

1976/2 Ulysses wrestling with Charybdis

Height 15½" Bronze

Exhibited Royal Academy Summer Exhibition 1976 Catalogue No.1344

The inspiration for this was James Joyce's *Ulysses* and it was originally entitled "Ulysses wrestling with Molly Bloom (apologies to James Joyce)"



According to Greek mythology Charybdis was a sea-monster, who thrice a day drew up the water of the sea and then spouted it again, thus forming a whirlpool. She was on one side of the narrow Strait of Messina between Sicily and Italy, and on the other side was Scylla, another sea-monster. The two sides are so close to each other that an arrow could be shot across them. So sailors, on trying to avoid Charybdis became the victims of Scylla, and vice versa.

When Odysseus, after having returned from the Underworld, reached once more the island of Aeaëa, which was Circe's home, the sorceress gave him new instructions and made for him every landmark clear so as to avoid any disasters on his homeward journey, warning him about the many dangers that awaited him. Among these, she mentioned Scylla and Charybdis, who had their homes in the two rocks that are at each side of the strait of Messina. Of these two rocks, Circe said, Charybdis' was the lowest, and upon its crag there grew a great fig-tree below which Charybdis

sucked the waters down and then spewed them up again three times a day, turning the spot into a terrible place. For not even a god could save anyone who had approached near enough the devouring whirlpool that Charybdis' amazing activity formed.

That is why Circe's advice was to sail past Scylla at full speed, and to avoid Charybdis. For it was better, the witch explained, to mourn the loss of some comrades than that of the whole crew. She also insisted that there was no point in trying to tackle Scylla, being as she was a ferocious monster impossible to fight against. Instead, she said, valour was to be found in flight without wasting time.

