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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.

1. Homer 1, 4

...αὐτοὺς δὲ ἑλώρια 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 ἐρίσαντε
Ἀτρεΐδης 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 distored Homer severely and in exactly the same way, by failing to touch "διαστήτην", which is the corner-stone in the original (διίστημι = 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' ἀπερείσι' ἄποινα
στέμματ' ἔχων ἐν χερσὶν ἑκηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος
χρυσέῳ ἀνὰ σκήπτρῳ, καὶ λίσσετο πάντας Ἀχαιούς,
Ἀτρεΐδα δὲ μάλιστα δύω, 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 indebteness.

3. Homer 18–19

ὑμῖν μὲν θεοὶ δοῖεν 'Ολύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες
ἐκπέρσαι Πριάμοιο πόλιν, εὖ δ' οἴκαδ' ἱκέσθαι

(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 indebteness.

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 Ἄργεϊ, τηλόθι πάτρης,
ἱστὸν 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 "ἱστόσ", but his somewhat unsuccessful insertion of Chapman's 'web' for "ἱστὸσ" 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 χώσεται ἀνδρὶ χέρηι·
εἴ περ γάρ τε χόλον γε καὶ αὐτῆμαρ καταπέψῃ
ἀλλά τε καὶ μετόπισθεν ἔχει κότον, ὄφρα τελέσσῃ,
ἐν στήθεσσιν ἑοῖσι, σὺ δὲ φράσαι εἴ με σαώσεις»

(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 "σαώσειο" '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

..... *αἴ κὲ ποθι Ζεύς*
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, "δεινὼ δὲ οἱ ὄσσε φάανθεν", 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' ὅ γε Ταλθύβιόν τε καὶ Εὐρυβάτην προσέειπε
τῶ οἱ ἔσαν κήρυκε καὶ ὀτρηρὼ θεράποντε·
"ἔρχεσθον κλισίην Πηληιάδεω 'Αχιλῆος·
χειρὸς ἑλόντ' ἀγέμεν Βρησηίδα καλλιπάρῃον
εἰ δέ κε μὴ δώῃσιν, ἐγὼ δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἕλωμαι
ἐλθών σύν πλεόνεσσι· τό οἱ καὶ ῥίγιον ἔσται".
ὣς εἰπὼν προΐει, κρατερὸν δ' ἐπὶ μῦθον ἔτελλε.
τὼ δ' ἀέκοντε βάτην παρὰ θῖν' ἁλόσ' 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 convincive: 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 οἴω

(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 λίην σε πάρος γ' οὔτ' εἴρομαι 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 councels?*

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

Κάππεσονἐν 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.