

## The Catasterism of Diogenes the Cynic in an Epigram by Ausonius<sup>1</sup>

### El catasterismo de Diógenes el Cínico en un epigrama de Ausonio

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**ABSTRACT:** In the collection of Ausonius' *Epigrams* edited by R. P. H. Green (1999), three are dedicated to Diogenes the Cynic. One of them, epigram 54, constitutes an epitaph for the philosopher's tomb, and is composed as a paraphrase of epigram 7, 64 of the *Anthologia Palatina*. Moreover, a rare tradition on Diogenes' catasterism appears in this poem, attesting that the philosopher was placed in the sky by the aster of Leo to serve as the guard dog of the heroine Erigone. This research thus begins with an analysis of the transition from the Greek to the Latin epigram of Ausonius, and then develops the investigation of the issue of Diogenes' catasterism, by examining the broader context of the Greco-Roman sources on related topics.

**KEYWORDS:** Ausonius, epigrams, Diogenes the Cynic, catasterism

**RESUMEN:** En la colección de *Epigramas* de Ausonio editada por R. P. H. Green (1999), tres están dedicados a Diógenes el Cínico. Uno de ellos, el epigrama 54, constituye un epitafio para la tumba del filósofo, y está compuesto como una paráfrasis del epigrama 7, 64 de la *Anthologia Palatina*. Además, en este poema aparece una rara tradición sobre el catasterismo de Diógenes, que atestigua que el filósofo fue colocado en el cielo por el áster de Leo para servir de perro guardián de la heroína Erigone. Así pues, esta investigación comienza con un análisis de la transición del epigrama griego al latino de Ausonio y luego desarrolla la investigación de la cuestión del catasterismo de Diógenes, examinando el contexto más amplio de las fuentes grecorromanas sobre los temas tratados.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Ausonio, epigramas, Diógenes el Cínico, catasterismo.

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The text of Ausonius' epigrams edited by R. P. H. Green (1999) includes three compositions dedicated to the death of Diogenes the Cynic: epigrams 54, 55, 56<sup>2</sup>. In manuscript V (Leiden, UB, Voss. Lat. F 111) these short poems were included in the collection of the *Epitaphia heroum qui Troico bello interfuerunt*, but Green placed them among the epigrams since their content does not concern the heroes of the Trojan war<sup>3</sup>. In any case, epigram 54 is a particularly interesting epitaph for two reasons: first, it is a reworking of the anonymous epigram 7, 64 of the *Anthologia Palatina*<sup>4</sup>; secondly, it introduces a singular version on the catasterism of Diogenes the Cynic<sup>5</sup>. Ausonius' text reads as follows<sup>6</sup>:

'Dic, canis, hic cuius tumulus?' 'Canis.' 'At canis hic quis?'  
 'Diogenes.' 'Obiit?' 'Non obiit, set abit.'  
 'Diogenes, cui pera penus, cui dolia sedes,  
 ad manes abiit?' 'Cerberus inde vetat.'  
 'At quonam?' 'Clari flagrat qua stella Leonis  
 additus est iustae nunc canis Erigonae.'

'Tell me, dog, whose tomb is this?' 'It is a dog's.' 'But what dog was that?'  
 'Diogenes.' 'And is he passed away?' 'Not passed away, but gone away.'  
 'What, has that Diogenes gone to the shades, whose wealth was his wallet and whose  
 house a cask?' 'Cerberus will not let him in.'  
 'Where is he gone, then?' 'Where the bright star of Leo  
 burns he has been installed now as watch-dog for righteous Erigone'<sup>7</sup>.

Ausonius' epigram can be compared with *AP* 7, 64<sup>8</sup>:

*α. εἰπέ, κύων, τίνος ἀνδρὸς ἐφεστῶς σῆμα φυλάσσεις;*  
*β. τοῦ Κυνός. α. ἀλλὰ τίς ἦν οὗτος ἀνὴρ ὁ κύων;*  
*β. Διογένης. α. γένος εἰπέ. β. Σίνωπέυς. α. ὃς πίθον ᾤκει;*  
*β. καὶ μάλα: νῦν δὲ θανὼν ἀστέρας οἶκον ἔχει.*

*A.* 'Tell me, dog, who was the man on whose tomb thou standest keeping guard?'  
*B.* 'The Dog.' *A.* 'But what man was that, the Dog?'  
*B.* 'Diogenes.' *A.* 'Of what country?' *B.* 'Of Sinope.' *A.* 'He who lived in a jar?'  
*B.* 'Yes, and now he is dead, the stars are his home.'

