Wordsworth's *Aeneid* and the Influence

of its Eighteenth-Century Predecessors

Matthias Widmer

William Wordsworth was easily the most important English literary figure to attempt a

complete translation of the *Aeneid* after Dryden, whose *Works of Virgil* was published in

1697. In 1805 Wordsworth disparaged Dryden's achievement in a letter to Sir Walter Scott:

> Dryden had neither a tender heart nor a lofty sense of moral dignity: where his
>
> language is poetically impassioned it is mostly upon unpleasing subjects; such as the
>
> follies, vice, and crimes of classes of men or of individuals. That this cannot be the
>
> language of the imagination must have necessarily followed from this, that there is not
>
> a single image from Nature in the whole body of his works; and in his translation
>
> from Vergil whenever Vergil can be fairly said to have had his *eye* upon his object,
>
> Dryden always spoils the passage.[1]

The general criticism of Dryden leads to an attack on his competence as a translator of Virgil

specifically, and it seems likely that Wordsworth mentions this particular work because it

best exemplifies some of the characteristic shortcomings he is discussing. Analogously, a

second letter to the same correspondent states his verdict on Pope's version of the Homeric

epics:

> I have a very high admiration of the talents both of Dryden and Pope, and ultimately,
>
> as from all good writers of whatever kind, their Country will be benefitted greatly by

their labours. But thus far I think their writings have done more harm than good. It will require yet half a century completely to carry off the poison of Pope's Homer.

(18 January 1808; *Letters*, II, 191)

Again, the negative assessment of a poetic ancestor closes with a condemnation of his practice as a translator. The association of Dryden and Pope with Virgil and Homer, respectively, indicates the extent to which their reputations had come to rest on translations of ancient epics; these were the works that needed to be displaced for the sake of the future of English poetry. 'Pope's Homer' – and, by implication, Dryden's *Aeneis* – epitomize the entire neoclassical tradition that Wordsworth was trying to leave behind.

Wordsworth's enterprise was not, however, crowned with success. He translated less than three books of the *Aeneid* before abandoning his design, and except for a small portion that appeared in a contemporary journal, the text remained unpublished until the later twentieth century. This turn of events has been explained in terms of the poet's decision to use heroic couplets – a surprising move given his earlier contributions to the development of blank verse and his distaste for the couplet translations by Dryden and Pope.[2] It is arguably a testament to the lasting impact of their work that even such a committed detractor as Wordsworth, writing 100 years later, opted for the verse form in which they had demonstrated their mastery.

The genesis of Wordsworth's partial translation is documented by a number of surviving manuscripts that show successive revisions, and thus allow us to engage in what Sally Bushell has called 'compositional criticism', i.e. the study of 'repeated words, deletions, aborted passages or lines' as 'an active part of the creative process' through which 'the poet gradually refines the nature of his communication'.[3] The comments Wordsworth's Virgil elicited when he sent drafts to Coleridge are still extant in their correspondence, too.

Handwritten drafts and exchanges possess an intimacy absent from finished works in print (or for that matter in fair copies), which at best manage only faintly to suggest the author's laborious search for words; the polished surface of the final text bears little or no trace of the trials and tribulations entailed in its development.

An account of the different manuscripts in which this particular text has come down to us is already available,[4] but an outline of its genesis may be helpful here. Wordsworth first translated the opening of Book 3 as a trial segment, and by the end of August 1823 had begun to work his way through Book 1. We know from one of the poet's letters to his patron William Lowther, first earl of Lonsdale, that Book 1 was completed by November 1823. A fair copy of Book 2 was sent to Lonsdale in January 1824, and Wordsworth proceeded to Book 3. At this point, however, Lonsdale put a damper on the whole project by expressing his disapproval of the sample he had seen. Faced with the uncertainty of public support and the loss of a potential dedicatee, Wordsworth aborted his plan to translate the complete *Aeneid*. Nevertheless, in April 1824 he solicited Coleridge's advice on how to address the flaws that Lonsdale had observed. But the tone of Coleridge's remarks was sometimes harsh, and Wordsworth only used them as the basis for a few temporary changes. Further revisions followed later, in 1826-7, of Book 3, then, with the assistance of Wordsworth's nephew Christopher, of Book 2. Christopher left the Lake District in Autumn 1827 to start his second year at Cambridge, taking the manuscript with him in the hope of getting it published. But no publication occurred until 1832, when an extract from Book 1 appeared in the second number of a Classics journal founded by the Cambridge scholar Julius Charles Hare. There was thus a period of eight years between the first conception of Wordsworth's *Aeneid* and its partial appearance in print.

The overall picture to emerge from the poet's various drafts is an exceedingly complex one, reflecting a prolonged intellectual engagement with the source material and an

ongoing refinement of the translation he was producing, albeit interrupted by breaks of several months or even years at a time. The manuscripts, photographically reproduced in the Cornell edition of the text, promise to give us a fuller understanding of the kind of dynamic evolution that can usually be reconstructed only speculatively in the case of a finished composition. But perhaps the best place to begin to look at this process is Wordsworth's correspondence with Lonsdale between late 1823 and early 1824, in which he goes to great lengths to explain and defend his principles as a translator.[5] The rationale behind the use of the couplet form becomes somewhat clearer from the following statement:

> the versification … will not be found much to the taste of those whose ear is exclusively accommodated to the regularity of Popes Homer. I have run the couplets freely into each other, much more even than Dryden has done. This variety seems to me to be called for, if any thing of the movement of the Virgilian versification be transferable to our rhyme Poetry; and independent of this consideration, long Narratives in couplets with the sense closed at the end of each, are to me very wearisome.
>
> (23 January 1824; *Translations*, p. 563)

While Wordsworth makes a concession to Pope's Homer as an embodiment of the old standard, he has found a means of innovation by opening the closed heroic couplet. Still, one wonders whether blank verse would not have allowed for at least a similar degree of metrical 'variety', especially since it had long been an acceptable alternative and a recognized way of conveying the Virgilian 'movement' in English.[6]

As Wordsworth's next letter suggests, he used the couplet not only because of its importance in the native tradition but also because of what he considered was its potential to bridge the historical and cultural distance to the source text:

> Pentameters, where the sense has close, of some sort, at every two lines, may be rendered in regularly closed couplets; but Hexameters, (especially the Virgilian, that run the lines into each other for a great length) can not. – I have long been persuaded that Milton formed his blank verse, upon the model of the Georgics and the Æneid, and I am so much struck with this resemblance, that I should have attempted Virgil in blank verse; had I not been persuaded, that no antient Author can be with advantage be so rendered. Their religion, their warfare, their course of action & feeling, are too remote from modern interest to allow it. We require every possible help and attraction of sound in our language to smooth the way for the admission of things so remote from our present concerns.
>
> (5 February 1824; *Translations*, pp. 563-4)

In contrast to his predecessors, Wordsworth associates the heroic couplet not so much, or not so directly, with the metre as with the subject matter of Virgil's epic. It is the ancient 'course of action & feeling' – rather than the features of the Latin hexameter line – that makes rhyme appropriate. Despite playing a central role in the genealogy of English *Aeneids*, the couplet had never been credited with this familiarizing effect; Wordsworth seems to be the first to argue that this verse form itself could help make accessible the poem's content.

Surprisingly enough, this argument is consistent with the way Pope had justified his general preference for couplets over blank verse. Joseph Spence recorded the relevant statement in one of his *Anecdotes*:

I have nothing to say for rhyme, but that I doubt whether a poem can support itself

without it in our language, unless it be stiffened with such strange words as are like to

destroy our language itself.

