Ecbasis Cuiusdam Captivi Per Tropologiam—Escape of a Certain Captive Told in a Figurative Manner

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Ecbasis Cuiusdam Captivi Per Tropologiam—Escape of a Certain Captive Told in a Figurative Manner: An Eleventh-Century Latin Beast Epic.

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COMMENTARY

15. *ius, iura* usually means custom, practice, wont, habit in the *Ecbasis*.

23. As Ekkehard I started writing verse in his early youth, so this writer, one hundred years later, started late. Here I disagree with Ehrismann. As he confesses, he actually has trouble with the *sillabicos cursus*, especially in the case of foreign (Greek) words: *cydonia* and *melodidia* (1. 179), *maldia* (1. 939). But simple Latin words too are sometimes wrongly accented: *masticat* (1. 89), *fatique* (1. 366), *militia* (1. 848), *avicula* (1. 934).

24. This is literally true; the work is full of illogical changes of tense, often perhaps *metri causa*. Cf. 11. 81-82, 216, 226, 436-437, 782, and i159-i160. The translation purposely retains this eccentricity.

28. I refer *sibi* to *priscorum* above.

42. There is no reason why *recitas* should not be taken literally; the work, or at least considerable parts of it, were probably meant to be recited. Indeed those portions where speakers are indicated were probably recited with the roles assigned to different speakers. On the blending of genres in the *Ecbasis* see the Introduction. *non simplo stamine*, 1. 68, must refer to this. The *tort a* (twist, braid) *panis* (gen.) may be suggested by Exodus 29, 23; see also 1. 544, where Grimm reads *panis tortis* for *pavis, turdis*.

69 f. I see no reason why this determination of time should be construed as being the date of composition, or a date connected remotely with the author's birth, as Voigt would have it. It is merely the date for the *rara fabella* (1. 39) - an Easter story. But see also II. 394 and 1026.

70. *bis septima luna* = full moon.

97. *forstrarius*, a monastic official, here the wolf. The monastery as the scene of action is adhered to throughout.

110. *superius* is surprising since this does not seem to be a cento-quotation. But see 11. 116 and 119.

111. In view of the meager fish and vegetable fare of the monastery, food was much in the minds of the monks and plays a dominant part in the *Ecbasis*.

112. But in 1. 182 he speaks of seven years, using a Horatian quotation, and twice thereafter (11. 298, 387) others also mention seven years. Is this an oversight on the author's part, or are the later references sly indications of the wolf's untrustworthiness?

116, 119. Since both lines are from Horace (1. 116 half from *De arte poetica*, 42, and partly from *Sat. 2*, 3, 206; 1. 119 from *Sat. 2*, 3, 288: *doles* instead of *labores*), the pagan tone is less surprising. The marginal designations of speakers from this point on are in MS A.

132. On Henry see Introduction.

148. This verse, like 1. 335, may be taken from Mico's *Florilegium, Poetae* 3. It is originally
from Serenus Sammonicus. Capsidle is accented wrongly in 335. See note on 1. 23 above.

152. Are Henry and Conrad both living? See Introduction.

153 f. Both lines contain echoes of Hor. Carmina 1, 24, 11 f., and 2, 2, 23 f. The Carmina are used comparatively rarely (about 16 times) as against some 120 uses of the Satires and 75 of the Epistles. Even the brief (476 ll.) De arte poetica is used more frequently (20 times).

165. These fish are mentioned in the Mosella of Ausonius and the Halieutica of Ovid, but there is no evidence that the author used these works. The former e.g. mentions capito, barbus, salmo, mullus and gobio as found in the Moselle. See Grimm 327 ff. Both Waltharius and Ruodlieb also deal with fish. On these fish see also Voigt.

170, 172. Both Rabado (Rabadeau) and Petrosus are brooks in Lorraine. See Strecker ed.

45. I interpret ceto (1. 172) as coetus. Thus too coetus, 1. 173. But in 1. 546 eeto is from cetus, whale. Strecker interprets Mosa (1. 171) as the Meuse, Grimm as the Moselle.

173 ff. The order of the lines was established by Grimm.

179. Crustumium was a Sabire town.

198. The first few words allude to the words in the canon of the Mass.

201. Germanic writers of Latin often invert to express the conditional. See also 11. 287 and 470.

203. Note the alliteration, as occasionally at other points.


236. MS A has in ethere (aere in B) •·aces, but since this is a Virgilian echo (cf. Aen. 8, 70: ad aethera voces), Voigt’s correction of what Strecker calls the “merkwürdige Lesart” ethere seems justified.

