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Ciris 218: An Emendation

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Late at night Scylla goes to her father's chamber to cut off his magical lock of purple hair, but pauses in the forecourt (217–218):

uestibulo in thalami paulum remoratur et alte
suspicit ad †caeli nutantia† sidera mundi.

217 alte *Hertzberg* : alti *HAR* : altum ρ

218 nutantia *Aρ* : mutantia *HR*

She lingers in the chamber's forecourt for a little while
and looks high up at the *** stars of the *** sky.

There are two problems with 218. First, many editors are unhappy with *nutantia* and replace it with Scaliger's *nictantia*.¹ Second, either *caeli* or *mundi* must be redundant, and 7 *altius ad magni suspexit sidera mundi* ('[my mind] has looked high up at the stars of the great sky') protects *mundi*;² of the large number of corrections proposed for *caeli*, the following may be mentioned: *celsi* (Scaliger),³ *clari* (Goodyear),⁴ *magni* (Courtney),⁵ *nitidi* (Lyne).⁶

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¹ I. SCALIGER, *Publii Virgilio Maronis Appendix*, Lyon, 1572, 322.

² Cf. R.O.A.M. LYNE, *Ciris: A Poem Attributed to Vergil*, Cambridge, 1978, 190.

³ SCALIGER (n. 1), 322.

⁴ F.R.D. GOODYEAR, "Ciris", in W.V. Clausen et al., *Appendix Vergiliana*, Oxford, 1966, 97–125, at 110.

⁵ E. COURTNEY, "A new text of the *Appendix*", *CR* 17, 1967, 42–6, at 45.

⁶ LYNE (n. 2), 190.

I think *nutantia* is right: it refers to the stars' downward motion towards the horizon in the eastern half of the visible hemisphere.⁷ Choosing a suitable epithet for *mundi* is more difficult. Scaliger's *celsi* may seem attractive because of its closeness to the paradosis, but it is somewhat superfluous after 217 *alte*, and *celsus* is not normally paired with either *mundus* or *caelum*. Goodyear's *clari* is likewise reasonably close to the paradosis, and finds a parallel in Sen. *Phaedr.* 1144 *hic qui clari sidera mundi*; but I doubt that it is contextually appropriate: in a context speaking of the slow motion of the stars the emphasis on the sky's brightness would not be particularly pointed.⁸ The same objection applies to Lyne's proposal (which also departs from the paradosis).⁹ Courtney may well be right: "it is pointless to attempt to restore a palaeographically plausible adjective for *caeli*, as that word is probably not a corruption but a gloss on *mundi* [...] and may well have replaced something as remote as *magni*, which is suggested by 7".¹⁰ Yet adopting Courtney's *magni* may make 7 and 218 a bit *too* similar to each other; and if we should find an apposite epithet that would also happen to be plausible palaeographically, this can hardly be considered a drawback.

I propose *taciti*, suggested to me by Verg. *Aen.* 3.514–15 *explorat uentos atque auribus aera captat; | sidera cuncta notat tacito labentia caelo* ("he inspects the winds and checks the air with his ears, he considers all the constellations as they glide across the quiet sky").¹¹ It seems likely that Virgil's *auribus aera captat* is intertextually related to *Ciris* 210–11 *auribus arrectis nocturna silentia temptat | et pressis tenuem singultibus aera captat* ("with ears upright, she checks the night's

⁷ OLD s.v. *nuto* 2a: "To incline from the vertical, sink, nod". Note e.g. Verg. *Aen.* 2.9 and 4.81 *cadentia sidera*; contrast 6.850 *surgentia sidera*. Cf. M. LENCHANTIN DE GUBERNATIS, *P. Vergili Maronis Ciris*, Turin, 1930, 51: "*nutantia* 'oscillanti, declinanti' [...] È verosimile che Scilla abbia scelto per operare le prime ore del mattino, quando gli astri volgono all'ocaso". See further B. KAYACHEV, *Allusion and Allegory: Studies in the Ciris*, Berlin, 2016, 95–6. The reason why many scholars found trouble with *nutantia* is apparently that they misunderstood it, note e.g. R. ELLIS, "New suggestions on the *Ciris*", *AJPh* 15, 1894, 469–94, at 479: "*nutantia* would refer to the wavering, unsteady look of the stars, 'bickering'".

⁸ In Seneca the emphasis on the sky's brightness is by contrast highly appropriate, since the context speaks of Theseus seeing the sky again on his return from the underworld.

⁹ Contrast LYNE (n. 2), 190: "the *brightness* of the sky (i.e. of the stars which Scylla is looking at) is here an important notion" (but this is because he accepts Scaliger's *nictantia*).

¹⁰ COURTNEY (n. 5), 45.

¹¹ For pairing *tacitus* with *mundus*, cf. Val. Fl. 3.418 *et circum tacito uolitant somnia mundo*.

silence and, with suppressed sobbing, gulps after thin air”), only a few lines before our passage.¹² If so, *Aen.* 3.515 may be related to *Ciris* 218; the two lines certainly express more or less the same idea in similar terms. Is *caeli* a plausible error for *taciti*? The corruption will have involved *tac-* being misread as *cae-* and *-it-* as *-li*, which is very easy in a minuscule script. This would have left a spare *-i*, which of course might simply have disappeared. But I suspect that it survives in HR’s *mutantia* (< *inutantia*), which is as likely as Aρ’s *nutantia* to be the reading of the archetype.¹³

¹² Note that the exact collocation *aera captat* is not attested elsewhere; though cf. *aera captant* at *Luc.* 4.329.

¹³ In other words, the corruption apparently involved misdividing *tacitinutantia* as *tacit inutantia* while misreading *tacit* as *caeli* and *inutantia* as *mutantia*.