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The Second Edition of Cowper's Homer

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William Cowper's 1791 translation of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is rarely read today even among academics. While it adds to the advances in the medium of blank verse that the poet had made with *The Task*, its literary significance pales by comparison with that of the monumental Pope translation it sought to replace, and as an attempt at rendering Homer it is marred by the unwholesome influence of Milton – or so the general consensus seems to be. As early as 1905, one editor pronounced the translation 'dead'.¹ Cowper's efforts to revise the text, which continued until the end of his life, are even less well known; the second edition, published posthumously in 1802 by his kinsman John Johnson, has received almost no attention at all.

When critics do discuss Cowper's Homer, it is to the first edition that they refer. Matthew Arnold, although aware of the 1802 edition and Cowper's dissatisfaction with his earlier work expressed in the preface to that volume, nevertheless quotes the original 1791 version to illustrate what he perceives as the translator's 'elaborate Miltonic manner, entirely alien to the flowing rapidity of Homer':²

So num'rous seem'd those fires the bank between
Of Xanthus, blazing, and the fleet of Greece,
In prospect all of Troy³

In Arnold's opinion, 'the inversion and pregnant conciseness of Milton' that Cowper imitates in this passage 'are the very opposites of the directness and flowingness of Homer' (p. 104). Interestingly, however, the inverted order of the words 'the bank between | Of Xanthus' has

been rearranged in the revised text of 1802:

So num'rous seem'd those fires between the stream
 Of Xanthus, blazing, and the fleet of Greece,
 In prospect of all Troy⁴

The preposition no longer separates the two parts of the noun phrase; Cowper thus reduces the decelerating effect to which Arnold objects and achieves something slightly closer to normal English syntax. Even without checking it against the Greek source text, we may credit the revised version with a greater degree of 'flowing rapidity' than his initial rendering.

The same is true of the second passage Arnold criticizes:

For not through sloth or tardiness on us
 Aught chargeable, have Ilium's sons thine arms
 Stript from Patroclus' shoulders, but a God
 Matchless in battle, offspring of bright-haired
 Latona, him contending in the van
 Slew, for the glory of the chief of Troy.

(Iliad 1791, 19.499-504)

Arnold comments that 'the first inversion, "have Ilium's sons thine arms Stript from Patroclus' shoulders," gives the reader a sense of a movement not Homeric; and the second inversion, "a God him contending in the van Slew," gives this sense ten times stronger' (p. 105). Had he looked at Cowper's reworking of the lines, he might have gained a different impression, for in both cases the syntax has been straightened out:

For not through sloth or tardiness in us
 The Trojans stripp'd Patroclus of his arms,
 But, most illustrious of the Pow'rs divine,
 Latona's offspring slew him in the van,
 Designing glory to the Chief of Troy.

(Iliad 1802, 19.491-5)

Cowper simplifies the speech by omitting any mention of 'shoulders', and dispenses with the auxiliary verb 'have'; the main verb 'stripp'd', which previously appeared after the direct object 'thine arms', now immediately follows the subject of the first clause ('Trojans') and is in turn followed by the object 'Patroclus'. Likewise, he removes the participle 'contending' from the second clause, and he places the verb 'slew' between the subject 'Latona's offspring' and the object 'him', rather than suspending it. Again, the result of these changes is a regularized word order that 'flows' in a way that the earlier translation does not. Whatever the 'movement' of the Homeric original, the differences between the two versions of 1791 and 1802 are significant enough to call for Arnold's assessment to be reconsidered.

In his critical monograph on Cowper, Norman Nicholson takes a more nuanced view of the Homer than others. 'As a piece of versification', he argues, the work 'is competent, easy, and, on the whole, interesting, and there are a few passages where the translation smoulders into poetry'. Still, he echoes the common complaint that 'Cowper, in turning to Milton for a model, lost his own voice and found no other', and he deems the poet's 'Miltonic inversions and transferences ... as awkward and unassimilated as blocks of granite set in concrete', citing the following lines as an example:⁵

He ended; Juno and Minerva heard,
 Low-murm'ring deep disgust; for side by side
 They forging sat calamity to Troy.

(Iliad 1791, 4.23-5)

Judging by this specimen, it is hard to disagree with Nicholson's verdict. Here, too, however, the 1802 edition shows a considerable improvement:

He said; low murmurings from both ensued,
 As side by side they sat contriving plagues
 For hated Ilium.

(Iliad 1802, 4.20-2)

The main clause 'Juno and Minerva heard' and the ensuing participial construction 'Low-murm'ring deep disgust', which at first glance might be mistaken for an object belonging to 'heard', are replaced by a single independent clause, with 'low murmurings' now functioning as a subject, while the sequence of transitive participle, main verb, then object in 'They forging sat calamity' gives way to the less confusing 'they sat contriving plagues'. Once more, we find the revised translation free from the 'Miltonic inversions and transferences' that characterize the 1791 text.

Even a modern critic like Robin Sowerby ignores Cowper's copious revisions when touching on 'the best-known eighteenth-century translation of classical epic after Pope' and comparing it with the latter's couplet version.⁶ The translator's description of Achilles is presented as evidence of his inability to produce an adequate alternative to his predecessor:

So, by magnanimous Achilles driv'n,
 His coursers solid-hoof'd stamp'd as they ran
 The shields, at once, and bodies, of the slain;
 Blood spatter'd all his axle, and with blood
 From the horse-hoofs and from the fellied wheels
 His chariot redden'd, while himself, athirst
 For glory, his unconquerable hands
 Defiled with mingled carnage, sweat and dust.

(Iliad 1791, 20.613-20)

Sowerby highlights the overly literal rendering of *μεγάθυμος* as 'magnanimous' – 'jar[ring] in a context in which Achilles is far from displaying magnanimity' – and the odd choice of the word 'fellied', as well as Cowper's 'difficult syntax' and 'inharmonious rhythm' (p. 170). Yet, as before, most of these flaws are mitigated, if not rectified, by changes introduced at a later stage:

So, bearing terrible Achilles on,
 His coursers stamp'd together, as they pass'd,
 The bodies and the bucklers of the slain;
 Blood spatter'd all his axle, and with blood
 From the horse-hoofs and from the fellied wheels
 His chariot redden'd, while himself, athirst
 For glory, his unconquerable hands
 Defiled with mingled carnage, sweat and dust.

(Iliad 1802, 20.596-603)

The point about ‘felled’ still applies, and the distinctions between main verbs and participles in ‘his chariot redden’d’ and ‘his unconquerable hands | Defiled’ remain somewhat unclear, but the substitution of ‘together’ for ‘at once’, and the placement of this word after ‘stamp’d’, at least help to make the first few lines syntactically smoother. As if to forestall Sowerby’s charge of inharmoniousness, Cowper also solves the clash of two stressed syllables in ‘solid-hoof’d stamp’d’ by removing the adjective altogether. Most importantly, he has decided against the incongruous use of ‘magnanimous’, and instead translates *μεγάθυμος* as ‘terrible’ – a much more appropriate rendering. These minor refinements may not, of course, suffice to convince us that Cowper’s version of the passage as it appeared in 1802 (let alone the rest of the translation) is superior to Pope’s. In conjunction with other instances of the translator’s revisionary practice, however, they give us grounds to question whether his work is, as Sowerby has it, ‘almost impossible to read in long stretches’ if judged by the final form he gave it (Sowerby, p. 170).

As this brief survey already suggests, more than one critic has perhaps unwisely based an assessment of Cowper’s merits as a translator of Homer exclusively on the 1791 edition of his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In the revised text, the seemingly overpowering presence of Milton with the resulting syntactic contortions is noticeably subdued; the examples discussed above are enough to suggest a consistent pursuit of greater simplicity. But if a comparative analysis of the 1802 edition could lead to a fuller appreciation of Cowper’s contribution to English Homer translation, why has it been neglected for so long?

The preference for the earlier version seems to have originated with Robert Southey, who included it in his edition of Cowper’s complete works, and who, according to the modern critic Nicholson, ‘ought to be able to judge a translation’,⁷ presumably by virtue of being an accomplished translator himself. Southey first articulated his reasons for rejecting

the 1802 text in a letter to John Wood Warter:

Among my latest purchases, is the most complete edition of Tasso's works ... It is the Venice edition of 1722, in twelve quartos ... This 'Tasso' came in good time to decide me in a matter upon which I was hesitating – whether to print Cowper's 'Homer' from the first or second edition. The case of Tasso's 'Jerusalem' was curiously in point. He recast it, like Cowper, in deference to the critics; like Cowper, he worked upon the revision when his mind was diseased, the disease being very much of the same kind; and like Cowper, against his own judgment, he smoothed down the versification, and took especial care to get rid of all elisions. The poem thus revised is only reprinted in this and one other general edition of his works, and is never read. There could not be a more complete coincidence; and I shall in consequence, without scruple, print that version on which Cowper bestowed unwearied pain while his mind was at its best, and while he followed his own unbiased judgment.⁸

The rationale presented here is repeated and underlined in the 'Advertisement' to Southey's edition of Cowper's Homer:

Whoever has perused the translator's letters must have perceived that he had considered with no ordinary care the scheme of his versification, and that when he resolved upon altering it in a second edition, it was in deference to the opinion of others. It seems to the Editor that Cowper's own judgement is entitled to more respect than that of any, or all his critics; and that the version which he composed when his faculties were most active and his spirits least subject to depression ... ought not to be superseded by a revisal, or rather reconstruction, which was undertaken three years

before his death ... In support of this determination, the case of Tasso may be cited as curiously in point. The great Italian poet altered his Jerusalem like Cowper, against his own judgement, in submission to his critics: he made the alteration in the latter years of his life, and in a diseased state of mind; and he proceeded upon the same prescribed rule of smoothing down his versification, and removing all the elisions.⁹

It is worth noting that Southey draws a parallel between Cowper, an immediate literary precursor who exercised a strong influence on the writers of his generation, and Torquato Tasso, who, by the early nineteenth century, had been ‘established as a prototype of the Romantic poet, ... the hypersensitive creative artist at odds with society’.¹⁰ In Cowper’s case, the main interest evidently lay with the poet’s work rather than with the circumstances of his life, but one wonders to what extent this analogy would allow Southey’s contemporaries to see him as a figure with whom they could identify. Even if he was the only one to make the association explicit, it raises larger questions about the prevailing Romantic attitude towards the public’s involvement in shaping – and reshaping – the output of individual authors. Southey chooses the first edition of Cowper’s Homer not because the later revisions resulted in an objectively inferior version, but rather because they seem to have been occasioned by external forces during a time when the translator’s mental health was in decline. We never learn why elisions are essential for rendering the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into English, and, as we have seen, Arnold’s complaint was precisely that the versification in its original state lacked Homer’s smoothness or ‘flowing rapidity’; in Southey’s eyes, the fact that Cowper altered these features ‘against his own judgement’ and ‘in deference to the opinion of others’ automatically detracts from the quality of the translation, regardless of whether or not the changes served to bring it closer to the Homeric epics. Despite their oft-repeated disapproval of the version published in 1791, later critics may have unwittingly inherited this prejudice; at

any rate, none of them seem to have gone back to the revised text to verify for themselves its alleged insignificance. Ironically, Southey's prediction that the second edition of Cowper's Homer would suffer the same fate as Tasso's *Gerusalemme conquistata* turned out to be something of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Indeed, this unfavourable view, and the resulting scholarly neglect of the second edition, persist in the most in-depth discussion of Cowper's translation to date: an unpublished doctoral thesis by Catrin Williams. In placing the first edition at the centre of her analysis, Williams expresses cautious agreement with Southey:

The failure of reviewers to appreciate the achievement of the First Edition, the influence of William Hayley and John Johnson, and the almost unremitting depression that affected him during [the last nine] years [of his life] seem to have oppressed Cowper and persuaded him to remove, almost piecemeal, many of his best lines.¹¹

Like Southey, Williams sees Cowper's willingness to amend the already published text in the wake of its poor reception as a weakness, and argues that the changes made after 1791 were to the work's detriment: 'we might wish he had been less receptive [to the criticisms voiced by reviewers], since in the process of revision the rich character and expression of the First Edition would seem to be somewhat diluted' (p. 141). However, she provides only a handful of examples to support her point, and these are introduced before she gets around to discussing any of Cowper's 'best lines' at greater length. Although enforced by actual comparisons with the original, the first edition's claim to our undivided attention thus remains as inconclusive as it was in Southey's day.