As is evident, from a formal point of view, the two poems are construed on a dialogical structure. In both, the first verse contains an interlocution to the statue of the dog, placed on a column near the tomb of Diogenes, as recounted by Diogenes Laërtius (6, 78)<sup>9</sup>. Comparing the two epigrams, we see that Ausonius' is longer than the Greek ver-

2. See also the edition by Kay (2011: 51-52), which reproduces the same texts and numbering of the epigrams as in Green's edition (1999).

3. Green (1991: 363, 400-402).

4. On this epigram, see Häusle (1989).

5. See the commentary by Green (1991: 401); Kay (2011:181-184); Dräger (2012: 736-738). Alvar Ezquerro (1990: 187) is also useful.

6. Green (1999: 87).

7. Translation by Evelyn White (1919).

8. Text and English translation by Paton (1917).

9. Kay (2001: 182).

sion. First, Ausonius' text adds references to the saddlebag and the cask (v. 3), and then recounts several details on Diogenes' *post-mortem* fate (vv. 4-6): 1. the man's departure, i.e. his non-death; 2. his failure to move to the Manes; 3. Cerberus' obstruction; 4. his new location near the aster of Leo, as Erigone's watchdog.

In epigram 54, Ausonius does not simply translate the Greek poem, but produces a variation upon its model. As N. M. Kay (2001: 13-19) has noted, this procedure is not new, as a number of Ausonius' epigrams often imitate Greek versions in creative ways<sup>10</sup>. On the other hand, it is also evident that Ausonius draws the fundamental thematic core, i.e. Diogenes' catasterism, from the Greek model, while dealing with it independently through the addition of new details. More broadly, the dependence of Ausonius' text on the Greek version constitutes one of many instances demonstrating the poet's profound knowledge of Greek<sup>11</sup> and showing how he often followed the inspiration of the Greek rather than Latin epigrammatic tradition for the content of his works<sup>12</sup>.

More specifically, with regard to epigram 54, it is precisely the closing references to mythology that lead to some reflections on the theme of Diogenes' death. This epigram presupposes an idea that was typical of Greek culture in relation to the final fate of heroes, or heroised historical characters, who were imagined to be transferred to the celestial vault as stars<sup>13</sup>. It is also fairly well documented how in many Greek literary sources the process of catasterisation extended to wise men, whose memory was considered worthy of being preserved forever. At the same time, Ausonius partly reworks and transforms the Greek model according to the parameters of his culture of origin, that of Rome. In the Latin literary tradition, it is quite common to praise illustrious emperors by transferring them to the status of immortality through their catasterisation. In close connection with Ausonius' epigram 54, one cannot overlook that Virgil mentions Octavian's catasterism in the proem of the *Georgics*, evoking his sublimation as a star placed precisely between the constellation of Erigone and that of Chelas<sup>14</sup>.

The focal point of epigram 54 is Diogenes' avoidance of mortality, a fact that is emphasised by the rhetorical play produced by the consonance of the words *non obiit, sed abit*. Ausonius accepts the tradition that Diogenes does not share the same fate as mortal beings, but has the privilege of still existing after death, in a sublimated condition among the stars. Of interest is that the dialogic sequence of epigram 54 implies a series of events following Diogenes' death. First, he is said to have gone among the Manes: this reference alludes to the Roman belief that the dead are received in the afterlife among the Manes

10. On Ausonius' method of translating and imitating epigrams from the *Greek Anthology*, see Munari (1956); Benedetti (1980); Traina (1982); Green (1991: 375-376); Cameron (1993: 90-96); Floridi (2013; 2015); Wolff (2018). On Ausonius' epigram 57 see Nolfo (2022).

