Formula and invention:
the poetry of Pope's *Iliad*

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To what perfection will our Tongue arrive,
How will Invention and Translation thrive,
When Authors nobly born will bear their part,
And not disdain th' inglorious praise of Art![1]

Pope's *Iliad* deserves better: an unrivalled masterpiece, the culmination of rich traditions of verse translation and epic re-interpretation, currently suffers neglect both by classicists and, more surprisingly, in the ever-expanding field of Pope studies. Its importance as a poetic recreation of Homer and as a major English epic demands our attention, especially as 'we belong to a generation for which Homer is poetry again.'[2] Both the literary environment in which it was produced and the solutions Pope found to many of the problems of translating epic reveal a great deal about the uniquely Homeric qualities of Pope's *Iliad*. These Homeric affinities spring from Pope's understanding of, and engagement with, the notions of 'invention' and 'formula'.

'Invention', for Pope, adumbrates the sacred core of poetic creativity, 'that which is the very foundation of poetry', elegantly binding 'art' and 'nature': a paradoxical union yearned for in *An Essay on Criticism*. 'Homer is universally allow'd to have had the greatest *Invention* of any writer whatever'[3], and in reproducing him within the English language, faithful 'not just to the word but to the spirit and Genius of an Author',[4] Pope exemplified that thriving 'invention' which Dryden looked forward to in the almost messianic literary prophecy quoted above. But Pope did not just 'bear his part' as a translator. His devotion to forming the best English version of the *Iliad* was a campaign for perfecting the language of English literature, and the literature of the English language. Translation was a form of poetic invention just as rich and artistically complex as anything in his, so to speak, 'original' works. This

meant transcending the bounds of Roscommon's influential but conventional notions of the art:

> 'Tis true, *Composing* is the *Nobler* Part,
> But good *Translation* is no *easie* Art:
> For tho *Materials* have long since been found,
> Yet both your *fancy*, and your *Hands* are *bound*;
> And by *improving* what was writ *Before*;
> *Invention* Labours *Less*, but *Judgement, more.*[5]

Pope's success at an English equivalent of the poetic ideal of Homer's 'invention' is what drives his *Iliad* past a translation where mere 'judgement' prevails. His response to the problems of how to treat formula in translation is instrumental in this.

Pope's was not a blanket response to the formulas and repetitions of the Homeric text (that is, either to preserve them all or ignore them completely), but a careful consideration of each case and its relation to the larger issues and structures. This is outlined in his discussion of compound epithets in his preface to the *Iliad*:

> I believe such should be retain'd as slide easily of themselves into an English-compound, without violence to the ear or to the receiv'd rules of composition; as well as those which have receiv'd a sanction from the authority of our best Poets, and are become familiar thro' their use of them; such as the *cloud-compelling Jove*, &c ... Some that cannot be so turn'd as to preserve their full image by one or two words, may have justice done to them by circumlocution ... Others that admit of differing significations, may receive an advantage by a judicious variation according to the occasions on which they are introduc'd.[6]

Pope's reinvention and creative use of formula led to a language which was the ideal medium for a truly poetic rendition of Homer within the English epic tradition. His use of previous *Iliad* translations, commentaries and notes, as of the work of other poets, is of the essence here. This pointer comes from Felicity Rosslyn:

> [Pope] wanted to speak, as Homer had spoken, for a whole civilisation, and his language is the one which had been used with

increasing sophistication through the seventeenth century to translate the Greek and Roman classics. It is made up of phrases used and re-used by poets ... When Pope calls big and little Ajax 'thunderbolts of war' he is borrowing from John Dryden's ... translation of Virgil's Aeneid ... Even a phrase as apparently unremarkable as 'mountains of the slain' has a genealogy reaching back through French and English poetry to Latin epic. But this is not an elaborate game of allusion; Pope does not want us to catch a specific reference, but the atmosphere these phrases evoke from the numberless heroic contexts in which they have been used ... His conviction that only especially dignified, time-honoured language will serve is shared by Homer, who also keeps us inside the epic atmosphere with a special vocabulary.[7]

But we need to go beyond this. Pope used lines and phrases not only from his epic predecessors and Greek and Roman translators, but from all of the English poetry he read and knew. In this respect too, Pope's can be seen as the most Homeric English *Iliad*: he stands in a very similar position to that of Homer, in relation to his poetic forebears and descendants. Examination of the compositional process of Pope's *Iliad* reveals a great deal about how he succeeded with his English epic, as we shall see below. But the effect and implications of Pope's methods have never been fully explored.

In Pope's own time, Dennis attacked his recycling of poetical material as plagiarism; but arguments for redeeming Pope were proposed, even if they intimated some mild (parenthetical) disapproval:

> Pope was so superior to all the poets his contemporaries [sic] in versification that if he met with a good line (even in a much inferior [poet]) he would take it (like a lord of the manor) for his own. Thus even from Ambrose Philips, 'nor shall his promise to his people fail', to his *Iliad*.[8]

More recently the issue has been schematically discussed in the introduction to the Twickenham edition of Pope, with many parallels adduced.[9] There is even an appendix which attempts to list all the borrowings, echoes and allusions that occur in the *Iliad*.[10] Laudable as the intentions behind these parts of the Twickenham edition are, they are simply unsystematic and incomplete.

They could not be otherwise, because nothing in all the critical machinery of this edition addresses the central questions about Pope's creative process. If this process were understood, it would be obvious that his language at all points refers outwards to the whole of English poetry and cannot be reduced to a finite number of parallels. But this Popean procedure needs to be put into its cultural, political and aesthetic context; it can then help illuminate his poetic practice and theory.

