

**Zeitschrift:** Museum Helveticum : schweizerische Zeitschrift für klassische Altertumswissenschaft = Revue suisse pour l'étude de l'antiquité classique = Rivista svizzera di filologia classica

**Herausgeber:** Schweizerische Vereinigung für Altertumswissenschaft

**Band:** 75 (2018)

**Heft:** 1

  

**Artikel:** Ciris 68 : an emendation

**Autor:** Kayachev, Boris

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-780962>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 20.08.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## ***Ciris* 68: an emendation**

*Boris Kayachev, Dublin*

*Abstract:* At *Ciris* 68 a reference is made to Scylla's appearance in the *Odyssey*, *hoc in carmine toto*; it is suggested that *toto* is corrupt and should be emended to *ficto*.

At 66–88 the *Ciris* recounts several alternative versions of the origin of the Homeric Scylla. Line 66 states that according to Homer Scylla's mother was Crataeis. Line 67, badly corrupt, names as Scylla's mother a different goddess or monster, whose identity cannot be established with certainty. Then the poem mentions a third version, namely that Scylla was not a real creature at all, but an allegorical image of lust (68–69):

*siue est neutra parens atque hoc in carmine toto  
inguinis est uitium et ueneris descripta libido.*

Or whether neither is her mother, and this whole poem  
tells of the weakness of the groin and venereal lust.

We may start with Lyne's comment: "I take *hoc in carmine toto* to refer to the *Odyssey* (*hoc* picks up the allusion in 58ff.). But the universality is odd. Does the poet actually mean that the *whole* poem was interpreted as an allegory of lust?"<sup>1</sup> This seems unlikely. To begin with, it is difficult to imagine such an interpretation. Comprehensive moral allegorical readings of the *Odyssey* did exist in antiquity, but they usually were centred on the figure of Odysseus as the model of prudence, triumphing over a variety of temptations (not just sexual).<sup>2</sup> More to the point, it is specifically Scylla who is at issue in the present context. Even though a prominent character, she only makes an episodic appearance in the *Odyssey*; it would be excessive to reduce the whole poem to a very specific kind of allegory, only to suggest that Scylla was an invention. Finally, the allegorical meaning exposed by the narrator matches too well the figure of Scylla<sup>3</sup> (note also

\* This note was written during a stay at the Hardt Foundation in April 2016, made possible by the Foundation's research scholarship; I should like to express my gratitude for the Foundation's generosity and hospitality.

1 R.O.A.M. Lyne, *Ciris: A Poem Attributed to Vergil* (Cambridge 1978) 131. Lyne appears to be the only scholar who found *toto* problematic.

2 See e.g. J. Stern, "Heraclitus the Paradoxographer: Περὶ Ἀπίστων, *On Unbelievable Tales*", *TAPhA* 133 (2003) 51–97, at 68. Another approach viewed Penelope as an allegorical image of philosophy; see W.E. Helleman, "Penelope as Lady Philosophy", *Phoenix* 49 (1995) 283–302.

3 Cf. Fulg. *Myth.* 2.9 *Scylla enim Graece quasi αἰσχὺνη dicta est, quod nos Latine 'confusio' dicimus; et quid confusio nisi libido est?* (On reading αἰσχὺνη, see F. Jacobs, "Fabii Planciadis Fulgentii Mythologiarum libri", *Beiträge zur ältern Litteratur* 2, 1837, 416–429, at 421). Cf. also Heraclit. 70.11 Σκόλλαν δὲ τὴν πολύμορφον ἀναΐδειαν ἡλληγόρησε.

that *inguinis* at 69 evokes 59 *candida succinctam latrantibus inguina monstribus*, “girt with barking monsters around her white groin”). The point clearly can only be that Homer invented Scylla as an image of lust; *toto* is out of place here.

What can it be concealing? *Noto* is an obvious option, but saying that the *Odyssey* is well known feels redundant after the explicit reference to *Maeoniae* ... *chartae* at 62. It would also be preferable if the correction contributed to the meaning of the context, perhaps by justifying or explaining the claim that Scylla is merely an allegory. An attractive possibility might be *tecte*, “[i]n a concealed or disguised manner, covertly, secretly” (*OLD* s.v.), implying that lust is the hidden meaning, ὑπόνοια, behind the figure of Scylla.<sup>4</sup> Yet the adverb is quite rare, and in poetry only the comparative form occurs.<sup>5</sup> *Ficto* may therefore be a better solution, especially in view of *Georgics* 2.45–6 *non hic te carmine ficto | atque per ambages et longa exorsa tenebo*, “here I shall not detain you with a fictional poem, with digressions and long proems”. Virgil is claiming that the *Georgics* is a straightforward exposition of factual information.<sup>6</sup> In the *Ciris* the point would be precisely the reverse: the *Odyssey* is not an objective account of Odysseus’ voyage, but a fictional narrative whose true meaning lies beneath the surface.

Correspondence:

Boris Kayachev

Department of Classics

Trinity College

IE-Dublin 2

boriskayachev@gmail.com

4 For the metaphor of concealing in reference to allegorical discourse, cf. e.g. Men. Rh. (ed. L. Spengel, *Rhet.* iii.338.26), speaking of a φυσιολογία (physical doctrine) ἐγκεκρυμμένη καθ’ ὑπόνοιαν.

5 And only two times: Ov. *Ars* 1.276 *uir male dissimulat: tectius illa cupit*; [Tib.] 3.11.17 *optat idem iuuenis quod nos, sed tectius optat*. It may be worth pointing out, however, that *tecte* can be used of speaking indirectly (Cic. *Fam.* 9.22.2 *quod tu in epistula appellas suo nomine ille tectius ‘penem’*).

6 Virgil’s claim can, of course, hardly be taken at face value; as R.F. Thomas, *Virgil: Georgics*, vol. 1 (Cambridge 1988) 164–165 comments, “this book [*Georgics* 2] contains three passages which have been characterized by critics as ‘digressions’, and there is only one other book in V[irgil]’s corpus (*Georgics* 3) which is still involved in its prelude as late as line 46”. Cf. further C. Nappa, *Reading after Accium: Vergil’s Georgics, Octavian, and Rome* (Ann Arbor 2005) 76.