11. On Ausonius' profound knowledge of Greek authors and their works, cf. Green (1990); Goldlust (2010); Cazzuffi (2017); John (2021).

12. Benedetti (1980: 81). In general, on the relations between the Latin epigrammatic tradition and Greek models, see Neger (2019); Morelli (2019).

13. On the matter of catasterism in Greek culture, see Cumont (1922: 104-105; 113); Pérez Jiménez (1993); Pàmias – Zucker (2013: lxx-lxxvi); Pàmias (2019). On Greco-Roman astral myths, see Condos (1997).

14. Verg. *Georg.* 1, 32-35: *anne novum tardis sidus te mensibus addas, / qua locus Erigonen inter Chelasque sequentis / panditur (ipse tibi iam bracchia contrahit ardens / Scorpius et caeli iusta plus parte reliquit)*. «or as a new constellation to the slow months you will join, / where a space between Erigone and the following Claws / opens (for you already the arms retract the fiery / Scorpio, leaving you more than a due portion of the sky)» [My translation]. For the mention of Erigone and its connection to Octavian's catasterism in this passage from Virgil, see Withcomb (2018).

gods<sup>15</sup>. This motif also appears in Ausonius' epigram 56, the third epitaph dedicated to Diogenes, where the Cynic philosopher is imagined to be standing among the Manes and conversing with Croesus, king of Lydia, renowned for his wealth<sup>16</sup>:

Effigiem, rex Croese, tuam, ditissime regum,  
vidit apud manes Diogenes cynicus.  
'nil', inquit, 'tibi, Croese, tuum; superant mihi cuncta.  
nudus eram; sic sum. nil habui; hoc habeo.'  
rex ait, 'haud egui, cum tu mendice carebas  
omnibus; et careo, si modo non egeo?'

King Croesus, wealthiest of kings, Diogenes the Cynic  
saw your form amongst the shades.  
Said he: «Now you have nothing, Croesus, that was yours; while I still have all that I had.  
Bare was I: so am I now. I had nothing: and that I still have.»  
The king replied: «I wanted for nothing when you, you beggar,  
lacked everything; and do I lack if I need nothing now?»<sup>17</sup>

In this dialogue, the two characters ironically reproach each other concerning their shared condition of being dead, which forces them to possess nothing. The same motif appears in epigram 9, 145 of the *Anthologia Palatina*, where Diogenes' mockingly addresses Croesus for possessing nothing<sup>18</sup>. However, the text of Ausonius' epigram 56 differs considerably from the Greek one, because Croesus has the last word and rebukes Diogenes, pointing out that the latter's condition is no better than his own. This epigram is another striking example of how Ausonius was able to independently rework the model of the Greek epigrams<sup>19</sup>.

The scene depicted in epigram 56 by Ausonius is based on the idea that Diogenes is still active in the afterlife. By contrast, epigram 54 assumes that Diogenes was prevented from entering the underworld by the monstrous dog Cerberus, who in Greek mythology is usually the guardian of the dead<sup>20</sup>. Both the reference to the Manes and the mythical dog recall the motif of Diogenes' descent into the underworld. Regarding this theme, it should be noted that Ausonius certainly knew the series of epigrams 63-68 in Book 7 of the *Anthologia Palatina*<sup>21</sup>, dedicated to the death of Diogenes, and especially to his arrival in the underworld. In particular, epigrams 63, 66, 67, 68 are constructed on the ironic jokes that Diogenes addresses to the mythical ferryman of the dead: in these epigrams the Cynic philosopher is presented as someone who, while alive, possessed very little, only

15. See King (2009) and (2020).

16. Green (1999: 88).

17. Translation by Evelyn White (1919).

18. *AP* 9, 145: ὅσσα γὰρ εἶχον, πάντα φέρω σὺν ἐμοί: Κροῖσε, σὺ δ' οὐδὲν ἔχεις. Translation by Paton (1917): «for all I had I have brought with me, but you, Croesus, have nothing».