The key textual strategy of the translation of the *Iliad* reveals what is most characteristic of Pope's achievement: the synthesizing impulse. This 'synthesizing impulse' operates on different levels: from the vast nexus of cultural and political pressures through which he negotiated a path for his *Iliad*, through the most minute of textual details, to the unifying patterns within the poem as a coherent narrative. The pull for internal coherence and consistency was essential, given the model of hermeneutic reception which Pope espoused: surveying 'the whole, with the same spirit that its author writ';[11] not reading for the words (the fault of the 'verbal critic'), but *through* them.

> Mr Pope thought himself better in some respects for not having had a regular education. He (as he observed in particular) read originally for the sense, whereas we are taught for so many years to read only for words.

> This no doubt was one reason of his being pleased so excessively – at eight or nine years old – with Ogilby's Homer. The greatness and novelty, and all the excellencies of the matter struck him in spite of the language. He saw the greatness of Homer's beauties through all the rags that were flung over him.[12]

The *Iliad* had to appear 'of a piece', reflecting the 'fire' of Homer's mind. This was celebrated in Pope's Preface, where he 'presents as a complex whole, the strong sense of a continuing relation between Homer and a community of readers, and an equally strong sense of the self-contained and absolute nature of great poetry.'[13] The subtle arts of Homer become Pope's own principles, re-applied throughout his work. The significance of the famous note to book VI has thus been very pertinently highlighted by Leo Damrosch,[14] acting as it does as commentary on the very life-blood of Pope's *Iliad* itself:

There never was a finer piece of painting than this. Hector extends his arms to embrace his child; the child affrighted at the glittering of his helmet and the shaking of the plume, shrinks backward to the breast of his nurse; Hector unbraces his helmet, lays it on the ground, takes the infant in his arms, lifts him towards heaven, and offers a prayer for him to the Gods: then returns him to the mother Andromache, who receives him with a smile of pleasure, but at the same instant the fears for her husband make her burst into tears. All these are but small circumstances, but so artfully chosen, that every reader immediately feels the force of them, and represents the whole in the utmost liveliness to his imagination. This alone might be a confutation of that false criticism some have fallen into, who affirm that a poet ought only to collect the great and noble particulars in his paintings. But it is in the images of things as in the characters of persons; where a small action, or even a small circumstance of an action, lets us more into the knowledge and comprehension of them, than the material and principal parts themselves.[15]

Poetic insight means apposite selection with meticulous attention. This ensures excitement even in passages without dramatic dialogue or the thrill of battle. Pope was thus able to develop a style which compensated for the lack of clear narrative outlines (*The Dunciad*), or plots in discursive poems (*Epistles, Imitations of Horace*). The narrative drive lies not in the plot, but everywhere in the language. So it becomes very easy 'to affirm that Pope possesses real narrative power, if narrative can be seen in the plotting of action within lines and couplets . . . Every corner of his *Iliad* is filled with this narratized energy, including passages which in modern versions are just connective tissue.'[16]

A magnificent example of this is the description of the frustrated, isolated Achilles in book I. The original springs a tension between his standard epithet – πόδας ὠκύς – (quick-footed) and the participles of inaction παρήμενος (waiting by) and μένων (staying). But Pope does not translate this epithet of Achilles. How then does he bring out the passage's effect?

But raging still amidst his navy sate
The stern *Achilles*, stedfast in his hate;
Nor mix'd in combate, nor in council join'd,

> But wasting cares lay heavy on his mind;
> In his black thoughts revenge and slaughter roll,
> And scenes of blood rise dreadful in his soul.[17]

Melancholy lies behind this passage: both in its conventional sense, but also in its etymological Greek sense, of the black ink that fills the body and creates the black mood. The dynamism of this picture springs from the combination of the blood and black thoughts rolling and rising, as we follow them in Pope's mini-narrative, coursing round the body of Achilles. The concentrated intensity of this passage derives further energy from the contained passion of Achilles not being 'mix'd' or 'join'd', and thus purged in action as it ought to be. Even in describing inactivity, Pope's verses are enthralling, drawing out the meaning with those 'small circumstances, so artfully chosen'. Here and everywhere, he teases out the psychology implicit in Homer so that 'it may be conceded that Pope's emendation, if not strictly accurate, conveys very adequately the effect of the passage. That is a conclusion to which one continually recurs in the study of this translation.'[18] But the notion of word-for-word accuracy has very little to do with the only kind of accuracy that counts in poetical translation. Pope is, in fact, accurate because he translates 'for the sense and not the words'.

This is all exemplary of what Pope's contemporaries meant by 'improvements' upon Homer: 'Homer's great soul in ev'ry line we see; / For if he sometimes nods, he's roused by thee.'[19] Pope gets behind what are sometimes but intimations in the Greek text and brings out more fully the parallels and oppositions, an internal maze of mirrors, reflecting and commenting upon each other. The best of late twentieth-century Homeric interpretation presents this as the way Homer's Greek text works. Mueller describes some of 'the highly organised structure modern criticism has discovered in the text', and talks of Homer's narrative as 'very subtle in its use of juxtaposition and implicit contrasts'.[20] Silk illustrates how parallelism is 'another important principle' underlying the organization of the *Iliad*, in his examination of its 'sophisticated unity and homogeneity'.[21]

We have here further evidence of the validity of Pope's insights into the poetics of the *Iliad*. Pope paints Homer's pictures, but his poetical synthesizing vivifies and 'improves' their internal unity. In describing the lamentations of Achilles, Pope brings them before our eyes with a chain of watery images characteristically yoked together:

> Not so his loss the fierce *Achilles* bore;
> But sad retiring to the sounding *shore*,
> O'er the wild margin of the *deep* he hung,
> That kindred *deep*, from whence his mother sprung:
> There, *bath'd* in tears of anger and disdain,
> Thus loud lamented to the stormy *main*.[22]

In amongst the metonymic ('deep'), synecdochic ('shore') and synonymic ('main') references to the sea, the life of the passage and the key linking device is Pope's addition, which gives it a vivid formulaic unity: the verb 'bath'd'. This word joins Achilles' 'tears', in a literally elemental way, to the enclosing references to his mother's home ('that kindred deep'). But these unifying processes do not occur only within passages. There is linking between two passages, using kindred visual imagery, and there is the unifying of epic language throughout the entire poem through Pope's synthesis of previous poetic language in his own version of the formulaic style. For these techniques to be fully appreciated as committed responses to Homeric poetry and invention, the broader picture must be painted.