Not only is Southey's reasoning flawed by virtue of leaving the Greek source text out of account, it is based on an inaccurate representation of both the translation process and

Cowper's mode of writing in general. Quite apart from the misconceptions about Tasso's motives for recasting the *Gerusalemme liberata*, the image of the English poet as a misunderstood genius bending to social pressure requires serious qualification. While Williams associates Cowper's responsiveness to later criticism with an alleged dilution of the work's 'character and expression', and uses it as the basis for dismissing the second edition, she devotes ample space to scrutinizing the translator's exchanges with a number of critics in the years leading up to the publication of his Homer and the revisions he made in response to their strictures. 'By considering these various criticisms alongside the manuscript drafts of the *Iliad*', she writes, 'we are able to examine the nature and degree of influence that Cowper's early critics exercised over the final shape of the translation' (pp. 8-9). There is no reason why this methodology might not be just as fruitfully applied to the continuing transformation that the text underwent after adopting its supposedly 'final shape', even if one does not approve of the outcome, or why the impulse behind it should be seen as fundamentally different from the translator's previous reliance on sources beyond his own creative faculties. A detailed look at Cowper's biography – in particular his extensive correspondence – reveals that the desire to revise his translation sprang from the same motives as his decision to undertake it in the first place, and that, rather than contaminating the final product, 'the opinion of others' played an important role in its composition from the very start. As will become clear, the eventual 'deference to the critics' that Southey deplors is consistent with the translator's practice of incorporating suggestions he received from friends, family members, and professional acquaintances prior to 1791; seen in this light, the second edition appears as a natural evolution and logical conclusion of his project. By acknowledging the beneficial effect of outside influences on Cowper's psyche as well as on the text itself, we may correct the negative picture created by his nineteenth-century editor. At the same time, such a reappraisal can help us to modify our own post-Romantic

assumptions about translation as primarily an expression of authorial talent by placing equal emphasis on its potential to function as a social activity.

Southey's portrayal of Cowper is wrong on two counts. First, he draws too sharp a distinction between the period when 'his faculties were most active and his spirits least subject to depression' and 'the latter years of his life', when he was 'in a diseased state of mind'. Barbara Packer's analysis of Cowper's life locates not just the composition of the first English Homer (1784-91) but Cowper's entire career as a publishing poet squarely within a period during which he 'alternated between chronic and severe states of depression'.¹² Far from hindering the flow of creative energies, his 'diseased state of mind' seems to have acted as a catalyst, as the following letter to Harriot Hesketh confirms:

My dear Cousin, Dejection of Spirits, which I suppose may have prevented many a man from becoming an Author, made me one. I find constant employment necessary, and therefore take care to be constantly employ'd. Manual occupations do not engage the mind sufficiently, as I know by experience, having tried many. But Composition, [especiall]y of verse, absorbs it wholly.¹³

If composing original verse offered a temporary remedy for Cowper's depression, translating Homer would come to fulfil much the same purpose. As he writes to a correspondent, John Newton, in December 1785:

Employment ... with the pen, is through habit become essential to my well-being, and to produce always Original poems, especially of considerable length, is not easy. For some weeks after I had finish'd the Task and sent away the last sheet corrected, I was through necessity idle, and suffer'd not a little in my Spirits for being so. One day

being in such distress of mind as was hardly supportable, I took up the Iliad; and merely to divert attention ... translated the first 12 lines of it. The same necessity pressing me again, I had recourse to the same expedient, and translated more. Every day bringing its occasion for employment with it, every day consequently added something to the work. 'Till at last I began to reflect thus. The Iliad and the Odyssey together consist of about forty thousand verses. To translate these forty thousand verses will furnish me with occupation for a considerable time. I have already made some progress, and I find it a most agreeable amusement ... The Literati are all agreed to a man, that although Pope has given us two pretty poems under Homer's titles, there is not to be found in them the least portion of Homer's spirit, nor the least resemblance of his manner ... These and many other considerations, but especially a mind that abhorred a vacuum as its chief bane, impelled me so effectually to the work, that 'ere long I mean to publish Proposals for a subscription to it.

(Letters, II, 411; 3 December 1785)

In addition to a long-harboured dislike of Pope's version, it was Cowper's fear of idleness and, consequently, of the further deterioration of his mental constitution that provided the initial impetus for rendering the Homeric epics into English. James King, Cowper's biographer, suggests that he may have been playing up the therapeutic quality of his occupation in order to avoid incurring his friend's censure for translating a 'pagan' poet; indeed, Cowper did not tell Newton about the project until almost a year after he had commenced work, and was more reluctant to discuss it with him than with any of his other correspondents.¹⁴ But the fact remains that this preliminary stage of the translation process, growing as it did out of Cowper's earlier poetic activity, was marked by the same 'disease' whose impact made the final revisions so objectionable in Southey's eyes. Evidently

Cowper's 'spirits' were still 'subject to depression' even when he was at his most productive, and given that they had already reached two low points by the time he conceived his *Homer*, they may have fluctuated more wildly over the course of the whole enterprise than Southey's chronological division seems to imply. Such persistently unstable conditions would in themselves weaken the editor's case for selecting the 1791 version of the text over the second edition from 1802.

More importantly, to some extent Cowper's work had always been influenced by 'the opinion of others', and the first *Homer* translation was no exception. It is unlikely that either *Adelphi* or his part of the *Olney Hymns* would have been written without encouragement from Newton, and we know that the titular 'task' of composing what would become his most famous poem was originally set by another close friend, Lady Austen. Rather than focusing on a small audience of like-minded individuals, however, this responsiveness to outside stimuli extended beyond Cowper's immediate readership and included the public at large, and it constituted no small source of anxiety for the aspiring poet. Priscilla Gilman gives a useful analysis of his keen sensitivity to – indeed, his paranoid obsessions with – all forms of criticism directed at him; based on the vast body of letters that he left behind, she describes Cowper's ambivalent relationship with his critics as wavering between the two constraining attitudes of 'diffidence' and 'ambition' and, correspondingly, between the two coping strategies of 'indifference' and what Cowper terms 'carefulness of revisal' (*Letters*, I, 495; 7 July 1781).¹⁵ The former pair of opposites features prominently in a letter written to Lady Hesketh while he was engaged in translating *Homer*:

The frown of a Critic freezes all my poetical powers, and discourages me to a degree that makes me ashamed of my own weakness; yet I presently recover my confidence again ... I am not ashamed to confess that having commenced as Author, I am most

ardently desirous to succeed as such. *I have, what perhaps you little suspect me of, in my nature an infinite share of ambition.* But with it, I have at the same time, as you well know, an equal share of diffidence. To this combination of opposite qualities it has been owing that till lately I stole through life without undertaking any thing, yet always wishing to distinguish myself. At last I ventured, ventured too in the only path that at so late a period was yet open to me, and am determined, if God have not determined otherwise, to work my way through the obscurity that has been so long my portion, into notice. Every thing therefore that seems to threaten this my favorite purpose with disappointment affects me nearly. I suppose all ambitious minds are in the same predicament. He that seeks distinction must be sensible of disapprobation exactly in the same proportion as he desires applause.

(*Letters*, II, 543; 15 May 1786; original italics)

While indifference may have been ‘the central strategy of his early career’, the mid-1780s saw Cowper veering more towards an attempt to escape criticism by frenetically revising his texts (Gilman, p. 91). Around that time, moreover, ‘Cowper comes to rely on a much larger circle of friends for advice’ (p. 107). In the case of Homer, he received considerable (though unsolicited) help from the Swiss artist Henry Fuseli, who, upon arriving on the London scene, was staying with Cowper’s publisher, Joseph Johnson, and found casual employment as a reader, reviewer, and translator in the latter’s service. In January 1786, Fuseli, an accomplished classical scholar, was shown a specimen of Cowper’s work, and made several corrections before it was returned to him; on Johnson’s recommendation, the revision of future instalments continued in the same fashion, without the two men ever meeting in person (King, *Cowper*, pp. 199-200). At first, Cowper was reluctant to yield to the authority of his unknown revisor, as this would inevitably delay publication, and he anticipated his strictures

with mixed feelings, writing to Lady Hesketh that ‘He is, in truth, a very clever fellow, perfectly a Stranger to me, and one who I promise you will not spare for severity of animadversion where he shall find occasion (*Letters*, II, 470; 31 January 1786). Nevertheless, a letter to Walter Bagot shows his ultimate gratitude for Fuseli’s freely given assistance:

my translation ... passes under the revisal of a most accurate discerner of all blemishes ... I am in the hands of a very extraordinary person of the name of Fuseli ... He is intimate with my Bookseller, and voluntarily offer’d his service. I was at first doubtful whether to accept it, but ... I at length conceded, and have since found great reason to rejoice that I did ... By his assistance I have improved many passages, supplied many oversights, and corrected many mistakes.

(*Letters*, II, 574-5; 4 July 1786)

Despite the acerbic tone and the exacting nature of his remarks, Fuseli’s tastes were very much in alignment with Cowper’s, and King argues that it is largely owing to his intervention that the latter’s vision of a new English Homer was eventually realized.¹⁶ By holding the translator to his self-imposed standards of literalness and often overriding the contradictory opinions of friends and critics, he helped him achieve his ambition: ‘Cowper was being driven ever further from vestiges of Augustan decorum in Fuseli’s caustic annotations’ (*Cowper*, p. 210).

Williams questions Fuseli’s objectivity and the degree to which his own principles aligned with Cowper’s. She identifies a discrepancy between the two men’s attitudes towards Homer which had practical implications: ‘both Fuseli and Cowper recognise in Homer’s poetry an interaction between specific literal and compositional details and overall effect and meaning. But where Cowper seeks to reproduce such effects through the skilful deployment

of English blank verse, Fuseli tends to demand a more rigorous replication of the Greek' (p. 152). Nevertheless, she concludes that 'the success of the collaboration between Cowper and Fuseli would seem ... to be due to the convergent (but not identical) nature of their critical interests' (p. 173). To mention but one of the many instances in which Fuseli's extant remarks call for a more rigorous adherence to the Greek original than Cowper was at least initially willing to offer, we may consider the translator's polite omission of the word 'sweat' from a description of Nestor and Machaon, which, in the opinion of his revisor, turned these warriors into 'washerwomen' and was consequently altered. Williams compares two early manuscript drafts:

and themselves,
 Machaon and the Sage of Pylus, stood
 To catch the sea-breeze on the beach awhile,
 And dry the damps, that in the sultry day
 Their garment had from all their pores imbibed.

On the beach awhile
 With faces to the breeze oppos'd they stood
 Their raiment sweat-imbued in the cool air
 To ventilate

While Cowper still 'struggles to incorporate the perspiration' in the second version, the published text shows him 'more comfortable with the poetising of sweat' (Williams, pp. 156-7):

On the beach awhile

Their tunics sweat-imbued in the cool air

They ventilated, facing the full breeze

(*Iliad* 1791, 11.744-6)

A somewhat less straightforward example of a revision that could be due to Fuseli's painterly insistence on minute exactness and attention to expressive detail is the process by which Cowper arrived at his translation of Juno's epithet *βοῶπις* ('ox-eyed'). Williams tracks the translator's attempts to get to grips with this word through successive drafts, noting that, in his translation of Book 1, he at first adopted Pope's rendering 'majestic Juno' before revising it to 'the Goddess heifer-eyed', and finally settling for the compromise 'the Goddess ample-eyed'. Elsewhere, in Book 4, the text was likewise adjusted from 'with looks of majesty supreme' to 'the Goddess with protuberant eyes' and thence to 'the Goddess heifer-eyed', only for *βοῶπις* to be retranslated as 'ample-eyed' at the last moment (p. 165). Williams' findings clearly show that 'Cowper does not always conform himself either to Fuseli's criticisms or Homer's peculiarities' (p. 148). Even so, the painter's heavy involvement in the translation process undermines the idea that Cowper was merely following 'his own unbiased judgment' in translating the Greek, and thus further diminishes the alleged difference between the circumstances of the first and second editions of his Homer. Cowper did revise his version 'in deference to the critics', but he started doing so at a much earlier stage than Southey's account might lead us to believe; if the 1802 text is to be dismissed on the grounds of external interference, then the same argument could be made with regard to the 1791 publication.

