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Civic Subjects: Wordsworth, Tennyson, and the Victorian Laureateship

by

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Abstract

Civic Subjects examines the ways in which poets laureate William Wordsworth and Alfred Tennyson negotiated the terrain between poetics and politics during the long reign of Queen Victoria – a period during which the monarchy was both contested (especially by popular republicanism) and in a state of transition. The first chapter traces important moments in the history of the office in Britain, both in order to establish the traditions handed down to Wordsworth and Tennyson and to clarify the office's complex relationships to poetics, to reading publics, to the monarchy, and to the elected government. Despite the remarkable differences between the laureates examined, both have a common task: to balance the political claims of a monarchist institution against the responsibilities each feels to his own politics and poetics. *Civic Subjects* therefore examines circumstances where such negotiations become visible: Wordsworth's insistently private laureate relationship with Queen Victoria; Tennyson's early experiments in constructing a laureate voice in the Crimean War-era volume *Maud, and Other Poems*; and the role of Tennyson's verse written to mark royal events (deaths, marriages, and anniversaries). Overall, *Civic Subjects* argues that the laureateship can illuminate both the contested power of poetry in public political life and the constant, sometimes violent, renegotiation of concepts of British citizenship. The structure of laureateship, wherein one poet is called upon to be a ventriloquist for the monarchy and for the people, simultaneously, makes legible the difficult ideological work of maintaining a coherent national narrative – especially during

a period in which the role of monarchy in national life is repeatedly brought under fire, debates about the constitution of a proper political subjectivity are constantly embattled, and the poets laureate themselves hold strong views of their own on the politics of poetics.

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INTRODUCTION: The Poet Laureate as "The Voice of England"

> For reasons which are not difficult to discover, the office has often been unfortunate in its holders; but however much the circumstances of certain periods of history have conspired to cheapen it, there has never been a moment when it was without great possibilities. Even in the eighteenth century, the laureates were not restricted to perfunctory laudation. The very New Year and Birthday Odes themselves might have been—though unfortunately they usually were not—something other than empty adulation; and in the celebration of great events, the laureate always had the opportunity—however little he availed himself of it—of making himself the voice of England . . . . If the results have been in many cases disappointing, the possibility has always been there; and, even in the most jejune period, there have been instances not a few when the laureate seemed at least to catch a glimpse of it.
>
> – Edmund Kemper Broadus, *The Laureateship* (1921)

When the poets laureate William Wordsworth and Alfred Tennyson met Queen Victoria, nearly a decade apart (1843 and 1851, respectively), they were wearing the same suit – a suit that fit neither of them well. Both Tennyson and Wordsworth were initially presented to the queen under the same circumstances – at a court levee. Neither had appropriate clothing for such an occasion, and so both borrowed a court suit from the poet Samuel Rogers. Too small for both poets, the suit was serviceable, but by no means ideal (O'London 47). Surveying his silk-clad legs, Tennyson is reputed to have much admired his excellent calves (Dyson and Tennyson 30). The outfit, like at times the office, fit him a bit tight. But he knew he looked good in it anyway. Wordsworth is a different story altogether. In his capacity as poet laureate, between 1843 and his death in 1850, he wrote

absolutely nothing he wanted considered laureate verse. But silence is rarely a neutral condition, and Wordsworth's lack of laureate poetry was not a failure to produce for an office that somehow exceeded him, but an active refusal of laureate traditions demanding the production of rote annual odes to the monarch. For Wordsworth, then, the laureateship, like the court suit, was constraining: its historical function of fusing poetry with state power did not fit his poetics, which demanded verse that did not perform in the service of the state.

This project is about the ways in which poets laureate negotiated the terrain between poetics and politics during the long reign of Queen Victoria. It examines the practice of laureateship in a period when the perfunctory tribute odes of the eighteenth century were no longer required and when the monarchy itself was both embattled (especially by popular republicanism) and in a state of transition with respect to the prerogatives of the queen. The Victorian poets laureate were servants to the monarch and members of the royal household, but were relatively free during this period to write when moved to do so; their choices – moments of versification and of poetic silence – are often telling.

This project balances a number of narrative threads. While its main focus is to examine the poetry produced by laureates (in Wordsworth's case, the poetry he disavowed as issuing from the office), looking at the ways in which the institution provides a particular view into Victorian cultural politics, it also addresses itself to the changes in laureate practice and to both government and readership perceptions of laureateship across the period. Consequently, I also examine non-poetic texts: Wordsworth wrote little verse during the laureate

period, but both his prose writing on poetics and his comments on laureateship in letters provide a view into his poetic practices during his tenure in office. My goal in this study is to approach the Victorian laureateship as an institution, exploring the ways it functioned as an important location for representations not just of the monarchy, but also of individual and collective identities, citizenship and empire, and poetry's contested role in the public life of Britain.

Any study of Victorian laureateship inevitably faces the long shadow cast by Tennyson. Poet laureate for much of Queen Victoria's reign, Tennyson was appointed in 1850, largely on the critical momentum produced by that year's publication of *In Memoriam, A. H. H*. Overall, I devote much of this study to Tennyson's active engagement with the problems and opportunities of holding an office that fused poetics and statecraft. I begin, however, with a chapter tracing important moments in the history of the office in Britain, both in order to establish the traditions handed down to Wordsworth and Tennyson and to clarify the office's complex relationships to poetics, to reading publics, to the monarchy, and to the elected government. Where Wordsworth and Tennyson refused or conformed to received laureateship traditions, it is useful to know what was being cast off, replaced, or revived. Despite the remarkable differences between each of the laureates I examine, both have a common task: to balance the political claims of a monarchist institution against the responsibilities each feels to his own politics and poetics. Charles Mahoney argues that the laureateship registers "the most visible link between English poetry and English politics – or, more comprehensively, between literature and power" (14), and there are a surprising

number of instances in which both Tennyson and Wordsworth perform elaborate negotiations that mediate these competing claims. I examine, then, circumstances where such negotiations become visible: Wordsworth's insistently private laureate relationship with Queen Victoria; Tennyson's early experiments in constructing a laureate voice in the Crimean War-era volume *Maud, and Other Poems*; and the role of Tennyson's verse written to mark royal events (deaths, marriages, and anniversaries). While this study is concerned with unpacking the ways in which verse written by laureates produces tensions between poetics and politics, and between the government and the poet, each chapter moves beyond the particularities of poetic texts. Taking my cues from each poet's laureate practice – their written materials and contexts, from formal structure to method of publication – I argue that this changing institution can illuminate some of the key issues at stake in both Victorian politics and Victorian poetics. I thus extend my readings of the poetic texts into broader arguments about both the contested power of poetry in public political life and the constant, sometimes violent, renegotiation of concepts of British citizenship. The structure of laureateship, wherein one poet is called upon to be a ventriloquist for the monarchy and for the people, simultaneously, makes legible the difficult ideological work of maintaining a coherent national narrative – especially during a period in which the role of monarchy in national life is repeatedly brought under fire, debates about the constitution of a proper political subjectivity are constantly embattled, and the poets laureate themselves hold strong views of their own on the politics of poetics. The Victorian laureateship thus makes visible the fractures in an idea of

Britishness (grounded not just in monarchy, but also in a variety of social, political, and economic categories and their attendant inequalities) as much as it provides a view into its continuities.

The epigraph that introduces this study highlights some of the main issues at stake in these considerations. Edmund Kemper Broadus's 1921 lament for the largely unfulfilled promise of the laureateship suggests an ideal that laureates could rarely match: the office, he argues, provides "great possibilities its holders rarely took advantage of" (v). He sees the laureateship for what it might have been, and the poets themselves for what they might have transformed themselves into. He expresses disappointment for the fact that poets laureate in general rose only to the most predictable of occasions, their verses often squandering the office's promise in "empty adulation" (v). For Broadus, these "great possibilities" could have been realized by each office-holder if he – and until the appointment of Carol Ann Duffy in 2009 (Malvern 4), *all* British poets laureate had been men – were able to "mak[e] himself the voice of England" (v). Broadus's concept of the ideal laureate is at once astute and revealing. It points in many of the directions to which this thesis addresses itself: the self-fashioning of the laureate and laureateship through verse and its circulation; the gendered nature of both the institution and the ideas of the nation this institution produces and to which it responds; laureate poetry's public and private "voice[s]"; and the question of how the laureateship is connected to concepts of the nation, including race, ethnicity, and the slippery-but-crucial distinction between England and Great Britain.

I pursue this multivalent question of what is at stake in "making" oneself "the voice of England" below, but I want for the moment to focus on the way in which Broadus's phrase invokes the notion of the poet laureate as a representative voice, as one person who speaks for or in place of the nation. This project is crucially interested in how Victorian laureates construct a representative voice in their poetry – and of how their texts come to grips with (and, in Wordsworth's case, avoid) a situation in which they are called upon to speak as the voice of the nation. This is a matter that goes to the heart of questions about British nationalism and the idea of citizenship in the Victorian period. The structure of laureateship – that one person speaks in verse to and for the nation – necessitates that those holding the office navigate the problem of inhabiting both individual and collective subject positions. They must at once be "I" the poet laureate and "we" the British people, even as they also must contend with the weight of monarchical (and, often, elected government) approval residing in and behind their verse. This tension between the individual and the collective is one that poets laureate must reckon with at the scene of writing, adopting a subject position that in fact closely mirrors the production of a civic subject – of an individual with ties to a collective. As Raymond Williams suggests in *Keywords*, the term "individual" should be read as both "a unique person and [her or] his (indivisible) membership of a group" (137), what Judith Scherer Herz calls a "paradox" that is both "alive and productive" (34). This paradox of the individual has a strong resonance in Victorian poetry. As Isobel Armstrong argues, "[t]he effort to renegotiate a content to every relationship between self and the world is the

Victorian poet's project," one that is "simultaneously personal and cultural" *(Victorian Poetry* 7*).* For the Victorian poet laureate, this task is intensified by the office's codification in government documents, by the traditions of the position, by the widely held expectation that the poet laureate writes simultaneously in the voice of the individual and the national collective – and that the laureate voice be a performative tool for defining this collective. The laureateship thus makes Williams' paradox of the individual legible.

More particularly, Victorian laureateship poetry, particularly as practiced by Tennyson, rehearses the tensions of citizenship. Concepts of citizenship are deeply tied to notions of the individual person and to the nation as "imagined community," (13) to use Benedict Anderson's phrase. As Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman argue, "[c]itizenship is intimately linked to ideas of individual entitlement on the one hand and of attachment to a community on the other" (352). For Tennyson especially, laureateship situates the poet in exactly this space, of voicing both the individual and the community, and a study of the office can therefore shed light on what is at stake in the vexed questions of defining ideal British citizenship during the Victorian period. Debates about who should have access to the full rights of citizenship took place in poetry and prose, but also in the halls of power at the centre of the empire and in the streets of Britain and its colonial territories. Questions of Victorian citizenship, most evident in the political movements surrounding suffrage, fell into two traditions. In the republican tradition, citizenship involved political and legal standing, but also participation in the state. Republican citizenship theorized the republic as the

locus of individual identity and active citizenship as crucial to the maintenance of the republic. The liberal tradition of citizenship posited rights as individual and natural, and privileged individual freedoms and the exercise of individual rights. Such rights prefigured the state, which was responsible for ensuring liberty, and therefore placed political rights with respect to the state as a less primary concern (Hall, McLelland, and Rendall 57-58). As Catherine Hall, Keith McLelland, and Jane Rendall point out, the two traditions often overlapped in political discourse, with, for example, discussions of individual freedoms drawn from the liberal tradition and invocations to the citizen's duty drawn from the republican tradition (58). What the two traditions have in common is a concern with how to understand the relationship between the individual and the collective, and both of these entities' relationship to the state. Terry Eagleton suggests that the nineteenth-century liberal subject, more generally, "strived to preserve its identity and autonomy along with its plurality, though this was never an easy matter" (87). My discussion of the laureateship aims to attend to both of the concerns raised by Eagleton: the relationship of identity and autonomy to plurality, and the difficulties associated with this ambivalence at the core of liberalism – while also considering the ways in which the laureate practices of Tennyson and Wordsworth shed light on the populist claims to republican citizenship continually threatening the monarchy.

In Victorian Britain, questions of who might be a proper citizen, and how a viable civic subjectivity could be constituted were very much alive and productive. Mary Poovey argues that by mid-century there was an increased sense

of the British population as being constituted by a series of individuals rather than by an unruly group:

> [T]he possibility that every man is an instance of the same self-managing entity . . . was available as a formulation [in literature] because the social domain had begun to be reconceptualized as a collection of responsible, disciplined individuals, not as an aggregate that should be policed by the government. *(Making* 22*)*

At the same time as this concept of the "self-managing" individual was emerging, Britain was in the midst of metabolizing a very changed sense of itself. The abolition of the slave trade and then of slavery altogether, Catholic emancipation, and parliamentary reform changed Britain significantly, and impacted concepts of citizenship and the nation. In the wake of these changes, questions raised about the problems and prospects of democracy formed an important part of public – and poetic – debate (Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry* ix). As Linda Colley argues,

> the years between Waterloo and the accession of Queen Victoria – and especially the late 1820s and early 1830s – were arguably the only period in modern British history in which people power – as we have seen it operate in parts of eastern Europe in the late twentieth century – played a prominent and pervasive role in effecting significant political change . . . . Not only did the foremost political controversies of this era impinge directly on questions of citizenship: they also brought together both sexes, every social level and all parts of the nation, not in a consensus to be sure, but in an instructive and revealing debate. (362-63)

Although these debates gave way to social and political change, they were never fully resolved – nor are they settled today. Concepts of Britishness were (and still are) always subject to revision. As Mary Poovey argues, "[t]he consolidation of a national identity or national character is necessarily a protracted and uneven process, just as its maintenance is always precarious and imperfect" (*Making* 55).

Poetry, especially poetry written for an institution of the state, has a role to play in considerations of Victorian Britishness.

The laureateship gives insight into not just a Britishness defined by Protestantism, monarchism, masculinity, whiteness, and (relative) wealth that characterizes both the office itself and the *status quo* Victorian citizen. Linda Colley clarifies the great extent to which both Protestantism and the monarchy were crucial to concepts of Britishness by the nineteenth century (11-54, 195-236), while others have pointed to the importance of Queen Victoria specifically as a nationalist symbol – Elizabeth Langland, for example, writes that "[i]n Victoria, a national idea finds its articulation through gender, race, class, and ethnicity" (112). Hall, McLelland, and Rendall suggest that gender, possession of property, and nationality (with its connotations of race and ethnicity) were all key themes in citizenship debates of the Victorian period (58-62). But the laureate practices of Wordsworth and Tennyson do not just outline the contours of the period's concepts of the normative citizen; they also expose some of the faultlines in Victorian concepts of citizenship – the ideological fissures and frailties of the debates about who does and does not "belong," and for what reasons. Examining the ways in which these faultlines appear in the context of laureateship is one way of tracing the paths of nationalist and imperialist discourses in the period, a task that Antoinette Burton argues brings into view the "unstable foundations" of normative colonial politics (*Gender* 1). This study, then, examines the content and circulation of the complexly configured civic subject in laureate poetry, rather than rehearsing the story of the laureateship as a site for the staging of royal

spectacle. Studies that focus exclusively on royal ceremony run the risk, as Antony Taylor suggests, of "ignor[ing] the voices of dissidence through [a] preoccupation with royal ritual" (53). Burton argues that scholars should take seriously "the possibility that 'domestic' Britain may in fact have been not merely historically dependent on empire, but may indeed have been significantly, if not fully, constituted by it" ("Déjà vu" 1). She cautions against research characterized by

> a commitment to centralizing empire in the story of Britain, to reveling in the rhetoric of re-discovering its aristocratic delights and, above all, to writing its past as coterminous with the history of its sovereigns, Queen Victoria prime among them – even as [it] carefully stage-manage[s] empire's presence in the larger historical account of modern British history. ("Déjà vu" 3)

This study is clearly not one of dissident voices. Beyond the fact that poets laureate are, by definition, the opposite of dissidents, Wordsworth and Tennyson are inveterately canonical authors with a rich afterlife in the present day. I hope, however, to take seriously the claims made by Burton and Taylor. I examine the Victorian laureateship not to revel in the spectacle of monarchy. Quite the contrary: this project arises from an interest in precisely that careful stage-management of empire Burton finds disagreeable, and in how royal ritual might function to foreclose the "voices of dissidence" Taylor values.

Crucial to this project's considerations of what constitutes both normative and dissident voices are the linked concepts of nationalism and patriotism. These two terms I use with very specific meanings. Both involve a relationship to the national community, and can take recourse to similar sets of ideas (e.g., a national history), but I use the terms to suggest two very different relationships to

government. The distinction I use arises in part from post-World War II debates about the true constitution of patriotism, which led Theodor Adorno and his colleagues to mark out a difference between a "genuine" patriotism and a "pseudo-patriotism" (107). The former is characterized by "love of country and attachment to national values that is based on critical understanding" and the latter by "an uncritical allegiance to one's country characterized by rigidity, conformity and rejection of outgroups" (107). This distinction has been honed by a number of thinkers across many disciplines (from political science to social psychology[1]), and has settled into a distinction between patriotism and nationalism. Most definitions have two things in common. First, patriotism allows one to disagree with the government on the grounds that it is not acting in a fashion that is in the nation's best interests or is failing to live up to an ideal, whereas nationalism disallows this possibility. And second, patriotism can (sometimes) be ethically justified, whereas nationalism is morally bankrupt. As one recent American commentator explains this line of thinking, "patriotism and nationalism are drawn from the same conceptual reservoir—with nationalism being patriotism's evil twin" (Renshon 44). A number of political theorists have taken issue with this distinction, including Rogers Brubaker:

> attempts to distinguish good patriotism from bad nationalism neglect the intrinsic ambivalence and polymorphism of both. Patriotism and nationalism are not things with fixed natures; they are highly flexible political language, ways of framing political arguments by appealing to the *patria*, the fatherland, the country, the nation. (120)

[1] For a précis of this history, see Hornsey (79-80).

I can only agree with Brubaker on this point. In the US context, anti-government patriotism is as much an operating premise for Martin Luther King, Jr.'s statement that "[n]ow is the time to make real the promises of democracy" (74) as it is for the National Rifle Association's recourse to the American *Constitution*'s Second Amendment in arguments against gun control. Patriotism can be deployed by the right or the left, be racist and misogynist, or anti-racist and feminist. Patriotism allows for the possibility of critiquing the government, but patriotism itself is not intrinsically good. And so, I use the distinction between nationalism and patriotism without any moral connotations. The distinction provides a useful method to mark out different types of political moments in the Victorian laureateship, an institution that, by virtue of its structure, asks for nationalism – from two poets whose verses regularly invoke Britishness, but who also exhibit a suspicion toward nationalism and a reticence to proffer the official views of the British government.

Despite this suspicion and reticence, the versions of Britishness presented by poets laureate are tied up with the post's relationship to the monarchy. Broadus's notion that the ideal laureate might "make himself the voice of England" suggests that it is the holders of the office who control the extent to which they live up to the ideal. And, indeed, laureates had a certain amount of control over the ways in which they practiced in office. But Broadus's sense of laureate practice as having been generally disappointing does not take into account the role of government in the constitution of the limits of the office, as laureates and their readers might perceive them. The poet laureate is conferred the

title by the monarch – and is thus effectively sanctioned by the monarchy. Consequently, one might expect the laureate to function as the poetic spokesperson for the monarchy. In some cases, the laureate was viewed as spokesperson for the elected government as well. Helene Koon, biographer of eighteenth-century laureate Colley Cibber, thinks it likely that the large scale attacks on Cibber's laureate poetry stood in for the much more politically dangerous act of criticizing then prime minister Sir Robert Walpole (128). Certainly the laureate tradition leading up to the Victorian period is characterized by the reception of laureate verse as poorly written flattery of the monarch. But the laureateships of Tennyson and Wordsworth display a complex resistance to this inheritance. In Pierre Bourdieu's terms, one way of thinking about the laureateship as an institution is to see it as existing within a network which functions to safeguard national social capital. Social capital, defined by Bourdieu as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked" to "institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" ("Forms" 248), is produced and maintained, both for individuals and for the whole institutional network, through the delegation of power:

> Every group has its more or less institutionalized forms of delegation which enable it to concentrate the totality of the social capital, which is the basis of the existence of the group (a family or a nation, of course, but also an association or a party), in the hands of a single agent or a small group of agents and to mandate this plenipotentiary, charged with *plena potestas agendi et loquendi*, to represent the group, to speak and act in its name and so, with the aid of the collectively owned capital, to exercise a power incommensurate with the agent's personal contribution . . . . The institutionalized delegation, which ensures the concentration of social capital, also has the effect of limiting the consequences of individual lapses by explicitly delimiting responsibilities and

> authorizing the recognized spokesman to shield the group as a whole from discredit by expelling or excommunicating the embarrassing individuals. ("Forms" 251)

Following Bourdieu's analysis, the poet laureate is "delegat[ed] a task," which is "to represent the group" and "to speak and act in its name" within "explicitly delimit[ed] responsibilities." The "task" of the laureate is simple – to write poetry. Laureates have their "responsibilities" delegated to them by the government, and these responsibilities shift over time. John Dryden, poet laureate between 1668 and 1689, wrote blatantly partisan poetry and prose (Cotterill 254-55 and n33), while the laureates of the eighteenth century wrote mainly nonpartisan odes celebrating the new year and the king's birthday. But no matter the substance of the utterance, laureates speak from a privileged position: the power of poets laureate is indeed "incommensurate with" their "personal contribution" in the sense that they are not "just" poets, but poets who are called upon by the monarch to function in the service of the monarchy.

Because poets laureate are bound up in this institutional network by virtue of their official relationship to the monarch, they are unlikely to produce verse that threatens the social capital of the government. As paradoxical as it might seem, it is exactly this structure that has, historically, prevented most laureates from attaining to Broadus's ideal. This 'failure,' as Broadus terms it, occurs for two reasons. The first is a gatekeeping function. As Bourdieu points out, anyone acting "as a representative … of the whole group" must be an appropriate choice. She or he is subject to the necessity of "regulat[ing] the conditions of access" to such a position ("Forms" 251). Those chosen to be poet laureate are unlikely to

hold political views that will counter those of the reigning monarch, or even to produce verse that might prove embarrassing. Secondly, once appointed, laureates find themselves imbricated in a network of institutions that encourages the maintenance of the *status quo*, rather than the bold vision Broadus's "voice of England" suggests. Although Bourdieu reminds us that "[o]ne of the paradoxes of delegation is that the mandated agent can exert on (and, up to a point, against) the group the power which the group enables him to concentrate" ("Forms" 251), poets laureate – especially before the Victorian period – have rarely sought to use their poetic voices to press back against government. The main exception to this is Robert Southey, whose laureateship I discuss in Chapter One. Pre-Victorian poets laureate were often perceived by their poetic colleagues to be simply political appointees whose verses exemplified the worst sort of poetic toadyism. They did not "exert" themselves against government in part because their connection to government made such an act unthinkable, and in part because one of the important criteria for choosing a laureate was that he would be unlikely to even want to do so. Earlier poets laureate, especially of the eighteenth century, were, as a matter of course, actively barred from Parnassus by their fellow poets on the grounds of their institutional connection to government – especially because this connection worked at the time to produce rote annual odes to the monarch. If the social – and actual monetary – capital possessed by the eighteenth century's first poet laureate can be read as any sort of indication, the office was, from early on in its official history, of minimal importance to either the government or the rest of the nation: Nahum Tate, laureate from 1692-1715, spent the final years of his life

in poverty and died seeking protection from his creditors in the Mint (Russell 34-35). Until the office was taken over by Wordsworth in 1843, poets laureate were, in Bourdieu's sense, plenipotentiaries of some kind (the first ode produced by Robert Southey was censored precisely because he was viewed as plenipotentiary); their cultural importance, however, was profoundly circumscribed by the limited esteem they enjoyed from government, their fellow poets, and their critics. Broadus's lofty ideal of the office is only possible *after* the nineteenth century's renovation of the institution – it is only possible after Wordsworth refuses to write from the position of laureate, and after Tennyson strives to rearticulate a role for his verse within the constraints of the office.

But reading laureateship strictly in Bourdieu's terms has some limitations. The laureate's sanction by government is important, as is the idea of the laureate as a plenipotentiary – these are the aspects of laureateship that, like Samuel Rogers' pants, do not fit Wordsworth or Tennyson well. But their resistance to acting as a straightforward plenipotentiary raises further questions about whom the laureate speaks for and what kind of power the laureate possesses. Who precisely is the "group" for whom the laureate "speak[s] and act[s]"? Do poets laureate represent the nation, the government, or themselves as poets? Bourdieu is instructive, but if we follow him to his conclusion, the laureate cannot help but speak for the government, and especially for the monarchy, "act[ing]" in the "name" of this political entity. James C. Scott argues that the "domination" of the state cannot "persist of its own momentum," and that contentious political systems "can be sustained only by continuous efforts at reinforcement,

maintenance, and adjustment" (*Domination* 45). Political efforts to maintain power often take the form of representation:

> A good part of the maintenance work consists of the symbolization of domination by demonstrations and enactments of power. Every visible, outward use of power—each command, each act of deference, each list and ranking, each ceremonial order, each public punishment, each use of an honorific or a term of derogation—is a symbolic gesture of domination that serves to manifest and reinforce a hierarchical order. (*Domination* 45)

While the "visible, outward use of power" Scott writes of might include "beatings, jailings, [and] executions," it also takes in "public demonstrations of grandeur, . . . beneficence, [and] spiritual rectitude" (*Domination* 45). The laureateship is one of these latter types of demonstration, where the circulation of laureate verse (through court performance early in the office's history and periodical or volume publication later) functions as a ritual display of the monarchy's power. The eighteenth century, for example, saw the laureateship move from a post characterized by only sporadic verse to one that was a public (because "published"), predictable, and choreographed display. Scott pinpoints the tendency toward this type of regularized displays of "grandeur" in what he calls the "public transcript" of nationalist institutions:

> Some displays, some rituals, … are more elaborate and closely regulated than others. This seems particularly the case with any venerable institution whose claim to recognition and domination rests in large part on its continuous and faithful link to the past. Royal coronations, national day celebrations, ceremonies for those fallen in a war thus seem to be choreographed in a way that is designed to prevent surprises. (*Domination* 47)

One could easily add the annual laureate odes to Scott's list. The monarchy relies symbolically on a link to the past. So too does the laureateship. As I discuss in

Chapter One, the office's historical narrative, given official seal in the royal patent appointing John Dryden, locates Chaucer at its origin. Even if the power of a ritual like the much-maligned laureate ode of the eighteenth century seems to be inconsequential, it is bound up in a system whose function is, to use Scott's terms, "[t]he successful communication of power and authority" (*Domination* 48). This is a system that has material effects: "[i]f subordinates believe their superior to be powerful, the impression will help him impose himself and, in turn, contribute to his actual power" (*Domination* 49). Furthermore, this "collective theatre" performed by elites before "an extremely critical audience" of subordinates also "stiffens the spines of the rulers" (*Domination* 50, 49).

If laureateship is part of the "collective theatre" of power, it functions not just to act by naming (following Bourdieu), and not just to perform power (following Scott), but also to define what is nameable in the discursive field that rests (often uncomfortably) between poetics and government politics. The laureateship is, more precisely, an institution of the state in Michel Foucault's sense. It is important, to be sure, to consider the relationship between poetry and Victorian political entities like the monarchy, elected government, and various other actors involved in administration and regulation through institutions. But I read the laureateship also as a state institution, drawing from Gilles Deleuze's reading of Foucault. The state is not a series of singular entities *per se* – not the queen, not the poet laureate, not the mechanisms and outcomes of individuals or groups – but the *effects* of a set of power-relations, within which everyone is embroiled:

> [P]ower is not homogenous but can be defined only by the particular points through which it passes. As the postulate of localization, power would be power of the State and would itself be located in the machinery of State to the point where even 'private' powers would only apparently be dispersed and would remain no more than a special example of the machinery of State. Foucault shows that, on the contrary, the State itself appears as the overall effect of or result of a series of interacting wheels or structures which are located at a completely different level, and which constitute a 'microphysics of power'. Not only private systems but explicit parts of the machinery of State have an origin, a behaviour and a function which the state ratifies, controls or is even content to cover rather than institute … [M]odern societies can be defined as 'disciplinarian'; but discipline cannot be identified with any one institution or apparatus precisely because it is a type of power, a technology, that traverses every kind of apparatus or institution, linking them, prolonging them, and making them converge and function in a new way. (Deleuze 25-26)

This definition of the state situates the laureateship as one point through which power passes – not just as "explicit parts of the machinery of State" – but more complexly as a site where, as Deleuze has it, "the State itself appears." This project thus examines the laureateship in the context of power as a technology – and laureate practices as the site for considerations of how the ratification, control, and covering over of power meet, often in contentious ways, with poetics. By contrast, I use the word "nation" in a particular sense, drawn from Michel Seymour – as "political community, national majority, national consciousness, and territory" (39).

State and nation cannot, of course, be easily disentangled from each other. Simply put, this project terms the 'nation' as both *place* and *concept*, and 'state' as the legible *effects* of power. A laureate poem titled "To the Queen" is therefore situated in the social, political, and economic contexts of the nation, takes recourse to ideas of the national community, and circulates within the confines of

the geographical nation, but it is also, crucially, a product of a state institution with "apparatuses and rules [that] organize, in effect, the grand visibilities, the field of visibility, and the grand narratives, the regime of enoncés" (Bové xxix). Laureate poems, and the practices circulating around these texts (e.g., their mode of publication), are bound up within a structure and a set of rules that make certain things visible and certain things sayable.

Being a poet laureate necessarily involves participating in the politics of royal power. And although the queen's political influence on the elected government was not on par with the monarchs who came before her, the appearance of monarchical power was the subject of both continual challenge and continual maintenance during her reign. The monarchy remained a potent nationalist symbol, one held up against the forces of republican politics. Perhaps the clearest example of this can be found in the revival of republicanism during the late 1860s and early 1870s. After the death of Prince Albert in 1861, Queen Victoria's long period of mourning resulted in her almost total disappearance from public life – she refused for most of this period even to open parliamentary legislative sessions. Furthermore, her son, the Prince of Wales, was involved in a scandalous extramarital affair, while she was the subject of disapproving rumour about her relationship with John Brown. Public opinion of the monarchy was low. William Gladstone, who was then prime minister and increasingly concerned about the rise in republican sentiment, actively sought the queen's return to public life in order to strengthen cohesion around the monarchy and quiet the republican movement (Matthew 64-68). The queen, like her laureates, is tied up in complex

ways with the institutional structures of state power. The laureateship, therefore, is not tied to a monarch who functions as a simple base of state authority – she is deployed by others as a bulwark against anti-monarchical political views. If the laureate's primary connection to state power is to the monarch herself in a period where ideas of monarchy circulate at the will of a wide variety of people (both the elected government and republicans, for example), then the laureate is not, in any sort of straightforward way, simply an agent of the monarch's power. In fact, the laureate is but one part of creating the discourse of monarchy. This is a discourse that, as Adrienne Munich argues, places Queen Victoria in the "position" as "the *one* representing the nation" (5), but her singularity – her representativeness – was insistent *and* contested.

For poets of the nineteenth century, politics (including questions of monarchical rule) and poetics were complexly bound to each other, and my own study benefits greatly from a vital scholarly conversation about the relationship between Victorian politics and poetry. Victorian poetry until the *fin de siècle* occupies, as Joanne Shattock suggests, "a central position in literary culture" (397). Analysis of the criticism of Victorian poetry shows the degree to which verse was read not as a discrete aesthetic object, but rather within the contexts of wider culture: "[t]he proper materials for poetry, the role of the poet in the modern age, the attractions and the dangers of subjective poetry, the anxiety that the age was inimical to poetry – these were questions at the heart of Victorian poetics" (Shattock 397). Linda K. Hughes links poetry's privileged position to a lengthy historical legacy of "classical studies and its hierarchy of genres that

placed epic at the pinnacle of literary achievement" (93), but also to more recent Romantic and early Victorian ideas of poetry's embeddedness in a public life, on and off the page – from Percy Bysshe Shelley to Thomas Carlyle (Hughes 93-94). In Shelley's famous formulation, poets are "the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (701), and, for Carlyle, poets possess the qualities of the hero – those "leaders of men" Carlyle sees as "the modellers, the patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or attain" (*Heroes* 7). In this context, poets are of the highest order of hero, capable of all the great works of great men. For Carlyle, the poet is "sincere," but also "reaches deep down ... to the universal and perennial" (*Heroes* 95); however, his ability to do so does not move him away from public life to an ephemeral or abstract region of affect, but instead ties him in closely to the contexts of culture and politics:

> The poet who could merely sit on a chair, and compose stanzas, would never make a stanza worth much. He could not sing the heroic warrior, unless he himself were at least a heroic warrior, too. I fancy there is in him the politician, the thinker, legislator, philosopher;—in one or the other degree, he could have been, he is all these. (*Heroes* 67)

Carlyle's model of the poet as hero is an influential one, and one visible in the reception of, for example, Tennyson. In an unsigned *British Quarterly* review of the 1855 volume, *Maud, and Other Poems*, Tennyson is not only "as massively intellectually" as William Gladstone and Lord John Russell, but exceeds both because he is "of a higher order of spirit" than mere politicians (qtd. in Shannon 403). Carlyle's model is influential, but it is also avowedly masculine (Dante and Shakespeare are his poet-heroes of choice). The influence of the poet on matters important to national politics was not the purview of male poets alone. Victorian

female poets were often engaged in writing poetry with a clear relationship to public life – Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Cry of the Children" (1843) and Caroline Norton's *A Voice from the Factories* (1936), both on the topic of child labour, are but two examples. But, as Susan Brown argues, the "fiercely contested role" of the Victorian poetess placed female poets in a difficult position: they had both "scandalous potential," but might also display "profound continuities between cultural constructions of the [poetess'] role and that of the respectable woman" (187). Poets of both genders worked within a literary culture in which poetry itself carried both "prestige" and "cultural value" (Hughes 94). As Hughes argues, periodicals highly valued publishing poetry in their pages because it could "enhance the symbolic capital" of a periodical, and was viewed as a "'value-added' feature" (94).

Indeed, the content of Victorian poetry need not have been obviously or avowedly political (in the sense of being engaged with a specific social matter or public policy) in order to have a political content. Isobel Armstrong's influential *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* argues that "[t]he task of a history of Victorian poetry is to restore the question of politics, not least sexual politics, and the epistemology and language which belong to them" (7). Crucial to this task, Armstrong, suggests, is an examination of the way in which Victorian poetry deals with its primary "project," an "effort to renegotiate a content to every relationship between self and the world." This is, Armstrong argues, "a simultaneously personal and cultural project" that "entails renegotiating the terms of self and world themselves" (7). Armstrong's concept of the "double poem"

argues that texts should be read as a site of "struggle" (15) between the competing claims of a phenomenological reading and one that situates the poem in its cultural contexts. Thus, Armstrong reads poems that appear to dwell on the topic of the private self as also "inveterately political," peopled by "unstable entities of self and world and the simultaneous problems of representation and interpretation" that are "founded on debate and contest" (13-14).

Armstrong's insistence on the political nature of private poetry has attracted its share of criticism. In *The Realms of Verse*, Matthew Reynolds suggests the limitations of Armstrong's approach:

> The shortcoming of this line of argument, however, is that it tends to reduce, even annihilate the distance between imaginative changes registered in the seclusion of the page, and the developments that were debated in the public space of Parliament, or that were demonstrated for and fought over in the even more public streets …. If private life is already shot through with political implications, the possibility of a conflict between a realm thought of as 'private', and a 'public' realm which is the location of politics, will disappear. (9)

Arguing that Armstrong's method risks destroying the distance between the private and imaginative and the public and political, Reynolds proposes a cure – to take up "the works in which poets most obviously confronted politics in the public sense" (9). The laureateship is a public institution – for the Victorians, the recent history of laureateship had been constituted by the publication of birthday and New Year odes, and the laureate himself had a visible link to the monarch. Laureateship verse and the laureate voice are, ultimately, public in nature. But laureates in the service of Queen Victoria come to the office with a sense of poetics that is much changed from the beginning of the eighteenth century, when odes for the King's birthday and the new year became the norm. For a post-

Romantic laureate, there is little in the way of relevant laureate practices upon which to base the office, for the laureateship itself comes from an age that, for the serious poet, has gone – an age of patronage and panegyric, of poets seeking the favour of the aristocracy and monarchy, of celebrating the great deeds of important, titled men. Even before Victoria's reign, laureates were viewed by many as suspect: Thomas Gray, who declined the laureateship in 1757, likens the office to an appointment as "ratcatcher to his Majesty" (qtd. in Mack 498). In a history that I more fully explore in Chapter One, the laureateship became, in the wake of Romanticism, a post not just associated with toadyism, but with offensive poetics. Leigh Hunt, writing of the laureateship after the death of Henry Pye in 1813, argues that the office renders a bad poet "ridiculous" and a good poet "debased" (qtd. in Mahoney 13), and William Hazlitt, in his 1824 *The Spirit of the Age*, diagnoses then-laureate Robert Southey as "obliged to put a constraint on himself" and as having "offer[ed] a violence to his nature" (318). And while there is no such thing as an entirely clean break between Enlightenment empiricism and Romantic transcendentalism (Kitson 35), a post-Romantic poet laureate cannot simply render services to the monarch without considering the crucial role of the poet as Shelley's unacknowledged legislator. For Wordsworth and Tennyson, laureateship thus suggests an extra burden – if the ideal poet is, as Hazlitt suggests, "independent, spontaneous, free as the vital air he draws" (318), then the laureate's power as a poet, and thus as a central figure in literary culture, is compromised. In writing for the monarch, he does not write for himself. At the same time, the post-Romantic laureate has a further task. Coming out of the

eighteenth-century practice of annual odes to the monarch, the traditional laureate voice is one that glorifies the monarch in the voice of the people. For Wordsworth, who gives up his pro-revolutionary political views early on in the century without giving up the poetics that attended these views, such a speaking position is not possible. For Tennyson, the weight of this eighteenth-century voice must be translated for a new age, and a new type of national poet. The laureateship under Tennyson is remade, piece by piece, and voice by voice as he navigates writing to multiple readerships – the queen, the elected government, and the reading public.