In synthesizing the language of previous poets and translators, through his own facility in the couplet, Pope makes an important claim for the timeless ethical application of Homer. 'Pope's whole translation is an affirmation of the doctrine of the generality of human experience, and can be appreciated on no other assumption.'[23] This was by no means a commonplace in Homeric hermeneutics of the time. There was a tradition of partisan appropriations of the *Iliad*, of translators casting Homer in their own political image. The effect of Ogilby's *Iliad* on the young Pope is well attested.[24] Ogilby's translation was dedicated to Charles II. It was a characteristic celebration of the Restoration.[25] It rendered Homer an outright Royalist, made to address Charles directly and across two and a half thousand years to receive his patronage:

> ... *that which may render him yet more proper for Royal Entertainment is, That he appears a most constant assertor of the Divine Right of Princes and Monarchical Government. Be pleas'd to hear himself;*

> No good did many Rulers ever bring;
> Let one be Lord; in *Jove's* name one be *King*.

> *On the other side, all Anti-Monarchical Persons he describes in the*
> *Character of Thersites ... From what Prince then more justly may*
> *Homer hope for Patronage than from your Sacred Self, in whose*
> *Veins (besides your irrefragable Title to these Kingdoms) the*
> *channels of all the Royall Blood in Christendome concenter.*[26]

Although prefaced with nothing so directly political, Hobbes' version too was a product of the Restoration. It was composed in the leisure the new era afforded, 'because I had nothing else to do', as he confesses.[27] Then there was the battle over the Glaucus and Sarpedon episode. 'Denham's version', it has been said, 'establishes the speech in English as an apology for aristocratic privilege, and Motteux's seems to be a eulogy for William III, the warrior King.'[28] It is important to note that Pope's 1709 version steers a path between these two partisan approaches, by reading the episode as a moral exemplum, later defined in Pope's own notes for the complete *Iliad* as the 'generosity and nobleness ... justice, gratitude and magnanimity'[29] of Sarpedon's attitude.

One of the sources most often used by Pope was the 1712 translation by Ozell, Oldisworth and Broome of Madame Dacier's prose version. Considering the substantial use Pope made of the linguistic resources and critical material in this version, it seems to be a much more likely candidate than Chapman's, for the use Johnson describes in his *Life of Pope*. There, Johnson suggests that Pope 'perhaps never translated any passage till he had read this version'.[30] This project, dominated by Ozell, was dedicated to Steele. It was of a strongly Whiggish cast and thoroughly Miltonic inspiration. Ozell's preface is a very important text; its conviction demonstrates that Pope's choice of couplets was not innocent or non-polemical:

> *I doubt whether an* English *Translation of* Homer, *any otherwise than*
> *in verse, can be made so as to please an* English *Reader. By Verse I*
> *do not mean Rhyme; for I always thought That too Effeminate to*
> *express the Masculine Spirit of* Homer. *The affected Finery of Rhyme*
> *can never sute with that divine Simplicity, which is the peculiar*
> *Character of this poet, who, if he had been an* English-man, *and liv'd*
> *in our Days, wou'd most certainly have chosen the same sort of Verse,*
> *which our* English-Homer, Milton, *did. I have long entertain'd a*
> *Notion, that ... Regard ought to be had ... to the very manner of the*
> *Composition, which ought to be resembled as near as possible and*

not a new one introduced. Blank Verse, therefore, seems to be the only
proper Measure for an English *Translation of* Homer.[31]

Pope's comments on Miltonic style in the preface to Parnell's translation of
Homer's *Batrachomyomachia*[32] are a direct response to Ozell's preface and its
accompanying translation.

We see ... that the Ridicule of his [Milton's] *Manner succeeds him*
better than Imitation *of it; because Transpositions, which are*
unnatural to a language, are to be fairly derided, if they ruin it by
being frequently introduced.[33]

Later we shall see how careful Pope was in his use of Ozell and company's
version, particularly in response to the temptations of Miltonic diction in
English epic.

In his study of Johnson, J.C.D. Clark[34] politicizes the classical tradition to
such an extent that it is made to seem a marker of Jacobite-Tory sympathies.
This is probably an extreme position to hold, taking into account the diversity
of uses to which the classics were put. But there was perhaps, in the minds of
a few zealots, still some subversive, symbolic link. This is witnessed in Pope's
fear of writing out a passage in Greek in a letter to Caryll, where he instead
quotes Homer in English, 'for Greek characters might possibly be taken for
cyphers should this letter be intercepted by any zealously affected to the
government'.[35] On a lighter, but no less provocative note, there were the many
frivolous bawdy parodies of Homer circulating at this period. The popularity
of these gave some urgency to Pope's poetic campaign. Weinbrot usefully
locates their mockery of ancient morality as being rooted in the Ancients and
Moderns debate.[36] Part of Pope's aim was 'to rehabilitate Homer from the
serio-comic tradition of interpretation... and to establish his poems on a level
of dignity with *Paradise Lost* and *The Aeneid*'.[37]

The Homer manuscripts, and the corrected proofs, reveal the laborious
perfection for which Pope strove. They offer tantalizing material for
investigating 'by what gradations it advanced to correctness'. Walsh inspired
this attention to perfecting each line, 'for though we had several great poets,
we never had any one great poet that was correct – and he desired me to make
that my study and aim.'[39] In his *Life of Pope* Johnson printed variants from the
Iliad manuscript. In doing this he was following Spence, whose pointers for

future Pope research have been quite bafflingly ignored by recent Pope scholars.

