

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* HAR]”.

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. FRIESEMAN, *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 aduereret 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 improuidi current ad muros”).