This project draws its methods from the work of both Reynolds and Armstrong. Taking a cue from Reynolds that texts that come face to face with matters of public politics can provide a view into struggles between public and private, I address both the private nature of Wordsworth's laureateship and the public verse of Tennyson's, examining Wordsworth's full-scale rejection of public laureate verse and Tennyson's often contentious embrace of the office's ties to public political life. But Armstrong's reminder that much Victorian poetry stages the relationship between "the self and the world" (7) guides much of my more detailed readings – especially because, as I have already suggested, laureateship poetry often puts on display a version of this relationship. In particular, this study focuses on situations where poets laureate experience some discomfort with the job, and by this I mean moments where the pull between poetry and public politics becomes visible. For example, I examine in some detail Tennyson's patriotic poems of 1852. Hard on the heels of Louis Napoloeon's *coup d'état* in

late 1851, Tennyson published several poems anonymously on the grounds that attaching the name of the laureate to a violent call to arms would embarrass Queen Victoria (and, one suspects, the laureate himself). What becomes visible in this situation is an irreconcilable tension between Tennyson's patriotic poetics and his need to *appear* publicly as a supporter of the government's officially neutral policy on Louis Napoleon. The anonymous poems of 1852 suggest the extent to which Tennyson was aware of the role he was expected to play as poet laureate.

Chapter One examines crucial moments in the history of the institution: the braiding of various informal practices into the laureateship appointment of John Dryden in 1668; the eighteenth-century laureate voice (through an in-depth examination of Colley Cibber's first ode); the regularization of the office's practices across the eighteenth and early nineteenth century; the tradition of resistance to the office on the grounds of poetics; and the contentious early laureateship of Robert Southey. Chapter Two takes up the largely silent laureateship of William Wordsworth. Taking the post in 1843, Wordsworth was 72 years old and initially refused the offer on the grounds of his age. By exploring the apparatus and poetry surrounding Wordsworth's refusal to write laureate verse, Chapter Two argues that Wordsworth's laureateship is characterized not just by the silence of an aged apostate Romantic, but by a critical refusal on Wordsworth's part to publicly acknowledge the office's inherent link between poetry and state power. Wordsworth's laureateship, which privileges a private relationship with the monarch over published laureate verse, lays the groundwork for a renovated return of laureate verse to the public stage when Tennyson takes

the office on Wordsworth's death in 1850. The third chapter looks at the early years of Tennyson's laureateship, from 1850-1855. Wordsworth's laureateship had put the nails in the coffin of the annual laureate odes, and from early on in his laureateship, Tennyson's response to this legacy was not to absent himself from laureateship, but instead to cast himself as "always on duty." This chapter examines Tennyson's earliest verses as poet laureate before turning to a consideration of how his first new volume of poetry after becoming laureate, 1855's *Maud and other poems*, carefully manages Tennyson's position as poet laureate by (and while) staging intricate negotiations of a poetics of mid-century citizenship.

Tennyson's later work as poet laureate is the subject of the fourth chapter of this thesis. I focus my attention in the fourth chapter on a different but not unrelated aspect of Tennyson's laureateship. I examine instead a series of occasional verses he wrote in his official capacity as poet laureate – poems of marriage, of death, and of anniversaries. This final chapter examines Tennyson's laureate practice in moments of public performance or publication, and in moments of family intimacy, and explores the ways in which these poems produce a laureate voice that places the queen at the centre of the empire while situating the poet as an authorizing figure in the text.

CHAPTER ONE: The Laureateship, Beginnings to 1843

This chapter explores the laureate traditions inherited by Wordsworth and Tennyson. Both poets cast off or repurposed particular traditions of the office. Most notably, both refused the tradition of composing annual odes for the new year and the monarch's birthday. At the same time, however, both poets found themselves forced to reckon with the office's fundamental structure: British poets laureate are always tied to the monarch and are part of the state; their verses are always bound up in the spectacle of the sovereign's power; and, their voices are always complexly tied to cultural ideas and ideals about the function of the poet in the life of the nation – and as the voice of the nation. This chapter, then, examines important moments in the history of the laureateship in order to provide a view into what is at stake in the poet laureate's entanglements with the state, poetics, and the nation. I move in roughly chronological order, beginning by examining the early history of the office, but pause at length over several crucial moments in the office's history. The formalization of *ad hoc* practices in the royal patent appointing John Dryden as laureate in 1670 clarifies the rights and duties of laureateship as codified in the first official document issuing from government about the office. I then examine in detail the first ode written by Colley Cibber to demonstrate the tensions involved in producing the laureate voice predominant in the eighteenth century. I position Cibber's poem as a case study, a text representative of the discursive structure of nearly all laureate poetry in the

century or so preceding Wordsworth and Tennyson. Finally, I examine two cases in which the laureateship meets with stark critique, at the hands of poets and on the grounds of political poetics. Thomas Gray, who refused the offer of laureateship, provides a view into the constraints of a poetics characterized by the poet's freedom to write outside of the constraints of the government's power. These constraints are made manifest in the case of Robert Southey, the laureate immediately preceding Wordsworth. Southey's first laureate ode was actively censored by government officials because it contravened foreign policy. I examine the implications of Southey's choice to present the ode in its censored form while also publishing the excised portions under his own name in a separate venue. Taken together, this history provides a view into the governing structures and precedents of the office passed down to Wordsworth and Tennyson, two poets who, in a post-Romantic context, navigated this history alongside their own commitments both to a monarchical system of government and a poetics that favoured the liberty of the poetic voice.

The concept of bestowing laurels on a deserving poet dates from the story of Daphne's father transforming her into a laurel tree to allow her escape from Apollo. In Ovid's *Metamorphosis* (completed circa 8 A.D.), the transformed Daphne is assigned a purpose by Apollo: "Since you cannot be my bride, surely you will at least be my tree. My hair, my lyre, my quivers will always display the laurel" (43-44). The laurel branch, the "bay," thus becomes Apollo's symbol for youth, poetry, and victory. The tradition of crowning poets with the laurel appears most famously in fourteenth century Italy with Petrarch's crowning as poet

laureate of Rome in 1341 (Biow 27). However, the 1315 ceremony crowning the poet Mussato in Padua was the first such ceremony of the early modern period (de Ridder-Symoens and Rüegg 453), and its execution clarifies the way in which such ceremonies were characterized by the melding of classical tradition and university practices with the idea of poetry as important to civic life:

> [It was] an academic ceremony in many respects: the recommendation by the College of Artists, the assent and the participation by the rector, the presence of the University body, [and] the provision and signing of the diploma…. Specifically, the coronation had much in common with the *conventus*, the ceremony at which – at the University of Bologna, at least – the doctorate was conferred. On the other hand, it varied from the academic pattern, and became definitely a municipal ceremony, in the absence of a preliminary examination, the declaration of a general holiday, the holding of the ceremony in the City Hall rather than in the Cathedral, the presence of the thronging populace, and the act of coronation itself. Thus, it is clear that the ceremony was modeled on the mediaeval *conventus*; and it is inherently probable that the idea of the coronation itself, and the more general aspects of the festival, was derived from acquaintance with the tradition of the Capitoline contests. (Wilkins 164)

Although this public coronation of a poet was tied both to university practices – Mussato was granted the ability to teach as a result of his coronation – and to the classical traditions of the contests of poets, musicians, and artists of other sorts held at Rome's Capitoline Hill (de Ridder-Symoens and Rüegg 453; Burckhardt 139), it was, as Wilkins points out, a fundamentally "municipal" ceremony. In keeping with the relationship to governance made legible in Mussato's coronation, it was not simply Mussato's poetry that gave rise to this honour, but also his "extensive and varied patriotic service" (Wilkins 167).

Petrarch's own coronation only a few years later was also marked by the same type of hybrid ceremony and by recognition of the poet's service to

government. Although he had written relatively little at the time of his coronation, Petrarch had addressed his work to "personages of great influence" in a campaign to be granted the laurel. In this early modern Italian tradition of laurel coronations, we can see some of the seeds of British laureateship: Petrarch and Mussato are honoured because they made themselves useful to those with the power to grant such honours. At the same time, their coronations cement a relationship between poetry, public life, and state power – three key players in the British laureateship to this day.

The Petrarchan formula for laureateship did not translate in a simple way to the regions that would become England.[2] The modern laureateship can be traced to the Anglo-Saxon *scop*, the paid king's poet, who appears in both *Beowulf* and the tenth century *Lament of Deor* (Broadus 1). This early tradition continues through the twelfth century, when the title "versificator" was conferred upon Henri d'Avranches in the court records of Henry III. Although d'Avranches was not a poet laureate in the modern sense, he is known to have received wine and money as a reward for his poetic services – two methods of payment that continue well into the official laureateship (Rigg 179). The exact point at which the two traditions of king's poet and university laureate met in England remains difficult to precisely discern, but university laureation ceremonies for poets were certainly in place at Oxford and Cambridge by the late 15th century. These ceremonies were brought together with the sanction of the monarch when poet John Skelton was styled "poete laureate" of both universities for his skill in Latin

[2] For a detailed survey of the English king's poet tradition, as well as the relationship between the early modern Baccalaureate degree and poets laureate, see Broadus 1-23.

(not English vernacular) poetry and granted the right to wear the "kynge's colours, white and grene" ('Quarterly' 103), a specialized court costume ('Quarterly' 103-04). The early modern English idea of a poet laureate thus brought together academic ceremony and the example of Petrarch with a long and varied history of court poetry.

The first English poets to conceive of themselves more comprehensively in the tradition of a Petrarchan poet laureate (Edmund Spenser and Ben Jonson among them) had, unlike Skelton, few ties to the academic world and did not participate in anything like a coronation ceremony. They instead concentrated on fostering and maintaining connections not just with the reigning monarch, but with powerful players in the ever-volatile sixteenth- and seventeenth-century court. Strong ties to a system of aristocratic and royal patronage characterize their understanding of themselves as laureates. Although the patronage system falls away in the centuries between these poets and the Victorian laureates that are the focus of this study, the fundamental structure of royal patronage persists in the office of poet laureate. This history of patronage is an important element in the structure of Victorian laureateship; the reason I cover this history here is that it represents an uncanny but persistent echo not just of early modern poets fashioned as laureates, but of the patronage system itself. Patronage's explicit power relationships are always at least implicit in Victorian laureateship – the monarch's approval of the poet is an operating premise for the office. These earlier poets practiced a focused poetics – counting themselves as different both from the amateur poets who wrote flattering verses in their quest for nonpoetic patronage

posts as well as the professional writers for the theatre who were more fully engaged in a consumer marketplace (Helgerson 21-35). None of these poets received royal patronage (Edmund Spenser, George Chapman, Samuel Daniel, and Michael Drayton), including Ben Jonson, often considered in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century to have been the first poet laureate, were officially named as poet laureate.[3]

Richard Helgerson argues that the positions attained by Jonson and his contemporaries should not be read as laureateships, but instead as literary careers that gave rise to "the idea of the laureate poet" in England (216). Each member of this group of poets (Spenser, Daniel, Drayton, Chapman, and Jonson) achieved some level of success in terms of the patronage of the royal court, but it was Ben Jonson who received a regular salary for his production of court masques. In 1618 he was granted 100 marks per year (which increased to £100 in 1630), along with a further stipend paid in wine (Russel 1). Jonson began his career at court by performing plays he had originally written for the public theatre before Elizabeth I (Marcus 31). Despite his troubled early adulthood (which included imprisonment and censorship), Jonson was able to resuscitate his reputation well enough to have a continued career in the court of Elizabeth I and, later, to become a regular writer of masques for James I. Leah S. Marcus hypothesizes that Jonson's salary was in fact aimed at supporting Jonson in lightening his substantial critiques of court corruption, and that this act was to no avail – after 1618, Jonson put on numerous

[3] See, for example, Boswell, Gray, and Austin and Ralph.

masques about corrupt court practices (including those of James I), alongside those that commended some of the king's policies (36).

Jonson's court masques are important to the laureate tradition because they are a precursor to the later, more regularized laureate practice of laureate odes being performed to music at court. For Jonson, the court masque was a relatively recent adoption in the English court (Loxley 115), and his productions left a mark on the genre. James Loxley argues that the Jonsonian masque – a play put on at court and featuring aristocrats as actors – went through a series of incarnations. Early productions, working within an established framework, focused primarily on dancing. These masque dances, duly performed by members of the aristocracy, were central to the entertainment and ideological functions of the performance. As Loxley argues, James I viewed the dancing as an important entertainment, but the concluding scene of dancing also involved the noble actors moving into the audience and inviting new partners into the performance. The political weight of the play's 'action' – which often addressed court or international politics – was dissolved into "a broader moment of revelry" (116). The line between the fictive performance of the masque and the performance of power at the royal court was blurred. But Jonson's masques also put at their centre the spectacle of royal power. As Loxley points out, the Jonsonian masque privileged this power in two senses. Firstly, the masques were the first instance of perspectival staging, and provided "a way of seeing that privileged the monarch in offering a proper view only to him" (118). And, not only was the king the privileged audience, he was also positioned so that other members of the audience had him in their view. The

king was thus both audience and spectacle. Secondly, the masques often concentrated on the force of royalty – each presents a problem that is, in the end, solved through the monarch's use of power (Loxley 118). Jonson's career as a writer of masques is instructive to the laureateship tradition insofar as he seems to have taken advantage of the possibilities of his role as poet to the king – like the official poets laureate who would follow, Jonson was aware that his work was a performance both *for* power and *of* power. In other words, it narrated and enacted, for both king and court, the spectacle of royal power. Especially in the odes of eighteenth century laureates, generally set to music and performed before the monarch, there are echoes of the Jonsonian masque. But perhaps more importantly for the purposes of examining Wordsworth and Tennyson, Jonson serves as an important example of what is deeply at stake in laureateship: the possession of power by virtue of a relationship to the sovereign, and the obligation to use that capital to reproduce and perform the sovereign's power. Put another way, Jonson's masques clarify the difficulties of producing a laureate voice: who precisely is speaking, and who precisely is being addressed? These are persistent questions in the laureate practices of both Wordsworth and Tennyson.

When Jonson died in 1637, a royal pension of £100 was also awarded to the poet and masque writer Sir William Davenant. Davenant's salary was formalized using a royal patent, but only after he had spent some years writing for the court, especially the queen (Edmond). He was not characterized in the patent as a poet laureate, nor did the patent make reference to the salary's relationship to writing poetry. Once the civil war began in 1642, the agreement lapsed (Russel 2).

Davenant, by then a long-valued member of the court, served the royal family, and joined the court in exile until, on a voyage destined for America in 1650, he was captured and imprisoned in the Tower of London (Edmond). After his release, Davenant spent the years before his 1668 death employed primarily in the commercial theatre. No poet replaced him, until after his death, when Dryden was appointed as the first official poet laureate – the first evidence of the office involving the succession poets laureate.

John Dryden was sworn into the office of poet laureate in 1668 by the Lord Chamberlain, but it was not until 1670 that his position as poet laureate to Charles II was formalized in a royal patent. Dryden became the first laureate to be named as such in government documents (Boswell 338). The patent, which also served to appoint Dryden historiographer royal,[4] granted him a salary of £200 per year (to cover both positions), along with a large quantity of wine. The document's composition demonstrates the degree to which the laureateship, in its first official definition by the government, constructed an historical narrative for the office and situated the laureate as a servant to the king – rewarded for his services and expected to perform agreeably. I quote from it at length:

> Charles the Second, by the grace of GOD, of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c. to the Lords Commissioners of our Treasure …. Know yee, that wee, for and in consideration of the many good and acceptable services by John Dryden, Master of Arts, and eldest sonne of Erasmus Dryden, of Tichmash in the county of Northampton, Esquire, to us heretofore done and performed, and taking notice of the learning and eminent

[4] In his role as historiographer royal, Dryden is likely to have written several texts, including the partisan *His Majesty's Declaration Defended* (1861) and translations from French of Louis Mambourg's *History of the League* and Dominque Bouhours's *Life of St. Francis Xavier* (Barnard 207).

> abilities of him the said John Dryden, and of his great skill and elegant style both in verse and prose, and for diverse other good causes and considerations us thereunto especially moving, have nominated, constituted, declared, and appointed, and by these presents do nominate, constitute, declare, and appoint, him the said John Dryden, our POET LAUREAT and HISTORIOGRAPHER ROYAL; giving and granting unto him the said John Dryden all and singular the rights, privileges, benefits, and advantages, thereunto belonging, as fully and amply as Sir Geoffrey Chaucer, Knight, Sir John Gower, Knight, John Leland, Esquire, William Camden, Esquire, Benjamin Johnson, Esquire, James Howell, Esquire, Sir William D'Avenant, knight, or any other person or persons having or exercising the place or employment of Poet Laureat or Historiographer, or either of them, in the time of any of our royal progenitors, had or received, or might lawfully claim or demand, as incident or belonging unto the said places or employments, or either of them. And for further and better encouragement of him the said John Dryden, diligently to attend the said employment, we are graciously pleased to give and grant … one Annuity of yearly pension of two hundred pounds. (qtd. in Kinsley and Kinsley 39)

The royal patent is important for a number of reasons. First, the text of the patent creates an historical narrative. What had previously been a piecemeal and informal practice of sometimes rewarding poets connected to the court is turned into a chronicle. The list of previous "laureates," most of whom would not have conceived of themselves as holding such a title, creates a new historical context for the office – a history that links the laureateship of Dryden and all who come after him to a strain of English cultural nationalism that puts poets at its centre and Chaucer at its origin. The laureates after Dryden and before Wordsworth and Tennyson would rarely find themselves taken seriously as part of this narrative, but Dryden's patent made this origin story part of the conceptual toolbox of the office: Chaucer could be invoked as the beginning of its tradition.

The placement of Chaucer at the beginning of this history is crucial because it creates a venerable national past for an institution in fact founded by

the act of Dryden's patent. This origin story survives through the appointment of Tennyson in 1850: laureate historian Walter Hamilton, writing in the 1880 *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, places Chaucer as the first laureate (35). But Chaucer would not have seen himself as the first national poet, and certainly not as the nationalist poet later laureates were expected to be. While Chaucer was undeniably connected to institutions of power (he was granted pensions by both Edward III and Richard II [Cannon 34]), these connections do not yield the sort of nationalism that laureates of the eighteenth century so often employed. Derek Pearsall argues that despite "various attempts to identify medieval moments of emergent English nationhood" ("Chaucer" 289), there is "little or nothing in Chaucer" to support the view of Chaucer as even a proto-nationalist. While the *Canterbury Tales* present an England "being fully *recognised*, so to speak, perhaps for the first time as a real place …. It is not a place for which we are encouraged to feel a particular affection, as a beloved land or heritage-site" ("Chaucer" 291). Pearsall argues that Chaucer does not come to be comprehensively read as "the poet of Englishness" until the nineteenth century ("Chaucer" 291). However, Dryden's patent marks the emergence of Chaucer as the origin for the office of poet laureate – if he is not yet Pearsall's "poet of Englishness," he is the original poet of England. As Stephanie Trigg argues, by the end of the sixteenth century Chaucer's texts had been "recuperated … as the worthy object of nationalist attention" (145). The work of sixteenth-century editors of Chaucer was, like Dryden's patent, "a way of affirming continuity with the past" (143). The invocation of Chaucer in the patent takes part in this creation

of a national narrative. Dryden, whose 1699 preface to *Fables Ancient and Modern* is "widely accepted" as the "inaugurat[ion of] modern Chaucer criticism" (Trigg 146), is in fact one of the architects of this Chaucer-as-origin story: in the *Fables*, he calls Chaucer his "Countryman, and Predecessor in the Laurel" (553). This national origin for the office is part of the laureateship inherited by Wordsworth and Tennyson, whose laureate practices are contextualized by an office that defines itself at least partially in terms of its historical continuity. To put it in no uncertain terms: Wordsworth and Tennyson inherit an historical continuity that begins (retrospectively) with the poet who comes to define not just the origin of laureateship but the origin of poetry understood to be properly English.

Dryden's patent can be read as a crucial moment in the creation of a history for the laureateship that is founded in the beginnings of English poetry, and the document is part of the emerging technologies of statecraft. James C. Scott argues in *Seeing Like a State* that "legibility" is "a central problem in statecraft" (2): "until the nineteenth century," Scott argues, "the "abstractions and simplifications" undertaken to make the social world 'legible' to the government "were typically taxation, political control, and conscription" (23). However, Dryden's patent can be seen as part of an ongoing, if piecemeal, project to make the processes of statecraft legible in the seventeenth century: the patent creates a documentary system for understanding the rights, responsibilities, and history of laureateship. Because, as Scott argues, "[i]llegibility has been and remains a reliable resource for political autonomy" (52), the patent's attempt to make the

office legible also functions to cement the constraints of laureateship. Eleanore Boswell, who in 1931 first noted the appearance of Chaucer in the patent, argues that because "[l]etters patent were not lightly or imaginatively composed," the document should be read "as a serious effort on the part of the Chancery to establish the true pedigree of the poet laureate" (338). In the words of Scott, such documents have power: "paper records are," he argues, "operative facts" (*Seeing* 83). The patent signals as much in its wording; by virtue of the will of the king, and through "the grace of GOD," Dryden is "nominated, constituted, declared, and appointed." The word is the deed, a concept we should keep in mind when considering laureate poetry. With its origin in an institution controlled by the monarchy, laureate poetry, like a royal patent, can function as material "facts" – even where these "facts" are embattled.

The "facts" established in the patent have specific material effects, beyond the creation of a historical narrative for the office. The patent accords Dryden "the rights, privileges, benefits, and advantages" of all who came before him, which suggests that his laureateship will bear a likeness to that of his unofficial predecessors. However, the opportunities provided for in the patent are undergirded by the expectations placed upon the poet – expectations that are phrased in the form of compliments. The patent cites Dryden's "learning and eminent abilities" and his "great skill and elegant style" as a writer. The positive attributes of Dryden's learning and technical ability as a writer are balanced by the positive content of his actions, writing or otherwise. His laureateship is, the patent states, also a reward for his "many good and acceptable services" and the

"diverse other good causes and considerations" that have been "especially moving." These compliments are crucial: the laureateship is not given to a poet who simply writes "good" verse, but also for work that is deemed "acceptable." Poetry found to be "acceptable" by the monarch is likely to be poetry written from a political position agreeable to the monarch. One of the "facts," then, established by the patent is that the laureateship is a reward for poets with views deemed "acceptable" and "moving" by the king – with the understanding that they will continue, "diligently," to provide such "services" and, by extension, to write in a way that "mov[es]" the king.

Dryden's laureateship is the very best example of this particular "fact" made manifest. He has the distinction of being not just the first poet laureate, but of being the only laureate to be fired. Dryden wrote very little specific to the post (he had no regular duties) until the king encouraged the composition of *Absolom and Achitophel* in 1681. Written in the aftermath of Shaftesbury's attempt to replace Charles II's heir, his Roman Catholic brother James, with the Protestant Duke of Monmouth, Dryden followed this poem with *The Medal*[5] after Shaftesbury's second unsuccessful attempt to keep a Catholic from the crown (Mullan 168, Spurr 243). By the end of Charles II's reign, Dryden himself had become a Roman Catholic, and so when James II ascended the throne in 1685, Dryden found himself in a comfortable position – so comfortable that it is likely that Dryden anonymously wrote propaganda at the king's request (Mullan 166). But in 1689, when William III replaced James II, Dryden refused to swear

[5] These poems were published anonymously, but their authorship was an open secret. For details, see Mullan, 156-80.

allegiance to the new Protestant king, and was summarily dismissed (Russel 2-3). Dryden's dismissal attests to the volatile politics of the day, but also to the symbolic importance of the laureate as an expression of the monarchy's power.

Dryden's replacement would not have pleased him. Thomas Shadwell had been the subject of Dryden's satire in both *Absolom and Achitophel* and *MacFlecknoe*; Shadwell had pointed his pen at Dryden in his own 1682 satire *The Medal of John Bayes*, which some consider "the fullest and most vigorous of the attacks" on the laureate (Kinsley and Kinsley 143). And indeed, Dryden is characterized by Shadwell as nothing less than "half Wit! half Fool … Coward and Slave" (150). With Shadwell's appointment, the pension remained the same as it had been for Dryden and the allowance of wine (discontinued under James II) was restored (Russel 3). Shadwell's laureateship was very short; appointed in 1689, he died in 1692. The tenure of Shadwell's replacement, Nahum Tate, bridged the end of the seventeenth century and brought the office into the eighteenth century – and through the 1707 Act of Union that made England and Scotland the Kingdom of Great Britain (the laureate thereafter being the poet laureate of the unified nation). Tate is perhaps best known for his revision of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, an adaptation most notable for its *happy* ending (Cordelia lives).[6] Tate's tenure, like Dryden's, represents an important moment in the legibility of laureateship as statecraft. Tate's tenure as poet laureate also saw further standardization of the office's duties: he wrote odes for the monarch's birthday and to celebrate the new year (although he was not required to do so).

[6] See Tate, *The History of King Lear*, 68-95.

The odes were set to music and performed, like the masques of Jonson and Davenant, before the court. The laureateship was still very much about creating a spectacle of the monarch's power, at court before an audience. Odes to the monarch were by no means the sole domain of poets laureate; as Nick Russel points out, other poets submitted verses to mark these occasions (3). And, this practice of presenting poetry to the monarch continued through the Victorian period. Even during Tennyson's laureateship, the man who would succeed him as poet laureate, Alfred Austin, offered presentation copies of his own volumes to Queen Victoria.[7] Although others might have written poetry for the monarch, none were appointed – and paid – to do so. This relationship, one that becomes standard through the eighteenth century, involves the poet laureate being *employed* to write verse that celebrates the monarch's power and the overall greatness of the nation.

The laureateships of the eighteenth century were characterized by a steady increase in the regularization of the office's duties. For the most part, none of the century's laureates were particularly known as poets before their appointments. They were, instead, adequate and well-placed writers who were in the right place, politically speaking, at the right time. After Queen Anne took the throne in 1702, responsibility for the laureateship was shifted to the Lord Chamberlain's office, a change that "put the laureate on the same footing as other servants of the royal household" (Russel 3). The Lord Chamberlain, though holding a political post (as peer, privy councillor, and member of cabinet), was also the top administrator of

[7] These volumes are now housed in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle.

the royal household. Royal patents for laureates were discontinued when Tate was reappointed under Queen Anne, and were replaced by a short warrant issuing from the Lord Chamberlain's office (Broadus 90 and n1). The next laureate, Nicholas Rowe (appointed after Tate's death in 1715), counted the poetry post amongst many appointments he received as a consequence of being well-connected. As Dustin Griffin suggests, eighteenth-century forms of state patronage took numerous shapes, including those related specifically to writing or literature (the laureateship, royal pensions, sinecures), but appointments within what Griffin terms the "substantial administrative bureaucracy" were in fact the more common method for providing men of letters with a living – via an easily managed and well-salaried position (*Literary Patronage* 29). What set the laureateship apart from administrative patronage was the poet's role in functioning as a plenipotentiary (to return to Pierre Bourdieu's term) for the state; however, the laureateship of the eighteenth century must also be understood as but one part of a patronage system that persisted through to the accession of George IV in 1820 (Griffin, *Literary Patronage* 29).

Rowe, who is now known mainly for his dramatic writing and his influential 1709 edition of Shakespeare (which contained the first biographical sketch of the poet), was a particularly lucky recipient of what George Justice terms "lingering forms of patronage" (256 n24). Before becoming laureate, he was under-secretary to James Douglas, second duke of Queensbury, during the duke's tenure as secretary of state for Scotland (Sherbo). Following his appointment as poet laureate, Rowe received a number of other posts – as land

surveyor at the Port of London, clerk of council for the Prince of Wales, and clerk of presentations by the lord chancellor (Sherbo). Rowe's numerous posts beyond the laureateship – posts requiring trustworthiness and appropriate political views – suggest that the office of poet laureate itself was not assigned according to poetic genius but rather as part of an ongoing system of state patronage. Rowe's new practice of consistently producing birthday and new year odes for the king (these were completed only sporadically by his predecessor Tate) further contributed to the overall regularization of laureateship practices as a predictable part of the court calendar. The annual odes became expected, and William Wordsworth was the first to refuse to pen these odes altogether.

The laureateship of Laurence Eusden (1718-1730) was relatively uneventful. Before his appointment, Eusden was a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. His poetic production included contributions to translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* put together by John Dryden and Samuel Garth in 1717, and he appears to have written in the *Spectator* and *Guardian* on several occasions (Sambrook, Ellis 33 and 48n28). Eusden was appointed laureate in the wake of complimentary verses produced for the wedding of the lord chamberlain, the duke of Newcastle in 1717 (Sambrook). Eusden produced a wide variety of verses as poet laureate, generally odes for the new year and the king's birthday, along with poems addressed to members of the aristocracy and to his patrons (and those he hoped to make patrons) (Sambrook). A favourite target of Alexander Pope, Eusden had this in common with the laureate who succeeded him – Colley Cibber, whose name-recognition now rests primarily on Pope targeting him in the

second version of the *Dunciad*. The 1730 appointment of Colley Cibber was no less than explosive – the context surrounding his appointment makes visible what laureateship meant during this period. Cibber's appointment was a scandal, not least because the choice was heavily influenced by Sir Robert Walpole, the first Prime Minister (Koon 125). The frontrunner candidates to replace Eusden (Stephen Duck, Lewis Theobald, and Richard Savage) were passed over in favour of the well-connected Cibber.[8] Cibber's first ode for the king was received with great interest by his satirically-minded critics. Helene Koon argues that the attacks on Cibber's laureateship were actually covert attacks on Walpole, and had little to do with the quality of his verses:

> So much has been written about Cibber's wretched odes that one might believe not only the author but the entire court blind and deaf to any sort of good poetry. Admittedly, his verse is bad, but neither Eusden, who preceded him, nor Whitehead, who followed, wrote better, though neither was ridiculed. Much of the concentration on Cibber was, of course, political; as the laureate, Colley was a gentleman of the court, representing a government the Tories abhorred. They could not directly attack Walpole without severe reprisals, but they could strike at his spokesman. (128)

By the time Cibber was offered the laureateship, then, it was both reviled and sought after in literary circles. Certainly there was significant interest over which poet would receive the favour of the monarch. Furthermore, it is clear that the laureate was understood to be a spokesperson for the state – in Bourdieu's sense, as I discuss above, as a plenipotentiary whose texts function to safeguard social capital – if only because the head of state had *chosen* him. However, in this case, detractors received the laureate as a route to criticizing the Prime Minister. And

[8] For a summary of the impetus behind Cibber's appointment, see Koon, especially 125-26.

although the office remained closely associated with the monarch in terms of the specific form and content of its verse throughout the eighteenth century (almost exclusively flattering odes), laureates were nearly as unlikely to criticize the elected government as they were the monarch. Robert Southey, in a case I discuss below, was the first to attempt a critique of parliamentary leadership's policy – with negative results. Poetry of the laureate still directs itself to the monarch. With Cibber's appointment, we see laureateship become tied to the elected government, but we do not see laureates writing *to* or *for* the elected government. To return to James C. Scott's formulation of the "public transcript" (*Domination* 47) of nationalist institutions, laureate poems cover over the growing gap between these two arms of the state because they address the monarch even after laureateship is a matter of both elected and monarchical government. The public transcript, in this regard, presents a unified view of state power – a "symbolic gesture," as Scott puts it, "of domination that serves to manifest and reinforce a hierarchical order" *(Domination* 45). Looking forward to the nineteenth century, the office remains closely associated with the monarchy, even as poets laureate are either required (in the case of Robert Southey, discussed below) or require of themselves (as Tennyson does) alignment of their views with the policy of the elected government.

Cibber's first ode as poet laureate provides a clear example not just of the structures governing the office (its link to monarchy and elected government), but of the content and circulation of the eighteenth-century laureate ode. Written to celebrate the new year, the poem exemplifies the idea of laureateship that

Wordsworth and Tennyson would later refuse. The poem constructs a laureate voice that covers over dissent, glorifies the monarch, and situates the poet laureate as the representative voice of the nation. I read Cibber's ode as a case study in eighteenth-century laureateship – as a performance of the prerogatives of the monarchy over its subjects and as an example of the strategies a laureate of the period of compulsory annual odes had at his disposal.

Critics who examine the history of the ode in Restoration and eighteenth century literature tend to map the form's transition from public to private modes of address – from "panegyric to introspection, real persons to personified abstractions" (Koehler 659). Paul Fry, for example, notes a "great divide" between seventeenth-century odes, "poem[s] for public or publicly shareable occasions," exhibiting both "civic-mindedness" and an "oratorical" mode of address, and later eighteenth century odes "where unashamed self-communion is held to be as dignified and, in its own way, as sociable as public speech" (60). Fry's formulation, however, has been reworked in the criticism of Suvir Kaul. Writing in *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century*, Kaul argues that the voice of the eighteenth-century ode should not be read as "the quintessential poetic act," but rather as a "[trope] of literary authority" that "derive[s its] discursive and ideological authority from the idiom of nationalism" and "finds its object" in "the imagined life of the nation" (212). In other words, even as the ode form moved away from specific adulation of individuals, including the monarch, it increasingly found its premises in nationalist ideology. The key example, cited by both Kaul (1) and Griffin

(*Patriotism* 48) is "Rule, Britannia." For Kaul, James Thomson's famous work, with its refrain of "Rule, Britannia, rule the waves; / Britons never will be slaves" (qtd in Kaul 2), represents nothing less than "the condition to which much English poetry on public themes written in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries aspires" (1). Griffin holds a similar view, characterizing "Rule, Britannia" as the dominant model of patriotic verse: "with its focus on the nation rather than the monarch and on Britain's control of the seas, [it] is more characteristic [than the panegyric] of the patriotic poems of the major poets of the period" (*Patriotism* 48). The eighteenth century laureate odes, including those completed by Cibber, can be linked most closely to the model Fry identifies with late seventeenth-century poetry – they are a type of panegyric ode increasingly frowned upon in eighteenth century literary circles (Griffin, *Patriotism* 50). The laureates of the eighteenth century are, therefore, called upon to compose verse that is already considered to be largely outmoded – ripe for derision by peers, and attempted by only a few (Griffin, *Patriotism* 50).

It should come as no surprise, then, that Colley Cibber's first ode as poet laureate was roundly and publicly mocked in 1731. But the context for this critique was made possible by a new development in laureate practice. Cibber's first laureate poem was also the first to be published in the inaugural issue of the *Gentleman's Magazine* in January of 1731, a tradition that would continue for a century, into the laureateship of Robert Southey (1813-1843). This change is an important one: laureateship verse, though it had previously been published occasionally, was not regularly circulated until it began its run in the *Gentleman's*

Magazine. The very fact of its publication further cemented laureateship verse as part of the performance of royal power – although Cibber's first ode was published alongside several pieces satirizing the laureate, the annual odes continued to be published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* through the century, indicating their continued value as a commodity in the periodical press. Cibber's first ode performs the ritual of monarchy's power perfectly. Published with its musical directions intact (stanzas signaling *recitativo* and *air*), the poem thus reinforces its origin as a piece intended for performance before the monarch – and the laureateship's legacy of court masque performances in the seventeenth century. The ode's print publication is presented as secondary, as a replication of a performance, but its original function as a spectacle of power is underlined in the print presentation's cues. I reproduce the poem below in its original layout in the *Gentleman's Magazine*:

> ODE FOR NEW-YEAR'S DAY
> BY C. CIBBER, ESQ;
>
> RECITATIVO.
> Once more the ever circling sun
> Thro' the cælestial sign has run,
> Again old time inverts his glass,
> And bids the annual seasons pass:
> The youthful spring shall call for birth,
> And glad with op'ning flow'rs the earth:
> Fair summer load with sheaves the field,
> And golden fruit shall autumn yield:
> Each to the winter's want their store shall bring
> 'Till warmer genial suns recall the spring.
>
> AIR.
> Ye grateful *Britons* bless the year,
> That kindly yields increase,
> While plenty that might feed a war,
> Enjoys the guard of peace;

Your plenty to the skies you owe,
Peace is your monarch's care;
Thus bounteous *Jove* and *George* below
Divided empire share.

RECITATIVO

Britannia pleas'd, looks round her realms to see
Your various causes of felicity!
(To glorious war, a glorious peace succeeds;
For most we triumph when the farmer feeds)
Then truly are we great when truth supplies
Our blood, our treasures drain'd by victories.
Turn, happy *Britons*, to the throne your eyes,
And in the royal offspring see,
How amply bounteous providence supplies
The source of your felicity.

AIR.

Behold in ev'ry face imperial graces shine
All native to the race of *George* and *Caroline*:
In each young hero we admire
The blooming virtues of his fire;
In each maturing fair we find,
Maternal charms of softer kind.

RECITATIVO.

In vain thro' ages past has *Phoebus* roll'd,
'Ere such a sight blest Albion could behold.
Thrice happy mortals, if your state you knew,
Where can the globe so blest a nation shew?
All that of you indulgent heav'n requires,
Is loyal hearts, to reach your own desires.
Let faction then her self-born views lay down,
And hearts united, thus address the throne.

AIR.

Hail! royal *Cæsar*, hail!
Like thus may ev'ry annual fun
Add brighter glories to thy crown,
'Till Suns themselves shall fail.

RECITATIVO.

May heav'n thy peaceful reign prolong,
Nor let, to thy great empires wrong,
Foreign or native foes prevail.
Hail, &c.

