2010 WARTON LECTURE ON ENGLISH POETRY

'The Reason of this Preference': Sleeping, Flowing and Freezing in Pope's *Dunciad*

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I

When, in the early 1780s, forty years after Pope's death, Samuel Johnson was working on his *Lives of the Poets*, he declared that 'among the excellences of Pope … must be mentioned the melody of his metre'; and this led him to introduce a striking anecdote:

> I have been told that the couplet by which he declared his own ear to be most gratified was this:
>
> > Lo, where Moeotis sleeps, and hardly flows
> > The freezing Tanais through a waste of snows.
>
> But the reason of this preference I cannot discover.[1]

Given the evidence now available to us about Pope's crafting of this couplet, the anecdote is particularly intriguing. This evidence of the revision process also illuminates the thematic as well as the aural development of the couplet, and opens up a range of suggestive links with the wider strategies of the *Dunciad* as a whole. 'Suggestive', however, remains the

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[1] *Samuel Johnson: the Lives of the Poets*, ed. Roger Lonsdale, 4 vols. (Oxford, 2006), 4. 78–9, 347. For the purposes of this paper, diphthongs are spelled out as separate characters, and the spelling variants Ma'otis/Maeotis/Moeotis are reproduced but not discussed.

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important word here: this cannot be a conclusive enquiry because we shall never know, in the absence of direct evidence, what reasons Pope himself might have given for choosing this couplet—if indeed his choice was accurately reported to Johnson in the first place; but Johnson's anecdote, if it does nothing else, effectively issues us with an invitation to contemplate, in more than usual detail, one exemplary instance of Pope's couplet art.

II

The couplet that Johnson singles out describes what is now called the Sea of Azov, and the River Don which flows into it. It forms part of a sequence in Book III of Pope's *Dunciad*, appearing first in the three-book poem of 1728, and remaining in place in all succeeding editions through to the enlarged *Dunciad in Four Books* of 1743.[2] This sequence introduces the northern tribes implicated, in Pope's account, in the fall of the Roman empire; and the couplet that Johnson quotes depicts the landscape from which their southwards journey begins.

> Lo where *Moeotis* sleeps, and hardly flows
> The freezing *Tanais* thro' a waste of snows,
> The North by myriads pours her mighty sons,
> Great nurse of *Goths*, of *Alans*, and of *Huns*.[3]

Although none of Pope's manuscripts has survived, the process of his composition and revision of this couplet can be reconstructed in part from transcriptions of manuscript readings made by his friend Jonathan Richardson the younger, who worked from two manuscripts now lost, transferring their variants into two printed copies, now in the New York Public Library.[4] The earlier of these manuscripts, the so-called First Broglio,

[2] For the 1728–9 versions of the *Dunciad*, see *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. Julian Ferraro, Valerie Rumbold, Nigel Wood and Paul Baines, 5 vols. (Harlow, 2007–), 3, ed. Valerie Rumbold, pp. 4–5, 113–14; for the final lifetime version of 1743, see *Alexander Pope: The Dunciad in Four Books*, ed. Valerie Rumbold, rev. 1st edn., Longman Annotated English Texts (Harlow, 2009), pp. 1–2.

[3] Rumbold (ed.), *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, 3: *The Dunciad. A Heroic Poem*, 1728, III. 79–82.

[4] For Richardson's transcriptions from the so-called First Broglio and Second Broglio, see Rumbold (ed.), *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, 3. 2–4; for transcription of both sets of readings, see Maynard Mack, *The Last and Greatest Art: Some Unpublished Poetical Manuscripts of Alexander Pope* (London, 1984), pp. 97–155; for a facsimile of the 1728 copy into which Richardson copied the readings of the First Broglio, see David L. Vander Meulen, *Pope's Dunciad of 1728: a History and Facsimile* (London, 1991).

whose readings Richardson recorded in a copy of the 1728 edition, shows significant developments for this couplet.

Figure 1 shows the opening where the passage appears, with the relevant couplet printed towards the foot of the left-hand page.[5] Richardson's general procedure is to place the variants closest in time to the printed version as close as possible to the printed lines, moving further away as the versions go further back in time. The opening shows three stages of development for this particular couplet: (a), the earliest, is from the block of three couplets at the top of the right-hand page; (b) is the intermediate stage, from the margin and interlining around the couplet itself; and (c) is the version as printed:

(a) Where dull Ma'otis sleeps, & hardly flows,
The frozen Tanais thro', a waste of snows …

(b) Lo where *Moeotis* sleeps, and hardly flow
The streams of *Tanais* thro' a waste of snow …

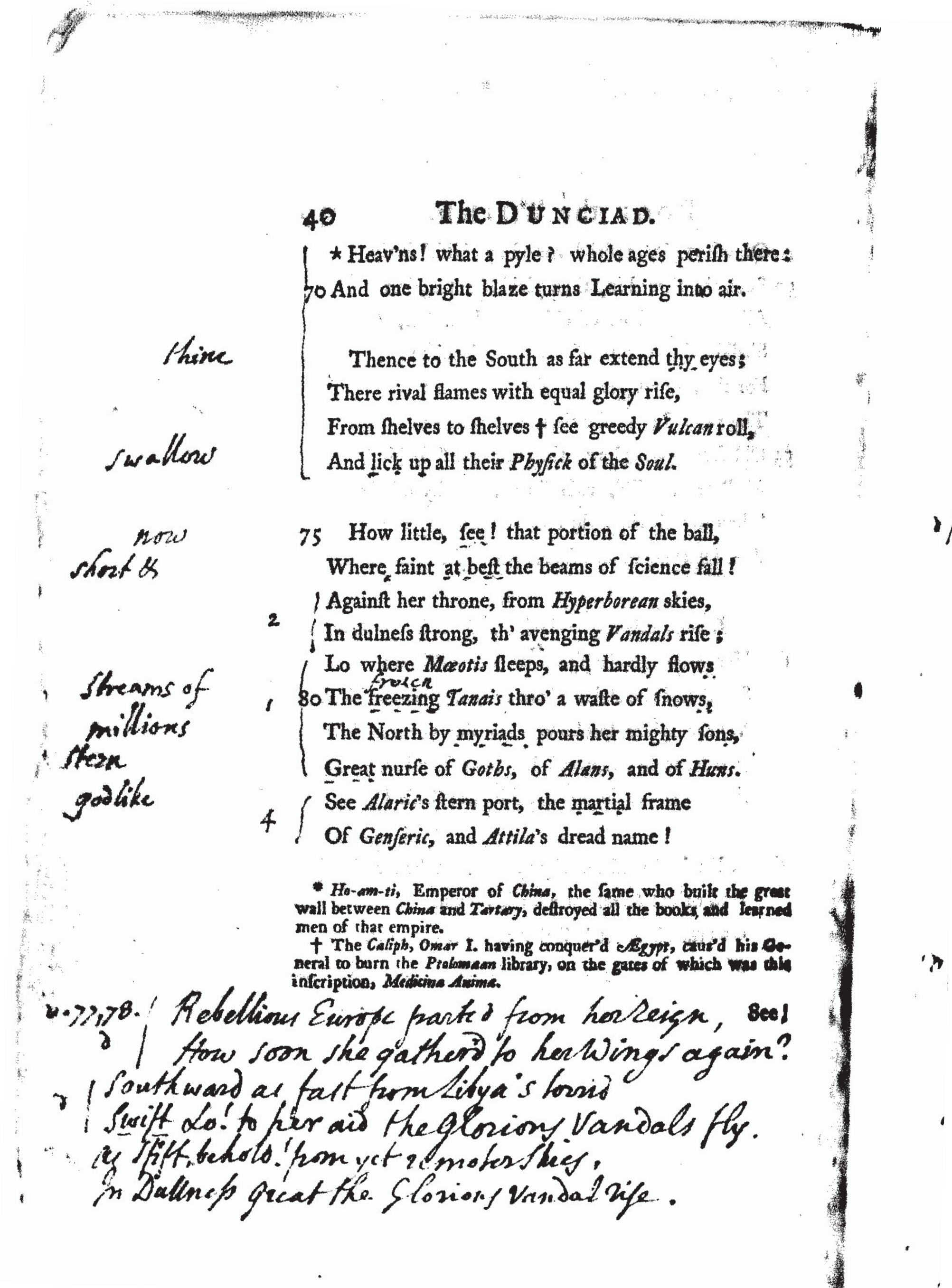
(c) Lo where *Moeotis* sleeps, and hardly flows
The freezing *Tanais* thro' a waste of snows …

