

VIRGIL, *AENEID* 5.279

In *A.* 5. 273 ff. Virgil compares Sergestus' crippled ship to a wounded snake. With part of itself it is still defiant, but

278 pars vulnere clauda retentat  
nexantem nodis seque in sua membra plicantem

Of the capital manuscripts R and V have *nexantem*, M and P *nixantem*. The good minuscules favour *nexantem* on the whole, though Paris lat. 7906 has *nixantem*.<sup>1</sup> *nexantem* is found in the Latin grammarians (Keil ii. 469 and 538 (Priscian), v. 485 (Eutyches)), who quote the line because it contains this verb in its first conjugation form. Editors vary, and recently R. D. Williams, in his commentary on *A.* 5 (Oxford, 1960), has preferred *nixantem*. So it seems worth restating the case for *nexantem*, especially as its defenders have not used all the arguments open to them.

The manuscript evidence is divided, and, moreover, *e* and *i* are easily confused in rustic capitals (Ribbeck, *Prolegomena*, pp. 243 f., L. Havet, *Manuel de critique verbale* §§ 590 ff.); compare the variation at *A.* 1. 448, where *nexae* has nearly all the support, although *nixae*, which was known to Servius *auctus*, is clearly an ancient variant. So we cannot look to the manuscripts for help in deciding between the two readings.

It has been argued against *nexantem* that it lacks an object; e.g. Conington took *nexantem nodis* as 'a Virgilian variety for *nexantem nodos* or *nexantem se in nodos*, *nexantem* being used intransitively, like other transitive words in Virgil'. But we may take *se* as the object of both *plicantem* and *nexantem*, by the idiom discussed by Leo in *Ausg. kl. Schr.* i. 71 ff., in which a word common to two clauses is placed in the second only. For an object ἀπό κοινοῦ see *ibid.*, pp. 98–101, and add *Sil. Ital.* 5. 5 f.<sup>2</sup>

With this alleged grammatical difficulty removed, we may consider the two readings on their merits. *nexantem (se) nodis* 'entangling itself in knots' gives a sense simpler and better pictorially than *nixantem nodis* 'struggling by means of its coils'. And while the expression *nixantem nodis* causes doubt, *nexantem (se) nodis* is an easy and common construction.

James Henry (ad loc.) supported *nexantem* because 'there is no example of the application of *nixans* to a serpent, while the application not indeed of *nexans* itself, but of the near relation of *nexans*, *nexus*, is quite usual', quoting Ovid, *Met.* 15. 659 f. and 3. 41 f. He might have mentioned Virgil himself (*G.* 3. 423 f.) 'cum medii *nexus* extremaeque agmina caudae / solvuntur'. Virgil describes a wounded snake writhing also in *A.* 11. 753 'saucius at serpens sinuosa volumina versat', though he does not here use a word from the stem *nex-*.

Apart from our line, *nexo* occurs only in Livius Andronicus, frag. 22 Morel (see below), and Accius, frag. 130 Ribbeck, *Trag. Rom. Frag.*<sup>3</sup>. Williams appears to think its rarity counts against it, but Virgil does use some rare

<sup>1</sup> I owe information about the manuscripts and help in other ways to Professor Sir Roger Mynors, and I am grateful to Professor W. S.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Culex* 170 f., with W. V. Clausen's note in the Oxford text.

words, and in particular some rare frequentative verbs, cf. Williams on *A.* 5. 470 (*ieictantem*) and 3. 425 (*exsertantem*), and R. G. Austin on *A.* 2. 551 (*lapsantem*). Here *nexantem* is frequentative in meaning as well as in form, and so goes well with the preceding *retentat*. *nixor* ('struggle' or 'rest on') is a less recherché word, occurring three times in Lucretius, 3. 1000, 4. 506, and 6. 836.

The association of *nodus* with *nixor* is unparalleled, but it goes well with *nexo*. It is related to *necto* not only in sense, but also etymologically, according to Ernout-Meillet, *Dict. étymol.*<sup>3</sup> p. 772 and Walde-Hofmann, *Lat. etymol. Wörterbuch*<sup>3</sup> ii. 155 f. Virgil uses *nodus* and *necto*, or a compound, in the same sentence in:

*E.* 8. 77            *necte* tribus *nodis* ternos, Amarylli, colores

*A.* 5. 510                    *nodos* et vincula linea rupit  
quis *innexa* pedem malo suspendit ab alto

12. 603            et *nodum* informis leti trabe *nectit* ab alta

Cf. Livius Andronicus, frag. 22. Morel

*nexebant* multa inter se      flexu *nodorum* dubio

Cicero, *Aratea* frag. 32. 4 Traglia (*De Nat. Deor.* 2. 111)

aeternum ex astris cupiens *conectere nodum*

Ovid, *Met.* 4. 491, 12. 429 f., *Ex P.* 3. 1. 124;<sup>1</sup> Germanicus, *Arat.* 369 f.; Paul. Fest. p. 44 L '*nodum* . . . , quo *conexa* . . . tunica'; Reposianus 54; Donatus; Ter. *Andr.* 404; Hilarius, *In Matth.* 18. 8; Prudentius, *Psych.* 187, 357, *Hamart.* 400, *Per.* 11. 103 f.