The high style that is affected so much in blank verse would not have been

borne even in Milton, had not his subject turned so much on such strange out-of-the-

world things as it does.[7]

This conformity, or at least overlap, between their remarks reveals Wordsworth as a

descendant of the literary figure he so despised. Pope and Wordsworth both care about the

accessibility of their work, aspiring to remain poetical without alienating their audience.

Rhyme in and of itself supports this delicate balance by ensuring that a poem will be read as

such, and by automatically endowing it with an emotive quality. And while Wordsworth may

deplore the lack of imagination he diagnoses in his neoclassical precursor, he cannot help but

acknowledge his formal brilliance, as his backhanded compliment in the 1800 Preface to the

Lyrical Ballads attests: 'We see that Pope by the power of verse alone, has contrived to

render the plainest common sense interesting, and even frequently to invest it with the

appearance of passion.'[8]

Regarding poetic diction, on the other hand, the second letter to Lonsdale indicates a

point of continuity between Wordsworth's approach to translating the *Aeneid* and his

reformatory programme in *Lyrical Ballads*. The preface to the latter work had called for the

shedding of extraneous ornament, and instead placed a strong emphasis on naturalness and

simplicity, criticizing poets who 'separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and

indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression in order to furnish food for the fickle

tastes and fickle appetites of their own creation' (*LB*, p. 744). Wordsworth's aversion to

stylistic mannerisms and his steady focus on elementary principles correlate with the idea of preserving Virgil in an unadulterated form. Writing to Lonsdale, Wordsworth promotes literal translation, although he adds a few caveats:

> My own notion of translation is, then that it cannot be too literal, provided three faults be avoided, <u>baldness</u>, in which I include all that takes from dignity; and <u>strangeness</u> or <u>uncouthness</u> including <u>harshness</u>; and lastly, attempts to convey meanings which as they cannot be given but by languid circumlocutions cannot in fact be said to be given at all.[9]

By the time he undertook to translate Virgil's epic, to be sure, Dryden's standard of literalness was somewhat higher than in the Preface to *Ovid's Epistles*, which had promoted the paraphrastic mode as a compromise to avoid the dual pitfalls of a too servile metaphrase on the one hand and an excessively loose imitation on the other; yet the Dedication of the *Aeneis* is still suggestive of this sort of binary thinking, and thus gives the impression that a comparatively large number of liberties were taken during the translation process:

> I thought fit to steer betwixt the two Extreams, of Paraphrase, and literal Translation: To keep as near my Authour as I cou'd, without losing all his Graces, the most Eminent of which, are in the Beauty of his words: And those words, I must add, are always Figurative. Such of these as wou'd retain their Elegance in our Tongue, I have endeavour'd to graff on it; but most of them are of necessity to be lost, because they will not shine in any but their own.[10]

Even if the two translators agree that some loss of Virgilian beauty is inevitable, Dryden's middle path between two polar opposites seems to entail fewer limitations than Wordsworth's narrow list of exceptions to a general rule. By pursuing a more literalist methodology, Wordsworth clearly differentiates himself from his predecessor.

Despite the importance he attaches to directness and perspicuity, however, Wordsworth did not intend to eschew verbal adornments in his translation completely. Judging by the exchange with Lonsdale, he felt it not enough for a translator simply to refrain from uncouth or undignified expressions: he must also respect the unique aesthetic qualities of his author, instead of covering him in false splendours. Wordsworth writes:

> It was my wish and labour that my Translation should have far more of the <u>genuine</u> ornaments of Virgil than my predecessors. Dryden has been very careless of these, and profuse of his own, which seem to me very rarely to harmonize with those of virgil [*sic*] … I feel it however to be too probable, that my Translation, [may *del*] is deficient in ornament, because I must unavoidably have lost many of Virgil's, and have never without reluctance attempted a compensation of my own.
>
> (5 February 1824; *Translations*, pp. 565-6)

Wordsworth defends his work not on absolute but relative grounds, going on to quote from Dryden's version to show that he has at least done a better job than this predecessor. One of the passages that earn his disapproval is Aeneas' address to the ghost of Hector in Book 2:

> O lux Dardaniae! spes o fidissima Teucrum!
>
> Quae tantae tenuere morae? quibus Hector ab oris

Expectate venis? ut te post multa tuorum

Funera, post varios hominumque urbisque labores

Defessi aspicimus? quae causa indigna serenos

Foedavit vultus? aut cur haec vulnera cerno?'

(2.181-6)[11]

O Light of *Trojans,* and Support of Troy,

Thy Father's Champion, and thy Country's Joy!

O, long expected by thy Friends! from whence

Art thou so late return'd for our Defence?

Do we behold thee, weary'd as we are,

With length of Labours, and with Toils of War?

After so many Fun'rals of thy own,

Art thou restor'd to thy declining Town?

But say, what Wounds are these? What new Disgrace

Deforms the Manly Features of thy Face?

(Dryden, 2.367-76)

While he considers this 'not an unfavourable specimen of Dryden's way of treating the solemnly pathetic passages', Wordsworth complains that 'here is <u>nothing</u> of the <u>cadence</u> of the original, and little of its spirit – The second Verse is not in the original, and ought not to have been in Dryden' (5 February 1824; *Translations*, p. 565). We cannot be entirely sure what he means by Virgilian 'spirit' or what criteria he applies to measure such an elusive quality, but his criticism of Dryden's cadences is easily verifiable. Bruce Graver draws attention to the discrepancy between the Latin hexameters – characterized as they are by

heavy spondees, strong mid-line pauses, enjambment, and gradually lengthening sentences – and the English couplets, which display the typical closure and are mostly comprised of lines that have no more than four stressed syllables.[12]

Wordsworth's own version of this speech underwent a total of eight revisions before December 1827, which makes it by far the most highly developed part of his translation (Graver, *Translations*, p. 161). In their chronological sequence, the main stages of composition reflect a progressively closer approximation of the movement, the literal meaning, and (to some extent) even the sound of Virgil's verse. I give three stages in order:

O Light of the Dardan realms! most faithful stay

Of Trojans why such lingerings of delay!

Where hast thou tarried? Hector, from what coast

Comest thou, long-wished for? that so many lost

Friends, followers, Countrymen such travails borne

By Warriors, by the city, we outworn

Behold thee? Why this undeserved disgrace?

And the serene composure of that face

Why And why keeps every wound its ghastly place?

   (DC MS 89, sig. 168ʳ; *Translations*, pp. 469-70, 2.379-87)[13]

"O Light of Dardan Realms! Most faithful Stay

"To Trojan courage! why these lingerings of delay?

"Where hast thou tarried, Hector? From what coast

"Com'st thou, long <u>wish'd</u>-for? That so many lost –

"Thy kinsmen or thy friends – such travail borne,

"By this afflicted City – we outworn,

"Behold thee! Why this undeserv'd disgrace?

"Who thus defil'd with wounds that honor'd face?

 (DC MS 101B, Notebook 2, sig. 8ᵛ; *Translations*, p. 547)

"O Light of Dardan Realms! Most faithful Stay

"To Trojan courage, why these lingerings of delay?

"Where hast thou tarried, Hector? From what coast

"Coms't thou, long-look'd for? After thousands lost –

"Thy kinsmen or thy friends – such travail borne

"By desolated Troy, how tir'd and worn

"Are we, who thus behold thee! how forlorn!

"These gashes whence? this undeserv'd disgrace?

"Who thus defiled that calm majestic face?"