> When I was looking on his foul copy of the *Iliad* and observing how very much it was corrected and interlined, he said, 'I believe you would find upon enquiry that those parts which have been the most corrected read the easiest' …
>
> What a useful study might it be for a poet in those parts to compare what was first writ with successive alterations – to learn his turns and arts of versification, and to consider the reasons why such and such an alteration was made?[40]

Even brief extracts from the manuscripts reveal a wealth of illuminating material, giving a crucial insight into Pope's workshop. They capture the synthesising process in action, displaying an often dazzling array of alternatives. The proofs were not the last stage of revision; Pope even responded to criticisms after publication. (The most famous example is his incorporation of Dennis' criticism of the opening lines.[41]) The manuscripts reveal the process he describes so clearly to Spence:

> In translating both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* my usual method was to take advantage of the first heat, and then to correct each book first by the original, next by other translations, and lastly to give it a reading for the versification only.[42]

Consider, for instance:

> ~~Hear sacred Pallas~~   ~~Goddess divine thou ever dredful Maid~~
> ~~O Goddess most divine! redoubted~~   ~~Divinest Goddess~~
> Goddess of Goddesses! ~~O Pallas aid~~   ~~Venerable Maid~~
> Oh dreadful Maid
> ~~Minerva~~   ~~Aid~~
> Troys safe defence   victorious Pallas aid   Oh dredful Maid
> ~~unconquerd~~ thou ever dredful Maid[43]

Here Pope works with and around the 'first heat' version, deleting then returning to some of his first ideas. He then tries out 'Venerable' and 'Goddess of Goddesses', which derive from Ozell's 'O venerable *Pallas*! Goddess of

superior Rank in Heav'n!' The final version is a fusion of some this material, and a rejection of much of it:

> Oh awful goddess! ever dreadful maid,
> *Troy's* strong defence, unconquer'd *Pallas*, aid![44]

With the 'famous moonlight scene' extract from Book VIII, printed in manuscript form in the Twickenham edition,[45] one can find instances of material from the corresponding passages[46] in previous translations being redistributed, whether into different parts or in different forms. This is the case where Ogilby has:

> Whose chearing Fires all Night may gild the skies.

Compare Ozell's:

> And with ascending brightness gild the skies.

Pope avoids this phrasing in the equivalent part of his translation, but uses it at the end of the book, in a recast form, which nevertheless mirrors its use in Ogilby and Ozell:

> The long reflections of the distant fires
> Gleam on the walls, and tremble on the spires.
> A thousand piles the dusky horrours gild,
> And shoot a shady lustre o'er the field.[47]

We can also see Pope carefully avoiding the same adjective as Chapman has ('As when about the silver Moone'), but still being inescapably drawn to its resonances, where he uses 'Golden', 'glow'and 'beams':

> ~~silver~~   vivid
> Around her ~~silver~~ Throne ye ~~Stars~~ ~~Golden~~ planets ~~glow~~ roll

And

> ~~The~~ & Stars unnumberd, ~~trembling beams bestow:~~ gild ye glowing Pole

The tensions and resolutions between borrowing, copying, digesting and remoulding are clearly exposed in the final form of this passage, where the re-emergence of 'silver' and the reappearance of the verb 'gild', suggest, again, how conscious this process of formulaic redeployment on Pope's part was:

> Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
> And stars unnumber'd gild the glowing pole,
> O'er the dark tress a yellower verdure shed,
> And tip with silver ev'ry mountain's head.[48]

It is this sophisticated attention to the details of the epic idiom that gives Pope's *Iliad* its conviction and authority. 'Pope cuts; he also glosses freely; but he translates Homer *into something*. He is aware that it is the total effect that counts: the reader comparing Pope to the Greek will often be amazed to find how ingeniously an important phrase that has disappeared from its original context is reintegrated at a later point.'[49] The same can be said of the ingenuity with which material from previous English Iliads is redeployed.

There is also careful linking of a pair of passages. This is often achieved by the establishment of striking visual connections between them. At the climax of the battle of Book XVI, after he has missed Patroclus with his throw of the spear, Sarpedon's wounding yields this memorable triplet:

> Not so Patroclus' never-erring dart
> Aim'd at his breast, it pierc'd the mortal part
> Where the strong fibres bind the solid heart.[50]

The binding is all: it is mimetic of Pope's binding together 'strong fibres' from his predecessors' work, woven into his harmonious whole. We can highlight what he has taken from each. First Chapman:

> But no such speedlesse flight
> Patroclus let his speare performe, that on the breast did light
> Of his brave foe where life's strings close about the *solid Hart*,
> Impressing a recurelesse wound; his knees then left their part.[51]

Then Ogilby:

> Menoetius Son then at the Lycian threw.
> From him no Spear unsignifying flew.
> The Launce, impuls'd with so much strength and Art,
> The trembling *Fibres pierc'd* which guard his Heart.[52]

But the powerful image in Pope's triplet is picked up again later. The details of the wound bring the scene before our eyes like no other version:

> Then drew the weapon from his panting heart,
> The reeking fibres clinging to the dart;
> From the wide wound gush'd out a stream of blood,
> And the soul issu'd in the purple flood.[53]

These passages, completed as part of his 1709 *Episode of Sarpedon*, show how instinctive were Pope's elevating syntheses. But when integrated into the complete *Iliad*, other parts of this episode show a fastidious attention to detail, including the rearranging or removal of punctuation marks, which ties in well with the picture presented by Foxon[54] of Pope's genuine interest in the appearance of his pages. The two most significant changes in the new version of Sarpedon are rewritings of couplets. First the couplet in 1709,

