

A Note on *Ciris* 47

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Abstract: This note contains a suggestion to the text of the *Ciris*. The author proposes a new way of completing the lacuna in line 47 and discusses other possible issues in this verse.

Keywords: *Ciris*; textual criticism; conjecture.

accipe dona meo multum uigilata labore
promissa atque diu iam tandem 47
impia prodigiis ut quondam exterrita tantis
Scylla novos avium sublimis in aere coetus
auxerit [...]

Accept this gift wrought by me with many a toilsome vigil and take now at last the long promised... It is the story of how, once upon a time, impious Scylla, terrified by love's portents, soaring in the air, increased the ranks of new birds [...].²

47 promissa ... tandem Z et promissa tuis non magna ρ (pagina dicat) Lyne: (carmina narrent) Sudhaus: (hoc accipe carmen) Helm: (exordia sume) Vollmer: (carmina sume) Kayachev 50 auxerit Leopardus: uiderit codd.

In this passage, the author of the *Ciris* addresses his dedicatee, Messalla, and asks him to accept a gift which required great effort to produce. It is clear that this gift is the poem, from which readers deduce how the wicked Scylla, “soaring in the air (*sublimis*), increased the ranks (*auxerit*)³ of new [i.e. formed as a result of a metamorphosis] birds” etc. Line 47 contains a lacuna which scholars fill in various ways; some of them add a noun (defined by *promissa*) and a verb governing the subordinate clause *ut* [...] *auxerit/uiderit* (*carmina narrent* – Sudhaus; *pagina dicat* – Lyne); others maintain that the imperative of a verb (meaning “accept” or sim.) is needed here and they suggest, e.g., *exordia sume* (Vollmer), *hoc accipe carmen* (Helm) or *carmina sume* (Kayachev).⁴ Both solutions are apt, though I agree with the supposition that in view of *accipe* in line 46 an imperative is also needed here.⁵ Following this path, I would like to suggest another supplement using an imperative form that is found elsewhere in the poem:

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² Transl. by Fairclough (2000, 447), with modifications.

³ I follow Iodice (2002, 250) in accepting Leopardus' conjecture: *auxerit* instead of *uiderit*. Since the text mentions *prodigia* and then birds in the sky, the scribe probably assumed Scylla *saw* bad omens, thereby inserting *uiderit*.

⁴ Leo's conjecture – *reddita uota* – goes in another direction: the poet finally (*iam tandem*) fulfills the vows that he has been promising for a long time.

⁵ Kayachev 2020, 92.

promissa atque diu iam tandem ⟨carmina habeto⟩
and have now at last the long promised poem⁶

The poet makes use of *habeto* at 267, where he quotes Virgil, *Eclogues* 8.60: *extremum hoc munus morientis habeto* (“take this as my last dying gift”). It is true that the context is different, but the author of the *Ciris* tends to repeat the same words and expressions “nonsignificantly, even annoyingly”, as noted by Lyne.⁸

There are, however, two potential problems we are faced with if the suggested form of the verse is to be accepted. The first is the presence of unelided *atque* which is generally avoided in Latin poetry as we learn from a detailed study of Butterfield.⁹ The only conjecture which makes away with *atque* is Kayachev’s tentative *promissumque*. One could imagine thus: *promissumque diu iam tandem ⟨carmen habeto⟩* (and have now at last the long promised poem);¹⁰ I believe, however, that there are sufficient reasons for which *atque* should not be removed from the text. Apart from the fact that this reading is supported by both Z and ρ, it has parallels in the *Ciris* itself: in the apostrophe to the Muses (100): *praecipue nostro nunc aspirate labori / atque nouom aeterno praetexite honore uolumen* (“now breathe a special grace upon this toil, and crown this new scroll with glory immortal”)¹¹ and in Scylla’s words addressed to Minos (445): *mene alias inter famularum munere fungi / coniugis atque tuae [...] beatae / non licuit grauidos penso deuoluere fusos?* (“Might I not amid mothers and mitred granddames have discharged the function of a slave, and for your blessed wife [...] have unrolled the spindles, weighted with their coils?”).¹² The latter parallel is particularly noteworthy because both in line 445 and at 47 preconsonantal *atque* is located in the same position (in the second foot), before an iambic word (*atque tuae*, *atque diu*), preserving the masculine caesura of the third foot.¹³ Parallels to this practice can be found in Lucretius (where all the occurrences of unelided *atque* in the second foot precede iambic words and produce an identical caesura)¹⁴ and in Virgil’s *Aeneid* (where fourteen of the thirty four occurrences of *atque* before an initial consonant are located precisely in the second foot, before an iambic word).¹⁵ It has also been observed that in the *Aeneid* unelided *atque* has

⁶ Translation mine.

⁷ Transl. by Fairclough (2000, 79).

⁸ Lyne (ed.) 1978, 30.

⁹ Butterfield 2008.

¹⁰ Translation mine.

¹¹ Transl. by Fairclough (2000, 451).

¹² Transl. by Fairclough (2000, 477).

¹³ It is also worth noting that in both these places *atque* is an inverted particle; cf. Haupt 1875, 120–121.

¹⁴ Cf. Butterfield 2008, 391–392.

¹⁵ Cf. Butterfield 2008, 393.

an archaising and/or a solemn tone.¹⁶ A similar observation has been made regarding the use of *atque* in Catullus: as Jocelyn pointed out, “The use of *atque* before an initial consonant raised the tone”.¹⁷ Such tone is certainly not out of place in the *Ciris* poem.

The second possible objection may concern the suggested *habeto*. Frequent use of this form by Plautus might lead to the conclusion that it has a colloquial colouring. However, the survey of the instances of *habeto* in Augustan poetry does not confirm the supposition. It is sufficient to quote Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 12.80: *quisquis es, o iuuenis [...] solamen habeto / mortis, ab Haemonio quod sis iugulatus Achille!* (“Whoever you are, O youth, have it for solace of your death that you were slain by Achilles of Thessaly”),¹⁸ where Achilles’ words to Cygnus have an evidently solemn tone, or Ovid, *Fasti* 5.259: *habeto / tu quoque Romulea [...] in urbe locum* (“Do thou also have a place in the city of Romulus”)¹⁹ where Mars’ address to Flora is by no means colloquial.

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¹⁶ Butterfield 2008, 393–394.

¹⁷ Jocelyn 1999, 372.

¹⁸ Transl. by F. J. Miller (1916, 187).

¹⁹ Transl. by J. G. Frazer (1931, 279).