Johnson states that it was specifically the poet's *ear* that was gratified by this couplet; but attention to these early stages of revision makes it clear that the development of *sound* in the process of revision was closely implicated also in the development of *sense*. That this was a consistent concern with Pope, and one that he associated particularly with his work on the *Dunciad*, is attested by a comment recorded by his friend Joseph Spence in 1744:

> I have followed that (the significance of the numbers and the adapting them to the sense) much more even than Dryden, and much oftener than anyone minds it: particularly in the translations of Homer, where 'twas most necessary to do so, and in the *Dunciad* often, and indeed in all my poems.[6]

Richardson's transcription shows that as Pope moved from the earliest recoverable version of the couplet (a) to the intermediate stage (b), he dropped two commas. These had probably been intended as rhetorically expressive rather than grammatical; but their removal usefully clarifies the syntax by steering the reader away from any preliminary assumption that 'Ma'otis' will be the subject of both 'sleeps' and 'flows', and towards the recognition, on beginning the second line, that it is '*Tanais*' that is the

[5] Vander Meulen, *Pope's Dunciad*, facsimile p. 41; Mack, *The Last and Greatest Art*, p. 123.
[6] Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, ed. James M. Osborn, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1966), 1, no. 396, pp. 173–4.


40 The DUNCIAD.

* Heav'ns! what a pyle? whole ages perish there:
And one bright blaze turns Learning into air.

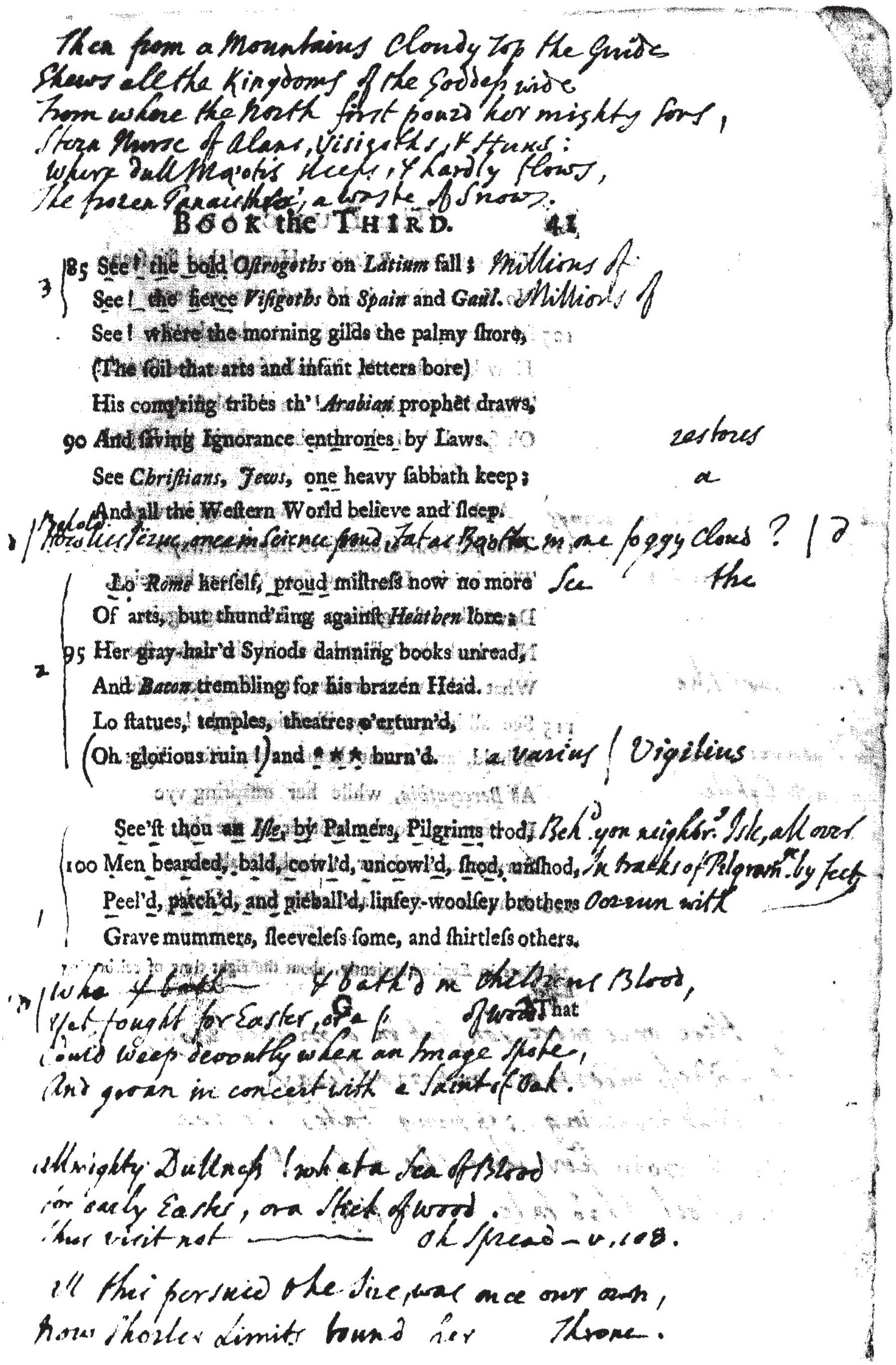
Thence to the South as far extend thy eyes;
There rival flames with equal glory rise,
From shelves to shelves † see greedy *Vulcan* roll,
And lick up all their *Physick* of the *Soul*.

How little, see! that portion of the ball,
Where faint at best the beams of science fall!
Against her throne, from *Hyperborean* skies,
In dulness strong, th' avenging *Vandals* rise;
Lo where *Mæotis* sleeps, and hardly flows
The freezing *Tanais* thro' a waste of snows,
The North by myriads pours her mighty sons,
Great nurse of *Goths*, of *Alans*, and of *Huns*.
See *Alaric*'s stern port, the martial frame
Of *Genseric*, and *Attila*'s dread name!

* *Ho-am-ti*, Emperor of *China*, the same who built the great wall between *China* and *Tartary*, destroyed all the books and learned men of that empire.

† The *Caliph*, *Omar* I. having conquer'd *Ægypt*, caus'd his General to burn the *Ptolomæan* library, on the gates of which was this inscription, *Medicina Animæ*.

Figure 1. Transcription by Jonathan Richardson the younger of manuscript readings in a copy of Pope's *The Dunciad. A Heroic Poem* (1728) in the New York Public Library, from David L. Vander Meulen, *Pope's Dunciad of 1728: a History and Facsimile*, London, University Press of Virginia,



Then from a Mountains Cloudy top the Guide
Shews all the Kingdoms of the Goddess wide
From where the North first pour'd her mighty sons,
Stern Nurse of Alans, Visigoths, & Huns:
Where dull Maeotis sleeps, & hardly flows,
The frozen Tanais thro' a waste of Snows.

BOOK the THIRD. 41

See! the bold *Ostrogoths* on *Latium* fall; Millions of
See! the fierce *Visigoths* on *Spain* and *Gaul*. Millions of
See! where the morning gilds the palmy shore,
(The soil that arts and infant letters bore)
His conq'ring tribes th' *Arabian* prophet draws,
And saving Ignorance enthrones by Laws. restores
See *Christians*, *Jews*, one heavy sabbath keep; a
And all the Western World believe and sleep.
Behold yon Isle, once in Science proud, [illegible] in one foggy Cloud?

Lo *Rome* herself, proud mistress now no more See the
Of arts, but thund'ring against *Heathen* lore;
Her gray-hair'd Synods damning books unread,
And *Bacon* trembling for his brazen Head.
Lo statues, temples, theatres o'erturn'd,
(Oh glorious ruin!) and * * * burn'd. Varius / Vigilius

See'st thou an *Isle*, by Palmers, Pilgrims trod, Beh. yon neighb. Isle, all over
Men bearded, bald, cowl'd, uncowl'd, shod, unshod, In tracks of Pilgrim. by feet
Peel'd, patch'd, and pieball'd, linsey-woolsey brothers Ooz-run with
Grave mummers, sleeveless some, and shirtless others.

Who [illegible] & bath'd in Children's Blood,
Yet fought for Easter, or a [illegible] of Wood That
Could weep devoutly when an Image spoke,
And groan in concert with a Saint of Oak.

