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## DRYDEN'S INDEBTEDNESS TO CHAPMAN IN HIS TRANSLATION OF HOMER'S ILIAD

John Dryden was born in 1631 and is well known as a poet, critic and translator. Apart from his original work, he rendered Ovid and Virgil into English and these translations have passed through many editions. Dryden undertook the heavy task of translating Homer, but he died after he had finished the first book and had attempted part of the sixth book of Homer's Iliad. Alexander Pope, one of the most important literary figures of eighteenth century England, in his preface to Homer's Iliad says that if Dryden had lived to finish what he began of Homer he would not have attempted it after him, 'No more, says he, than I would his Virgil, his version of whom (not withstanding some human errors) is the most noble and spirited translation I know in any language'. As far as Dryden's translation of Homer is concerned, readers familiar with the original, as well as with Chapman's and Dryden's renderings, might be able to trace direct and indirect similarities between the two translators. By the term 'indirect' I mean that Dryden and Chapman have in some places obscured, transformed or mistranslated Homer in almost the same way. By 'direct' I imply that Dryden has copied Chapman without checking the original and as a result Dryden errs where Chapman errs.

To support my view, I have selected some passages from Homer's Iliad as translated, by Chapman and Dryden which leave no doubt that Dryden is indebted to Chapman.

### I. Homer I, 4

...αὐτοῦς δὲ ἐλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν οἰωνοῖσί τε πᾶσι

(and made them *prey* to all dogs and vultures)

Chapman 1, 4

...; and *their limbs* to dogs and vultures gave:

Dryden 1, 5

*Their limbs* a prey to dogs vulture made:

'Prey' is missing from Chapman, 'all' is missing from both, and the crucial point is 'limbs' which does not exist in the original

2. Homer 6-7

ἐξ οὗ δὴ τὰ πρῶτα διαστήτην ἐρίαντε

Ἀτρείδης τε, ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν, καὶ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.

(After they were at odds they separated

Atrides the king of men and the noble (godlike) Achilles)

Chapman 5-6

.....from whom first strife begun

Betwixt Atrides, king of men, and Thetis godlike son

Dryden 7-8

From that ill-omen'd hour when strife begun,

Betwixt Atrides' great, and Thetis' godlike son

Both translators have distorted Homer severely and in exactly the same way, by failing to touch "διαστήτην", which is the corner-stone in the original (δίωστημι = separate, break relationships with somebody). As a result, Chapman's and Dryden's renderings are so vague and obscure that they give the impression that 'godlike son' should have been followed by another phrase to complete the meaning.

3. Homer 12-16

ὃ γὰρ ἦλθε θοὰς ἐπὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν

λυσόμενός τε θύγατρα φέρων τ' ἀπειρίσι' ἄποινα

στέμματα' ἔχων ἐν χερσὶν ἐκηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος

χρυσέω ἀνὰ σκήπτρῳ, καὶ λίσσετο πάντας Ἀχαιοῦς,

Ἀτρεΐδα δὲ μάλιστα δύνω, κοσμήτορε λαῶν.

(...he came to the Achaeans' ships

to ransom (redeem) his daughter bringing boundless silver coins having in his hands, on the golden sceptre, the crown of the far-shooting Apollo, and supplicated all the Achaeans and most of all the two Atrides capable of ranging soldiers)

Chapman 11-15

.....Chryses, the priest, came to the fleet to buy,

For presents of unvalued price, his daughter's liberty;

The golden sceptre and the crown of Phoebus in his hands

Proposing; and made suit to all, but most to the commands

Of both the Atrides, who most ruled.

Dryden 18-25

For venerable Chryses came to buy  
with gold and gifts of price, his daughter's liberty.  
Suppliant before the Grecian chiefs he stood;  
Awful, and arm'd with ensigns of his God;  
Bare was his hoary head; one holy hand  
Held forth his laurel crown, and one his sceptre of command  
His suit was common

'To buy the liberty' does not exist in Homer, though it is implied, and is enough to persuade us that Dryden consulted Chapman. 'Suit' = request made to a superior, is not an equivalent for supplicate and its application to both translations should not be taken as a coincidence.

Finally, neither does the idea of command exist in the original, which is sound evidence of Dryden's indebtedness.

3. Homer 18-19

ὕμῖν μὲν θεοὶ δοῖεν Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες  
ἐκπέρσαι Πριάμοιο πόλιν, εὖ δ' οἴκαδ' ἰκέσθαι

(To you, may the gods, who have their abodes on Olympus,  
grant (give) to conquer Priam's city and come back home safely)

Chapman 17-18

....., the gods, whose habitations be  
In heavenly houses, grace your powers with  
Priam's razed town, and grant ye happy conduct home.