Indeed, the changes that Southey observes in the 'reconstruction ... undertaken three years before [Cowper's] death' are already prefigured in the text he chose for his edition of

the poet's works. This becomes evident when we consider that 1791 was not, in fact, the first time that the translation appeared in print. Through their combined efforts, Cowper's friends – Joseph Johnson, Lady Hesketh, and General Spencer Cowper, another cousin invested in the success of the project – prevailed upon him to publish a sample of his Homer along with the *Proposals for Printing by Subscription* (1786). The passage he submitted, covering part of the interview between Priam and Achilles from *Iliad* Book 24, was the one that occasioned his collaboration with Fuseli, and a series of revisions took place (King, *Cowper*, pp. 198-201). While Cowper was trying to comply with the demands of the fastidious artist, his other collaborators raised objections of their own. One point on which they agreed with Fuseli was the translator's excessive use of elisions. Cowper vigorously defended this practice in a letter to Johnson: 'As to those elisions of the vowel before a vowel, which ... are invariably excepted against, they are of the very essence of the manner, that I have adopted, and in my judgment are no blemishes' (*Letters*, II, 472; 1 February 1786). On Lady Hesketh he unleashed a whole 'volley of good reasons' for cutting off the 'e' in 'the':

In the 1st. place. *The* is a barbarism ... In the two best languages that ever were spoken, the Greek and the Latin, there is no similar incumbrance of expression to be found. 2ly. The perpetual use of it in our language is to us miserable Poets attended with two great inconveniences. Our verse consisting only of ten syllables, it not unfrequently happens that the 5th. part of a line is to be engrossed, and necessarily too unless Elision prevents it, by this abominable intruder; and ... open vowels are continually the consequence. *The* Element – *The* air – &c. 3dly.– The French ... dispose of their *Le* and their *La* without ceremony, and always take care that they shall be absorbed ... in the Vowel that immediately follows them.– 4thly. ... the Practice of cutting short a *The*, is warranted by Milton who of all English Poets that

ever lived, had certainly the finest ear ... 5thly. ... the custom of abbreviating *The*, belongs to the Stile which in my Advertisement annex'd to the Specimen, I profess to write in. The Use of that Stile would have warranted me in the practise of much greater liberty of this sort than I ever intended to take. In perfect consistence with that stile, I might say – i'th'tempest. i'th'door-way &c. which however I would not allow myself to do, because I was aware that it would be objected to, and with reason. But it seems to me for the causes abovesaid, that when I shorten *The* before a vowel, or before a *Wh*, as in the line you mention

Than th'whole broad Hellespont in all his ports.–

my license is not equally exceptionable. Because *W*, though he rank as a consonant, in the word *whole* is not allowed to announce himself to the ear, & *H*. is an Aspirate.

(*Letters*, II, 493-4; 5 March 1786; original italics)

Nevertheless, by March 1786 Cowper had already adopted a more pragmatic view regarding his prosodic ideal, for he prefaces the above list with the concession that 'I do not indeed absolutely covenant, promise and agree that I will discard *all* my Elisions, but I hereby bind myself to dismiss *as many* of them as without sacrificing energy to sound, I can' (p. 493), and he closes it by vowing to 'allow to *The* his whole dimensions, wheresoever it can possibly be done' (p. 494). Later that month, he proudly reported to his cousin that 'I bestowed two mornings in the last week, on the extirpation of elisions only ... I displaced, I suppose, not less than thirty, some of them horrible creatures, and such as even I myself was glad to be rid of' (*Letters*, II, 499; 20 March 1786), and in May he apologized to Walter Bagot for the 'great fault' of 'the harshness of some of the elisions' in his specimen, promising that 'no such monsters will be found in the volume' (20 May 1786; *Letters*, II, 546).

In fact, Cowper went on to correct every single instance of a contracted ‘the’ that had occurred in the published sample, as a comparison with the complete 1791 version shows:

As when th’ oppress’d, who hath in vengeance slain
 Th’ oppressor, flies for life, and enters th’ house
 Of some rich dweller in a distant realm¹⁷

As when a fugitive for blood the house
 Of some Chief enters in a foreign land

(Iliad 1791, 24.603-4)

Think on thy father full of days like me,
 And standing upon th’ utmost verge of life.

(1786, p. 3)

Think, oh Achilles, semblance of the Gods!
 On thy own father full of days like me,
 And trembling on the gloomy verge of life.

(Iliad 1791, 24.610-12)

Softly he placed his hand
 On th’ old man’s hand, and push’d it gently away.

(1786, p. 4)

softly he placed his hand
On Priam's hand, and push'd him gently away.

(Iliad 1791, 24.637-8)

He rose, and raised th' old man.
Compassionating much his hoary head
And his white beard

(1786, p. 5)

Upstarting from his seat, with pity moved
Of Priam's silver locks and silver beard,
He raised the antient father by his hand

(Iliad 1791, 24.646-8)

But if he give t' a man th' unmingled cup
Of bitterness, he makes that man a curse

(1786, p. 5)

but to whom he gives unmixt
The bitter cup, he makes that man a curse

(Iliad 1791, 24.665-6)

So also thou, as I have heard, had'st once
Wealth more than Lesbos, more than Phrygia, more

Than th' whole broad Hellespont in all his ports.

(1786, p. 6)

Thee also, antient Priam, we have heard
 Reported, once possessor of such wealth
 As neither Lesbos, seat of Macar, owns,
 Nor Eastern Phrygia, nor yet all the ports
 Of Hellespont

(*Iliad* 1791, 24.681-5)

We may note that these changes do not simply involve the substitution of unelided definite articles for elided ones; in each case, the translator managed to find an alternative way of avoiding the dreaded hiatus between open vowels, thus staying true to his personal preferences even as he conformed to those of his correspondents. Cowper's readiness to part with his elisions was not a late development brought about by undue pressure exerted on a fading poetic genius, but rather a compromise resulting from a creative – if often frustrating – exchange with people whose opinions he had come to value as indispensable for his undertaking while it was still taking shape. Thus, it is perhaps little surprising that the number of elisions decreased further during the revisions that took place after 1791; in this respect, the evolution of the text was proceeding along a linear trajectory.

Another contentious point, related to elision, on which Cowper gradually gave way was the need for a certain degree of metrical roughness. Again, he could cite the precedent of Milton in defence of his method:

I use all possible diligence to give a graceful gait and movement to such lines as

rather hobbled a little before, with this reserve however, that when the sense requires it, or when for the sake of avoiding a monotonous cadence of the lines, of which there is always danger in so long a work, it shall appear to be prudent, I still leave a verse behind me that has some uneasiness in its formation. It is not possible to read *Paradise Lost*, with an ear for harmony, without being sensible of the great advantage which Milton drew from such a management. One line only occurs to me at present as an instance of what I mean, and I cannot stop to recollect more; but rumbling and rough as it is, it is in my mind, considering the subjects, one of the finest that ever was composed. He is describing hell; and as if the contemplation of such a scene had scared him out of all his poetical wits, he finishes the terrible picture thus,—

Abominable, unutterable [sic], *and worse*

Than fancy yet had formed, or fear conceived,

Gorgons and hydras and chimæras dire.

... the deformity of the first of these three lines is the greatest beauty imaginable. This, however, is only an instance of uncouthness where the *sense* recommends it. Had I the book before me, I could soon fill my sheet with quotations of irregular lines taken from the most beautiful parts of his poem, which he used partly as foils to the rest, and partly to relieve the ear ... from the tedium of an unvaried and perpetual smoothness. This I understand to be one of the great secrets of verse-writing in a piece of great length.

(*Letters*, II, 499-500; 20 March 1786; original italics)

As Williams points out (p. 188), Samuel Johnson quotes the same line (*Paradise Lost* 2.626) in one of his *Rambler* essays on Milton's versification as an example of permissible elision.

The final vowel of words like ‘abominable’ and ‘inutterable’, Johnson argues, ‘is so faintly pronounced in common speech, that the loss of it in poetry is scarcely perceived; and therefore such compliance with the measure may be allowed’, although he is quick to add that ‘even these contractions encrease the roughness of a language too rough already; and though in long poems they may be sometimes suffered, it never can be faulty to forbear them’.¹⁸

Cowper, on the other hand, has nothing but admiration for Milton’s verse, yet he, too, describes it as ‘rumbling and rough’ and draws a connection between roughness and elision when, in the same letter to Lady Hesketh, he concedes that his own line ‘Than th’ whole broad Hellespont in all his ports’ has been ‘mended’ by the removal of the word ‘whole’: ‘smoother it is, no doubt, and sufficiently emphatical into the bargain’ (*Letters*, II, 501; 20 March 1786). While this particular change served to correct the ‘shorten[ed] The before ... a Wh’ for which he had still made excuses only two weeks earlier, his revisions of the 1786 specimen also affected ‘those elisions of the vowel before a vowel, which ... are of the very essence of the manner, that I have adopted’ and thus provide further evidence that he was accommodating his readers’ wishes before the complete translation had even been published. As they originally stood, two of the lines he amended would be hypermetrical if it were not for the suppression of the ‘y’ at the end of ‘many’ and ‘massy’:

And for his Sire, Achilles, who by turns

Deplor’d Patroclus also. Many a groan

Both utter’d, such as fill’d the spacious tent.

(1786, p. 5, emphasis mine)

Achilles wept

By turns his father, and by turns his friend
 Patroclus; sounds of sorrow fill'd the tent.

(*Iliad* 1791, 24.641-3)

Such a guard as our's
 He should not easily elude, such gates,
So massy', he should not easily unbar.

(1786, p. 7, emphasis mine)

guards vigilant as ours
 He should not easily elude, such gates,
 So massy, should not easily unbar.

(*Iliad* 1791, 24.711-13)

Compared to Milton's picture of Hell, it is less obvious why the 'sense' of the first example would absolutely 'require' an elision, or what 'great advantage' Cowper could gain from the slightly redundant 'he' that absorbs the preceding vowel in the second case. Nor did he completely purge the passage of such elements of 'uneasiness'; in the above example 'Softly he placed his hand | On th' old man's hand, and push'd it gently away', the replacement of 'th' old man' with 'Priam' obviated the need for an elided article, but the 'y-a' elision of 'gently away' escaped revision and, according to Williams, 'reveal[s] Cowper's sensitivity to the expression of sense through prosody':

In the elision, there is both a stillness and an expansiveness as Achilles, in the moment that he makes contact with Priam, also moves him away. The moment of

recognition is both one of closeness and separateness. Achilles' feeling of closeness – expressed in the spontaneous gesture of physical closeness (he placed his hand | On Priam's hand') – is balanced by a movement away (Achilles then 'push'd him gently away') as the immediacy of the other person's existence and experience reveals his foreignness.

(Williams, p. 200)

Despite Lady Hesketh's protests, incidentally, we are told that even this effect was not retained without the sanction of a close acquaintance, General Cowper having been 'particularly pleased' with it (*Letters*, II, 494; 5 March 1786), which might explain why it endures as a feature of the text in the second edition (*Iliad* 1802, 4.634-5). On the whole, it was thus possible for the translator to make small sacrifices without compromising his larger scheme: 'Cowper's desire for metrical roughness to obtrude itself at key moments of his work was not quelled in future revisions, although the trend of those revisions was towards polishing and regularizing' (King, *Cowper*, p. 204).

As the history of its critical reception outlined at the beginning of this discussion makes clear, the 1791 edition of Cowper's Homer still gave ample grounds for complaints about his Miltonic manner. Early reviews of the translation proved that Lady Hesketh's reservations were justified; an anonymous article in the *Critical Review* directly responded to Cowper's prefatory assertion that 'A line, rough in itself ... saves the ear the pain of an irksome monotony, and seems even to add greater smoothness to others. Milton ... has exemplified in his *Paradise Lost* the effect of this practice frequently' (1791, I, x-xi):

We are ready to acknowledge that Mr. Cowper sometimes roughens his lines with success, and they prove an excellent accompaniment to the sentiment ... In a long

poem we have must not expect a constant succession of faultless lines: yet we can see no reason why musical periods might not be placed, according to the author's abilities, interchangeably in different parts of different lines ... so as not to disgust the reader with too level a stream of harmony; why flat and feeble passages must be introduced for the sake of variety ... Mr. Cowper ... must know that many passages in Milton are not approved, but excused, on account of the superior excellency of others.¹⁹

The reviewer for the *English Review* likewise questions the translator's logic, and damns his work more strongly still:

That some lines should be less harmonious than others, is proper, and that they will be so, is unavoidable ... But this does not warrant the introduction of lines which are *not* verse almost in every page ... A variety in the cadence of verse is looked for and expected by every reader of taste; but in poetry, as well as in music, he must be considered as a bungler indeed whose only method of producing variety is by the introduction of too frequent and unscientific discords.²⁰

With regard to 'The flowing numbers of the Grecian bard', the reviewer concludes, 'Mr. Cowper is a bad imitator, for his own numbers are, upon the whole, harsh, abrupt, cumbrous, and frequently *not* verse' (pp. 455-6). He then produces a long list of examples that show 'a want of that rhythm, or cadence, which is essential to verse, arising either from a passion for inversion, from redundant syllables, improper accent, or some other fault in the formation of the line', and in a footnote at the end he blames 'the harshness of our translator's numbers' on his 'blind adoration of Milton' (pp. 457, 463). These critical voices, anticipating Arnold and

later commentators, undoubtedly reinforced the revisionary trend towards greater regularity in the years following publication, and thereby contributed to the radically altered text that Southey would encounter in the 1802 edition. Cowper's realization 'that it is necessary ... to consult the Taste of our own day' (*Letters*, II, 494; 5 March 1786), however, precedes them by half a decade, and he reached it through a dialogue with individuals who could at times exasperate him with their conflicting demands but were, on the whole, supportive of his undertaking. By failing to distinguish the benevolent and openly invited feedback on the early project from its eventual reception by the public, Southey creates the false impression of a monolithic readership whose negative reaction threw the translator off course. In reality, that course was constantly being readjusted as he went along.