Almighty Dullness! what a Sea of Blood
For early Easter, or a Stick of Wood.
[illegible] —— Oh spread — v. 108.

All this perswaded the Isle, was once our own,
Now shorter limits bound her Throne.

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subject of 'flows', and that the 'waste' is what it flows through. This clarification helps focus a syntactic chiasmus in the relation between the two subject–verb pairs (with '*Moeotis* sleeps' mirrored in reverse by 'flows | The … *Tanais*'). But however punctuated or not punctuated, the couplet remains awkward to read: the transition between lines is both formally elegant and expressively obstructive. The river 'hardly flows', and this is true also of the reader's engagement with the syntax. That Pope was acutely conscious of such expressive difficulty is borne out by a conversation he had with Spence about a line from his *Iliad* translation ('He lies, a lifeless Load, along the Land'), of which Pope commented that the liquids did 'not make it run on like a river-verse … 'Tis as the thing described, nerveless and yet stiff.'[7] The line in the *Iliad*, as Pope reads it, enacts not flow but an encumbering dead weight: liquidity is arrested by the final dead stops of 'Load' and 'Land'. Conversely, in the Maeotis couplet, what 'hardly flows' over the line-end audibly hangs momentarily suspended, at the beginning of the second line, over the ice that awaits it.

The intermediate stage (b) also shows changes to the beginning of the couplet; and in the change to 'Lo where *Moeotis*', a potentially important word, 'dull', is lost from 'dull Ma'otis'. Yet although 'dull' is an important word in a poem whose presiding goddess is Dulness, there may have been a particular problem in using it here, because 'dull' could denote not only sluggishness of motion, but also darkness of colour.[8] Once 'dull' is removed, it is easier to visualise Maeotis as sleeping under ice, matched in with the surrounding scene of unbroken whiteness. It is also suggestive that in the miniature anthology of snow poems that Pope compiled in a letter to his friend Caryll in 1712, prompted by the hard winter of that year, he had included what he called a 'very *picturesque*' couplet from Ambrose Philips's celebrated winter piece, the 'Epistle to the Earl of Dorset from Copenhagen', in which Philips describes how all the usual attractions of landscape are hidden under 'snow' that forms a prospect of 'waste':

> All hid in snow, in bright confusion lie,
> And with one dazling waste fatigue the eye.[9]

Philips renders the impact of unbroken brilliance not as radiant or uplifting, but as chaotic and glaring (a kind of irony that Pope will often draw

[7] Spence, *Observations*, 1, no. 399, p. 175.
[8] *OED*.
[9] *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1956), 1. 168.

on in representing even the most inventive of Dulness's projects as pointless and baleful; and it is particularly ironic to note parallels between Philips's poem and the freezing and flowing of the *Dunciad*, given how negative will be Pope's considered view of Philips, and how he will delight to taunt him with his association with cold, lifeless writing).[10] But the instance of the 'snow' that forms Philips's 'dazling waste' certainly demonstrated the kind of effect that might be available without the ambiguous 'dull' of Pope's couplet: by removing it Pope eliminates any visual contrast that might relieve the eye from the oppressive impact of his own 'waste of snows'.

At the same time another epithet, this time in the second line of the couplet, is also rejected. Pope is evidently unhappy with 'frozen Tanais' (perhaps it seems illogical to claim that a river 'flows', even 'hardly', when it is 'frozen') and he experiments instead with 'streams of *Tanais*'. But this too is arguably unhelpful in terms of sense, since 'streams' tends to suggest a volume and fulness incompatible with the 'hardly flows' of the previous line. Moreover, being a plural, 'streams' entails losing the final 's' from the rhyme word, which leaves 'flow' and 'snow' both inappropriately open, underlining the potential copiousness of 'streams', and removing a particularly prominent pair of sibilants from the couplet's dozy and obstructive symphony on that consonant.

It is at this point, evidently unhappy with both 'frozen' and 'streams of', that Pope makes his decisive move towards the published version (c); and this brings him to the heart of the paradox that he is on his way to articulating, the problem of the river that is at once flowing and ice-bound. 'Streams', though now discarded, has perhaps suggested the desirability of an assonance with 'sleeps' in the first line, for Pope's next and final attempt, a partial reversion to his first thought of 'frozen', is 'freezing'. This foregrounds the process, the liminal moment of movement in and out of the frozen state, that will henceforth focus the couplet's enactment of obstructed flow.

In effect, once 'freezing' is in place, all the important changes have been made. This is the form in which the couplet is published in 1728; and thereafter it changes only in spelling, punctuation and styling. In the last lifetime *Dunciad*, the *Dunciad in Four Books* of 1743, it appears as:

> Lo! where Maeotis sleeps, and hardly flows
> The freezing Tanais thro' a waste of snows …[11]

[10] For a text of the poem, see David Fairer and Christine Gerrard (eds.), *Eighteenth-Century Poetry: an Annotated Anthology*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 2003), pp. 20–1.
[11] Rumbold (ed.), *The Dunciad in Four Books*, III. 87–8.

And, punctuation apart, this is very close to the form in which Johnson gives it:

> Lo, where Moeotis sleeps, and hardly flows
> The freezing Tanais through a waste of snows …[12]

III

Slight as they may appear, the emphases of sound and sense highlighted by Pope's revisions to this couplet prompt a range of questions about the sources and implications of this imagined landscape of ice and snow. The area is certainly a part of his imaginative repertory as early as 1711, when in *The Critical Specimen*, a counterblast to attacks by John Dennis, Pope was characterising '*Maeotis*' Marsh' as the cold and windswept terrain of predatory birdlife, a fit setting for the 'baneful *Hunch-back'd Toad*, with look Malign' that served for an image of Dennis, waiting to spit his venom at the 'Traveller' whose 'unwary steps' lead him into 'those dark unwholesome, misty Fens'.[13] Here, Pope temporarily places himself, as well as Dennis, in the stagnant chill of Maeotis; but Dennis belongs there: Pope is just a visitor.

A more sustained instance of Pope's early absorption in scenes of snow and ice is the letter he wrote to Caryll in the hard winter of 1712, the letter in which he inserted his anthology of snow poems:

> My ill state of health ever since the cold weather began renders vain any such pleasing thoughts as of the enjoyments of your fireside: I cannot express how thoroughly I'm penetrated by the sharpness of it. I feel no thing alive but my heart and head; and my spirits, like those in a thermometer mount and fall thro' my thin delicate contexture just as the temper of the air is more benign or inclement.[14]

Yet the very experience of cold and restriction leads him to focus on the literary representation of such scenes:

> The severity of the cold has turned my studies to those books, which treat of the descriptions of the Arctic regions, Lapland, Nova Zembla and Spitsberg; deserts of snow, seas of ice and frozen skies might administer some odd kind of shiver-

[12] See above, n. 1.
[13] J. Butt *et al*. (eds.), *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, 11 vols. (London, 1939–69), 6, *Minor Poems*, ed. Norman Ault and John Butt (1964), pp. 79–80.
[14] Sherburn (ed.), *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, 1. 165.

> ing satisfaction (or as the vulgar have it cold comfort), in the comparison with my own case. This, I say, some people would imagine …[15]

He then goes on to copy out for Caryll 'several beautiful winter pieces of the poets, which have occurred to my memory on this occasion'; and he goes on:

> These are the scenes the season presents to me, and what can be more ridiculous than that in the midst of this bleak prospect that sets my very imagination a shivering, I am endeavouring to raise up round about me a painted scene of woods and forests in verdure and beauty, trees springing, fields flowering, Nature laughing. I am wandering thro' Bowers and Grottos in conceit, and while my trembling body is cowering o'er a fire, my mind is expatiating in an open sunshine.[16]

The keenness of the young Pope's engagement both with the reading that reflects the harshness of the actual weather and with the contrary task of summoning up the landscape in its summer beauty (probably in relation to prepublication revision of *Windsor Forest*) reflects a power of imaginative projection that, subtly and strategically disorganised as part of what Dulness takes to be a poetic sensibility, will indeed be rendered 'ridiculous' when, in the *Dunciad*, she encourages poets to describe places of whose situation, climate and flora they have only the vaguest idea:

> Here gay Description Aegypt glads with showers,
> Or gives to Zembla fruits, to Barca flow'rs;
> In cold December fragrant chaplets blow,
> And heavy harvests nod beneath the snow.[17]

The rock of ice on which the temple is placed in Pope's Chaucerian dream-vision *The Temple of Fame* (1715), and the comparison to Zembla that it evokes, with its never-setting Arctic sun, its Northern Lights, and its layers of accumulated snow, provides further testimony to Pope's extraordinary imaginative realisation of a sublimity that he had never witnessed and was never likely to witness:

> So *Zembla*'s Rocks (the beauteous Work of Frost)
> Rise white in Air, and glitter o'er the Coast;
> Pale Suns, unfelt, at distance roll away,

[15] Ibid., p. 166. For Nova Zembla in relation to Swift's *Battel of the Books*, see Dirk F. Passman and Hermann Real, 'Barbarism, witchcraft, and devil worship: cock-and-bull stories from several remote nations of the world', *Swift Studies*, 23 (2008), 94–110.
[16] Sherburn (ed.), *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, 1. 168.
[17] Rumbold (ed.), *The Dunciad in Four Books*, I. 75–8.