The nouns *nexus* and *nodus* (or *nodare*) are used together in:

Curtius 3. 1. 15 ff. *notabile erat iugum adstrictum compluribus nodis in semetipsos implicatis et celantibus nexus. . . quippe serie vinculorum ita adstricta, ut unde nexus inciperet quove se conderet, nec ratione nec visu perspicere posset, . . . ille nequaquam diu luctatus cum latentibus nodis . . .*

Notice the remarkable *abundantia* by which Curtius seeks to express the complexity of the Gordian knot. In choosing between the two nouns he doubtless aimed at *variatio*, and in particular he probably shunned the homoeoteleuta *compluribus nexibus* and *latentibus nexibus*.

Cf. Apuleius, *Met.* 8. 31 *mortem sibi nexu laquei comparabat. nec tamen latuit fidam uxorem eius casus extremus mariti, sed funestum nodum violenter invadens . . .*

Cf. *ibid.* 3. 18; Nemesianus, *Cyn.* 162; Reposianus 26-32; Amm. Marc. 28. 6. 27 = 30. 2. 12; Glossaria Latina (Lindsay) i. p. 390 n. 483, v. p. 300 n. 219, p. 301 n. 308.

These passages would seem to support *nexantem* in *A.* 5. 279. One can, however, argue that Virgil may have deliberately avoided a well-established and obvious form of expression, which his copyists then substituted for the less obvious *nixantem*. But the difficulty of getting satisfactory sense out of *nixantem nodis* tells against this possibility.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also *Met.* 2. 499 '*nexilibus plagis*' with *Fasti* 6. 110 '*nodosas plagas*'.

A last point concerns the relationship of *nexantem nodis* to the rest of the sentence. It cannot be shown that *nixantem* produces a sentence clearly un-Virgilian in structure, but *nexantem* does give a recognizable Virgilian pattern. *se . . . plicantem* is a variation on *nexantem nodis*, and this, as Page saw, supports *nexantem*.<sup>1</sup> In particular, the formation of a line by two phrases or clauses related in sense is common in Virgil;<sup>2</sup> for other lines composed of two participial phrases similar in sense cf.

G. 3. 421 tollentemque minas et sibila colla tumentem  
deice

As in *A.* 5. 279, the participles enclose the line,<sup>3</sup> and their last two syllables rhyme.

*A.* 2. 216 post ipsum auxilio subeuntem ac tela ferentem  
corripiunt

2. 380 trepidusque repente refugit  
attollentem iras et caerulea colla tumentem

2. 514 incumbens arae atque umbra complexa penatis

2. 570 erranti passimque oculos per cuncta ferenti

This line is from the 'Helen-episode', but I am convinced that the passage is the work of Virgil by R. G. Austin, *C.Q.* n.s. xi (1961), 185 ff. On pp. 188 f. he observes that *passim . . . ferenti* closely defines the meaning of *erranti*.<sup>4</sup>

*A.* 2. 771 quaerenti et tectis urbis sine fine ruenti  
infelix simulacrum atque ipsius umbra Creusae  
visa mihi ante oculos et nota maior imago

In its structure *A.* 2. 771 recalls *A.* 2. 570; *et . . . ruenti* particularizes the general *quaerenti*,<sup>5</sup> and both lines are enclosed by participles in the dative. They also have a certain affinity in sense. Line 772 is also made up of two related phrases, as *simulacrum* and *umbra* both refer to Creusa.

*A.* 4. 260 Aenean fundantem arces ac tecta novantem  
conspicit

The internal rhyme of *-antem* (cf. Austin, ad loc.) goes well with the semantic similarity of the two phrases. (I follow J. Soubiran, *L'Élision dans la poésie latine* [Paris, 1966], pp. 55-91, in supposing that the *-em* of *fundantem* was not lost in pronunciation.)

*A.* 6. 332 multa putans sortemque animi miseratus iniquam  
*sortem . . . iniquam* particularizes the general *multa putans*.