Even if unfavourable reviews (or the mere prospect thereof) were a major factor behind Cowper's change of mind, his impulse to appease and forestall detractors need not be taken as a sign that he lacked conviction or artistic integrity. He may have dreaded the moment of publication, and occasionally indulged in fantasies about 'hang[ing] all these Critics' (*Letters*, II, 484; 20 February 1786) prior to issuing his specimen, but fear and hostility gave way to – or were at least tempered with – feelings of gratitude once he realized that the work stood to benefit from such criticisms: 'I wish to learn from every body' (*Letters*, III, 597; 10 December 1791). Gilman points out how the rhetoric of his correspondence could turn anonymous attacks into another source of support: 'So great is Cowper's desire to perfect his translations ... that he comes to see even reviewers as possible collaborators in the effort. As friends become preliminary critics, critics become something like helpful friends' (p. 107). In particular, she cites two letters from 1792 in which Cowper's 'deference to the critics' (to use Southey's term) appears not as a desperate and half-hearted act of submission but rather as a strategic move towards a revised version that promised to genuinely improve upon the first:

I purpose to keep back a second edition 'till I have had opportunity to avail myself of the remarks both of friends and strangers. The Ordeal of Criticism still awaits me in the Reviews, and probably they will all in their turn mark many things that may be mended. By the Gentleman's Magazine I have already profited in several instances. My Reviewer there, though favourable in the main, is a pretty close observer, and though not always right, is often so.

(Letters, IV, 12-13; 14 February 1792)

I have no leisure for Homer, but shall certainly find leisure to examine him with a reference to your strictures, before I send him a second time to the Printer. This I am at present unwilling to do, chusing rather to wait ... till I shall have undergone the discipline of all the Reviewers; none of whom have yet taken me in hand, the Gentleman's Magazine excepted. By several of his remarks I have been benefited, and shall no doubt be benefited by the remarks of all.

(Letters, IV, 18; 21 February 1792)

Evidently, criticism, for Cowper, was not only an 'ordeal' to be endured but also an 'opportunity' to be embraced. As had been the case with the sudden appearance of Fuseli among the private critics of his Homer, the longer it continued, the more appreciative he grew of the public scrutiny to which he was subjected. Although he would still complain about the unfair treatment he received in some of the reviews – 'abusive to a degree of malignity, that will rather serve me than do me harm' (28 March 1793; *Letters, IV, 315*) – the reviewers, too, were admitted into the steadily widening circle of readers whose advice he took on board. In contrast to Southey's rigid dichotomy between the translator's 'own unbiased judgment' and

‘the opinion of others’, this inclusiveness points to a concept of authorship that depends less on the assertion of creative autonomy than on the fulfilment of one’s obligation to an intended audience; as Cowper himself puts it, ‘An author should consider himself as bound not to please himself but the Public; and so far as the good pleasure of the Public may be learn’d from the Critics, I design to accommodate myself to it’ (*Letters*, IV, 316; 29 March 1793). In maximizing the input from ‘friends and strangers’ and taking full advantage of ‘the remarks of all’, the poet saw himself as refining his original idea of an English Homer rather than diluting it. The proper medium for rendering Homer, he perceived, could not derive from any single authority but had to be negotiated collectively, despite the seemingly impossible task of reconciling the many different suggestions that reached him.

Cowper’s own pluralistic outlook on his *Iliad* and *Odyssey* accepts the public’s participation in the act of composition, and consequently reduces the status of the 1791 edition from a supposedly finished product to a provisional step in an ongoing and open-ended process. As Gilman puts it, ‘The translation itself ... becomes something of a communal endeavor ... and publication is therefore not final. The published work is only a draft’ (p. 108). Underneath its superficially agonistic thrust, we can thus detect a subsidiary strand in the text; going through successive stages of revision and synthesizing a multiplicity of opinions, it performs an integrative function that slowly modifies Cowper’s competitive rivalry with Pope and the general anti-neoclassical sentiment to which Southey may have been attracted because it remained prevalent in his own day. Yet while the effect of this function may not have been felt until the appearance of the fully revised translation in 1802, its demonstrable presence from the earliest moments of composition onward serves as a powerful counter-argument against the editor’s rejection of that version. Since the removal of elisions and the smoothing down of Cowper’s versification – stylistic decisions that Southey singled out for special criticism – did not come about suddenly but took place over a

prolonged period of time and under the influence of various critics, they cannot be dismissed as deviations from a hypothetical blueprint, nor completely isolated from the version of the translation that he considered worth preserving. As we have seen, there is no part of the text that reflects the translator's 'own unbiased judgment' in an unadulterated form, no point in time at which he was not 'taken in hand' by someone else.

On the other hand, the continual implementation of the changes mentioned testifies to the unity of the whole project and endows it with a sense of directedness. Granted, the existing evidence does not actually disprove Southey's claim that Cowper altered his work 'in deference to the critics'; it merely shows that the first expressions of this deference predate the 1791 publication. Again, however, if Cowper was easily swayed by outside forces and quick to abandon his original design as soon as he had committed it to paper, this should not be held against him. The translator's susceptibility to criticism is only a weakness if we imagine the alterations as being forced upon him, rather than proceeding from a point of agreement. That this was not (always) the case is suggested by two letters that touch upon the subject of versification and show him warming to his critics' point of view. While Lady Hesketh obtained the somewhat defiant promise that 'The work will be much improved, not by its greater smoothness only, concerning which I have my doubts whether it be an improvement indeed, but by a better version of many whole passages, speeches, similes &c.' (*Letters*, IV, 311; 23 March 1793), Johnson would soon hear a more enthusiastic endorsement of such smoothness:

Homer ... is now much smoother in my translation of him than he is in himself, and, to say truth, I not only hope that he will please others the more for being so, but am myself inclined to like him the better for it.

(*Letters*, IV, 337; 16 May 1793)

If the total erasure of elided definite articles from the 1786 sample is any indication, Cowper's compliance with the desire of his critics almost bordered on over-compensation; in all likelihood, his emendatory enthusiasm would not have gained in intensity as it did without a sincere commitment to perfecting the already published text. Insofar as he really believed that the revisions he was making would change the work for the better, the 1802 edition represents the culmination of his efforts, and the closest approximation of what he wanted Homer to sound like in English. The network of critical readers who assisted him in the project did not impair his judgment; they helped to give it focus.

Despite the chronic anxiety over his public reception, this social dimension of the writing process must have appealed to Cowper on a personal level. Collaborative translations were, of course, no rarity in eighteenth-century England; Pope himself had not been above enlisting the help of others to ensure the swift completion of his *Odyssey*. Cowper turned to Homer not only as a distraction to occupy his troubled mind, but also as a means of reconnecting with a world on which he had turned his back – and indeed, raising subscriptions to the forthcoming translations had the positive side effect of renewing ties with people he remembered from his time at Westminster and the Middle and Inner Temples. As King points out, and as the correspondence we have seen might have already suggested, Cowper's accomplishment as a translator coincided with a peak in his letter-writing activity: 'During the period from 1785 to 1791, he managed to re-establish many old friendships and give them new life in the course of his preparations for publication', and while his main incentive may have been nothing more than a desire to secure the favour of prominent members of society, 'more than once this superficial aim led to the discovery of a surviving affection, a shared stock of memories that could bring happiness and strength to him' (King, *Cowper*, p. 192).

Cowper's success in strengthening social bonds did not end with the first publication of his Homer, and occasionally went beyond the mere addition of another name to the list of subscribers, leaving traces in the text of the translation itself. He found an unlikely collaborator in Edward Thurlow, the man who had joined him as a legal apprentice at Chapman's office in Greville Street in 1751, who had witnessed his mental breakdown first-hand, and who had since risen to the position of Lord Chancellor.²¹ After not responding to the offer of a copy of Cowper's first volume of poems in 1782, Thurlow subscribed for two fine copies of the Homer. In July 1791 he wrote to Henry Cowper, the poet's kinsman (who seems to have been instrumental in bringing the work to his attention), to express doubts about the suitability of blank verse (amongst other criticisms); the letter included his own rhymed version of Achilles' speech to Phoenix from the *Iliad* 9, which he challenged Cowper to elevate and polish. In his answer, the translator granted the superior accuracy of Thurlow's rendering, but not the superiority of rhyme as a medium for Homer's poetry:

I allow your Lordship's version ... to be very close and closer much than mine ... But I believe that should either your Lordship or I give them burnish and elevation, your lines would be found, in measure as they acquired stateliness, to have lost the merit of fidelity.

(*Letters*, III, 560; c.15 August 1791)

Elaborating on his case for rhyme, Thurlow replied with yet another translation of the same passage, this time in blank verse – 'the strictest translation I can invent, leaving you the double task of bringing it closer, and of polishing it into the style of poetry':

Ah! Phoenix, aged Father, guest of Jove!

I relish no such honours: for my hope
 Is to be honour'd by Jove's fated will,
 Which keeps me close beside these sable ships,
 Long as the breath shall in my bosom stay,
 Or as my precious knees retain their spring.
 Further I say, – and cast it in your mind!
 Melt not my spirit down by weeping thus,
 And wailing only for that great man's sake,
 Atrides: neither ought you love that man,
 Lest I should hate the friend, I love so well.
 With me united 'tis your nobler part
 To gall his spirit, who has galled mine.
 With me reign equal, half my honours share.
 These will report; stay you here, and repose
 On a soft bed; and with the beaming morn
 Consult we, whether to go home, or stay.²²

Thurlow's comments on the first line of the Greek original (*Iliad*, 9.607) suggest that 'ἄττα
 ['father'] was the fondling expression of childhood to its parent' and that 'γεραιὲ ['old']
 expressed the reverence which naturally accrues to age'; as he observes, moreover 'Διοτρεφής
 ['fostered, cherished by Zeus']', the adjective immediately following ἄττα γεραιὲ, 'implies an
 history. Hospitality was an article of religion, strangers were supposed to be sent by God, and
 honoured accordingly ... Phoenix had been describing that as his situation in the court of
 Peleus' (*Correspondence*, p. 112; August 1791). These nuances are more effectively
 conveyed by his own choice of words – 'Phoenix, aged Father, guest of Jove!' – than by the

published text of Cowper's translation, which reads 'Phœnix, my guide, wise, noble and revered!' (*Iliad* 1791, 9.758).

Cowper obliged by producing a version in heroic couplets. However, he stressed its inadequacy:

I have not treacherously departed from my pattern, that I might seem to give some proof of the justness of my own opinion, but have fairly and honestly adhered as closely to it as I could. Yet your Lordship will not have to compliment me on my success, either in respect of the poetical merit of my lines, or of their fidelity. They have just enough of each to make them deficient in the other.

(*Letters*, III, 560; c.22 August 1791)

When reworking Thurlow's earlier couplet rendering, Cowper had deliberately avoided 'meddling with his verses', as he admitted in a letter to Lady Hesketh (*Letters*, III, 567; 30 August 1791). In the present case, juxtaposition with the published translation highlights the extent of his willingness to deviate from the latter so as to indulge his friend:

Phœnix, my guide, wise, noble and revered!
 I covet no such glory; the renown
 Ordain'd by Jove for me, is to resist
 All importunity to quit my ships
 While I have pow'r to move, or breath to draw.
 Hear now, and mark me well. Cease thou from tears.
 Confound me not, pleading with sighs and sobs
 In Agamemnon's cause; O love not Him,

Lest I renounce thee, who am now thy friend.
 Assist me rather, as thy duty bids,
 Him to afflict, who hath afflicted me,
 So shalt thou share my glory and my pow'r.
 These shall report as they have heard, but here
 Rest thou this night, and with the rising morn
 We will decide, to stay or to depart.

(Iliad 1791, 9.758-72)

Oh Phoenix, father, friend, guest sent from Jove!
 Me no such honours as they yield can move,
 For I expect my honours from above.
 Here Jove has fix'd me; and while breath and sense
 Have place within me, I will never hence.
 Hear too, and mark me well – Haunt not mine ears
 With sighs, nor seek to melt me with thy tears
 For yonder chief, lest urging such a plea
 Through love of him, thou hateful prove to me.
 Thy friendship for thy friend shall brighter shine
 Wounding his spirit who has wounded mine.
 Divide with me the honours of thy throne –
 These shall return, and make their tidings known:
 But go not thou! – thy couch shall here be dress'd
 With softest fleeces for thy easy rest,
 And with the earliest blush of opening day

We will consult to seek our home, or stay.

(*Letters*, III, 560; c.22 August 1791)

Cowper clearly took Thurlow's remarks about ἄττα γεραιὲ διοτρεφεὲς into consideration; his revised version of the first line – 'Oh Phœnix, father, friend, guest sent from Jove!' – matches Thurlow's closely enough, and the recurrence of the word 'honour' (with varying inflectional endings) in the next two lines, corresponding to Homer's polyptoton τιμῆς ... τετιμῆσθαι (*Iliad*, 9.608), is another feature that their respective translations have in common. Cowper is also indebted to Thurlow for the newly introduced (and rather un-Homeric) metaphor of 'melting', the line 'Wounding his spirit who has wounded mine', which follows the same syntactic structure as his friend's 'To gall his spirit, who has galled mine', and the revised last line, which is only a slight variation on 'Consult we, whether to go home, or stay'. Apart from these coincidences, however, Cowper shares little of Thurlow's phraseology; while his attempt at a rhymed version is noticeably different from the 1791 text (and not just by virtue of its metre), it does not adhere to his model of a strictly literal translation either. Perhaps the constraints of the couplet proved too much of an obstacle for Cowper; perhaps the divergences were deemed necessary in order to meet the additional demand for poetic refinement. Be that as it may, the couplet rendering did its intended job of convincing Thurlow that blank verse was after all the proper dress for an English Homer: 'I am clearly convinced that Homer may be better translated than into rhyme, and that you have succeeded in the places I have looked into' (August 1791; *Correspondence*, p. 116).