> The Gates resound, the Brazen Hinges fly,
> While each is bent to conquer or to die.[55]

is transformed into a brilliant sound-effect, gaining a place in Pope's Poetical Index, under 'Versification: Expressing in the sound the thing describ'd':

> The brazen hinges fly, the walls resound,
> Heav'n trembles, roar the mountains, thunders all the ground.[56]

where the thumping second line has the mimetic force of Pope (or Homer) at his best. The second change occurs where Pope removes his own additional metaphor, in order not to disturb the distribution of Homer's similes. Before Hector's decisive arrival, Pope had written:

> So Conquest loth for either to declare,
> Levels her Wings, and hov'ring hangs in Air.
> 'Till Hector came, to whose superior Might
> Jove ow'd the Glory of the destin'd Fight.[57]

But since this followed Homer's own simile of the old lady and the wavering scales, Pope realizes that there is figurative overload at this point and so simplifies for the benefit of the larger compositional structures:

> So stood the war, till Hector's matchless might
> With fates prevailing, turn'd the scale of fight.[58]

All these details, through repetition and accumulation, contribute to the

experience of unity in reading Pope's *Iliad*. As Silk says of Homer, 'the cumulative effect of so many repeated elements is to convey a sense of overall unity.'[59] Pope's willingness to sacrifice a distracting extraneous metaphor is a demonstration of that greatest art, the art of blotting. ''Tis not a *Lip* or *Eye* we beauty call, / But the joint force and full *Result* of *All*.'[60]

But the most general and important linguistic technique, which reveals most clearly the parallel with Homeric technique, is Pope's re-deployment of previous poetic collocations and verbal formulas. This compositional process makes him much closer to Homer than either he or his contemporaries could have imagined. Although Bentley had hinted at Homer's oral roots, 'Pope did not conceive of Homer as a poet who composed orally. He was ... aware that the poems had originally been sung and he wished to preserve the stylistic qualities – such as the repetition of stock epithets and even of entire passages – that we now associate with ... the oral formulaic style.'[61] This century's discovery of primary epic's oral-formulaic method reveals a Homeric text reorganizing and synthesizing inherited materials near the end of a long oral tradition, which developed a vast armoury of stock phrases. Even without the modern insights of Parry's analyses, Pope's technique is parallel, doing the same thing, but in a literary-textual way. This can be examined by looking at one of the many formulas in Pope's *Iliad*, the 'hurl(d)-headlong' formula, which is one of the most fascinating. This phrase occurs twice in *Paradise Lost*, and gained widespread fame from its use in the first book in the 'fall of Mulciber' passage, which is itself based on Hephaestus' fall in Book I of the *Iliad*. The Twickenham editors cite only two occurrences of this unmistakable Miltonism in Pope's text; yet, as Keener shows, it occurs at least nine times and it goes beyond mere allusion:

> Pope's reiterating the phrase (much more than Milton does ...) extends and modifies the import of the words in the direction of significant parallelism, not allusion, within Pope's text.[62]

Incorporation and redeployment make it common poetic property, a formula of epic diction, not just a genuflection to an epic predecessor. This was not just Pope's work. Between him and Milton is an intermediary which turns Milton's phrase into a much more regular formula – Ozell and company's version – and Pope's use of it follows their precedent in some obvious places, as in Andromache's lament,

> Or else some Greek whose father prest the plain,
> Or son, or brother, by great Hector slain;
> In Hector's blood his vengeance shall enjoy,
> And hurl thee headlong from the tow'rs of Troy.[63]

after Oldisworth:

> Or else some furious Greek, when Troy is sack'd, May snatch thee
> from my Arms, and headlong hurl thee From a high Tow'r, a Victim
> to his Son, or Brother, by thy valiant father slain, when with the
> slaughter'd Greeks he strow'd the Field.[64]

Another example is in Book VIII of Pope:

> My light'ning these rebellious shall confound,
> And hurl them flaming, headlong to the ground,[65]

after Ozell:

> If they proceed their Horses I will lame; Themselves I'll headlong
> hurl, and break your chariot.[66]

But where Pope does not follow his predecessors 'headlong' down the road to mannered Miltonization is just as important. The best English *Iliad* could not, like previous attempts, stand obscured in the darksome shadow of *Paradise Lost*:

> When by that Tyrant, to the Depths of Erebus, Inexorable Pluto's
> darksome Realms, His son was sent to fetch the dreadful Monster,
> That guards the Adamantine Gates of Hell ... [67]

Resistance to this sort of thing was vital. In this way, Pope effected the appropriation of Milton's formula, making it his own, by his own reworkings of it, sewn throughout his text:

> And drive the Grecians headlong to the sea [XV 295]

> To plunge the Grecians headlong in the main [XII 139]

Thus, the phrase becomes part of the stock-in-trade of English epic diction, part of the background and inheritance of Pope's style.

 These examples have shown how much can be gleaned from Pope's usual

writing procedures. It seems that re-using or rewriting material was sometimes occasioned neither by other translations, nor by critical responses, nor by any defects in versification. Pope sometimes found opportunities for elevating the poetry, incorporating information from the commentaries, to evoke more clearly Homer's sense. In the depiction of Briseis, this goes hand in hand with a lucid backward glance at *Paradise Lost*. At I 347-8 Homer has:

> ... τὼ δ' αὖτις ἴτην παρὰ νῆας 'Αχαιῶν.
> ἡδ' ἀέκουσ' ἅμα τοῖσι γυνὴ κίεν.

> [... so they went back, beside the Achaean ships,
> and the woman went unwillingly with these two][68]

Pope gives us an account which has digested the scholia[69] on the word γυνή, (which can also mean wife), and also the commentaries on the pathos of this silent and moving scene. He may also have taken a hint from the engraving opposite this passage in Ogilby, which gives a picture of Briseis turning back to Achilles as she is led away.