*A.* 7. 386 maius adorta nefas maioremque orsa furorem

8. 712 pandentemque sinus et tota veste vocantem  
caeruleum in gremium latebrosa quae flumina victos

12. 781 namque diu luctans lentoque in stirpe moratus

<sup>1</sup> For 'Theme and Variation' in Virgil see refs. in Henry, *Aeneidea*, Index, p. 36. (He does not give *A.* 5. 279 as an example.)

<sup>2</sup> In this article I quote only lines in which the phrases are joined by 'and', except for *A.* 12. 903 f.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Austin on *A.* 2. 568.

<sup>4</sup> Conington compares 'oculos per cuncta ferenti' with *A.* 8. 310 'oculos fert omnia circum'.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. also *A.* 7. 564 'nobilis et fama multis memoratus in oris'; *et . . . oris* is an expansion of *nobilis*.

Cf. *G.* 4. 510

mulcentem tigris et agentem carmine quercus

The two phrases, though not synonymous, balance each other.

Cf. also *A.* 11. 886

defendentum armis aditus inque arma ruentum

The participles rhyme and enclose the line, but the phrases are semantically not similar but exactly opposed, and thus balance each other.

The fact that these lines are made up of two closely related phrases gives them a certain unity. Recalling E. Fraenkel's demonstration (*Kl. Beiträge zur klass. Philologie*, i. 78 ff., 91, 94 ff., 123 f.) that participial phrases can form independent cola of the sentence,<sup>1</sup> it may be suggested that most of these lines, including *A.* 5. 279, are syntactical units. Particularly interesting are *G.* 3. 421 and *A.* 2. 381; Virgil repeats a line with only a slight variation, and this suggests he felt it to be a unit. Similarly Catullus repeats the participial phrase 'amata nobis quantum amabitur nulla' (8. 5) with a slight change in 'amata tantum quantum amabitur nulla' (37. 12); Fraenkel comments (*J.R.S.* li [1961], 52 n. 23): 'In transplanting it like that, the poet must have felt that the line was an autonomous unit.' On the other hand there is no pause at the end of *G.* 3. 421. In the same way, it is doubtful if *A.* 2. 216, 4. 260, and 8. 712 are syntactical units, but there is nothing to prevent us regarding the other lines as such.

Two adjectival phrases make up the line in

*G.* 3. 437            cum positis novus exuviis nitidusque iuventa

*A.* 2. 473            nunc, positis novus exuviis nitidusque iuventa

For their affinity in sense cf. Servius *auctus* on *A.* 2. 473 'NITIDUSQUE IUVENTA novus: constat enim serpentes *innovari* virtute, pelle deposita.'

Two co-ordinate phrases of similar meaning make up the line in:

*G.* 4. 104            contemnuntque favos et frigida tecta relinquunt

*A.* 1. 53            luctantis ventos tempestatesque sonoras  
imperio premit ac vinclis et carcere frenat

*ac* . . . *frenat* particularizes the general *imperio premit*. Line 54 is perhaps a syntactical unit, the weighty spondaic line 53 being an 'extended object', cf. Fraenkel, *Kl. Beiträge*, i. 77 f., 82 f., 129.<sup>2</sup>

*A.* 1. 153            ille regit dictis animos et pectora mulcet

1. 687            cum dabit amplexus atque oscula dulcia figet

2. 53            insonuere cavae gemitumque dedere cavernae

The assonance of the verbal endings goes well with the similarity in meaning of *insonuere* and *gemitum dedere*, cf. on *A.* 4. 260 above. For the distribution of *cavae* and *cavernae* between the clauses cf. R. S. Conway on *A.* 1. 13;<sup>3</sup> the idiom is related to the placing of *se* in the second phrase in *A.* 5. 279.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *C.Q.* n.s. xvi (1966), 140 f., 156 (for *G.* 3. 426).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *C.Q.* n.s. xvi (1966), 142 f., 157.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. also Leo, *Ausg. kl. Schr.* i. 91-3, who confines his observations to nouns in apposition.

- A. 2. 483            apparet domus intus et atria longa patescunt  
           2. 649            fulminis adflavit ventis et contigit igni  
           3. 659            trunca manum pinus regit et vestigia firmat

Cf. Williams, ad loc., for the reading *manum* and the 'Theme and Variation'. S. E. Winbolt (*Latin Hexameter Verse*, p. 37) says of the pause after the third foot: 'The equal division of the line seems to suit two alternatives which are roughly equivalent'; here the two halves are similar in meaning rather than alternatives, cf. A. 4. 477, 6. 331, and 11. 734 below.

- A. 4. 175            mobilitate viget viresque acquirit eundo

Austin comments 'The second half of the line . . . explains the first'.