The poem celebrates the grace and power of the royal family in a fairly predictable fashion. At the same time, the poem demonstrates the elaborate negotiations involved in producing a laureate point of view and implied audience. The opening stanza heralds the new year ("Once more the ever circling sun / Thro' the cælestial sign has run") and pays tribute to all of the seasons in their turn. The second stanza addresses the population, immediately defining them as "grateful" and entreating them to "bless the year" that will bring "plenty" and "peace." The former is attributed to Jove, with his traditional power over the sky, and thus the harvest, while the latter is the work of George – the outcome of "your monarch's care." Cibber's phrasing suggests that the king is beneficent public property, an ideological move that effaces the power of the king over his subjects. The mode of address in this stanza also functions to separate the poet from the population – "Britons" are here being addressed by their poet laureate, who calls upon them to feel and to act in particular ways.

The third stanza begins by invoking Britannia, the feminine personification of Britain, whose appraising gaze over the nation is foregrounded: "pleas'd," she "looks round her realms." Initially, this stanza continues to employ a third person point of view; however, by the fourth line of the stanza, the speaker includes himself in the population from which he previously held himself apart: "*we* triumph … truly are *we* great …. *Our* blood, *our* treasures." This plural first person point of view changes abruptly one line later, when the speaker addresses Britons once again. Employing the imperative tense, the final lines direct the population in a collective act of vision: "Turn, happy *Britons,* to the throne your

eyes, / And in royal offspring see, … The source of your felicity." The lines suggest a positive future for the monarchy, and thus the people. In gazing upon the children of "*George* and *Caroline*," Britons see the "source" of their own happiness in the continuation of the Hanoverian line. But by invoking the gaze twice in one stanza, Cibber calls attention to the similarities *and* differences between Britannia and Britons. While Britannia "looks" and "see[s]" of her own volition, the people's gaze must be directed by the speaker. The repetition of the trope of vision here marks a connection between the nation and its population; however, Britons are treated as subjects to the crown whose actions must be disciplined by the speaker. Implicitly, the speaker, what I would term the "laureate voice," is neither Britannia nor Britons. Although this voice sometimes writes itself into the poem's "we," the final lines of the ode reveal such inclusion as the artificial construction of unity. The fifth stanza maintains a separation between the speaker and the people (signified by the repeated use of "you" and "your") and, finally, urges an end to partisanship: "Let faction then her self-born views lay down, / And hearts united, thus address the throne." This call to efface – or even erase – difference in a "united…address" to the monarch suggests the unification of a British population that was in fact not united, but the grammar of the lines adds a complexity: it is not Britons who are called to "lay down" their views, but rather "faction" itself, with its pejorative connotations of either strife or selfishness. It is the idea of difference itself that the laureate voice wants banished, along with the resulting "self-born views" – views that, in Cibber's phrasing, arise not from legitimate political dispute with those in power, but from

improper factionalism itself. The absenting of Britons' agency in the grammar of these lines makes way for the unified and celebratory utterance of royal and national power in the final two stanzas. These last lines again direct the supposedly newly unified Britons to "address" to "the throne." The laureate voice performs ventriloquism. The "Hail!" to the king appears to come from Britons themselves – the same Britons from whom the laureate voice distances himself in the fifth stanza.

But these final eight lines are unconvincing as ventriloquism – one can, in fact, see the laureate's lips moving, and the puppet Britons look rather less convincing than one might expect. Any ventriloquist relies on the visibility of the act as a fiction. Cibber's laureate voice constructs a united nation that does not exist and then speaks *for* it to the monarch. The publication of this ode falls squarely between the two Jacobite rebellions of the eighteenth century (1715 and 1745). Both George I and the reigning king in 1731, his son George II, "were regarded by many Britons as Whig kings, partisan figures not agents of national unity" (Colley 203). All the while, the laureate voice itself is remarkably mystified. The vacillation between "your" and "we" gives lie to the constructed nature of both, for as Philippe Lejeune suggests, the "[a]lternate use of the third and first person" in "[a] system of oscillation and of indecision makes it possible to elude what is inevitably artificial or partial in each of the two presentations" (43). Neither Britannia nor Briton, neither nation nor people, the laureate voice is constructed as both objective and imbricated in the power relations of the state. Cibber's laureate voice reports the turn of the new year, reports Britannia's

pleasure, directs the gaze and utterance of the people, and then writes and speaks their lines for them. But this voice does not produce unity on the public political stage – it is an ode that is, self-consciously, a fiction, a performance of national unity and adulation for the monarchy (and its self-conscious construction links it with the court masques of Jonson). The laureate voice, in this case, although it attempts to do so through ventriloquism, does not speak for the people. Rather, it is an ideal narrative of unity, a text that performs its duty as part of the "public transcript" that is the spectacle of power. Scott suggests that these types of "self-dramatization of domination" through the falsification of unity, amongst other strategies, "may exert more rhetorical force among the leading actors themselves than among the far more numerous bit players" *(Domination* 69*).* Cibber's first laureate ode is ideological salve, intended primarily to perform a patriotism for consumption by elites, not by those Britons of "faction" it seeks to unite at the poem's conclusion.

The publication context of Cibber's first ode indicates that the ode itself has a complex, even conflicting, function in the public transcript of monarchy's power, not to mention the laureate's. Cibber's first ode was published alongside no less than four satires of it, one of which was written by Cibber (under the name Francis Fairplay [Koon 128]) himself and another by his main rival for the laureateship, Stephen Duck.[9] The satires were unlikely to have been published for political reasons: Edward Cave, founder of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, began his career working as a Tory sympathizer, and later became a "mild whig," but "as an

[9] See *Gentleman's Magazine* 1 (1731): 20-22 for the official ode and its parodies.

editor he never put politics before profit" (Barker). From an editorial point of view, the publication of all of these poems together – the official ode with its unofficial attacks – seems to have been done for the entertainment of readers. Cave's *Magazine* was a digest, reprinting pieces of interest from the preceding month. The satires of Cibber had previously appeared in the *London Evening Post*, *Fog's Journal*, and the *Whitehall Evening Post*. The *Gentleman's Magazine* brought these satirical pieces together with the text of the official ode, capitalizing on interest that had already been generated around Cibber's appointment.

Although the seventeenth-century periodical press was vibrant and diverse, a sharp rise in the production of new periodical titles came about in the wake of the lapsed Licensing Act in 1695, creating a context in which oversight of the press (particularly censorship) was ambiguously regulated (Black 12). The *Gentleman's Magazine* was a very successful part of this rise in the periodical press. Wide-ranging in its content, the title included everything from obituaries and parliamentary coverage to natural science, mathematics, and poetry (Ruston ix, xii). Poetry figures strongly in the *Gentleman's Magazine* from the beginning – indeed Cibber's first ode was published in the first number of the magazine (January 1731). The publication of the ode signals an important new aspect to laureateship – because the laureate odes are regularly published in the periodical press, they are granted a more widely circulated place on the public transcript of royal power, but are also more openly subject to public scrutiny than they had been before. As Linda K. Hughes argues of poetry published in the nineteenth century press (and the point stands for the eighteenth-century as well), periodical

verses are "context-dependent, inflected by topicality, marketplace competition, available contributors, and the shifting editorial policies and class register of specific titles" even as they are also effected "by pressures exerted from within poetic tradition and aesthetic innovation" (91). The placement of laureate odes in the *Gentleman's Magazine* allows the poems to be placed in a variety of contexts – alongside parliamentary debate or satirical critique, for example. As a consequence of their periodical publication, the laureate poems of the eighteenth century do not stand alone as simply poems written for the monarch, but are instead widely circulated (for *Gentleman's Magazine* was a popular title) in a magazine beyond the editorial control of the poet laureate. These poems' publication in this popular venue changed the performativity of the poems if not their content: that is, the poems' addressing of the monarchy became discursive (a matter of public poetry) rather than literal (a poem given directly to the monarch). As such, this change in publication venue changed the mode of laureate address: the poems were no longer 'addressed' directly to the monarchy but to an imagined consumer public – a public configured here as a hermeneutic relay through which to bring one's address to the monarchy not *to the monarchy,* but rather, into public discourse and sentiment.

In gathering together the ode itself with satirical poems written by detractors, the *Gentleman's Magazine* publication context places the laureate ode on the public stage in a fundamentally different way than before. It does so by illustrating that laureate poetry, and the positive views of monarchy it puts on display, can very well be contested. One of the poems, for example, sends up

Cibber's 1696 play, *Love's Last Shift, or the Fool of Fashion*, before concluding that "If Wit unequall'd shou'd prevail," then "[t]he *Laurel*'s justly thine" ("Hymn" 23-24). Cibber is specifically linked to the Prime Minister in "An Ode to Sir Robert Walpole, for New-Year's-Day, 1731," a poem where Cibber's voice is taken on as a mask. The poem proceeds to glorify the Prime Minister, as "[g]uardian of Britannia's glory" and "[l]ife and soul of Europe's peace" (1-2). This new mode of publishing laureate verse (with and without accompanying satires) highlights the possibility for readers of seeing laureate odes as disingenuous and politically suspect, but also open to public scrutiny and conversation – as one place for engaging in public discussion about not only politics, but also the proper role of poetry in public life.

At the same time as these attacks on the poet laureate indicate a willingness to mock Cibber and his post, they also suggest that the office was worthy of such attack – clearly, the office signifies enough power that it cannot simply be ignored. Cibber's ode is a case study for what issues are at stake in laureateship: the ode gives us a view into how the laureate voice might constitute itself and how Britons, Britannia, the king, and the royal family are marshaled for a display of monarchical power. In this case, the ode presents a distant laureate voice that only sometimes includes itself as one of the people. The poem addresses "Britons" on several occasions, directing their gaze and their united speech toward the monarch, and the final lines of the poem reinforce the fact that the king is the ode's most important audience. The rhetoric of the preceding stanzas works to construct a unified national voice that then celebrates the king

and the might of the nation. But the poem's second-to-last line belies the fractured nature of Britain in the early eighteenth century: it is not just "[f]oreign … foes" from which "heav'n" is asked to protect Britain, but "native" foes as well. As Mary Poovey points out, nationalism relies not only on defining foreign states as 'other,' but on "a widespread perception that not everyone who lives in the country embodies its national virtues" (*Making* 55). Cibber's laureate ode puts the rhetorical possibilities of this nationalist ideology on display.

But the eighteenth-century laureateship should be read as more than participating in nationalist display, for it is also part of a history Foucault identifies as the transition from "sovereignty" to "governmentality." The earliest laureates find themselves subject to the older version of power – sovereignty. For Foucault, at the heart of sovereignty is the king's "right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself; it culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it" (*History* 136). A power that is "conditioned by the defense of the sovereign, and his own survival," this "right to decide life and death" *(History* 135) reaches through the eighteenth century:

> First, [sovereignty] referred to an actual power mechanism: that of the feudal monarchy. Second, it was used as an instrument to constitute and justify the great monarchical administrations. From the sixteenth and especially the seventeenth century onward, or at the time of the Wars of Religion, the theory of sovereignty then became a weapon that was in circulation on both sides, and it was used both to restrict and to strengthen royal power. You find it in the hands of Catholic monarchists and Protestant antimonarchists; you also find it in the hands of more or less liberal Protestant monarchists; you also find it in the hands of Catholics who advocate regicide or a change of dynasty. You find this theory of sovereignty in being brought into play by aristocrats and *parlementaires*, by the representatives of royal power and by the last feudalists. It was, in a word, the great instrument of the political and theoretical struggles

> that took place around systems of power in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the eighteenth century, finally, you find the same theory of sovereignty, the same reactivation [as in the Middle Ages] of Roman law, in the work of Rousseau and his contemporaries, but it now played a fourth and different role; at this point in time, its role was to construct an alternative model to authoritarian or absolute monarchical administration: that of the parliamentary democracies. And it went on playing that role until the time of the Revolution. (*"Society"* 34-35).

This theory of sovereignty is grounded, in the first place, in the king or queen; it is grounded in their power, and, later, in considerations of the limits of their power – including in the founding of representative governments. For Foucault, sovereignty, and the relationships it exhibited, were "coextensive with the entire social body," and "could indeed be transcribed, at least in its essentials, in terms of the sovereign/subject relationship" (*"Society"* 35). The laureates leading up to Wordsworth and Tennyson might appear at first to be bound up in the politics of sovereignty in Foucault's simplest terms – they subjugate themselves, in poetry, to the limited will of the monarch. Even as the monarchy's influence over national affairs changes across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, laureates continued to write verses that echo the subjection characteristic of sovereignty (most exhibit a similarity to the Cibber ode discussed above). And so, laureate odes give voice in the eighteenth century to a poetry in keeping with subjection, but are also tied to the historical rise of what Foucault terms "governmentality." Rather than simple subjection to the will of the monarch, the governmental "self is always subject to surveillance – to a form of self-monitoring that produce[s] boundaries determining an 'interiority' for the liberal self" (Roy 61).

The laureate ode of the eighteenth century carries with it the rhetorical trappings of panegyric subjection, but its publication context reflects the transition to governmentality. Laureate odes placed in the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine* are governmental in their effects. In the case of Cibber's first laureate publication, the ode is placed in conversation with satirical writing (and other laureate odes are similarly placed in the magazine in the context of current parliamentary news and other texts relating to public life). This contextualization of the laureate ode reveals the degree to which a sovereign model of rhetoric is inauthentic. The laureate Cibber, for example, is not a political tastemaker, and his satirical detractors make a mockery of his false subjection by lampooning both Cibber's relationship to Prime Minister Walpole and by suggesting that his glorification of the king does not ring true for all. If governmentality is characterized, as Anindyo Roy suggests, by both self-surveillance and interiority, the publication of laureate odes in a constructed conversation with satires skewering the odes' sovereign sensibilities, then the odes themselves are revealed to the *Gentleman's Magazine* reading audience as the fruit of a self-surveilling, disciplined subject. The laureate chooses disingenuously to write poetry in the mask of a sovereign subject while in fact choosing that subjection, despite the availability of alternative models of poetics.

The eighteenth-century laureateship was, then, not a post envied by all, and critiques of the office became increasingly founded in a poetics that rejects laureateship as outmoded poetic subjection. When Cibber died in 1757, the laureateship was offered to and refused by Thomas Gray, who had enjoyed

success with his "Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard." Gray's response to the offer is telling, and indicates a resistance to the office as an institution of the monarchy: even though the offer came from a friend of Gray's, along with a proposal that the annual odes be abolished, the poet refused in no uncertain terms:

> Though I very well know the bland, emollient, saponaceous qualities both of sack[10] and silver, yet if any great man would say to me "I make you ratcatcher to his Majesty, with a salary of £300 a year and two butts of the best Malaga; and though it has been usual to catch a mouse or two, for form's sake, in public once a year, yet to you, sir, we shall not stand upon these things," I cannot say I would jump at it; nay, if they would drop the very name of the office and call me Sinecure to the King's Majesty, I should still feel a little awkward, and think everybody I saw smelt a rat about me; but I do not pretend to blame anyone else that has not the same sensations; for my part I would rather be sergeant-trumpeter or pin-maker to the palace. (qtd. in Mack 498)

Gray's grounds for refusal are telling: beyond his amusing comparison of the laureateship to public rat-catching, he initially grounds his refusal in the office's title and symbolism. It is poetic service to the monarchy that he finds disagreeable. For Gray, poetry and the state should not be mixed, even if the office's title *and* duties are abolished. His letter implies that being a poet with this deep tie to state power would be "awkward." Importantly, accepting even a sinecure would, Gray thinks, cause his colleagues to "smel[l] a rat," which suggests that he is far from alone in having this view of the laureateship. Gray goes on to express his general opinions on the office:

> Nevertheless I interest myself a little in the history of it, and rather wish somebody may accept it that will retrieve the credit of the thing, if it be retrievable, or ever had any credit …. The office itself has always humbled the professor hitherto (even in an age when

[10] "Sack" (as well as "Malaga," a few lines later) refers to the wine traditionally provided as part of the laureate's stipend (*OED*).

> kings were somebody), if he were a poor writer by making him more conspicuous, and if he were a good one by setting him at war with the little fry of his own profession, for there are poets little enough to envy even a poet laureate. (qtd. in Mack 498)

Gray's letter indicates his sense of the office's lowly stature, both in contemporary and historical terms: it currently has no "credit," and may not have had any in the past. The letter further indicates the extent to which the office was perceived, at least in some circles, as being unimportant. Laureateship, he suggests, embarrasses weak writers and puts good writers in opposition to those who envy his position. The office might, he writes, be irretrievable, even though he clearly has some investment in seeing its stature raised. Hope remains for the laureateship.

At the same time, Gray's letter points to another key issue in the laureateship. The fortunes of the office are also tied to the stature of the monarchy. Gray invokes "an age when kings were somebody." Across the eighteenth century, the "active" political life of monarchs was, in Colley's words, "diminishing" (203), and would continue to do so through the end of the nineteenth century. The early Hanoverian kings did not enjoy a great deal of popularity and were less inclined to public display of their power than those monarchs preceding or following them:

> From the night of 20 September 1714, when George I entered his new capital for the first time, driving along in pitch darkness as if deliberately to outrage the crowds of Londoners who had waited long hours to see him, through to the Royal Fireworks display in Green Park in 1749, when the patriotic slogans on show were rendered only in Latin, and on to George III's coronation on 22 September 1761, when he and his queen were taken to Westminster Abbey in separate sedan chairs just like ordinary mortals going about their everyday business, royal ceremonial and celebration in

> this period regularly plumbed the art of sinking to its very depths. (Colley 202)

The unpopularity of the eighteenth-century laureateship can be linked to more than just the quality of its practitioners' verses; monarchs of the period demanded little in the way of public displays of power – a far cry from the "geopolitical spectacle" of the later years of Queen Victoria's reign as Empress of India (Burton, "Déjà Vu" 6). As Colley suggests, the long reign of George III (1760-1820) managed to produce "a renovated and far more assertively nationalistic royal image" for the British monarchy, but not "a resurgence of royal power in political terms" (207). Over the course of this transition, the laureateship, too, changed, even as laureates were called upon more and more to celebrate an increasingly symbolic head of state in odes for the new year and the monarch's birthday. Once Thomas Gray turned down the laureateship in 1757, it was offered to William Whitehead. Whitehead was the first to argue for the laureateship as a post that should be less concerned with politics than it was with "matters affecting the whole nation" (Russel 4). Although Whitehead wrote few verses that exemplified this position[11] and continued the tradition of annual odes, his suggestion that the laureateship should not simply be a rote celebration of the royal calendar was the first instance of a laureate advocating for a poetry that addressed the public and not just the monarchy. This was a project that re-emerged significantly for the laureate Tennyson. Following Whitehead, scholar Thomas Warton was appointed to the office. Not known particularly for his poetic

[11] See Broadus 138-39 for a brief discussion of Whitehead's *Verses to the People of England*, composed in 1758 in the midst of unrest in North America, India, and Britain.

talents, Warton was ancient history professor at Oxford and author of the groundbreaking *History of English Poetry*, completed four years before his 1785 appointment as laureate. Warton's appointment points to what could almost be called a tradition in the laureateship. A number of poets laureate engaged in scholarly or literary writing that was crucial to the development and maintenance of a British cultural nationalism: Dryden's Chaucer, Rowe's Shakespeare, and, finally, Warton's *History*.

Warton's first ode as laureate was the occasion for a renewal of perhaps the most steadfast of the office's characteristics – full-scale attack on it. Warton published his first ode in the June, 1785 issue of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Soon after, *Probationary Odes for the Laureateship* appeared, an anthology of 22 flattering odes, 21 of which were written by the satirical Whig Rolliad group. The group, which included journalist Joseph Richardson and politicians Charles Grey and George Tierney, published the odes as part of a larger satirical project aimed at their political opposition (Mitchell 55). Chronicling a fictional competition for the laureateship, the collection of extravagant, panegyric poems ends with Warton's own first official ode, which is, in Broadus's words, "the most extravagant of them all" (149). The structuring of this group of poems – and indeed, the very fact of the collection's publication – suggests the extent to which, at least in some circles, laureate verse was perceived to be a function of state power. The satire of auditioning possible laureates gestures towards the idea that laureate poetry is always written at the pleasure of those in power – it must, in short, please the monarch.

Warton's successor on his death in 1790 was Henry Pye. Pye accepted the position's salary (still £100 per year), but refused the traditional wine in favour of an additional £27, a choice that his successor, Robert Southey, would characterize as "wicked" (Russel 5). Pye's tenure in office to his death in 1813 saw revolution in France, Britain at war, and George III's complete disappearance from public life due to illness. Pye was an active anti-Jacobin writer, and included such sentiments in his laureate odes of the revolutionary period (Paley 126-27). The new year ode for 1793, for example, speaks of French "scenes of woe, / Where ceaseless tears of anguish flow" and the "horrid footsteps" of "anarchy's insatiate brood" (105). Pye also authored anti-Jacobin novels, including *The Democrat* (1795) and *The Aristocrat* (1799). Although these were not officially connected to the laureateship and were but a few of a large number of such novels published in the 1790s (Grenby 9), these novels had parallels with the anti-Jacobin views of some of his laureate odes (Grenby 42, Paley 126-27). Under Pye, the annual odes continued until George III disappeared completely from public life in 1810, at which point they ceased. The ode for new year was briefly resuscitated when Robert Southey was appointed in 1813, but never again would the office see the predictable, twice-annual odes. While it is initially tempting to characterize the dissolution of the practice as an "accident," the reticence to celebrate a reigning monarch who was no longer seen on the public stage is indicative of the laureateship still functioning as a spectacle – even a barometer – of the monarch's power.

With Pye's death in 1813, Robert Southey was appointed poet laureate. From a firebrand Romantic of the so-called Lake School of poets (and friend of S. T. Coleridge, Dorothy Wordsworth, and the next laureate, William Wordsworth), Southey had become a much more politically acceptable choice once he began work as a regular contributor to the Tory *Quarterly Review* and the *Edinburgh Annual Register* and published his *Life of Nelson* the year he was appointed poet laureate (Mahoney 24, Russel 114-15). Southey paid the price for his apostasy; he was reviled by many. William Hazlitt, however, put forward the view that laureateship was not just a symptom of Southey's political about-face, but a betrayal of poetics. Hazlitt was critical of Southey on more than one occasion, including in 1824's *The Spirit of the Age*.[12] Hazlitt's criticism is laced with regret, but not for the laureateship – rather, for the poet who might have been:

> It is indeed to be deplored, it is a stain on genius, a blow to humanity, that the author of *Joan of Arc* – that work in which the love of Liberty is exhaled like the breath of spring, mild, balmy, heaven-born, that is full of tears and virgin-sighs, and yearnings of affection after truth and good, gushing warm and crimsoned from the heart – should ever after turn to folly, or become the advocate of a rotten cause. After giving up his heart to that subject, he ought not (whatever others might do) ever to have set his foot within the threshold of a court. He might be sure that he would not gain forgiveness or favour by it, nor obtain a single cordial smile from greatness. And that Mr Southey is or that he does best, independent, spontaneous, free as the vital air he draws—when he affects the courtier or the sophist, he is obliged to put a constraint upon himself, to hold in his breath; he loses his genius, and offers a violence to his nature. (318)

Southey, Hazlitt suggests, should have remained subject to his "subject" – poetry of liberty – rather than crossing the boundary into the court, a crossing that made

[12] For a survey on Hazlitt's writing on the laureateship, see Mahoney, especially Chapter One, "The Laureat Hearse Where Lyric Lies: The Making of Romantic Apostasy."

him beholden to the monarch for the rest of his life. There is no going back from laureateship; until the appointment of Andrew Motion in 1999 for a ten-year term, poets laureate were appointed for life. For Hazlitt, Southey seems less like a figure to be derided than one to be pitied. Good poetry is an expression of a love for liberty; his likening of poetic love as both a promising beginning ("spring") and a physiological necessity ("breath") suggests that moving past "the threshold of a court" constitutes not just a violation of political views, but, just as dangerously, a violation of poetics. The "courtier" is no longer the "author"; he chooses his own "constraint," abandons his "genius," and does "violence" to his "nature" as a poet. Hazlitt's condemnation of the laureate Southey has commonalities with Thomas Gray's critique of the office discussed above – both view the poet laureate as entering into a relationship with government that compromises the necessary liberty of the poet.

Laureates often received brutal treatment from their colleagues. At times, they were attacked on the grounds of professional jealousy (for the laureateship *did* come with a £100 annual income), and at times for their political views (where laureate verse supported a monarch not overwhelmingly popular). But all attacks have something important in common – an idea of what poetry can and should do in the world. Although attacks on the eighteenth-century laureates often address the poor quality of their verse, another key premise of these attacks is the idea that poetry offered in the service of the monarch was not proper poetry. These concerns with poetics become an important point of tension in the laureateship for Wordsworth and Tennyson. Both were avowed monarchists and

committed poets at the time of their appointments, and both confronted the difficulty of balancing their own poetics with a state institution constrained by a structure and a history at odds with their own views on poetry. By the nineteenth century, the laureateship was often criticized for being contrary to a "spirit of independence" that all poets should adhere to (Mahoney 22). While some writers in the eighteenth century made exactly this point, it was Romanticism's investment in the imaginative power of the individual that gave charges of the laureate-as-toady new force. Charles Mahoney summarizes the position as it was put forward by noted radical Leigh Hunt just before Southey's 1813 appointment:

> Real poets don't write official panegyrics for £100 and a butt of sack: they have far too great a sense of the value of in-dependence to de-pend upon the largesse of the state. Better far to stand alone than to stand in line for such a contaminated distinction. The romantic poet, after all, is not supposed to be a servile courtier but an outspoken advocate of liberty, one whose power does not depend upon his endorsement by the hirelings of the court, but upon his critical distance from the forms of institutional power. (22)

By virtue of its institutional structure, the laureateship had always had the potential to elicit verses that glorified the monarch, but by the early nineteenth century, it was seen by Hunt not just as the worst sort of toadyism, but also as a betrayal of poetics. In Romantic and republican literary circles, Hunt was not alone in this view of the laureateship. Lord Byron, for example, had tart words for the laureate (and former republican) Southey. Byron's 1819 dedication to *Don Juan* singles out Southey, along with fellow apostates Wordsworth and Coleridge, for attack. The poem opens decrying an aspect of laureateship that should by now be familiar: "Bob Southey! You're a poet, a poet laureate, / And representative of all the race" (1-2). In *Reading Public Romanticism*, Paul Magnuson glosses the

second line: Southey "utters only fulsome praise or ranting condemnations and thus thinks himself as 'representative of all the race,' the race of Britons, the race of poets, and the race of poets laureate" (124). Byron's point, clearly, is that Southey is representative of none of these things, and his acceptance of the laureateship indicates that Southey is willing to attempt to act as representative for the British people when, in fact, he acts as plenipotentiary for the corrupt government and Regency. Few in the world of letters took the office at all seriously. Southey experienced virulent opposition, from poets and critics alike. Francis Jeffrey, no friend to the Lake Poets (writing in the reformist *Edinburgh Review*, he was among the sharper critics of their work), was also no friend to the laureate Southey. He puts the case against laureateship succinctly in an unsigned 1816 review of Southey: "a poet laureate has no sort of precedency among poets,—whatever may be his place among pages and clerks of the kitchen; and … he has no more pretensions as an author, than if his appointment had been to the mastership of the stag-hounds" ("Lay" 442). For Jeffrey, there are only two reasonable ways of approaching laureateship – to write so well that one avoids ridicule or to keep one's laureate works out of the eye of popular readers. Southey, Jeffrey suggests, fails at both, confusing the world of poetry and the world of the court to a degree that he renders himself "conspicuously ridiculous" ("Lay" 443). Jeffrey goes so far as to pronounce Southey guilty of "prostitution of great gifts" and the office itself intolerable to any poet: "we do not believe that there is a scribbler in the kingdom so vile as to think it a thing to be coveted" ("Lay" 449).

But the constraints of the office never really sat well with Southey. He was initially expected to write odes for the new year, and his first, duly published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, was titled "Carmen Triumphale." The poem was torn to shreds from all sides. Criticism from the world of letters quickly denounced the poem as being either inappropriately warlike or in the pocket of government.[13] There is also a clear historical record of state censorship. Southey's first draft of the poem featured stanzas on Napoleon, who he characterized as "Remorseless, godless, full of fraud and lies, / And black with murders and with perjuries" (201). Cementing a ceasefire with Napoleon would bring only "woe and endless shame" to the nation. At the behest of John Rickman (secretary to the speaker, Charles Abbot) and John Croker (secretary to the Admiralty), Southey removed all obvious references to Napoleon (Broadus 169). He did so only grudgingly, however, writing to his uncle, the Rev. Herbert Hill, that he had "spoiled" the poem:

> in deference to Rickman's judgement and Croker's advice, cutting out all that related to Bonaparte, and which gave strength, purport, and coherence to the whole. Perhaps I may discharge my conscience by putting these rejected parts together and letting them off in *The Courier* before it becomes a libellous offence to call murder and tyranny by their proper names. (Southey, *Life and Correspondence* 301)

Southey's response to the situation, including his decision to publish the excised stanzas separately as "Ode written during the Negotiations with Bonaparte in 1814," points to the very real potential for conflict in the nineteenth-century laureateship. The laureate is subject not just to the monarch, but to very real

[13] See Madden 194-205.

political investments of the other branches of government. Southey is torn between "deference" and "conscience," between his quite literal subjection to the government and the debt he feels he must "discharge" to satisfy his conscience.

I highlight Southey's letter because from it emerge issues that are key to this study. Laureateship and poetry can make entirely different (and often political) claims on the poet. In Southey's case, these competing claims yield a doubled poet: Southey splits his ode in two, with one poem enjoying state sanction and the other exposing the poet's 'real' views. This did not always present a problem for Southey, particularly where laureate duty and his non-laureate poetry coincided ideologically. In the same letter to his uncle, Southey notes that he was planning a series of inscriptions for monuments at Peninsular War battle sites (and indeed, he completed numerous such poems[14]): "[t]hough this is not exactly *ex-officio*," he wrote, "I should not have thought of it if it had not seemed a fit official undertaking" (301). Although these commemorative inscriptions were not written as part of the official duties of the laureateship, Southey's willingness to compose them indicates that he was not opposed to writing verse that might "fit" laureateship but was not specifically requested. Still, the Victorian laureateships involve instances of elaborate negotiations to satisfy the needs of both "deference" and "conscience." Deference to the elected government and the monarch, and conscience as a poet with responsibilities that extend beyond the interests of nationalist discourse remain important considerations for both Wordsworth and Tennyson. However, Southey's

[14] See Southey, *Complete Poetical Works* 182ff.

laureateship brings to an end the compulsory annual odes. Without well-defined laureate duties, the split identity Southey constructs in the case of "Carmen Triumphale" is no longer possible. Without these, Wordsworth, and then Tennyson, construct new models of laureateship to accommodate these often-conflicting claims on their poetic vocation.

As an institution that performs for the public and elites alike (until Wordsworth, laureate odes were published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* and performed at court), the laureateship tradition carries with it into the Victorian period the remnants of its history. Institutions do not necessarily change quickly, or even functionally. The word "institution," comes from the Latin *institūtiōn*. It is a "noun of action," meaning that the word first signified the act of establishment (*OED*). Given that the word itself suggests the act of foundation, it should be no surprise that institutions often carry the baggage of their founding moments with them. Institutional theorist Paul Pierson argues that the origin of an institution – the moment of "structuring [an] institutional arrangement" – can be the result less of "conceptions of what would be effective," and more of what the founders understand to be "appropriate" (478). Even if at the founding of an institution its "designers do act instrumentally, and do focus on long-term effects," outcomes are still never simple: "unanticipated consequences," Pierson argues, "are likely to be widespread" (483). Thus, an aged institution such as the laureateship (nearly 200 years old by the time Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837, but much older if Chaucer is taken to be the site of ultimate origin), can find itself

"encumbered by the preoccupations and mistakes of the past" (496) even if aspects of its practice have changed.

Wordsworth's solution to the laureateship's traditional poetics of state power was to refuse to write any laureate poetry (a choice that was sanctioned by the queen and prime minister, but a choice nonetheless). In the next chapter, I examine the circumstances surrounding Wordsworth's appointment, along with the one poem he wrote for the Queen during his tenure as poet laureate. "Written upon a fly-leaf in the Copy of the Author's Poems which was sent to her Majesty Queen Victoria" is exactly what its manuscript title suggests: a handwritten set of verses inscribed by the poet. Taking its cue from the poem's suggestion that it should be read as "No Laureate offering of elaborate art," Chapter Two examines Wordsworth's chosen mode of 'publication' for the poem. His insistence on the poem's private circulation and its singularity (it was handwritten and not published until 25 years after his 1850 death) indicates his discomfort with holding the office of poet laureate. This discomfort stems from Wordsworth's beliefs about the role that poetry has to play in the public life of the nation. Although he argues elsewhere for "the national importance of poetic Literature" (*Letters* 7.4: 425), Wordsworth maintains until the end of his life the position that poetry should never intervene fully in matters of public policy. At its best, poetry prepares the reader's mind for politics, but it can never be political. Very little critical attention has been paid to the laureateship of Wordsworth, or indeed to much of his later years of poetic production. Although his impact on Victorian literary culture has been recently explored (most notably in Stephen Gill's 1998

Wordsworth and the Victorians), his silence as poet laureate has been largely attributed not just to his age, but also to the fact that he spent most of his time in the 1840s revising his work and editing it for two editions of collected works (1845 and 1849-50). However, Wordsworth's largely silent laureateship can instead be read, through the fly leaf poem's 'publication' in a single volume destined for the Royal Library at Windsor Castle, as a critique of the intimate relationship between public poetry and state power that is at the very heart of the office, even as Wordsworth constructs for himself a private laureateship relationship with Queen Victoria.

CHAPTER TWO: Wordsworth's Refusals of Laureateship

The laureateship of William Wordsworth was almost entirely silent. But silence is rarely a neutral condition, rarely a pure absence. An abbreviated tour of the *Oxford English Dictionary* entry for the word makes this point: silence might mean being silenced, or it might mean abstention, forbearance, reticence, taciturnity, renunciation, inaudibility, omission, or failure. A state of silence might indicate a disinclination to speak, or an inability to break silence (*OED*). This chapter explores the contours of Wordsworth's public silence as poet laureate, from his appointment in 1843 until his death in 1850. As a poet laureate, Wordsworth is a singular case: he wrote no official verse for the purposes of the office. I argue that Wordsworth's laureateship is characterized by a refusing

silence, and I do so by following a number of avenues. I begin the chapter with an examination of the circumstances surrounding Wordsworth's appointment. The letters between the poet and members of the government provide some view into Wordsworth's laureate practice – a practice that did not include the writing of official odes, but focused instead on the laureateship as an institution that might come to symbolize what Wordsworth termed "the national importance of poetic Literature" (Wordsworth, *Letters* 7.4: 425). At the heart of this chapter is a discussion of Wordsworth's one piece of verse written for Queen Victoria. Inscribed by the poet in a volume of his own verses, and destined for the Royal Library at Windsor Castle, the first few lines of "Written upon a fly-leaf in the Copy of the Author's Poems which was sent to her Majesty Queen Victoria" clearly insist that the poem should not be read within the context of laureateship. Taking my cue from this insistence on the part of the poet, I argue that Wordsworth's refusals of the laureateship tradition sought to reconstruct the office through a private relationship between poet and monarch. Wordsworth not only rejects the tradition of putting laureate odes on display in the periodical press (and therefore of rendering them subject to scrutiny and public conversation about laureateship), but also rejects the eighteenth-century sovereignty mode of laureate voice. In doing so, Wordsworth's laureate practice recreates the office as a practice more closely related to self-surveilling liberal governmentality.

I then contextualize Wordsworth's silence in relation to the new writing he published in the last fifteen years of his life, arguing that this silence can be profitably linked to the poet's position on the relationship between poetry and

public politics. Specifically, I discuss Wordsworth's late 'political' poetic texts, and argue that while Wordsworth flirted with publishing poetry on matters of public policy (I examine specifically the poetry of 1835's *Yarrow Revisited* and the 1843 "Sonnet on the Proposed Kendall and Windermere Railway"), even his most politically-minded late verse tends to withdraw from matters relating to government or public policy. My argument is not that Wordsworth refused to write laureateship verse *because* he found doing so politically disagreeable – such an argument about Wordsworth's intention is simply not possible and would, in any case, be of little use in delineating the institution. Rather, I argue that his reconstruction of the laureateship as a private relationship with the queen and as an honour paid to poetic achievement in a national context is not inconsistent with his late theories of prose and poetry, which privilege prose as the appropriate site for discussing public politics and poetry as the venue for preparing the reader's mind for complex political engagements. The reasons for Wordsworth's silence as poet laureate are likely to have been myriad and complex: age, domestic affliction, general disinclination to compose poetry, or a reticence to experience the painful criticism that laureateship verse unfailingly engendered. All of these could have played some role in his silence as laureate, but Wordsworth also seems to have simply disliked writing poetry on anyone else's timetable. Many years earlier, he expressed not just aversion but inability to compose made-to-measure verse in a letter to the Reverend J. Pering:

> Alas! You have but a faint notion how disagreeable writing, of all Sorts, is to me, except from the impulse of the moment. I must be my own Task master, or I can do nothing at all. Last Autumn I made a little Tour, with my wife, and she was very anxious that I

> should preserve the memory of it by a written account. I tried to comply with her entreaty, but an insuperable dullness came over me, and I could make no progress. (Wordsworth, *Prose* 2: 123).

Wordsworth's personal reasons deserve consideration, but it is also clear that the laureateship he forged – through action and inaction – privileged poetry and patriotism over public politics and state nationalism. As Anne Frey argues, Wordsworth is not adverse to writing poetry that, overall, supports the mission of both the government and one of its key ideological arms, the Church of England. His *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (1838) aim to support the church's infrastructure in building a renewed national community – with the role of the poet circumscribed in a fashion similar to that in the *Yarrow Revisited* Postscript (18). But Wordsworth's tenure in the office of poet laureate involves no specific writing for the office, and thus shifts the balance away from the eighteenth-century model of laureateship that privileges public tributes that glorify the monarch toward a model characterized by the importance of poetry and poets to national culture (however imaginary such a concept might be). The tension between these two models of laureateship is never completely resolved; indeed, this is a productive tension, and one that casts into relief the competing claims of poetry and politics for the laureate Wordsworth.