   (*Translations*, p. 226)

The earliest of these renderings already improves upon Dryden's prosody. The pause after 'Where hast thou tarried' perfectly matches the medial caesura in 'Quae tantae tenuere morae? quibus Hector ab oris', and the subsequent enjambment 'Hector, from what coast | Comest thou, long-wished for' is no less faithful to the Latin 'quibus Hector ab oris | Expectate venis'. Wordsworth's couplets really do run into each other, as the lines building up to 'Behold thee' demonstrate; while Dryden places this same phrase in a similar metrical position and likewise manages to endow it with the caesural function of 'aspicimus', he uses it to begin a new sentence, thereby losing Virgil's syntactical energy. The second version, which is from the fair copy shown to Lonsdale, contains additional prosodic refinements. By

replacing 'Trojans' with 'Trojan courage', Wordsworth expands his second line into an alexandrine that further intimates the spondaic weight of the original; the stronger mid-line pauses after 'friends' and 'City' have a comparable effect.

With regard to Virgil's sense, too, the translation becomes more accurate over time. Although Wordsworth achieves neither the succinctness nor the metrical correspondence of Dryden's 'of thy own', his interpretative rendering of 'tuorum' gains in concision as 'Friends, followers, Countrymen' – a tricolon recalling Shakespeare's Mark Antony – gives way to the simpler 'Thy kinsmen or thy friends', and the emphasis shifts from a shared civic allegiance to the familial bond between speaker and addressee. Through the introduction of 'courage', similarly, the translator not only adjusts the prosody but also arrives at a fuller (if somewhat redundant) version of 'spes o fidissima Teucrum'. The tendency towards literalness continues to increase in the third version, the reading text of the Cornell edition, which incorporates adjustments Wordsworth made with the assistance of his nephew. The new compound 'long-look'd for' brings out the visual connotation of 'expectate' in a way that 'long-wished for' does not, and whereas the two final questions, 'quae causa indigna serenos | Foedavit vultus?' and 'aut cur haec vulnera cerno?', were at first blended into the single line 'Who thus defil'd with wounds that honor'd face?', they now receive separate translations (albeit in reverse order) with 'Who thus defiled that calm majestic face?' and 'These gashes whence?', respectively.

Finally, Wordsworth takes great pains to reproduce the phonetic qualities of his original. The English monosyllable 'stay' and its Latin counterpart 'spes' both begin with a sibilant, 'tarried' comprises the same 't' and 'r' sounds as 'tenuere', 'travail borne' echoes 'labores', and 'undeserved disgrace' retains all the consonants of 'indigna serenos'. In the last three cases, moreover, the translation simultaneously mirrors the placement of the words within Virgil's hexameter line. It does not always require a lot of effort to create this kind of

resemblance: rendering 'lux Dardaniae' as 'Light of Dardan Realms', the translator simply keeps the proper name, where Dryden opts for the looser 'light of Trojans'. On the whole, Wordsworth's initial conception and repeated revision of the passage thus seems to be consistent with the programme laid out in his letters to Lonsdale. The resources of the target language are being exploited to the fullest in order to imitate 'the genuine ornaments of Virgil'.

It is easy to overstate the novelty and thoroughness of this approach, however. Stuart Gillespie observes that 'the further Wordsworth's three completed Books move forward, the more Drydenian the diction becomes'. Given how earlier translators had also failed in their attempts to distance themselves from Dryden, such a process of assimilation should come as no great surprise, but perhaps we can modify Gillespie's view that it took place 'very evidently, in spite of the author's own intentions'.[14] What appears to be growing as the work progresses is rather a tension between two separate and, for Wordsworth, ultimately irreconcilable goals: to be like Virgil, and to be unlike Dryden. Occasionally, the latter's practice conforms exactly to Wordsworth's aesthetic agenda, which may account for at least some of the borrowed phraseology that ended up being absorbed into the successor-version. Even in the present example, Dryden can take part of the credit for the expression 'undeserved disgrace' and its phonetic equivalence with 'indigna serenos' because he supplied the rhyme words of the final couplet. Thus, not only is Wordsworth's translation less innovative than he claims: one of his most felicitous phrases directly builds upon the work of his predecessor.

On the other hand, it almost seems as if Wordsworth deliberately foregoes certain opportunities to adopt a Drydenian phrase, even though to do so would have enhanced the literalness (as he defines that quality) of his English *Aeneid*. Despite Wordsworth's particular commitment to recreating the auditory experience of the source text, Dryden's version of this

passage carries across just as many vowels and consonants from the Latin, often in places where the later translation falls short of its objective. 'Long expected' renders 'expectate' with an elegance that neither 'long-wished for' nor 'long-look'd for' can hope to parallel, 'Labours' is closer to 'labores' than 'travail borne', and 'After so many Fun'rals of thy own', in addition to giving nothing but the sense of 'post multa tuorum | Funera', also preserves the sound of the last word. While the shared rhyme 'disgrace'/'face' suggests that Wordsworth's primary concern for phonetic authenticity caused him to follow Dryden when the latter had found a way of replicating the physical properties of Virgil's language, the translator's avoidance of these cognates (which must have presented themselves as an obvious solution) points to an equal and opposite impulse to move as far away from the diction of his predecessor as possible.

Even more revealing are the multiple manuscript revisions, for they show Wordsworth abandoning several ideas that would have contributed to the overall effectiveness of his translation but also reduced its individuality. Phonetically as well as metrically, 'Warriors' in MS 89 (*Translations*, p. 469, 2.384) corresponds to the Virgilian adjective 'varios'. Considering that it has no literal equivalent in the source text, however, the use of this word may have been partly prompted by the phrase 'Toils of War', Dryden's expansion of 'labores' (Dryden, 2.372). If so, then Wordsworth's later rejection of it could be specifically aimed at minimizing his debt to Dryden here. The same purpose might underlie the poet's changing treatment of 'vulnera'. To any English translator, the initial rendering with 'wounds' would probably seem to be the most natural option, and for Wordsworth it must have had the added benefit of echoing the first syllable of its Latin counterpart. Nevertheless, he eventually revised 'wounds' to 'gashes', and thereby sacrificed another chance to make his translation sound like the original. Although there is nothing distinctively Drydenian about the rejected element, it appears in the couplet that is already indebted to

Dryden for its rhyme words, so Wordsworth conceivably exchanged it because he came to see these lines as too derivative, and felt the need to individuate them.

In the end, we do not know Wordsworth's motives with absolute certainty, but this problem can be circumvented by taking Bushell's advice to 'mak[e] use of the … concept of "intention" not so much in terms of "what the author intended" as through intentional acts on the manuscript page'.[15] Irrespective of his stated ambitions, the small changes Wordsworth made in the successive revisions of this passage tell a story of their own. Their gradual deviation from Virgil's sound clashes conspicuously with the translator's usual practice of phonetic imitation, yet with each revision the text not only loses a little of its auditory appeal but also becomes slightly less similar to Dryden's version. If Wordsworth began to rely more heavily on his predecessor after completing Book 1, he thus still appears to have checked himself and put up local resistance to the latter's influence – even at the cost of neglecting his own principles of translation. It might be argued that this borders on overcompensation, for neither of the two lexical items that are introduced and then deleted seems likely to have struck readers as a straightforward borrowing; the fact that the poet did not avoid them in the first place suggests how far his philological instinct accords with the taste of preceding translators. Wordsworth's provisional choices and their cancellation say as much about the eighteenth-century roots of his poetics as they do about his wish to emancipate himself from them. Nor did Wordsworth limit himself to drawing on a single predecessor. His use of heroic couplets, amongst other factors, has helped to spark critical interest in his relation to Dryden;[16] what has been largely overlooked, by contrast, is the potential influence of the blank verse Virgil translators whose activity spanned the many decades separating the two English poets from each other. It is to these that I now turn.