19. See the examples analysed by Benedetti (1980: 15-48). Cf. Wolff (2018).

20. Ogden (2013: 63-74).

21. On Ausonius' borrowing from the epigrams of the *Anthologia Palatina*, see Cameron (1993: 92-95). On the Cynics described in the epigrams of the *Anthologia Palatina* and the *Anthologia Planudea*, see Follet (1993).

a saddlebag, a staff and a threadbare robe<sup>22</sup>. The same objects are also mentioned in *AP* 7, 65, which is addressed to Diogenes' tomb, from which mediocre men are urged to stay away. These are the well-known tools that traditionally characterise Diogenes as a Cynic, committed to an austere lifestyle based on deprivation<sup>23</sup>. This motif, besides appearing in Ausonius' epigram 54, is also clearly reworked in the following epigram 55, where Diogenes is defined as one who possesses «a haversack, some barley-meal, a cloak, a stick, a cup» (*pera, polenta, tribon, baculus, scyphus*). To this it should be added that in epigram 54 Ausonius acknowledges a debt to the text of *AP* 7, 66, consisting of an apostrophe put into Diogenes' mouth to exhort Cerberus to feast on him, dog to dog<sup>24</sup>.

Nevertheless, compared to other epigrams in the *Anthologia Palatina* and other texts depicting Diogenes in the underworld<sup>25</sup>, both *AP* 7, 64 and Ausonius' epigram 54 refer to a different tradition: Diogenes is not destined to remain in the underworld, but in a different location, the heavens. Ausonius' epigram 54 specifies that Diogenes is near the «aster of Leo» (*stella Leonis*), as the watchdog of Erigone (vv. 5-6). This detail alludes to the myth of Icarus and his daughter Erigone, who are said to have been transferred among the stars, as recounted by numerous sources<sup>26</sup>, including most notably a scholium on Homer (*Il.* 22, 29), and passages from Nonnus (*D.* 47, 35-262) and Hyginus (*Fab.* 130; *Astr.* 2, 4). The myth recounts how the two characters welcomed Dionysus and received from him the gift of wine. Icarus then gave it to some shepherds who, having drunk to the point of inebriation, killed him. Erigone, having gone in search of her father Icarus accompanied by Maera, a female dog, would hang herself after finding the corpse, and the dog would also then die. For this reason, Dionysus would turn them into stars: Erigone would become the constellation Virgo<sup>27</sup>, Icarus the star Arcturus, or the constellation Bootes depending on the versions<sup>28</sup>, and the dog the constellation Canicula<sup>29</sup>.

As for why Ausonius would have defined Erigone as *iusta* in epigram 54, the reason clearly emerges from Servius' commentary on verse 1, 33 in the proem of the *Georgics*, where Virgil mentions Erigone. Here we read that Erigone is identified with the constellation Virgin and with Justice, since, after seeing her father Icarus lying dead, she de-

22. In epigram 63 Diogenes claims to have laid bare the affectation of life; in epigram 66 Diogenes is described as the one who possesses only a staff, a saddlebag, and a rough cloak; in epigram 67 Diogenes addresses the ferryman and says that he is carrying a flask, a wallet, a worn-out cloak, and a coin for the ferry; epigram 68 repeats the same objects as in the previous epigram, to which the saddlebag is also added.

23. Goulet-Cazé (2016: 77-84).

24. *AP* 7, 66: ἀλλὰ κύον σαίνοις Κέρβερε τόν με κύνα.

25. Worthy of mention is Lucian's account of the *Dialogues of the Dead*, where Diogenes meets Pollux in the after-life (1, 1).

26. Apollod. 3, 14, 7; Lucian *Deor. Conc.* 5; Ael. *NA* 6, 25; 7, 28; Ps. Nonn. *Schol. Mythol.* 68; Tat. *Orat.* 9, 5. Cf. Ov. *Met.* 6, 125.

27. Nonn. *D.* 47, 248; Hyg. *Fab.* 130; *Astr.* 2, 4.

28. In Hyg. *Fab.* 130 Icarus becomes the star Arcturus, while in Nonn. *D.* 47, 251, *Schol. Hom. Il.* 22, 29 and Hyg. *Astr.* 2, 4 he becomes the constellation Bootes.