Dryden 26-30

So may the Gods who dwell in heavenly bowers  
Succeed your siege, accord the vows you make,  
And give you Troy's imperial town to take;  
So, by their happy conduct, may you come  
With conquest back to your sweet native home.

Dryden's version reminds us of Pope's tendency to expand the original, but the point at issue here is the superfluous word 'conduct'; though differently applied, it was added by Chapman and adapted by Dryden. If the above comment leaves some room for argument, the translation of Homer's "γέρον" = old man, as 'Dotard' by both translators constitutes the most typical example of indebtedness.

Homer 26

μή σε γέρον κοίλῃσιν ἐγὼ παρὰ νηυσὶ κιχείω

(Old man, on no account let me not find you by the hollow ships)

Chapman 25-26

.....*Dotard!* avoid our fleet,  
where lingering be not found by me.....

Dryden 39

Hence, holy *dotard*, and avoid my sight

4. In my investigation, cases which show similarities between Chapman and Dryden, but are faithful to the sense of the original, need not be mentioned.

Homer 30-31

ἡμετέρῳ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ ἐν Ἀργεῖ, τηλόθι πάτρης,  
ἰστὸν ἐποιχομένην καὶ ἐμὸν λέχος ἀντιόωσαν.

(In our house in Argos, far from her country (home)  
she will weave at the loom and go to my bed

Chapman 29-31

..... In our court at Argos, far transferred  
From her loved country, she shall ply *her web*, and see  
Prepared with all *fit ornaments my bed*.

Dryden 47-49

Till then my royal bed she shall attend;  
And, having first *adorn'd* it, late ascend:  
This, for the night; by day *the web* and loom

The first point to surprise us is not Dryden's use of 'loom', a perfectly good rendering of "ἰστός", but his somewhat unsuccessful insertion of Chapman's 'web' for "ἰστός" which is in fact superfluous.

The second point, which is not at all surprising, is Chapman's 'ornaments' and Dryden's 'adornment', neither of which can be found in the original.

5. Homer 80-83

κρείσσων γὰρ βασιλεύς, ὅτε χόσεται ἀνδρὶ χέρι·  
εἴ περ γάρ τε χόλον γε καὶ αὐτῆμαρ καταπέψῃ  
ἀλλὰ τε καὶ μετόπισθεν ἔχει κότον, ὅφρα τελέσῃ.  
ἐν στήθεσιν ἐοῖσι, σὺ δὲ φράσαι εἴ με σάωσεις·"

(The king prevails when he becomes angry with an inferior man  
because even if he swallows his anger on the very same day  
in his breast he remains revengeful (angry) till he executes it (his anger),  
and you do say whether you will save me)

.....

Chapman 74-78

.....when a king hath *once marked for his hate*  
A man inferior, though that day his wrath *seems to digest*  
The *offence* he takes, yet evermore he *takes up in his breast*  
Brands of quick anger, till revenge hath quenched to his desire

The fire reserved .....  
 .....thy valour may prevent

Dryden 116-121

And sovereigns, ever jealous of their state,  
 Forgive not those whom once *mark for hate*;  
 Ev'n though th' *offence* they *seemingly digest*,  
 Revenge, like embers *rak'd*, within their breast,  
 Bursts forth in *flames*.....  
 .....thy valour may prevent

It is evident that Homer has been paraphrased, they have added and omitted in the same way, and they have expressed themselves in the same way. We take sometime to be sure that they have expressed themselves in the same way. We take sometime to be sure that Chapman's and Dryden's words 'thy valour may prevent', correspond to Homer's "σάώσεις" 'you will save', but Dryden's line 143, 'And empties all his quiver in our hearts', is exactly similar to Chapman's lines 92-93:

and this still will empty in our hearts  
 His dreadful quiver;

We begin to see now that the above expressions are not found in Homer. Almost the same applies to Dryden's line 156, 'And sputtering under specious names thy *gall*', which is not far from Chapman's line 106, 'Now casting thy prophetic *gall*'.

Homer 129-130

..... αἶ κὲ ποθὶ Ζεὺς  
 δῶσι πόλιν Τροίην εὐτείχεον ἐξαλαπάξαι"  
 (if ever Zeus grants (me, us) to destroy the fortified Troy,  
 or Troy with the beautiful walls)

Chapman 129-130

.....when Jupiter bestows  
 The sack of well-walled troy on us; which by his words he owes

Dryden 187-188

.....if Saturn's son bestows  
 The sack of Troy, which he by promise owes;

If we add to the above lines Chapman's 'eyes sparkling with ardour' and Dryden's, 'But by her sparkling eyes, and ardent look', to render Homer's line 200, "δεινὸν δὲ οἱ ὅσσε φάνθεν", we should not hesitate to say that Chapman's translation must have been Dryden's constant guide throughout the process.

