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*Excerptio Abbonis ex Hyginus de figuratione signorum*

English

early 12th century

**text**

ff.105r-113r *Excerptio Abbonis ex Hyginus de figuratione signorum* (**note:** the text is derived from Book III of Hyginus, *De Astronomia*. For a transcription, see the notes below.

ff. 104r-105r: DUO SUNT VERTICES MUNDI QUO APPELLANT POLOS — que ad ipsum usque decurrit accipiens. (*Excerptum de astrologia Arati* ; cf. Maass 1898, pp. 309-12)

ff. 105r- 113r Denique ut dicit Plinius inter omnia— ad octavam partem cancri redit.



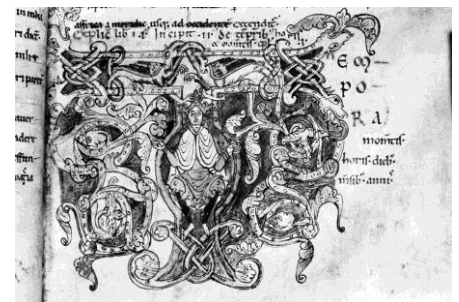
fol. 1r



fol. 14r



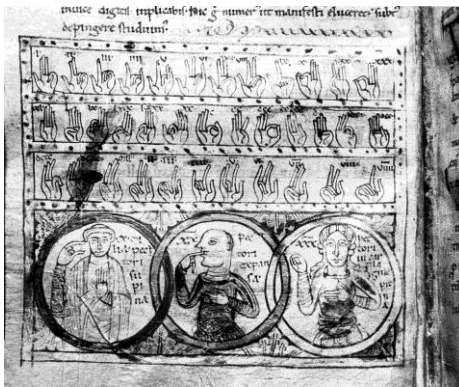
fol. 14v



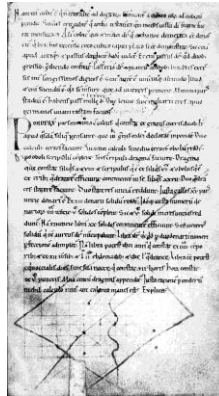
fol. 22r



fol. 32v



fol. 33v



fol. 43r



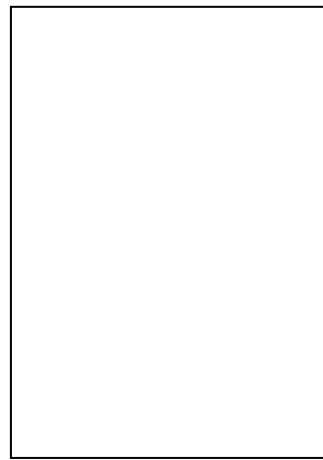
fol. 104r



fol. 105r



fol. 105v



fol. 106r



ff. 106v-107r



ff. 107v-108r



ff. 108v-109r



ff. 109v-110r



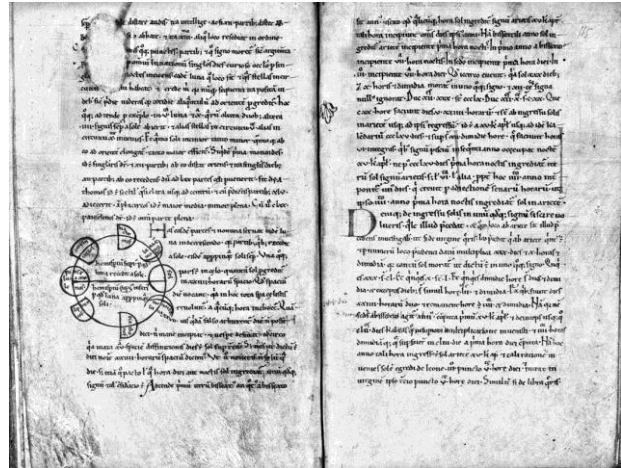
ff. 110v-111r



ff. 111v-112r



fol. 112v



ff. 114v-115r

**illustrations**

- fol. 14r                    A drawing of a 'horologium viator' labelled 'OROLOGIUM' and decorated with a monster's head.
- fol. 33v                    A series of hands making gestures for counting, with three figures at the bottom of the page gesticulating larger numbers.
- fol. 43r                    diagram of the paths of the planets on the ecliptic
- fol. 114v                    phases of the Moon
- ff. 105r-112v            Pen drawings in brown and red-orange of 41 constellations. No stars are marked. Whereas the order of the constellations follows the general sense of Hyginus's text, there are a number of anomalous depictions of constellations and stellar grouping included. For example:
  - SERPENS is depicted twice: once with OPHIUCHUS and once as a separate constellation.
  - LIBRA appears as held by a standing female figure.
  - SCORPIO is depicted twice.
  - AQUARIUS stands on a fish (which is presumably PISCIS AUSTRINUS), but PISCIS AUSTRINUS also appears in its own right at the end of the series of pictures.
  - There are two figures connected to ERIDANUS – a sea monster and the head of a river god.