29. Hyg. *Fab.* 130; *Astr.* 2, 4. It should be noted that while Hyg. *Fab.* 130 seems to refer to the star called Canicula, i. e. the Dog Star Sirius, instead Hyg. *Astr.* 2, 4 clearly alludes to the constellation Canicula, since it is identified with the constellation the Greeks call Procyon (cf. *Astr.* 2, 35-36). Cf. OLD s. v. *Canicula*, 3: «The Dog Star, Sirius (sometimes the constellation Canis Major), regarded as bringing hot weather».

stroyed herself with all manner of mourning, and for this reason the gods ordered her to take the place of *Virgo* under the name of *Iustitia*<sup>30</sup>.

However, since verses 5-6 of Ausonius' epigram 54 do not clearly indicate the astral seat of Diogenes, several problems of interpretation have arisen in this regard. Some scholars think that here Diogenes was transformed into the star Sirius<sup>31</sup>, since in the Greek astronomical tradition Sirius is located at the mouth of the constellation of Canis Maior<sup>32</sup>. In his commentary on verses 5-6 of Ausonius' epigram 54, however, Green (1991: 401) already expressed puzzlement at this identification, because Sirius is often connected to the constellation Lepus<sup>33</sup>. Instead, he suggested the conjecture that the meaning of these verses refers to constellations in general. In fact, the connection between Sirius or Canis Maior and Lepus appears both in Ausonius' epigram 15 and in epigram 29 of the *Epigrammata Bobiensia*<sup>34</sup>, which are two imitations of Germanicus Caesar's epigram 9, 18 found in the *Anthologia Palatina* and dedicated to a hare<sup>35</sup>. Ausonius' epigram 15 is clearly a freeform version of the Greek model, while *Epigr. Bob. 29* is certainly a more faithful translation<sup>36</sup>. All these epigrams mention a 'dog among the stars' chasing a hare, i.e. the constellation of Lepus. Unlike Green, Kay (2001: 183-184) argued with certainty that in verses 5-6 of epigram 54 Diogenes is identified with the star Sirius<sup>37</sup>, based on the tradition that the entry of the sun into the constellation of Leo is connected to the rising of Canis Maior<sup>38</sup>.

Regardless, a number of points raised by the sources provide a complex framework for the identification of the astral element embodying Diogenes the Cynic. First of all, in Ausonius' epigram 54, the verb *flagrat* found in verse 5 may imply an exceptional radiance of the *stella Leonis*<sup>39</sup>. If we consider sources, both Eratosthenes' *Catasterisms* (12) and Hyginus' *Astral Myths* (3, 23) list 19 stars belonging to constellation Leo, and both authors qualify three or four of them as particularly bright. Therefore, it is difficult to identify which star of Leo Ausonius refers to. At the same time, *flagrat* may not refer to brightness, but to the climatic ardour of that particular time of year. Indeed, in this

30. Serv. *Georg.* 1, 33: *vel certe ideo inter scorpionis brachia, quae sunt libra, et Erigonen, quae est virgo, quia libra aequitas, virgo iustitia. sane haec Erigone Icari filia fuit, tantae pietatis in patrem, ut cum eum vidisset mortuum, omni se luctu ac maerore conficeret, ob quam rem misericordia deorum inter signa locum virginis sub iustitiae vocabulo iussa est obtinere.* Cf. also Hyg. *Fab.* 130, which reports that the constellation Virgo is called *Iustitia*.

31. Livrea (1987: 433); Kay (2001: 183 note 5-6); López Cruces (2018).

32. Arat. 329-332; Schol. Arat. 332; Eratosth. *Cat.* 33; Gem. 3, 14; Hyg. *Astr.* 2, 35, 2; 2, 34; Germ. 334-335.

33. Arat. 338-341; Manil. *Astr.* 5, 233.

34. See the edition by Speyer 1963. On *Epigr. Bob. 29* see Canali-Nocchi (2011: 88-90) and Nocchi (2016: 200-204). On the themes of astral mythology developed within the same epigram, see D'Angelo (2015).

