A NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION OF AEN. 10,655

Line 655 from the tenth Book of the Aeneid reads: 'qua rex Clusinis adventus Osinius oris'. The reference is, of course, to a ship ('ratis', 653) in which king Osinius is said to have sailed to the war, and upon which (in the scene under discussion) Aeneas' apparition, hotly pursued by Turnus, rushes into hiding. Apart from the puzzling question as to the identity of Osinius, which will not be considered here, this line, and more specifically the phrase 'Ciusinis . . . oris', appears to present one of the numerous pitfalls for which a modern commentator or translator of Vergil always has to watch out. Perhaps this explains why commentators have almost unanimously passed it over in silence.

Translators however, unlike commentators, are not at such liberty to assume a non-committal attitude in matters like this. And so we notice that English translators, from the previous century onwards, have rendered 'Ciusinis . . . oris' almost invariably with either 'from Clusium's coast(s)' or 'from the coast(s) of Clusium', or 'from the shores of Clusium' or 'from Clusium's shore'. For example, C.R. Kennedy and H.R. Fairclough have translated it respectively with 'from Clusium's coast' and 'from the coasts of Clusium'; J. Conington and C.J. Billson with 'from Clusium's shore'; C. Day Lewis and K. Guinagh with 'from the shores of Clusium'; and finally W.F. Jackson Knight with 'from the borders of Clusium'.

In order to decide whether the above-mentioned versions are acceptable a closer look should be had at the meaning 'ora' bears in the 62 passages in which it appears in the Vergilian corpus. However, before elaborating on the issue, attention should be drawn to two more translations of the Aeneid which have recently appeared, most happily both in Afrikaans, these being the prose version by J.T. Benade and the verse translation by N.A. Blanckenberg, corrected by Suretha Bruwer, who also wrote an introduction to it.

We shall first consider their versions of 'Clusinis . . . oris': while the former has translated it with 'van die strande van Clusium', the latter has rendered it by 'van Clusiumstrand'. It is immediately evident that these translators have misconceived the meaning of 'ora' in this passage, obviously equating it with 'litus'. Admittedly 'litus' is on occasion used in a sense which 'ora' may also have, but for an equation of 'ora' with 'litus' there is, as far as I can establish, neither ancient authority nor lexicographical evidence. The reason for this dissimilarity between
'ora' and 'litus' is simply that 'ora' encompasses a much wider area than 'litus'. If this assumption is sound, the reliability of these versions of 'ora' in this particular instance is already a matter of dispute. There is however another much more important reason which may best be considered in the light of the apparently more correct English versions mentioned earlier.

Taken at face value, these translations appear to be acceptable, for apart from its basic meaning of 'extremity', 'border', 'brim', 'edge', 'margin', 'end' or 'boundary', 'ora' also has the specific meaning of 'coast', 'sea-coast', 'shore', as well as of 'region', 'clime', 'country' when metaphorically used. If 'ora' in the context under discussion is subjected to a closer examination, however, the validity of these translations becomes disputable, especially if one takes into account the fact that 'ora' is here used with reference to Clusium. This is indeed decisive to determine the meaning of 'ora' in this passage, a fact which has apparently escaped the notice of most translators of Vergil, including both Benade and Blanckenberg. For if 'ora' is here to be taken in the sense of 'coast' or 'shore', it presupposes that Clusium (the modern Chiusi), once a very important Etruscan city, lay close to the sea, which is not the case, however. Anyone consulting a map of Italy will notice that Clusium was situated well inland, from both the western and the eastern coast of the peninsula.

It is therefore highly improbable that Vergil had 'coast' or 'shore' in mind when speaking of the 'orae' of Clusium, unless one were to assume that the borders of Clusium had once extended as far west as the Tyrrhenian Sea, but for this there is hardly any evidence. Consequently I suggest that 'oris' should in this case be rendered in English by either 'borders', as Jackson Knight has done, or 'boundaries' or even 'region.' A suitable Afrikaans version, in my opinion, would be either 'grense' or 'omstreke', or perhaps even 'gebied'.

On similar grounds the rendering by some translators of 'ora' in Aen. 10.198 may be questioned. There it is stated of Ocnus, an Etruscan ally of Aeneas coming, be it noted, from Mantua: 'ille etiam patriis agmen ciet Ocnus ab oris'. I here consider four English translations, and the said Afrikaans versions. While Jackson Knight and Day Lewis have translated 'patriis ... ab oris' respectively with 'from his homeland's borders' and 'from his native land', Fairclough has 'from his native shores', and Guinagh 'from his ancestral shores'. But to speak of the 'shores' and 'kuste' of Mantua surely is absurd, for the simple reason that Mantua, like Clusium, was situated well inland; in fact, even farther away from either coast than the latter. I therefore would suggest that 'oris' here be rendered in English by either 'borders' (Jackson Knight) or better still by 'land' (Day Lewis), and in Afrikaans by 'grense' or simply 'land'. In short, for the phrase 'patriis ... ab oris' I would suggest in English 'from his native land', and in Afrikaans 'van sy vaderland'.

In conclusion I quote one other instance from Vergil where the rendering of 'ora' by some of the translators appears to be debatable. This is to be found in Aen. 1,1–2, where it is stated of Aeneas: 'Troiae qui primus ab oris/Italiam . . .
venit'. While English translators have here rendered 'oris' with either 'land' or 'realm', or 'frontier', four translations which, as has been noted above, are all offered for 'ora', both Benade and Blanckenberg have 'kuste'. Admittedly 'kuste' is not incorrect here, given the semantic range of the Latin term; however, if I were to make a choice, I would opt in Afrikaans for 'land' and in English for 'frontier' or simply Jackson Knight's 'land' which in fact has lexicographical support.

These are only three examples of a possible misinterpretation of 'ora' in Vergil. There may be others too. Perhaps it will be worthwhile to trace the various shades of meaning attributed to 'ora' in the entire Vergilian corpus.

NOTES

1. In all instances the italics are mine.
9. In the meaning of 'shore'. See Lewis & Short, s.v. litus.
11. Forcellini, s.v. ora, expressly states: 'Differit tamem a litore, quia ora latius patet; quia est alicubi ora, ubi tamen litus non est.'
12. See Forcellini, Stephanus, Lewis & Short, s.v. ora.
14. See Jackson Knight 257; Day Lewis 215; Fairclough 185; Gunnagh 253.
15. See Benade 296; Blanckenberg 295.
17. Cf. Jackson Knight 27 ('from the land of Troy'); C. Bowen, Virgil in English Verse, Eclogues and Aeneid I–VI, 2nd ed. London 1889, 71 ('from the Trojan land'); Conington 1 ('from Ilian realm'); Day Lewis 11 ('from Troy's frontier'); Billson 3 ('from Troy').
18. Benade 17 ('van Troje se kuste'); Blanckenberg 17 ('van Trojaanse kuste').
19. See note 17 above.
20. Both Stephanus and Lewis & Short, s.v. ora, have inscribed 'ora' in Aen. 1.1 in this meaning. Cf. Forcellini, s.v. ora, who quotes Cic., Nat. D. 2.66.16 '... quacumque in ora ac parte terrarum', and Verg., Aen. 3.97 'hic domus Aeneae eunctis dominabitur oris'. In my opinion, the latter is well translated by Blanckenberg 78: '... sal Aeneas se geslag/ oor al die lande heers'.

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