> And on th' impassive Ice the Lightnings play:
> Eternal Snows the growing Mass supply,
> Till the bright Mountains prop th' Incumbent Sky:
> As *Atlas* fix'd, each hoary Pile appears,
> The gather'd Winter of a thousand Years.[18]

He was characteristically enthralled, despite the physical fragility that debarred him even from crossing the Irish Sea or the English Channel, by the contrasts of 'Earths wide extreams'; and reading and imagination supplied, to a degree, what travel could not.[19] In particular, he owned an impressive folio atlas of ancient geography, the *Theatri geographiae veteris tomus prior* (1618) by Petrus Bertius, based on Ptolomey (Claudius Ptolemaeus), who, writing about AD 150, cited the work of Marinus of Tyre: images of both Ptolomey and Marinus appear on the engraved title (Fig. 2).[20] The Sea of Azov and the Don are clearly recognisable even on the globe displayed at the foot of the title; and later in the volume they appear in much more detail in the eighth of the fold-out maps devoted to Europe (Fig. 3).[21] On the right-hand side is 'Euxini maris pars' (part of the Black Sea) in the south, with, to the north, the 'Bosphorus Cimmericus' (Cimmerian Bosphorus) leading north into the Palus Maeotis (the Maeotian Marsh, or Sea of Azov); and flowing down into it from the north is the 'Tanais fluvius' (River Tanais, the Don). The image emphasises the status of the Don, which serves as a boundary between 'Sarmatia Europae' (European Sarmatia) and 'Sarmatiae Asiaticae pars' (part of Asian Sarmatia).[22] Not far to the north are the fabled 'Riphei montes' (Riphaean mountains—in the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* they are singled out by the hero's father as particularly worthy of his personal inspection);[23] and on the eastern bank of the Don are depicted spear-carrying tribesmen, posed with the tents, cart, bundled luggage, cattle and

[18] *The Twickenham Edition*, 2, *The Rape of the Lock and Other Poems*, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson (1962), lines 27–8, 53–60.
[19] Rumbold (ed.), *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, 3: *The Dunciad. A Heroic Poem* (1728), III. 63.
[20] For Pope's copy, see 'A Finding List of Books Surviving from Pope's Library with a Few That May Not Have Survived', in Maynard Mack, *Collected in Himself: Essays Critical, Biographical, and Bibliographical on Pope and Some of his Contemporaries* (London, 1982), pp. 394–460, no. 17 (p. 397). For Ptolemy, see J. Oliver Thomson, *History of Ancient Geography* (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 229–30.
[21] Bertius, *Theatri geographiae*, 'Europae tabula octava'.
[22] A map in the Asian sequence of Bertius's atlas shows this same region from the Asian perspective, again emphasising the status of Sarmatia, between the Don and the Vistula, as an intercontinental borderland ('Asiae tabula secunda').
[23] Charles Kerby Miller (ed.), *Memoirs of the Extraordinary Life, Works, and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus* (New Haven, CT, 1950), p. 101.

Figure 2. Title page of Petrus Bertius, *Theatri geographiae veteris tomus prior* (1618: British Library 210.h.4, reproduced by kind permission). © The British Library Board.

Figure 3. 'Europae tabula octava', from Petrus Bertius, *Theatri geographiae veteris tomus prior* (1618: British Library 210.h.4, reproduced by kind permission). © The British Library Board.

pack animals associated with their nomadic lifestyle. To the north again, it is not far to the 'Montes Hyperborei' (Mountains of the Hyperboreans, the people fabled to live beyond the north wind); and beyond that imposing barrier is nothing but 'Terra incognita' (an unknown land).

IV

There was no shortage of available accounts of this and other icy regions that Pope could have read; but the Roman poets, particularly Virgil and his recent English translators, were evidently particularly crucial in developing this aspect of his imaginative geography. This is plain from an examination of the phrase 'freezing Tanais', the crucial revision by which his supposedly favourite couplet reached its definitive form; for Pope's working towards this phrase reveals a very clear relation to familiar translations from Virgil. The phrase 'freezing Tanais' appears, in fact, to be something of a novelty: before Pope, there are precedents for the discarded phrase 'frozen Tanais', but none have been so far identified for 'freezing Tanais'.[24] Whereas this commoner form, 'frozen Tanais', would simply have represented the end point of freezing, Pope evidently decided, during his revisions, to represent freezing in process; and in so doing he comes very close to a formulation that would have been familiar to him from Dryden's *Sylvae* (1685).[25] In '*Part of* Virgils 4th. *Georgick*, *Englished by an unknown Hand*' ('A Table of the Poems'), the translator (actually Richard Maitland, later fourth Earl of Lauderdale) describes how Orpheus, having lost Eurydice a second time, roams by the Tanais:

> Alone he wander'd thro' the *Scythian* Snows,
> Where Icy *Tanais* freezeth as it flows …[26]

[24] See searchable texts in Literature Online <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, Early English Books Online <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home> and Eighteenth-Century Collections Online <http://find.galegroup.com/ecco>. For 'frozen Tanais', see the first sonnet of 'Urania', by William Drummond of Hawthornden, in *Poems. The Second Impression* (Edinburgh, 1616), 'The Second Part', unpaginated ('From frozen *Tanais* to Sunne-gilded *Gange*'); and *Hippolitus translated out of Seneca by Edmund Prestwich; together with divers other poems of the same authors* (London, 1651), p. 17 ('Such was *Hippolita*, and as she guides | From frozen *Tanais*, and *Maeotis* sides | Her troops to Attick coasts … | … even so | Accoutred I, into the woods will goe': this passage is also cited below, see n. 34).

[25] *Sylvae, or, The Second Part of Poetical Miscellanies* (London, 1685).

[26] Ibid., p. 153, translating Virgil, *Georgics*, IV. 517. (This and other citations of Latin verse refer to the texts in the Loeb Classical Library). For Lauderdale's authorship, see *The Works of Virgil, translated into English Verse. By the Right Honourable Richard late Earl of Lauderdale* (London, 1709).

Here, developed from Virgil, is the *idea* of the liminal point between flowing and freezing, spelled out at length by Maitland in the line 'Where icy *Tanais* freezeth as it flows'. (And here also is the rather obvious 'snows' | 'flows' rhyme that Pope will use.) In fact it is Dryden who, in his own later translation of Virgil (which Pope owned in its third edition of 1709), does include the word 'freezing', but applies it to a different river:

> By *Strymon*'s freezing Streams he sate alone …[27]

Dryden's phrasing also brings into play the word 'Streams': in effect, both elements of Dryden's 'freezing Streams' had been considered in the process of Pope's characterisation of the Tanais, with 'freezing' in the end replacing 'Streams'. Furthermore, behind Maitland, Dryden and Pope also stands an account of the hard life of the Scythian inhabitants of this vaguely defined region that occurs earlier in Virgil's *Georgics*, in one of the passages that Pope had anthologised for Caryll in 1712.[28] According to Virgil it is always winter ('semper hiems'); and 'sudden crusts of ice form on the flowing river' ('concrescunt subitae currenti in flumine crustae').[29] Dryden, in rendering the hardships of the Scythian 'who treads the bleak *Meotian* Strand', translates this line as 'Swift Rivers are with sudden Ice constrain'd'.[30] Virgil's evocation of the sudden formation of ice, with its contrast, sharpened by alliteration, between 'currenti' and 'crustae', seems to be picked up in the formulations that Maitland and Dryden bring to the wintry rivers encountered by Orpheus in *Georgics* IV, offering a further precedent for Pope's concern with the liminal moment between motion and stasis, the in-between state in which the 'freezing' current 'hardly flows' through the 'waste of snows'.