- LUPUS is depicted not only as an animal (or animals) held by CENTAURUS, but as a separate lion-like creature (panthera).
- There are two depictions of CRATER on the back of HYDRA.
- An image of the PLEIADES is also included.

There is the repeated introduction of open circlets as a decorative feature in many of the figures, but these are decorative embellishments. The placement of a few of these suggests that they may reflect the position of stars in one of the earlier models for these drawings, but they do not seem to represent stars in these drawings.

fol. 105r **DRACO INTER ARCTOS** with **DRACO** as a dog-headed snake with 4 bends in its body. Its body makes an E shape, but the Draco turns his head back into himself and faces to the left. Its mouth is open and it has red-orange hair on top of its head. There is a line of small circlets running down his back. The two Bears are placed back-to-back and face in opposite directions. They both face inwards towards the body of DRACO.

**URSA MINOR** is set within the third bend and **URSA MAIOR** within the fourth, standing on DRACO's tail. Both Bears have prominent claws on their feet and are about the same size.

fol. 105v **BOOTES** strides to the left, facing the viewer and is dressed in a short tunic. His torso appears to be nude (his ribs are visible), but he has lacy cuffs around his upper arms and there is a cloak that falls behind his body, but is not attached to his shoulders. He has red hair and a red beard and has a moustache. He raises his left hand in front of him and holds his a plant with two star shapes vertically behind his back.

**CORONA BOREALIS** is an interlaced circle with the face of a man in the centre.

fol. 106r **HERCULES** walks to the left facing the viewer, but turns his head back to the right. He is nude, and bearded. He holds a straight sword in his upraised right hand in front of him and holds a lion by the scruff of its neck in his upraised left hand. The lion curls up its body like a kitten being held by the neck (with the whole of the lion's face and body visible). There is an isolated circlet with a dot in the middle on his left ankle, which may be a star, but is probably a stylised ankle-bone.

**LYRA** is a square construction like a loom with curved horns at either side and a *fleur-de-lis* at the bottom.

**CYGNUS** is almost completely drawn in red and it walks to the left with its wings close behind its body and its head bent slightly towards its chest.

**CEPHEUS** stands facing the viewer. He is dressed in a short tunic and has a shin-length red mantle over his shoulder. He wears a pointed hat on his head, is bearded and holds his hands to either side so they form a 'W'. His feet are cut off by the bottom of the page.

- fol. 106v **CASSIOPEIA** is seated on a square throne with no back. She wears a pointed red hat and is dressed in a long robe with decorative bands at the neck, waist and hem. Her mantle spills over the edge of the throne. She holds her arms extended to either side with the elbows bent so they form a 'W'. She has long bell-shaped sleeves.
- ANDROMEDA** stands between two tall vines, the tops of which encircle her wrists in delicate knots. She is dressed in a long and highly patterned robe and her head is bare. Her feet are cut off by the bottom of the page.
- fol. 107r **PERSEUS** stands to the left and is dressed in a short tunic with a pronounced waist band and cuffs and short boots. He has red wings sprouting from his head and a beard and moustache. He holds a full male figure by the hair with his right hand. The figure is dressed in a tunic with a patterned top and holding a red shield (?) with his right hand. The figure is also bearded. **PERSEUS** holds a straight sword in his upraised left hand. The foot of the victim rests on the shoulder of **AURIGA** below. He has two circlets with dots in the middle on his left foot and one on his right foot (= stars?).
- AURIGA** faces the viewer and stands slightly to the right, wearing a short tunic and a red mantle. He looks upward towards **PERSEUS** and his victim. He holds a flail with three thongs upraised in his right hand. His left shoulder and hand are covered by his mantle, but on his upper arm (?) there are two standing goats that face the Charioteer. He has a number of open circlets on his upper body: 1 in his right elbow, 1 in his right shoulder, 2 on his left shoulder and 1 in the goats (= stars?).
- OPHIUCHUS** is drawn in red. The page is slightly abraded so it is difficult to determine if he is nude or clothed in tight-fitting tunic and tights. He faces to the right and has the snake encircling his body in a spiral. The **SERPENS** head is on the right and it faces towards the man, with red flames coming out of his mouth. There are open circlets in Ophiuchus: 1 in the head, 1 in each shoulder, 1 in the knee (orientation is difficult to determine) and one in the leading foot. Ophiuchus stands on a **SCORPIO** that faces to the right and has 3 legs on either side and a curved tail.
- fol. 107v **Serpens**<sup>2</sup> is shown wrapped around a tree, similar to the image of the serpent in the Garden of Hesperides usually associated with Hercules. He has circlets running down the length of his body.
- SAGITTA** is depicted as a arrow (marked by 4 circlets = stars ?) that points upwards into the neck of an animal that looks like a wild boar.
- AQUILA** stands to the left and looks over its shoulder to the right. Its wings are outspread to either side. Its body is red and its head is brown. There is an additional head of Aquila added by a later copyist at the bottom of the page.
- fol. 108r **DELPHINUS** is shaped something like a Capricorn except that its front half is a boar, with a pig's snout. Its front legs are those of a horse (not cloven) and its rear half ends in a corkscrew fish's tail. It faces to the left and