The recent literature on Wordsworth pays relatively little attention to his late poetic production. Rather than building a bridge between his early and late works, Romanticists and Victorianists alike largely overlook Wordsworth's late poetry. A few critics work on Wordsworth's late poetry, but doing so has been perceived in some Romanticist circles as a superficial or pointless endeavour.

Critic Thomas McFarland characterizes Peter J. Manning's attention in *Reading Romantics* (1990) to some of Wordsworth's later verse as "mount[ing] a circumspect defence of the quality of the late poetry" (28). Similarly, Thomas Pfau comments on William H. Galperin's "[attempt] to resuscitate Wordsworth's late poetry" (411 n34) in *Revision and Authority in Wordsworth* (1989). Considerations of the poet's late poetic production were so out of the mainstream in the early 1990s that one had to justify expending critical energy on it. While this situation might be shifting somewhat (certainly Manning continues to work in the area[15]), the critical orthodoxy has a long history that does not seem easily revised.

Negative evaluations of the late poetry go back at least as far as the Preface to Matthew Arnold's 1879 edition of Wordsworth:

> Wordsworth composed verses during a space of some sixty years; and it is no exaggeration to say that within one single decade of those years, between 1798 and 1808, almost all his really first-rate work was produced. A mass of inferior work remains, work done before and after this golden prime, imbedding the first-rate work and clogging it, obstructing our approach to it, chilling, not unfrequently, the high-wrought mood with which we leave it. To be recognized far and wide as a great poet, to be possible and receivable as a classic, Wordsworth needs to be relieved of a great deal of the poetical baggage which now encumbers him. To administer this relief is indispensable, unless he is to continue to be a poet for the few only,—a poet valued far below his real worth by the world. (221-22)

[15] For Manning's most recent work, see "The Other Scene of Travel: Wordsworth's 'Musings near Aquapendente," *The Wordsworthian Englishtenment: Romantic Poetry and the Ecology of Reading*, Eds. Helen Regueiro Elam and Frances Ferguson, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins U P, 2005, 191-211; "William Wordsworth and William Cobbett: Scotch Travel and British Reform," *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, Eds. Leith Davis, Ian Duncan, and Janet Sorensen, Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2004, 153-69.

This passage from Arnold's Preface is not an attack on Wordsworth, but a defence of his early, "first-rate work" at the cost of his later poetry. Wordsworth was not without his detractors in the nineteenth century. In their 1853 volume, early laureateship historians Wiltshire Stanton Austin and John Rowe Kelley Ralph find much to question in Wordsworth's oeuvre. "He has written," they suggest, "some of the very best, and some of the very worst poetry in the language" (402). Future study, they argue, will determine Wordsworth's value: "it yet remains for some one, with special qualifications for the task, to calmly and candidly investigate the soundness of his poetical system, and to pronounce upon the success with which he carried it out" (421). Arnold's analysis of the late and the very early poetry is an attempt to carve out a place for Wordsworth in a canon of English literature. Only once the poet can be "relieved" of the "mass of inferior work" that "obstruct[s]" the reader's access to the "really first-rate" verse will Wordsworth be granted passage to Parnassus. In other words, we have in Arnold's analysis the seeds of a privileging of the early poetry over the late – and of a narrative reliant upon the argument that Wordsworth's reputation as a poet depends upon the effacement of his late work.

This narrative of the relative value of the various stages of Wordsworth's poetic output continues, but in another form. The lack of recent attention to the late poetry echoes Arnold's view of the Wordsworth canon: most criticism focuses on Wordsworth's poetry between 1798's *Lyrical Ballads* and 1814's *The Excursion*, largely ignoring both his earlier and later poetry. This fashioning of Wordsworth's career within a limited time frame is not a simple repetition of

Arnold's argument, but, more accurately, the outcome of what Tilottama Rajan terms "the lyricization of Wordsworth and the consequent attenuation of the canon" (366). This canon is quite tiny, Rajan suggests, focusing on *The Prelude* and the Lucy poems, and the result is a disfigurement of Wordsworth's poetic project – from the narrative poems of the *Lyrical Ballads* to his later work (366). As a consequence of shrinking the canon, it becomes all too easy to ignore the ways in which Wordsworth's "narrat[ion of] the lyric" positions his poetry's "personal voice" as but "one strand in a social text" (367). Put another way, the continued emphasis on Wordsworth as a lyric poet emphasizes what Rajan calls an "asocial context" to his work (366), leaving aside the consideration that the texts of his late career give to the poet's complex relationship to government, public policy, and the social world of which the published page is one part. It is precisely these considerations that animate Wordsworth's laureate silence.

Rajan, along with Tracy Ware, points to a narrowing of Wordsworth studies, especially in the wake of Geoffrey Hartman's influential 1964 book *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814*.[16] The critical preference in Romantic studies for the early Wordsworth can be seen in one of the most important sources for Wordsworth studies: the scholarly editing of Wordsworth's poetry. The current "standard" edition of the poetry is the Cornell Wordsworth series. Under the general editorship of Stephen Parrish, each volume provides a great deal of useful information: manuscript history and facsimiles, textual variants, and writings

[16] For an account of the impact of Hartman's reading of Wordsworth, and especially of "Michael," see Ware and Rajan. For a further account of the overall impact of *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814*, see Hanley (252-60), who characterizes Hartman's volume as "the most influential post-war work" in Wordsworth studies (252).

related to the edited text. The poetry itself is provided in a "Reading Text." The editorial method is theoretically simple: the earliest complete extant draft is used as the "Reading Text." Although the *Prelude* receives splendid attention, edited in three separate versions according to Wordsworth's key periods of revision (1798-1799, 1805, and 1850), the editorial strategy effaces the publication history of the poetry in favour of its composition history. These are invaluable texts, and it is possible to reconstruct publication history using them, but the Cornell Wordsworth nonetheless privileges creative process over publication, always pushing Wordsworth as far back in time as possible. However, this method of textual editing (privileging composition history over publication history) has enjoyed its share of detractors. Thomas Pfau, for example, suggests that the method "sustain[s] the interpretive hypothesis of Wordsworth's authorial betrayal of what, between 1793 and 1805, had constituted his 'greatness' as a writer" (411). Notable among detractors is Jack Stillinger, whose "Textual Primitivism and the Editing of Wordsworth" (1989) argues that one of the "unintended" results of the Cornell Wordsworth – and particularly of editorial debate over the many extant versions of the *Prelude* – is that "the later Wordsworth is being forced out of the picture" (4).

But it is also Victorianists who cast Wordsworth as the property of the Romantic period. Joseph Bristow's *Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry* (2000) includes a fairly comprehensive timeline of Victorian poetry publications (xxvi-xxxv), but Wordsworth does not appear. *Yarrow Revisited* (1835) and *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years* (1842) both fall tidily within the

chronology's purview, as does the posthumous publication of the *Prelude* in 1850. This elision of Wordsworth from Victorian studies is problematic because it artificially separates his late work from the field of Victorian poetry, leaving a gap where there might instead be a meaningful bridge between Romantic and Victorian poetics. And, as I suggest above with reference to Rajan, this representation of Wordsworth's career does not leave room for a meaningful engagement of his laureateship silence as a matter of political poetics and refusal of tradition – instead casting his laureateship as neutrally silent. Some critics have, however, sought to remedy this inaccurate version of Wordsworth. Chief among these is Stephen Gill, whose *Wordsworth and the Victorians* follows Wordsworth rise to celebrity through the 1830s and 1840s, largely on the strength of the now-ignored late poetry.

Even where the later stages of Wordsworth's career are addressed, the laureateship is generally mentioned only in passing. Gill's comprehensive biography of the poet covers all of Wordsworth's life, but characterizes the laureateship as somewhat insignificant:

> Wordsworth received this "high Distinction" in April 1843 with "unalloyed pleasure," but it made no difference to his pattern of living, which had been established over the last fifteen years. Its centre was, more firmly than ever, domestic life with Mary at Rydal Mount. *(A Life* 409)

Although Gill calls the appointment an "honour" (*A Life* 409), the laureateship functions in his narrative of Wordsworth's life as proof of the extent to which the poet's life was settled. Gill is, of course, not wrong, and there are other convincing reasons for the lack of attention paid to Wordsworth's laureateship. He

wrote little between 1843 and his 1850 death; domestic affliction kept him both busy and troubled – his sister Dorothy had been ill since the mid 1830s and his much-beloved daughter Dora died, after several illnesses, in 1847. Most of his professional activity was directed toward editing and revising his earlier work for publication in the 1845 and 1849-1850 volumes of his collected works, and in preparing the manuscript of the *Prelude* for posthumous publication.

Although the laureateship might have "made no difference" to Wordsworth, he left his mark on the institution nonetheless. He was, from the start, a reluctant poet laureate, and the documents surrounding his appointment chart a move away from the office as duty and toward the laureateship as an honour paid to a proven poet. To return to James C. Scott's concept of "paper records" as "operative facts" *(Seeing* 83), the documents surrounding Wordsworth's laureate appointment signify a new set of laureate facts – ones that Wordsworth, as well as his government correspondents, have a hand in creating. In 1843, the year his friend and predecessor in office Robert Southey died, Wordsworth was 72 and, as Gill suggests, firmly entrenched in the Lake district. The initial offer of the laureateship came in a letter from the Lord Chamberlain, George John Sackville-West, fifth Earl De La Warr. The Lord Chamberlain seems to have discussed the matter with Prime Minister Robert Peel, and then sought and received approval of the appointment from Queen Victoria: his letter to Peel on the subject notes that "[t]he Queen entirely approves of Wordsworth as successor to poor Southey" (Sackville-West Add. 40526 f.406). De La Warr then writes to Wordsworth with "feelings of peculiar gratification" because he is able

"to propose this mark of distinction on an Individual whose acceptance of it would shed an additional luster upon an Office in itself highly honorable" (Wordsworth, *Letters* 7.4: 421 n1). Until this historical moment, the laureateship required an exchange: the poet was provided with a "mark of distinction" and the monarch received verses honouring her or him. But the Lord Chamberlain's letter to Wordsworth speaks only of honour and little of duty. It has been said that "[t]he Laureateship is not burdened with too much honour" (Gray, *Poets Laureate* iii), but in the case of Wordsworth there is only honour, and no duty. The office, as represented by the Lord Chamberlain, was simply an additional honour for a poet already famous and revered. And so it is only duty that gives Wordsworth sufficient grounds to initially refuse the appointment:

> The Recommendation made by your Lordship to the Queen, and graciously approved by Her Majesty, that the vacant Office of Poet Laureat should be offered to me, affords me high gratification. Sincerely am I sensible of this Honor and let me be permitted to add that . . . being deemed worthy to succeed my lamented and revered friend Mr Southey enhances the pleasure I receive upon this occasion.
>
> The appointment I feel however imposes Duties which far advanced in life as I am I cannot venture to undertake and I must therefore beg leave to decline the acceptance of an offer that I shall always remember with no unbecoming pride.
>
> Her Majesty will not I trust disapprove of a determination forced upon me by my reflections which it is impossible for me to set aside.
>
> Deeply feeling the Distinction conferred upon me and grateful for the terms in which your Lordship has made the communication I have the Honor to be, My Lord
>
> Your Lordship's most obedt Humble Servt,
>
> W. W. (*Letters* 7.4: 421)

Wordsworth's letter makes clear that he feels the offer to be an "Honor," one constituted by both his "gratification" at being offered a post "approved by" the

queen, but also by his "enhance[d] . . . pleasure" of being thought worthy to succeed Southey. Wordsworth here links the laureateship to the will of the monarch, but also to his own intimate circle and the recent history of the office itself (through the figure of Southey). But Wordsworth also understands the position to be one that "imposes Duties": the duty to produce poetry, a duty imposed from above. News of Wordsworth declining the laureateship reached London, and was leaked to the press. A brief piece appeared in the *The Times*, approving of the offer having been made to "the greatest of living poets" and noting Wordsworth's "reasonable" refusal "on account of his advanced age" ("Laureateship" 6). But the Lord Chamberlain was not satisfied with Wordsworth's response: upon receiving the refusal, he immediately dispatched a letter to Peel, writing that "Wordsworth declines, but on grounds, which may, I sh[oul]d think, be removed" and asking, "shall I tell him that there is little or nothing to do?" (Sackville-West Add. 40526 f.408). The letter ends with the Lord Chamberlain promising to see Peel "at the Palace today," and the two must have further discussed the matter, for both then sent letters to Wordsworth. The Lord Chamberlain's follow-up "press[es] the appointment upon" Wordsworth, stating that the office "could not in any way interfere with [his] habits of country retirement" (Wordsworth, *Letters* 7.4: 423 n2). Peel's letter, meanwhile, makes absolutely clear that the offer should be understood as an honour sanctioned specifically by the queen and without any imposed duties:

> The offer was made to you by the Lord Chamberlain, with my entire concurrence, not for the purpose of imposing on you any onerous or disagreeable duties, but in order to pay you that tribute of respect which is justly due to the first of living poets. The Queen

> entirely approved of the nomination, and there is unanimous feeling on the part of all who have heard of the proposal (and it is pretty generally known) that there could not be a question about the selection. Do not be deterred by the fear of any obligations which the appointment may be supposed to imply. I will undertake that you shall have nothing *required* of you. But the Queen can select no one whose claims for respect and honour, on account of eminence as a poet, can be placed in competition with yours. I trust you will not longer hesitate to accept it. (Wordsworth, *Letters* 7.4: 424 n2, original emphasis)

Not simply a recognition of the poet's accomplishment, Peel's renewed offer of the laureateship defines the office as a justly paid "tribute of respect." The concept of tribute carries with it the connotation of a debt to a superior being paid, and Peel thus rhetorically reverses the social order: Wordsworth is positioned in the letter not as the servant to the monarch he will become, but as a poet-sovereign. "The king-poet of our times," (Browning and Barrett Browning 6: 28) as Elizabeth Barrett Browning once called Wordsworth, is pressed into accepting the laureateship because it is what he is owed as "the first of living poets."

Peel's letter evacuates poetry from the office designed to honour poetry: the honour bestowed on the poet is that he is not obligated to write a certain kind of poetry. Wordsworth will, Peel assures him, be protected from the "onerous and disagreeable duties" of writing laureate verse. This is an important moment in the history of the institution: its previously doubled nature, encompassing both honour for the poet and duty to the Crown, is replaced paradoxically by sinecure. There is room here for the possibility of Wordsworth writing non-laureate poetry during his period in office (which he did), but his production of poetry was not reduced to being a function of the laureateship. Without any duties attached to the office, Wordsworth accepts. But his response to Peel massages the paradox into a

new meaning for the institution. His letter to Peel restores rhetorical social order and points the meaning of laureateship in a new direction:

> I could not but be deterred from incurring responsibilities which I might not prove equal to at so late a period of life; but as my mind has not been entirely set at ease by the very kind and most gratifying Letter with which you have honored me, and by a second communication from the Lord Chamberlain to the same effect, and in a like spirit, I have accepted with unqualified pleasure a Distinction sanctioned by her Majesty, and which expresses, upon authority entitled to the highest respect, a sense of the national importance of poetic Literature, and so favorable an opinion of the success with which it has been cultivated by one, who, after his additional mark of your esteem, cannot refrain from again assuring you how deeply sensible he is of the many and great obligations he owes to your goodness. (*Letters* 7.4: 425)

Picking up the discourse of debt and repayment running through Peel's letter, Wordsworth's acceptance suggests that being expected to write poetry expressly for the laureateship would constitute "incurring responsibilities," a debt he would be unable to repay. However, in the final lines of the letter, Wordsworth incurs an entirely different responsibility. The new laureate is, in the end, the debtor. The "many and great obligations" Wordsworth "owes" are not Peel's "onerous and disagreeable duties" of laureate verse; Wordsworth is in debt because he has been relieved of duty, while still bearing the "Distinction sanctioned by her Majesty" and the "mark of [Peel's] esteem."

But Wordsworth's letter also presses the laureateship into a new form. Because the duties of the office have been removed, the post can only be understood as part of an economy of honour. But why, for Wordsworth, would a poet be honoured in this fashion? Not, it would seem, for the sake of either the office's history or one poet's singular achievements. While he admits the

"favorable . . . opinion" of his own "success," his letter redefines the office as representative of something beyond himself or his own verse. His public silence as poet laureate, sanctioned at both the parliamentary and monarchical levels of state power, points not toward the importance of laureate poetry, but "the national importance of poetic Literature." Absent the service function of the laureateship, Wordsworth recasts the office with a larger scope than any previous laureate had enjoyed – as an institution that supports poetry's importance to and for the nation. In this instance, Wordsworth the laureate is not a court poet, but instead the state's expression of its belief in poetry's "national importance." The office of laureate can be held by only one poet, but that poet's silent "honour" is emblematic of the crucial role that poetry has to play in the life of the nation. Put more precisely, the laureate becomes a figure for the state sanctioning the necessity of poetry in the life of the nation.

But Wordsworth's position on what constitutes the "national importance of poetic Literature" is not as easily pinned down as this letter might suggest. To flesh out the contours of this idea, one that has little to do with the courtly pronouncements of a laureate, I turn to an examination of the few available moments that constitute Wordsworth's laureate practice. Despite his final acceptance of the laureateship,Wordsworth seems to have remained less than overjoyed by his appointment. On 4 April 1843, the same day he wrote the letter to Peel expressing "unqualified pleasure" at accepting the laureateship,[17] Wordsworth also wrote a brief message to his brother Christopher:

[17] Wordsworth also wrote to the Lord Chamberlain that day, and the letter was forwarded to Peel

> After declining the Laureatship, I have accepted the Appointment in a consequence of a renewed offer from the Lord Chamberlain enforced by a Letter from a high Quarter[18] which removed my objections, and left me not at liberty to refuse without the utmost ungratiousness the Appointment. (*Letters* 7.4: 425)

The juridical terminology employed here – the offer is "enforced" and the poet "not at liberty to refuse" – suggests that, despite the removal of duty from the office, Wordsworth nonetheless feels that something indeed has been imposed upon him. Those in control of the appointment on the side of the state seem to have been more satisfied with the outcome of their labours. In his final communication on the topic with the Lord Chamberlain, Peel writes that the two "have settled" the appointment "very satisfactorily" by making "a good appointment and prevent[ing] a bad one" (Add. 40526 f.411).[19] Wordsworth's response to his appointment, however, shows a trace of discomfort with the imposition of state power onto the private life of the poet. It is this suggestion of discomfort I wish to explore further in what follows. Wordsworth was an avowed patriot, but this did not necessarily extend to a poetics of public nationalist verse written for the monarchy. It is my contention that Wordsworth specifically resists those traditions of laureateship that publicly fuse poetry and nationalism; instead, on several occasions he disavows laureateship verse in favour of constructing a

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as a means of confirming the poet's acceptance (Add. 40526 f.410). There is no mention of this document in Wordsworth's *Letters*, and it seems not to have survived in either the Peel papers of the British Library or in the correspondence of the Lord Chamberlain's office in the National Archive, Kew.

[18] Sir Robert Peel.

[19] It is unclear what might have constituted a "bad" appointment for Peel. Several other poets were suggested for the post, including Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Alfred Tennyson. Peel had, only days before Wordsworth's appointment, received a letter from the MP Lord Francis Egerton. The letter urges Peel to consider Alfred Tennyson for the position, mainly on the grounds that "the salary would save him from *absolute starvation*" (British Library Manuscript Add. 40526 f.350, original emphasis).

private relationship with the queen. Wordsworth's rhetoric reaches back to the language of earlier systems of literary patronage (he accepts the honour of the queen's recognition) while also moving the laureateship into a new form. By maintaining a position of writing only privately to the queen, he rejects laureateship tradition of both court performance and periodical publication of odes in favour of maintaining an individual poetic voice. Rather than the false, nationalist unification of the eighteenth century odes (and even the early laureate work of Southey), Wordsworth chooses a laureate practice that more closely aligns him with the interiority and discipline of Foucault's individual, governmental subject. In being poet laureate, he is not interested in aligning himself with the state's ideological work; however, his own laureate practice suggests the degree to which the liberal governmental subject had, by the 1840s, pervaded his own poetics. As in Foucault's distinction between the sovereign and governmental models of power, Wordsworth's self-surveilling silence represents neither total resistance to duty and convention (his eventual acceptance of the title of laureate is evidence enough of this) nor the wholesale self-discipline and self-censorship often associated with the liberal governmental subject today. As I have suggested above, the productive tension sustained between these two poles of governmentality (the imperative towards a certain interiority of the subject and the important private poetics thereby made possible; and, the potentially constraining panoptic public culture that likely plays a part in generating the desire precisely *for* such privacy) shows some of the fraught ideas about publicity, privacy, and poetry that are at stake in Wordsworth's thorough – if silent –

refiguring of the laureateship. To be clear, Wordsworth's move towards a far more interior or governmental laureate subject – indeed, 'voice' is no longer the word here – is neither wholly liberating nor conservative, neither purely radical nor apathetic. His reshaping of the laureateship is, instead, a reflection and instantiation of the change (not progression) Foucault describes. While the model of governmentality (or any model of power and authority) is not to be endorsed lightly, Wordsworth's ability to shift the terms of public knowledge about poetics and politics are one example of the *possibilities* of these early shifts in the ways in which power was brokered.

It is not only through silence, however, that Wordsworth theorizes poetics. Indeed, Wordsworth's poetic project is littered with concern over just what poetry can do. As early as the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads,* in fact, Wordsworth focuses on the usefulness of poetry. Indeed, it is this poetry's "worthy purpose" (*Prose* 1: 125) that sets it apart. As David Lloyd and Paul Thomas argue in *Culture and the State*, the "worthy purpose" in Wordsworth's poetics is tied to the ultimate production of "an ethically cultivated disposition in its reader" (71). Ethics always points to the extra-textual world, to material decisions about what is good or right, what obligations and freedoms one has, and what actions should be taken; ethics has implications for the way in which each individual chooses to act upon the world. For the early Wordsworth, the reader's ethical disposition comes about through a process of replication: the reader takes on the structures of the "*intrinsically* ethical" poetry. If the proposed goal of Wordsworth's project in the *Lyrical Ballads* is to remake the reader in the 'figure' of poetry itself, then it can

be compared to the "poet's prayer" in the fly leaf verses to Queen Victoria, which also propose a transaction between the reader and the text.

Wordsworth continued to refine his poetics throughout his career and by late in his life had established a clear division of political labour (of "purpose") between poetry and prose. I will examine two instances in Wordsworth's late career where this division becomes particularly visible. Such a division casts poetry as political, but only insofar as it reforms the mind of the reader so that she or he might act in the public sphere; put another way, Wordsworth's division of labour between the private work of poetry and the public political arguments of his prose is in keeping with his resistance to any public poetic duties associated with a traditional laureateship. The "national importance of poetic Literature" of which Wordsworth writes when accepting the laureateship can be located in this political, but not public, relationship between the reader and the text. While poetry can make certain impressions upon the reader that might ultimately impact her or his choices in the public sphere, it is only prose that can make specific and logical arguments regarding matters of what he calls "public affairs" (Postscript 240).

Wordsworth's clear insistence on poetry's privacy – particularly with respect to the laureateship – is made clear in a letter he wrote to his American friend and editor Henry Reed one year after his appointment to office. The letter details Wordsworth's and his wife's journey back from a visit at Cambridge, where his brother Christopher was then Master of Trinity College (Gill, *Victorians* 13). During their return, they were held up at Northampton waiting for Queen

Victoria, *en route* to the nearby Burleigh House. Wordsworth's letter describes the scene, one of adulatory crowds, and his own response to the delay:

> On our return home we were detained two hours at Northampton by the vast crowd assembled to greet the Queen on her way to Burleigh House. Shouts and ringing of bells there were in abundance, but these are things of course – it did please us however greatly to see every village we passed through for the space of 22 miles decorated with triumphal arches, and every cottage however humble with its little display of laurel boughs and flowers, hung from the windows and doors. The people young and old were all making a holy day, and the Queen if she had the least of a human heart in her could not but be affected with these universal manifestations of affectionate loyalty. (*Letters* 7.4: 626-27)

Although Wordsworth appears not to have enjoyed the loudness of this public display, he takes pleasure in the decorated villages, and, most of all in what the entire experience suggests – "universal manifestations of affectionate loyalty" for the queen. In this vignette, Wordsworth also sets himself apart from the crowd. In part, this is a practical matter – he is set apart by virtue of his status as traveler. But Wordsworth also places himself in a doubly privileged position that not only separates him from the masses, but also links him to the queen. He is an observer of the "vast crowd" that is "assembled" in his homeward path. He also, however, constructs a narrative of Queen Victoria's response, one which lies somewhere between empathy and moral projection: if, he suggests, she possesses "the least of a human heart," then she must be "affected" by the display. The Northampton crowd is characterized in the letter to Reed as relatively rural and often "humble." And although this crowd, like the one in London, had "one identity," (its "*universal* manifestations of affectionate loyalty"), the group gathered along Queen Victoria's route does not suffer from a state of "no meaning." The

Northampton crowd gathers for the sake of the queen – for both the sight of celebrity and the manifestation of patriotic monarchism. Wordsworth sees them as effecting a transformation of space and time: "The people young and old," he writes, "were all making a holy day." In refashioning the space of their everyday lives with "triumphal arches," "laurel bows," and "flowers," they also change the nature of the day itself; their actions produce "a holy day." For Wordsworth, this is both moving and proper collective action, but not a scene to which he feels personally linked as a member of the crowd. The potential for Wordsworth to connect in a meaningful way with this enjoyable scene is circumscribed by his aloofness from the crowd and his connection – as poet laureate, I would argue – to Queen Victoria. The conclusion of his letter to Reed expresses a poet's afterthought:

> I much regret that it did not strike me at the moment to throw off my feelings in verse, for I had ample time to have done so, and might perhaps have contrived to present through some of the authorities the tribute to my royal Mistress. How must these words shock your republican ears! But you are too well acquainted with mankind and their history not to be aware that love of country can clothe itself in many shapes! (*Letters* 7.4: 627)

Wordsworth finds himself wishing not just that he *had* written a poem, but that he had even *thought* to write one. In terms of the traditions of laureateship, Wordsworth's poetic silence in this moment is telling: he only recognizes afterwards that it would have been an appropriate moment for him to write a poem to the queen. But even this desire is one that does not fit well with the traditions of laureateship, where verse is generally either performed for a court audience or circulated in the periodical press. Wordsworth's desire to have

"contrived" delivery of the imaginary poem to the queen suggests his refusal of the traditional role of poet laureate. It does not occur to Wordsworth to write a publicly accessible (i.e., published or performed) ode commemorating this event; it is a more intimate poetic connection with the queen that he seeks, rather than the potential audience of the crowd he separates himself from.

A clue to the construction of Wordsworth's more private relationship with the queen can be found in the final lines of the passage. Wordsworth, as always, is aware of his audience: he does not expect the American republican Reed to be sympathetic to his desire to provide a "tribute" (with its connotations of a debt paid to power) to the monarch. But Wordsworth contextualizes his monarchism as a symptom of patriotism, "that love of country" that "can clothe itself in many shapes." Patriotism is, for Wordsworth, not a public political idea or a unifying nationalism. It is instead allied with the individual's repertoire of types of "love." As far back as the first draft of the *Prelude* (composed between 1798 and 1799), patriotism is constructed in these terms – along with the moon, patriotism is figured as a reflection of the life-sustaining light of the sun:

> And from like feelings, humble though intense,
> To patriotic and domestic love
> Analogous, the moon to me was dear,
> For I would dream away my purposes
> Standing to look upon her while she hung
> Midway between the hills as if she knew
> No other region but belonged to thee,
> Yea, appertained by a peculiar right
> To thee and thy grey huts, my native vale. (2: 228-36)

Here patriotism is a mode of "love" rather than a unifying social force. Patriotism is an adjective, a subcategory, of love. Wordsworth's patriotism connects the

individual to the larger nation through emotion, but still privileges the feelings of the individual as the origin. It seems, then, no surprise that Wordsworth might resist the traditions of laureateship, which favour the public display of a unifying nationalism over private patriotic communication with the queen.

This concept of patriotism as individual, along with Wordsworth's overall reticence to assume any type of public duty as poet laureate, goes some way to making sense of the poet's extreme secrecy about the one poem he did send to Queen Victoria. "Written upon a fly leaf in the Copy of the Author's Poems which was sent to her Majesty Queen Victoria," a set of verses inscribed in the 1845 edition of Wordsworth's *Poetical Works*, was the result of Wordsworth having been convinced, by the end of 1845, to offer a copy of his new edition to the queen. He wrote as much to his publisher, Edward Moxon, asking him to arrange for the elaborate binding suitable for Queen Victoria:

> It has been strongly recommended to me to send a Copy of our Vol to the Queen; and for the purpose of having it bound I beg you w[oul]d send one in Sheets to Mr Westley with the best impression of the Print and Title Page you can select. (7.4: 736)

The presentation copy is one traditional laureate practice that Wordsworth did bend to (as he did attending a court levee in order to meet Queen Victoria), but it is clear that Wordsworth wished for the transaction to be kept private, and that the contents of the poem he inscribed on the fly leaf would clarify that the book was presented as a private gift from servant to monarch rather than as an official poetic offering. In contrast, Tennyson published nearly every volume of his work after coming to office in 1850 with a poetic dedication "To the Queen." Wordsworth's postscript to the letter to Moxon underlines his expectation of

privacy – as opposed to the public display inherited in the laureate tradition. He reminds Moxon, "Pray do not mention the Presentation Copy to *any one*" (7.4: 736, original emphasis). In late February, Wordsworth received a letter from the Lord Chamberlain "conveying her M[ajest]y's thanks and the expression of her admiration of the verses in the fly leaf" (7.4: 760-61).

The fly leaf poem itself is in keeping with both the secrecy of its production and Wordsworth's refusal of laureate tradition. But despite the poem's immediate disavowal of a connection to the office of poet laureate, both the form and content of the verses share common features with the most traditional of laureate odes. I reprint here the version of the poem found in the Royal Library manuscript:[20]

> Deign Sovereign mistress! to accept a Lay
> No laureate Offering of elaborate art;
> But salutation taking its glad way
> From deep recesses of a loyal heart.
>
> Queen, Wife, and Mother! may all-judging Heaven
> Shower with a bounteous hand on Thee and Thine
> Felicity that only can be given
> On earth to goodness blest by Grace divine.
>
> Lady! devoutly honored and beloved
> Through every realm confided to thy sway
> May'st Thou pursue thy course by God approved,
> And He will teach thy People to obey;
>
> As Thou art wont, thy Sovereignty adorn
> With Woman's gentleness, yet firm and staid;
> So shall that earthly crown thy brows have worn
> Be chang'd for one whose glory cannot fade.

[20] See "Written upon a fly leaf in the Copy of the Author's Poems which was sent to her Majesty Queen Victoria" in *Last Poems*, 241-42 for variants between this text and that found in the poet's manuscripts. The poem is known by another title in its Royal Library form: "Deign Sovereign Mistress!"

> And now, by duty urged, I lay this Book
> Before thy Majesty, in humble trust
> That on its simplest pages Thou wilt look
> With a benign indulgence more than just.
>
> Nor wilt Thou blame the Poet's earnest prayer
> That issuing hence may steal into thy mind
> Some solace under weight of royal care
> Or grief—the inheritance of human Kind;
>
> For know we not that from celestial spheres,
> When Time was young, an inspiration came
> (Oh! were it mine) to hallow saddest tears,
> And help Life onward in its noblest aim.

The poem is an odd singularity – the laureate's only piece of verse written for the queen, but also one that expressly states that it should be received as "no Laureate offering of elaborate Art." Wordsworth characterizes the poem as a "lay," a short lyric intended for performance as a song, rather than an ode, the traditional genre of the laureate. Both types of poem are "intended to be sung" (*OED*), but the ode is a more formal genre than the lay. The similarity in the historical connotations of their mode of performance serves to make more clear their differences in mode of address. Although this "lay" is approximately the same length as the compulsory annual odes written by eighteenth-century laureates, Wordsworth links the poem with his own verse history rather than with that of the laureate ode: in "The Emigrant Mother" (1802), the speaker uses the term to recreate the language relationship between a mother and child:

> Once having seen her clasp with fond embrace
> This Child, I chanted to myself a lay,
> Endeavouring, in our English tongue, to trace
> Such things as she unto the Babe might say:
> And thus, from what I heard and knew, or guessed,
> My song the workings of her heart expressed. (9-14)

"Lay" is used in this poem to signify verse of humble and informal origin, and the repetition of the term in the fly-leaf verses therefore suggests that the poem be read as a private greeting rather than the "elaborate Art" of the laureate ode. In other words, the poem should be read as an informal mode of address, from poet to monarch. Although Wordsworth takes up the very public subject of Queen Victoria's reign (making a virtue of her "sovereignty adorn[ed] / With Woman's gentleness" and suggesting the "sway" of her rule were not uncommon ways of representing the queen[21]), the poem is insistently private. Handwritten on the fly leaf to a volume of Wordsworth's poems, it refuses not just the public voice of the laureateship ode, but also the usual mode of publication for such odes. Beginning in 1731, with Colley Cibber's first new year's ode in the first issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, all laureate odes were regularly published (as opposed to being performed at court and sporadically published in the periodical press), and this practice continued into the laureateship of Robert Southey (until the king, due to illness, no longer had a public presence). The poem's specifically anti-laureate content is not quite what is at issue here; in fact, the fly leaf poem shares many resemblances with the standard panegyric sentiments of the eighteenth-century ode's celebration of royal power. Instead, what I suggest is most important here is Wordsworth's precise choice to 'publish' his one poem written for the queen in the most intimate and private form possible – his own hand. Furthermore, in presenting the queen with a copy of his own collected works, he maintains the definition of laureateship as recognizing "the national importance of poetic

[21] See, for example, Adrienne Munich, *Queen Victoria's Secrets*, 2-5.

literature" written in his letter to Peel. Unlike Tennyson, who publishes all of his collected works after 1850 with a prefatory poem dedicating the volume "To the Queen," Wordsworth presents the queen with a volume self-consciously defined as issuing from outside the office of poet laureate.

Wordsworth's fly leaf verses are thus not just singular as (anti-)laureate poetry, but are insistent on their singularity as a text. The poem was not published at all during Wordsworth's lifetime (he was still to complete the *Collected Works* of 1849-1850), appearing in print only in Alexander B. Grosart's 1876 collection of the poet's *Prose Works* (Curtis 505), which included some previously unpublished material from manuscripts. In addition, the volume to which the poem was attached was intended for the Royal Library – a further indication that the poem was meant for, at most, limited circulation amongst members of the court. During what remained of Wordsworth's life, then, the poem was intended to remain outside the sphere of publication, outside the sphere of public consumption.

But, despite what I call the poem's insistence on privacy, on non-performance and non-publication, the fly leaf verses do engage with the question of what poetry 'does'. There can be no doubt that Wordsworth intends the poem and the inscribed volume to be an "offering" of some kind. "[E]laborate art" it may not be, but it is a presentation the poet makes "by duty urged." Wordsworth clearly feels some responsibility with regard to his role as poet laureate; however, the "duty" he feels does not press him in the direction of the performed and published verse that is so much a part of the laureate tradition before his tenure in

office. Wordsworth expresses the idea that he is bound by duty to "lay this Book / Before thy Majesty." The repetition of "lay" transforms its first meaning in the poem (as informal poetry) to a generic marker to a verb for the volume's presentation by the poet, doubles the word's meaning: in "lay[ing] this Book," the short poem itself becomes the act of its presentation as tribute.

In this transition from noun to verb, from "lay" as poem to "lay" as the material manifestation of tribute, poetry breaches the boundary between representation and the material world. This is a point underlined in the poem's penultimate stanza. The speaker hopes that this poem will "steal into" the "mind" of the queen, providing her with "solace" from the "weight" of both her "royal care" and the "grief" that is "the inheritance of human Kind." For Wordsworth, poetry has the power to effect change in the mind of its reader – even when the intended audience is only one person. The content of the fly leaf verses is avowedly nationalist, imperialist, and monarchist; and while Wordsworth's insistence on this poem remaining out of circulation can be reasonably assumed to be a matter of preference, the choice to keep these political positions outside of the public realm is in keeping with Wordsworth's late poetics, which posit a division of labour between poetry and prose.

The first example I examine in this context is Wordsworth's 1835 volume *Yarrow Revisited,* which represents Wordsworth's most substantive statement on poetics in the late stages of his career. *Yarrow Revisited* was published with a Postscript that is as much a statement of Wordsworth's late poetics as it is a treatise objecting to the institution of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 (the

'New Poor Law') and to the issue of Church Reform raised by the passing of the Church Temporalities Act of 1833 and the repeal of both the Test and Corporation Act and the Roman Catholic Relief Act (in 1828 and 1829, respectively). In the process of making his objections to these legislative changes, Wordsworth outlines the relationship he sees between his Tory politics and his poetics. Poetry, he argues, cannot (and *should* not) breach the boundary between the realm of imagination and the world of public affairs. This position on poetry's purpose, a purpose that lies outside the realm of public policy, is pushed to its logical extreme in the Postscript when Wordsworth invokes both Milton and his own published and unpublished verse as evidence for his political argument. Poetry's constraints are tested again in the second example I examine. Wordsworth's "Sonnet on the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway," published in 1844, at the beginning of his laureateship, struggles with the question of how close poetry can come to arguing a specific matter of policy. Written to protest a proposed railway line into the Lake District, the sonnet was first published in the *Morning Post* in the fall of 1844. Its title undeniably links it to public affairs, but the text of the sonnet pulls back from this engagement by invoking the power of nature to make its own argument against the intrusion of the railway. The sonnet rides a very fine line: on the one hand, it unquestionably makes an argument about a matter of policy, but on the other, it is the limit case for Wordsworth's struggle to maintain poetry's purpose outside of matters of national politics.