Aspirations for literalness are regularly articulated in the prefaces to eighteenth-century blank verse renderings of the *Aeneid*. To the extent that Wordsworth used these

renderings, they also showed him a means of realizing such aspirations. He may not always have followed his inclination to copy Virgil's exact sound patterns, or have taken advantage of every available opportunity to employ a cognate, but the large number of such echoes in the final version of his *Aeneid* is undeniable, and remains one of its most salient features. Moreover, the same Latinizing traits have been noted in Wordsworth's earlier translations from Horace and from the *Georgics*.[17] However, this aspect of the text is again less innovative than might be imagined. Graver's 1986 article on Wordsworth's epic language compares it favourably with the diction of Dryden and Pitt, but almost all the examples he adduces in order to assert its superiority have a precedent in one of the earlier blank verse translations. A case in point is the rendering of 'et dulci distendunt nectare cellas' (1.433),[18] where an obscure *Aeneid* translator of 1794, James Beresford, anticipates Wordsworth's cognate 'distend':

And with pure nectar every cell distend;

(*Translations*, p. 200, 1.587)

and their waxen cells

Distend with luscious nectar[19]

While the identical phraseology does not suffice as conclusive evidence of indebtedness, it does suggest that attempts to preserve Virgil's sound through cognates date back to well before Wordsworth decided on his method of translating the *Aeneid*.

The most scrupulous practitioner of this technique was Joseph Trapp, and it is to his blank verse *Aeneid* of 1718-20 that Wordsworth seems to owe a particular debt. Graver makes much of the word 'murmur' and its recurrence in Wordsworth's translation as an

equivalent for the Latin 'murmure' ('Language of Epic', pp. 270-2), yet in two out of the three instances that he cites, Trapp had used it too.[20] It is perfectly possible that Wordsworth chose the cognate independently in each case. On one occasion, however, Wordsworth's own and Trapp's use of this word coincide without being etymologically tied to anything in the source text, which conveys a much stronger sense of the link between them. These lines form part of the counsel Aeneas receives from Helenus:

> Inconsulti abeunt, sedemque odere Sibyllae.
>
> Hic tibi ne qua morae fuerint dispendia tanti:
>
> Quamvis increpitent socii
>
> <div align="center">(3.452-4)</div>

> "And they, who sought for knowledge, thus beguil'd
>
> "Of her predictions, from her Cave depart,
>
> "And quit the Sibyl with a murmuring heart.
>
> "But thou, albeit ill-dispos'd to wait,
>
> "And prizing moments at their highest rate,
>
> "Though Followers chide
>
> <div align="center">(*Translations*, p. 264, 3.624-9)</div>

<div align="center">The Votaries</div>

> Depart untaught, and curse the Sibyl's Cave.
>
> But let no Loss sustain'd by your Delay,
>
> However great, deter you: Tho' your Friends
>
> Impatient murmur

(Trapp, 3.576-80; Vol. I, p. 128)

Wordsworth and Trapp use 'murmur' to translate 'odere' and 'increpitent' respectively. Despite corresponding to different lexemes in the original, the verb seems too idiosyncratic to appear accidentally in two separate versions of such a narrowly defined passage, for not only is it completely unwarranted by Virgil's vocabulary: both translators are actually weakening the meaning of the Latin as a result of their decision to use it. 'Curse' and 'chide' are undoubtedly the preferable alternatives. Thus it appears to have been Trapp rather than Virgil who suggested what Wordsworth should do here.

The parallels between these two translations do not end with their deployment of cognates. Another Wordsworth passage that Graver singles out for special praise is Aeneas' report of how he and his followers first set eyes on Italy ('Language of Epic', pp. 272-3). As far as couplet versions go, Wordsworth may indeed be more accurate than earlier translators of these lines, but, once the blank verse tradition is taken into account, it becomes evident that Trapp again preceded him in his stylistic choices:

Jamque rubescebat stellis Aurora fugatis:

Cum procul obscuros colles, humilemque videmus

Italiam. Italiam primus conclamat Achates;

Italiam laeto socii clamore salutant.

(3.521-4)

Now, when Aurora redden'd in a sky

From which the Stars had vanish'd, we descry

The low faint hills of distant Italy.

"Italia!" shouts Achates: round and round

Italia flies with gratulant rebound,

From all who see the coast, or hear the happy sound.

<div align="center">(Translations, p. 267, 3.721-6)</div>

And now the Morning redden'd, and the Stars

Retreated; when at distance we beheld

The Hills obscure, and low Italian Plains.

Italia first Achates crys aloud,

Italia all our Crew with joyful Shouts

Salute.

<div align="center">(Trapp, 3.659-64; Vol. I, p. 132)</div>

Trapp does not reproduce the proper name 'Aurora' like Wordsworth, but he does, like Wordsworth, retain the characteristic repetition of 'Italiam', and uses the Latin form of the word while doing so. Approximating Virgil's metrical organization, moreover, the arrangement of the three elements is the same in each case, which further suggests that Wordsworth was borrowing from his predecessor.

Their translations similarly converge in 'redden'd' – 'the most exact English equivalent of "rubescebat," and a choice which retains the implicit sense of blushing as well as the initial "r" sound' (Graver, 'Language of Epic', p. 273). Appropriate though it may be, Wordsworth's use of this verb was not unprecedented either. Ironically enough, it also occurs in the sonnet by Thomas Gray that had been the target of his criticism in the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads:

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,

And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire:

The birds in vain their amorous descant join,

Or cheerful fields resume their green attire:

These ears alas! for other notes repine;

A different object do these eyes require;

My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;

And in my breast the imperfect joys expire;

Yet Morning smiles the busy race to cheer,

And new-born pleasure brings to happier men;

The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;

To warm their little loves the birds complain.

I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear

And weep the more because I weep in vain.

(*LB*, p. 749)

The italics are Wordsworth's, and serve to highlight 'the only part of this Sonnet which is of any value' (*LB*, p. 749), contrasting its simple style with the supposedly over-elaborate language of the rest. Of course, one must not accuse the poet of being inconsistent if he later had recourse to the kind of vocabulary that he complains about at this point; Wordsworth was attempting something quite different in his *Aeneid* than in his collection of original pieces, and besides, the word 'redden' on its own could hardly be regarded as representative of the outdated poetic diction to which he objected. Geoffrey Tillotson points out, too, that Gray himself 'speaks by means of quotations from others', regurgitating the stock phrases of springtime descriptions only to dismiss them as incompatible with the personal sorrow he is

experiencing.[21] Far from blindly conforming to the prevalent customs of his day, this rejection implies a high degree of self-awareness on Gray's part; long before Wordsworth, he must already have perceived the increasingly commonplace ring of expressions such as 'reddening Phœbus' and felt the need to restrict their usage to the proper occasion. Those phrases that are Virgilian in origin would obviously lend themselves to translations from the Roman poet's œuvre, but their wider currency also indicates the breadth of his influence on native versification in general, and shows how much of the contemporary translator's task was, in fact, being performed by poets outside of translations. This lends an additional dimension to the truism that different renderings of the same source text will inevitably bear a certain resemblance to each other: in a culture whose literary output is positively suffused with the presence of a few classical authors, every new translation will be equally similar to a number of non-translated texts, too. Thus, even if Wordsworth really had been more rigorously literal in his approach to the *Aeneid* than all his predecessors, the result would still have sounded like much English verse of the eighteenth century.