seems to have a stiff mantle around its shoulder. There are two circlets on top of its head, 2 by its ears and 4 in its chest (= stars?).

**PEGASUS** is a full horse placed vertically on the page. It is winged and its head faces to the left. It has a lacy band around its middle and opens its mouth. The wings, mane, tongue, tail and belt around its middle are red.

**TRIANGULUM** has its point facing down the page and there is the figure of a caryatid/ hunchback set within the triangle and holding the top bar.

fol. 108v **ARIES** prances to the right, but looks back over its shoulder to the left. It has curled red horns, a red band around its middle and a very long tail (there is a second depiction of the Ram's head by a later hand slightly above it).

**TAURUS** is a full bull facing to the left. He tucks his left foreleg under his body and has a red face.

The **PLEIADES** are set within a lobed hexagonal frame with the four side lobed and the centre containing a female figure with her head covered. The top and bottom lobe have nude women who seem to be expressing milk from their breasts.

fol. 109r The **GEMINI** are two youths dressed in short red tunics with long capes. They stand frontally and hold spears vertically in their outer hands. They hold their inner hands at their waists.

**CANCER** is an almond-shaped crab, facing to the right with very large, human eyes. He has two front claws and 3 long legs on either side. His face is brown, but his body is red.

**LEO** stands to the right and has his mouth open. He raises his left forepaw and his tail and has a very thick mane.

fol. 109v **VIRGO** stands facing the viewer and she has no wings or head covering. She is dressed in a tunic of multiple layers with long, bell-like sleeves. She raises her right hand in salutation and holds a long palm frond in her left hand.

**LIBRA** is a long-haired (female?) figure that stands to the right in a long dress, holding the Scales with her right hand and her left hand is raised in salutation.

**SCORPIO**<sup>2</sup> is a paisley-shaped insect with human eyes and a decorative band around his neck and running down his body. He has two claws and 3 legs on either side. He faces to the right and has a striped, curved tail.

fol. 110r **SAGITTARIUS** is a centaur that stands to the right, His human half is nude, but there is a decorated belt separating the two halves. He holds the bow in his right hand and pulls the string with his left.

**CAPRICORN** faces to the right. He has long curved horn, a full mane and a long beard. He has a series of circlets running down the length of his body and a corkscrew tail that ends in a trefoil.

**AQUARIUS** is nude to the waist, but wears a short skirt around his hips. He stands to the left, and holds the upturned urn in front of him with both hands – his right hand at the base and his left hand on the body. He raises his right foot and seems about to tread on an elaborate plant beneath it. The water pouring from the urn pours into the mouth of a fish (PISCIS AUSTRINUS?).

fol. 110v **PISCES** swim in opposite directions and they both have the backs upwards. They are connected at their mouths by a cord.

**CETUS** is shaped like a Capricorn that faces to the left, but turns its head back to the right. It has lion's feet on its extended front legs and a wing at its shoulder, a beaky face and a corkscrew tail that ends in a trefoil.

**ERIDANUS** is depicted as a lion-faced snake with large triangular fins and a bendy body. It faces to the left and there is a stream of water coming out of its mouth.

fol. 111r **CANOPUS** (labelled: CANOPUS) is a male face with a wide mouth from which a triangular-shaped red and brown stream flows.

**LEPUS** is red and leaps up to the right, placed at a vertical angle.

**ORION** lunges to the right and faces the viewer. He is dressed in a short tunic with a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -length cape that is clasped by a round pin on his right shoulder and is draped so that it covers his entire left arm that is extended in front of him. He holds a sword vertically in his right hand. He has a thick strap running from his left shoulder to his waist and a scabbard stuck in his belt. He seems to have handkerchiefs tied to his ankles.

**CANIS MAIOR** leaps to the left. Its head is surrounded by a red halo with rays inside it. He sticks out a red tongue. There is a second head of Lepus added to the margin in pencil by a later hand.

fol. 111v **CANIS MINOR** is a sleek dog that leaps to the right with teeth exposed and its tail raised. He is completely red, except for his eyes, teeth, hind feet and the insides of his ears.