It is also suggestive that the Virgilian passage that underlies Pope's 'freezing Tanais' should itself belong to an account of the death of Orpheus, the exemplary and mythic poet, who, having lost Euridice for the second time, wanders in a wintry landscape that mirrors his desolation. From this point of view, Pope's 'freezing Tanais' establishes a connection with a fundamental allusion to the myth of Orpheus in the *Dunciad*.[31] Indeed, among

[27] John Dryden (trans.), *The Works of Virgil … The Third Edition*, 3 vols. (London, 1709), 1. 208: *Georgics*, IV. 738. Pope's copy, which later belonged to Thomas Gray, is British Library C.28.f6: see Mack, 'A Finding List', no. 171, p. 459. The Strimon is on the Thracian/Macedonian border.
[28] Virgil, *Georgics*, III. 349–83; Sherburn (ed.), *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, 1. 167.
[29] Virgil, *Georgics*, III. 356, 360.
[30] Dryden, *The Works of Virgil*, 1. 169, *Georgics*, III. 554.
[31] Cp. the epigraph (Rumbold (ed.), *The Dunciad in Four Books*, p. 21), taken from Ovid's account of how, after the murder and dismemberment of Orpheus at the hands of the Maenads, Apollo

the allegations of violence and barbarism routinely made against the inhabitants of the region, the Roman poets laid particular stress on female bloodthirstiness; and Virgil's mention of the Tanais in connection with the Thracian women who dismember Orpheus in their Bacchic rites is just one instance of a well-established association. Ovid, from his exile in Tomis, some way to the south, explains that the Scythian cult of Diana, the moon-goddess, features human sacrifice, and that it is the specific role of well-born Scythian virgins to put strangers to death.[32] He also associates the area with the murderous Medea.[33] Horace too combines the notion of the Tanais as the limit of the known world with its association with female savagery; and both Seneca and Statius describe the area as the abode of fearsome Amazons.[34] Maeotis and the Tanais not only set limits to the Roman world, but also associated those limits with spectacularly bloody female transgressions against civilised custom.

This association also tends to align the region, in ways that Pope would not have had to spell out for his classically educated readers, with the dubious female cults and moon divinities so comprehensively shadowed in his creation, for the myth of the *Dunciad*, of his presiding goddess Dulness. Named in the first line of the poem as 'The Mighty Mother', she is associated by the poem's networks of mythological allusion with Aeneas's mother Venus, with the Great Mother Cybele worshipped in Asia Minor, with the Egyptian Isis, with the Greek patroness of agriculture Demeter and the Roman Ceres, and with Hecate, the goddess of the dead worshipped as a sinister aspect of the moon goddess Diana.[35] The reputation of Maeotis and the Tanais thus underlines the centrality of these mysterious and potentially sinister female cults to Pope's characterisation of his presiding goddess.

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intervened to stop a serpent from devouring the dismembered poet's head. For a broadly positive interpretation in terms of the role of the head in providing for the continuance of poetry through its burial on Lesbos, see John V. Regan, 'Orpheus and the *Dunciad*'s narrator', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 9 (1975), 87–101; and for a darker reading, Howard Erskine-Hill's 'Pope's Epigraphic Practice' (forthcoming), discerning 'an affinity between Orpheus and the singer of the *Dunciad* as each sweeps into darkness'. For another comparison with Orpheus, see the episode of Doll's decapitation by falling through the frozen Thames in Gay's *Trivia*: Clare Brant and Susan E. Whyman (eds.), *Walking the Streets of Eighteenth-Century London: John Gay's Trivia (1716)* (Oxford, 2007), p. 188 (*Trivia*, II. 389–98).

[32] *Ex Ponto*, III. ii. 55–60; cp. *Tristia*, IV. iv. 63–4, 67–8.

[33] *Tristia*, III. ix. 33–4; *Heroides* VI. 107–8.

[34] Horace, *Odes*, III. x. i. 1–4. Seneca, *Hercules Furens*, 533–46; *Hippolytus*, 399–403. Statius, *Thebaid*, XII. 526; *Achilleid*, I. 758–60.

[35] Rumbold (ed.), *The Dunciad in Four Books*, p. 89.

Another vital aspect is the area's reputation for perpetual cold: though it actually enjoys warm summers, Virgil had claimed that it is 'always winter', and Ovid, lamenting his exile to the very ends of the earth, sees nothing to the north but uninhabitable cold.[36] The icy sea also offered an image for stasis: when Lucan describes Caesar's ships becalmed in a motionless sea, it is the frozen Maeotis that he invokes as a comparison: here, the absence of even a breath of wind suggests lack of inspiration in its most literal sense.[37] For the Christian reader this is also the antithesis of that primal scene of creation in which 'the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters', further intensifying the association between Maeotis and lack of creativity (Genesis 1.2). 'Cold' was in Pope's time a familiar term of dismissal for weak or uninteresting writing, further supporting the alignment of ice-bound landscape with blighted creativity.[38] (This imagery also recalls the 'lazy Lake' unpromisingly placed 'In fam'd *Hibernia* on the *Northern* Main' that Blackmore had chosen as the headquarters of his own temple of Dulness in his poem *The Kit-Cats*, the precursor of the *Dunciad* to which David Womersley drew our attention in his 2004 Warton Lecture.[39])

Yet another and perhaps more surprising angle on threats to poetry and the civilised order is suggested by Juvenal's episode of the monster turbot officiously presented to the emperor in *Satire* IV, which refers, for a comparison, to the apparently proverbial size of fish overwintered under the ice of Maeotis.[40] (And we may recall the venom-swollen toad of Maeotis to which Pope had likened Dennis, who 'swells his bloated Corps to largest size'.[41]) Ovid had written memorably about watching the fish trapped alive in the ice, inviting readers to make the analogy with his own confinement in exile; and Juvenal's sense of the ice as a trap in which fish grow fat and sluggish suggests another kind of threat to creativity.[42]

In the translation of Juvenal published by Dryden in 1693, this satire had been translated by his friend Richard Duke:

[36] Ovid, *Tristia*, III. iv*b*. 51–2.
[37] Lucan, *Pharsalia*, V. 436–46.
[38] Cp. *Tatler* no. 254 for words supposedly freezing as soon as uttered in Nova Zembla (*The Tatler*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1987), 3. 288–92, and for earlier analogues, n. 10, p. 292).
[39] David Womersley, 'Dulness and Pope', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 131: *2004 Lectures* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 229–50 at 245.
[40] Juvenal, *Satires*, IV. 37–44.
[41] See above, n. 13.
[42] Ovid, *Tristia*, III. x. 49–50.

> Where *Venus* Shrine does fair *Ancona* grace,
> A Turbut taken of prodigious Space,
> Fill'd the extended Net, not less than those
> That dull *Maeotis* does with Ice enclose,
> Till conquer'd by the Sun's prevailing Ray,
> It opens to the *Pontick* Sea their way;
> And throws them out unweildy with their Growth,
> Fat with long ease, and a whole Winter's sloth.[43]

(It is noteworthy, by the way, that Duke here uses the phrase 'dull *Maeotis*', which had been included in Pope's early draft of his couplet, but was discarded during revision.) Duke also comments on the flattering terms in which the huge fish is presented to the emperor:

> How fulsom this! how gross! yet this takes well,
> And the vain Prince with empty Pride does swell.[44]

This is all too reminiscent of a description of the king of the dunces that Pope had drafted for the *Dunciad*, but never published in any version of the poem, since it reflected so obviously on the similiarities between Dulness's chosen king and George II himself: the king of the dunces is characterised by 'His Strut his Grin, and his dead Stare' and 'his stupid Eye', and is surrounded by a 'Laurelld Train' of poetic flatterers, as 'With Kingly Joy he hears their Loyal Lies'.[45] Although the fat fish of Maeotis evokes a threat to civilised culture very different from that of the female violence that befell Orpheus, it is one undeniably relevant to Pope's vision of England under George II.