More remarkable than this conversion itself, however, is the fact that some of the provisional changes inspired by Thurlow survive in the 1802 edition of Cowper's *Iliad*:

Phœnix, my aged father, dear to Jove!

Me no such honours int'rest; I expect
 My honours from the sov'reign will alone
 Of Jove, which shall detain me at my ships
 While I have pow'r to move, or breath to draw.
 Now mark me well. Assay not thus to melt
 My fixt resolve, pleading with sighs and tears
 In Agamemnon's cause; O love not Him,
 Lest I renounce thee, who am now thy friend.
 Assist me rather, as thy duty bids,
 Him to afflict, who hath afflicted me,
 So shalt thou share my glory and my pow'r.
 These shall report as they have heard, but here
 Rest thou this night, and with the rising morn
 We will decide, to stay or to depart.

(*Iliad* 1802, 9.852-66)

While the latter half of the speech, beginning with 'In Agamemnon's cause', is identical to its 1791 counterpart, and thus suggests a return to the translator's original vision, the opening still shows signs of his intervening exchange with the critic who prompted him to experiment with rhyme. The half-line 'Me no such honours' has been preserved from the draft he sent Thurlow, as have the words 'I expect my honours' (albeit with a different metrical distribution); Cowper thus reproduces the etymological figure that his initial rendering had failed to capture. The 'melting' metaphor, too, resurfaces after appearing in Cowper's adaptation of his friend's lines to the couplet form. But the surest indicator of Thurlow's lasting influence is the first line – 'Phœnix, my aged father, dear to Jove! – which now looks

even more similar to ‘Ah! Phoenix, aged Father, guest of Jove!’ than it did in the letter from August 1791.

Insignificant though these parallels may seem, they prove that Cowper was not merely humouring the irritable Lord Chancellor but respected his opinion as an amateur literary critic. Even if he never seriously entertained the idea of a complete *Iliad* in heroic couplets, Thurlow’s feedback evidently helped him to arrive at a better understanding of the Greek epic, and thus added to the knowledge he could acquire from more authoritative sources. Despite the temporary nature of most of the resulting verses, moreover, the exercise in writing a new translation based on somebody else’s also generated lexical building blocks whose inclusion in the final 1802 version may not reflect the translator’s quest for maximum fidelity alone, but carries with it a sense of fond memories. Cowper’s reuse of these elements several years later is as much a testament to his long-standing friendship with Thurlow as it is an expression of his continuing revisionary endeavour. An edition like Southey’s, which narrowly focuses on reconstructing the primary poetic intent behind the text, necessarily misses the interpersonal aspect of its composition and its value as a shared cultural product among men of letters from different walks of life.

While revising his Homer, Cowper not only listened to advice from old friends: he also had an open ear for the comments of more recent acquaintances. One prominent literary figure he befriended only after the initial publication was the poet and playwright William Hayley, who first contacted him in 1792 on the occasion of a newspaper report that portrayed the two of them as rivals. In search of new employment, Cowper had been persuaded by Joseph Johnson to edit Milton’s poems (illustrated by Fuseli), and Hayley, who was writing a life of Milton for an edition by another London publisher, wished to dispel any suggestion that they were in direct competition with each other. The intimacy that developed between them soon began to inform their work, as Hayley assisted Cowper in the translation of

Milton's Latin and Italian poems and included some of them in his own biography of the poet (Johnson's Fuseli-Cowper project having been abandoned in 1793). He would also go on to edit the remaining portion, which was published along with the already completed parts of Cowper's commentary on *Paradise Lost*, and he would, of course, achieve particular success as his friend's biographer.²³ The Homer, too, eventually became a subject of discussion between the two men owing to their mutual acquaintance with Thurlow, whom Hayley importuned to secure a royal pension for Cowper. While the (now) ex-chancellor could do little to help him in this cause (Hayley would have to apply directly to the Prime Minister before his wish was granted), he did devise a scheme to lift Cowper's mood: translating, as he had done in 1791, a few lines from the *Iliad* – Hector's prayer for his son Astyanax – and criticizing their treatment in the published version, he hoped to spur the translator back into action; Hayley joined him with a translation of his own.²⁴

These renderings had the desired effect. In December 1793, Cowper sent Hayley a new translation of the prayer 'not perfectly according to my own liking, but as well as I could make it, and I think better than either yours or Lord Thurlow's'. He made no claims as to its definitiveness, however:

Thus have I disciplin'd you both, and now if you please you may both discipline me. I shall not enter my version in my book till it has undergone your strictures at least, and should you write to the noble Critic again you are very welcome to submit it to his.

(*Letters*, IV, 440-2; 17 December 1793)

Again Thurlow's objections were followed up by a second letter containing fresh criticism and another rendering of the same passage, and again Cowper responded by composing 'a translation de novo ... shaped as nearly as I could contrive to his Lordship's ideas' (*Letters*,

IV, 446; 5 January 1794). The revisions that appear in Cowper's correspondence with Hayley may be compared with the 1791 and 1802 editions to measure the long-term impact of his friends' strictures:

Hear all ye Gods! as ye have giv'n to me,
 So also on my son excelling might
 Bestow, with chief authority in Troy.
 And be his record this, in time to come,
 When he returns from battle. Lo! how far
 The son excells the Sire! May every foe
 Fall under him, and he come laden home
 With spoils blood-stain'd to his dear mother's joy.

(Iliad 1791, 6.579-86)

Oh Jove and all ye Gods! grant this my son
 To prove, like me, preeminent in Troy,
 In valour such, and firmness of command.
 Be he extoll'd when he returns from fight
 As far his Sire's superior; may he slay
 His enemy, bring home his gory spoils,
 And may his mother's heart o'erflow with joy.

(Letters, IV, 440; 17 December 1793)

Grant Jove and all ye Gods! that this my son
 Be, as myself have been, illustrious here,

A valiant man, and let him reign in Troy.
 May all who witness his return from fight
 Hereafter, say – He far excells his Sire,
 And let him bring much || back || gory armour || trophies || stript²⁵
 From foes slain by him, to his mother’s joy.

(*Letters*, IV, 446; 5 January 1794)

Grant, oh ye Gods! such eminent renown
 And might in arms, as ye have giv’n to me,
 To this my son, with strength to govern Troy.
 From fight return’d, be this his welcome Home –
 “He far excels his sire” – and may he rear
 The crimson trophy, to his mother’s joy!

(*Iliad* 1802, 6.534-9)

The deictic ‘this’ that Cowper added to ‘my son’ in 1793 remains a feature of the text through all subsequent stages of revision, suggesting his correspondents approved it either implicitly or explicitly; the same goes for the replacement of the word ‘battle’ with ‘fight’. Other elements of the prayer evolved in a less linear fashion: the adjective ‘preeminent’, also introduced in 1793, was not carried forward to the second redraft sent to Thurlow, although it clearly anticipates the use of ‘eminent’ for the final publication. Similarly, the word ‘trophies’, noted in 1794 as a potential alternative to ‘armour’, seems to be an afterthought Cowper decided to keep, whether with or without receiving any comment on it. Of course, these changes only affect minor lexical elements, and we cannot be certain that any of them are the result of specific comments made by Hayley and Thurlow, or borrowings from their

respective translations, but their durability contrasts with the transience of, for example, the last line of the 1793 text – ‘And may his mother’s heart o’erflow with joy’ – which was obviously too similar to Pope’s ‘His mother’s conscious heart o’erflows with joy’,²⁶ and in consequence was dropped after a single use. The fact that even a small number of the stylistic choices in the 1802 edition emerged from Cowper’s private communication with one of his closest friends long before that edition saw the light of day is further proof that the act of translation has the power not only to establish an imaginative kinship between a translator and his author but also to forge (or reinforce) a bond between fellow admirers of the same original.

Nor did Cowper discriminate against well-meaning critics on the grounds of age; we find a similar display of affection and openness to suggestions in his reply to Hayley’s thirteen-year-old son, Thomas Alfonso, when the latter approached him with a few comments on his *Iliad* that may well be regarded as the most surprising contribution to the work’s revision.²⁷ For instance, Cowper eagerly amended an ‘uncleanly expression’ that the young Hayley’s letter pointed out to him; the phrase occurs in the following lines of the 1791 text:

Their Agamemnon, may himself be taught
His rashness, who hath thus dishonour’d foul
The life itself, and bulwark of his cause.

(*Iliad* 1791, 1.507-9)

‘*Dishonour’d foul*’, Cowper writes in his response, ‘I have wiped away, for the reason you give, which is a very just one, and the present reading is this, *Who had dared dishonour thus / The Life itself, &c.*’ (*Letters*, IV, 305; 14 March 1793). As it turns out, this rendering has barely changed by the time it resurfaces in the second edition of 1802:

Their Agamemnon, may himself be taught
 His rashness, who hath dared dishonour thus
 The life itself, and bulwark of his cause.

(*Iliad* 1802, 1.499-501)

In another case Cowper seems to have pre-empted his ‘dear little Censor’, who opined that ‘“Kindler of the fires in Heaven” ... makes Jupiter appear too much like a Lamp-lighter’ (*Iliad* 1791, 1.749); by the translator’s own account, the unintended connotation had not escaped his notice: ‘Your objection ... I had the good fortune to anticipate, and expunged the dirty ambiguity some time since, wondering not a little, that I had ever admitted it’ (*Letters*, IV, 305; 14 March 1793). It is, of course, entirely possible that Cowper was unaware of the fault up until that point and only corrected it afterwards; but regardless of when the revision took place, the permanently altered version of the epithet – ‘kindler of the lightnings’ (*Iliad* 1802, 1.729) – suggests his sincerity in addressing Alfonso’s complaint about the original wording.

The junior critic also provoked a change of two lines he considered ‘below the elevated genius of Mr. Cowper’. This observation may have been particularly well received because it was couched in complimentary language; judging by his exuberant reaction, flattery went a long way with Cowper:

The fault you find with the two first verses of Nestor’s speech, discovers such a degree of just discernment, that but for your Papa’s assurance to the contrary, I must have suspected *him* as the author of that remark, much as I should have respected it, if it had been so, I value it I assure you, my little Friend, still more as yours.

(*Letters*, IV, 305-6; 14 March 1793)

If his ego was flattered, Cowper was always willing to accept criticism, but the resulting revision again stood the test of time, remaining virtually intact in the 1802 edition:

Ah! what calamity hath fall'n on Greece!
 Now Priam and his sons may well exult,
 Now all in Ilium, shall have joy of heart
 Abundant, hearing of this broil, the prime
 Of Greece between, in council and in arms.

(*Iliad* 1791, 1.318-22)

Alas! great sorrow falls on Greece to-day.
 Priam, and Priam's Sons, with all in Troy –
 Oh! how will they exult, and in their hearts
 Triumph, once hearing of this broil between
 The prime of Greece, in council, and in arms.

(*Letters*, IV, 306; 14 March 1793)

Ye Gods! great sorrow falls on Greece to-day.
 Priam, and Priam's sons, with all in Troy –
 Oh how will they exult, what triumph feel,
 Once hearing of this strife aris'n between
 The prime of Greece in council and in arms.

(*Iliad* 1802, 1.311-15)

Naturally, Cowper did not agree with every point the teenager raised, but he patiently explained his reasoning on items he declined to revise. These explanations sometimes help us to understand Cowper's tastes and principles. Alfonso complained about the phrases 'cloth'd with impudence', 'shameless wolf', and 'face of flint' in Achilles' invective against Agamemnon (*Iliad* 1791, 1.184-213), but Cowper stayed firm, his argument based on fidelity: 'Coarse as the expressions are, they are no more than equivalent to those of Homer ... my business, you know, is not to be more polite than my Author, but to represent him as closely as I can' (*Letters*, IV, 305-6; 14 March 1793). The translator also insisted on keeping the image he had created with 'the huge mountain reeled' (*Iliad* 1791, 1.651), which his young friend thought 'makes it appear as if Olympus was drunk' (*Letters*, IV, 305, n. 1) but which, as Cowper lectured him, had a biblical precedent:

Where the word *reel* suggests to you the idea of a drunken mountain it performs the service, to which I destined it. It is a bold metaphor; but justified by one of the sublimest passages in Scripture, compared with the sublimity of which even that of Homer suffers humiliation. It is God himself who speaking, I think, by the prophet Isaiah, says,

'The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard.'