> She, in soft sorrows, and in pensive thought,
> Past silent, as the heralds held her hand,
> And oft look'd back, slow-moving o'er the strand.[70]

This is the scene from the 1720 text. It achieves so much more than the bare first version:

> Supported by the Chiefs on either Hand,
> In Silence past along the winding Strand.[71]

Pope improved on Ozell's 'but she oft look'd behind', by enriching this Miltonic echo and enhancing the felicitous epic parallel. Just as the end of *Paradise Lost* ('looking back ... hand in hand with wandering steps and slow'[72]) is the beginning of all our woe, so here, the reluctant, 'slow-moving' steps are the beginning of all the Grecian woes. Milton is an ever-present figure in the notes, so such structural parallels contribute to the sense of continuity in English epic.[73]

But Milton was not the only forebear, and integral to the synthesizing of an English poetic diction was the use of formulas from other poets, as well as some of Pope's own. There are formulas he took from Ogilby. For example, in

Book XVI the battle field is a plain of 'dust and gore';[74] this is used seven times elsewhere. The 'dust and gore' rhythm seems to have entered Pope's metrical subconscious, since a related formula – penultimate 'dusty' + final monosyllable – recurs nineteen times, while 'gore' in final position occurs over seventy times in the *Iliad*, and thirteen in the *Odyssey*. In his critical study, Shankman quotes several passages which use the metaphor of burning for passion: characters are 'fir'd' 'for thirst of fame' or 'by wrath' or 'to vengeance' or 'with hate'; 'at or by his word'.[75] This is one of Pope's own formulas, which is ubiquitous in the *Iliad*. There is also (at IX 143), Nestor's description of Agamemnon's anger at Achilles, the wonderful collocation: 'But bold of soul, with headlong fury fir'd'.[76]

The way in which this particular metaphor is regularly employed by Pope points to how essential standardized formulaic elements (whether metrical-linguistic or metaphorical *topoi*) were to his conception of the *Iliad*'s unity. Its importance in the 'Sarpedon' episode has been illustrated by Connely,[77] who shows that the lines introducing Sarpedon are 'governed by the metaphor' of fire: he 'glows with gen'rous rage', casts 'an ardent look' and is 'fir'd with the thirst of glory' (ll. 21-6). This imagery gives what is primarily visual a psychological emphasis and this naturally infects the whole passage, spreading to the listening Glaucus: ' ... his words the list'ning chief inspire / With equal warmth, and rouze the warrior's fire' (ll. 53-4). As Connely puts it, 'the heroic flame that Zeus inspires in Sarpedon burns through all the incidents.' This is so ingrained in Pope's procedures that when Bridges suggested changing some later lines which continue the metaphor, Pope does alter them, but keeps the metaphoric fire: 'evidently it did not occur to Pope to translate the lines without the metaphor, which was one of his ways of insisting that the events of the "episode" constitute a unity and, later, that they are united to the whole poem.' That organic unity, like Homer's, is only possible through a coherent approach to formulaic method. Pope's extreme care and concentration in matters of linguistic detail in particular, and his own formulaic methods, make much more sense seen against the background of appropriation discussed above. His language had, above all else, an obligation to render Homer's vitality. 'In other words, the "truth" of the rendering lay in the English poetry.'[78] For our poet-translator, this meant using all the resources at his disposal to create 'the noblest version of poetry which the world has ever seen'.[79]

'Informed literacy is far from allowing the fact – yet surely it is obvious – that Pope's *Iliad* is a masterpiece in its own right and an epic which, as far as English goes, comes second only to Milton.'[80] Steiner does well to draw attention to the lack of attention drawn to Pope's versions of Homer. There are probably very banal reasons for this neglect: 'Warton ignored them for the same reason that much later criticism did – namely, that they are not original.'[81] Even in the most enthusiastic Popeans, there are damaging asides: 'that long creative famine . . . from 1718 through 1727 . . . when with a few small exceptions he wrote no original poetry of any consequence'.[82] False distinctions have built unnecessary fences between Pope's *Iliad* and his 'original' work. But, in truth, which of Pope's poems after the 'creative famine', in Mack's unfortunate phrase, are genuinely 'original'? The *Imitations of Horace*? The patchworks of social, political, moral and theological argument in the *Essay on Man*, or the various *Epistles*? The *Dunciad* or the *Rape of the Lock*, which build their burlesque imaginings on a vast and erudite parody of epic machinery and traditions of genre criticism and scholiastic commentary?

What should be stressed in a balanced view of Pope's achievement is the continuity in his works of his particular skill of digesting and then inventively regurgitating poetic and cultural fodder. The digestive metaphors are not my own:

> I wrote the Essay on Criticism fast, for I had digested all the matter in prose before I began upon it in verse ... I wrote most of the Iliad fast.[83]

Or things can be seen from the other end:

> Now Wits gain praise by copying other Wits
> As one Hog lives on what another shits.[84]

The difference is between eating others' excrement and straightforward digestion of matter. These opposing images give, from one angle, an honest account of Pope's practice; from the other, his self-presentation to literary history, which obscures his methods. Literary history has been too easily convinced of an easy dichotomy between Pope and those he mocked, falsely dividing Pope from the whole cultural set he fed upon. We have seen how he incorporated the criticisms of Dennis, and ideas from Ozell and Ogilby. This

level of literary interaction is not something we would even consider possible after some of Pope's critical pronouncements on these authors and the divided picture of literary culture presented in *An Essay on Criticism* or *The Dunciad*. The synthesis of poetic and cultural inheritance exemplified in the *Iliad* is the antithesis of the divisive chaos and futile pedantry caricatured in *The Dunciad*. The most reliable and appropriate metaphors for the whole process of perfecting a nation's poetics, and elevating its art under a unified banner via borrowing, are Pope's as a young man, for all that the mature Pope became a master at the art of lying:[85]

