Russell's Anthology of Latin Prose

Text 7: A pirate raid (Cicero)

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a) Source:

In Verrem 2. 5. 95-100.

b) Background (synopsis quoted from Russell's book):

"In 70 BC the young Cicero placed his reputation on a solid foundation by a successful prosecution of C. Verres for extortion as pro-praetor of Sicily. Most of the *Verrines* were never spoken, but Cicero wrote them up with unflagging vividness and polemical zest. In this passage he enlarges on the disgrace of a piratical raid by Heracleo into the very harbour of Syracuse, when the governor was actually in residence. The history and geography are impressionistic. The focus is firmly on the defendant; it was *te praetore* that this scandal happened."

c) Language comment:

The difficulty of this text lies in the geographic description of the harbour of Syracuse and of the way in which the island of Sicily had provided corn for the whole of Italy, which produces some complicated sentences.

d) Content:

Cicero wants to prove that during the period in which Verres has been governor of Sicily, he has not protected the capital from pirate attacks, something that would have been really easy thanks to the natural layout of the harbour; it seems that the pirates not only went up and down the harbour of Syracuse as they wanted (Cicero exposes this making use of a funny description of the pirates taking a tour with Verres' acquiescence) but also mocking the citizens in front of their own eyes, an event that

Cicero uses to expose another complaint: Verres did not even take care to feed the Roman soldiers properly on an island that seemed to supply as much corn as desired, and the soldiers had to eat whatever they could find.

e) Distribution of content:

(numbers refer to the lines in the printed edition)

1-5:	Ridicule of the pirates being like tourists.
5-10:	The pirates decide to enter the city.
10-17:	Description of the layout.
17-24:	Mention of former wars.
25-33:	Mention of the Athenian fleet.
33-39:	The island of Ortygia.
40-43:	The sailor's diet.
43-49:	How can this happen here?
49-54:	Final complaints.

f) Notes for help:

1) "commorati": remember that only deponent verbs can have perfect participles with active meaning.
2) historic "cum".
3) "audissent": remember that relative clauses with verb in subjunctive may have final or causal meaning.
8) "offenderunt": here it means "to come accross", nothing to do with "offend".
11) observe the postponed position of "causa".
14) "adluantur": nice resemblance with λύω!
18) "cum": adversative here, not historic.
19) "omnis" = "omnes".
21) again participle of deponent verb with active meaning.
22) "invicta": goes with "gloria illa navalis".
23) "gloria illa navalis": a complicated way of saying "the glorious navy".
24) "qui": demonstrative relative, after a full stop.
"ut": consecutive.
"ante": goes with the "quam" two lines further.
27) "hic": adverbial, "there" (altough usually means "here").
29) "vi ac multitudine" = "by force and number".

"quae": demonstrative relative, after a full stop.

30) "portus": genitive; "natura": ablative; "victa atque superata": nominatives.

"primum": adverbial, "for first time" (equivalent to the German "erst").

33) "factum": supply "esse".

"eo": adverbial, "there", in combination with the local relative "quo".

33-34) "simul atque" = "as soon as".

34) "adisset" = "adiisset" = "adivisset".

34-35) "a + Abl. relinquere + Ac." means "to advance having Ac. at Abl."; it means that he advanced having the "magnam partem urbis" not only "a latere" but also "a tergo", to show how freely that pirate was moving to the very centre of the city.

36) antecedent "loco" included in the relative clause, and moreover the relative is prolated.

37) "quod": causal.

38) "tenerent": verb in subjunctive because it gives the relative sentence a conditional meaning.

"futurum": supply "esse".

41) "ut": final.

43-48) several lines long exclamative sentence with the structure "me hoc videre!", accusative and infinitive; the various "-ne" add a sense of question.

44) "frumenti": genitive partitive that depends on "tantum".

"ut": result.

46-47) "esse usos": infinitive of "utor", which moreover governs an ablative; the subjects of this infinitive are the former acustives "Siculos milites", "liberos" and "eos natos".

47) "quo": the antecedent is "cibo".

"frugibus inventis": ablative absolute.

50-52) the same exclamative structure, and the accusative subjects are four; moreover, inside this structure a difficult use of the verb "sum" with two datives can be found.

"ludibrio": dative depending on "esse" in a structure of the style "hoc est mihi gaudio"; the other dative is "piratico myoparoni".

52-53) the same exclamative structure.

53) "cum": adversative.

54) "nequissimi": superlative of a very rare adjective, "nequam" (= "useless"), which is indeclinable.