With equal boldness in the same Scripture, the poetry of which was never equalled, mountains are said to skip, to break out into singing, and the fields to clap their hands. I intend, therefore, that my Olympus shall be still tipsy.

(*Letters*, IV, 306; 14 March 1793)

Despite the humorous touch at the end, Cowper's explanation here is no less sophisticated than if he had been writing to an adult who had a literary frame of reference comparable to his own.

One final remark deserves a special mention for drawing the translator's attention to a blunder that none of his professional critics had detected. Originally, Cowper had rendered Homer's description of the council of the Trojans in Book 18 as follows:

It was a council at which no man sat,
Or dared; all stood; such terrour had on all
Fallen, for that Achilles had appear'd,
After long pause from battle's arduous toil.
First rose Polydamas

(*Iliad* 1791, 18.300-4)

'This', Thomas Alfonso confesses, 'appears to me rather Irish, since in Line 300 you say "no one sat," and in 304, "Polydamas rose" '. Cowper was delighted by his astuteness, and promptly amended the inconsistency: 'A fig for all Critics but you! The blockheads could not find it. It shall stand thus, *First spake Polydamas*' (*Letters*, IV, 306; 14 March 1793). Once more, this phrasing proved to be definitive, and we re-encounter it in the corresponding passage of the 1802 version: 'First spake Polydamas the prudent son' (*Iliad* 1802, 18.301).

Even more than the correspondence with Fuseli, Lady Hesketh, and others prior to 1791, Cowper's epistolary interactions with Thurlow and the two Hayleys in the years after the first publication of his Homer reveal how the process of drafting and redrafting went hand in hand with the formation of social bonds that were just as important a source of spiritual comfort as the translation itself. Applying a tone of tenderness and familiarity to a vigorous

debate about poetics, these letters undermine the narrative of Cowper's passive acquiescence to the demands of a hostile readership that stifled any impulse towards innovation, and forced the already completed project into a different groove. Whatever societal pressure he may have experienced was counterbalanced by the repeated assurances of support from his personal acquaintances, even if such support took the form of further criticism. Given that the back-and-forth dynamic between Cowper and his addressees had subtle but far-reaching consequences for the development of a second edition, the letters can be said to constitute a complementary function of his work as a translator. To dismiss the 1802 edition as a mere aberration from 'his own unbiased judgment' is to discount the productive influence of the relationships he had cultivated over the course of a lifetime.

As the last example from the letter to Thomas Alfonso reminds us, however, the purpose of Cowper's revisions was not simply to cater to the popular taste of the time or the stylistic preferences of his close friends but, wherever possible, to achieve a greater degree of literalness. With this end in view, it is evident he needed more than a few trustworthy individuals to highlight the flaws in his translation. Thus, while the letters document the collaborative aspect of the translator's work, they leave the bulk of the textual amendments in the 1802 version unaccounted for. In deploring Cowper's 'deference to the critics', Southey tells only half the story behind the second edition (and, as we have seen, rather inaccurately at that); an equally important factor that might be easily overlooked is the incorporation of materials drawn from contemporary scholarship on Homer. As well as the Greek epics annotated by Joshua Barnes (1711) and Samuel Clarke (*Ilias*, 1754; *Odysea*, 1740), Cowper's library contained a copy of Villoison's recent edition of the *Iliad* (1788), which was based on a tenth-century manuscript discovered at Venice.²⁸ His use of these learned authorities invites comparison with Dryden, another major translator of classical literature into English. Dryden's meticulous attention to the critical texts and commentaries of his day

has long been recognized, as has his habit of borrowing ‘rhymes, stray phrases, even whole lines and passages’ from earlier translations.²⁹ Cowper, while announcing a departure from the existing tradition, did not ignore the efforts of those who preceded him either. For all his opposition to the established trend of translating authors as if the language into which they were being rendered had been their own, the pursuit of lexical fidelity also led him to revisit his old nemesis in the latest edition of Pope’s *Homer* by Gilbert Wakefield. To explain how this came to pass, it will be necessary to say a little more about the poet’s personal circumstances during the final years of his life.

Although the onset of Cowper’s chronic depression predated the *Homer* project (and provided, as we have seen, at least part of the motivation to go through with it), his own fragile condition was further compounded by the declining health, and eventual death, of his long-time companion, Mary Unwin, and by January 1794 the revision of the text had come to a complete halt. That he was able to continue at all can be attributed to a trick by John (‘Johnny’) Johnson, the cousin who became his permanent caretaker in 1795 and who, as has already been mentioned, prepared the revised translation for publication after the poet’s demise. Johnson himself shares the story in his preface to the second edition:

I received a copy of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Pope, then recently published by the Editor abovementioned [i.e. Wakefield], with illustrative and critical notes of his own. As it commended Mr. Cowper’s Translation in the Preface, and occasionally pointed out its merits in the Notes, I was careful to place it in his way.

(*Iliad* 1802, I, xiii-xiv)

This experiment was crowned with success:

To my inexpressible astonishment and joy, I surprised him, one morning, with the Iliad in his hand, and with an excess of delight which I am still more unable to describe, I the next day discovered that he had been writing.

(*Iliad* 1802, I, xii)

As Johnson informs us, however, Cowper did not pick up his work where he had left it off but rather started anew:

with regard to the earlier Books of the Iliad it was less a revisal of the altered text, than of the text as it stands in the first Edition. For though the interleaved Copy was always at hand, and in the multitude of its altered places could hardly fail to offer some things worthy to be preserved, but which the ravages of illness and the lapse of time might have utterly effaced from his mind, I could not often persuade the Translator to consult it. I was therefore induced, in the course of transcribing, to compare the two Revisals as I went along, and to plead for the continuance of the first correction, when it forcibly struck me as better than the last. This, however, but seldom occurred.

(*Iliad* 1802, xv-xvi)

Despite the remnants of the drafts that Cowper had circulated among his friends in 1793, then, it makes sense to view the last phase of the revision process as both separate from his previous labours and decisive in giving the translation its new shape; indeed, Southey may have adopted the same perspective when referring to the second edition as a ‘reconstruction ... undertaken three years before his death’. What remains to be examined is the extent of the changes that the translator made under the influence of Wakefield’s notes, and whether or not

they constitute an improvement.

While it is true that Wakefield's paratextual references to Cowper's translation are generally favourable, he did not limit himself to 'point[ing] out its merits' but also took occasion to criticize it. There are numerous examples of passages that won his approval and subsequently reappeared unaltered in the 1802 edition, which may, of course, be a mere coincidence; an equally large number of lines show alterations despite receiving nothing but praise from Wakefield, so the evidence that Cowper was guided by these positive comments is at best tenuous. On the other hand, some amendments seem to have occurred in direct response to the editor's strictures: in the above account, Johnson quotes a few revisions that Cowper 'had written ... with a pencil, on a leaf at the end of his *Iliad*' under the heading 'Mistaken meanings corrected, admonente G. Wakefield' (*Iliad* 1802, I, xii-xiii). The lines in question all belong to Book 23. The first two form part of the advice that Antilochus receives from his father before participating in the chariot race, and to discern Wakefield's imprint on the final rendering, we must start with the corresponding passage in Pope's version that triggered his comment:

But urge the right, and give him all the reins;
 While thy strict hand his fellow's head restrains,
 And turns him short; 'till, doubling as they roll,
 The wheel's round nave appear to brush the goal.

(*Iliad* 1796, 23.409-12)

In the accompanying footnotes, Wakefield makes the following observation:

This unaccountable idea of "*doubling as they roll*," which Ogilby thus exhibits ... and

Mr. Cowper thus;

————— that the nave

And felly of thy wheel may seem to meet:

this inexplicable idea, I say, which has puzzled *scholiasts* and *commentators* arose from a gross misconception of the most perspicuous passage imaginable. The words *κύκλου ποιητοῖο* [‘well-made wheel’] in the original are in connection with the substantive *πλήμνη* [‘nave’], and not with the words *ἄκρον ἰκέσθαι* [‘come to the farthest point’] ... because, in proportion to it’s approach to the goal, the circle of the chariot would be contracted, and an advantage gained, well understood by the practitioners of our days also.

(*Iliad* 1802, I, pp. xii-xiii)

Cowper’s revised translation clearly reflects this input; here are the relevant lines in context:

Thy right-hand horse prick smartly, challenge him
 And give him rein; but make his fellow-steed
 Bear on the goal so closely, that its head
 Seem grated by the centre of thy wheel.

(*Iliad* 1802, 23.414-17)

Cowper has connected the elements of Homer’s *ὡς ἂν τοι πλήμνη γε δοάσεται ἄκρον ἰκέσθαι* | *κύκλου ποιητοῖο*³⁰ in the exact way that Wakefield’s analysis laid out before him, and thus arrived at a reading that makes logical sense.

The second revision in Book 23 that we can attribute to Wakefield’s influence with

absolute certainty concerns an epic simile. Again, I quote Pope's translation along with Wakefield's remark:

As a large fish, when winds and waters roar,
By some huge billow dash'd against the shore,
Lies panting: not less batter'd with his wound,
The bleeding hero pants upon the ground.

No comparison could possibly be devised more accurate and lively, or more truly descriptive of that instantaneous spring upwards, frequently occasioned by a blow upon the temples; but the purpose and language of the master poet are most miserably misconceived by Dacier, Cowper, and our translator; less so by Chapman and Ogilby, but properly understood by Hobbes alone; whose version is this:

As when the sea is curl'd by Zephyrus,
A little fish leaps up and falls agen;
So started at the stroak Euryalus,
And fainted.

I shall endeavour to communicate, but with some diffusion, for the sake of clearness, a more exact resemblance of the great poet's phraseology in the dress of a blank version:

As, by the weedy shore, beneath the curl
Of shivering Boreas, springs a fish in air,
And in the black wave disappears at once:
Thus from the blow the champion sprang aloft.

(*Iliad* 1796, 23.802-5)

If we now turn to Cowper's two translations from 1791 and 1802, we find that the latter incorporates parts of the preferable alternatives presented by Wakefield:

As by the rising North-wind driv'n ashore
 An huge fish flounces on the weedy beach,
 Which soon the sable flood covers again,
 So, beaten down, he bounded.

(*Iliad* 1791, 23.864-7)

As when, the North-wind fresh'ning, near the bank
 Upsprings a fish in air, then falls again
 And disappears beneath the sable flood,
 So, at the stroke he bounded.

(*Iliad* 1802, 23.827-30)

Cowper combines Hobbes' phrase 'falls agen' (which has no direct equivalent in the Greek) with the editor's own half-line 'springs a fish in air'. Although the result is not a precise match for Homer's line ending *ἀναπάλλεται ἰχθῦς* (*Iliad*, 23.692), it does suggest a more abrupt motion than the second line of the 1791 version thanks to the opening position of the verb, and thus can be argued to capture the 'purpose' that Wakefield ascribes to the 'master poet', even if the initial reference to the 'weedy beach' (*θίν' ... φυκίοεντι*, 23.693) is sacrificed in the process. Cowper also adopts Hobbes' rendering 'at the stroak' for *πληγείς* (23.694), which does not seem to make much of a difference in terms of literal accuracy. Less

justifiable, however, is the replacement of the verb ‘cover’ with Wakefield’s ‘disappear’, as it causes the translator to lose the transitivity of *ἐκάλυψεν* in the preceding line.

The third and final of the ‘mistaken meanings corrected’ that Johnson mentions in his preface emerges during the duel between Aias and Diomedes. On this occasion, Pope manages to avoid the censure of his editor by translating the passage as follows: ‘Not thus the foe: his javelin aim’d above | The buckler’s margin, at the neck he drove’. Wakefield comments:

Mr. Cowper thus translates:

Then Tydeus’ son, sheer o’er the ample disk

Of Ajax, thrust a lance home to his neck:

which is wholly contrary to the intention of Homer, who should be represented thus:

In turn, Tydides o’er the spacious shield

His lance was aiming ever at the neck:

or, with more emphatical delineation, to exhibit the unvarying and repeated efforts of the combatant to effect that vital stroke, whose perseverance at such a dangerous attempt alarmed the Greeks, we may thus model the couplet:

But his sharp lance Tydides o’er the shield

Was aiming still, and aiming, at the neck:

(Iliad 1796, 23.967-8)

In revising his lines, Cowper repeats Wakefield’s choice of words for Diomedes’ action almost verbatim:

But Diomede his spear high-poised above
 The sev'n-fold shield aim'd ever at the neck

(*Iliad* 1802, 23.980-1)

‘Thrust ... home’ might not be an outright mistranslation of *αἶέν ... κῶρε* (*Iliad*, 23.821), but the new rendering, ‘aim’d ever at the neck’, aptly expresses the insistence of the attack that prompts the onlookers in Homer to call off the fight before either combatant has succeeded in drawing blood – an interpretation for which the 1791 version offers little support. As far as Book 23 of the *Iliad* is concerned, then, Wakefield’s influence on Cowper seems to have produced an overall increase in fidelity to the translator’s source material.