The division of labour between prose and poetry constructed in Wordsworth's Postscript to *Yarrow Revisited* assigns a specific purpose for each

genre. The introductory paragraphs of the Postscript link the poetic contents of the volume to the policy issues with which Wordsworth concerns himself, in what he calls the "plain prose" of the Postscript:

> In the present volume, as in those that have preceded it, the reader will have found occasionally opinions expressed upon the course of public affairs, and feelings given vent to as national interests excited them. Since nothing, I trust, has been uttered but in the spirit of reflective patriotism, those notices are left to produce their own effect; but, among the many objects of general concern, and the changes going forward, which I have glanced at in verse, are some especially affecting the lower orders of society: in reference to these, I wish here to add a few words in plain prose.
>
> Were I conscious of being able to do justice to those important topics, I might avail myself of the periodical press for offering anonymously my thoughts, such as they are, to the world; but I feel that, in procuring attention, they may derive some advantage, however small, from my name, in addition to that of being presented in a less fugitive shape. It is also not impossible that the state of mind which some of the foregoing poems may have produced in the reader, will dispose him to receive more readily the impression which I desire to make, and to admit the conclusions I would establish. (240)

Wordsworth argues here that his poetry contains some reference to matters of "public affairs" and "national interests." But despite the poetry's subject matter gesturing toward matters of policy, a tension between poetry's privacy and the more public stage of Wordsworth's political concerns persists. This initial formulation of poetry having a strong relationship to politics is held back by Wordsworth's insistence that the verses "have been uttered . . . in the spirit of reflective patriotism." Invoking the concept of "reflective patriotism" – that mode of "love" discussed above in reference to both the *Prelude* and Wordsworth's letter to Henry Reed – pulls the poems back into the realm of the private. The "reflective patriotism" of *Yarrow Revisited*'s Postscript can thus be linked to

individual love for one's country. Patriotism is allied with feeling, with the individual, and not with the realm of public policy. The poems in *Yarrow Revisited* might arise from "national interests," but they do not make specific arguments on policy. As Stephen Gill argues, the Postscript condemns the New Poor Law, asserting that political economy – rather than the agency of poor individuals – should be more closely linked to poverty in the thinking of politicians ("England's Samuel" 6), and that the New Poor Law "proceeds too much upon the presumption that it is a labouring man's own fault if he be not, as the phrase is, beforehand with the world" (Wordsworth, Postscript 246). For example, a sonnet on an agricultural worker living in poverty begins: "Deplorable his lot who tills the ground, / His whole life long tills it, with heartless toil / Of villain-service" (194). The poem ends not with the poet's voice calling for political change, but rather with "mercy" crying out to "abate / These legalized oppressions" on the grounds of natural rights: the "high claim / To live and move exempt from all control / Which fellow-feeling doth not mitigate!" In a similar vein, "A Jewish Family" goes some lengths to describe not just the beauty (the speaker suggests they would make a fitting composition for Raphael), but also the morality of a "poor family" (74). Despite their poverty, the boy of the family is "faithful to the mother's knee, / Nor of her arms ashamed" (75) and the family as a whole remains protected:

> Mysterious safeguard, that, in spite
> Of poverty and wrong,
> Doth here preserve a living light,
> From Hebrew fountains sprung. (75)

Both poems point to the importance of "safeguard[ing]" the poor, but neither does so by putting forward the poet's views on the current legislation. Instead, "mercy" in the first poem voices a view on public policy, and, in the second poem, it is god (whether Christian or Jewish is elided in the term "[m]ysterious safeguard") who appears to preserve the Jewish family. The poor are both worthy of protection and capable of beauty – what they are not capable of is altering their economic condition. These poems put forward these views, which might function as the premises for specific engagement in public policy, but it remains for Wordsworth's prose to do the work of such detailed political intervention. The volume's poems, he argues in the Postscript, will "produce their own effect" by constructing a "state of mind . . . in the reader, [that] will dispose him to receive more readily the impression [Wordsworth] desire[s] to make" (240). Poetry can, as a consequence, ready the mind for prose political discourse, but it cannot make the "impression" on its own.

Important to Wordsworth's formulation of the political work of the Postscript is his discussion of the periodical press. He gives several reasons for not publishing his opinions anonymously in the press: that his name will grant the ideas further stature, that his views will be more permanent ("less fugitive") coming in volume form, and that the relationship between poetry and prose will render the reader more likely to share the political views he furthers in the Postscript. In 1835, anonymous publication of prose was the norm, and Wordsworth understood that in putting his views forward anonymously, what he would gain in the corporate identity that came along with anonymous publications

he would lose in not having his political views associated with his cultural capital as a highly regarded poet. As Susan Hamilton argues, until the advent of the open-platform editorial style popularized by the *Nineteenth Century* and the *Contemporary Review* in the 1860s and 70s, "periodical titles were generally defined by consistent editorial positions on major topics and, vitally, by unsigned writing" (42). In publishing anonymously, Wordsworth would lose an important source of cultural capital that could support his views – his name. Mark Rose suggests that signed authorship produces "a kind of brand name, a recognizable sign that the cultural commodity will be of a certain kind and quality" (1). Signing one's legal name, what Gérard Genette terms "onymity" (10) is as much a deliberate choice as publishing anonymously or under a pseudonym (Genette 10). For Tennyson, use of his own name functions as a guarantee, based upon his stature as a poet, that his views can be taken seriously. In some important ways, then, Wordsworth's Postscript suggests a very fine distinction between the functions of poetry and prose. While he states that the political work of the Postscript is not proper content for poetry, he nonetheless founds his prose politics on both his signature as poet and the presumed positive effects of his verse. Again, we witness Wordsworth strategically navigating his way through the imperfect and shifting conditions of his culture's changing orientations to sovereignty and the status of the public subject – here, by using his poetically-charged name as a means to a political end.

This fine distinction of poetry's purpose is maintained in what is perhaps the most well-known of Wordsworth's 'political' interventions, his sonnet and

accompanying letters on the Kendal and Windermere Railway. The poem is also one of the few original pieces of verse Wordsworth published during his laureateship, and can be read as a further indication that he placed a strict division between his 'own' poetry and the office. The construction proposition to which Wordsworth objected would bring the railway to the Lake District, connecting the Lancaster and Carlisle Railway to Kendal, with an additional terminus north-west at Windermere (Wordsworth, *Prose* 3: 331). Wordsworth was passionately opposed to this development, and, although he was destined to lose this battle, he wrote and published a sonnet on the topic in the *Morning Post*. In keeping with Wordsworth's official silence as laureate, the sonnet was presented as the poet's private view on the proposed rail development. In choosing to publish under his own name in the periodical press, Wordsworth avails himself of the advantages of periodical publication (despite his earlier view of the press as "fugitive"). The poem appeared first in the *Morning Post*, on 16 October 1844. Wordsworth was at the height of his fame, and his signature would carry a great deal of weight. The publication was likely to have been a positive move for the *Morning Post.* The sonnet can be considered what Linda K. Hughes terms a "celebrity poem" (109) – one a newspaper is eager to print because of the high value of its author. Furthermore, newspapers did not view the publication of poems as "filler," but rather, as Linda K. Hughes suggests, as "a value-added visual and literary feature" which "lights up the page" while also "suggesting a shift from mundane to sacred or spiritual spaces in which contemplation can occur" (103). Wordsworth was not above employing the periodical press when doing so suited him (and his fame

ensured that it suited the periodical press as well), but it appears that his primary consideration in this publication was timeliness: Wordsworth moved quickly to object to the development, and the *Morning Post* afforded him the platform to do so.

The poem objects to the railway's intrusion on the purity of the Lake District. Similar to the *Yarrow Revisited* poem "Deplorable his lot who tills the ground," the railway sonnet rides the knife-edge, pushing to its limit Wordsworth's poetics of non-intervention in political affairs:

> Is then no nook of English ground secure
> From rash assault? Schemes of retirement sown
> In youth, and mid the busy world kept pure
> As when their earliest flowers of hope were blown,
> Must perish;—how can they this blight endure?
> And must he too the ruthless change bemoan
> Who scorns a false utilitarian lure
> Mid his paternal fields at random thrown?
> Baffle the threat, bright Scene, from Orrest-head
> Given to the pausing traveller's rapturous glance:
> Plead for thy peace, thou beautiful romance
> Of nature; and, if human hearts be dead,
> Speak, passing winds; ye torrents, with your strong
> And constant voice, protest against the wrong.

Wordsworth is not wholly objecting to the business of railroads *per se*, but is more concerned here with keeping the "blight" of the railway from the one "nook of English ground" that he views as "pure" and fit for "retirement." Wordsworth positions himself as one "[w]ho scorns a false utilitarian lure" and calls upon nature itself to "protest" the railway. The call to have the constant voice of the wind speak for the preservation of the natural world (of which it is a part) has doubled implications: Wordsworth suspects the possibility that "human hearts [are] dead" when it comes to this matter, and that perhaps the battle is all but lost.

At the same time, however, he calls upon nature to make its own argument: to present itself as evidence enough for preventing the "ruthless change" of the railway.

Although the railway was privately owned, railways were subject to regulation through the Board of Trade, which made reports to Parliament before railway companies could be incorporated (Wordsworth, *Prose* 3: 331-32, 334). Thus, Wordsworth's goal in publishing the sonnet was not to influence those who ran the railway, but the politicians and bureaucrats in charge of shepherding the project through the system of government approval. To this end, the day before the poem was published in the *Post*, Wordsworth composed a letter to W. E. Gladstone, then President of the Board of Trade. Over the next few months he published two lengthy letters in the *Morning Post* calling on the general public and, implicitly, members of the Board of Trade (Wordsworth, *Prose* 3: 332), to prevent the rail line.

This poem is something of an anomaly in Wordsworth's oeuvre, in that it addresses itself to a specific matter of governmental concern. At the same time, such is only clear from the poem's title, and not from its content – quite in keeping with Wordsworth's views on the separation of powers between prose and poetry. To balance his concept of the railway as a "rash assault" and "blight," the speaker's own agency for political change is abjured at the end of the poem in favour of an invocation to nature's power to prevent the encroachment of the railway: "Speak, passing winds; ye torrents, with your strong / And constant voice, protest against the wrong." For Wordsworth, then, poetry was simply not

the venue for specifically political discourse and he proved, especially in the Kendal and Windermere Railway sonnet, that he was willing to press the point to its limit. Despite Wordsworth's move from Jacobite to Tory, his view of the political use of poetry remained fairly constant throughout his career. In combination with his construction of patriotism as an individual emotion allied with love for country rather than unifying collective nationalism, his strict silence as poet laureate can be read as a refusal of the public claims of a laureate tradition that favoured published, nationalist odes.

There remains, however, one case where Wordsworth seems to have bent to the will of tradition. In 1847, Prince Albert requested that Wordsworth compose an ode to be performed at a ceremony installing the prince as Chancellor to the University of Cambridge. Wordsworth agreed, but was unable to write the poem because his daughter Dora was very ill (and subsequently died). The ode was, however, completed by Wordsworth's son-in-law, Edward Quillinan. Quillinan sketched an outline and composed the poem, which Wordsworth then approved. The "Installation Ode" was performed on July 6 of 1847 at the University of Cambridge Senate-House ceremony. Wordsworth went out of his way to refuse the poem's connection to the laureateship. In a letter to Thomas Attwood Walmisley, who composed the musical arrangement for the ode (and was Professor of Music at the university), Wordsworth makes the point clear:

> The heavy domestic affliction that presses on me, the very dangerous illness of my only daughter, makes it impossible for me to exert myself satisfactorily in this task. . . . P.S.—Do not misunderstand the word *task*. I only feel it one in reference to the great anxiety that I have alluded to, for I was not called on to furnish the *Installation Ode* in my capacity of Laureate, but simply

> as a poet to whom His Royal Highness was pleased to apply on the occasion. (*Letters* 7.4: 846)

The distinction between poet and poet laureate that Wordsworth draws in this letter seems as artificial as the one between the political function of poetry and prose in the Kendal and Windermere Railway texts, but it is one on which he insists nonetheless. By pressing this point, Wordsworth shows his refusal to write poetry in his capacity as laureate. This insistence is in keeping with the point he first made in accepting the laureateship – namely, that it should function as the state's expression of the "national importance of poetic Literature," rather than as a position from which one poet speaks for and to the nation. Throughout his poetic career, Wordsworth's work was fraught with tensions between public and private experience, and although the laureateship might seem to have presented him with the opportunity to fuse the poet of individual experience with the public nationalist so visible in his prose, Wordsworth's laureateship instead yielded a resounding public silence.

Wordsworth's public silence as poet laureate, coupled with the cultural capital he granted the institution by virtue of his fame, functioned to reform the institution – to clear the way – for the fraught, but very public, engagements Tennyson made as laureate after Wordsworth's death. If Robert Southey was forced to divide his poetry between laureate "duty" and poetic "conscience," Wordsworth refused to make such distinctions. His own sense of "duty" was discharged privately in the fly leaf poem volume alone. In the place of the old laureateship, Wordsworth erected a new office wherein *all* poetry issued from the voice of the poet alone and there was no laureate poetry at all. The unintended

outcome of this change to the office was that the next laureate, Tennyson, would need to painstakingly navigate the distinction between laureate and non-laureate verse.

The difficulties involved in making such a distinction became apparent on 25 April 1850, two days after Wordsworth died, when *The Times* published an article titled "Death of the Poet Wordsworth." What seems at first to be a tribute to Wordsworth's life becomes, by its end, a call to abolish the laureateship:

> Before concluding we would advert to a point which is perhaps more in keeping with the usual subjects of our columns than the humble tribute of admiration we have endeavoured to offer to the illustrious man who has just been called away. Let us hope that the office of Poet Laureate, which was dignified by its two last possessors, may never be conferred upon a person unworthy to succeed them. The title is no longer an honour, but a mere badge of ridicule, which can bring no credit to its wearer. It required the reputation of a Southey or a Wordsworth to carry them through an office so entirely removed from the ideas and habits of our time without injury to their fame. Let whatever emoluments [that] go with the name be commuted into a pension, and let the pension be bestowed upon a literary man without the ridiculous accompaniment of the bays. We know well enough that birthday odes have long since been exploded; but why retain a nickname, not a title, which must be felt as a degradation rather than an honour by its wearer? Having said thus much, we will leave the subject to the better judgment of those whose decision is operative in such matters. Assuredly, William Wordsworth needed no such Court distinctions or decorations. (5)

From the outset, this passage suggests that its content marks a return to *The Times*' "usual subjects"; the tribute to Wordsworth preceding it, though deserved and necessary, is figured as interruption and exception. In short, although the article's title is "Death of the Poet Wordsworth," its final paragraph decrying the laureateship is normalized as categorically the 'regular' work of *The Times*. The author goes on to suggest that only a very worthy poet should succeed

Wordsworth and Southey as laureate. The expectation being set up here – that only a great poet is worthy of the laureateship, and that perhaps *The Times* will throw in its lot with one poet or another – goes unmet. The office is not, for *The Times* writer, prestigious at all; it is precisely the opposite. The laureateship is "no longer an honour, but a mere badge of ridicule, which can bring no credit to its wearer." The laureateship is, the author argues, "entirely removed from the ideas and habits of our time." Importantly, *The Times* is not objecting to a poet being paid by the state, for the author suggests the laureate stipend be "commuted into a pension" given to "a literary man." It is, in fact, "the name" of the office, "the title," the "decorations," and the "degradation" of "Poet Laureate" that *The Times* objects to. Such a position has implications for conceptions of a nationalist poetic project like laureateship. For *The Times* writer, "degradation" is bestowed upon the laureate by virtue of the title – signalling that poetry's proper place is not within the court.

This idea is confirmed by the article's representation of Wordsworth. The article opens with a tribute expressing "feelings of much regret" over Wordsworth's death and a short passage criticizing him for being "rather so enamoured of his own judgment that he could brook no teacher." But *The Times* piece also celebrates Wordsworth's relationship to matters of national interest, the first of which (and, in fact, the origin of all) is his positive personal qualities: [t]here is much in the character, as well as in the works of William Wordsworth, to deserve hearty admiration" (5). The article goes on to examine Wordsworth's moral character at length:

> His life was as pure and spotless as his song. It is rendering a great service to humanity when a man exalted by intellectual capacities above his fellow-men holds out to them in his own person the example of a blameless life. As long as men are what they are it is well that the fashion of virtue should be set them by men whose rare abilities are object of envy and emulation even to the most dissolute and unprincipled. If this be true of the statesman, of the warrior, of the man of science, it is so in a tenfold degree of the poet and the man of letters. Their works are in the hands of the young and inexperienced. Their habits of life become insensibly mixed up with their compositions in the minds of their admirers. They spread the moral infection wider than other men, because those brought within their influence are singularly susceptible of contamination. The feelings, the passions, the imagination, which are busy with the compositions of the poet, are quickly interested in the fashion of his life. From "I would fain write so" to "I would fain live so" there is but little step. Under this first head of the English nation owes a deep debt of gratitude to William Wordsworth. Neither by the influence of his song, nor by the example of his life, has he corrupted or enervated our youth; by one, as by the other, he has purified and elevated, not soiled and abased, humanity. (5)

The passage quickly establishes that Wordsworth's life and work were "pure and spotless" and goes on to discuss why such moral purity is crucial. Important men can set "the fashion of virtue" for those with no other reason to be more than "what they are." This moral imperative is particularly important for poets, who "spread … moral infection" more widely than anyone else, a view that has much in common with Carlyle's idea of the poet-hero. More influential than "the statesman," "warrior," or "man of science," the poet has power over those most "susceptible to contamination," those apt to confuse the poem with the poet's life. Thus, the doubled purity of Wordsworth puts the nation itself in his "debt." The underlying premise of this argument is that poetry and moral (and therefore *national*) behaviour are inextricably bound in ways that they are not for other

influential members of society.[22] Wordsworth, the article argues, has borne this responsibility admirably.

Furthermore, *The Times* writer emphasizes the extent to which Wordsworth's influence has been primarily on the national stage. His immense popularity in England stood at odds with his comparatively small following across the Channel. But, for *The Times*, this is further indication of Wordsworth's intrinsic value:

> There must be something essentially "English" in his inspirations, for while few poets have exercised greater influence in his own country, on the continent his works are little known even to students who have devoted much time and attention to English literature …. There must, therefore, be some development of "English" thought in Wordsworth which is the secret to his success amongst ourselves, as of his failure in securing an European reputation …. It is probably the case that in no country of Europe is the love for a country life so strongly developed as in England, and no man could not linger out on a summer day by the river bank or on the hill side is capable of appreciating Wordsworth's poetry …. It was not in Wordsworth's genius to people the air with phantoms, but to bring the human mind in harmony with the operations of nature, of which he stood forth the poet and the interpreter. (5)

The Times positions Wordsworth as a particularly "English" poet, both in his "inspirations" and his "thought." He appeals to the English, and fails with other audiences, because the people of England have "strongly developed" a "love for a country life." Wordsworth is read as a poet of the "summer day" and, literally, of a rural point of view – "the river bank" and "the hill side" are the privileged locations to properly view *this* England. This gaze, always avoiding spectral "phantoms," is instead intent on "bring[ing] the human mind in harmony with the operations of nature."

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[22] See Armstrong, *Victorian Scrutinies*.

The last sentence of *The Times* article concludes that Wordsworth's "name will live in English literature, and his funeral song be uttered, amidst the spots which he has so often celebrated, and by the rivers and hills which inspired his verse" (5). The article and its argument end by invoking the longevity of the author over any specious claims for the longevity of the laurel. And so, although *The Times* proposes the idea of a pensioned poet connected to the monarch, the tribute nonetheless privileges the world outside of the royal court as the right site for poetry. This position represents the continued force of the view of poetry espoused by Thomas Gray, William Hazlitt, and Thomas Carlyle I discuss above, as well as suggesting that the next laureate will have his work cut out for him. How is it possible to bear the name of poet laureate without falling into the trap of speaking as a government agent? For Tennyson, the role of a straightforward Bourdieu plenipotentiary is not easily inhabited – this history of laureateship tradition had long been ridiculed. If poetic appropriateness can be measured by one's distance from court, and by one's purity as an individual, then how is it possible to write any verses in the service of the monarch without incurring both derision and dismissal? By showing that silence can indeed be a crucially critical orientation to the laureateship, Wordsworth reopens precisely that deceptively simple question, one that had seemed quite far gone: how can a laureate write poetry? If, for Wordsworth, both giving one's name over to the post wholeheartedly and shielding it entirely from public political discourse were both unacceptable as laureate programs, this chapter shows that his silence redefined –

ultimately, widened – the conventions through which future laureates would tackle the same impasse.

Following suit, the next poet to receive the "badge of ridicule" that accompanies the "name" of poet laureate proved at first to be quite ambivalent about the position. Tennyson had already warned of the difficulties involved in "becom[ing] a name" – one risked becoming a rusted and empty signifier of past deeds and giving up the quest "To follow knowledge like a sinking star, / Beyond the utmost bound of human thought" ("Ulysses" 31-32). But in his first laureate poem, a dedication "To the Queen" in the seventh edition of his *Poems*, Tennyson takes up this challenge, writing of "This laurel greener from the brows / Of him that uttered nothing base" (7-8). The laurel is born again, through Wordsworth's virtue, on the brow of a new poet laureate.

CHAPTER THREE: Tennyson, 1850-1855

Tennyson's first five years as poet laureate to Queen Victoria were characterized by a renovation of the institution. Indebted to the refusing silence of Wordsworth, Tennyson reinvented the laureateship free of the annual task verses with which it had so long been associated. But Tennyson's early work as poet laureate is characterized by elaborate negotiations between poetics and politics, between the calls of a patriotic poetics and the expectations of the state, and between the sometimes conflicting audiences of the reading publics he wished to speak to and the monarch he was loathe to offend. In this chapter I examine the vast majority of Tennyson's published work from 1850 to 1855 in order to provide an overview of his early years in office. If, as I argue in the previous chapter, Wordsworth's reshaping of laureateship can be linked to Foucault's concept of governmentality, so too can Tennyson's. Whereas Wordsworth's laureateship sustains a tension between governmentality's imperative towards the subject's interiority and panoptic public culture, this tension is grounded in poetic silence. Tennyson does not choose such a silence, but, like Wordsworth, engages with the same constraints of governmentality. The result is a new set of laureate practices – practices informed by the tensions of Wordsworth's silent laureateship, but constructed to meet the needs of a laureate who wished to publish a wide range of verses, including official laureate poems.

I begin this chapter with an examination of Tennyson's very first published works after becoming laureate. These texts, and their publication contexts, show a tension between nationalism and the traditions of laureateship on one hand and the patriotic and poetic duties Tennyson's texts sought to live up to. Tennyson's first laureate poem, "To The Queen," initially published as a dedication to the 7th edition[23] of his *Poems* (Tennyson, *Poems* 2: 462), demonstrates the laureate's early interest in negotiating the traditions of the office. Written in the mode of the traditional laureate ode, the dedication produces a framework for thinking through the laureate's potentially competing audiences and sources of poetic authority. In addition, I examine how the dedication sets an early precedent for Tennyson's laureateship – one that positions the laureate's entire *oeuvre* within the boundaries of the office. Following from this discussion, I explore the ways in which Tennyson constructs a sense of both expectation and duty – not always the same thing – pertaining to his laureate practice. In this section, I discuss the poems he composed in 1851 and 1852 – the "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington" and his six anonymously and pseudonymously published poems of earlier that same year. These poems highlight the degree to which Tennyson self-consciously constructed his laureate practice. Any and all verse he produced could be read as laureate utterance and thus as intrinsically connected to and reflecting upon the authority of the monarchy and his own authority as national poet. Wordsworth avoids this difficulty by refusing to write any laureate verse, but Tennyson, who chooses to write laureate verse, cannot. Taken together, the Wellington Ode, along

[23] Tennyson, Alfred. *Poems*. 7th edition. London: E. Moxon, 1851.

with the anonymous and pseudonymous poems demonstrate an attempt to meet the expectations Tennyson sees laureateship imposing upon him, while also making legible the often-conflicting investments the texts sought to reconcile as Tennyson explored the contours of the office. From early on in the laureateship, Tennyson cast himself as "always on duty," although there appears to have been no official expectation that he would do so. Indeed, his poems of this period show a laureate that is aware of and responsive to competing ideologies, sources of authority, and audiences, and a carefully controlled laureateship persona that exhibits the interiority and discipline of the liberal governmental subject.

Drawing on the contentions arising from the earliest laureate work, I then devote my attention to Tennyson's first new volume published after his appointment, *Maud, and Other Poems* (1855), and, specifically, to its title poem. I attend to *Maud* at length and I do so both because the poem is Tennyson's most controversial text during his tenure as laureate and because the poem's reception and content demonstrate a major attempt by Tennyson to fashion a set of practices that allow him to stage potent cultural critique as part of his laureate duty. *Maud* has proven to be one of Tennyson's most divisive poems, and I read it as a crucial piece of Tennyson's laureate practice. Although it was not written to commemorate a particular occasion (cf. the Wellington Ode or other of Tennyson's occasional verses), it was a poem that took up potent contemporary concerns – indeed, *Maud* is often considered to be Tennyson's contribution to the "Condition of England" question (Tucker 407; Culler 207; Riede 87; Harrison, *Romantic* 80, 86). The poem ends with its speaker intending to become a soldier

in the Crimea, and, by the time of *Maud*'s mid-war 1855 publication, Tennyson understood that the poem would be received as verse issuing from the laureate – in part because Tennyson had not sought to divide his official verse from the rest of his poetry (a distinction both Southey and Wordsworth maintained). Consequently, *Maud* was a poem that could not be disarticulated from Tennyson's role as servant to the monarch, and its mixed reception at the time of its publication largely hinged on the question of whether the laureate – as a plenipotentiary of the state – had produced a pro- or anti-war piece. I argue that the poem remains fundamentally ambivalent on this question: although its narrative resolution involves its speaker uttering fulsome praise for British militarism abroad (as a curative to a domestic landscape of mercantile abuses), the poem itself resists both pro- and anti-war readings. In terms of its plot-line, the poem is pro-war; but *Maud* is ultimately less interested in whether the war itself is a just national cause than in the state of the speaker's relationship to himself and to a world conditioned by unjust choices. One of the primary concerns of *Maud* is the staging of the questions of citizenship in mid-century Britain; it is a poem that opens a series of questions about what options are available to a particular type of male citizen. At the same time, its ultimately bleak view of its speaker's choices asks readers to consider profound questions about the contested politics of citizenship itself and of poetry's role in such fundamental national matters.

Written in the first person, in a hybrid of dramatic monologue and lyric (what Tennyson calls "a new form of dramatic composition" [*Letters* 2: 138]), *Maud* addresses itself to questions of love and war, violence and madness, and domestic

and global politics – all in the voice of one citizen, speaking not "to the queen" and not to the people, but only to himself.

This chapter closes by considering the import of the *Maud* volume for the laureateship as an institution. I situate the poem in its print context, arguing that Tennyson's construction of the entire 1855 volume, which contained both the Wellington Ode and "The Charge of the Light Brigade," functions to manage the reception of the title poem and to make a discursive place for public cultural critique by the laureate, while simultaneously mitigating the competing claims of poetics and laureateship. Specifically, I examine the correspondences between *Maud* and "To the Rev. F. D. Maurice," a short poem that also appeared in the volume: both texts take up the same issues, but in radically different fashion. Taken together, the poems produce an argument about the politics of citizenship and the poetics of laureateship. *Maud, and Other Poems* represents a fundamental shift in the practice of laureateship and, as a barometer of poetry's relationship to power and politics, it stands as a significant moment in nineteenth century poetics.

Tennyson's first official work as poet laureate was a short piece of verse, dated "March 1851," set as a dedication "To The Queen" in the 7th edition of his *Poems* (Tennyson, *Poems* 2: 462). Written in the same stanza form as both *In Memoriam* and Tennyson's earlier poems dealing specifically with questions of nation, like "Hail Briton" (Tennyson, *Poems* 2: 463), the poem can thus be linked, on the one hand, to the work that ensured Tennyson's fame and appointment as laureate and, on the other, to Tennyson's sporadic but long-term commitment to writing verse exploring the complexion of the nation. The dedication addresses

both Victoria's role as monarch and Tennyson's position as laureate. At the same time, it is a poem very much in the tradition of the eighteenth-century laureate ode:

> Revered, beloved—O you that hold
> A nobler office upon earth
> Than arms, or power of brain, or birth
> Could give the warrior kings of old,
>
> Victoria,—since your Royal grace
> To one of less desert allows
> This laurel greener from the brows
> Of him who uttered nothing base;
>
> And should your greatness, and the care
> That yokes with empire, yield you time
> To make demand of modern thyme
> If aught of ancient worth be there;
>
> Then—while a sweeter music wakes,
> And through wild March the throstle calls,
> Where all about your palace-walls
> The sun-lit almond-blossom shakes—
>
> Take, Madam, this poor book of song;
> For though the faults were thick as dust
> In vacant chambers, I could trust
> Your kindness. May you rule us long,
>
> And leave us rulers of your blood
> As noble till the latest day!
> May children of our children say,
> 'She wrought her people lasting good;
>
> 'Her court was pure; her life serene;
> God gave her peace; her land reposed;
> A thousand claims to reverence closed
> In her as Mother, Wife, and Queen;
>
> 'And statesmen at her council met
> Who knew the seasons when to take
> Occasion by the hand, and make
> The bounds of freedom wider yet

‘By shaping some august decree,
Which kept her throne unshaken still,
Broad-based upon her people’s will,
And compassed by the inviolate sea.’

This poem, like Wordsworth’s private fly-leaf poem presented to Queen Victoria in 1846, takes up some very standard topics: it contains tributes to the queen (her “grace,” “greatness,” and “care / That yokes with empire”) and a humble assessment of Tennyson’s own verses (“this poor book of song”). And, like the eighteenth-century laureate tradition I discuss in Chapter One, in this poem Tennyson constructs a narrative of national political unity. In the last two lines of the fifth stanza, the poem slips from the “I” of a singular speaking subject to “us.” The poem’s final four stanzas are a projected quotation from future citizens, and these final lines perform a ventrioloquism: the poem moves from speaking *to* Queen Victoria in the opening lines “O you” (1) to speaking *for* the Britons of the future. The “children of our children” will remember Victoria’s “throne unshaken” by virtue of a reign “[b]road-based upon her people’s will” (23, 35, 34).

But such a national unity did not, in any realistic sense, exist – particularly when it came to public opinion on the monarchy. As Neville Kirk argues, the failure of Chartism in the late 1840s was not the end to radical dissent: “fluctuating moments of class-based tension and harmony constituted essential features of a Liberal alliance which was negotiated, constructed and renegotiated rather than ‘given’ in any absolute, final sense” (94). Philip Harling suggests that the political landscape of post-1850 Britain might have appeared calm – it was the “Age of Equipoise,” as William Laurence Burn would have it – but that it was characterized by perhaps less obvious conflicts. For Harling, the years after 1850

saw a rise in "antisectional 'disinterestedness'" – a constructed sense of calm and consensus that was in fact reliant upon piecemeal, even token, acts by the government that gave the appearance that all economic classes were being dealt with equitably by those in the halls of power (900). But this appearance of calm was part of a larger context of continued conflict in the public sphere. Challenges to the *status quo* still existed; radical political thought and activism did not die with the defeat of the Chartist movement.[24] The appearance of calm was, furthermore, not necessarily a sign of lack of conflict, but rather of a national belt-tightening in conservative ideology: as James Vernon argues, the domestic peace was "predicated upon ever more restrictive definitions of the political subject as citizen, definitions which closed down not only the radical potential of a libertarian politics, but also the parameters of the public sphere" (338). This increasingly rigid definition of the citizen was grounded, as Catherine Hall suggests, in "[r]ace, gender, property, labour and purported level of civilization" (99). This is to say that ideas of the proper citizen – of who should have access not just to the vote, but who counted as a worthy member of the national community – were increasingly restrictive. The included and the excluded, the deserving and the undeserving (to use the terms of Hall and Harling, respectively), continued to be divided from one another, and, in the long echo of the New Poor Law of 1834, each group's relative value took on an increasingly moral complexion. As Harling suggests, the decades following 1850 saw not just a false appearance of calm, but a rise in "moral 'authoritarianism'" (900) – each

[24] See Vernon and Taylor and Nash for general political context on the resilience of republicanism, and Lootens for a brief discussion of the same in poetry specifically.

group's qualities were represented more often in terms of relative moral value and virtue (912).

Tennyson's concept of a nation united behind the monarch is a construction that does not speak to political realities, but the queen's "unshaken throne" relies, in the end, on her relative lack of political power. As Elizabeth Langland suggests, Tennyson mitigates the queen's political import (19-20) when he writes of the "statesmen" (29) who ensure her power and her legacy by carefully expanding "[t]he bounds of freedom" (32), but it is ultimately the monarch's own authority that provides the condition for Tennyson's glorifying tribute. In this poem, the laureate, appointed by the queen, becomes simply a medium through which monarchical authority circulates; the queen might as well be speaking to herself – but *that* would not entail a sufficient performance of power. As Margaret Homans argues, in the related context of another of Tennyson's official verses, Tennyson's laureate verses for the queen can be read as "a self-representing royal utterance even if it happens to be spoken by someone else" (181). But "To the Queen" also functions to grant authority to Tennyson's own verse. The poem was published as the dedication to the first new edition of his collected works after his appointment as laureate, and it appeared, in a slightly revised form, at the beginning of numerous collected editions throughout the poet's lifetime (Dyson and Tennyson 30-31). But the dedication's publication within the 1851 volume effectively overwrites the early work of Tennyson the poet with the monarchical authority of Tennyson the poet laureate to Queen Victoria. In other words, in dedicating his poems, and his *Poems* "To the Queen,"

Tennyson's entire poetic output is marked as laureate work, brought into the reader's imagination as a textual product imbued with the sanction of the power of the head of state. Such a dedication puts Tennyson in line with not just the laureate tradition, but with the tradition of patronage to which many laureate traditions are indebted. This initial act of publication signals to the reader that *all* of Tennyson's poetic production – past and present – can be read as the product of laureateship.

This marks a substantial change from the laureate practice of Wordsworth, who maintained a clear distinction between his position as laureate and his publications as a poet. Tennyson's first textual act as poet laureate – relying on his "trust" in the "kindness" of the queen to "[t]ake" his "poor book of song" despite its "faults…thick as dust / In vacant chambers" (19, 20, 17, 18) – puts the queen in possession of Tennyson's oeuvre. Whereas Wordsworth presented the queen with an inscribed edition of his collected works that self-consciously defined his poetry as not issuing from the office, Tennyson chooses otherwise. While previous laureates had used similar types of dedications, complete with a disavowal of the quality of the laureate's verses, but Tennyson had inherited an office for which there were no established duties. "To the Queen" therefore establishes his commitment to *acting* as a publishing poet in service to the queen, with all the benefits and drawbacks of lodging poetic authority with the head of state. How, then, would such a position translate into poetic duties? Tennyson quickly found himself face-to-face with this question – the choices he made in the year following the publication of the dedication illuminate the extent to which the

politics of Tennyson's poetics and the duties and expectations surrounding the laureateship could easily come into conflict with each other.

This conflict is made visible in the poems Tennyson published in early 1852. The 24th January, 1852 issue of the *Morning Chronicle* contained a poem titled "The Penny-Wise." The author of the poem was Alfred Tennyson, but appended to the poem was the following note to the editor: "Sir—if you please, insert the inclosed. My name is known well enough in the literary world, though I have rather chosen to subscribe myself, A Scorner of the Penny-Wise" (qtd. in Tennyson, *Poems* 2: 467). "The Penny-Wise" was the first of several poetic contributions to the periodical press made by Tennyson in early 1852. In the wake of Louis Napoleon's consolidation of political power in France (indeed, despite the fact that Louis Napoleon was then President of the Second Republic, his actions were most often characterized as a *coup d'état*) and the subsequent fear in Britain of an impending war, Tennyson published six poems on the crisis anonymously or under pseudonyms.[25] These verses are seldom discussed in the Tennyson literature, but when critics broach this set of poems, it is usually with a negative evaluation – either of the poems' nationalist and imperialist politics or of the quality of the poetry. Not only Tennyson's nationalism and imperialism come under scrutiny, but the Modernist view of his verse as unsophisticated still gently

[25] "The Penny-Wise" was the first to appear in print, followed by "Britons, Guard Your Own" (*The Examiner*, 31 January 1852), "For the Penny-Wise" (*Fraser's Magazine*, February 1852), "The Third of February, 1852" (*The Examiner*, 7 February 1852), "Hands All Round" (*The Examiner*, 7 February 1852), and "Suggested by Reading an Article in a Newspaper" (*The Examiner*, 14 February 1852) (Ricks, *Poems* 2: 470, 472, 473, 475, 477). In addition to the six published poems, Tennyson composed two versions of a poem titled "Rifle Clubs!!!" One was not printed during Tennyson's lifetime, while the other became the source for his 1859 "Rifleman Form" (Ricks, *Poems* 2: 469, 603 and 3: 600).

simmers. T. S. Eliot's diagnosis of the poet possessing a "large dull brain like a farmhouse clock" (qtd. in Lamos 32) and W. H. Auden's pronouncement that Tennyson "had the finest ear, perhaps of any English poet," but was "also undoubtedly the stupidest" (qtd. in Mazzeno 80) have had a long echo. And while a long campaign has been waged to restore Tennyson's reputation as a worthy intellect, these two strands of thinking – Tennyson's bad politics and naïve worldview – still collide in considerations of the poet's post-1850 verse, as evinced by the fact that even the quite recent Kathryn Ledbetter volume, *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals* (Ashgate, 2007), feels compelled to stage an intervention into what she calls an "unscholarly" approach to the laureate-era political poems, the "excoriation" and "ghettoization" of which she argues obscures the possibility of new views on Tennyson (102). On the question of poetic quality, Tennyson himself seems not to have been entirely satisfied: he judges one of the poems "not overgood" and considered retracting it before publication (*Letters* 2: 22). Deirdre David calls the poems "jingoistic" and "blatant flag-waving" (177), while Tricia Lootens terms them "vehement – not to say frenzied" (263). And while one has a hard time feeling a critical sympathy for this poetry having been hard done by (particularly when so many other poets who are rather less likely to portray the French as a barbaric horde continue to receive so little critical attention), Ledbetter is nonetheless on to something.