35. The same theme of the hare being chased by a dog is also treated in the epigram *AP* 9.17, equally attributed to Germanicus Caesar, and in *AP* 9, 371. On Ausonius' epigram 15, the *Epigr. Bob. 29* and the Greek models of *AP* 9, 17-18, see the comments of Kay (2001: 111-112). On the relationship between the *Epigrammata Bobiensia* and Ausonius' epigrams, see Nocchi (2018).

36. Benedetti (1980: 98); Nocchi (2016: 201).

37. More specifically, Kay (2001: 183-184) asserts that in v. 5 *stella Leonis* indicates the alpha star or Regulus in the constellation Leo, while Diogenes is here identified with the single star Sirius, or Dog Star.

38. Hor. *Epist.* I 10, 16. In Manil. *Astr.* 5, 206-208 the arrival of the sun in the constellation of Leo is connected to the rising of Canis Maior and Canicula.

39. Kay (2001:183).

regard, it is worth recalling the tradition that the sun's entry into the constellation of Leo occurs in July, a particularly hot season of year<sup>40</sup>. Add to this the fact that the Latin word *stella* can also mean «constellation» and not just «star»<sup>41</sup>. Here, in verse 5 of epigram 54, the meaning of «constellation» seems more appropriate since other sources on Erigone's catasterism also mention constellations<sup>42</sup>, and in one case that of Leo<sup>43</sup>. In light of this, Ausonius' verse may mean «where the constellation of Leo burns».

Secondly, an important and useful testimony on this question is a passage from Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* (47, 246-262) which relates two different versions of the same catasterism. Although Nonnus – a 5th century Greek poet – was not Ausonius' direct source, it can be assumed that he was a witness to a tradition that Ausonius may have drawn on in his time. According to the first version of Nonnus (*D.* 47, 246-255), Zeus placed Erigone, the agrestic Virgo (Παρθενική), next to the back of Leo (Λέων), Icarus next to his daughter with the name of Bootes (Βοώτης), which touches the Chariot (Ἀμαξία) of Ursa (Ἄρκτος), and he placed Canis (Κύων) as a fiery star chasing Lepus (Λαγώς), where the astral ship Argo encircles the vault of Olympus. According to the second version (*D.* 47, 256-262), Zeus joined the soul of Erigone to the celestial star of Virgo (Κούρη); then near the celestial Canis (Κύων) he placed another similar dog, called Sirius (Σείριος), which usually rises at the same time; finally, he joined the soul of Icarus to Bootes (Βοώτης). Thus, while in the first account Nonnus alludes to the transformation of Erigone's dog into the constellation of Canis Maior, the second version explicitly states the proximity of two dogs, the celestial one, i.e. the constellation of Canis Maior, and the Dog Star Sirius. In this case, Nonnus alludes to the identification of Erigone's dog with Sirius. Clearly, Nonnus' passage does not simplify the question of the catasterisation of Erigone's dog and shows instead how the identification of the astral seat is by no means a foregone conclusion<sup>44</sup>. In fact, according to the accounts offered by Hyginus (*Fab.* 130 and *Astr.* 2, 4), Erigone's dog is transformed into Canicula, but is often identified with the star Sirius or Canis Maior<sup>45</sup>.

To all this, we should further add that, alongside epigram *AP* 7, 64 and Ausonius' epigram 54, the same inspirational motif occurs in a short poem attributed to Cercidas of Megalopolis – 3rd century BC – by Diogenes Laërtius (6, 76-77)<sup>46</sup>. Here, the man from

40. Arat. 149-151; Manil. *Astr.* 5, 214-217.

41. OLD *s. v. stella* quotes the passages of Hyg. *Fab.* 195, 3; 224, 3.

42. Hyg. *Fab.* 130; *Astr.* 2, 4; Serv. *Georg.* 1, 33.

43. Nonn. *D.* 47, 246-247.

44. In Greco-Roman sources it is often difficult to identify the astral element which is referred to as Canis, since there is an overlap/confusion between the constellation of Canis and the Dog Star Sirius. To give just one example, in Hyg. *Astr.* 2, 35, 2 we read: *Sed canis habet in lingua stellam unam, quae ipsa Canis appellatur; in capite autem alteram, quam Isis suo nomine statuisse existimatur et Sirion appellasse propter flammae candorem, quod eiusmodi sit, ut prae ceteris lucere videatur. Itaque quo magis eam cognoscerent, Sirion appellasse.* Translation by Hard (2015): «Now the Dog has a star on its tongue which is itself called the Dog, and on its head another star which Isis is supposed to have placed there under her own name, calling it Sirius because of the brilliance of its light, for it is of such a nature that it seems to outshine all other stars. And so, to make it more easily recognizable, she called it Sirius».

