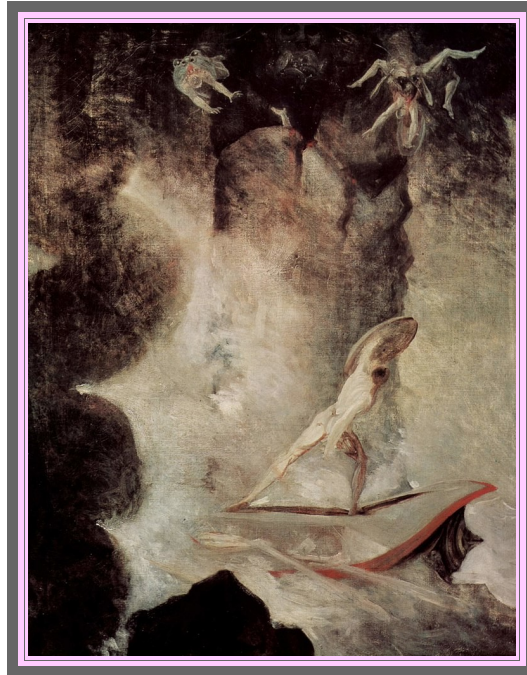


Virgil Extracts 13¹



*praecipitis metus acer agit quocumque rudentis
excutere et ventis intendere vela secundis.
contra iussa monent Heleni, Scyllamque Charybdi
inter, utrimque viam leti discrimine parvo,
ni teneam cursus: certum est dare lintea retro.
ecce autem Boreas angusta ab sede Pelori
missus adest: vivo praetervehor ostia saxo
Pantagiae Megarosque sinus Thapsumque iacentem.
taliam monstrabat relegens errata retrorsus
litora Achaemenides, comes infelicis Ulixi.*

¹ Illustration: Henry Fuseli's painting of Odysseus facing the choice between Scylla and Charybdis, 1794/6

The last of your set lines from Virgil in today's lesson.

praecipitis metus acer agit

metus is the subject. *Praecipitis* "headlong"

quocumque rudentis excutere

excutere "to cast off" *rudens* "rope" *quocumque* "for (i.e. "towards") any quarter/place"

et ventis intendere vela secundis.

Intendere "to direct" *secundis* "favourable" goes with *ventis*.

Translate and compare.

Bitter fear drives [us] to cast off the ropes headlong towards any place and to direct the sails to a favourable wind. (i.e. whatever wind was blowing, never mind where it was taking them.)

Next we have what my old commentary crustily describes as being “among the most difficult and unsatisfactory lines in Virgil.”

*contra iussa **monent** Heleni, Scyllamque Charybdinque inter,*

iussa “orders” (subject)

utrimque viam leti discrimine parvo,

utrimque viam says the old commentary is “literally 'each of the two courses,' ... a Virgilian variation for 'a course on either hand'” *letum* “destruction” *leti* is genitive so “of destruction” *discrimine* is ablative of *discrimen* “risk” .

ni teneam cursus:

ni “not” *teneam* “hold” *cursus* “course”

After trying to sort it all out the old commentator gives up and resorts to imperiously instructing the student: “Translate: ' On the other hand the bidding of H. warns them not to hold their course between S. and Ch. , a passage on either side but a hand-breadth (or hair's-breadth) from death.'” this seems like good advice to me so we will move on to the end of the sentence:

certum est dare lintea retro.

Certum est “decided” *dare lintea* literally “to give linen” i.e. “to sail” *retro* “backwards” “back”.

Translate and compare.



On the other hand the bidding of Helenus warns them not to hold their course between Scylla and Charybdis, a passage on either side but a hand-breadth (or hair's-breadth) from death. [We] decide to sail back.

“...the general meaning will be as follows. From fear of the Cyclopes they are ready to go wherever the wind will take them. But as the wind is southerly this would be towards Scylla and Charybdis, and they remember Helenus' warnings. Unable therefore to put into shore for fear of the Cyclopes, or to sail with the wind for fear of Scylla and Charybdis, they decide to sail back the way they have come. i.e. towards the north-east.”

We have already encountered the seer Helenus (See Year 2Term 2Week 6 Day 2) son of King Priam of Troy and twin brother of the prophetess Cassandra. Aeneas meets him at Buthrotum in the lines omitted from the extract you have to study (See Year 2Term 2Week 6 Day 2) where he finds he has become king of a Greek city. Helenus prophesied Aeneas' founding of Rome at this meeting and issues the warning mentioned in these lines. Scylla and Charybdis were mythical sea monsters noted by Homer who recounts Ulysses passage between them (see the illustration above). Greek mythology sited them on opposite sides of the Strait of Messina, between Sicily and Calabria on the Italian mainland. Scylla was as a rock (described as a six-headed sea monster) on the Calabrian side of the strait and Charybdis was a whirlpool off the coast of Sicily. Ulysses was advised to keep closer to Scylla which would entail the loss of only a few of his men to the monster whereas going near Charybdis would result in the loss of the whole ship. Helenus advice is to go near neither danger. Accordingly Aeneas and his men set off back in the direction they came from but...

ecce autem Boreas angusta ab sede Pelori missus adest:

Boreas “the North wind” *angustus* “steep” *sedes* “home” (all the proper names here except Thapsus are in the genitive case)

vivo praetervehor ostia saxo Pantagiae

(Remember that Aeneas is the narrator of the whole passage) *praetervehi* “to sail by” *vivo ostia saxo* “living stone entrance” “entrance of natural rock”

Megarosque sinus Thapsumque iacentem.

Sinus “bay” *iacentem* “low-lying”

Translate and compare.

Behold however, the north wind sent from the narrow home of Pelorus arrives. I sail by the natural stone entrance of Pantagias and the Bay of Megara and low-lying Thapsus.

Pantagias is the River Cassibile which flows in a rock canyon pictured on the right. Megara is difficult to identify. Thapsus is now called Magnisi and can be found on a map. It is a low peninsula or causeway.



And now the final two lines:

talia monstrabat relegens errata retrorsus

Achaemenides is the subject and *comes infelicis Ulixi* describes him. *Talia litora* is the object. *relegens errata retrorsus* gives more information about the subject. Literally “rereading his wanderings backwards” that is he was pointing out the parts of the shore line which he had wandered along during his sojourn on the island.

litora Achaemenides, comes infelicis Ulixi.

Translate and compare.

Achaemenides, companion of unhappy Ulysses, showed [me] such these shores where he had wandered.

Where have you read *comes infelicis Ulixi* before? See line 613. It is how Achaemenides identifies himself when Anchises encourages him to speak without fear.

And that's it! We will look at the literary and poetic devices that Virgil uses in more detail and also the topic of **scansion** in some future lessons and then you should be able to tackle any question that comes up on the Virgil part of the paper.

Make sure that your flashcards are up to date and keep practising them. You can use the flash cards I have put up here: <https://quizlet.com/gb/617807965/aeneid-cambridge-international-igcse-2023-25-flash-cards/> if you do not want to make your own.