> I have defended it sometimes by saying, that it seems not so much the Perfection of Sense, to say things that have *never* been said before, as to express those *best* that have been said *oftenest*; and that Writers in the case of borrowing from others, are like Trees which of themselves wou'd produce only one sort of Fruit, but by being grafted upon others, may yield variety. A mutual commerce makes Poetry flourish; but then Poets like Merchants, shou'd repay with something of their own what they take from others; not like Pyrates, make prize of all they meet.[86]

This 'mutual commerce', captured as a dynamic process in the Homer manuscripts, is what enabled Pope to achieve the unity and poetic force within his *Iliad*. There is still a great deal to be discovered in his manuscripts, and their fertile ground provides ideal material for a more systematic analysis of his composing methods and the cultural and poetic strategies he worked with. Pope's metaphors of a perfecting vision of synthesis (articulated here in 1706 – before his career started) accommodate an organic and culturally responsible ethic. What he invests in the mutual commerce of poetry is an unswerving dedication to the guiding principles of his art; through it, the horizons of the English poetic economy expand immeasurably, for it now boasts an epic in English, in which both formula and invention thrive as they do in Homer.

NOTES

1   *To the Earl of Roscommon on his Excellent 'Essay on Translated Verse'*, ll. 53-6, in P. Hammond, ed., *The Poems of John Dryden*, vol. ii: 1682-85 (London 1995) 218.

2 M. Silk, *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 December 1997.

3 Preface, in S. Shankman (ed.), *The Iliad of Homer: Translated by Alexander Pope* (London 1996) 3. Shankman is used here instead of the Twickenham Edition, as it uses the text reflecting Pope's final intentions, the fifth edition of 1743: hereafter referred to as *Iliad*.

4 T. Parnell, *Homer's Battle of the Frogs and Mice. With Remarks of Zoilus* (London 1717) sig. A5r.

5 W. Dillon, Earl of Roscommon, *An Essay on Translated Verse* (London 1685) sig. B3r.

6 *Iliad*, Preface, 17-18.

7 F. Rosslyn, *Pope's Iliad, A Selection with Commentary* (Bristol 1985) xi-xii.

8 J. Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, ed. J.M. Osborn, 2 vols. (Oxford 1966) 83, no. 194: Yang 1759.

9 *Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope: VII: The Iliad, I - IX* (ed. M. Mack et al., London 1967), Introduction: 'Pope and his English predecessors', cvii-clxiii. (Hereafter *TE*.)

10 *TE*: X, Appendix F.

11 *An Essay on Criticism*, ll. 234-5, in *TE*: I, 266.

12 Spence, *Observations*, 13-14, no. 29: Pope 1743.

13 D. M. Knight, 'The development of Pope's *Iliad* preface', *Modern Language Quarterly* 16 (1955) 237-46 (246).

14 L. Damrosch, 'Pope's epics: what happened to narrative?', *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 29 (1988) 189-207.

15 *Iliad*, 336-7; on VI, 595.

16 Damrosch, 'Pope's epics', 195.

17 *Iliad*, 42; I, 635-40.

18 N. Callan, 'Pope's Iliad: a new document', *Review of English Studies*, n. s. 4 (1953) 109-21 (116).

19 'To Mr Pope *on his Translation of* Homer', in N. Ault, ed., *Pope's own Miscellany, being a reprint of 'Poems on Several Occasions, 1717'* (London 1935) 40.

20 M. Mueller, *The Iliad* (London 1984) 148 and 167.

21 M. Silk, *Homer: The Iliad* (Cambridge 1987) 9 and 43. See also J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford 1980). The fragmentary readings of each poem by H.A. Mason, in *To Homer through Pope: An Introduction to Homer's* Iliad *and Pope's Translation* (London 1972), seem to go against the current of the illuminating recent critical works just cited; fragmentation prevents a unified and overarching viewpoint.

22 *Iliad*, 37; I: 454-9: my italics.

23 *TE*: VII, ciii-civ.

24 Spence, *Observations*, 14, No. 30; S. Johnson, *Life of Pope*, in G.B. Hill, ed., *Lives of the English Poets,* 3 vols. (Oxford 1905), iii, 84 and 115.

25 Ogilby had a particular skill for using classical materials to celebrate the restoration. For his use of Roman myths on the restoration procession arches, see H. Erskine-Hill, *The Augustan Idea in English Literature* (London 1983) 216-21.

26 J. Ogilby, *Homer his Iliads translated with Notes* (London 1669) sigs. A1v-A2r.

27 T. Hobbes, *The Iliads and Odysses of Homer* (3rd edn., London 1686) sig. A9r.

28 P.J. Connelly, 'The ideology of Pope's *Iliad*', *Comparative Literature* 40 (1988) 358-83 (358).

29 *Iliad*, 589; on XII, 371.

30 Johnson, *Life*, 115.

31 J. Ozell, W. Broome and W. Oldisworth, *The Iliad, with Notes, Done from the French of Madam Dacier*, 5 vols. (London 1712): vol. i, Ozell, Translator's Preface, sigs. A4v-A5r. (Hereafter OBO.)

32 Parnell, *Frogs and Mice*. The preface is an interview with the recent translator of Homer (Pope)

and is a defence of his style against 'envious criticism': see *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, (5 vols., Oxford 1956) i, 284-5.

33 Parnell, *Frogs and Mice*, sig. A4r-v.

34 J.C.D. Clark, *Samuel Johnson: Literature, Religion, and English Cultural Politics from the Restoration to Romanticism* (Cambridge 1994).

35 *Correspondence*, i, 166.

36 In H.D. Weinbrot, *Britannia's Issue* (Cambridge 1995), ch. 6: 'Homeric Wars', 193-236, and 'The Rape of the Lock and the contexts of warfare', in G.S. Rousseau and P. Rogers (eds.), *The Enduring Legacy, Alexander Pope Tercentenary Essays* (Cambridge 1988) 21-48. See also J. Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (Ithaca 1991).