45. Cf. above n. 29. See also the passages quoted in OLD *s. v. Canicula*, 3: Varro *Rust.* 1, 28, 2; Cic. *Div.* 2, 93; Hor. *Sat.* 2, 5, 39; *Carm.* 1, 17, 17; Liv. 40, 22, 7; Ov. *Ars* 2, 231; Pers. 3, 5; Col. 3, 11, 8; Plin. *Nat.* 28, 187.

46. Fr. 60 Lomiento (1993) = fr. 54 Livrea (1986). On this poem by Cercidas, see the observations of Livrea (1987) and López Cruces (2018). In general, on Cercidas, see Livrea (1986) and López Cruces (1994).

Sinope is said to no longer be there but to have «gone on high» (ἀνέβα), having held his breath; this passage is immediately followed by a play on the etymology of Diogenes the Cynic's name, invoked in these words: «truly you were the son of Zeus and a heavenly dog» (Ζανὸς γόνος ἦς γὰρ ἀλαθέως οὐράνιος τε κύων). In this short poem by Cercidas – written earlier than Ausonius' epigram 54 and *AP* 7, 64 – the motif of Diogenes' transference to heaven is associated with his divine origin. Hence, in Cercidas' verses, the apotheosis of Diogenes is complete because he is explicitly recognised as having a divine status surpassing his mortal one, leading to his eternal placement in a superhuman and transcendent space.

Another mention of the same theme appears in epigram 11, 158 of the *Anthologia Palatina*, attributed to Antipater of Thessalonica<sup>47</sup>, or of Sidon according to some scholars<sup>48</sup>. The tone is satirical, as the life of Diogenes the Cynic is extolled in comparison with that of another obscure and mediocre Cynic philosopher. Verse 6 of this epigram ironically exclaims «celestial was he, dog of rubbish are you!» (ἦ γὰρ ὁ μὲν που οὐράνιος, σὺ δ' ἔφους οὖν σποδιῆσι κύων)<sup>49</sup>. Here, too, we find the definition «heavenly dog» placing the truest Cynical philosopher at a level of sublimation.

If we go back to Nonnus' controversial passage, we can see how the definition of αἰθέριος Κύων (*D.* 47, 259-260) in some way re-proposes that of οὐράνιος κύων found in the epigrams by Cercidas and Antipater. Thus, it seems appropriate to think that in all these texts the «celestial dog» is precisely the constellation of Canis Maior, and not the star Sirius.

Returning to Ausonius' epigram 54, there are a few other elements to consider. From a rhetorical and poetic point of view, verses 5-6 constitute the final *pointe*: the philosopher-dog par excellence is equated with the heavenly Dog par excellence. Moreover, as for the term *additus* in verse 5, Ausonius seems to have used it with a subtle irony, hinting at the idea that Diogenes was added as Erigone's watchdog, in addition to her own dog: the fair maiden, therefore, would have had two dogs at her side.

In essence, for the purpose of a critical analysis of Ausonius' epigram 54, beyond the various speculations on Diogenes' astral seat it is worth considering the emphasis on the main assumption of the text, which echoes that of *AP* 7, 64, i. e. that the Cynic philosopher was awarded the honour of being forever placed among the stars.