Now let us look at the following eight lines of the Iliad:

## 7. Homer 320-327

ἀλλ' ὃ γε Ταλθύβιον τε καὶ Εὐρυβάτην προσέειπε  
 τῷ οἱ ἔσαν κήρυκε καὶ ὀτρηρῷ θεράποντε·  
 "ἔρχεσθον κλισίην Πηληιάδew 'Αχιλῆος'  
 χειρὸς ἔλόντ' ἀγέμεν Βρησηίδα καλλιπάρηον  
 εἰ δέ κε μὴ δώησιν, ἐγὼ δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἔλωμαι  
 ἑλθὼν σὺν πλεόνεσσι· τό οἱ καὶ ῥίγιον ἔσται".  
 ὣς εἰπὼν προΐει, κρατερὸν δ' ἐπὶ μῦθον ἔτελλε.  
 τῷ δ' ἀέκοντε βάτην παρὰ θῖν' ἄλoς' ἀτρυγέτοιο.

(Well, he said to Talthybius and Eurybates,  
 who were his Heralds and willing attendants:  
 'Go to Achilles' tent,  
 catch the beautifully-cheeked Briseis by the hand and bring her here  
 If he does not give her I myself will come  
 with more men to take her. It will be terrible to him'.  
 Having spoken thus, he sent them away, uttering severe words.  
 They unwillingly walked along the shore of the resounding sea).  
 Chapman 318-325

Thus vented to Talthybius, and grave Eurybates  
 Heralds, and *ministers of trust*, to all his messages.  
 'Haste to Achilles' tent; where take Briseis' hand, and bring  
 Her beauties to us. If he *fails to yield* her, say your king  
 Will come himself, with *multitudes* that shall be horribler  
 Make both his presence, and your charge, that so he dares defer'.  
 This said, he sent them with a charge of hard condition.  
 They went unwillingly, and *trod the fruitless sea's shore*;

## Dryden 456-465

Talthybius, and Eurybates the just,  
 Heralds of arms, and *ministers of trust*,  
 He call'd, and thus bespoke: *Haste* hence your way:  
 And from the Goddess-born demand his prey  
 if *yielded*, bring the captive: if deny'd  
 The king (so tell him) shall chastise his pride:  
 And with arm'd *multitudes* in person come  
 To vindicate his power, and justify his doom.  
 This hard command unwilling they obey,  
 And o'er *the barren shore* pursue their way.

To me the cumulative evidence in these two renderings of the same passage is  
 convincing: Dryden translated Homer with his eye on Chapman. I will



content my self with providing a few further examples.

8. Homer 427

.....καί μιν πείσεσθαι οἶω

(and I think that he will be convinced)

Chapman 421

And doubt not to win thy wish.

Dryden 600

*Doubt not I will obtain the grant of your desire.*

9. Homer 552-553

“αἰνότατε Κρονίδη, ποῖον τὸν μῦθον ἔειπες,

καὶ λήν σε πάρος γ' οὔτ' εἶρομαι οὔτε μεταλλῶ.

(Most terrible son of Kronos what a word have you uttered

Certainly I am neither asking you nor questioning you)

Chapman 534

.....Austere king of the skies,

what hast thou uttered? When did I before this time

Require or sift thy counsels?

Dryden 754

What hast thou said, O tyrant of the skies!

When did I search the secrets of my reign?

10. Homer 565

ἀλλ' ἀκέουσα κάθησο, ἐμῷ δ' ἐπιπείθεο μύθῳ,

(be quiet and listen to my words)

Chapman 548

*Curb your tongue in time.*

Dryden 772

*Curb your impetuous tongue, before too late.*

11. Homer 577

μητρὶ δ' ἐγὼ παράφημι, καὶ αὐτῇ περ νοεούσῃ

Chapman 558

But, mother, *though yourself wise*, yet let your

son request (His wisdom audience)

Dryden 788

Mother, *though wise yourself*, my counsel weigh.....

12. Homer 593

Κάππεσονέν Λήμνῳ

(I fell down on Lemnos).

Chapman 574

*At lenght in Lemnos I struck earth*

Dryden 900

Pitch'd on my head, *at length* the Lemnian ground

13. Homer 603

οὐ μὲν φόρμιγγος περικαλλέος, ἣν ἔχ' Ἀπόλλων,

(Nor of the beautiful harp that Apollo *had*)

Chapman 583

Apollo there did *touch* his most sweet harp

Dryden 911

Apollo *touch'd* the lyre

The total weight of evidence seems to me to favour the view that, directly or indirectly, Dryden followed Chapman again and again.