Assuming Wordsworth eventually backed down from his initial position on the usefulness of a poetic diction that noticeably differs from the language of prose, he was still reluctant to admit to any external stimuli that inspired this change. In Graver's defence, most of the above parallels with Trapp, as well as several others, have been included in the Appendix of his Cornell edition since his article was published (although the list is by no means exhaustive), where they appear next to potential borrowings from Dryden, Pitt, and Ogilby. Judging by the relative quantity of these materials, Trapp's impact evidently rivalled that of the couplet translators. That it went unnoticed for so long might have to do with an 'advertisement' Wordsworth placed at the head of his translation (in one of the manuscripts). Here the poet explicitly mentions some of the pre-existing versions on which he had drawn:

It is proper to premise that the first Couplet of this Translation is adopted from Pitt –

as are likewise two Couplets in the second Book; & three or four lines, in different

parts, are taken from Dryden. A few expressions will also be found, which, following

the Original closely are the same as the preceding Translators have unavoidably

employed.

(*Translations*, p. 181)

As has been shown, Wordsworth borrowed much more than 'three or four lines' from

Dryden, but this statement is at least proof that he does not completely refuse to credit the

latter's contribution. By contrast, it is left unclear whether Trapp falls into the category of

'the preceding Translators' with whom the poet also has 'a few expressions' in common, and

at all events we are meant to believe that this shared phraseology is a consequence of

'following the Original closely' rather than of consciously appropriating the work of others

who had done so in the past.

Wordsworth's selective acknowledgment of his sources invites comparison with

Dryden's own paratextual referencing of the translations he consulted – specifically his sole

footnote in Book 2, which declares that the line 'A headless Carcass, and a nameless thing'

was 'taken from Sir John Denham' (*Works*, V, 403), and the section of his Dedication in

which he acknowledges help from Lauderdale, his exact contemporary in Virgil translation

(V, 336-7). Each statement functions as something of a diversionary tactic that obscures the

actual scale of the translators' indebtedness to their respective predecessors and distracts from

all the unnamed versions whose influence left a similar mark on the final product.

Wordsworth's omission of Trapp can tell us something about the particular self-image he was

trying to cultivate; by withholding the blank verse rendering among the list of used texts, he

further reinforces his alignment with the representatives of the couplet tradition, who thus

appear as the only real competitors for the title of the definitive English *Aeneid*. Making

fidelity to the letter his main criterion, Wordsworth may have sensed that he could not

significantly improve upon Trapp's literalness, and for this reason deliberately pitted himself

against those precursors whom he saw as lacking in that regard. Even more than Dryden, the

blank verse translator seems to have constituted an influence that needed to be suppressed.

But regardless of how comprehensively Wordsworth studied and incorporated the

work of earlier Virgil translators, his efforts did not produce the results he desired.

Coleridge's comments on Book 1, included in the critical apparatus of the Cornell edition,

expressly criticize the Latinate vocabulary that was supposed to be the translation's greatest

asset, Coleridge complaining to Wordsworth: 'There are unenglishisms here & there in this

translation of which I remember no instance in your own poems' (*Translations*, p. 190).

Coleridge apparently could not bear to see his friend wasting his time on a project whose

completion, by its very nature, promised but a fragment of the esteem he could achieve

through original compositions yet to be written. At best, such an endeavour offered the

prospect of moderate success; at worst, Coleridge warned, its outcome might compromise the

reputation to which Wordsworth was entitled: 'You have convinced me of the necessary

injury which a Language must sustain by rhyme translations of narrative poems of great

length … Were it only for this reason, that it would interfere with your claim to a Regenerator

& Jealous Guardian of our Language, I should dissuade the publication' (p. 197).

In the light of the preceding discussion, it is noteworthy that some of the passages

which attracted Coleridge's criticism may have been composed in direct emulation of Trapp.

The storm scene in *Aeneid* 1, for instance, features a description of sailors whose vessel is

tossed around by the waves:

Hi summo in fluctu pendent, his unda dehiscens

Terram inter fluctus aperit:

<div align="center">(1.106-7)</div>

Those hang aloft, as if in air; to these

Earth is disclosed between the boiling seas.

<div align="center">(*Translations*, p. 185, 1.137-8)</div>

These hang upon a Surge; to Those the Deep

Yawning discloses Earth between the Waves:

<div align="center">(Trapp, 1.126-7; Vol. I, p. 8)</div>

The verb 'disclose' for 'aperit' is evidence that Wordsworth was following Trapp when he rendered these lines. If so, his translation did not necessarily benefit from the borrowing, however; Coleridge finds fault with the demonstrative pronouns: 'Those & these occasion … perplexity', he writes (*Translations*, p. 185). Although both translators are fairly literal in their choice and arrangement of words, one might agree that something more expansive is needed to make Virgil's Latin accessible. Possibly due to the influence of the predecessor version, Wordsworth seems to have forgotten his self-imposed rule to temper lexical fidelity with an avoidance of 'strangeness or uncouthness'.

This impression is confirmed by another example that occurs a few lines later and describes Neptune taking notice of the maritime uproar:

Interea magno misceri murmure pontum,

Emissamque hyemem sensit Neptunus, et imis

Stagna refusa vadis: graviter commotus

(1.124-6)

Meanwhile, what strife disturb'd the roaring sea

And for what outrages the storm was free,

Troubling the Ocean to its inmost caves,

Neptune perceiv'd – incensed;

　　　　　　(*Translations*, p. 186, 1.162-5)

Mean-while the Noise and Tumult of the Main

Neptune perceives, the Bottom of the Deep

Turn'd upwards, and the Storm's licentious Rage.

Highly provok'd,

　　　　　　(Trapp, 1.147-50; Vol. I, p. 9)

Here it is not so much the vocabulary as the metrical organization that aligns Wordsworth

with his predecessor. The shared phrase 'Neptune perceiv'd' would look like a coincidence if

it did not also occupy an identical spot at the beginning of a line; Wordsworth's earliest

rendering in MS 89, moreover, reads 'Was known by Neptune' (*Translations*, p. 423),

suggesting a decisive and deliberate movement towards the blank verse *Aeneid*. Syntactically,

however, the two versions are slightly different, for Trapp places his subject and verb after

the first of Virgil's three objects (exchanging the positions of 'Emissamque hyemem' and

'imis | Stagna refusa vadis' in the process), whereas Wordsworth delays his until the very end

of the sentence. Wordsworth thus ends up with a more extreme suspension than even the

Roman poet himself, who inserts 'sensit Neptunus' between the second and third object. In

English, this structure arguably impairs the clarity of the meaning, which is what prompted

Coleridge's comment: 'Neptune perc. incensed – I can scarcely read, as part of a sentence. It seems to my ear as if I was repeating single words' (*Translations*, p. 186). To further illustrate Wordsworth's particular affinity with Trapp, one can turn to the much simpler alternative of Dryden for comparison:

Mean time Imperial Neptune heard the Sound

Of raging Billows breaking on the Ground:

Displeas'd

(1.176-8)

Dryden does leave out quite a few details, but he also produces a more natural word order than either of his two successors; at least with regard to syntax, this neoclassical couplet translator comes closest to writing in the language of prose. Again, the contrast throws into relief a kinship that goes beyond any superficial consideration of poetic formats (and may in fact be obscured by it). For all Wordsworth's borrowings from Dryden, he just as often depended on Trapp to guide him in his translation of the *Aeneid*.

Yet if the negative elements of his versification are inherited, the positive aspects are no less derivative. One of Coleridge's few approving comments relates to the grove that accommodates the temple of Juno:

Lucus in urbe fuit media, laetissimus umbra;

(1.441)

Within the Town, a central Grove display'd

Its ample texture of delightful shade.