Moving to a more general level, the theme of the catasterism of philosophers was fairly widespread in the Greek world. Through Diogenes Laërtius we also have other epigrams on the deaths of philosophers destined to be placed among the stars. As S. Grau (2013; 2020) has shown, these epigrams are evidence of a heroic cult revering philosophers considered «divine men» (θεῖοι ἄνδρες). One of the most noteworthy of such epigrams is attributed by Diogenes Laërtius to Antipater of Sidon, regarding the death of Zeno of Citium (*D. L.* 7, 29)<sup>50</sup>:

τῆνος ὄδε Ζήνων Κιτίῳ φίλος, ὅς ποτ' Ὀλυμπον  
ἔδραμεν, οὐκ Ὀσση Πήλιον ἀνθέμενος,

47. López Cruces (2013).

48. On the dubious identity of the author, see the remarks of López Cruces (2013: 288 n.1), who provides bibliographical references. On the attribution to Antipater of Thessalonica or Sidon of *AP* 11, 158, see the discussion in Argentieri (2003: 146-147).

49. Kay 2001: 184.

50. See Antipater of Sidon, 35 in Gow-Page (1968). Cf. *Anth. Pal., Appendix 3*, 104 Cougny (1890).



οὐδὲ τά γ' Ἡρακλῆος ἀέθλεε: τὰν δέ ποτ' ἄστρα  
ἀτραπιτὸν μούνας εὔρε σαοφροσύνας.

Here lies Zeno dear to Citium, he who ascended  
Towering Olympus, not by piling Pelion on Ossa,  
Nor by laboring hard like Heracles; no, but by finding  
Moderation's path, the only route to the stars<sup>51</sup>.

In this epigram, Zeno is attributed the ability to ascend Mount Olympus, that is to say, to reach the seat of the gods, and thus transcend the human condition.<sup>52</sup> However, he is also said to have succeeded in elevating himself to the divine rank without performing the same swaggering feats as the Giants, who during the war against Zeus and the Olympian gods would had piled Mount Pelion on top of Mount Ossa in order to ascend Mount Olympus,<sup>53</sup> and without undergoing the same twelve labours as Heracles, who was eventually held up to Mount Olympus as a god.<sup>54</sup> Instead, Zeno's feat was the achievement of true and complete wisdom, thus gaining the favour of the gods and rising to the heavens among the stars.

Furthermore, Diogenes Laertius wrote an epigram on the death of the philosopher Polemo, who in turn also rose to the stars (4, 20)<sup>55</sup>:

οὐκ αἶεις; Πολέμωνα κεκεύθαμεν, ὃν θέτο τῆδε  
ἀρρωστή, τὸ δεινὸν ἀνθρώποις πάθος.  
οὐ μᾶλλον Πολέμωνα, τὸ σῶμα δέ: τοῦτο γὰρ αὐτὸς  
βαίνων ἐς ἄστρα διάβορον θῆκεν χαμαί.

Have you not heard? We buried Polemo here, laid low by  
Frailty, terrible plight of humankind.  
Nay, not Polemo, only his body, which he himself cast  
Down on the ground on his way to the stars above<sup>56</sup>.

This epigram too displays the theme of the ascent to the stars of a philosopher who has left his body on earth<sup>57</sup>.

The cases mentioned above should suffice to illustrate the process of catasterisation enacted by Greek culture towards wise men, and philosophers in particular. Their condition is equated to that of heroes who, despite being mortal, receive forms of worship that bestow upon them a lasting fame<sup>58</sup>. The transfer of these sages to the celestial vault implies their eternal permanence not only in the cosmos of the natural elements, but also in the traditional heritage of the world to which they belong.

51. Translation by White (2020).

52. Grau (2020: 4).

53. On the mythical tales surrounding this episode, see Rocchi (2010).

54. On the ascent of Heracles to Olympus, see Shapiro (1983); Holt (1992).

55. *Anth. Pal.*, Appendix 2, 380 in Cougny (1890).

56. Translation by White (2020).

57. Grau (2020: 7).

58. Alongside philosophers, poets are also heroised by Greek culture: in this regard, see Kimmel-Clauzet (2013).

Resuming the analysis of Ausonius' epigram 54, we could conclude that the poet certainly drew the material for his short poem from the numerous Greek epigrams that circulated on Diogenes and his otherworldly fate. In his reworking of the same theme, Ausonius, as in most of his works, was anchored in the Greek tradition, although he added some details about Diogenes' destiny. Here, the poet echoes and reworks the Greek tales about the catasterism of Diogenes, whose function is to ensure the perpetual memory of the character that was considered the prime emblem of Cynic thought.

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