

CIRIS 118: AN EMENDATION

by

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ABSTRACT: The paper argues that *Ciris* 118 should be restored as “reicere [HEINSIUS: *dicere* HAR: *ducere* ρ: *deicere* VOLLMER] et indomita [ρ: *indomitas* HAR] uirtute retundere Minon [scripsi: *mentes* HARρ]”.

Minos lays siege to Megara, but, trusting in Nisus’ magical lock of purple hair, the Megarians are confident of their own safety (116–118):

sed neque tum ciues neque tum rex ipse ueretur
infesto ad muros uolitantis agmine turmas
deicere et indomitas uirtute retundere mentes.

Although there are some uncertainties up until, and in fact including, 118 *deicere*, LYNE’s text (as printed) is plausible enough¹: the Megarians are not afraid “to repel the squadrons rushing towards the walls in hostile ranks”. The rest of 118, however, seems more problematic. First, *retundere mentes*, “to neutralise the minds (of the Cretans)”, is too vague, especially after the concrete *turmas*, ‘squadrons’, of 117. Second, the adjective *indomitus*, ‘untamed’, ought surely

¹ R.O.A.M. LYNE, *Ciris: A Poem Attributed to Vergil*, Cambridge 1978, p. 74, with commentary on pp. 149 f. My only disagreement is that, for HAR *dicere*, ρ *ducere* at the beginning of 118, we must restore *reicere* rather than *deicere* (*reicere* is HEINSIUS’ conjecture, see C.G. HEYNE, *P. Virgilii Maronis opera*, vol. IV, Lipsiae 1789, p. 114, though it was first published in H. FRIESEMANN, *Collectanea critica*, Amstelodami 1786, p. 9, where it was misattributed to SCHRADER; *deicere* is a conjecture by F. VOLLMER, *Poetae Latini minores*, vol. I, Lipsiae 1910, p. 100), since the latter does not mean ‘to beat off’ (the sense we need), but ‘to cast down’ (cavalry cannot scale walls). The technical military sense ‘to drive out or dislodge (from a position)’ (*OLD* s.v. *deicio* 8a) is likewise inappropriate, since the Cretans are attacking, not holding a position (in particular, *ad muros* should clearly be taken to denote direction, ‘towards/against the walls’, rather than place, ‘at/near the walls’; cf. Verg. *Aen.* XI 906 f.: “sic ambo ad muros rapidi totoque feruntur | agmine”; XII 555: “iret ut ad muros urbique aduerteret agmen”; 575: “densaque ad muros mole feruntur”; 689 f.: “disiecta per agmina Turnus | sic urbis ruit ad muros”; Liv. V 21, 7: “uelut repentino icti furore improvidi currerent ad muros”).

to characterise not the besiegers, but the besieged who refuse to capitulate². In fact, *indomitas* is the reading of only one branch of the tradition, represented by three fifteenth-century manuscripts (HAR), whereas the *editio princeps* (ρ), which forms an independent branch, reads *indomita*. It seems clear that LYNE prints *indomitas* only because the bare *mentes* is virtually unintelligible; on its own, however, *indomita uirtute retundere*, “to rebut (the attackers) with untamed bravery”, is patently far superior in sense. We are therefore justified in suspecting *mentes*.

What can it be concealing? One option is to change *mentes* to *mentis*³ and to connect *retundere* with the same direct object as *deicere* (or rather *reicere*: see n. 1), namely *turmas*: the Megarians are not afraid “to repel and neutralise the hostile squadrons with untamed courage of mind” (*indomitae* would I think be preferable: “with the bravery of their unsubdued spirit”). At first glance, this might seem an attractive solution, as it produces meaningful Latin with minimal changes. Yet, on closer inspection, we cannot but see that the resulting text says too little with too many words. For one thing, *reicere turmas* is a perfectly self-sufficient expression, and the metaphorical *retundere* adds nothing to the concrete *reicere*. For another, there is no reason to say *indomita uirtute mentis* or *uirtute indomitae mentis*, where a mere *indomita uirtute* would be quite enough. It seems clear that what we need in place of *mentes* is rather a separate direct object for *retundere*, referring to the besiegers⁴.