With the help of the editor’s notes, Cowper also made refinements at other points in the text. One example is the mention of Idomeneus’ spears:

Within my tent, leaning against the wall,
 Stand twenty spears and one, forged all in Troy

(*Iliad* 1791, 13.321-2)

Commenting on Pope’s translation of the same lines (which does not specify the number of weapons), Wakefield feels compelled to clear up a common misunderstanding:

And here it may not be improper to note an universal error, as far as I know, in translators and editors, about these *one and twenty* spears, of which Ogilby speaks; which, however, I should not have stayed to notice, as not immediately connected with my present duty, if Mr. Cowper also had not fallen into it, whose knowledge of

his author appears to be even critically exact. Homer says, in homely prose, “You will find spears, both one, and (even) twenty, if you like;” meaning to denote indiscriminately a large number by this specific quantity: that is, “not one merely, but twenty, if you want them.” And I now see, that the scholium in Villoison proposes, with some diffidence, a comma at ἐν, with a view to the interpretation now proposed.

(*Iliad* 1796, IV, 39)

Even though Cowper had access to Villoison’s edition, it was only after he had read this argument for ‘the interpretation now proposed’ that he embraced it, as becomes evident from his revised 1802 version of *καὶ ἐν καὶ εἴκοσι δῆεις* (*Iliad*, 13.260):

Not one alone, but twenty thou wilt find

(*Iliad* 1802, 13.313)

Perhaps it is because Wakefield had gone out of his way to highlight a minor flaw in a translation he considered to be ‘critically exact’, but Cowper once more demonstrates a keen responsiveness to criticisms aimed at bringing his work to perfection.

Nevertheless, the translator did not indiscriminately adopt these suggestions wherever he encountered them. Some of the changes he implements barely qualify as concessions to Wakefield’s critical judgement. When the editor proposes ‘and laid waste her ways’ as a more literal rendering of *χῆρωσε δ’ ἀγνιάς* (*Iliad* 1796, 5.795; *Iliad*, 5.642) than Pope’s ‘He left the town a wide deserted plain’, for instance, Cowper merely borrows the last word but leaves his own original metaphor intact:

Lay’d Troy in dust, and widow’d all her streets.

(*Iliad* 1791, 5.763)

The fall of Troy, and widow'd all her ways.

(*Iliad* 1802, 5.722)

Likewise, Wakefield's objections against the rendering of another Homeric simile seem only partially answered by Cowper's revision. As before, he makes his remark apropos of a couplet in Pope: 'So roll'd up in his den, the swelling snake | Beholds the traveller approach the brake'.

Thus, more closely:

So rolls before his den the swelling snake,

Soon as he sees the swain approach the brake:

for the lingering enunciation of the word *traveller* in *three* syllables is void, I think, of suitable vivacity. But his predecessors might misguide our poet; for thus Chapman:

Wraps all her caverne in her folds:

and thus Ogilby:

Coyl'd up before his mansion's narrow gates:

and, lastly, Hobbes:

And as a snake *roll'd up* before his den.

And so, I see, Mr. Cowper; very erroneously, and in a stile but little suited to the restless impatience of this enraged and alarmed animal.

(*Iliad* 1796, 22.130-1)

Cowper does not appear to have agreed that the translation of *ἄνδρα* (*Iliad*, 22.93) by ‘traveller’ is ‘void ... of suitable vivacity’, for he uses the same word in both his 1791 and his 1802 version. On the other hand, although rephrasing ‘lies coil’d’ as ‘coils himself’ was not enough to supply the perceived lack of agitation in his snake, Cowper’s ‘hideous looks abroad’ contributes to that end:

As some fell serpent in his cave expects
 The traveller’s approach, batten’d with herbs
 Of baleful juice to fury, forth he looks
 Hideous, and lies coil’d all around his den,

(*Iliad* 1791, 22.106-9)

As some huge serpent in a cave, that feeds
 On baleful drugs, and swells with deadliest ire,
 A traveller approaching, coils himself
 Around his den, and hideous looks abroad,

(*Iliad* 1802, 22.107-10)

On certain points, the agreement between the 1802 edition and the editorial notes from 1796 is inconsistent. Wakefield repeatedly criticizes Pope for misrepresenting Homer’s characters as crying, and he includes Cowper in these charges, first when discussing Pope’s translation of Lycaon’s plea for mercy:

These words, attended with a show'r of tears,
The youth address to unrelenting ears

These *tears* our translator found convenient, [but are] unauthorised ... *Tears* are no effort of Nature at a crisis like this ... But our poet might take a wrong direction from Chapman just below:

Die, die, (my friend) what *teares* are these? what sad looks spoil thy face?

Where Ogilby and Mr. Cowper also are erroneous.

(*Iliad* 1796, 21.109-10)

In the 1791 edition of Cowper's *Iliad*, the passage corresponding to Chapman's line looks like this:

Die, therefore, even thou, my friend! What mean

Thy tears unreasonably shed and vain?

(*Iliad* 1791, 21.128-9)

The problem of 'unauthorized' tears arises again with the description of Priam's behaviour at the sight of Hector being dragged through the dust:

Tears after tears his mournful cheeks o'erflow,

And the whole city wears one face of woe

Homer makes no mention of the *tears* of Priam; and I have noted more than once this

unseasonable and inaccurate version of the Greek word *ῥῥωζε*: so unfit on occasions too big with calamity for *tears* in the leading sufferers. Yet thus Mr. Cowper, whose accuracy in general is exemplary:

————— His father wept aloud:

... I would propose this alteration in the passage before us:

Tears o'er *the* cheeks of *each* spectator flow.'

(*Iliad* 1796, 22.516-17)

Going over the two passages, Cowper removes the first reference to 'tears' but continues to render *ῥῥωζε* (*Iliad*, 22.408) as 'wept aloud':

Die, therefore, thou, my friend! Why deem'st it hard?'

(*Iliad* 1802, 21.126)

His father wept aloud,

And, all around, long long complaints were heard

(*Iliad* 1802, 22.466-7)

If we assume that Cowper rejected Wakefield's argument that the second situation is 'too big with calamity for *tears* in the leading sufferers', then it is not immediately clear why *ὀλοφύρεαι* ('lament') at 21.106 would not equally lend itself to being translated the same way as in 1791. Whatever it was that convinced Cowper to revise his work, he did not embrace the recommended change as a general principle, but rather evaluated its necessity on a case-by-case basis.

In some instances, Cowper may have concluded that Wakefield's efforts to correct Pope had led him to take just as many liberties with the source text as Pope himself. Wakefield points to a possibility for improving Achilles' speech to Odysseus by borrowing one of Cowper's lines and adding details he thought were missing from the Pope translation:

Then thus the Goddess-born. Ulysses hear
A faithful speech, that knows nor art, nor fear;

On this occasion of respect and ceremony, the address of the original should, in my opinion, have been more punctually preserved. I would propose the following alteration, of which the first verse is from Mr. Cowper:

Then thus Achilles, matchless in the race:
O! thou, whom feats and words of wisdom grace,
Laertes' son divine, Ulysses! hear ——.

(Iliad 1796, 9.406-7)

The relative clause 'whom feats and words of wisdom grace' is extrapolated from the single adjective *πολυμήχαν'* ('resourceful', 'inventive'; *Iliad*, 9.308). Cowper, whose 1791 version translates the word somewhat more economically as 'for wiles renown'd' (9.381), did not seize this opportunity to further expand the passage in a similar fashion:

Then thus Achilles matchless in the race.
Laertes' noble son, for wiles renown'd!
I must with plainness speak my fixt resolve

Unalterable

(Iliad 1802, 9.475-8)

Presumably Cowper felt his translation conveyed enough of the ‘respect and ceremony’ that Wakefield was looking for without the reverential addendum his note proposed. Cowper may also have seen Wakefield’s addendum as designed to complete Pope’s rhyme scheme rather than to express Homer’s precise meaning.

Cowper ignored the paired criticism of Pope’s and his own approaches to the opening of Book 10 too:

All night the chiefs before their vessels lay,
 And lost in sleep the labours of the day:
 All but the king; with various thoughts opprest,
 His country’s cares lay rolling in his breast.

Chapman and Ogilby have preserved, but in coarse versification, the pleasing figure of their original, which Pope and Cowper, to my great surprise, have entirely neglected. The following translation is in the stile of Homer:

Close in their ships the Græcian chieftains lay,
 All, through the night, in sleep’s soft fetters bound:
 But Atreus’ son, great shepherd of the host,
 Sweet sleep possesst not, tost from thought to thought.

(Iliad 1796, 10.1-4)

In Homer, the Greeks are ‘overcome by soft sleep’ (*μαλακῶ δεδμημένοι ὕπνω*, *Iliad*, 10.2); the ‘fettters’ in the above rendering reflect the imagination of the editor rather than of the poet. Cowper, having depicted the characters as ‘sunk in soft repose’ (*Iliad*, 1791, 10.2), reused this phrase completely unaltered:

All night, the leaders of the host of Greece
 Lay sunk in soft repose, all, save the Chief,
 The son of Atreus; him from thought to thought
 Roving solicitous, no sleep relieved.

(*Iliad* 1802, 10.1-4)

Again, we cannot be certain why Cowper declined to follow Wakefield’s lead on these occasions, but the discrepancy is significant in itself, for it suggests that the translator, far from succumbing to the pressure of criticism, retained at least a modicum of autonomy even during what would turn out to be the last stage of the revision process.

Indeed, at one point Cowper went so far as to side retroactively with Pope, and thereby oppose an editorial note that validated his own 1791 translation. Wakefield takes issue with the rendering of Helenus’ instructions to Hector:

Direct the queen to lead th’ assembled train
 Of Troy’s chief matrons to Minerva’s fane;
 Unbar the sacred gates, and seek the pow’r
 With offer’d vows, in Ilion’s topmost tow’r.

Our poet follows Chapman

– take the key, unlocke the heavie gates –

in understanding the original of the gates of the *temple*, which seem to mean rather the doors of a private apartment, where the vestments, employed for sacred purposes, were repositd. So Mr. Cowper appears to apprehend the passage.

(*Iliad* 1796, 6.109-12)

This endorsement notwithstanding, Cowper revised his interpretation of *ἱεροῖο δόμοιο* ('holy house'; *Iliad*, 6.89) to bring it into alignment with Pope's:

There charge our mother, that she go direct,
With the assembled matrons, to the fane
Of Pallas in the citadel of Troy.
Opening her chambers' sacred doors,

(*Iliad*, 1791 6.105-8)

Hector! shalt enter Ilium, and enjoin
Our royal Mother, that the sacred doors
Of Pallas' temple in the heights of Troy
Thrown open, and the matrons all convened,

(*Iliad* 1802, 6.100-3)

Maybe Cowper had always intended 'chamber' to be understood as referring to the temple, and saw that Wakefield had misconstrued his meaning; at any rate, it seems unlikely that the comment had nothing to do with his decision to amend the text.

There are only a few cases in which Cowper's non-compliance with Wakefield's recommendations prevented the correction of an actual mistranslation. As an example, one might cite Telemachus' defence of Phemius in the first book of the *Odyssey*. Wakefield includes an original footnote by Pope before adding his own note and then his own proposed rendering:

Why, dearest object of my duteous love,
 (Reply'd the Prince) will you the Bard reprove?
 Oft', Jove's ætherial rays (resistless sire)
 The chanter's soul and raptur'd song inspire;
 Instinct divine! nor blame severe his choice,
 Warbling the Grecian woes with harp and voice:
 For novel lays attract our ravish'd ears;
 But old, the mind with inattention hears;

Telemachus here reproves his mother for commanding Phemius to desist, or not to make Ulysses the subject of his song: by saying, that it was not in the Poet's own power to chuse his subject, which was frequently dictated and inspired by the Gods. This is a particular instance of the opinion the ancients held as to the immediate inspiration of their Poets. The words in the original evidently bear this sense. *If the subject displease you, it is not the Poet, but Jupiter is to blame, who inspires men of invention, as he himself pleases.* And Madam Dacier strangely mistakes this passage, in rendering it, *it is not the Poet, but Jupiter, who is the cause of our misfortunes, for it is he who dispenses to wretched mortals good or evil as he pleases.* At the same time she acknowledges the word *ἀλφησαί*, which she here renders *laborious*, or

wretched, to signify *persons of wit*, in the beginning of lib. vi. *and persons of skill and ability in their art*, in lib. xiii. P.

Our translator, treading in the steps of Chapman and Ogilby, most miserably mistakes his author, his criticisms notwithstanding: nor less the last runner of this race, Mr. Cowper himself. Hobbes and Dacier are right. The passage is parallel to Il. T. 86 and to Virg. *Æn.* ii. 601 referred to by Clarke. Thus beginning the line before us, and proceeding to ver. 449.