V

When we come to relate Pope's couplet on Maeotis and the Tanais to the poem of which it forms part (and I shall be referring throughout to the poem in its final lifetime form, *The Dunciad in Four Books* of 1743), it becomes clear that the three actions of sleeping, freezing and flowing are crucial to his imagining of what Dulness is and does in the world. Sleeping

[43] *The Satires of Decimus Junius Juvenalis: and of Aulus Persius Flaccus. Translated into English Verse by Mr. Dryden and other Eminent Hands. To which is Prefix'd a Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satir* [*sic*] … *The Fourth Edition* (London, 1711): Juvenal, *Satires*, IV. 150–1. For Pope's copy of Dryden's Juvenal, see Mack, 'A Finding List', no. 102, p. 422.
[44] *The Satires of Decimus Junius Juvenalis*, p. 153, translating Juvenal, *Satires*, IV. 69–71.
[45] Rumbold (ed.), *The Dunciad in Four Books*, p. 148.

and freezing, while each replete with a different range of literal and metaphorical potential, work in this particular couplet as parallel terms for inactivity:

> Lo! where Maeotis sleeps, and hardly flows
> The freezing Tanais thro' a waste of snows …[46]

Sleeping is characteristically associated in the *Dunciad*s with torpor rather than refreshment: Claude Rawson aptly contrasts it with what he calls 'the hearty sleep of heroes', the refreshing and well-earned sleep enjoyed by Homer's heroes.[47] Falling asleep out of laziness, boredom or futile exhaustion is what characters in the poem literally do on several occasions; and it is also what other entities, including other bodies of water like Maeotis, are said to do metaphorically: indeed, when characters sleep literally in the poem, they enact in allegory the metaphor of sleep as inactivity. In addition, the habitual sleep of babies and the final sleep of death are both specifically invoked in the poem as aspects of the state into which Dulness, characterised as an irresponsible nurse or mother, invites her protégés to relapse. Freezing, however, apart from its relation to the warm/cold contrast conventionally applied to creativity or its absence (which Pope draws on more than once in the poem), works in this particular couplet to suggest the fragility of motion, the instant-by-instant risk of losing momentum and lapsing into stasis; and in this respect the trickling of almost frozen water into a shallow, silty sea is emblematic of the obstruction that literally congests other bodies of water in the poem, and metaphorically afflicts entities that can be likened to such bodies of water.

Flowing, on the other hand, is different. Because of the inversion of verb and subject in Pope's description of the Tanais, 'flows' intervenes between 'sleeps' and 'freezing', opening up, with an open vowel emphasised by enjambement, a sense of space beween the repeated narrow 'ee' of the two words associated with torpor, cold and inertia:

> Lo! where Maeotis sleeps, and hardly flows
> The freezing Tanais thro' a waste of snows …[48]

Flowing would thus seem, at first sight, to be the positive term between two negatives, with the implication that to be torpid, cold and inert is bad,

[46] Rumbold (ed.), *The Dunciad in Four Books*, III. 87–8.
[47] Claude Rawson, 'The Sleep of the Dunces', in David Womersley and Richard McCabe (eds.), *Literary Milieux: Essays in Text and Context Presented to Howard Erskine-Hill* (Newark, DE, 2008), pp. 258–83 (pp. 258, 270).
[48] Rumbold (ed.), *The Dunciad in Four Books*, III. 87–8.

while the energy of flow is good. After all, Denham had in a famous and much-imitated passage from his poem *Cooper's Hill* made the flow of the Thames a model for good writing:

> O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
> My great example, as it is my theme!
> Though deep, yet clear, Though gentle, yet not Dull;
> Strong without rage, without ore-flowing, full.[49]

But it is equally well known what Pope makes of this in his *Dunciad*:

> Flow Welsted, flow! like thine inspirer, Beer,
> Tho' stale, not ripe; tho' thin, yet never clear;
> So sweetly mawkish, and so smoothly dull;
> Heady; not strong; o'erflowing, tho' not full.[50]

The power of flow as an enabling image of creativity is here radically undercut—as we might expect in a poem that, whatever its beauty, complexity and mystery, has satire at its heart. (Indeed, David Fairer's sense of the centrality of mud and slime to Pope's imagery of Dulness is highly relevant here.[51]) Flowing is thus not always good. It depends what is flowing and how. So to succumb to the encouraging thought of flow as an enabling metaphor, a positive allusion, whether to the spring of Helicon or to the reviving and sanctifying waters of Scripture, may be to risk tumbling into the irony that Pope holds open for our perplexity in the very setting up of his poem, the irony by which, although torpor is the final end of Dulness's perverse providence, the often frenetic activity of the poem's human characters is not an opposite but merely a contributory force, advancing only the causes of perversity, exhaustion and entropy.[52] For

[49] *The Poetical Works of Sir John Denham*, ed. Theodore Howard Banks, 2nd edn. (Hamden, CT, 1969), 'Cooper's Hill', lines 189–92.

[50] Rumbold (ed.), *The Dunciad in Four Books*, III. 169–72.

[51] David Fairer, *Pope's Imagination* (Manchester, 1984), pp. 113–52; see also index under 'Imagination' and 'Sleep and dreams'. Cp. also Patricia Meyer Spacks, *An Argument of Images* (Cambridge, MA, 1972), for 'the image of life as a river' as one of Pope's reworkings of 'traditional, even hackneyed images' (pp. 2–4); also for the *Dunciad*'s 'elaborate structure of physical images for moral conditions' (p. 86); and for its 'lack of clarity about where description stops and metaphor begins' (p. 108).

[52] Cp., on entropy, Thomas Robert Edwards, *This Dark Estate: a Reading of Pope* (Berkeley, CA, 1963): the dunces 'yield happily to the tendency of life to run downhill towards darkness, sameness and sleep' (pp. 127–30). John E. Sitter, *The Poetry of Pope's Dunciad* (London, 1971), draws on the notion of circularity: 'images of circular motion … become an important means of resolving a conceptual paradox—namely, that the dunces exhibit a nonproductive energy (one which does not "go anywhere") and yet are part of an energy which progresses steadily like the

Dulness, in a formulation that Pope's authorised editor, William Warburton, evidently found sufficiently paradoxical to require explanation, is introduced to us at the outset not simply as idle or lazy, but as 'Laborious, heavy, busy, bold and blind.'[53] Perhaps anticipating the criticism that Pope is arbitrarily assigning everything he dislikes, whether inert or active, idle or productive, derivative or inventive, to the realm of Dulness, Warburton insists:

> Dulness here is not to be taken contractedly for mere Stupidity, but in the enlarged sense of the word, for all Slowness of Apprehension, Shortness of Sight, or imperfect Sense of things. It includes (as we see by the Poet's own words) Labour, Industry, and some degree of Activity and Boldness: a ruling principle not inert, but turning topsy-turvy the Understanding, and inducing an Anarchy or confused State of Mind. This remark ought to be carried along with the reader throughout the work; and without this caution he will be apt to mistake the Importance of many of the Characters, as well as of the Design of the Poet.[54]

Pope's verse relentlessly stages what he seeks to ridicule as the futility of exertions, however heroic in scale and cost, that end only in the boredom, exhaustion and, ultimately, sleep into which Dulness lulls her followers. Indeed, there is a precedent for part of the passage in which he embeds his couplet on Maeotis and the Tanais that points this irony particularly. In Pope's account

> The North by myriads pours her mighty sons,
> Great nurse of Goths, of Alans, and of Huns![55]

This pouring, like the 'freezing Tanais', defies the apparently ice-bound landscape, but the personification of the paradoxically prolific North as 'Great nurse' echoes the sinister awe evoked by Milton's headcount of fallen angels:

> A multitude, like which the populous north
> Poured never from her frozen loins, to pass
> Rhene or the Danaw, when her barbarous sons
> Came like a deluge on the south.[56]

"nutation" at the close of Book II. Metaphors of circularity serve, in other words, to characterize physically both the centrifugal energy and centripetal attraction of Dulness' (pp. 37–8).

[53] Rumbold (ed.), *The Dunciad in Four Books*, I. 15.

[54] Ibid. I. 15, n.

[55] Ibid. III. 89–90.

[56] *John Milton: Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler, 2nd edn. (Harlow, 1998), I. 351–4.

This pouring of offspring from the 'frozen loins' of the north offers an analogy not only for the ambivalent relation between stasis and movement articulated in Pope's vision of Maeotis and Tanais, but also for his characterisation of Dulness as both inert and destructively busy.