In choosing to publish the poems in the periodical press, Tennyson avails himself of a publication system that, as Linda K. Hughes argues, placed a high "cultural value" on the publication of poetry, as a means to "enhance the symbolic

capital" of a publication (94). Because poetry as a genre "signified intimation of the universal, the spiritual, and the permanent," it "could mediate the miscellaneousness and ephemerality of the periodical itself" (99). In other words, even a poem with specific and time-sensitive political content, like Tennyson's, acted as a poem published in volume form could not – as a discursive space suggesting the moral seriousness of Carlyle's poet-hero. This seriousness was produced in part by the layout of periodical poetry, in which, as Hughes puts it, "the sacrifice of unprinted [white] space [surrounding the poem] suggest[s] a shift from mundane [prose] to sacred or spiritual spaces in which contemplation can occur," or, as Hughes puts it, a move from the "mundane" space of prose to the "sacred spaces in which contemplation can occur" (103). Tennyson's choice to move his anonymous and pseudonymous poems into print as quickly as possible suggests that he participates self-consciously in a periodical context in which poetry is, as Natalie M. Houston argues, "used to refine, amplify, or comment upon the emotional responses that news reporting could produce" (241). This is to say that the publishing of Tennyson's patriotic poems in the periodical press signals a desire to leverage readers' knowledge of the current political situation – gained through reading prose reporting – and translate this knowledge to political action. According to Houston, this was a well-established mode in the Victorian press: "[p]oetry was one way that individuals participating in the communal, nation-defining experience of reading the newspaper . . . were guided toward emotional and aesthetic interpretations of different national events" (241). It is likely no coincidence, then, that one of the six patriotic poems is title "Suggested

by Reading an Article in the Newspaper" – the poem's title suggests the idea that newspaper readers might be brought to political consciousness and, ultimately, action as a consequence of active engagement with the news. In addition, although two of the six patriotic poems, "Britons Guard Your Own" and "For the Pennywise" were published completely unsigned, Tennyson makes use of the periodical press in order to construct a poetic conversation on the current events in France. Two of the poems, "The Third of February, 1852" and "Hands All Round," both in the February 7, 1852 issue of the *Examiner*, are signed "Merlin," while a third poem, "Suggested by Reading an Article in the Newspaper," was published under another pseudonym ("Taliessen") the following week (Ricks, *Poems* 2: 467, 470, 472-73, 475, 477). A note appended to the poem reveals Tennyson's self-conscious effort to construct a poetic conversation in the pages of the *Examiner*:

> Sir,— I have read with much interest the poems by *Merlin*. The enclosed is longer than either of those, and certainly not so good; yet as I flatter myself that it has a smack of Merline's style in it, and as I feel that it expresses forcibly enough some of the feelings of our time, perhaps you may be induced to admit it. (Ricks, *Poems* 2: 477)

Clearly, Tennyson is aware of both the symbolic capital afforded poetry and the potential of the periodical press to act as host for political discourse, and employs both the form and the publication context to underscore his own political project.

"The Penny-Wise," which I choose for detailed attention here because its rhetoric as a representative case of the rhetoric of the patriotic poems, is a call to

arms that seeks to dissuade Britons of any and all objections to militarizing the nation against possible aggression by France:

O where is he, the simple fool,
    Who says that wars are over?
What bloody portent flashes there
    Across the straits of Dover?

Four hundred thousand slaves in arms
    May seek to bring us under:
Are we ready, Britons all,
    To answer them with thunder?
            Arm, arm arm!

You – sleepy Lords of Admiralty,
    Your errors are too grievous,
See that your work be workmanlike,
    Or else go out and leave us.
O shame on selfish patronage,
    It is the country's ruin;
Come, put the right man in his place,
    And up, now and be doing.
            Arm, arm, arm!

And you – ye brawlers penny-wise,
    Through you the land is cheated,
Till by barbarians better-armed
    Our greatness is defeated.
The cheapest things are not the best,
    The best things are the cheapest;
But wake, arise! O noble blood
    Of England, how thou creepest!
            Arm, arm arm!

O gather, gallant volunteers,
    In every British village!
Or have the tigers of Algiers
    Your licence here to pillage?
O babbling Peace Societies,
    Where many a dreamer trifles!
Is this a time to cry for peace,
    When we should shriek for rifles?
            Arm, arm, arm!

"The Penny-Wise" takes aim at a number of targets. Anti-French sentiment abounds, but much is directed specifically at Louis Napoleon, soon to be fashioned Napoleon III of the Second Empire (bringing an end to the Second Republic formed after the 1848 revolution). His regime represents a "bloody portent" that has rendered the French population nothing more than "slaves in arms" (3, 5). "The Penny-Wise" presents ideas and images of Victorian Britain's national anxiety in the face of perceived external threats using content similar to that being published elsewhere in the periodical press, and marshals this anxiety to rouse reluctant readers to action. With regard to its defensive Francophobia, the poem does not put forward a view at all out of step with the time. As Clare A. Simmons argues, "British commentators were skeptical" of the *coup* (138): the *Times*, for example, suggests that "if 'stability' be the motto of the new Government, that is precisely the quality we are least prepared to find in it; and in closing 'the era of revolution,' LOUIS NAPOLEON has very possibly brought the country once more within the vortex of anarchy" (qtd. in Simmons 138). Tennyson's views are put forward in a vociferous tone, but the substance of their politics was not at all unusual.

But the poem spends relatively little time condemning Louis Napoleon and focuses instead on how the threat of the new France has cast into relief tensions at home. This should come as no surprise: foreign threats to the nation are often cause for reflections on the domestic political and ideological landscape. Tennyson first castigates the naïve (anyone believing wars to be over is a "simple fool" [1]), but it is the pacifists who are subjected to more thoroughgoing abuse,

just as they suffer at the hands of the speaker in Tennyson's *Maud*: the "babbling Peace Societies" (a reference to such thinkers as John Bright and Richard Cobden [Ledbetter 118]) are figured as patently unrealistic, as places where the "dreamer trifles" (33). Instead, the speaker suggests, "gallant volunteers" (28) from across Britain should prepare to take up arms (28). The "pennywise" (19) to whom the poem's title refers – those who are, by extension, pound-foolish and thus reticent to spend what the speaker would view as appropriate funds on the military – are chastised for their imprudent cheapness (19-24). Meanwhile, the British military itself "is the country's ruin" (15); spoiled by the patronage system, it is in dire need of reform that would "put the right man in his place" (16) through the institution of a merit-based appointment policy. The overarching remedy for all of these problems is clear in the poem's final lines, which do indeed come off, to use Lootens' formulation, as "frenzied." I would add, however, that the frenzy is part of the poem's point, as well as being an available poetic voice during this period – as Michael Sanders notes, "heightened emotionalism" was a characteristic of Chartist poetry in the late 1840s and early 1850s (371). The shrieking for rifles and final refrain of "Arm, arm, arm!" emphasize the poem's sense of imminent danger: Britons, the poem suggests, must overcome all false arguments and ready the nation for a successful defense against possible French invasion *now*.

Indeed, a letter Tennyson wrote to his wife, Emily Sellwood Tennyson, just before the poem's publication confirms this sense of time running short: wanting to see "The Penny-Wise" in print as quickly as possible, the poet was disinclined to submit it to the monthly *Fraser's Magazine* because the poem

would be, by the time of the next issue, "half superannuated by the musket"[26] (*Letters* 2: 23). Linda K. Hughes argues that returning "poems to their first publication context exposes their participation in cultural dialogues rather than their retreat into autonomous aesthetic realms" (92), and indeed Tennyson's publication of "The Penny-Wise" demonstrates his use of the periodical press to strengthen his political message through Tennyson's use of available print forms serves to underscore his message through timely publication. The speaker in "The Penny-Wise" argues that the risk of not acting quickly is dire. Failure to prepare for war would be giving "the tigers of Algiers" a "licence…to pillage" Britain. The insinuation here is clear enough: without immediate militarization by citizens, Britons would be attacked, conquered, and even colonized by the French – mirroring the last twenty years' experience of the inhabitants of Algeria. In the final stanza, then, we have not just a call to arms, but the suggestion that Britain could face the same fate as France's colonial 'other' in North Africa, with Britain's position at the centre of its own empire being destroyed in the process. In the end, it is the fear of *becoming* 'other' that is the most potent reason for taking up arms. It makes little difference that even one of the most vociferous supporters of voluntary rifle clubs felt that these clubs would function as a preventative measure. James Spedding, in a letter to Emily Sellwood Tennyson dated 4 February 1852, details his promise to send £5, on behalf of the Tennyson's, to Coventry Patmore and in aid of "the Rifles." Spedding argues that

[26] The phrase is a reference to a similarly-titled patriotic poem of the same period: "For the Penny-Wise" had already been placed with *Fraser's Magazine* for the February 1852 issue (Ricks, *Poems* 2: 472).

"the more noise we make in that way the better, and the more we practise the less likely are we to be called upon to perform" (Tennyson, *Letters* 2: 25). But this is not the argument Tennyson put forward in this poem. The call to arms of "The Penny-Wise" is represented not as a way to prevent violence, but is part of an insistent argument about the inevitability of war.

Given the poems' militaristic content and concern for the safety of the nation ("The Penny-Wise" is reasonably representative of the whole set of 1852 poems), and Tennyson's newly minted credentials as the national poet, why would he then publish all six of these poems anonymously or pseudonymously? Unsigned poetry was common in the periodical press, and, as Houston suggests, "participated in the larger shared public discourse of current events" (239). But anonymous and pseudonymous writing has a long history. Mark Rose argues that a lack of identifiable signature might arise from a long list of possible reasons: "an aristocratic or a gendered reticence, religious self-effacement, anxiety over public exposure, fear of prosecution, hope of an unprejudiced reception, and the desire to deceive." In the case of Tennyson, anxiety over public exposure appears to have been operating, along with a further reason Rose identifies, that a given text's "authorial persona conflict[s] with their daily one" (8). We can therefore read Tennyson's choice to publish the poems as both indicative of his sense of political responsibility as poet but also of his laureate practice, for, as Rose argues, signature choices are "part of a strategy for associating only certain pieces with a projected persona" (10).

Tennyson's choice to publish without his name illuminates his efforts to control his projected persona, and to align that persona with stated government policy – a move in keeping with his earlier dedication of his *oeuvre* to the queen. This is to say that by early 1852, Tennyson's emerging laureate practice involved publicly aligning himself with government policy while privately publishing his political views. As Hope Dyson and Charles Tennyson argue, the poet "feared that if he used his own name, his views might be taken as official and compromise the Queen and the government" (34). Queen Victoria had made her views on the events in France well known before Tennyson sent the patriotic poems out into the world. Despite widespread surprise and a belief amongst many members of the British government and aristocracy that Louis Napoleon's *coup* was an "unconstitutional act," Queen Victoria insisted upon maintaining neutrality on what was then deemed – publicly, at least – to be a purely internal French concern (Thomas 237). Nonetheless, Louis Napoleon's consolidation of power, and subsequent refashioning of himself as Emperor Napoleon III, represented "a major new element of instability" in international politics (Hoppen 167). Just as disapproval of the *coup*, like that characterized by Tennyson in "The Penny-Wise," was not tolerated, neither was any public commendation of Louis Napoleon sanctioned. Lord Palmerston, then Foreign Secretary in the cabinet of Prime Minister Lord John Russell, was summarily dismissed – in part at Queen Victoria's behest – on 19 December 1851, after he privately communicated his support for Louis Napoleon to the French ambassador (Steele; Thomas 237). "The Penny-Wise," the first-published of Tennyson's 1852 poems, appeared in the

Morning Chronicle just one month later. It was not signed by the poet laureate because, in this particular case, militaristic anti-French views were at odds with official foreign policy. As Kathryn Ledbetter agues, "Tennyson presumably worried that his political involvement might be offensive to his new position as Poet Laureate" (104). In other words, Tennyson's sense of his own patriotic (as opposed to nationalist) duty as poet compelled the publication of the poems, but *this* duty was sharply at odds with his perception of the expectations placed upon him as poet laureate.

As I mention above, the poems of 1852 receive relatively little attention in the Tennyson literature. But, more particularly, they seem to have often been ignored or misread as part of Tennyson's laureate practice. Biographer Peter Levi, who decries the quality of the poems, writes that "[a]s poetry they do not exist" and that "as a performance by the laureate they are lamentable" (210). What Levi, amongst others,[27] either misses or fails to find important is that Tennyson's refusal to publish these verses under his own name means that they did not function at the time as "a performance by the laureate." Purposefully sent into print without the laureate's name, it is not that the poems of 1852 "do not exist" as *poetry*, but that they do not exist as *laureate poetry*. Most critics, including those who recognize the poems' anonymous publication, do not pursue the ramifications of Tennyson's choice very far.[28] One exception is Alan Sinfield, who views them as crucial to Tennyson's understanding of the office:

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[27] See, for example, Gibson (182-83) and David, the latter of whom argues that the poems might be read as "Tennyson's desire for royal and popular acclaim" (177).

[28] See, for example, Reynolds, 210-17 and Lootens, 26.

> Here Tennyson is setting out what he evidently took to be a laureate function, the role of the poet in recalling his society to its best self; this is his attempt to retrieve the bardic authority which had lapsed with the Shelleyan conjunction of political and imaginative liberty. And it is *manly*: thus Tennyson seeks to repudiate both the effeminacy and the marginality with which poetry was involved, and his own poetry specifically. (176)

While Sinfield's contention that the poems seek to move "society to its best self" is an accurate one, surely Tennyson's reticence to publish them under his own name – and hence under the name of the poet laureate – suggests that he did not conceive of the poems as part of any sort of public "laureate function." Indeed, their anonymity suggests just the opposite: that laureateship made circulating certain views impossible. Tennyson's letters make clear that he felt a weighty patriotic responsibility to compose and publish the poems, and it is, of course, possible that his installation as poet laureate strengthened just this sense of responsibility, but he nonetheless chose anonymous and pseudonymous publication. Any "bardic authority" he might gain was private, or at least limited to his intimate circle and, perhaps, those publishing the poems. In terms of a larger reading audience, there was no bardic authority for Tennyson to gain. Ledbetter argues that "Tennyson never really intended for the poems to be anonymous," given that he published so many with his friend, John Forster, at the *Examiner* (104). I am not sure, however, that this point entirely sticks. Tennyson was clearly nervous at the possibility of being discovered by the larger public reading the poems. In a letter to Coventry Patmore diagnosing one of the poems as "[v]ery wild but I think too savage" and "enough to make a war of itself" (Tennyson, *Letters* 2: 20, 21), Tennyson asks Patmore to "mind" that the poem's

"authorship" is "a most deep secret!" (Tennyson, *Letters* 2: 20). The poem in question is "Rifle Clubs!!!" which remained unpublished during the poet's lifetime, but Tennyson seems to have expressed similar anxieties about the poems he did send out into print. In a letter to James Forster at the *Examiner* accompanying "Britons, Guard Your Own," Emily Sellwood Tennyson impresses upon the editor the importance of

> keeping the author's name a profound secret; he fearing, if it be known, he shall get his royal mistress a reprimand from the great autocrat for daring to allow one of her servants to use such bold language and thereby the scolding would come next to him. (qtd. in Tennyson, *Poems* 2: 470)

The Tennysons were interested in controlling how Tennyson's public persona circulated publicly, including as poet laureate. Emily Sellwood Tennyson also demands that her husband's name not be connected with radical political views: in a letter to Patmore, she enjoins him against "speak[ing] of [Tennyson] as an 'agitator' for any cause whatsoever" (Tennyson, *Letters* 2: 25), a comment that suggests the familial anxiety of the poet laureate being perceived to be too partisan in Patmore's cause of organizing voluntary militia. All this is to say that the readers of Tennyson's 1852 poems had, unless they were privy to the inner publication circle, no way of connecting these poems to their author or to debates surrounding the "effeminacy" of his work (Sinfield 176), or of poetry generally. And, most importantly for any consideration of Tennyson's laureateship, readers had no way of connecting these poems to the office of poet laureate, and thus could not connect them to the workings of the authority of the state. Permanent anonymity, however, appears to have been an uneven and temporary condition for

the patriotic poems. Although several were suppressed throughout Tennyson's life, a slightly revised version of "Britons Guard Your Own" was set to music by Emily Sellwood Tennyson and "Hands All Round" was entirely reworked – keeping only the first stanza – as a poem for Queen Victoria's birthday in 1882 (Tennyson, *Poems* 2: 470, 3: 98). Not all of the poems were, then, unsigned forever. While there is ample evidence, discussed above, to suggest that Tennyson very much wished their authorship to be secret at the time of their publication, it is not certain why the initial anonymity/pseudonymity were given up, but one possibility is that, because the French crisis had passed, there was no danger of compromising his public persona or the queen's good will toward him. Another possibility is that Tennyson felt no one would identify the revised works with unsigned poetry from years earlier – because the poems were never identified with the famous laureate, Tennyson might have relied upon the likelihood that they would simply be forgotten in the "fleeting topicality" of the quickly moving newspaper press (Houston 234).

Tennyson's response to the 1851 events in France indicates a number of things. First of all, it signals a gap in Tennyson's work between patriotism – love for one's country – and nationalism – the espousing of state ideology. Put another way, Tennyson's anonymous publications show a fracture between the laureate's desire to employ poetry as a means to speak out on political matters and his responsibility to remain publicly silent as poet laureate. The situation underlines the extent to which Tennyson understood that anything he wrote could be received not just as the work of a poet, but always also as the work of the queen's chosen

poet. From early on in his career as poet laureate, then, Tennyson had a keen sense of laureateship as involving a publicly honed representative voice, with attendant rights and responsibilities that he self-consciously constructed. This configuration of the laureateship as an institutional practice sets Tennyson apart from his predecessors in office. As I discuss in Chapter One, Robert Southey also queried Britain's foreign policy, but he did so in his first official laureate ode, was censored by agents of the state, and went on to publish the offending passages, critical of the British government's negotiations with Napoleon Bonaparte, under his *own* name in the periodical press. The anonymous publication of the 1852 poems indicates that, for Tennyson, no such split between poet and poet laureate is possible. And, in contrast to Wordsworth's official silence and partitioning of laureateship from his poetic production, both new and old, Tennyson casts himself in the role of a poet laureate whose words always potentially represent or reflect back upon the views of government, including the queen. Precisely because Wordsworth refuses altogether to write any laureate verse, and because he theorizes the office as a manifestation of the state's recognition of poetry's crucial role to play in the public life of the nation, his laureateship breaks forever a connection between rote poetry for the court and a laureate voice that is separate from that of the poet. Tennyson's early years in the laureateship show him weighing this inheritance, and, rather than separating his laureate poetry from the rest of his work, choosing to publish under his own name within the confines of laureateship. Put another way, Tennyson's public laureateship performs nationalist ideology, while his anonymous and pseudonymous patriotic poems of

1852 fulfil the obligations of a patriotic poetics. What the 1852 poems also suggest is the content of Tennyson's divided loyalties, for the practice of laureateship involves not just the negotiation of differences in politics, but also of different audiences. A poem that might offend the monarch can also be a poem that might inspire citizens to action. In the case of "The Penny-Wise," Tennyson negotiates the interests of both potential audiences in deciding to publish anonymously. In placing "The Penny-Wise" in the *Morning Chronicle*, Tennyson employed a middleman to help preserve anonymity. Charles Richard Weld was Tennyson's brother-in-law (he was married to Emily Sellwood Tennyson's sister) and was well connected to the literary establishment (as the Royal Society's historian, librarian, and assistant secretary [McConnell]). Tennyson sent Weld a copy of the poem enclosed with the following message:

> The Poem of Arm etc. [i.e., "The Penny-Wise"] is public property. I might have made some £5 of it but I give it to the people. Let it be published and spread as widely as may be. If the Times won't put it in, send it to the Morning Chronicle, the Athenaeum, anywhere. It is too long a time to wait for Fraser. The little squib[29] must be Fraser's sole property as you have sent it thither. I had wished to retract it as it is not overgood, but let it stand. (*Letters* 2: 22)

The letter concentrates on two key matters: Tennyson's anxiousness to have the poem in circulation as quickly as possible and his desire to ensure the poem is not publicly connected to him. As I note above, Tennyson's wish that the poem be published quickly seems to have been the result of his sense of imminent danger and timely action. But Tennyson also constructs the poem as a particular type of text in its relationship to the "public." "The Penny-Wise" is figured with an

[29] i.e., "For the Penny-Wise," published in the February 1852 issue of *Fraser's Magazine* (Tennyson, *Poems* 2: 472).

implicit materiality: it is "public property" and a gift to the "people." Its link to the poet, and thus to the office of poet laureate, is disavowed. In the absence of such an author function, ownership of "The Penny-Wise" is instead made to lodge with the public who reads the poem. The imagery of the letter suggests a desire to have the poem's ideas take seed and multiply ("spread as widely as may be") and thus influence others.

In other words, Tennyson's publication of the patriotic poems of 1852 seems to have fulfilled some sense of his duty as a poet (he published several patriotic poems in his younger years), even though he did not conceive of it within the confines of his role as poet laureate. Put simply, the situation makes legible a tension between the claims of poetry and the claims of laureateship. The contours of these different claims are also visible in the text most often associated with Tennyson as laureate: the "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington." About six months after the publication of the patriotic poems, the Duke of Wellington – Arthur Wellesley, former Prime Minister and most renowned for having conquered Napoleon's army at Waterloo – died. The death of Wellington, and in particular his elaborate and well-attended funeral, constituted public spectacle and symbol on an unprecedented scale. As Peter Sinnema argues, "[o]nly the queen's funeral [in 1901] can be said to vie with Wellington's for the depth of its symbolism" (xxii).

Although Tennyson had no official duties as laureate, Wellington's death prompted his first piece of occasional verse. There is no extant record of the queen, Prince Albert, or any agent of the government requesting such a poem;

nonetheless, Tennyson came to see composing the poem as a matter of laureate duty, to both the government and his wider reading public. Wellington's death was on the 14th of September in 1852. The following day, Tennyson received a letter from his friend Richard Monckton Milnes, telling him of the duke's passing and encouraging him to write a poem:

> Will you think "The Duke" worth writing about? That is a kind of royalty you need not disdain to commemorate. An old aunt of mine called on Lady Mornington over a pastry-cook's in Bond St., and found a lean youth leaning on the edge of the sofa. "That," said his mother, "is Arthur. He wants to go into the army, but we will buy him a commission." "I don't want that," said the boy. "I want to *walk* to Germany and learn fortification." (*Letters* 2: 43 n2)

In his response to Milnes, Tennyson remarked upon news of "the Duke!" (*Letters* 2: 43), but made no mention of the proposed poem. The letter instead spoke of the recent birth of his first surviving son, Hallam. In the weeks following the duke's passing, Tennyson's letters show him mainly consumed by plans for the upcoming christening on October 5th (*Letters* 2: 47-48). But the laureateship was not far from his mind. Tennyson's sense of being bound by duty to perform certain tasks associated with the office is made clear in a letter to his aunt, Elizabeth Russell. In a letter dated November 16th, he expresses reservations about both the quality of the poem and the circumstances of its composition:

> I am going up to London today in order to get some place from which to see the Duke's funeral. I ordered [the publisher] Moxon to send you a copy of my ode which I hope you will have received before this. I have made some improvements since it was printed. It is not so good as I could wish it to be. Then, you see, I wrote it because it was expected of me to write: you will be glad to hear that Moxon has paid me £200 for the first 10,000 copies and that rate for more, if more were wanted. (*Letters* 2: 50).

Tennyson's pleasure at the publication fee and his dissatisfaction with the poem's execution serve as the pro and con, respectively, of a poem he wrote only "because it was expected" that he commemorate the life and death of the duke. Or, perhaps, both money and "expect[ation]" serve here as convenient excuses for a poem about which Tennyson expresses reservations. Nonetheless, it is clear that he felt, in some sense, beholden to write. The source of this expectation is not entirely clear. However, in a letter written within a few days of this one, the point is somewhat clarified. Tennyson repeats himself, writing of the ode that "it was expected of me so I wrote it" (*Letters* 2: 52). But here Tennyson calls the poem "my Civic Ode" (*Letters* 2: 52). It is an evocative formulation, one that pushes Tennyson's notion of what was expected of him away from its sense as excuse and toward a sense of expectation's ability to evoke the laureate's duty not just to the crown, but to the nation. According to the *OED*, the earliest use of the word "civic" was in the Latin phrase *corōna cīvica*, a civic crown "bestowed as much-prized distinction upon one that saved the life of a fellow-citizen in war." By the end of the eighteenth century, the word reappears, but this time its connotations of heroism are made normative – to be "civic" is not a sign of one's distinction, but instead a symptom of citizenship or a sign of the citizen's propriety. The *OED* finds the first instance of this meaning, perhaps unsurprisingly, in Edmund Burke's 1790 *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Tennyson's epistolary reference to the Wellington Ode indicates that, for him, the laureateship was tied not just to the expectations of crown and country, but also to his investment in the notion of the laureate as a proper citizen.

In this case, proper citizenship entails the construction of a Wellington embodied by what Sinnema calls "the twin ideals of lucidity and discretion," "the dutiful hero," and the "explicit…connection between personal accountability and national obligations." Together, these two ideals "encouraged readers to follow the example of Wellington in their allegiance to that exacting but rewarding mistress, duty" (40, 41). And indeed, the word "civic" appears three times in the poem itself – Tennyson writes of the "civic muse" that will "preserve" Wellington's "name" in "ever-echoing avenues of song" (75, 78, 76, 79) and twice includes a passage on the unified "people's voice" that will "rejoice / At civic revel" and "[a]ttest" to Wellington's greatness (142, 146-47, 148). All this is to say that Tennyson's poetic duty is to argue for the longevity of Wellington's memory not just for its own sake, but also for the sake of the life of the nation, and of national poetry. In the end, Tennyson has something in common with the hero he commemorates in 1852: in naming the poem a "Civic Ode," he constructs the laureateship as not just an object of expectation, but also as an agent of civic duty.

Unlike the patriotic poems of earlier that year, the Wellington Ode demonstrates that the expectations of laureateship and the civic duty of the poet were not necessarily incommensurate. Taken together, however, the ode and the patriotic poems make legible that both pressures come to bear on Tennyson, and that he begins early on in the laureateship to actively negotiate potentially competing claims, not just in deciding what to write, but in managing the circulation of a text in relation to his own authority or authorship. As I discuss

above, with reference to Tennyson's dedication "To the Queen," poets laureate traditionally garner what authority they have from the monarchy and then employ that authority to publicly speak back to the monarch. This formulation of the laureate's authority begins to break down when Southey seeks to publish an official ode that contravenes foreign policy, and dissolves altogether when Wordsworth refuses to write any official verse. Tennyson, then, reformulates the laureateship, at first locating its authority in a more traditional fashion, in "To the Queen," but soon finds it almost impossible to maintain such a position: the demands of politics and poetics, of expectation and civic duty, make it impossible for the laureate Tennyson to be just one person alone – for Tennyson, laureateship requires a publicly honed, seamless persona.

Negotiating the competing and often simultaneous claims of a belief that poetry has a role to play in national life, and that laureate poetry must be nationalist, produces a renovation of the laureate tradition. In the next section, I argue that Tennyson's first volume of new poems after his appointment offers a further recasting of the laureate voice. *Maud, and Other Poems* offers a radical renovation of the laureate voice in the title poem, and a careful stage-management of the laureateship through the poet's construction of the volume itself. In *Maud*, Tennyson replaces the circular monarchical authority of traditional laureate verse with the voice of the troubled citizen speaking to himself – authorized, at least within the text, only by the narcissistic echo of monologue. While the militaristic sentiments in the patriotic poems of 1852 recur early on in *Maud*, they do so not in the voice of Sinfield's "bardic authority," but in the voice of a man slipping into

madness. I read *Maud* not just as a poem about madness, but as a poem about citizenship: the text intervenes in crucial debates about the difficulties of citizenship at mid-century. But these questions – questions for which the poem provides no easy answers – are stage-managed by the volume's other poems, specifically, "To the Rev. F. D. Maurice." This latter poem shares the same immediate political context as *Maud*, employs the same images of war, and takes up the same concerns. Constructed to be read as the personal voice of Tennyson, the poem provides a counterpoint to *Maud*, and represents the poet's attempt to manage the interpretation of both *Maud* and the laureateship itself.

The volume *Maud, and Other Poems* was first published in 1855 and was Tennyson's first new volume of poetry since *In Memoriam* had been such a resounding success in 1850. The 1855 volume included the Wellington Ode and a version of "The Charge of the Light Brigade" with the famously criticized line "[s]omeone had blundered" removed. The revised version of this latter poem is another instance of the sometimes fractious relationship between Tennyson's perceived civic duty and the expectations of the laureate's propriety. In deference to critics at home who objected to the line's suggestion that the deaths of soldiers at Balaclava could be attributed to the errors of aristocratic officers, Tennyson removed the phrase. But, in a move that Helen Groth defines as Tennyson "ceding all critical authority" to soldiers (560), and one that further highlights Tennyson's responsiveness to his reading publics, the poem was restored to its original state before sending out copies to soldiers fighting in the Crimea. According to a letter sent by Emily Sellwood Tennyson, by October of 1855, 2,000 copies of the

restored poem had been sent to the front "because the senior chaplain wrote that half the men were singing it and all wished to possess what they so much admired" (*Letters* 2: 133). Tennyson again negotiates the competing claims of different readers, and, here, erring on the side of an audience he thought most important. In explaining the poem's editorial restoration, he wrote that he had been "overpersuaded to spoil it" (*Letters* 2: 134). As I suggest above, the 1851 dedication "To the Queen" demonstrates that Tennyson sought to construct all of his verse as falling within the realm of laureateship. His choice, then, to include the Wellington Ode and "The Charge of the Light Brigade," both poems with clear connections to the civic duties of laureateship, in the *Maud* volume is a further indication that poetry and laureate poetry were not easily separated from each other. In fact, the inclusion of these poems written out of civic duty, alongside a small number of other poems, constitutes Tennyson's closing of any perceptible gap between poetry and laureate poetry. They become one and the same by virtue of being published and read next to each other inside the covers of one volume.

The most difficult question for Tennyson's readers – then and now – is therefore what to make of the volume's title poem. As the centrepiece to Tennyson's first volume since his appointment as poet laureate, the poem is an important one for considering his laureate practice – particularly because it puts forward a very negative view of national culture, a position not in keeping with the 1850-1852 construction of the public nationalist laureate persona. In what follows, I read *Maud* closely as an attempt to reconfigure the laureate persona as

one that includes room for cultural critique. As Isobel Armstrong argues, *Maud* exhibits "dangerous energies" that critics have always found "difficult to locate" *(Poetry* 271). In broad strokes, the plot of *Maud* is as follows. The poem begins with the speaker considering the state of his life. The speaker is troubled – by the state of the culture surrounding him and by the death (possibly, but not necessarily, suicide) of his father. Enter Maud, whose father, Lord of the Hall, the speaker holds responsible for the dead father's financial ruin. The speaker is drawn to Maud, and the two meet, fall in love, and find out that they were betrothed as children. Maud's brother, however, has other plans: he wants Maud to marry a freshly-minted aristocrat, one who, for the speaker, represents the worst of a decaying culture. A duel ensues; the brother is wounded badly. The speaker flees, convinced (rightly) that the brother has died. After spending some time in a French asylum, learning that Maud herself has died, and enduring a period of madness, the speaker begins to recover. The poem ends with his resolution to go into battle as a soldier in the Crimean War. The poem ends with the speaker's return to some semblance of sanity and his decision to virtuously fight for his country.

But wresting a "message" from the text proves much more difficult than a summary of the poem might suggest, for although the speaker's apparent return to sanity and decision to become a soldier are simultaneous – even mutually constitutive – events, neither the speaker's state of relative mental health or position as a soldier are presented as ideals. They can be read as narrative "outcomes" for the speaker, but they do not represent either a personal or cultural

"cure" in a poem that takes as its topic the disruptive and violent interpenetration of public and private life, of the market and the mind, of the battlefield and the body. As Herbert F. Tucker argues, *Maud*'s conclusion, with "the hero's defection into lobotomized jingoism" (429) need not be read as a call to arms, but rather as a calling of the reader to action. For Tucker, the poem

> leaves us to take up the ethical slack, without a clue to imagining a credible alternative course of events. The hero's unacknowledged contradictions remain, to sear the critical conscience that would free itself of patriotic heroics without falling into step with some other cultural or countercultural troop. (429)

Maud's subject is not success, but failure – of culture and politics, and of the language, agency, and knowledge of the speaking subject. The first section of the poem sets in motion the key issues at stake in the text, those tenuous fractures and connections between the individual citizen and the national community, as well as the overwhelming force of madness, of love, and of violence. I examine these issues at length in order to explore the political work of the poem, and its function in Tennyson's laureate *oeuvre*. The poem begins with an invocation of the Echo and Narcissus myth. This is the first failure, a failure of language:

> I hate the dreadful hollow behind the little wood,
> Its lips in the field above are dabbled with blood-red heath,
> The red-ribb'd ledges drip with a silent horror of blood,
> And Echo there, whatever is ask'd her, answers 'Death.' (1.1.1-4)

The "horror of blood" dripping from the ledges is "silent," but Echo is not. In the midst of this inarticulate landscape, Echo's crucial role in the fourth line is to serve as disordered interlocutor. No matter what questions the speaker asks (and the line suggests multiple questions), any attempt the speaker makes at two-way communication is treated to a transformative disavowal that yields only one

response: “Death.” The speaker, who in the first three lines defines his position in relation to the objects of his utterances is, in the last line, confounded. From describing the visible liminality of the hollow’s edge, and the “hate” that conditions his failure of sympathy with the landscape, he enters an incomprehensible with Echo. Cursed by Hera, the mythological Echo could speak only the last words spoken to her. The open question of this first stanza is whether Echo is both cursed and disordered, or whether the speaker is. Does the speaker, without recognizing it, only ask questions that end with the word “Death”? Or, is Echo herself caught in time, able only to repeat the same word, over and over again? Echo’s answers come back to the speaker not just as difficult to understand, but also as a nullification of the possibility of language as exchange. The operative question in these first four lines is whether the root of the disorder lies within the uncomprehending speaking subject or with the landscape he inhabits.

This opening failure to be able to access knowledge of the self or the surrounding world is extended in the lines that follow. The speaker reveals that his “hate” for the “dreadful hollow” has its origin in the death of his father, whose body was found there some years ago. But the death of the father is itself a mystery:

> Did he fling himself down? who knows? for a great speculation had fail’d,
> And ever he mutter’d and madden’d, and ever wann’d with despair,
> And out he walk’d when the wind like a broken worldling wail’d,
> And the flying gold of the ruin’d woodlands drove thro’ the air. (1.1.9-12)

The father’s death yields another open question: the death was either an accident or a suicide resulting from the “despair” of a financial failure (“a great

speculation"). The unanswerable question of this passage is phrased in terms of the father's possible agency in his own death: "Did he fling himself down?" If the poem's opening lines indicate a failure of language and self-knowledge, then this third stanza extends these failures to questions of agency. The speaker's inability to know the circumstances of the father's death renders the agency of subjects, and of cause and effect, just as disordered as language and landscape. In this most important of events – the father's death is the impetus for all of the poem's action – the speaker cannot know the difference between intention and accident. In the poem's opening lines, then, Tennyson constructs a speaker whose sense of language, knowledge, and agency is radically disordered: there is, literally, nothing to say or know about what has or has not happened or been done.

The poems' fifth stanza functions as a hinge between the speaker's private experience (his unanswerable questions about his father's death) and the culture he inhabits:

> Villainy somewhere! whose? One says, we are villains all.
> Not he: his honest fame should at least by me be maintain'd:
> But that old man, now lord of the broad estate and the Hall,
> Dropt off gorged from a scheme that left us flaccid and drain'd.
> (1.1.17-20)

The speaker blames his father's death on "[v]illainy somewhere," but locating the responsibility for this death proves difficult. The speaker suggests that despite arguments that "we are villains all," his own love and loyalty to his father disallows the broad-brush logic of such a principle. The individual case of the speaker's father nullifies the notion that "all" might be villainous. This disjunction sets in motion yet another tension in the text, this time between rules and

principles that might hold for "all" and the experiences of one individual. For the speaker, the father's life ("his honest fame"), if not death, fractures the possibility of operating in the world according to a general principle. Put another way, this stanza articulates the difficulties involved in reconciling individual experience with overarching principles about the organization of society. Unable to locate "villains" *everywhere*, because one man – his father – marks such an act as impossible, the speaker applies a new principle, of villainy's singularity, to only one man: the Lord of the Hall who was the cause of the father's (and hence the son's) financial ruin. In this movement between a general principle that can be applied to all and the singularity of individual character, the speaker paints himself into a corner. While he first disproves the viability of a general principle of cultural villainy through the 'case' of his own father, he goes on to make individual qualities their own principle by extending his discussion from the father to his financial persecutor. In short, the speaker is able to explore, question, define, and follow through on the *logic* of his own ideas, but remains unclear about whether the general state of villainy is pervasive. In a poem where agency, knowledge, and language are foregrounded as radically in question, the speaker might still see the Lord of the Hall as villain, but is unable to comfortably lodge "[v]illainy" in either the culture at large or in every individual.