37 *TE*: VII, cxxvi.

38 Johnson, *Life*, 119.

39 Spence, *Observations*, 32, no. 73. Spence comments astutely, 'This I suppose first led Mr Pope to turn his lines over and over again and so often, which he continued to the last, and did it with surprising facility.'

40 Spence, *Observations*, 86, no. 203: Pope, 6-10 April 1742.

41 Changing 'Grecian woes' to 'woes unnumbered': see *Iliad*, xvii-xix.

42 Spence, *Observations*, 86, no. 202: Pope, 18-21 January 1743.

43 Homer MS, Brit. Mus. Add. 4807, f.84v: see Callan, 'A new document', 114.

44 *Iliad*, 305; VI, 378-9.

45 *TE*: X, Appendix C: 457-62, corresponding to Add. MS. 4807, f.122v-123v.

46 Ogilby, 192-3; OBO, ii, 213-8; Hobbes, 119-20; Chapman, 179-81.

47 *Iliad*, 399-400; VIII, 701-4.

48 *Iliad*, 399; VIII: 691-4.

49 D. Ricks, 'On looking into the first paperback of Pope's Homer', *Classics Ireland* 4 (1997) 97-121 (111).

50 *Iliad*, 763; XVI, 587-90.

51 G. Chapman, *Homer: The Iliad, The Odyssey and the Lesser Homerica,* ed. A. Nicoll (2 vols., London 1951) i, 335, ll. 443-6: my italics.

52 Ogilby, *Iliads,* 361: my italics.

53 *Iliad*, 763; XVI, 621-4.

54 D. Foxon, *Pope and the Early Eighteenth-Century Book Trade* (Oxford 1991) 63-86.

55 *TE*: I, 452, ll. 64-5.

56 *Iliad*, 578; XII, 409-10.

57 *TE*: I, 455-6, ll. 171-4.

58 *Iliad*, 581; XII, 527-8.

59 Silk, *Homer: The Iliad*, 18.

60 *An Essay on Criticism*, ll.245-6, TE: I, 267.

61 *Iliad*, xxxv.

62 F.M. Keener, 'On the poet's secret: allusion and parallelism in Pope's Homer', *Yearbook of English Studies* 18 (1988) 159-70 (167).

63 *Iliad*, 1127; XXIV, 926-9.

64 Oldisworth, OBO, v, 130.

65 *Iliad*, 394; VIII, 494-5.

66 Ozell, OBO, ii, 208.

67 Ozell, OBO, ii, 206.

68 Tr. A.T. Murray (Cambridge, Mass. 1925).

69 As in Ogilby's *Iliads*, 18.

70 *Iliad*, 37; I, 451-3.

71 *Iliad*, 1190 (*List of Variants*).

72 J. Carey and A. Fowler (eds.), *The Poems of John Milton* (London 1968) 1059-60.

73 Pope may have picked up some tips on reintegration of epic material from Milton. In the notes to Book XIV of his *Iliad*, Pope shows how the seduction of Zeus by Hera is used as a source in Books IV, VIII and IX of *Paradise Lost*.

74 After Ogilby's 'Soiling his batter'd Helm with Dust and Gore', 370.

75 S. Shankman, *Pope's* Iliad: *Homer in the Age of Passion* (Princeton 1983).

76 Statistics gathered from E.G. Bedford and J.D. Dilligan, *A Concordance to the Poems of Alexander Pope* (2 vols., Detroit 1974).

77 P.J. Connely, 'Pope's *Iliad: ut pictura translatio*', *Studies in English Literature: 1500-1900*, 21 (1981) 439-55 (454-5).

78 *TE*: VII, lxxxix.

79 Johnson, *Life*, 119. The cultural implications of Pope's synthetic powers reach their peak in the 'fierce embrace' of *The Essay on Man, Epistle III*. In this poem there is an apotheosis of synthesis, almost in a literal sense in which the binding love of self is the love of God for all. In his manuscript workings, we can see Pope puzzling over what or who it is, that most represents the ideal way, the illuminating spirit:

> ~~first~~ Legislators ~~Philosophers~~
> Then ~~First~~ Poets, ~~first~~ ^ then ~~Lawgivers~~
> ~~Then Legislators, Poets then,~~ restore
> The Faith & Morall, Nature gave before,
> Relum'd her ancient Light, not kindled new;
> If not Gods Image, yet his Shadow drew;

Pope is unsatisfied with the scheme; against the background of the *Iliad*, the joining of 'poet or patriot' makes much more sense as a solution.

> 'Twas then, the studious head or gen'rous mind,
> Follow'r of God or friend of human-kind,
> Poet or Patriot, rose but to restore
> The Faith and Moral, Nature gave before ...

This can, without apology, serve as a comment on the mind behind that synthesis: the synthesis that thrives in Pope's *Iliad*, which elevates a national culture and perfects the English poetic tongue.

80 George Steiner, *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 November 1982.

81 J. Barnard (ed.), *Pope: The Critical Heritage* (London 1973) 12.

82 'The least thing like a Man in England', in M. Mack, *Collected in Himself: Essays Critical, Biographical, and Bibliographical on Pope and Some of His Contemporaries* (London 1982) 385.

83 Spence, *Observations*, 45, no. 107.

84 In R.M. Schmitz (ed.), *Pope's Essay on Criticism 1709: A Study of the Bodleian Manuscript Text with Facsimiles, Transcripts, and Variants* (St Louis 1962) 5 (*TE*: VI, 235).

85 M. Mack, foreword to M. Cowler, ed., *The Prose Works of Alexander Pope* (2 vols., Oxford 1986) viii.

86 *Correspondence*, i, 19-20: 2 July 1706.