There is almost no end to the detailed reflections that might arise from a close reading of the poem's four books in terms of sleeping, flowing and freezing, and for the purposes of this lecture a few striking instances must suffice. The invocation at the beginning of Book I immediately invokes sleeping and flowing:

> Say how the Goddess bade Britannia sleep,
> And pour'd her Spirit o'er the land and deep.[57]

This torpid sleep reverses the Biblical figure in which spirit, like water, is 'pour'd' in creation and inspiration. Freezing is also associated with Dulness near the beginning of the poem, as she sponsors 'gay Description' that 'gives to Zembla fruits' in defiance of its freezing climate.[58]

Flowing and sleeping are again associated as the Thames is introduced by way of the Lord Mayor's procession by 'land and wave'; and later the city dignitaries doze after their feast, while poets attempt in vain to engage readers in their commemoration of the festivities:

> Now May'rs and Shrieves all hush'd and satiate lay,
> Yet eat, in dreams, the custard of the day;
> While pensive Poets painful vigils keep,
> Sleepless themselves, to give their readers sleep.[59]

Water is metaphorically invoked when the hero, Bays (based on the Poet Laureate, Colley Cibber), is introduced sinking, plunging and floundering in his own incompetence; and Pope focuses the traditional equation of coldness with lack of creativity by having Dulness extinguish the bonfire of his works with the sheets of Ambrose Philips's unfinished poem 'Thule', whose frozen subject and contemptible quality render it particularly fit for use as a literary fire blanket.[60]

Dulness then declares her ambition to fatten up favourites like Bays (recalling the proverbially overgrown fish of Maeotis?) and lull the nation

[57] Rumbold (ed.), *The Dunciad in Four Books*, I. 7–8.
[58] Ibid. I. 7–8.
[59] Ibid. I. 86; I. 94.
[60] Ibid. I. 118–20; I. 258, n. Philips had also associated himself with ice and snow in his 'Winter Piece' (see above, pp. 428–9).

into infantile sleep—sleep like that induced by listening to Bays's official Odes:

> O! when shall rise a Monarch all our own,
> And I, a Nursing-mother, rock the throne …
> Fatten the Courtier, starve the learned band,
> And suckle Armies, and dry-nurse the land;
> 'Till Senates nod to Lullabies divine,
> And all be sleep, as at an Ode of thine.[61]

Finally, Book I invokes congested flow when it likens the newly chosen king Bays to the log that Zeus gave the frogs who, in Aesop's fable, asked for a king. The log plummets into their swamp with a gratifyingly loud splash; and it is evidently going to take a while for King Log's delighted subjects to realise that the rest of his reign will be characterised by absolute inactivity:

> Loud thunder to its bottom shook the bog,
> And the hoarse nation croak'd, God save King Log![62]

Book II of the *Dunciad* is full of the lakes and streams in which Dulness's supporters, summoned to celebrate her election of Bays, disport themselves in parodies of the heroic games of classical epic. Notably, fluids are constantly flowing over or out of the bookseller Edmund Curll. In the pillory he receives the 'Golden show'rs' that the 'Public pours' on him.[63] In the booksellers' sprint he slips in the contents of his alleged mistress's chamber-pot, the 'lake, | Which Curl's Corinna chanc'd that morn to make'.[64] Indeed, the reason he is running in the first place is his desire to recruit a phantom poet who has definite affinities to the fat fish of Maeotis: this prize plagiarist is 'plump, full-fed', and much more desirable to Curll than any 'meagre, muse-rid mope, adust and thin'.[65] When Curl prays it is to the goddess of the sewers, where he 'fish'd her nether realms for wit, | List'ning delighted to the jest unclean | Of link-boys vile, and watermen obscene'.[66] Finally, the bedspread he wins commemorates Pope's punishment of his sharp practice by tricking him into swallowing an emetic: in the tapestry, like the river of some perverted pastoral idyll, shall 'the fresh

[61] Rumbold (ed.), *The Dunciad in Four Books*, I. 311–12, 315–18.
[62] Ibid. I. 329–30.
[63] Ibid. II. 3–4.
[64] Ibid. II. 70–1.
[65] Ibid. II. 37.
[66] Ibid. II. 99–101.

vomit run for ever green'.[67] Characteristically, when it comes to the pissing competition, it is 'shameless Curll' who successfully emulates the River Po: 'impetuous spread | The stream, and smoking flourish'd o'er his head'.[68]

When Dulness suggests a diving competition in the Fleet Ditch, an open sewer, Pope's language recalls the great rivers of ancient epic:

> … Fleet-ditch with desemboguing streams
> Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames,
> The King of dykes! than whom no sluice of mud
> With deeper sable blots the silver flood.[69]

By diving in, competitor after competitor illustrates the analogy between party writing and sewage; but a particular distinction is reserved for Blackmore, whose tub-thumping epics in the Whig cause have already won him the noise-making competition; and now he reduces the river to a stasis that anticipates Pope's couplet on Maeotis and the Tanais:

> No noise, no stir, no motion can'st thou make,
> Th'unconscious stream sleeps o'er thee like a lake.[70]

The last prize of Book II is for staying awake during the reading of boring authors; and sleeping and flowing are brought together as the image of excrement dumped into water enacts the inevitable onset of sleep:

> As what a Dutchman plumps into the lakes,
> One circle first, and then a second makes;
> What Dulness dropt among her sons imprest
> Like motion from one circle to the rest;
> So from the mid-most the nutation spreads
> Round and more round, o'er all the sea of heads.[71]

As night falls, competitors are found either dead drunk in the street ('inspir'd beside a sink' or sewer) or in the Fleet prison, here ironically called 'Haunt of the Muses': the polluted Fleet river, like the sinks or sewers that drain the refuse of the streets into it, is a wry reminder of the Muses' Helicon.[72]

[67] Ibid. II. 156.
[68] Ibid. II. 161–90, 179–80.
[69] Ibid. II. 271–4.
[70] Ibid. II. 303–4.
[71] Ibid. II. 405–10. For the complex and controverted history of the image, see authorial and editorial commentary, ibid., pp. 208–9.
[72] Ibid. II. 425–8.

If Book II is Pope's book of polluted waters, then Book III is the book of dubiously inspired sleep. At the opening Dulness lulls Bays on her lap and sprinkles him 'with Cimmerian dew' (the fabled Cimmerians supposedly lived north of Tanais in perpetual darkness); and the effect of this 'dew' is that 'raptures high the seat of Sense o'erflow', flooding Bays's brain with the dreams which constitute the substance of the book.[73] Another kind of narcotic is introduced when 'Shadwell nods the Poppy on his brows', an allusion that will be repeated when the poppy is identified as part of the heritage to be bestowed on Bays.[74] But already he can be hailed as 'born to see what none can see awake', from having been many times dipped into Lethe's 'oblivious Lake'.[75]

In this book Bays learns that Dulness has ruled most of the world for most of history, and this vision provides the context within which Pope places his couplet on Maoetis and Tanais.[76] Bays is invited to

> See Christians, Jews, one heavy Sabbath keep,
> And all the western world believe and sleep.[77]

Streams and springs no longer to be relied on for inspiration are invoked throughout this book: there are, for instance, the poets of the spa towns 'Whose tuneful whistling makes the waters pass', recalling the pissing competition of Book II; there is the memory of Denham's Thames, now cancelled in favour of Welstead's beer; and the book closes with the degeneration of the educational establishments on the banks of the rivers Thames and Isis.[78]

It is Book IV which, as the poem prepares to end in the world's return to Chaos and Night, engages most explicitly with the implications of 'hardly flows | The freezing Tanais', of motion barely faltering towards final stasis. The narrator begs 'Yet, yet a moment …', knowing that the most that can be hoped for is a brief respite: 'Suspend a while your Force inertly strong, | Then take at once the Poet and the Song'.[79] Dulness ascends the throne, and 'Soft on her lap her Laureat son reclines', prompting an authorial note on the appropriateness to the poem of a hero who is asleep more often than not, and is entirely content to let Dulness act for

[73] Rumbold (ed.), *The Dunciad in Four Books*, III. 4–5.
[74] Ibid. III. 22, 317.
[75] Ibid. III. 43–6.
[76] Ibid. III. 87–8.
[77] Ibid. III. 99–100.
[78] Ibid. III. 155–6, 169–72, 335–8.
[79] Ibid. IV. 1–8.

him: 'he hath done little or nothing from the day of his Anointing', Pope remarks, noting provocatively that 'many *King-consorts* have done the like'.[80]