248. On this line and 1. 66 above see the Introduction: 1. 308 echoes it.

251. One of the very rare (only three in all!) echoes of Terence: Adelph. 5, 3, 3. The others are 1. 421: Phormio 4, 1, 20, and 1. 707: Andria 1. 1. 2. One wonders if they are direct quotations. Certainly Terence was well known in the monasteries long before 1050.

256 ff. Strecker, comparing this passage with ll. 156 ff., is puzzled by what he calls an inconsistency. In the earlier passage the wolf serves the calf, while here, Strecker thinks, the wolf talks as if the calf had served him. But in changing feret to foret in 1. 256 (which I accept) I believe Strecker has solved his own puzzle. What the wolf says is that the calf would not be innocent in mixing...

259. Had the monk who gave MS A the title Ecbasis observed this line, he might have used Excessus instead of the Greek expression. I interpret foris excessit literally as “ran away” and not, as Strecker does, p. 57: “begangen hat.” See 1. 1159.

264. Strecker has one of his rare misprints – Index.


282. This line is an echo of one of the author’s most popular writers, Prudentius, Contra Symmachum 2, 982: nec potis est tenuum telluri affigere fibrum. But another now neglected reading of the Prudentius passage has affigere – an excellent example of how Ecbasis textual criticism can serve classical philology. Other examples: 1. 291, where Prudentius, Apotheosis,
I. 395 f., has blandus in ore sapor, fragrans odor ... sincera voluptas, but one MS has flagrans; 1. 725, which is identical with Ovid, Met. 10, 559, except that the approved Ovid reading of the last word seems to be verbis, even though good MS authority supports labris; 1. 991, identical with Hor. Sat. 1, 5, 44, where contulerim is now preferred by editors to praetulerim of the Ecbasis. Certainly the MS of the Classics used by the Ecbasis author have the sanction of old age. I do not think he usually quotes from memory.

284. Since spoken by the wolf, the East Franks are meant.

286. nunc was supplied by Grimm, who however recognized the possibility that this was a pentameter.

294. Strecke notes an echo of Martinus de Bracara, a Church writer.

299 ff. von Winterfeld placed 299 after 301, but Otto Schumann deems this unnecessary. See his review of Strecke ed., p. 121 ff.

308. A refrain of 1. 248.

310 f. "No one without leave of the abbot shall presume to give or receive, or keep as his own, anything whatever... All things are to be common to all." The Rule of St Benedict, op. cit., Chap. 33, p. 65.

311. Supply vult after fieri. The Rule of St Benedict, Chap. 70, p. 121: "What thou wouldst not have done to thyself, do not thou to another."

320. Proverbial; also in Reimardus and Renner.

321. With Voigt instead of acesit.

326. A biblical echo: John 17, 12; 18, 9.

327. Genesis 27, 3.

347-351. These five lines, in composite, resemble lines in Hor. Ep. 2, 1, 190; 2, 1, 183 f.; 2, 1, 212; and Sat. 1, 3, 110.

352. Perhaps ille = 'the'.

363. MS A has faza. B corrects to sexa – one of the few examples where B, neglected by Grimm and deriving from A, improves upon it.

368. ariete, here literally 'ram,' not the war machine of the ancients, with perhaps a suggestion of humor.

371. I adopt von Winterfeld's Si non sola potest... (or perhaps Peiper's Non solitum potis est –?) for the impossible Non solitum potest.

394 ff. The order follows von Winterfeld's proposal: decaetie instead of decanie according to Voigt. Tithes were awarded the Church in 813 (see 1. 69 above).


412. The reading lassescetl (Grimm) improves the MS lassessens.

417. Hec: It must be borne in mind that vulpes is feminine, and thus the fox becomes a Virgilian queen (1. 434: Aen. 11, 845)!

419. "Monks shall practice silence at all times..." "One or two seniors shall be appointed to go about the monastery at such times as the brethren are free to read, in order to see that no one is slothful, given to idleness or foolish talking..." The Rule of St Benedict, op. cit., Chap. 42, p. 76; Chap. 48, p. 86.

422. fini is an old dative of direction. See 1. 455.

424. Last verse of the Psalter.
433 ff. The significance of this is probably connected with pagan iconic tree mysticism. Is humor involved in posteriora?

446. See Luke 5, 1.


465. St. Aper, the saint of the monastery (St. Evre) of Toul.

480. happy = long-lived.

492. Strecker corrects from illis.

542 f. and 550 f. are strongly under the influence of Marcellus, De medicina 29, 23, and 47. tellure creatis and ... creatas both occur there.