**ARGO** is depicted as half a ship with a mast around which a flag is decoratively wrapped. There is a complicated building and two shields on the deck and the curved end of the stern has a floreate trefoil on it. There are four oars and the vessel travels in water to the right.

**CENTAURUS** is depicted as a centaur rushing to the right. His human and horse halves are separated by a decorative belt. He holds a spear in his left hand which rests on his left shoulder. A dead dog hangs by its heels from the spear. In his right hand he holds the back legs of **LUPUS** (a dog) so that the animal rises from his hand. Its tongue is sticking out and it is almost as if it is drinking the water underneath **ARGO**. The centaur is

bearded and holds the rear feet of Lupus so close to his mouth that it looks as though he is going to bite it.

fol. 112r **LUPUS**<sup>2</sup> is depicted separately as a lion-like creature that leaps to the left and looks back over his shoulder.

**ARA** is a three storied structure with numerous small windows. The bottom two levels are squarish and the top one is cylindrical. There are a number of sketched of leaves in ink at the bottom of the page.

fol. 112v **HYDRA** is a long, fat snake with 3 large bends in its body, set vertically on the page. It has a dragon's face with long pointed ears, prominent teeth and a beard. There is a line of circlets that run down the length of its body.

**CRATER** is placed upon the level of the first bend and is a two-handled vase, set on a tall foot.

**CORVUS** sits of the second bend, facing forward, with its wings flapping and biting the body of Hydra.

There is a **CRATER**<sup>2</sup> on the final flat section of the Hydra that looks identical to the one placed higher up. There are also two previous attempts at the Hydra's head in the margin.

**PISCIS AUSTRINUS** is a large fish that swims to the left. There is a pencil copy of the head of Piscis in the margin.

### notes

ff. 105r-113r is entitled: *Excerptio Abbonis ex Hyginus de figuracione signorum*.

The manuscript includes Heperic, *Liber de computo* (ff. 1v-12v); *De diebus Egyptiis* (fol. 12v); short excerpts on calculating months and hours with a picture of a horologium (fol. 13r); Bede, *De natura rerum et ratione temporem*, along with a number of ps-Bedan works (ff. 14v-30v); and several computistical and calendrical works.

The drawings in this manuscript are remarkably odd – both iconographically and stylistically. As such, they diverge significantly from to the pictorial traditions found in the other Hyginus manuscripts. The oddities include:

- The way in which DRACO's head turns back upon its body
- The head in the middle of CORONA BOREALIS
- PERSEUS depicted slaying a full-bodied male soldier
- SERPENS without OPHIUCHUS and depicted as the Snake in the Garden of Hesperides usually associated with Hercules
- SAGITTA accompanied by an animal
- DELPHINUS as a 'leo marinis'



- TRIANGULUM with a full figure inside
- Two of the PLEIADES shown as lactating women
- A human figure holding the SCALES
- AQUARIUS standing on a fish
- ERIDANUS as a sea monster
- CANOPUS as a river god
- A separate depiction of LUPUS ('panthera')
- And a second CRATER on HYDRA's back.

notes from website: 39050.htm

The fly-leaf is a portion of a Register of letters for Edward I for 1301. Vellum, ff. 150; 9 ¼ in x 6 in, 11-12th century; drawings of constellations slightly tinted (ff. 105-112v) initials in red and green with large interlaced initials on 1r, 14v, 22r, 30v, 32v, 104r and 120r. fol. 145v has the name 'Ja. Bonin' (14th c) fol. 149v has 'De libris J. de Longolio' (15th century)

astronomical texts also appear in Harley 2506

section on eclipses from Isidore (iii, 58-59)

various extracts from Macrobius

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### **bibliography**

WARNER-GILSON 1921, II, pp. 80-81

VAN de VYVER, 1935, pp. 141 and 45.

VAN de VYVER 1936, pp. 658-91.

JONES 1937, p. 433.

SAXL and WITTKOWER 1948, pp. 8-9.

SAXL-MEIER III 1953, 1, pp. 197-98.

English; 12 century; ff 105r-113r: Excerptio Abbonis ex Hyginus de figuratione signorum

inc: denique ut dicit Plinus inter omnia

expl: ad octavam partem cancri redit

McGURK IV 1966, p. xxvi.

some 11th - and 12th-century English mss, like this one, accompany their Carolingian-derived *Aratea* illustrations with new North European scientific texts, like Abbo of Fleury or Remigius of Auxerre

McGURK 1974, pp. [REDACTED]

JONES [REDACTED], pp. 153, 162 and 165.