Rivers again feature in relation to the abandonment of intellectual activity: the university rivers Cam and Isis are called on to preach up divine right; and the gathering of academics in 'a sable shoal' suggests fish and sea; then we hear of 'the streams that murm'ring fall | To lull the sons of Marg'ret and Clare-hall'; and in them Richard Bentley—like the great fish of Maeotis mentioned by Juvenal—no longer sports 'tempestuous' but 'sleeps in Port'.[81] Even the young men who escape from English universities and embark on the Grand Tour are led by the great rivers of the Seine and Tiber only into the sleep of indulgence and absolutism:

> To where the Seine, obsequious as she runs,
> Pours at great Bourbon's feet her silken sons;
> Or Tyber, now no longer Roman, rolls,
> Vain of Italian Arts, Italian Souls:
> To happy Convents, bosom'd deep in vines,
> Where slumber Abbots, purple as their wines …
> But chief her shrine where naked Venus keeps,
> And Cupids ride the Lyon of the Deeps;
> Where, eas'd of Fleets, the Adriatic main
> Wafts the smooth Eunuch and enamour'd swain.[82]

As the book moves towards its final sequence, the prophetic Silenus is found snoring, until woken for his speech.[83] The link with the wasteland of Maeotis and the Tanais is again recalled by Pope's play on 'Cibberian forehead, or Cimmerian gloom', offering as alternatives only the brazen face of Colley Cibber, Bays's real-life original, or the darkness beyond the Tanais inhabited by the fabled Cimmerians.[84]

When Dulness yawns ('More she had spoke, but yawn'd—All Nature nods: | What Mortal can resist the Yawn of Gods?'), the final sleep that comes upon the world recapitulates in earnest what was done in game in the staying-awake competition at the end of Book III; and the connection is marked by an echo, 'wide, and more wide', of the image of excrement being dumped into water.[85] The narrator asks the Muse—a notably infrequent

[80] Ibid. IV. 20 and notes.
[81] Ibid. IV. 187–8, 199–200.
[82] Ibid. IV. 297–310.
[83] Ibid. IV. 492.
[84] Ibid. IV. 532.
[85] Ibid. IV. 605–6, 613.

participant in this poem—to fill in as best she can in the brief moment before creation lapses; but even her song can at this juncture be only a lullaby: 'O sing, and hush the Nations with thy Song!'[86] 'The all-composing Hour' has indeed arrived, a universal lights-out when even 'The Muse obeys the Pow'r'.[87] The closing lines are introduced by mention of the northern murderess Medea, associated with the freezing landscape of Tanais by Ovid, and of the 'everlasting rest' imposed by magic on the watchful eyes of Argus.[88] Here are freezing and sleeping; but nothing 'flows', even 'hardly', as fires and lights are extinguished and Dulness 'lets the curtain fall' on the 'universal darkness' of Chaos and Night.[89] (Claude Rawson indeed suggests that Pope's 'culminating stroke … was to get rid of sleep altogether', by removing from the finale of the poem any lingering sense of sleep as renewal or refreshment, and emphasising instead the permanence of 'Universal Darkness'.[90]) For all the busyness of Dulness and her agents in maintaining what appears to be some kind of flow, Pope insists that such activity ends only in entropy.

VI

But, in 1743, when this final version was published, such a judgement could perhaps also have been turned against the author and his poem. After a decade and a half of working around the fixed points of George II and of Walpole, with Queen Caroline suggestively shadowed by Dulness herself, Pope does not radically rewrite when Caroline dies in 1737 or when Walpole resigns in 1742, before the first, separate publication of what in 1743 would appear as Book IV of the revised poem. Maynard Mack argued that Pope, freed from fear of Walpole, responded in that new book with satire of 'unparalleled specificity and boldness'; but it might also be argued that, in Pope's view, Walpole's system had effected damage that would persist long after he himself was gone (and Pope was, by the 1740s, markedly sceptical of Patriot promises of reform).[91] In the

[86] Rumbold (ed.), *The Dunciad in Four Books*, IV. 626.
[87] Ibid. IV. 627–8.
[88] Ibid. IV. 635, 637–8.
[89] Ibid. IV. 655.
[90] Rawson, 'The Sleep of the Dunces', pp. 280–1.
[91] Maynard Mack, *The Garden and the City: Retirement and Politics in the Later Poetry of Pope* (Toronto, 1969), pp. 150–62. Cp. Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725–1742* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 90–5.

poem itself, the novelty of Walpole's absence seems to be noted in a brief play on Edward Young's compliment to him as Palinurus: as the final sleep engulfs the centres of power, the narrator notes that 'Ev'n Palinurus nodded at the helm'.[92] This time, Walpole is set in no complimentary contrast with Aeneas's helmsman (who fell asleep at his post and fell into the sea).[93] Pope's Palinurus instead reverts to his Virgilian origins: he is nodding, and presumably about to fall; and, as Howard Erskine-Hill has suggested, this image could be read as doing 'a kind of honour to the great Prime Minister', if only in the sense that without Walpole 'the political world is left with neither direction nor life'.[94]

Yet if one had set out to imagine, from scratch, a myth of the national culture in 1742 or 1743, it seems unlikely that it would have been one so firmly posited on a trinity of king, queen and minister that harked back to the 1730s. In terms of the wider culture too, some of the issues not substantively engaged even in the final *Dunciad in Four Books* are striking: although in 1743 Colley Cibber, Laureate since 1730, is finally enthroned as hero of the poem, there are arguably deeper shifts in the world of literature that are not addressed. After long experiment in manuscript, Pope never included in any version of the *Dunciad* any substantive appraisal of the contribution of women to the published literature of his age: Aphra Behn, indeed, passes entirely unmentioned. Women writers, notably Eliza Haywood, are occasionally satirised, but not as part of any focused engagement with the issues their works might pose for a traditional conception of literature.[95] Indeed, by the early 1740s, the absence from *The Dunciad in Four Books* of prose fiction as a generic focus for change begins to be distinctly noticeable. In effect, the final lifetime *Dunciad* of 1743 still manifested origins that by this time lay rather a long way back, not only in the controversies of the 1720s and 1730s, but also in the late seventeenth-century Battle of the Ancients and the Moderns, whose lingering and constantly renewed reverberation in Pope's work keeps faith with much older friends like Atterbury and Swift for whom it had actually been a formative experience.[96] And it would be unrealistic to expect of a poet who had never

[92] Rumbold (ed.), *The Dunciad in Four Books*, IV. 614.
[93] Ibid., editorial notes on IV. 607, 614.
[94] Howard Erskine-Hill, *Poetry of Opposition and Revolution, Dryden to Wordsworth* (Oxford, 1996), p. 108.
[95] Valerie Rumbold, 'Women writers (not) in Pope's *Dunciad*s', *Review of English Studies*, 52 (2001), 524–39.
[96] Rumbold (ed.), *The Dunciad in Four Books*, pp. 3–4, 7–9, 11–12.

been physically strong, and who had only a year to live when he published *The Dunciad in Four Books*, that he would so late in the day undertake a radical reimagining of what had become the major satiric project of his maturity. Indeed, at the opening of the fourth book, when the narrator invites Chaos and Night, as soon as this last book is completed, to 'take at once the Poet and the Song', we may sense that the author too entertains thoughts of the speedy extinction both of his own life, and of the poem over which he has laboured so long.[97]

VII

The anecdote that Johnson records may, of course, be misleading or mistaken; but even if it is, the layers of development that it invites us to explore are nonetheless suggestive. The record of Pope's revisions to this couplet shows how patiently and artfully he tuned even the tiniest unit for expression, and how integrally his adjustment of sound was related to development of sense. The way in which, as he shaped this couplet, he negotiated its verbal and thematic relation to the poetry he knew reminds us how productively imagined was his engagement with verse both ancient and modern. Johnson's anecdote, moreover, has the merit of fixing our attention on the detail of a passage that might otherwise be overlooked, perhaps dismissed as only a bit of background scenery, and very much a poor relation to some of the famously witty couplets so often cited as evidence of Pope's genius. Yet, if Johnson was correctly informed, 'the couplet by which he declared his own ear to be most gratified was *this*' (my italics), a couplet that makes its effects rather subtly, but makes them in a way that connects powerfully with the larger structures of the *Dunciad* and with the wider network of images and ideas brought to bear in that poem. None of us, in the absence of the poet's own testimony, can claim, any more than Johnson, to have discovered 'the reason of this preference'; but we can at least begin to suggest some reasons that would make it a comprehensible choice.

[97] Rumbold (ed.), *The Dunciad in Four Books*, IV. 8.

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