(*Translations*, p. 200, 1.598-9)

'From this [i.e. the first] line', says Coleridge, 'the Translation greatly & very markedly improves … the metre has bone & muscle' (*Translations*, p. 200). Ironically, however, the couplet takes much from Pitt, in whose translation Wordsworth must have found it:

> Amid the Town, a stately Grove display'd
>
> A cooling Shelter, and delightful Shade.[22]

Coleridge is talking about prosody rather than diction, and his admiration for the first half of the couplet might be ascribed to its (un)remarkable regularity and perpetuation of traditional standards: the separation of prepositional phrase and main clause results in a medial caesura after the fourth syllable, and by using the verb of the sentence as a rhyme word, a strong emphasis results on the end of the line, as well as an enjambment that drives the verse forward. As the opening of a new paragraph, such a configuration is particularly effective because it operates both on a local and on a suprastructural level; 'display'd' is complemented not only by the immediate object in the next line but also by the ensuing depiction of the temple as a whole.

Given that Coleridge applauded one of the least original parts of the translation, we may suspect a streak of conservatism in his aesthetic judgment. A subsequent remark provides additional evidence that he was not altogether happy with the way Wordsworth had run his couplets into each other. These lines belong to Ilioneus' characterization of Aeneas:

> Rex erat Aeneas nobis, quo justior alter
>
> Nec pietate fuit, nec bello maior et armis,

Quem si fata virum servant, si vescitur aura

Aetherea, neque adhuc crudelibus occubat umbris;

<div align="center">(1.544-7)</div>

"A man to no one second in the care

"Of justice, nor in piety and war,

"Ruled over us; if yet Æneas treads

"On earth, nor has been summon'd to the shades,

<div align="center">(*Translations*, p. 205, 1.745-8)</div>

Coleridge makes only a tentative suggestion, but it still stands out as running counter to the prosodic ideal that informed the composition of the text: 'care, war, treads, shades – <u>rather</u> too confluent?' (*Translations*, p. 205). While he does not express an outright preference for the closed couplet style of Dryden and Pitt, one cannot help but think that he was implicitly questioning his friend's ability to surpass their versions.

This feedback had important long-term consequences for Wordsworth's *Aeneid*. Accompanying his commentary was a letter in which the exasperated Coleridge expressed his doubts about the feasibility of a verse translation that does Virgil justice:

Since Milton I know of no Poet, with so many <u>felicities</u> & unforgettable Lines & stanzas as you – and to read therefore page after page without a single <u>brilliant</u> note, depresses me – & I grow peevish with you for having wasted your time on a work <u>so very</u> much below you, that you can not <u>stoop</u> & <u>take</u>. Finally, my conviction is: that you undertook an <u>impossibility</u>: and that there is no medium between a prose Version,

and one on the avowed principle of <u>Compensation</u> in the widest sense--/ i.e. manner, Genius, total effect.

<div align="right">(Translations, p. 571)</div>

Wordsworth took this to heart, for when he eventually published part of his translation, he sent a quasi-apologetic note to the editors of the journal in which it appeared, and explained why he had abandoned his attempt at the entire epic:

> Your letter reminding me of an expectation I some time since held out to you of allowing some specimens of my translation from the Æneid to be printed in the Philological Museum was not very acceptable: for I had abandoned the thought of ever sending into the world any part of that experiment, – for it was nothing more, – an experiment begun for amusement, and I now think a less fortunate one than when I first named it to you. Having been displeased in modern translations with the addition of incongruous matter, I began to translate with a resolve to keep clear of that fault, by adding nothing; but I became convinced that a spirited translation can scarcely be accomplished in the English language without admitting a principle of compensation. On this point however I do not wish to insist, and merely send the following passage, taken at random, from a wish to comply with your request.

<div align="right">(Translations, p. 580)</div>

The penultimate sentence, in particular, seems to recall Coleridge's words. Contrary to his own assertion, moreover, the excerpt that Wordsworth submitted for publication (1.901-1040) was not 'taken at random' but selected because it had won his friend's approval:

'generally', Coleridge observes in one of his notes on Book 1, 'the latter part is done with great spirit' (*Translations*, p. 212).

More important still are the revisions Wordsworth made before finally submitting the text for publication, which likewise reflect the input he had received a decade earlier. Despite commending the passage (in MS 101B), Coleridge saw room for improvement; what bothered him were the couplets translating Cupid's deception of Dido:

Insideat quantus miserae Deus: at memor ille

Matris Acidaliae, paulatim abolere Sichaeum

Incipit, et vivo tentat praevertere amore

Jampridem resides animos desuetaque corda.

(1.719-22)

How great a God deceives her. He, to please

His Acidalian Mother, by degrees

Would sap Sichæus, studious to remove

The dead by influx of a living love,

Through a subsided spirit dispossess'd

Of amorous passion, through a torpid breast.

(*Translations*, pp. 211-12, 1.988-93)

According to Coleridge, 'the … lines … are obscure & run <u>obstructedly</u>' (*Translations*, p. 212), and he could also do without 'That <u>through</u> twice repeated'. Once again, however, these perceived shortcomings are partly the result of Wordsworth's emulative practice; a

comparative analysis reveals that Trapp had a distinct influence on the way he picked his rhyme words and used them for the construction of enjambments:

> nor thinks how great a God she bears.
>
> He, mindful of his Mother, by degrees
>
> Begins t' expunge Sichæus from her Breast,
>
> And with a living Flame to prepossess
>
> Her Heart, long listless, and unus'd to Love.
>
> (Trapp, 1.860-4; Vol. I, p. 44)

The phrase 'by degrees' is one possible translation of 'paulatim', but by no means the only one, and the fact that both translators place it at the end of a line makes it hard to doubt Wordsworth's indebtedness. The true giveaway, however, is the materials he absorbed into his final couplet. Trapp is a blank verse translator who occasionally comes close to writing in couplets himself, and even manages to appropriate Dryden's rhyme words simply by slightly altering their grammatical shape. Here we encounter the opposite phenomenon, as Wordsworth turns Trapp's finite verb 'prepossess' into the adjective 'dispossess'd' and thus achieves a rhyme with 'breast'.

To be sure, Trapp's syntax at this point is not nearly as convoluted as Wordsworth's, but by deciding to work in the same sequence of line endings, the latter may have unwittingly limited the range of creative options that would have allowed him to render the original in a more intelligible fashion. At any rate, the borrowed elements are largely absent from the published version of 1832; instead we find that Wordsworth has become more similar to Dryden:

what Guest,

How dire a God she drew so near her Breast.

But he, not mindless of his Mother's Pray'r,   )

Works in the pliant Bosom of the Fair;   )

And moulds her Heart anew, and blots her former Care.   )

The dead is to the living Love resign'd,

And all *Æneas* enters in her Mind.

<div align="center">(Dryden, 1.1004-10)</div>

How great a god, incumbent on her breast,

Would fill it with his spirit. He, to please

His Acidalian Mother, by degrees

Blots out Sichæus, studious to remove

The dead, by influx of a living love,

By stealthy entrance of a perilous guest

Troubling a heart that had been long at rest.

<div align="center">(*Translations*, p. 582, 1.988-94)</div>

Wordsworth still uses 'breast' as a rhyme word, but he has transposed it to the beginning of the passage, producing a line that strongly resembles what Dryden had written. Analogously, Dryden's un-Virgilian 'Guest' replaces 'dispossess'd' in Wordsworth's penultimate line; the end pause that follows the monosyllabic noun is more pronounced than that after the trisyllabic adjective, so it helps to stabilize the frame of the couplet. In addition, Dryden's influence seems to have triggered the substitution of 'Blots out' for 'Would sap', and it can

also be discerned behind the newly introduced word 'entrance' (which equally lacks a literal counterpart in the Latin).