- A. 4. 477            consilium vultu tegit ac spem fronte serenat

As in A. 1. 209 'spem vultu simulat, premit altum corde dolorem', the two clauses express different aspects of the same action.

- A. 5. 839            aera dimovit tenebrosum et dispulit umbras  
           11. 734            femina palantis agit atque haec agmina vertit?

For the next three lines cf. A. S. McDevitt, *C.Q.* n.s. xvii (1967), 318 f., who shows that they contain 'Theme and Variation', not hysteron proteron.

- A. 5. 292            invitat pretiis animos et praemia ponit  
           6. 226            postquam conlapsi cineres et flamma quievit  
           6. 331            constitit Anchisa satus et vestigia pressit

Two infinitival phrases of similar meaning make up the line in

- G. 4. 179            et munire favos et daedala fingere tecta

As above in G. 4. 104, *favos* and *tecta* have the same reference.

- A. 2. 38            aut terebrare cavas uteri et temptare latebras

For the distribution of *cavas* and *latebras* cf. A. 2. 53 above.

Two nominal phrases of similar meaning compose the line in

- A. 3. 442            divinosque lacus et Averna sonantia silvis  
           6. 68            errantisque deos agitataque numina Troiae

Further examples could be added, but these will be enough to show that the structure of A. 5. 279, if *nexantem* is read, is typical of Virgil.

We may now add that the similarity in sound of the endings of *nexantem* and *plicantem* goes well with their similarity in sense. There would, it is true, be rhyme between *nixantem* and *plicantem*, but with less point, as there would be no correspondence in sense.

It is desirable that a discussion of A. 5. 279 should take account of A. 12. 904. Here Turnus attempts to hurl at Aeneas an enormous boundary-stone:

- A. 12. 901            ille manu raptum trepida torquebat in hostem  
                           altior insurgens et cursu concitus heros.  
                           sed neque currentem se nec cognoscit euntem  
                           tollentemve manu saxumve immane moventem;  
                           genua labant, gelidus concrevit frigore sanguis

In 904 P has *manu*, and M and R *manus*. 903–4 are quoted by Isidore in *Or.* 1. 36. 15, where Lindsay's manuscripts offer *manus*, *manu*, *in manus*, and *in manu*. *manu* was generally accepted until Ribbeck, who kept *manu* in his text, said of *manus* 'fortasse recte', and since then *manus* has been widely preferred, though Page retained *manu*.

With *manu*, *saxum immane* is the object of *tollentem* as well as of *moventem*, just as in *A.* 5. 279 *se* is the object of both *nexantem* and *plicantem*. Moreover *manu* is right, because *manu tollere* (*aliquid*) is Latin for 'to lift up (something) in the hand'<sup>1</sup> whereas *manus tollere* means 'to raise the hands (without carrying anything in them)'.<sup>2</sup> And it is possible that Virgil was influenced by the instrumental datives in the similar passages *Iliad* 7. 264 and 21. 403 λίθον εἴλετο χεὶρὶ παχείῃ, and 5. 302 χερμάδιον λάβε χεῖρὶ.

*A.* 12. 904 resembles 5. 279 also in that it contains two participial expressions, similar in meaning. But they are not quite equivalent, as, unlike those in 5. 279, they express two successive stages in the action: *tollentem* refers to the lifting of the stone from the ground, corresponding to *raptum* in 901, while *moventem*, like *torquebat*, refers to the manoeuvring of it after being lifted up.

There is a further similarity to 5. 279 in that the participles enclose the line, and their last two syllables rhyme. Here, as there, the similarity in sound goes well with the similarity in sense. Line 903 also contains two participles similar in sense, and the two lines together have a strikingly smooth and musical effect. Their quotation by Isidore as an example of 'homoeoptoton' suggests that this effect was felt in the ancient world also.

M has *-que*, not *-ve*, after *tollentem*, possibly in recollection of *G.* 3. 421 'tol-  
lentemque minas . . .'. Two ninth-century manuscripts of Virgil have *-que* after *saxum*, and Isidore has *-que* in both places. But *-ve* is preferable in each case, because it goes better with the preceding negatives, has better manuscript support, and, though this may be a subjective impression, gives a better sound.

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<sup>1</sup> In *A.* 12. 904 *manu* suggests effort, cf. *A.* 12. 774 'incubuit voluitque manu convellere ferrum' and Austin on *A.* 2. 459.

<sup>2</sup> Hands are raised in prayer, to express

astonishment, admiration, or joy, in making threats, and on some other occasions; cf. *T.L.L.* viii. 343, 64 to 345, 39.