547. Qui for quod is my emendation, suggested by Strecker.

549. The huic instead of hic is my suggested emendation.

551. fragrant = fragrant. An echo of Dracontius?

560. illi looks like the definite article.

561 f. The only echoes of Bede, De die indicil (85, 93) in Ecbasis.

569 ff. Voigt suggested placing 1. 571 before 1. 570, and von Winterfeld proposed the order adopted here.

570. Proverbial.

372. "Let there be stationed at the gate of the monastery some wise old man who knows how to give and receive an answer. As soon as anyone shall knock, or some poor man shall call for help, let him reply Thanks be to God, or invoke a blessing. And let him in the meekness of God's fear hasten to reply with zealous charity ..." Rules of St. Benedict, op. cit., Chap. 66, p. 117.

582. Ibid., Chap. 5.

583. The story of Malchus, told by St. Jerome (Hieronymus) – De Vita Malchi – is here recited by the unicorn. See Introduction, also 1. 790. Grimm, p. 287, conjectured that Malchus was the monastic name of the Ecbasis author. It may well be that the Ecbasis story of the calf is a reflection of the Malchus plot, although in the latter a sheep, and not a calf, is mentioned.

590. See 11. 433 ff.

603. The first of three echoes of the Poetae of Johannes Scotus. See also 11. 922 and 984.

624 f. Deut. 25, 4.

636. Leopards is in square brackets because the designation is missing in ms A. The second king here seems to be the fox (see 1. 560) but is actually the panther. See 11. 765 and 1000.

638. The ms have gentacula.

660. The ms reading is: quam nobilis compilat. I follow Fickermann's suggestion: quam nobis, compilat is my own conjecture. In ms B Ericius is next to 1. 661, and 1. 660 is still the leopard's. This was approved by Grimm.

661. This and the following speeches are typically mock-heroic.

687. Stensile is probably Stinzel on the Saar river (not Steinsel in Luxemburg). This follows Grimm's conjecture (p. 289) and contradicts Voigt (p. 15). See Strecker, p. 45. But Hartmut Hoffmann goes back to Luxemburg.

689. cameram lecti = OHG pettichamera. Hunsaloa is probably Hundlingen near Saargemünd.
693 ff. The designation of speakers is confused. MS A assigns I. 693 to the leopard, I. 694 to Ericius, I. 695-697 to the leopard. But since there is no room in the margin of I. 693, Leopardus appears behind I. 693 in A. Then there is no designation of speakers until I. 706, when Vulpes speaks. Later a corrector of MS A wrote Ericius next to I. 694, Leopard (with o above the first a) next to I. 695, Ericius next to I. 698, and Leppardus (corrected to Leopardus) next to I. 699. However, with Grimm I still assign I. 693 to Ericius, beginning the leopard’s speech with I. 694 and extending it to I. 697. In MS B the designations are all erroneous.

718. ad presens sounds Germanic.

741. The reading in the MSS is Debitor es. But then it should be creditor es. See Voigt. If, as Voigt and Strecker suggest, we read en (i.e. en ego) for es, the sense is restored.

746. Proverbial.

759 ff. I follow the excellent suggestions of Otto Schumann (see note on 11. 299 ff.) in his review of the Strecker edition. Fickermann had supplied pardus in the gap, added Leo as the speaker of I. 759, and Leopardus leoni as the speaker of I. 760-761. MS A has Leo next to I. 761, while von Winterfeld puts it next to I. 762. The MSS have scit in I. 759.


765. This line echoes both Hor. Sat. 2, 5, 48 and also Genesis 41, 40 f.

767. Psalms 35, 8, and 141, 9.

771. That is, as far as Psalm 132.


781. I follow Seiler. The MS reading In speciem regnis viruit is corrupt.


797. I follow Peiper. The manuscript reading: Huncce regem decorcet, regem cum decore salvet is corrupt.

798-803. This passage echoes Marcellus De medicina 72, 73, 75-77, with which 11. 799-803 are almost identical.

814. 1 Kings 10, 1 ff.

817. filomena: see I. 829 ff. below.


829 ff. Filomena, Philomena, Philomela etc., the nightingale. See 11. 873, 1063, and 1066.


844 f. Matthew 27, 45, and 51.

847. The MS reading is matrem. I read matre (abl. of agent without prep. a – cf. 1. 766) for better sense.

851. linquere non potui sounds Germanic.