Overall, then, Wordsworth responded to Coleridge's criticism of the passage by exchanging one underlying secondary source for another, reducing the echoes of Trapp while making room for further particles of Drydenian phraseology. Locally speaking, these modifications do not amount to much, and hardly leave the translator's lines any less 'obscure' than they were before, but given how consistent his friend had been in apportioning praise and blame throughout the rest of the commentary, we can see them as part of a bigger picture. Whatever innovatory strategy Wordsworth may have pursued with his borrowings from Trapp's blank verse translation, they seem to have fallen on deaf ears, and other segments of his own rendering were able to make a favourable impression only in so far as they either abided by the long-established rules of closed couplet composition or directly drew on their most prominent exponents. Intentionally or not, Coleridge was gently nudging Wordsworth into conformity with Dryden – the very translator from whom his friend had been trying to distance himself. Considering the chronology of events, this is not to suggest that Coleridge had anything to do with the increasing proportion of borrowed materials in Books 2 and 3 of Wordsworth's *Aeneid*; the manuscript he saw contained a fair copy of the former, and the latter had already been drafted by the time Wordsworth heard back from him. Nor should we hold the poet responsible for the premature termination of the project, as Wordsworth did not seek his advice until after resolving not to continue with it. Nevertheless, it is telling that the translator would return to Dryden in his attempt to correct the flaws that had been pointed out to him. Despite the ostensible difference between their respective agendas, this 'Regenerator & Jealous Guardian' of the English language was no more capable of ignoring the famous model than the various eighteenth-century writers who had kept its legacy alive, and if he still believed himself to be independent of the dominant tradition, then

Coleridge's reaction must have had a sobering effect on his hopes of a positive public reception.

Indeed, the conservatism of Wordsworth's *Aeneid* goes even deeper than that. So far, we have been focusing on his indebtedness to a few individuals who had previously undertaken to translate the same source text, and could be consulted whenever he was in need of a suitable phrase or rhyme word. As time went by, however, Wordsworth's practice also became more neoclassical in other respects – a development that culminates in, and is thus best exemplified by, his version of Book 3. Once fair copies of Books 1 and 2 had been sent to Lonsdale, Book 3 was composed in great haste owing to the poet's imminent departure on a visit to Sir George and Lady Beaumont in February 1824 (*Translations*, p. 160). Potentially, these constraining circumstances could imply carelessness and lack of attention to detail, but on the other hand, they might also have led to an expression of instinctive preferences (which may still persist after several phases of revision). Book 3 deserves further attention now.

One feature of it is that Wordsworth repeatedly introduces rhetorical devices that we have seen to be characteristic of the closed heroic couplet. A case in point is the Trojans' sighting of Italy discussed above:

> Jamque rubescebat stellis Aurora fugatis:
>
> Cum procul obscuros colles, humilemque videmus
>
> Italiam. Italiam primus conclamat Achates;
>
> Italiam laeto socii clamore salutant.
>
> <div align="center">(3.521-4)</div>

> Now, when Aurora redden'd in a sky
>
> From which the Stars had vanish'd, we descry

The low faint hills of distant Italy.

"Italia!" shouts Achates: round and round

Italia flies with gratulant rebound,

From all who see the coast, or hear the happy sound.

<div style="text-align:center">(Translations, p. 267, 3.721-6)</div>

The final alexandrine has no Latin equivalent, but rather serves to round off the scene by juxtaposing its visual and acoustic stimuli in a single antithesis; the medial caesura divides the line into perfectly parallel halves of equal length.

A similar structure concludes Helenus' account of the natural forces that created the channel between Scylla and Charybdis:

Haec loca, vi quondam et vasta convulsa ruina

(Tantum aevi longinqua valet mutare vetustas)

Dissiluisse ferunt: cum protinus utraque tellus

Una foret, venit medio vi pontus, et undis

Hesperium Siculo latus abscidit: arvaque et urbes

Littore diductas angusto interluit aestu.

<div style="text-align:center">(3.414-19)</div>

"Tis said, when heaving Earth of yore was rent,

"This ground forsook the Hesperian Continent:

"Nor doubt, that power to work such change might lie

"Within the grasp of dark Antiquity.

"Then flow'd the sea between, and, where the force

"Of roaring waves establish'd the divorce,

"Still, through the Straits, the narrow waters boil,

"Dissevering Town from Town, and soil from soil.

<div align="center">(Translations, p. 262, 3.577-84)</div>

Although Wordsworth is relatively faithful to Virgil's literal meaning in these lines, he takes a few liberties with the geographical proper nouns, moving 'Hesperium' near the head of the verse paragraph and dropping 'Siculo' altogether. Moreover, the Roman poet uses 'arva' and 'urbes' only once, whereas his translator doubles the corresponding words 'soil' and 'town' and groups them into a sequence of two syntactically analogous pairs that occupy the better part of the last line. Again, such neat balances are nowhere to be found in the Latin, but neither do they seem particularly representative of Wordsworth's own poetic voice; stylistically, they rather look like specimens of the coolly analytical abstraction and lucid communication we would expect from neoclassical practitioners of the couplet form. In his 'Discourse of Satire', for instance, Dryden recalls how he was first told to copy 'the Beautiful Turns of Words and Thoughts' of Waller and Denham,[23] and Wordsworth's 'Dissevering Town from Town, and soil from soil' very much appears to continue this tradition.

Verbal elements are also duplicated during the translation of Andromache's speech:

Me famulam famuloque Heleno transmisit habendam.

<div align="center">(3.329)</div>

"And me to Trojan Helenus he gave –

"Captive to Captive – if not Slave to Slave.

<div align="center">(Translations, p. 259, 3.468-9)</div>

Here Virgil himself employs a turn on 'famulus', yet Wordsworth effectively translates it twice, and mirrors the variant renderings along the axis of the medial caesura in his second line. As with the previous examples, the translator's imposition of structural symmetries draws the verse closer to the Augustan standard he had opposed. Even without a specific precedent in any of the eighteenth-century versions, these parallelisms and antitheses reflect a frame of mind that still espouses the literary ideals of the previous age, perhaps in spite of itself, and they clearly interfere with the declared goal of lexical fidelity. While Wordsworth attempted to reinvigorate the closed couplet by loosening its fetters, he was not wholly successful at containing the artificial rhetoric that was encoded in the verse form he inherited from his predecessors.

Finally, Book 3 features some of the most egregious examples of the type of diction Wordsworth purported to avoid. It should be evident by now that, right from the start, the poet made ample use of phrases that qualify as 'languid circumlocutions' and thus violate his self-defined principles of translation; Coleridge suggests as much with comments like 'Shall Empire hold her place = regnabitur?' (*Translations*, p. 192) and 'Vertice = from the exalted region of her head?' (p. 199). These embellishments, however, are still recognizably connected to the semantic units upon which they expand. The same cannot be said about the part of Helenus' prophecy in which he predicts the divine omen that Aeneas will be sent:

> Cum tibi sollicito secreti ad fluminis undam
>
> Littoreis ingens inventa sub ilicibus sus,
>
> Triginta capitum foetus enixa jacebit
>
> (3.389-91)

"When, anxiously reflecting, thou shalt find

"A bulky Female of the bristly Kind

"On a sequester'd river's margin laid,

"Where Ilex branches do the ground oershade;

"With thirty Young-ones couch'd in that Recess

(*Translations*, p. 261, 3.545-9)

Virgil's 'huge sow' ('ingens … sus') becomes 'A bulky Female of the bristly Kind'. Instead of openly naming the animal, the translator opts for a periphrasis based on the normative formula 'covering + group word' that Tillotson infers from his study of Augustan poetics.[24] If this seems inept, Wordsworth should not have to take all the blame, as he was obviously inspired by Pitt's version of the same lines:

When, lost in Contemplation deep, you find

A large white Mother of the bristly Kind

(Pitt, 3.520-1; Vol. I, p. 120)

While the phrase can thus be regarded as yet another borrowing passed on from one English *Aeneid* to the next, it also raises more general questions about the evolution of style and decorum over the course of the eighteenth century, for in choosing his words, Pitt was himself looking back to Pope's *Odyssey*:

here are seen

Twelve herds of goats that graze our utmost green;

To native pastors is their charge assign'd,

And mine the care to feed the bristly kind[25]

Given the genre of their respective source texts, all three translators may have desired to avoid 'low' vocabulary as far as it was achievable; moreover, the identical end-line position of 'bristly kind' suggests that it also offered a preferable rhyme word. But there are still further reasons for the use of such formulaic language, even though they were not equally compelling in each case. With regard to Pope's *Windsor Forest* and Thomson's *Seasons*, Tillotson observes that both poets mention '*fish* and *birds* whenever they want to' and only resort to circumlocutions 'when fish or birds are being thought of as distinct in their appearance from other groups of creatures'.[26] The passage in the *Odyssey* shows something of the same quasi-scientific classification as it differentiates between herds of goats and herds of swine; here the choice of an abstract phrase is justified and works to great effect. By contrast, Virgil's lines refer to a particular creature of symbolic significance, and thus appear weaker in translation than in their Latin original. It looks as if neither Pitt nor Wordsworth paid much heed to the specific context of the words they were rendering, but simply settled for an expression that could be broadly associated with the 'high' style of epic.

Of course, this and similar decisions are not quite as easily excused in a poet who declares an intention to go against the grain of established conventions. Not only was Wordsworth eventually infected with the 'poison of Pope's Homer' via the intermediary of Pitt's Virgil; he remained oblivious to the nuances of neoclassical diction in the hands of a competent versifier, and, as a result, ended up producing a poor imitation of the poetic idiom he had formerly rejected. The misuse of stock phraseology, amongst other things we have seen, suggests a superficial understanding of the tradition to which his version of the *Aeneid* was contributing. Like Dryden, Wordsworth drew extensively on previous renderings, yet he did not always exercise the same critical judgment, and was rather less discriminating in the

selection of materials he deemed suitable for absorption. By comparison with how his best-known predecessor had handled his sources, one also gets the impression that the borrowed items did not undergo much refinement during the process of being integrated into the new work; more often than not, their primary function appears to lie in the provision of sounding rhyme words that made it easier for the translator to write in the unaccustomed medium of heroic couplets. To be fair, Wordsworth faced the problem of negotiating a greater and more diverse set of stylistic options and expectations than his precursor. The blank verse translations that had emerged since the publication of Dryden's *Aeneis* constituted at least one additional thread of Virgilian reception that needed to be taken into account. Competing for dominance over the translator's practice, these various influences rarely coalesced with each other, and thus did not tend towards an organic whole; neither was Wordsworth able to make any significant stylistic innovations. All things considered, the enterprise proves to be a somewhat belated addition to a body of translations which, despite Wordsworth's initial optimism, left him, on his own principles, hardly any room for creative exploration.

University of Glasgow

---

[1] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, edited by Ernest de Sélincourt, second edition rev. Chester L. Shaver, 8 vols (Oxford, 1967), I, 641 (7 November 1805).

[2] Kevin F. Doherty, 'On Wordsworth's *Aeneid*', *Classical World*, 54 (1961), 213-17 (p. 217).

[3] Sally Bushell, 'Wordsworthian Composition: The Micro-"Prelude"', *Studies in Romanticism*, 44 (2005), 399-421 (p. 403).

[4] In the introduction to the volume in the Cornell Wordsworth edited by Bruce E. Graver: *Translations of Chaucer and Virgil* (Ithaca, NY, 1998; hereafter *Translations*), pp. 155-74. For a more detailed description and partial reproduction of the manuscripts, see pp. xx-xxi

and 331-557 in the same volume. The designations of the manuscripts later in my discussion are Graver's.

[5] These letters, too, can be found in the Appendix to *Translations*, pp. 561-7. Only one side of the correspondence is extant: Lonsdale's objections must be inferred from Wordsworth's responses.

[6] Blank verse as a medium for Virgil translation became increasingly popular during the course of the eighteenth century. Examples include the complete renderings of the *Aeneid* by Nicholas Brady (1716-26), Joseph Trapp (1718-20), Alexander Strahan (1767), and James Beresford (1794); William Hawkins published only the first half of his version (1764).

[7] Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, edited by James M. Osborn, 2 vols (Oxford, 1966), I, 173 (recorded June 1739).

[8] William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, edited by James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca, NY, 1992; hereafter *LB*), p. 757.

[9] Letter of 5 February 1824; *Translations*, p. 564. In my quotations from Wordsworth, emphases are always those of the original, whether indicated by underline (in manuscripts) or italics (in printed material).

[10] *The Works of John Dryden*, V-VI: *Poems: The Works of Virgil in English, 1697*, edited by William Frost (Berkeley, CA, 1987), V, 330. All quotations from Dryden's Virgil are taken from this edition (hereafter *Works*), with the translation itself referenced by book and line numbers only.

[11] Virgil is quoted throughout from *P. Virgilii Maronis opera*, edited by Carolus Ruaeus (Charles de la Rue), the 'Delphin' Virgil (London, 1696 printing) – a popular edition used by both Wordsworth and Dryden. For Wordsworth's use of it see Graver, *Translations*, p. 178; for Dryden's see J. M. Bottkol, 'Dryden's Latin Scholarship', *MP*, 40 (1942-3), 241-54. Line numbering in quotations from Virgil follows standard modern editions of the *Aeneid*.

[12] Bruce Graver, 'Wordsworth and the Language of Epic: The Translation of the *Aeneid*', *SP*, 83 (1986), 261-85 (pp. 267-8). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

[13] My transcription follows that of the Cornell edition, but only reproduces the base text of the manuscripts, without any of the deletions and interlinear revisions. Since the latter were usually incorporated into the next version of the text, they do not need to be given again.

[14] Stuart Gillespie, *English Translation and Classical Reception: Towards a New Literary History* (Malden, MA, 2011), p. 153.

[15] Bushell (n. 3), p. 401.

[16] In addition to the articles by Graver and Doherty cited above, see Willard Spiegelman, 'Wordsworth's *Aeneid*', *Comparative Literature*, 26 (1974), 97-109 (pp. 97-103).

[17] Bruce Graver, 'Wordsworth and the Romantic Art of Translation', *Wordsworth Circle*, 17 (1986), 169-74 (p. 172); 'Wordsworth's Georgic Beginnings', *TSLL*, 33 (1991), 137-59 (p. 147).

[18] Graver, 'Language of Epic' (n. 12), p. 270.

[19] James Beresford, *The Aeneid translated into Blank Verse* (London, 1794), p. 22, 1.57-8.

[20] Joseph Trapp, *The Æneis of Virgil, Translated into Blank Verse*, 2 vols (London, 1718-1720), 1.66 and 1.332 (Vol. I, pp. 5, 6).

[21] Geoffrey Tillotson, *Augustan Studies* (London, 1961), p. 88.

[22] Christopher Pitt, *The Æneid of Virgil*, 2 vols (London, 1740), 1.588-9 (Vol. I, p. 27).

[23] *The Works of John Dryden*, Vol. IV: *Poems 1693-1696*, edited by A. B. Chambers and William Frost (Berkeley, CA, 1974), p. 84.

[24] Tillotson (n. 21), p. 74.

[25] *The Odyssey of Homer*, 5 vols (London, 1725-6), III, 303-4; 14.125-8.

[26] Tillotson, p. 21.