

VIRGIL'S LOCATION OF CORYTHUS

In a recent article (*JRS* (1973), 68 f.) Nicholas Horsfall sought to demonstrate that Corythus, which Virgil makes the original home of Dardanus (*Aen.* iii, 167 f.), should be identified with Tarquinii, some 50 miles north-west of Rome, on the coast of Etruria, rather than with Cortona, roughly twice as far away, to the north, and inland.¹ In doing so he expressed surprise that the Virgilian evidence should have been completely ignored by previous writers on the subject (p. 68): and, using the *Aeneid* as the main source on which his own argument was based, he supported his conclusion with a careful examination of several other aspects of the problem. The purpose of this note is simply to question his employment of the Virgilian evidence: it will be argued that the traditional identification with Cortona is supported and indeed required by the text of the *Aeneid*.

In a preliminary discussion of the expressions used in certain passages Horsfall maintained that these suggest that Corythus is reasonably close to where the words concerned are spoken (pp. 68-9). Thus Latinus welcomes Ilioneus to his city (somewhere between the mouth of the Tiber and Turnus' Ardea) and says that Dardanus originated 'his agris' (vii. 206), and in his reply Ilioneus says 'hinc Dardanus ortus' (vii. 240). And both Ilioneus and Tiberinus use terms indicating that in coming to this area the Trojans have returned to the district from which their founder originally started out (vii. 241: *repetit*; viii. 37: *revehis*). Moreover in the case of the Tiber-god we need to bear in mind that he is a local deity, with a local deity's restricted range.

But none of these points is really very positive, since in no case is there a single explicit reference to the crucial question of distance. When local terms are used they are relative, not absolute: and they have therefore to be measured according to the scale implicit in their contexts. In all three cases we find matching references to Troy, whether as the starting-point of the Aeneadae (vii. 217 f.), or as the final goal of Dardanus (vii. 205 f.).

Measured on such a scale, surely, the references in question could just as well indicate a place some 100 miles away as one half as distant. Moreover although the Tiber-god is a local deity, we should not restrict his area of concern too narrowly. Indeed, his proud boast that his source 'emerges from lofty cities' (viii. 65) seems to suggest that the more distant cities of inland Etruria (including Cortona) are more within range of that concern than Tarquinii could ever be, tucked away as it is on the coast, with a local river-god of its own.

Thus far, I would submit, the case remains unproved either way. I want to turn now to the lines which Horsfall rightly considers central to the problem. They are spoken by the goddess Iris when, acting on behalf of Juno (ix. 2), she delivers instructions to Turnus in Ardea:

extremas Corythi penetravit ad urbes
Lydorumque manum collectos armat agrestis. (ix. 10-11).

Horsfall's comments on the meaning of line 10 seem correct (p. 69, n.9: p. 70, n.12). Aeneas 'has penetrated as far as the distant city of Corythus'. But why,

¹ On the question of Corythus' location add: A.G. McKay, *Virgil's Italy* (1970), p. 81 and n. 2, p. 326.

after giving due consideration to the much less explicit terms *hinc* and *his agris* earlier, should we ignore this sentence as evidence for the location of Corythus? No doubt it is still inconclusive, but it certainly fits Cortona far better than Tarquinii. Indeed, the further away the city in question, the more appropriate *extremas* becomes. And that is no less true of *penetravit*, with movement inland increasing still further this term's appropriateness (cf. vii. 363: 'at non sic penetrat Lacedaemona pastor?').

But it is the next point that really brings us to the crux of the matter. For in considering line 10 Horsfall insists (p. 69): 'The phrase [viz. 'extremas . . . urbes'] demands an explanation which puts Aeneas where he really is.' In fact his case rests on this proposition: and in my view it falls down because the proposition cannot be sustained. The argument employed might be summarized as follows: Iris in these lines reveals that Aeneas is at Corythus gathering support. But we have already been told by the poet that he is at Caere, with his Etruscan allies close by (viii. 597 f.). There is no question of equating Corythus with Caere: but nearby Tarquinii is available, and there are external grounds that support such an identification.

The weak link in the chain, however, is Iris. If she were a reliable witness it would be difficult to shake the argument. But in fact both she and the mistress she works for will say anything that serves their immediate purpose, irrespective of the truth; lies and distortion are part of their normal stock-in-trade.²

Naturally this does not affect ix. 10 as evidence for the actual location of Corythus: it would be pointless for Iris to try to falsify Etruria's topography in addressing Turnus. But if we examine what she says about Aeneas it quickly becomes obvious that here she is indeed lying, and why she does so: Juno's purpose is to prevail on Turnus to throw discretion to the winds and attack the Trojan camp forthwith. (Cf. ix. 756 f., where she is behind the rash impetuosity he displays when he runs amok inside it.) We know that Aeneas has only to present himself in the Etruscan camp and their massed forces, eager and ready for action, will at once move to the attack under his command (viii. 494 f.). But to announce that to Turnus would scarcely produce the desired result: Iris therefore invents the quite false³ story that Aeneas is reduced to gathering supporters from among the farmers of Etruria and providing them with the arms such men would naturally lack — a procedure that would obviously take much longer. And this brings me to the main point, the question of Aeneas' whereabouts. We know already that he is at Caere (viii. 597 f.). But consider what that would mean from Turnus' point of view: the Trojan camp may be

² Cf. Iris' story about Cassandra (5. 636 f.) or Juno's string of distortions in the Assembly (10. 67 f.). Iris' lying speech here takes the typical Virgilian form, with its initial basis of veracity (viz. the reference to Aeneas' mission to Evander). Cf. how Sinon begins the first section of his lying speech with a reference to the death of Palamedes (2. 81 f.), the second by describing the war-weariness of the Greeks (2. 108 f.) and the third with an account of the stealing of the Palladium (2. 163 f.), in each case proceeding thereafter to his persuasive fiction.

³ It is important to note here that 'collectos' (line 11) must be referred to Aeneas for its agent and is as false as 'armat'. That both these pieces of information *are* false is clear, as we already can assume on the basis of Evander's account (8. 493 f.) and will have confirmed for us later, in the narrative (10. 148 f.) All Aeneas has to do is establish contact with Tarchon, conclude a formal agreement, and set out forthwith (cf. 10. 153 'haud fit mora'). The mustering and the arming have already been done for him: that is the whole point of Virgil's use of Mezentius.

without its leader, but in reality he is no further from it on its northern side than Turnus himself from the south. To reveal that disturbing fact to Turnus would be even more certain to discourage him from attacking than the truth about Aeneas' activities. Iris therefore says: 'extremas Corythi penetravit ad urbes.' This must surely be a comparable falsehood, one that places Aeneas deep in Etruria and far enough away to allow Turnus to attack the Trojan camp without misgivings.

The aftermath, I would suggest, supports this view. After Iris' report, Turnus and his men believe that Aeneas is over a hundred miles away in the vicinity of Corythus (=Cortona), and that when he finally returns it will be by land, from that direction. In the event, however, not only does his early return take them by surprise, but in addition the fact that he approaches from the sea is clearly a totally unexpected development: and the poet portrays the scene with considerable care in order to convey this effect (x. 260 f.).

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