Let the sweet songster's unrestrained choice
 Wake his free lyre, and tune his varied voice.
 No bard with woes our teeming measure fills;
 Great Jove alone dispenses human ills.
 What, if his theme the woes of Greece display?
 Our ravish'd ears approve the novel lay.³¹

Modern interpretations concur with this reading of the word *ἀλφειστῆσιν*. Cowper's 1802 translation, however, still gives it the same sense as Pope's, despite restructuring the passage in its entirety:

My mother! wherefore should it give thee pain
 If the delightful bard that theme pursue
 To which he feels his mind impell'd? the bard
 Blame not, but rather Jove, who, as he wills,
 Materials for poetic art supplies.

No fault is his, if the disastrous fate
 He sing of the Achaians, for the song
 Wins ever from the hearers most applause
 That has been least in use.

(*Odyssey* 1791, 1.437-45)

My mother! leave the tuneful bard unblamed
 To his own choice. No bard, himself, creates
 The woes of which he sings, but Jove supplies
 Each, at his pleasure, with a mournful theme;
 And He records Achaia's hapless doom
 Thus sweetly, with good cause; for newest strains
 Most take the list'ning ear.³²

We hear echoes of Wakefield's suggested rendering ('leave ... choice', 'No bard') in Cowper's revision, but it would appear the translator disregarded Wakefield's main point; for once, his 'own unbiased judgment' failed him.

Incongruities like these are the exception, however; Cowper evidently continued to rely on Wakefield as he proceeded with the revision of his *Odyssey*. Absorbing verbal materials from the footnotes until the very end, he not only drew on the editor's own occasional attempts at composing a more accurate translation than Pope, but also availed himself of the pre-eighteenth-century models Wakefield quoted for comparison. We have already seen this with Hobbes' rendering of the fish simile, and the same translator served as a partial source for the 1802 version of a Homeric image designed to illustrate the inaccessibility of Scylla's cave. Here, too, Wakefield had been just as dissatisfied with

Cowper as with Pope:

Full in the center of this rock display'd,
 A yawning cavern casts a dreadful shade:
 Nor the fleet arrow from the twanging bow,
 Sent with full force, could reach the depth below.

It is not easy to discover what our translator meant by this. Mr. Cowper, with whom Chapman and Ogilby agree, has rendered thus:

Pass it, renown'd Ulysses! but aloof
 So far, that a keen arrow, smartly sent
 Forth from thy bark, should fail to reach the cave.

Very mistakenly, in my opinion. Hobbes is right, but low, as usual:

The mouth o' th' cave is more above your bark
 Than th' youngest man can shoot to with a bow:

(*Odyssey* 1796, 12.98-102)

Along with the correct meaning, Cowper adopted Hobbes' characteristic choice of 'mouth' for *σπέος* (*Odyssey*, 12.84), probably so as to avoid reusing the word 'cavern' from a few lines earlier:

Turn'd towards Erebus, a cavern yawns
 Gloomy and deep; beneath it ye shall steer
 Ulysses, glorious Chief! your flying bark.

No youth could send an arrow from on board
High as its horrid mouth.

(*Odyssey* 1802, 12.96-100)

An example from Book 23 makes for a fitting conclusion to the present analysis because it allows us to observe for one last time how well Cowper responded to criticism that, rather than demanding a complete revisal, offered ways to improve upon an already successful translation. The compliment that Wakefield paid him on capturing the scepticism in Penelope's exchange with Odysseus must have been all the sweeter for being coupled with a dismissal of Pope:

Ah no! she cries, a tender heart I bear,
A foe to pride; no adamant is there;
And now, ev'n now it melts! for sure I see
Once more Ulysses my belov'd in thee!
Fix'd in my soul as when he sail'd to Troy,
His image dwells: then haste the bed of joy!
Haste, from the bridal bow'r the bed translate,
Fram'd by his hand, and be it drest in state!

The reader would conclude from the translation before us, that Penelope was already perfectly satisfied with respect to Ulysses; which is contradictory to the sequel. The beginning of this speech is very ill seen in the versions: Mr. Cowper is beyond measure before all in accuracy, but not sufficiently general. I shall give an attempt of my own, merely verbal, to convey a just conception of the author:

Good man! 'tis not my practice to extol,

Disparage, or admire, in great excess:

Well know I what you were, when home you left:

and this partial acknowledgment of him in the last line, is more courtesy, in conformity to his declarations, which she would not affront by the rudeness of opposition, than the result of satisfactory conviction in her own mind.

(*Odyssey* 1796, 23.175-82)

Cowper changed his translation to precisely the degree Wakefield asked, and in doing so he copied his key vocabulary:

I neither magnify thee, sir! nor yet

Depreciate thee, nor is my wonder such

As hurries me at once into thy arms,

Though my remembrance perfectly retains,

Such as he was, Ulysses, when he sail'd

On board his bark from Ithaca – Go, nurse,

Prepare his bed, but not within the walls

Of his own chamber built with his own hands.

Spread it without, and spread it well with warm

Mantles, with fleeces, and with richest rugs.

(*Odyssey* 1791 23.202-11)

My temper, Sir! inclines not me t'extol

Or to depreciate much, or much admire;
 Full well I recollect thee as thou wast
 When thou didst sail from Ithaca – Go, nurse,
 Prepare his bed; yet not within the walls
 Of his own nuptial chamber which he built
 With his own hands, but, placing it without,
 There make it thick with fleecy skins beneath,
 And with warm cloaks and splendid rugs above.

(*Odyssey* 1802, 23.203-11)

The words ‘extol’, ‘admire’, and (with a slight modification) ‘as thou wast’ are all taken from the ‘verbal’ rendering by Pope’s editor. By comparison with the text of the 1791 edition, Penelope’s statements in the first two lines now appear more abstract, reflecting the lack of a direct object in the Greek original; on the other hand, *ἔησθα* (*Odyssey*, 23.175), a second-person singular form, actually identifies her addressee as Odysseus (even if only out of politeness, as Wakefield points out) and is thus more appropriately translated with ‘as thou wast’ than with ‘as he was’. In both respects, Cowper’s translation benefited from the borrowings.

<1 line #>

The purpose of the preceding pages has not been to assert the absolute superiority of the 1802 edition of Cowper’s Homer, but rather to question the reasons for its descent into obscurity. While the translator’s revisionary ‘deference to the critics’ undoubtedly robbed his version of much of its distinctive flavour, it also made the text less vulnerable to the charges that have been levelled against the translation ever since the day of its first publication. Even if we do not share the opinion, popularized by Arnold and his followers, that the stylistic decision to

imitate Milton was a mistake, the continuous gains in literalness after 1791 seem, from the evidence we have seen, hard to deny, and the objection that Cowper did not make these revisions on his own becomes untenable once the earlier influence of allies like Lady Hesketh and Henry Fuseli is taken into account. Considering the multitude of voices that were either actively invited to participate in the process of re-composition, or thanked (at least reluctantly) for doing so, we might do well to reject the individualist notion of authorship informing Southey's preference for the supposedly purer first edition. Instead we might see the 1802 text as an equally, if not more, representative expression of the creative energies that fuelled eighteenth-century translation of the classics.

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¹ *The Poetical Works of William Cowper*, edited by H. S. Milford (1905; fourth edn, London, 1934), p. iii.

² 'On Translating Homer', in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, edited by R. H. Super, 11 vols (Ann Arbor, MI, 1960), Vol. I: *On the Classical Tradition*, pp. 97-216 (p. 103). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

³ William Cowper, *The Iliad and Odyssey of Homer, Translated into English Blank Verse*, 2 vols (London, 1791), I, 210 (*Iliad*, 8.649-51). Later line references are given after quotations in the text.

⁴ William Cowper, *The Iliad of Homer, Translated into English Blank Verse*, second edn, 2 vols (London, 1802), I, 259 (*Iliad*, 8.643-5). Further references to this edition ('*Iliad* 1802') are given after quotations in the text.

⁵ Norman Nicholson, *William Cowper* (London, 1951), p. 147. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

⁶ Robin Sowerby, 'Epic', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, 5 vols

(Oxford, 2005), Vol. III: *1660-1790*, edited by Stuart Gillespie and David Hopkins, pp. 149-72 (p. 169).

⁷ Nicholson, p. 147.

⁸ *Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey*, edited by John Wood Warter, 4 vols (London, 1856), IV, 463 (14 August 1836).

⁹ *The Works of William Cowper, Esq.: Comprising his Poems, Correspondence, and Translations, with a Life of the Author, by the Editor, Robert Southey, Esq. LL.D.*, 15 vols (London, 1835-7), XI, xxxiii-xxxiv.

¹⁰ C. P. Brand, *Torquato Tasso: A Study of the Poet and of his Contribution to English Literature* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 205.

¹¹ Catrin Williams, 'The Practice and Poetics of William Cowper's Translation of Homer' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2000), p. 7. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

¹² Barbara Packer, 'Hope and Despair in the Writings of William Cowper', *Social Research*, 66 (1999), 545-64 (pp. 547-8).

¹³ *The Letters and Prose Writings of William Cowper*, edited by James King and Charles Ryskamp, 5 vols (Oxford, 1979-86), II, 382-3 (12 October 1785). Unless stated otherwise, all further references are to this edition ('*Letters*') and appear after quotations in the text.

¹⁴ James King, *William Cowper: A Biography* (Durham, 1986), p. 191. Further references ('King, *Cowper*') are given after quotations in the text.

¹⁵ Priscilla Gilman, 'William Cowper and the "Taste of Critic Appetite"', *ELH*, 70 (2003), 89-115 (p. 91). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

¹⁶ James King, 'An Unlikely Alliance: Fuseli as Revisor of Cowper's Homer', *Neophilologus*, 67 (1983), 468-79 (p. 471).

¹⁷ William Cowper, *Proposals for Printing by Subscription a New Translation of the Iliad*

and *Odyssey* (London, 1786), p. 3. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

¹⁸ *The Rambler*, 18 January 1751, in *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson* (New Haven, CT, 1958-), Vols III-V: *The Rambler*, edited by W. J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss, IV, 98-104 (pp. 103-4).

¹⁹ Anon., ‘The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer, Translated into English Blank Verse, by William Cowper, Esq.’, *Critical Review*, April 1792, pp. 373-4.

²⁰ Anon., ‘The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer, Translated into English Blank Verse: By William Cowper, of the Inner Temple, Esq.’, *English Review*, December 1792, p. 454, original emphasis.

²¹ See King, *Cowper*, pp. 18-19; Robert Gore-Browne, *Chancellor Thurlow: The Life and Times of an XVIIIth Century Lawyer* (London, 1953), pp. 7-10.

²² *The Correspondence of William Cowper*, arranged in chronological order, with annotations by Thomas Wright, 4 vols (London, 1904), IV, 112-13 (August 1791). Further references to this edition (‘*Correspondence*’) are given after quotations in the text.

²³ For a detailed account of Cowper’s work on the Milton edition and his visit to Hayley’s family estate at Eartham, see King, *Cowper: A Biography*, pp. 231-48.

²⁴ Gore-Brown (n. 21), p. 308.

²⁵ ‘The words between double bars (“back” and “trophies”) were written in the original as interlineations above the words which they immediately follow here’ (*Letters*, IV, 446, n. 2).

²⁶ For reasons that will become evident presently, I quote from Gilbert Wakefield’s edition: *The Iliad of Homer, Translated by Alexander Pope, Esq.: A New Edition, with Additional Notes ... by Gilbert Wakefield*, 6 vols (London, 1796), II, 337 (*Iliad*, 6.615). Further references to this edition (‘*Iliad* 1796’) are given after quotations in the text.

²⁷ Alfonso’s letter, given in his father’s *Life of Cowper*, is also included in *Letters*, IV, 305, n. 1, whence all ensuing quotations from it are taken.

²⁸ Geoffrey Keynes, 'The Library of William Cowper', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 3 (1959), 47-69 (pp. 57-8).

²⁹ J. McG. Bottkol, 'Dryden's Latin Scholarship', *MP*, 40 (1943), 241-54 (p. 243).

³⁰ Homer, *Iliad*, with an English translation by A. T. Murray, revised by William F. Wyatt, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA, 1999), II, 518 (*Iliad*, 23.339-40). For ease of reference, my quotations from Homer follow the text and line numbering of this Loeb edition throughout. They have been checked for significant differences against Samuel Clarke's edition of the *Iliad* (1729-32) and *Odyssey* (1740) – a standard work to which both Cowper and Fuseli referred (Williams, pp. 13-16).

³¹ *The Odyssey of Homer, Translated by Alexander Pope, Esq.: with Additional Notes ... by Gilbert Wakefield, B.A.*, 5 vols (London, 1796), I, 53-4 (*Odyssey*, 1.441-8). Further references to this edition ('*Odyssey* 1796') are given after quotations in the text.

³² William Cowper, *The Odyssey of Homer, Translated into English Blank Verse*, second edn, 2 vols (London, 1802), I, 20 (1.430-6). Further references to this edition ('*Odyssey* 1802') are given after quotations in the text.