852. With the square bracket the interpolation (or two interpolations: 11. 852-880, and 881-905) begins. Von Winterfeld would extend it through 1. 907. See Introduction. It is to be noted that with the exception of an echo of Virg. Ecl. 9, 11 in 1. 853 (Audieras? Et fama fuit…) and possibly one of Hor. Carm. 1, 3, 18 in 1. 897 (Qui siccis oculis monstra natantia), all the echoes in the interpolation are from writers of the Christian era, especially the Arator. The fact that the first half of 1. 906 is from Virg. Aen. 3, 461, might tend to suggest that the line does not belong to the interpolation.
889. corde = chordae.

899. Isaiah 53, 7, and Act Apost. 8, 32. Pontius Pilate is meant.

900 ff. Mark 14, 65 ff.


923. The distribution of speakers follows Voigt.

943. On the Frankish horns see Grimm, 327.

945. Psalms 50; 73 ff.

947. Psitacus, supplied by von Winterfeld, hence in square brackets.

954. federe iunxit (cf. 1. 950) is a set conventional phrase.

961. ms A has imo, which Grimm and Voigt correct to imno = hymno. For no apparent reason Strecker has immo (a misprint?).

962. Severini festa beati, October 21.

977. The first three words are from a well-known Easter hymn.

992. This proverbial saying is from Hor. Ep. 1, 18, 89.


1010-1015: A break in the “inner fable”; the wolf and the otter of the “outer fable” speak.

1013. ms A assigns 11. 1013-1015 to Luter. Strecker suggests my change, giving 1. 1013 still to Lupus and only 11. 1014-1015 to Luter.

1014. Ezchiel 18, 2.

1026. Poma Geraldinga are mentioned also in the Capitulare de villis (Capit. reg. Franc.) 1, 1883, 91-92, of 812 of Charlemagne. See Grimm, 292. ms B knows nothing of them and has gero digna instead.

1033. The Prologue of the Rule of St. Benedict speaks of “the ear of thine heart.”


1044. I.e., they show by their insults that silence is golden.

1047. An extreme example of how the author echoes Horace, his favorite author: tiiio (sua) culpa premit (premet) is from Ep. 1, 18, 79, while the rest of the line is from 1.87 of the same Epistle. Ecbasis 1048 is word for word from Ep. 1, 18, 88.

1057. Isaiah 40, 6.

1069. Physiologus, Chap. 1: Un. of Calif. Publicats. in Class. Philo. xii, 1944, 103, where the number three is associated with the lion in various ways.

1073. revisit: If re- is taken literally, this might be interpreted as a return home. Both ms have suauz uualt (corrected by Grimm). Perhaps the copyists were Gallic.

1075. The swan is considered a northern bird, as Cygnus is a northern constellation. On these birds see Hartmut Hoffmann, 310 f.

1081. Grimm supplied the missing des.

1085. Proverbial.

1098. My reading is based upon suggestions of Peiper and Strecker. (not abeset).

1108. I.e., let him be consumed by the birds who...

1109. sublaterans, corrected by Grimm from sublatans. I am not sure of the meaning here.

See Voigt pp. 135 and 149.

1114. Perhaps an echo of Hrotsvit, Call. 9, 29 (von Winterfeld ed.).

1115. See Prov. 26, 27, also Eccles. 10, 8.

1116. See Rom. 2, 12.

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1130. An echo of Hor. Sat. 2, 4, 93, 92.
1133. See Hor. Sat. 2, 6, 94 f.
1139. See 1. 329.
1140. The West Franks are meant.
1142. I adopt Fickermann's suggested order, placing 1. 1141 after 1. 1156. Strecker also adopts it but confuses the enumeration between 11. 1140 and 1155.
1149. See Introduction.
1162. Since works of the time are often built around proverbial truths such as this from Horace, De arte poetica, 1. 350, or around well-known sayings, we may see here one possible point of departure for the author. See also 11. 248 and 308.
1164. Like a Roman at the circus!
1176. istis looks like a definite article.
1204. fastidia magna seems a strange expression. magna must be a cognate accusative. The fact that fastidia magna (cf. also 1. 1019) occurs in the line before, might make this recurrence suspect as a corrupt reading. See also amarum - amaras, 11. 1207 and 1208.
1208. Bitter weeping has been conventional since Matthew 26, 75, and Luke 22, 62.
1216. See Matthew 2, 16.
1217. See 1. 272. But here the wolf has become Herod!
1223. Psalms 113, 2.
1224. See Introduction.
1225 ff. The last five lines are taken over, almost without change, from the author's favorite Horace: De arte poetica 360; Ep. 2, 2, 141 f. (ms A has me instead of et; Horace has pueris instead of psalmis); Ep. 2, 2, 29; and Sat. 1, 1, 121 (Horace has compilasse instead of sermonem claudam). In 1226 the author reverts to his theme at the beginning