It might be said that the rest of the poem rushes into this breach, and is a sustained effort to know the self's relationship to the world, to explore the possibilities for acting appropriately, and for speaking without casting all utterance into Echo's incomprehensible discursive abyss. In the context of

Tennyson's laureateship, it is important to examine how *Maud* sets about to consider these issues, particularly because they bear upon how to read the poem's final invocation to nationalist militarism – and the poem's vexed role in Tennyson's public laureate persona. The stanza that fails to locate villainy functions as a hinge between private experience and public matters. The Lord of the Hall's "scheme," which left the family "flaccid and drain'd," becomes part of a larger concern for the speaker: the dangers of the mid-century marketplace. The stanzas immediately following vacillate between an analysis of individual experience and general cultural critique. The opening sections of the poem are set in the months before Britain's involvement in the Crimean War, and it is the danger of a peace-time economy that comes under scrutiny:

> Why do they prate of the blessings of Peace? we have made them a curse,
> Pickpockets, each hand lusting for all that is not its own;
> And lust of gain, in the spirit of Cain, is it better or worse
> Than the heart of the citizen hissing in war on his own hearthstone?
>
> But these are the days of advance, the works of the men of mind,
> When who but a fool would have faith in a tradesman's ware or his word?
> Is it peace or war? Civil war, as I think, and that of a kind
> The viler, as underhand, not openly bearing the sword.
>
> Sooner or later I too may passively take the print
> Of the golden age—why not? I have neither hope nor trust;
> May make my heart as a millstone, set my face as a flint,
> Cheat and be cheated, and die: who knows? we are ashes and dust.
>
> Peace sitting under her olive, and slurring the days gone by,
> When the poor are hovell'd and hustled together, each sex, like swine,
> When only the ledger lives, and when only not all men lie;
> Peace in her vineyard—yes!—but a company forges the wine. (1.1.21-36)

In this formulation, "the blessings of Peace" have been "made…a curse" by the citizenry, "[p]ickpockets all." The previous stanza's questioning of the

relationship between overarching principle and individual action continues. The speaker finds everyone, including himself ("we") responsible for the covert "[c]ivil war" that goes under the names of peace and progress. These "days of advance" and this "golden age" are not what they seem, for "lust of gain" and the vital power of "the ledger" ensure that "the poor are hovell'd and hustled together, each sex, like swine." At stake in this passage is the question of how best to organize society. Is "[c]ivil war" a state that is "better or worse / Than the heart of the citizen hissing in war on his own hearthstone?" The question being asked is whether a hypocritical "peace" is preferable to an international war. Is it any better, the speaker asks, to quietly betray one's brothers "in the spirit of Cain" – in other words, to betray the *family* of the nation – than to violently articulate a lust for war with an extra-national other? But even as the speaker includes himself in the "we" that curses the benefits of peace, he quickly separates himself from the plural first-person by showing his fear of becoming the same "we" that he initially includes himself in: by suggesting that he "may passively take the print / Of the golden age," he separates himself from the crowd, but predicts the possibility of his participation in it in the future. The speaker thus constructs himself as both embroiled in culture and apart from it. In this state of radical undecidability, he sees himself as agent, object of others' agency, and doomed mortal being: he will "[c]heat and be cheated, and die." This passage raises questions about individual responsibility, about cultural disease at the hands of Mammonism, and about the profound difficulties of understanding the self in relation to the world.

Maud provides no easy answers for these questions. Do we act or are we acted upon? Can we operate on general principles or logical grounds? Where do our responsibilities lie? In a poem that generates its initial energies from both unanswerable questions about knowledge, language, and agency, and from a fear that the father's "honest fame" might be betrayed, it seems clear where the speaker's final decision will lie; if the current peace is constituted by a betrayal of family (even if that family is no less than the British population itself), and the only legible alternative is to be at war with an international other, it should come as no surprise that, by the poem's end, the speaker has chosen to go to war. In doing so, he sutures together the betrayal of his own family with the cannibalizing betrayal of the national community itself. He cannot save his father, but he resists "the spirit of Cain" by joining the brotherhood of soldiers. However, even in *Maud*'s opening sections, an international war is not constructed as entirely desirable:

> For I trust if an enemy's fleet came yonder round by the hill,
> And the rushing battle-bolt sang from the three-decker out of the foam,
> That the smoothfaced snubnosed rogue would leap from his counter and till,
> And strike, if he could, were it but with his cheating yardwand, home.
> (1.1.49-52)

The difference between an international war and the mercantile war being waged against those at home *by* those at home is not one of violence, but of the *object* of violence. In other words, in war, the man at the counter uses the same weapon; the critical difference is that he stops cheating his community only because he is too busy "strik[ing]" the enemy. What these two states of being have in common is violence, and *that* is a state of being for which *Maud* provides neither cure nor

solace. If the speaker descends into madness throughout the poem and begins his recovery by its end, he – and his culture – do not and cannot recover from the violence and betrayal that gave birth to this madness. There is, in *Maud*, no escape. This is a far cry from the laureate ode of the eighteenth-century: *Maud*, as a poem published under the name of the poet laureate, and within the boundaries of a laureateship Tennyson has shaped to include all of his signed verse, asks its readers to consider politically contentious questions about the relationship between the individual and the world.

A reading of the poem's concluding lines clarifies that although the speaker begins the work of constituting a more assured relationship to knowledge, language, and agency, he does so without fully breaking from the violence that infects his earlier considerations of individual and community, of citizen and nation:

> And hail once more to the banner of battle unrolled!
> Though many a light shall darken, and many shall weep
> For those that are crushed in the clash of jarring claims,
> Yet God's just wrath shall be wreaked on a giant liar;
> And many a darkness into the light shall leap,
> And shine in the sudden making of splendid names,
> And noble thought be freer under the sun.
> And the heart of a people beat with one desire;
> For the long, long canker of peace is over and done. (3.6.42-50)

As a whole, *Maud* takes up "the clash of jarring claims" – between agent and object, individual and community – and the very real dangers of being "crushed" by their collision. In fact, the jarring clash and crush of war bears a startling resemblance to the speaker's voiced experience of his most profound moments of madness:

> And the wheels go over my head,
> And my bones are shaken with pain,
> For into a shallow grave they are thrust,
> Only a yard beneath the street,
> And the hoofs of the horses beat, beat,
> The hoofs of the horses beat,
> Beat into my scalp and my brain,
> With never an end to the stream of passing feet. (3.5.242-49)

But in emerging from this state of being "shaken" and "beat[en]," the clearly jarring experience of madness migrates, from the speaker's individual perceptions to, finally, lodge in the "clash" of international warfare. His love for Maud (and hers for him) brings the speaker out of his shallow grave and into a discursive position that favours war: Maud appears to him in a dream and speaks "of a hope for the world in the coming wars" (3.6.11). Violence and love are fused, just as they are when Maud, much earlier in the poem, sings an old battle song that provokes an emotional response in the speaker. In recovering from his inner turmoil, the speaker turns the violence of madness outwards. In the process, he constructs a new relationship to knowledge, language, and agency. He does so, however, by abjuring his own subjectivity. Tucker argues that the poem's end finds the speaker "fallen into the bliss of the state" (428). And indeed, the speaker escapes the questions of individual knowledge, utterance, and action by "mix[ing his] breath / With a loyal people shouting a battle cry" (3.6.34-35), and by allowing both the nation and God (the two being intimately connected) to exercise *their* "just wrath" in place of his own. In doing so, the "darkness" of death in warfare can be read instead as an active transformation into "light" – through the knowledge, language, and agency not of the speaker himself, but through the

knowledge of God's infallible sense of justice, the language of the nation's "loyal people," and the agency of a state at war.

The poem's final lines show the extent to which the speaker remains incurable – not of the madness that rendered him incapable of functioning, but of the previous infections that gave rise to it: the Mammonistic betrayal of the family, and the saturation of private and public life by violence. At the beginning of the poem, these are projected onto the landscape; the "dreadful hollow," its "lips…dabbled with blood-red heath," and the "red-ribbed ledges" that "drip with a silent horror of blood" (1.1.1-3) represent not just the scene of the father's death, but the initiatory scene of the speaker's confusion between psyche and space. How he feels is what he sees: the landscape of the mind and the geographical landscape surrounding the speaker are linked by the power of his perception, by a vexed relationship between subject and object. In *Maud*'s final invocation of warfare, this geography is repeated:

> And now by the side of the Black and the Baltic deep,
> And deathful-grinning mouths of the fortress, flames
> The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire. (3.6.51-53)

These final lines are a complex repetition of the poem's opening. Both describe a violent landscape, but, at the poem's closing, the "dreadful hollow" and its "lips" are replaced by the "deep" of the seas and the "deathful-grinning mouths of the fortress." The resonances between the two are clear, but the differences are even more telling. The poem's ending presents a bigger and more unified landscape. The Black and Baltic seas and the fortress are more sizable than the dreadful hollow, while the "lips" represented in the poem's opening become the "mouths

of the fortress," an image suggesting both consumption and the ability to speak, but also the unification of "lips." The most telling repetition and translation is the speaker's use of the compound term "blood-red." In the poem's opening, the speaker perceives the heath to be "blood-red."[30] In the poem's final line, it is not the low shrubbery of the landscape that is imbued with a colour signifying violence, but rather an image of war as a flower. "Blood-red" modifies a metaphor – the "blossom of war with a heart of fire." Thus, the speaker's early sense of the landscape as violent becomes, finally, lodged in an image of violence itself. In the end, this image of war can be read as profoundly ambivalent: it is active (it "flames") and beautiful (it is a "blossom"), and the invocations of "blood," "fire," and "heart" mark it as horrifying, destructive, and embodied. At the same time, this image appears to stand in for the scene of battle – thus, the "blood-red blossom of war" also serves to unify the violence done to individual soldiers, a rhetorical move that is in keeping with the speaker's decision late in the poem to venerate "the heart of a people beating with one desire." In projecting himself into his own future landscape, the scene of battle, the speaker fails to leave behind the past. Despite his attempts to obliterate both himself as an individual subject and the individuality of each soldier's suffering, the violence that infects the speaker from the start remains incurable. He carries the past with him, repeats his own beginning, and, consequently, never escapes from the Echo chamber that is *Maud*.

[30] Tennyson noted that the speaker's perception of "blood-red heath" was intended to indicate his disordered mind. The "exaggeration of colour" was of a piece with how, according to Hallam Tennyson's *Memoir*, "[n]ature at first presented herself to the man in sad visions" (1: 396).

Readings of *Maud* are almost always conditioned by the question of whether or not the speaker's final decision to become a soldier in the Crimean War constitutes a prowar message on Tennyson's part. This question itself is conditioned by a particular view of Tennyson's poetics and politics – a view that positions him not just as an avowed moral leader, but also as a poet laureate. How can the poet employed by the monarch construct a character who becomes a soldier without being accused of warmongering, or, at the very least, of making some definitive statement on the righteousness and wisdom of the conflict? The answer is simple: he can't. In the reception of *Maud*, the sequence of the poem's events, culminating in a pro-war "message" is often weighed more heavily than the processes that lead to that conclusion: the speaker's decision to become a soldier has been read by many – then and now – not as a bleak analysis of a nation's failure to provide adequate options, but as the positively valued triumph of active citizenship. In other words, the social critique of *Maud* is often read as finding its cure in the action of the individual. A. Dwight Culler, for example, argues that Tennyson's emphasis in *Maud* is upon "how to express the passionate morbidity which he felt infected the land" (194). Culler's analysis is alive to the intersections between public and private life in *Maud*, but his emphasis on "morbidity" presents as an individual, rather than a social, disease. Furthermore, he argues that *Maud*'s ending suggests the cleansing of "the evils of the age" not just through "the holy power of war" (204), but through the individual soldier's sacrifice:

> If *Maud* is a national and historical poem as on one level it certainly is, it urges that post-Romantic English youth, who have

> very properly been brooding on their social wrongs, particularly upon that central evil the marriage of convenience, should not confirm themselves in morbidity but come out of their shells and give their lives for England. In *The Charge of the Light Brigade* and the slightly later poems *Havelock* and *The Defence of Lucknow*, which describe the gallant stand of a little band of Englishman against a horde of Indian rebels, Tennyson gave models of how he expected his hero to act. It is undoubtedly true that he did not expect him to return alive. (205)

The difficulties with this reading are simply put. Culler takes refuge in the poem's plot: if *Maud* ends with sanity and soldiering, then Tennyson must be arguing that the two go hand in hand. At the same time, Culler emphasizes Tennyson's intention via recourse to his other poems dealing with soldiers, armed conflict, and heroic sacrifice. As I argue above, sanity is far from assured, Tennyson's intentions for *Maud*'s analysis of the war in the Crimea are far from clear, and the poem is, in the end, interested in the impact of the social world upon the individual. The poem's ending is not about the individual's ability to throw off the mantle of morbidity, but about how the attempt to do so is an illusion of agency in a culture so sick of its own violence that it can provide only a limited repertoire of subject positions for the poem's speaker. In the opening section of this chapter, I argue that Tennyson creates a public laureate persona that makes of laureateship an institution that exhibits governmentality. In *Maud*, Tennyson takes governmentality itself – the internal regulation of an individual embedded in the social world – as his topic. The poem indicates that Tennyson's laureate project cannot be simply boiled down to his production of a governmental laureate subject, but to a poetic project for laureateship that takes both the individual and the social world as a key theme for exploration.

A number of recent critics have taken up *Maud*'s poetics and politics and found it to be much more ambivalent on the subject of war. In her *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics*, Isobel Armstrong argues that the poem's "assent to war is a further assent to madness," that "[w]ar is," for Tennyson, "the product of a deranged society" (280). Armstrong locates the poem's politics in nineteenth century debates about the constitution of the will, as either "necessity" or "choice" (281). *Maud*, she argues, "uses both accounts of will to open up questions about the nature of madness and war" and to thus render "the status of the speaker's commitment to war finally problematical" (281). Ann C. Colley's *Tennyson and Madness* is similarly interested in the poem's struggle with the individual's relationship to culture. Tennyson's representation of madness in *Maud* is of a piece with both contemporary writing on madness and the literary traditions on the same topic: the poem's foregrounding of memory, delusion, excess, heredity, melancholia, and the figure of the "madly obsessed lover" (80) all suggest that the poem is a "blending of literary and scientific thought" (81). At the same time, however, Colley is alive to another strand in nineteenth century theories of madness,

> the belief that conditions of the age are guilty of producing a nation of nervous dispositions. As the historians of British psychology Hunter and Macalpine point out, in the early decades of the century "there developed an interest in what is today called social psychiatry—the influence of society, its culture and organizations, institutions, beliefs, habits, deprivations, and calamities on the mental ease and disease of its members." In the physicians' minds, one of the greatest threats to people's "ease" was the country's incredibly fast growing wealth. Accompanying this wealth was not only the figure of avarice but also the possibility of a sudden pecuniary embarrassment. These were responsible for a national sickness. Even before he becomes entangled in his monomaniacal

> regard for Maud, the hero is engaged and weakened by mammonism. (78)

And, indeed, the speaker of *Maud* not only views Mammonism as an affliction, but is also infected by a market culture that is consuming itself. On the subject of the speaker's final call to arms, Colley feels strongly that "the lover continues to be unstable" and that his final vision of war is tantamount to delusional "castle-building" (85). But Colley's argument relies not just upon the speaker's delusions of the self, but on his suggestion that "a marvelous war…will support the 'glory of manhood,' end all tyranny, and bring back a noble world where there is peace, no lusting for money, no misspent ambition" (85). Even if we agree with this position – and it has significant merits – Colley underestimates the extent to which some contemporary readers felt that the war would indeed help Britain reclaim the "glory of manhood." It was, in fact, this very issue that a number of reviewers commented on. War's power to cure the nation's ills might well have been delusional, but the question *Maud* poses is not whether or not Tennyson's speaker is mad at the end of the poem; the question is whether society has made him that way because it is mad, too.

Few critics, including Colley and Armstrong, read the poem in relation to the laureateship – few read it as Tennyson's first major piece of verse since his installation. Where it *is* read as a piece of laureate poetry, it tends to be read as a failure. Alan Sinfield, who understands Tennyson's post-1850 poetic output as always being connected to laureateship, reads the poem as an example of Tennyson-as-laureate at war with himself. On one hand, Sinfield suggests, *Maud*

is an example of Tennyson's quest to establish an important, and masculine, public role for the office. Tennyson

> mak[es] his aggressively heterosexual speaker discover general propositions that are manly, near to the centre of the political process and not merely 'spiritual'. If a true national harmony could be forged out of hostility to foreigners and the idea of a threat to bourgeois freedom, there might be a truly bardic role for the laureate. (177)

But Sinfield also senses a conflict in this position, for this reading necessitates viewing the poem's ending as coincident with the poet's views on war generally, and foreign policy specifically. Sinfield's answer to this conflict is that the poem fails: "it is all too much," he suggests, that "the poem manifests frustration as well as confidence in the laureate's role" (177). In essence, Sinfield argues that Tennyson is *confused*, and that the poem is confused, too:

> The paradox is that Tennyson really did want to criticize the ideology of capitalism and imperialism, which aspired to rationalize the cruelty and injustice of the prevailing order. But because he was not prepared to contemplate a radical critique he imagined a foreign war to be a resolution. He points out through the speaker that the existing political and economic relations are a kind of civil war…. Yet he imagines that a foreign war will improve matters… not seeing that he is merely endorsing a redirection of the violence and injustice endemic in capitalism. He forgets what he knew when he wrote "Anacaona," "You ask me why, though ill at ease" and "Locksley Hall" – that violence and oppression exported from the centre to the margins are still violence and oppression; that war is not an alternative to capitalism and imperialism but an extension of them. He will not contemplate the fundamental analysis undertaken for instance by Shelley…. *Maud*'s critique was misdirected because of a blockage in its political argument. (177-78)

The Tennyson Sinfield constructs in this passage "forgets what he knew," is "not prepared" and "not seeing," and is the producer of a text that suffers from "a blockage in its political argument." The "paradox" Sinfield rightly locates in

Maud is not one we need extend to the troubles of the poet himself; these are effects produced within the poem and are, in the end, how the poem produces its radical questioning of the relationship between the individual citizen and the nation he inhabits. What happens if readers assume that Tennyson *forgets* nothing, *is* prepared, and *does* see? What happens if we read the poem's political "blockage" as its most crucial political point? All this is to say that Sinfield's is a vision of *the poet* as blind, forgetful, ill-prepared, and politically constipated. It should instead be the vision of *the poem*. If we dislocate the poet's political views from those of the poem's speaker, *Maud* is not a route to diagnosing its author's false consciousness, but instead a text that asks its readers to profoundly question the contours of citizenship – by asking them to do the difficult work of locating both the fractures between and the ropes that bind the individual to the economy, the state, and the national community.

It was, indeed, just this question that often preoccupied the contemporary reviewers of the *Maud* volume. The common wisdom on the title poem's reception is as follows: it was received badly, across the board. Tennyson himself is likely to be the person most responsible for this narrative. He writes that "[p]oor little 'Maud'" had "run the gauntlet of…much brainless abuse and anonymous spite" (*Letters* 2: 136), and this is a narrative repeated in the *Memoir* written by his son (1: 400). Some readers felt strongly enough about the poem's final warmongering lines to write to Tennyson. The most dramatic of these letters, and, according to Hallam Tennyson, the one his father most enjoyed "repeating with a humorous intonation" arrived under cover of anonymity: "I used to

worship you, but now I hate you. I loathe and detest you. You beast!" The letter closes no more cordially, with "Yours in aversion" (*Memoir* 1: 400).[31] What some critics, the formally published and the informally epistolary alike, responded to in the poem seems to have caught Tennyson unawares: he seems to have intended a rather different understanding of the work. His clearest statement on the poem's attitude toward war can be found in a letter he wrote to Archer Thomas Gurney in late 1855:

> I wish to say one word about *Maud* which you and others so strangely misinterpret. I have had Peace party papers sent to me claiming me as being on their side because I had put the cry for war into the mouth of a madman. Surely that is not half so wrong a criticism as some I have seen. Strictly speaking I do not see how from the poem I could be pronounced with certainty either peace man or war man. I wonder that you and others did not find out that all along the man was intended to have a hereditary vein of insanity, and that he falls foul on the swindling, on the times, because he feels that his father has been killed by the work of a lie, and that all through he fears the coming madness. How could you or anyone suppose that if I had had to speak in my own person my own opinion of this war or war generally I should have spoken with so little moderation. The whole was intended to be a new form of dramatic composition. I took a man constitutionally diseased and dipt him into the circumstances of the time and took him out on fire. (*Letters* 2: 137-38)

It is important to take seriously Tennyson's intentions for *Maud*, but not for the sake of allowing these to intervene unduly in any readings of the text's effects. What Tennyson's statement above shows is the distance between his stated intention and his understanding of the text's reception. This gap has much to tell us about the relationship between Tennyson's poetics and his laureate practice.

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[31] Martin notes that although Hallam Tennyson comments on his father's "humorous intonation," the poet in fact "nearly drove his friends mad for a year or two by pitifully repeating" the contents of the letter, and especially its closing, before wondering "whether they had ever been so abused" (391).

For Tennyson, the poem was not about being pro- or anti-war; it was, in fact, *precisely* the laureateship that Tennyson felt would keep him from just this sort of criticism. For a poet already aware that all texts he produced could be received as utterance of the laureate, for a poet who had constructed a collapse between non-laureate poetry and laureate poetry, the act of "speak[ing] in my own person" – something he explicitly disavows in the letter to Gurney quoted above – suggests the *duty* of speaking with "moderation." Put another way, whereas Sinfield argues that *Maud* "manifests frustration as well as confidence in the laureate's role" (177), I argue that it is Tennyson's confidence that the poem would be read as issuing from the laureate that *allows* him the latitude to ask these questions. The laureateship itself was Tennyson's guarantee that the poem's speaker and the poet laureate would not be confused: Tennyson thus employs the office itself, and its attendant connection to the state, as the means for *Maud* to ask crucial questions about the relationship between the individual and the larger culture. The moment that the poet cannot be pinned to the utterance of his speaker, the reader is unable to pin the poem's politics to its plot. The poem's stance on the relative virtue of the war, the state of the nation, and the individual's relationship to the national community and the state become more difficult to discern.

Tennyson's wished-for reception was not to be. In the same letter to Gurney (but speaking of a different poem), Tennyson writes that "one cannot always measure the effect of one's written words on the mind of the reader" (*Letters* 2: 137). For a poet, who was, throughout his career, drawn to writing drama, text on the page existed in an imperfect condition. What was needed was

performance; what was needed was the body. Poems on the printed page possess an inherent lack, according to Tennyson: "the tone," he writes to Gurney, "the glance of the eye, the good-humoured smile are wanting" (*Letters* 2: 137). And indeed, one of the oddest details about *Maud* is that Tennyson often performed it himself (many argue that he did so obsessively [Bayley 148]). He read the poem, in its 1,400-line entirety, on many occasions, to after-dinner audiences that included the Brownings, D.G. Rossetti, and the Carlyles (Martin 393-94, 400). In fact, he is reputed to have (but later denied having done so) once read the poem three times over, in one evening to Jane Welsh Carlyle, who, distracted by personal matters, had not responded to the first reading with sufficient approbation or evidence of comprehension (Martin 396-97, 608 n7). Tennyson's sense of the poem as the object of "abuse" and "spite" is accurate, but it was not the only response. As Edgar F. Shannon notes, quite a number of the earlier reviews of the *Maud* volume were favourable, including those appearing in the *Edinburgh News and Literary Chronicle, Illustrated Times*, the *Examiner*, the *Spectator*, the *Daily News*, *John Bull*, and the *Leeds Mercury*, among others (399). The *Examiner* review, for example, calls the poem "one of the most perfect works of the Laureate" (657). The reviewer applauds the poem's inherent moral message, of "love as the producer not of sickness but of health in a man's mind" (654). Maud's love leads the speaker out of madness and into action: "he who was once a grumbler, has become a grumbler and a patriot, ready to hope that by the thunders of war the foul airs bred of peace will be dispersed" (657). More involved defenses of the poem also appeared – in response to the negative reviews

– in the *British Quarterly Review*, *Cambridge Essays*, and *London University Magazine* (400). Dr. Robert James Mann published a pamphlet, *Tennyson's 'Maud' Vindicated*, which the poet heartily approved of and believed a curative to what he saw as the general misapprehension of the poem: "your commentary is as true as it is full" (Tennyson, *Memoir* 1: 405). But Tennyson expressed, nonetheless, a sense that the poem had been almost wholly misunderstood. In nearly all cases, the speaker's final, nationalist investment in war was pinned to Tennyson's own view – with negative or positive evaluations of the poem taking this link as their premise. Whereas Tennyson felt that the laureateship would shield him such a reading, his own link to state power as poet laureate may have in fact functioned to narrow the distance between the poem's speaker and the poet laureate.

Certainly the volume received a number of blistering reviews, with its title poem coming under by far the most scrutiny. As Shannon notes, however, many reviewers wrote positively of Tennyson's perceived "endorsement" of the war in the Crimea, even if they argued that the poem itself was largely without merit – or even dangerous (400-403). Eneas Sweetland Dallas, for example, in his *Times* review of the volume,[32] found the passionate call to arms at the end of *Maud* to be one spot of brightness in an otherwise terrible, and terribly irresponsible, poem. For Dallas, the publication of *Maud* confirms Tennyson as the leading figure of a current batch of poets who are "more like King David than King Solomon" insofar as they gather "the materials for a gorgeous temple," but fail to produce "a

[32] The review is unsigned, but Shannon attributes it to Dallas (402, 417).

palace" because they are too "analytical and self-conscious" (8). Consequently, Dallas suggests, their "continual introspection" develops into "an incurable disease…the heart eating itself" (8). The inevitable result of this condition is that these poets leave behind "the external world of life and action" and instead become "hysterical and weak" (8).[33] It appears early on in the review that Dallas overlooks the fact that the poem's speaker is not the poet, but this is not quite the case. Conveniently, he sees such a gap at the beginning of the poem (during the speaker's psychological decline), but not at its end (for he applauds the speaker's decision to become a soldier). Rather than wonder whether the speaker's final decision might also be disarticulated from the political opinions of Tennyson, Dallas deplores the poet's inconsistency: "It is no use to say that Mr. Tennyson reprobates disease and inaction as strongly as we do" (8). *Maud* is, he argues, like the work of Restoration dramatists who "[d]elight[ed] in the vices which they portrayed" even as they "declar[ed] that they only painted vice in order to make it abhorred" (8). The poem does have a moral, he argues, but it is one that is "defectively conveyed" (8).

The laureateship, and not just the war, figures strongly in Dallas' critique of the poem. He refers on several occasions to Tennyson as "the Laureate," doing so not just when he bemoans the influence *Maud* will have on other poets, but also when he holds the poem up for what he sees as its only virtue, its support of the war:

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[33] Specifically, Dallas links Tennyson with the Spasmodic school of poetry. See *Victorian Poetry*'s special issue on the Spasmodics (42.4 [Winter 2004]), especially Charles LaPorte's introduction (421-27).

> [W]e rejoice to find the Laureate proclaiming the truth with regard to the war—that this great war is the salvation of the country from evils far more to be dreaded than any which excite the peacemongers. Very boldly he proclaims it throughout the poem, but most articulately at the conclusion…. We have heard far too much of the blessings of peace. Like the blessings of Balsam they may prove curses. There comes a time to every man and to every nation when the cry must be raised—"War! war! No peace; Peace is to me a war!" Let us now hear somewhat of the blessings of war—war that restored the manhood of a nation and taught us that honour is more precious than gold, duty grander than interest, and righteous Victory sweeping over the vineyards of the Alma diviner than Peace drowsily cracking the walnuts over the wine. (8)

As I suggest above, Dallas' reading of the laureate's support for the war hinges on his assumption that the speaker's seeming return to sanity also brings him in line with the voice of the poet. Furthermore, Dallas employs allusions to the poem in order to shore up his own point, and thus exposes something of his own politics. In short, his recitation of "the blessings of peace" shows his willingness to wrest *any* pro-war message from the poem – this despite the phrase's appearance at an early stage in the poem, as the speaker manifests "hate" (1.1.1) and is beginning his descent into madness. Dallas finds in the poem only what he looks for: the speaker's desire for war should, according to Dallas, be taken seriously at all times, both when he is mad and when he is sane. In his madness, the speaker "proclaims" the truth, but it is in his sanity that he does so "most articulately." Dallas goes even further than Tennyson's speaker in supporting the moral virtue of the war, by suggesting that the "blessings" it brings do nothing less than revivify the masculinity, honour, duty, and righteousness of the nation. War is, he suggests, the force that "restore[s] the manhood of a nation" and is that nation's "salvation."

For Dallas, the role of Tennyson as poet laureate appears to function simply as one part of a larger discussion about the moral responsibilities of poets to the national community. That Tennyson is poet laureate appears to *matter*, but it is not quite clear how. The reviewer for the *British Quarterly* provides a slightly different balance. Although finding Tennyson's apparent view on the war rather too "exaggerated," the reviewer reads the poem's seeming support for the action as a discursive act that binds Tennyson to the state:

> [As to] the fact that the poem indicates the Laureate's full adhesion to the war policy of Britain—what can be said but that, at a time when our Gladstones and Lord John Russells and Sir James Grahams are shillyshallying and sheering off, this hearty adhesion of a man, as massive intellectually as any of them, and altogether of a higher order of spirit than that to which they belong, must be most effective and welcome? (qtd. in Shannon 402-03)

In this passage we see the crux of what was, for some, at stake in laureateship. The poet adheres to foreign policy and, in doing so, marks himself as both moral and political leader. This is the cultural capital of laureateship, the role of Tennyson as a plenipotentiary for government power. Because of his "full adhesion" to "war policy," he grants that policy the power of poetry's "higher order of spirit." The reviewer reads this power as consequential, as materially "effective." The author of the *British Quarterly* review is not alone in this judgment of Tennyson's laureateship having material effects. The poet's (estranged and often hostile) uncle, Charles Tennyson d'Eyncourt writes, on the occasion of his nephew's appointment, that the laureate, tragically, functions not just as plenipotentiary for the state, but as a synecdoche for the "taste" of the British people:

> Horrid rubbish indeed! What a discredit it is that British taste and Poetry should have such a representative before the Nations of the Earth and Posterity! for a Laureate will so appear. Posterity will, it is hoped, have a sound judgment on such matters, and if so what an age *this* must appear when such trash can be tolerated and not only tolerated but enthusiastically admired!! (qtd. in Ricks, *Tennyson* 233)

Tennyson was read by some, then, not just as a spokesperson for British taste, then and in the future, but as a spokesperson for the positive moral and intellectual force of foreign policy. But it is not only Tennyson's seeming support of the war that his reviewers found noteworthy; it was also *Maud*'s intervention in contemporary debates about citizenship, and poetry's role to play in the construction of this much-contested idea.

Goldwin Smith's (unsigned) piece, "The War Passages in Maud," appeared in the *Saturday Review* late in 1855. Smith's key point of interest in the poem is its construction of the speaker as citizen, and, consequently, he makes a judgment upon Tennyson's politics of citizenship. Smith finds the poem, the poet, and his politics wanting:

> Not once throughout the poems [i.e., the verses of *Maud*] is active life painted with real zest. Not once are we called to witness the happiness or the moral cures which result from self-exertion. Everywhere we feel the force of circumstances, nowhere the energy of free will…. It is natural to such a character to be averse to the mental efforts which lead to conviction, as well as to the moral efforts which lead to action. He may be keenly alive to the picturesque in philosophy and theology as well as in nature. He may paint exquisitely all the phases of historical character as well as all the aspects of nature. He may draw knights-errant and saints as well as modern philosophers, though he will turn them all into still life, as he turns the flash of the cannon into 'the blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire'. But his own philosophy is to leave that which is amiss in the world to unriddle itself by-and-by. Death, not reason, for him, keeps the keys of all the creeds. In politics he does not care whether it is aristocrat, democrat, or

> autocrat, so long as there is a strong man to save him from the necessity of performing the active duties of a citizen. (188-89)

Whatever one might think of Smith's politics, he is an astute reader of the poem – *Maud* is indeed consumed by "the force of circumstances" and the absence of "free will." For Smith this is precisely the poem's ethical and political failure: the "active duties of a citizen" should be represented with "real zest," and be understood to provide "happiness," "moral cures," and "the energy of free will." But Smith reads the poem as Culler does: rather than viewing the speaker's "free will" as having been so profoundly compromised by cultural "circumstances" that, even as he returns to sanity, he is incapable of individual agency, both critics instead place all the *important* responsibilities at the feet of the speaker.

Smith's argument that *Maud* fails to promote "the necessity of performing the active duties of a citizen" is an important critique, and one that reaches to the heart of the poem's circulation as a text issuing from the poet laureate. Smith suggests that the individual must act responsibly, and will, indeed, be made happy by the exercise of active citizenship. And so, in Smith's reading of *Maud*, the speaker's final act of becoming a soldier is *not* an act of free will, but an act of weakness: the speaker does not choose his own destiny, but lets it choose him. A tension can be located between this reading of the speaker at the end of the poem and that given by Tucker, who argues that at the poem's end the speaker has "fallen into the bliss of the state" (428). Both critics, 150 years apart, locate the same symptom in the text, but there is a crucial difference between Smith's *failure* and Tucker's *falling*. For Smith, the speaker rejects the agency he should feel responsible to embrace; in Tucker's formulation, the wide, open arms of the

strong man of the state cause the speaker to lose his footing. For the purposes of Tennyson's laureateship, Smith's reading of the poem is a dangerous one insofar as it recognizes the poem as not wholeheartedly endorsing active citizenship. For Smith, there is no excuse for Tennyson's representation of failed free will; for Tucker, there is no failure – instead, there is only the loss of free will to a state that animates the speaker as soldier even as it anaesthetizes his agency.

This tension – between the primacy of the individual and the state (or 'society' more generally) as the most crucial force – is one that was insistent in mid-century British political theory. Derek Heater phrases the question succinctly in the work of J.S. Mill: "Do individuals have a *personal* responsibility always to behave virtuously or are they powerless to do so if *society's* institutions counteract the will to virtue?" (114). For Mill, there are particular individual virtues crucial to the "social good" ("Considerations" 220):

> What, for example, are the qualities in the citizens individually which conduce most to keep up the amount of good conduct, of good management, of success and prosperity, which already exist in society? Everybody will agree that those qualities are industry, integrity, justice, and prudence. (220)

To these qualities, Mill adds "mental activity, enterprise, and courage" (220). The virtuous citizen contributes to both "Progress" and "Order" (220). The speaker of *Maud* cannot be said to meet Mill's requirements. But even Mill, as Heater points out (114), could see the limitations of such a position. If these were the ideal virtues of an active citizen, then the choice to *be* virtuous could still be mitigated by bodies beyond the control of the individual:

> When [interest in the common good is] called into activity, as only self-interest now is, by the daily course of life, and spurred from

> behind by the love of distinction and the fear of shame, it is capable of producing, even in common men, the most strenuous exertions as well as the most heroic sacrifices. The deep-rooted selfishness which forms the general character of the existing state of society, is so deeply rooted, only because the whole course of existing institutions tends to foster it; modern institutions in some respects more than ancient, since the occasions on which the individual is called on to do anything for the public without receiving its pay, are far less frequent in modern life. (*Autobiography* 233)

Mill argues, then, that vigorous and virtuous individual action is important to the social good (similar to the position put forward by Smith), but he also recognizes that the social world, the "existing state of society," can make such virtues impossible. And so, for Smith, when *Maud*'s speaker chooses the life of a soldier, he does so not through "strenuous exertions" and in quest of "heroic sacrifices," but rather as a further symptom of his inability to act on his own as an individual interested in the good of the nation. Thus, for Smith, the speaker acts improperly as a citizen. But Tennyson's poem, I argue, takes much the same position Mill does in his *Autobiography*: is it at all reasonable to expect the individual to be virtuous, selfless, and heroic when the social world is organized in a way that spectacularly fails to encourage such behaviour? What Smith finds wanting in *Maud* is, first of all, that Tennyson asks the question in the first place. What Smith finds irrevocably dangerous is Tennyson's answer: perhaps it is *not* possible for each individual to be an ideal citizen in a culture made so sick by its avarice that its only cure is to change the theatre of war from home to abroad.

Until quite recently, *Maud* was almost universally read as a pro-war, with its speaker's choice to become a soldier seen as either a symptom of returning sanity and virtue or even as the cure itself: the choice to become an active citizen

in a meaningful war abroad would revivify the speaker and be a symptom of the same in the national moral character. Tucker, on the other hand, argues that *Maud* leaves its reader "without a clue to imagining a credible alternative course of events" (429). While this is true of the poem itself, it is not true of the volume in which it was published. Tennyson's post-1850 verse demonstrates that the laureateship, and the office's attendant cultural signification as poetic plenipotentiary for the monarchy, produced texts that sought to mediate competing claims.

The *Maud* volume is no exception: another poem within its bindings functions to mitigate the dangerous questions of its title poem. As I argue above, Tennyson had much to say in his private correspondence and conversations about the ways in which *Maud* had been misunderstood; in public, he said nothing. As Lorraine Janzen Kooistra argues, Tennyson highly valued an "ability to determine the material conditions in which his verses reached the public" (54). And the *Maud* volume is no exception: it contained one poem that made a pro-war reading of the title poem as difficult as possible. "To the Rev. F. D. Maurice," is, like *Maud*, written in the first person, and it also takes up the topic of the war in the Crimea. The first-person speaker of "Maurice" is as elaborately constructed as the one in *Maud*, but is instead constructed to represent the "real" views of the poet laureate. F. D. Maurice was the godfather to Emily and Alfred Tennyson's first son, Hallam. The first five stanzas of the poem refer to this relationship and to the "scandal" (17) surrounding Maurice's forced resignation from King's College, London for radical theology (Tennyson,*Selected* 505):

Come, when no graver cares employ,
Godfather, come and see your boy:
    Your presence will be sun in winter,
Making the little one leap for joy.

