

Persius 5.159: When Two *Ets* Are Two Too Many

A concise animal allegory illustrates the difficulty of achieving true freedom (5.157-60):

Nec tu, cum obstiteris semel instantique negaris
 parere imperio, 'rupi iam uincola' dicas;
 nam et luctata canis nodum abripit, et tamen illi,
 cum fugit, a collo trahitur pars longa catenae. 160

159 et tamen *αVXRW* : at tamen *P* : ast tamen *GLN* : tamen *C*

Braund translates the last two lines “Even when a bitch breaks the knot after a struggle, a long section of chain still trails from her neck”. I don’t quite see the “when” in the Latin, and it seems to me that *ut* for the first *et* in 159 would provide better sense at very small cost. Now the first clause means “*even supposing* a bitch breaks the knot after a struggle”: a hypothetical is good here. As the *OLD* notes (*s.v.* 35), this concessive use of *ut* is often matched with *tamen* in the main clause, and that is exactly what we have after the comma. It also requires the subjunctive, so we must alter *abripit* to *abripiat* and then delete the second *et* to save the meter. However, that actually removes another small problem: the variants listed in the apparatus, particularly the unmetrical reading of C, point to interpolation. Once *abripiat* had lost its second *a*, *et* and *at* and *ast* were variously inserted to mend the meter, while C or its ancestor left it unmended.

My final text:

nam ut luctata canis nodum abripiat, tamen illi,
 cum fugit, a collo trahitur pars longa catenae. 160