The earliest proposal along these lines is HEINSIUS’ *Martem*⁵. A bare *Martem*, however, is patently too vague: since *retundere* implies resistance against an attack, *Martem* should refer not to the fighting between the Cretans and the Megarians in general, but specifically to the Cretans’ aggression; in order to

² 117 *infesto* ... *agmine* does not support taking *indomita(s)* with *mentes* (or whatever it conceals), since *indomitus* does not parallel, but rather mirrors, *infestus*, as it denotes a passive as opposed to an active quality: while the latter is appropriate in reference to the attacker (‘hostile, aggressive’), the former makes far better sense in reference to the attacked (‘unconquered, unsubdued’). When *indomitus* is used of the aggressor (e.g. Stat. *Theb.* IV 672: “*indomitae bellum ciet ira nouercae*”), it does not refer to his determination or valour or fierceness, but specifies his psychologically unbalanced state (cf. OLD s.v. 3: “(of persons) That is not (or cannot be) held in control, unrestrained, violent, unbridled”): this would hardly be appropriate here in reference to the Cretans.

³ The form *mentis* appears in some earlier editions (N. HEINSIUS, *P. Virgilii Maronis opera*, Amstelodami 1676, p. 369 is the earliest I could find), but apparently it is taken as an accusative plural. As far as I can see, HEYNE, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 114 was the first to construe *mentis* as a genitive singular.

⁴ For the sake of completeness, I mention the proposal by J. MÄHLY, [Review of O. RIBBECK, *Appendix Vergiliana*, Leipzig 1868,] *Heidelberger Jahrbücher der Literatur* LXIII 1870, pp. 769–796 and 801–839, at p. 807 to read *mens est*, ‘their plan is’, taking both *reicere* and *retundere* as dependent on it and governing *turmas*: “they plan with untamed bravery to repel and neutralise the hostile squadrons”. While this proposal avoids the fairly pointless *mentis*, it still makes *reicere* and *retundere* go together in a rather redundant way, as well as introducing a somewhat harsh asyndeton after 116.

⁵ First in FRIESEMAN, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 9, erroneously ascribed to SCHRADER; but see HEYNE, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 114.

do so, however, it must be qualified by an epithet that would bring this out⁶. BAEHRENS felt this and proposed *indomitum*, comparing it with 117 *infesto ... agmine* (used of the Cretan cavalry) and, I assume, intending the line to mean something like “courageously to quell (the Cretans’) unrestrained aggression”⁷. In support of his conjecture, BAEHRENS adduced Verg. *Aen.* II 440 f.: “sic Martem indomitum Danaosque ad tecta ruentis | cernimus”, which he apparently took as a sort of hendiadys: “we see the Greeks rushing to the palace in their unbridled bellicosity”. Yet this is wrong: *Martem indomitum* refers back to 338 *ingentem pugnam*⁸, and accordingly must cover both sides of the battle: “we see violent fighting, as the Greeks rush to the palace”. A further objection is that the expression *indomitum retundere* is somewhat self-contradictory: if *Martem* (in whatever way we take it) is ‘untamed’ and, by implication, ‘indomitable’, how can it be restrained? Finally, as already pointed out, it makes far better sense to refer *indomitus* to the Megarians than to the Cretans⁹.

Another option is HEINRICH’s *gentes*¹⁰. But *gentes*, ‘nations’, whether with or without *indomitas*, can hardly refer to the Cretan army since the word is not used of troops.

I suggest that we should restore *Minon*: “to rebut Minos with unsubdued courage”. For *retundere* with an animate object, we may compare Cic. *Att.* XVI 15, 3 *retundit Antonium* and Tac. *Ann.* V 11 *rettudit collegam*. This will produce a more balanced text: just as 116 mentions both the Megarians (*ciues*) and their king (*rex*), so 117 f. would first refer to the Cretan army (*turmas*) and then to its leader (*Minon*). If my suggestion is right, there may be a pointed echo here of Call. *Aet.* fr. 4 καὶ νῆσων ἐπέτεινε βαρὺν ζυγὸν αὐχένι Μίνως, “and Minos stretched his heavy yoke over the islands’ neck”¹¹: Minos has already subdued the islands of the Aegean (note 111 *populator remige Minos*, alluding to Minos’ thalassocracy), but Megara succeeds, at least for the time being, in resisting his yoke (*indomita uirtute*). It is true that the accusative *Minon* is not securely attested elsewhere in Latin (the attested forms are *Minoa* or *Minoem*), but BUECHELER is probably right to restore it at 132 for the transmitted *si non*, rather than ac-

⁶ Cf. e.g. Enn. *Ann.* 14 Sk.: “occubuit Priamus sub Marte Pelasgo”; Hor. *Carm.* III 5, 23 f. “arua | Marte [...] populata nostro”; [Tib.] III 7, 149: “inuictus Romano Marte Britannus”.

⁷ A. [E.] BAEHRENS, *Emendationes in Cirin*, Neue Jahrbücher für Philologie und Paedagogik CV 1872, pp. 833–849, at p. 837.

⁸ Cf. N. HORSEFALL, *Virgil, Aeneid 2: A Commentary*, Leiden 2008, p. 340.

⁹ See n. 2 above, where I observe that, when characterising the attacker, *indomitus* does not mean ‘irresistible, unstoppable, unbeatable’, but ‘violent, passionate, frenzied’, which would be unmotivated in reference to the Cretans.

¹⁰ C.F. HEINRICH, *Animaduersiones in Virgilii Cirin*, Bibliothek der alten Litteratur und Kunst X 1794, pp. 44–48, at p. 46. W. LUPPE, *Textvorschläge zur pseudo-vergilianischen ‘Ciris’*, Philologus CLII 2008, pp. 161–165, at p. 162 repeated the suggestion.

¹¹ Translation by A. HARDER, *Callimachus, Aetia*, Oxford 2012, vol. I, p. 135.

cepting LACHMANN's *Minoa*; and if the *Ciris* did read *Minon* at 132, BUECHELER is probably right to also restore it at 367 for *Minoa*¹². The corruption may be due to misreading *mīō* (*Minon*) as *mītē* (*mentem*), which would be very easy, especially as the scribe seems to have been unfamiliar with the form *Minon*¹³. It is telling that H, which is known for its conservatism, actually uses this abbreviation here (*mītef*, cf. 162 and 327 *mīte* for *mente*). In a similar way, at 169 HA's *sic oīa* (= *sic omnia*) for *Sicyonia* (restored by FANENSIS) points to *sicioīa* in an ancestor¹⁴.

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¹² F. BUECHELER, *Coniectanea*, RhM LVII 1902, pp. 321–327, at pp. 321 f. For a more detailed argument for accepting the form *Minon* as a possible Latin accusative, see B. KAYACHEV, *Narrative Focalization and the Historical Present in Catullus 64*, CQ LXVII 2017, pp. 522–527, at pp. 526 f., where I also argue that *Minon* should be restored in Catull. 64, 85: “magnanimum ad Minoa uenit sedesque superbas”.

¹³ It might perhaps be doubted whether the scribe would use the abbreviation twice in such a short and unfamiliar word, but H features comparable (if less striking) examples: 76 *pōtū* (*pontum*), 227 *mōtē* (*mortem*), 294 *gē9* (*genus*). Alternatively, we could assume that it was written as *mīon*: the scribe will have misread it as *mīten* and then adjusted the ending.

¹⁴ This paper was produced during the term of a Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowship funded by the Irish Research Council (project ID: GOIPD/2016/ 549).