For, being of that honest few,
Who give the Fiend himself his due,
    Should eighty-thousand college-councils
Thunder 'Anathema,' friend, at you;

Should all our churchmen foam in spite
At you, so careful of the right,
    Yet one lay-hearth would give you welcome
(Take it and come) to the Isle of Wight;

Where far from noise and smoke of town,
I watch the twilight falling brown
    All round a careless-ordered garden
Close to the ridge of a noble down.

You'll have no scandal while you dine,
But honest talk and wholesome wine,
    And only hear the magpie gossip
Garrulous under a roof of pine. (1-20)

These first five stanzas, with their direct references to specific events, the location of the Tennyson's home on the Isle of Wight, and the relationship between the poet and his addressee, establish the speaking voice of this particular poem as one and the same as the poet himself. Unlike *Maud*, there is no indication of ironic distance between speaker and poet; "To the Rev. F. D. Maurice" is constructed as both epistolary and intimate – as an invitation into the domestic space of the Tennyson family. It consequently establishes the speaking voice of the poem as the poet, but also, because the two are one and the same, the poet laureate. Furthermore, because the poem also functions as a defense of Maurice's theological position, that "eternal punishment" referred not to a temporal hell but to the "quality" of the sinner's suffering (qtd. in Ricks, *Selected* 505), Tennyson

further invests the poem with his own theological position. The opening stanzas of the poem thus construct the authenticity and authority of the speaker – both as a poet laureate and as a thoughtful and pious man who stands in contrast to the "churchmen" who "foam in spite" (9).

The poem's construction of authenticity and authority would not be a particularly remarkable moment for Tennyson's laureateship, except for the fact that the text alludes to the conflict in the Crimea – precisely the topic that put him in such hot water with his critics. Tennyson published the poem with its date of composition, January, 1854 – only two months before Britain and France declared war. It is thus a pre-war poem. It is not, however, a pro-war poem. The dating locates the poem historically roughly at the time when the speaker of *Maud* would have, in the poem's opening section, been decrying the "civil war" at home and hoping for the cleansing power of international conflict. "To the Rev. F. D. Maurice" can, consequently, be read as a companion piece to the opening of *Maud*. The sentiments it expresses about the brewing tensions and domestic conditions at the time of its composition constitute a significant difference from those expressed by the speaker of the volume's title poem. Indeed, "To the Rev. F. D. Maurice" takes up the very same issues as *Maud*'s speaker does:

> For groves of pine on either hand,
> To break the blast of winter, stand;
> And further on, the hoary Channel
> Tumbles a billow on chalk and sand;
>
> Where, if below the milky steep
> Some ship of battle slowly creep,
> And on through zones of light and shadow
> Glimmer away to the lonely deep,

We might discuss the Northern sin
Which made a selfish war begin;
    Dispute the claims, arrange the chances;
Emperor, Ottoman, which shall win:

Or whether war's avenging rod
Shall lash all Europe into blood;
    Till you should turn to dearer matters,
Dear to the man that is dear to God;

How best to help the slender store,
How mend the dwellings, of the poor;
    How gain in life, as life advances,
Valour and charity more and more. (21-40)

The first two stanzas of this passage set the scene for Maurice's visit: the safety of the "groves of pine" that will "break the blast of winter" represent both safe solidity (they "stand" and, by "break[ing] the blast," also serve to protect) and a balanced landscape (they are "on either hand"). In contrast, the emotional geographies at the beginning of *Maud* are fundamentally unsafe, fundamentally unbalanced: there is both "the ghastly pit" and "the dreadful hollow" that is "dabbled with blood-red heath" and "drip[s] with a silent horror of blood" (1.1.5, 1, 2-3). The unanswerable question of the father's agency in his own death is articulated in *Maud*'s opening lines through images of downward motion: either he "fell," along with a rock or "fl[u]ng himself down" (1.1.8, 9). This tension between purposeful action and accident has an echo in "Maurice," where "the hoary Channel / Tumbles a billow on chalk and sand" (24). To "tumble" suggests both agency and accident, both acrobatic performance and helpless falling (*OED*), but the movement of the water onto the beach is expected, rhythmic, and repeated. This is a landscape of order and balance, one in which questions of agency remain

(held in the word "[t]umbles"), but it is nonetheless the safe site for a meaningful political discussion between the poet and Maurice.

The discussion Tennyson proposes in the poem is occasioned by looming political tensions. Importantly, the poem locates the prompt for their discussion offshore, away from the positively valued landscape of domestic space: they will "discuss the Northern sin" (i.e., the Russian invasion of northern Turkey and the Ottoman principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia) "if," the speaker suggests, a "ship of battle slowly creep[s]" in "the lonely deep" (29, 25, 26). In contrast to the disordered spaces of *Maud*, any disruption of landscape in this shorter poem, as indicated by the "creep[ing]" ship and the "zones of light and shadow" it moves through (26, 27), is constructed as elsewhere: the only invasion of home in this poem is the repeated "tumbl[ings]" of the waves on the shore. Conflict is contiguous with the landscape of home, by virtue of the liminal seashore, but not a part of it. Consequently, the geographies of the Isle of Wight are a fitting place for poet and theologian to "discuss" matters of the day (29). Read against the broken communication at the beginning of *Maud*, where "Echo there, whatever is ask'd her, answers 'Death'" (1.1.4), the interlocutors of "To the Rev. F. D. Maurice" are capable of not just "discuss[ion]," but a meaningful dialogue that includes disagreement between friends: they will "Dispute the claims, arrange the chances, / Emperor, Ottoman, which shall win" (31-32).

Tennyson thus constructs a context for political discussion that is characterized by a protective and balanced landscape that fosters dialogue and is contiguous with the looming conflict, without being embroiled in it. Each of these

qualities set *this* landscape quite apart from the one represented at the beginning of *Maud*. It is within this context that the speaker then broaches some of the same issues as *Maud*: international war and domestic problems. It is the latter that most interests the speaker of *Maud* early on in the poem: "Peace" is, he argues, "a curse" and he goes on to describe both the origin and symptoms of the ironic "blessings" of this "[c]ivil war" (1.1.21, 27). The only other option that the speaker sees is "the heart of the citizen hissing in war on his own hearthstone" (1.1.24). For the speaker in *Maud*, there is only the choice between two types of war. Not so in "Maurice": while some attention is paid to symptoms ("the slender store" and the abysmal "dwellings" [of those living in the echoing poverty of the Hungry '40s [37, 38]), the rhetorical emphasis in these lines is on positive action on domestic social and economic concerns. Put another way, "To the Rev. F. D. Maurice" is more concerned with hope, with cures, than it is with disease. Like *Maud*, this poem is concerned with difficult questions, but questions of a very different sort: "How best to help," "How [to] mend dwellings," and "How [to] gain … [v]alour and charity" in ever-increasing supply" (37, 38, 39-40).

On the matter of the coming conflict itself, the poem has an important connection with *Maud*. Part of the discussion between Tennyson and Maurice will, the poem suggests, include the question of "whether war's avenging rod / Shall lash all Europe into blood" (33-34). In this passage, war is characterized as the punishing tool of vengeance – as the "rod" of retribution. In contrast, domestic matters are "dearer" and the focus of the most important discussion. The speaker

in *Maud* also makes reference to a "rod." Near the poem's opening, the speaker questions his responses to foreign affairs and God's will:

> For the drift of the Maker is dark, an Isis hid by the veil.
> Who knows the ways of the world, how God will bring them about?
> Our planet is one, the suns are many, the world is wide.
> Shall I weep if a Poland fall? shall I shriek if a Hungary fail?
> Or an infant civilisation be ruled with rod or with knout?
> I have not made the world, and He that made it will guide. (132-37)

For the speaker, who only a few stanzas earlier confirms his early questions of agency ("Do we move ourselves, or are moved by an unseen hand" [115]), the "rod" lies in the hands of punishing foreign leaders. The speaker is able to muster a faith in God, but not a faith in his own ability to emotionally invest in the suffering of others. For *Maud*'s speaker, then, the source of violence is the hostile acts of foreign nations. However, in "To the Rev. F. D. Maurice" – a poem that is constructed to be deliberately read as the personal voice of the poet laureate – it is war itself that is the source of vengeful violence, "lash[ing] all Europe into blood." Finding solutions to domestic woes is the primary goal of meaningful political discussion. The two poems' positions on the war are incommensurate: how can the rod of war that lashes Europe into blood *also* be the curative for madness? War is an answer to what ails the speaker, but it is no cure. Soldiering is an act of the speaking subject's agency, but *not* a model for ideal citizenship.

Read in light of "To the Rev. F. D. Maurice," the closing stanzas of *Maud* do not suggest that war and soldiering are the logical outcome of the speaker's return to sanity, but instead represent a symptom of the speaker's attempts to reconsider concepts of agency, of cause and effect, and of an ability to connect with others:

> And as months ran on and rumour of battle grew,
> 'It is time, it is time, O passionate heart,' said I
> (For I cleaved to a cause that I felt to be pure and true),
> 'It is time, O passionate heart and morbid eye,
> That old hysterical mock-disease should die.'
> And I stood on a giant deck and mix'd my breath
> With a loyal people shouting a battle cry,
> Till I saw the dreary phantom arise and fly
> Far into the North, and battle, and seas of death. (1200-08)

But, even at the poem's close, there is no clear escape from the Echo chamber of the poem, for the speaker does not enjoy the give and take of the type of discussion so positively valued in "To the Rev. F. D. Maurice," but rather the obliterating of the self that is found in nationalistic unity – in "cleav[ing] to a cause" and "mix[ing]…breath" with the "loyal people shouting a battle cry." The speaker of *Maud* finds this unity most clearly in the fifth-to-last line of the poem: in the face of war, "the heart of a people beat with one desire" (1219).

But *Maud*'s companion poem makes the argument that unity with the loyal and attachment to a passionate cause do not make an ideal citizen or an ideal life. In trying to leave his madness, along with peace, behind, the speaker of *Maud* urges a specific disavowal of voice on domestic issues:

> Let it go or stay, so I wake to the higher aims
> Of a land that has lost for a little her lust of gold,
> And love of a peace that was full of wrongs and shames,
> Horrible, hateful, monstrous, not to be told. (1208-11)

The "canker of peace" (1220) – those domestic problems that the speaker rails against in the poem's opening – are cast into discursive exile at the end of the poem. They are, he argues, so "[h]orrible, hateful, [and] monstrous" that they are

"not to be told." In "To the Rev. F. D. Maurice," it is discussion of solutions to these specific social issues that is most highly valued.

The poem is itself a performance of meaningful interaction with the other: its epistolary form suggests the possibility of response, seems assured not just in its reaching out and actually speaking to the other, but in the repetition of invitation – that this one text stands in for multiple invitations, is the opening salvo in many conversations to come. "To the Rev. F. D. Maurice" represents a release from the Echo chamber of *Maud*, a model for civilized citizenship between men who are close to God and care deeply for the current state of the nation, and for its future. *Maud* poses the problems of citizenship; "Maurice" provides the solutions. That the solutions here involve only talk is another matter – for poets and theologians, action is inherently discursive – to talk *is* to act publicly. For the poet laureate, publishing a poem that argues for the importance of talking over matters of the day, for the need for serious, thoughtful, and Godly debate between men, *is* a public act: this invitation to discussion in the realm of safe domestic space makes itself public by the act of being published.

"To the Rev. F. D. Maurice" makes clear that proper citizenship starts between men and at home. It starts in an ideal British landscape, in the safe harbour where the world can be observed, but does not intrude. It starts with a particular brand of citizen in a particular landscape. That *Maud* asks much more profound questions than these is true, but that the inclusion of "Maurice" in the same volume mitigates the impact of these questions is also clear – *Maud*, with its bleak view of the Condition of England, and the Condition of the Englishman, did

not stand alone in its publication, but was situated so that it might be read in concert with the other texts in the volume. Because its speaker is so clearly defined as being one and the same as Alfred Tennyson, this poem can be said to represent the "official" views of the poet laureate, both on the war, and, perhaps more importantly, on the condition of England. Above all, "Maurice" signifies to the readers of the volume that the speaker of *Maud* cannot be Tennyson himself. In constructing the *Maud* volume to stage-manage his readership's response to its title poem, Tennyson radically renovated the traditions of the office, escaping the feedback loop of monarchical authority leading to poetic production that shores up monarchical authority. The *Times* review discussed above, suggests a different view of the proper poet. For Dallas, war is not just a solution to the curse of peace, but to the curse of contemporary poetry. After detailing the ways in which Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, Shakespeare, Milton, and Goethe were "pre-eminently men of action," he concludes the review with a call for a particular stripe of cultural nationalism. He hopes that the war itself will prove curative for those "[p]oets hiding themselves in holes and corners, and weaving interminable cobwebs out of their own bowels" (8). The war, he hopes, will "inspire the poet's heart to beat like a drum to action, and the poet's tongue to sound like a trumpet after victory" (8). For Tennyson, this solution was not as clear.

Maud represents the work of a poet laureate who asks difficult questions and comes up short in his quest for answers. Is the current cultural landscape fit for active citizenship for all men? If not, then must that world change? And, if it cannot be changed, then where does that leave the speaker of *Maud*? If he is

incapable of being an active citizen, then what *is* he capable of – simply the duties of soldiering and, perhaps, heroic sacrifice? All this is to say that *Maud* raises questions that reach to the centre of political concerns in mid-century Britain. If *Maud* asks who is capable of active citizenship, it also, by extension, gestures toward the question of who deserves the rights accorded the "official" citizen. In other words, *Maud* has implications for a consideration of that most crucial barometer of nineteenth-century British citizenship – the vote. On this issue, Tennyson had, perhaps unsurprisingly, ideals on one hand and questions on the other. Tennyson never cared much for Reform. As Elaine Jordan argues, the poet "feared the premature enfranchisement of the uneducated" and eventually voted for the 1884 reform bill only because Gladstone "persuaded him that to delay was more dangerous" (80). John Addington Symonds' recollection of an 1866 evening spent with Tennyson and William Gladstone (a mid-century supporter of limited male enfranchisement reform and then Chancellor of the Exchequer in the short-lived second administration of Lord John Russell) illustrates the extent to which Tennyson was dubious about Reform:

> Something brought up the franchise. Tennyson said, 'That's what we're coming to when we get your Reform Bill, Mr. Gladstone; not that I know anything about it.' 'No more does any man in England,' said Gladstone, taking him up quickly with a twinkling laugh, then adding, 'But I'm sorry to see you getting nervous.' 'Oh, I think a state in which every man would have a vote is the ideal. I always thought it might be realized in England, if anywhere, with our constitutional history. But how to do it?' This was the mere reflector. The man of practice said nothing. Soon after came coffee. Tennyson grew impatient, moved his great gaunt body about, and finally was left to smoke a pipe. (qtd. in Tennyson, *Letters* 2: 417)

Tennyson exhibits the incomplete knowledge of "any man in England," a belief in the ideal of universal male suffrage, and the insistent question about political progress raised by *Maud*: "But how to do it?" Here Tennyson is "the mere reflector" and Gladstone "[t]he man of practice." But the situation echoes the political structure of *Maud* as a laureate poem. Tennyson asks the question, and there is no easy answer. Gladstone, meanwhile, says nothing. His bill – one that sought to extend the vote ever-so-slightly in urban areas – would lead, in only a few months' time, to the rather dramatic fall of the government (Matthew 139, 426).

The point here is not that *Maud* is a poem that is about reform specifically, but rather that the poem's interest in the possibilities and limitations for proper citizenship participate in the ongoing cultural conversation that formed the premises behind considerations of reform. In 1864, two years before the evening spent with Tennyson and Symonds, Gladstone gave a speech that included perhaps his most famous statement on the vote: "Every man who is not presumably incapacitated by some consideration of personal unfitness or of political danger is morally entitled to come within the pale of the Constitution" (qtd. in Hoppen 244). This passage gives the initial impression that Gladstone supports nearly universal male suffrage, but, as Theodore K. Hoppen points out, Gladstone makes significant qualifications to this statement (244):

> Of course, in giving utterance to such a proposition, I do not recede from the protest I have previously made against sudden, or violent, or excessive, or intoxicating change . . . What are the qualities which fit a man for the exercise of a privilege such as the franchise? Self-command, self-control, respect for order, patience under suffering, confidence in the law, regard for superiors . . . I

> admit the danger of dealing with enormous masses of men; but I am now speaking only of a limited portion of the working class . . . a select portion. (qtd in Hoppen 244-45)

Gladstone was, in fact, unconvinced of the wisdom of anything like universal male suffrage; he was in favour of extending the vote only to "skilled working men" (Hoppen 244). All others were unfit for the vote, one assumes, because they failed to possess those "qualities which fit a man" for the "privilege" of the full measure of citizenship. Where then does *Maud* fit into this conversation ten years after its publication? If the poem can be read as an extended interrogation of whether it is even possible for those who *can* vote (for the speaker of *Maud* lives in reduced circumstances, but is still a landowner, and would have been granted the vote) to possess Gladstone's ideal qualities, then *Maud* in fact asks a series of questions that disrupt the moral discourse of Gladstone's vision of the voter and put Tennyson in conversation with other strands of thinking about reform – the widespread working-class view, for example, that labour rather than capital or property were the "true basis of wealth" (Hoppen 69). Can fitness for citizenship be reliably measured by the possession of property? Can any man possess those "qualities which fit a man" when his own agency is mitigated by the impacts of culture and economics on his individual experience? How can one employ the measure of "personal unfitness" in a context where those already deemed "fit" can fall away so easily from exhibiting the strengths of a proper, masculine citizenship? One of the functions of *Maud* is to insist that the poet is not Symonds' "mere reflector," that it matters to *ask* if there can be any escape from the reflections of the echo chamber of a sick culture. At the same time, "Maurice"

suggests that Tennyson is already such a proper citizen, and that educated discourse is appropriate behaviour for a good, male citizen.

But beyond *Maud*'s tacit engagement with questions of citizenship, the poem also asks questions about the political efficacy of a particular mode of poetics. In its original publication, the poem ends with the following lines:

> And now by the side of the Black and the Baltic deep,
> And deathful-grinning mouths of the fortress, flames
> The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire. (3.6.51-53)

I discuss above some of the implications of these lines as a revision of the poem's opening. The "lips" of the "dreadful hollow" (1.1.2,1) become the "deathful-grinning mouths of the fortress," and the "red-ribbed ledges" that "drip" with "blood" (1.1.3) become the "blood-red blossom of war." In the poem's opening, the speaker's language is figurative in some sense – both "lips," and "blood" are, officially, metaphors. But the former is shopworn enough to have lapsed toward the literal, and the latter is complexly enmeshed with the speaker's disordered habit of mind in the poem's opening. In the poem's final lines, the images are repeated, but with a difference. "[D]eathful-grinning mouths of the fortress" and "blood-red blossom of war" compress and translate the imagery of the opening into tight, unusual metaphors. In other words, the speaker becomes, this time self-consciously, a poet. The speaker at the beginning of the poem inhabits the discursive position of the Victorian dramatic monologue: his speech "represents the contradictions and differences of the self in language, continually enacting the doubled subject as both homogeneous 'true person' and heterogeneous, disappearing moment of speech or signification" (Slinn 314). Probably the most

famous example of this poetics can be found in Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess," where the reader's very act of dismantling the ironies of the Duke's speech mark the reader as crucially different from the Duke – who prefers art that he can control (the painting of his departed wife) and art that models control ("Neptune . . . Taming a sea-horse" [54-55]). This is to say that we can read the opening of *Maud* as both the speech of a person *and* as poetic trace: we read the speaker two ways at once, against himself. At the poem's end, this is still a functional reading position; but something must be added at the end of *Maud*, for the speaker leans purposefully into his own metaphors.

But metaphors are not always solidly reliable tropes in Tennyson. As Peter Conrad argues, they display "evanescence": "suffer[ing] their own small deaths ... [o]ften being reflections only, they deliquesce" (Conrad 527, 526). Slinn argues that for many Victorian poets, the legacy of Romanticism was

> a lyric voice which presented itself as autonomous, self-conscious, atemporal, and male, and an aesthetic which promoted the possibilities of transcendence, of attaining through metaphor a universality not bound by time, class, or gender.[34] Several of the Victorian male poets appear to have realized all too quickly the contingency of this practice, and the women poets were faced with a choice about gender conformity – a choice between being written and thereby appropriated by a patriarchal poetics, or opposing that structure and being banished to its margins. Whether gendered through or against hegemony, however, from the 1830s and 1840s the cultural value of the lyrical voice was in trouble. Its assumed singularity and transparency proved multivalent and mediated. Its expressiveness, its metaphorically flaunted ideality, its atemporal formalism, were increasingly to be recognized as contingent, discoursebased, and ideologically colonized. (309)

[34] As Slinn notes, this was the "phenomenological inheritance" of Romanticism for the Victorians; however, recent scholarship, he suggests, "increasingly emphasize[s] the disruptive counter-side of Romantic writing itself, its disjunctions and mixed genres, the struggles of the speaking subject to establish authenticity" (309).

Tennyson's speaker has become a poet, but not of the right sort. Just as he "fall[s] into the bliss of the state" (Tucker 428), he also falls into the bliss of metaphor, the bliss of a simple Romantic poetics. The speaker's inability to escape the social world that constrains him is matched by his containment in the false universality promised by the Romantic metaphor. His ecstatic, nationalist union, where "the heart of a people beat with one desire" (3.6.48) is echoed in his collapse into the very metaphor he uses to describe that moment. The lyric subject and the nationalist soldier are one in the same. And neither emerge from *Maud* unscathed. Both the use of figurative language and the act of troping the self as transcendentally unified with other national subjects are, in *Maud*, the very same speech act. In forging this connection between poetics and politics, *Maud* suggests that the two are enmeshed, in language. In the end, perhaps the only escape from the echo chamber of bad politics and bad poetics is, quite literally, the prescription Tennyson writes: read *Maud*, and you cannot be such a subject.

The publication of *Maud, and Other Poems* marks a significant moment in the history of the laureateship. The volume strikes a fine balance. On one hand, there are the dangerous themes of *Maud*, which put the political discourse of the day under scrutiny just as they do the questionable power of the lyric subject. And on the other, there is, in "To the Rev. F. D. Maurice," the "official" view of the poet laureate as a purveyor of reason, and of practical solutions. It is fitting, perhaps, that the volume closes with the sanitized version of "The Charge of the Light Brigade," perhaps the most famous example of Tennyson visibly buckling to the pressures of the laureateship's expectations of propriety. The volume is not

just significant for its elaborate negotiations of poetics, politics, and laureateship, but also for a notable absence. There is no dedication "To the Queen" in the volume. There is, furthermore, no evidence to suggest Queen Victoria ever read *Maud* (Dyson and Tennyson 40), and there is no record of a presentation copy of the volume ever being held by the Royal Library. The focus of the chapter that follows is on how Tennyson's poetics after 1855 negotiate a relationship with the monarchy specifically. His poems written for Queen Victoria and her family range from the very public (celebrations of marriage and consolations for death) to the very private (a four-line poem written only for the eyes of the royal family). Taken together, this body of texts shows Tennyson's verse for the monarchy as consistently engaged in negotiating the complex terrain of the poet as sage and the laureate as servant.

CHAPTER FOUR: Tennyson and the Monarchy

This chapter considers poetry spanning Tennyson's career as laureate, examining a series of his poems written specifically for the monarchy. My goal in Chapter Three, on Tennyson's earliest work as poet laureate, was to examine how the new laureate navigated the competing claims of poetics, his own politics, and government policy, all with one eye on the sovereign. In doing so, I argue that he constructs, sometimes successfully and sometimes not so successfully, a public laureate persona that takes in all of the poetry he signs under his own name – and that doing so effectively governmentalizes the institution even as the laureate seeks to carve out room for cultural critique within his purview. In this second chapter on Tennyson's work, however, I turn to his poems on the lives and deaths of the monarchy. While Tennyson continued to publish verse unofficial in nature throughout his long remaining career, I want here to devote my attention not to further examples of the relationship Tennyson navigates between his verse and the laureate institution he constructs in the wake of Wordsworth, but rather to his official work as poet laureate. I trace the poet's representations of royalty in his additional stanzas for “God Save the Queen” written to celebrate the marriage of the Princess Royal, Victoria Adelaide Mary Louise, to the Prussian Prince Frederick William (1857); his dedication to Prince Albert in the 1862 edition of the *Idylls of the King;* the monument inscription produced for the queen's mother, the Duchess of Kent (1864); a poem written for the marriage of Albert Edward,

Prince of Wales, to Princess Alexandra of Denmark; the 1878 "Dedicatory Poem to the Princess Alice," written after her death to accompany Tennyson's historical poem on the Sepoy Rebellion, "The Defence of Lucknow"; and a brief inscription he wrote to the queen in 1890.

Although the laureateship Tennyson inherited was remade for a modern age, without the tiresome annual task verses that had come to be associated with it by the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was still an office that carried with it echoes of its origin in an early modern patronage system and a very different model of royal power. These poems, which primarily celebrate marriages and honour deaths, often demonstrate a laureate practice concerned with the construction of collective identity; however, in the poems written to or about the royal family, Tennyson also constructs a particular role for the poet laureate – as one wary of the office's eighteenth-century legacies and increasingly interested in grounding the poet laureate's authority in these task verses not just as subjection to the monarch. Foucault argues that

> the juridical theory of sovereignty ... constantly attempt[s] to draw a line between the power of the prince and any other form of power, because its task is to explain and justify this essential discontinuity between them, in the art of government the task is to establish a continuity, in both an upwards and a downwards direction. ("Governmentality" 91).

In what follows, I examine the ways in which Tennyson's verses written for the monarchy sometimes maintain this distinction between the power of the sovereign and any other type of power, but also how Tennyson sometimes invests poetry – and the office he occupies – with a power grounded in laureateship. If, as Foucault suggests, governmentality emerges form the questions of "how to be

ruled, how strictly, by whom, to what end, by what methods, etc.," ("Governmentality" 88), then his laureate practices with respect to official verse for the monarchy engage not just with the question of how the poet laureate might be ruled by an institutional structure still carrying with it the echoes of sovereignty, but also how the laureate might, through poetry, rule his reading publics – including the queen.

The first poem Queen Victoria specifically requested of Tennyson prominently addresses the concept of the sovereign as a unifying force. On the occasion of the marriage of her eldest daughter (Victoria Adelaide Mary Louise, Princess Royal) to the Prussian Prince Frederick William (later German Emperor and King of Prussia), the queen asked that Tennyson compose an additional stanza of "God Save the Queen" (Tennyson, *Poems* 3: 627).[35] The request itself came by way of a letter from court official Charles Beaumont Phipps in late 1857:

> It has appeared to Her Majesty the Queen that an additional verse to 'God Save the Queen,' having reference to the occasion, might with very good effect be sung at the State Concert which is to be given at Buckingham Palace upon the Evening of the Wedding of the Princess Royal—and I am commanded to request that you will be good enough to think whether you can frame a Suitable verse for that occasion. (Tennyson, *Letters* 2: 190)

The language of the letter is suitably convoluted. The idea of an addition to the song "appear[s]" to the queen, as if out of thin air, and the request itself is couched with, at the very least, a performance of grace. Phipps has been "commanded" by the queen, but Tennyson is "request[ed]" only to "be good

[35] Tennyson was not the first or the last to compose occasional stanzas for "God Save the Queen." There were several other versions throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For an overview, see Jeffrey Richards, 88-100.

enough to think whether [he] can" produce "Suitable" lines. Tennyson, however, takes the request, quite literally, as a command. In a letter written two weeks later to the Duchess of Argyll (Princess Louise, another of the queen's daughters), Tennyson carefully frames his concern about both the quality of the verses and the rules of engagement for laureateship:

> I have written what for want of a better name may be called a Sea-Idyl [i.e. "Sea Dreams"], of the modern kind, and ½ of an Ode to Reticence [i.e. "Reticence"] which has ended in Silence, and I know not what else save it be my Opus Magnum, two stanzas added to 'God Save the Queen' at that Queen's command, on the subject of the Princess's marriage. I answered Col. Phipps's letter by return of post and this morning have an answer, that Her Majesty approves of them. I cannot say that my own workmanship pleases me, but the metre is so lumpish and dragging that Phoebus Apollo would tear his hair over it . . . . I send the stanzas but please do not show them, and I send you also Phipp[s]'s letter which to my mind has something cold about it. When I sent my Illustrated Edition the Queen sent through Phipps a letter of thanks. Now, perhaps I am only doing my duty, therefore not thanked—how is it? (*Letters* 2: 191-92)

Tennyson begins the passage by invoking the composition of unofficial verse, and holding this work against the stanzas for "God Save the Queen," characterized as "duty" that therefore requires no "thank[s]" from the queen. Curiously, Tennyson refers to the new stanzas both as his "Opus Magnum" and as "workmanship" that he "cannot say . . . pleases" him. There is no necessary contradiction here – for Tennyson seems to be pointing to the significance of composing such a text alongside his own anxiety that the verses will not be of sufficient quality. But where then does the importance of these new verses for the song lie? Jeffrey Richards locates the first performance of the song (then "God Save the King") in the midst of the second Jacobite rebellion in 1745. The national anthem thus

arose, he argues, as "the product of a threat to the established order" and its verses at the time were "a resounding plea to God to preserve the King against internal rebellion and foreign invasion" (88, 89). The song's history as a purveyor of national unity at a time of threats both to internal cohesion and external forces has a tepid echo in Tennyson's verses, which define the royal marriage as coextensive with the national unity suggested by the song itself:

> God bless our Prince and Bride!
> God keep their land allied,
> God save the Queen!
> Clothe them with righteousness,
> Crown them with happiness,
> Them with all blessings bless,
> God save the Queen.
>
> Fair fall this hallowed hour,
> Farewell our England's flower,
> God save the Queen!
> Farewell, fair rose of May!
> Let both the peoples say,
> God bless they marriage-day,
> God bless the Queen.

Tennyson's verses function to celebrate the royal marriage within the confines of celebrating the queen – and within the confines of the "lumpish and dragging" metre Tennyson complains of in his letter to the Duchess of Argyll. To celebrate the marriage *is* to celebrate the queen, whose importance, in the national anthem and to the nation, is both elastic and benevolent enough to take in the alliance between nations that is brokered in her daughter's marriage to the man who inherit the crown of the German empire. But the performance is, in the end, of the queen's power as sovereign, and of the power of European monarchy overall. Part of this power, however, comes from the performance of other roles commonly

ascribed to the queen. As Adrienne Munich argues, the public presentation of Queen Victoria often made use of "the concerns governing a Victorian woman's life—family, alliances, fashion, entertainments, domesticity, sexual behavior, mourning, and motherhood" and that these were "mobilized . . . to sovereign service" (7). In Tennyson's verses for "God Save the Queen," we have at least three of these: family, alliances, and motherhood. Bringing all of these within the purview of the national anthem, a song that itself performs a nation's wish for the sovereign, emphasizes that the power of monarchy includes such qualities. And, indeed, such a move is not unexpected in the context of a period in which political power moves away from the monarch to be lodged in the parliament (Munich 2). This is, to use Munich's terms, part of "the cultural work" of Queen Victoria (2), and here the poet laureate functions as one of "the cast of characters" working to produce "[t]he spectacle of the queen" (5). This, then, constitutes what Tennyson understands, or is, at least, compelled to perform an understanding of within the circle of the monarchy, as significant laureate work – no matter what he might feel about the quality of the lines themselves.

This text is not alone amongst Tennyson's laureate verses in performing as what Margaret Homans terms "a self-representing royal utterance even if it happens to be spoken by someone else" (181). For Homans, the most salient example of this aspect of Tennyson's laureateship is his composition of lines for the Duchess of Kent (Queen Victoria's mother) inscribed on a statue in her mausoleum. Dated 1864, the lines, foreground not the death of the mother but the queen:

Her children rise up and call her blessed
Long as the heart beats life within her breast,
Thy child will bless thee, guardian-mother mild,
And far away thy memory will be blessed
By children of the children of thy child.

The emphasis in these lines is not on the duchess's life, but instead on how she will be memorialized during the life of her daughter, and in the memory of the projected royal lineage. The lines are, as Homans suggests, a "celebrat[ion of] Victoria's fertility and durability as well as the value of her blessing" (181). Furthermore, the inscription presents the lost mother as "guardian-mother mild," but Queen Victoria herself as guardian and mother of memory and monarchy. Homans' argument that Queen Victoria makes "use of Tennyson" (181), an expression and concept that she repeats in her reading of the *Idylls* (181-82), is a strong one. As with the memorializing of her mother, the memorial function of the *Idylls* works, "like all Albert memorials," to "[celebrate] Victoria herself" (182). The main interest in Homans' volume, *Royal Representations: Queen Victoria and British Culture, 1837-1876* is, as its title suggests, bringing into focus the queen's cultural circulation. But I am as interested in how such poems celebrate the queen as in how they deploy the authority of the poet laureate in order to perform textual acts that make visible the power of a state that includes Tennyson's laureateship. In the official verses written for the monarchy, then, we see a return to the eighteenth-century traditions of laureateship – of the laureate being paid to glorify the monarch. It is not just, as Homans suggests, that it "happens to be spoken by someone else." *Who* exactly is doing the speaking, and the grounds that voice has to authority are not a matter of happenstance.

In other official verses, Tennyson's authority as a poet laureate who speaks for the national community appears with even more clarity. The authority of the traditional laureate voice – the poet who constructs a national unity reminiscent of Cibber's ode and the eighteenth-century laureate tradition – is present in Tennyson's next poem celebrating a royal marriage. "A Welcome to Alexandra: March 7, 1863" was written to celebrate the wedding of Queen Victoria's son, Albert Edward (Prince of Wales, and later Edward VII), to Princess Alexandra of Denmark. This marriage was cause for much celebration – Princess Alexandra was very well-liked. Her popularity went above and beyond any previous royal consort (Perkin 46), and the public frenzy over the royal marriage was so pronounced that Walter Bagehot commented in *The British Constitution* that it was "childish" (35). Bagehot was not simply being disagreeable. The *Gentleman's Magazine* noted that in public discussion "every other subject was put aside by preparations for the marriage . . . and the rejoicings that followed that event," and "all which will be found described with sufficient fulness in the following pages" ("Foreign News" 498). The report is lengthy, and includes details from dress trimmings to seating in procession carriages – it also notes the robust public response to the marriage – it was proclaimed a national holiday, and at least eight people died ("suffocated or trampled") and approximately 100 were injured in the midst of the London crowds (509). So many poems were produced to mark the occasion that the *Gentleman's Magazine* felt it "impossible for us to even give a tithe of the poetry that has been called forth" ("The Marriage" 499). Tennyson's poem to mark the marriage was initially published in *The Times* on the 10th of

March, but was chosen to be reprinted in the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, suggesting that the poet laureate cannot be counted among any other poets on this occasion – Tennyson is not representative of poets, but singular as the poet laureate. In this regard, Tennyson has returned to an eighteenth-century tradition (publication in the *Gentleman's Magazine*); however, his authority as poet escapes the ridicule so commonly associated with eighteenth-century odes, signalling the degree to which Tennyson's laureateship was viewed in more positive terms than his predecessors. The laureate voice of the poem speaks for the national collective and sutures over the Danish Alexandra's national difference:

> Sea-kings' daughter from over the sea,
> Alexandra!
> Saxon and Norman and Dane are we,
> But all of us Danes in our welcome of thee,
> Alexandra!
> Welcome her, thunders of fort and of fleet!
> Welcome her, thundering cheer of the street!
> Welcome her, all things youthful and sweet,
> Scatter the blossom under her feet!
> Break, happy land, into earlier flowers!
> Make music, O bird, in the new-budded bowers!
> Blazon your mottoes of blessing and prayer!
> Welcome her, welcome her, all that is ours!
> Warble, O bugle, and trumpet, blare!
> Flags, flutter out upon turrets and towers!
> Flames, on the windy headland flare!
> Utter your jubilee, steeple and spire!
> Clash, ye bells, in the merry March air!
> Flash, ye cities, in rivers of fire!
> Rush to the roof, sudden rocket, and higher
> Melt into starts for the land's desire!
> Roll and rejoice, jubilant voice,
> Roll as a ground-swell dashed on the strand,
> Roar as the sea when he welcomes the land,
> And welcome her, welcome the land's desire!
> The sea-kings' daughter as happy as fair,
> Blissful bride of a blissful heir,
> Bride of the heir of the kings of the sea—

O joy to the people and joy to the throne,
Come to us, love us and make us your own:
For Saxon or Dane or Norman we,
Teuton or Celt, or whatever we be,
We are each all Dane in our welcome of thee,
Alexandra!

The poem proposes that the British public welcome Alexandra actively and collectively ("our welcome"), but enters into quite different territory when considering Alexandra's Danish heritage. Gone is the concept of "land[s] allied" in the wedding verses composed for "God Save the Queen." Alliance is replaced by a deceptively generous mode of assimilation. Alexandra is invited to "[c]ome to us, love us and make us [her] own." The princess is, in effect, invited to assimilate the British, who are "all Dane in our welcome of thee." These lines present a paradox: the British national collective becomes Danish in the moment of welcome, and is happy enough, flexible enough, strong enough to transform its national character in celebration. But the national collective Tennyson constructs and gives voice to in the poem is not simply transformed momentarily into the collective of another nation – for Alexandra is, as a woman marrying into a monarchical system of primogeniture, already the subject of assimilation. The poem describes Alexandra's assimilation into the British monarchy and the British public's assimilation to her rule. In "own[ing]" the British public, Alexandra would make them her subjects. Put another way, it is "joy to the throne" that functions at the top level of discursive power in the poem – it matters little whether the British public is momentarily Danish, since the practices of male, monarchical rule over the populace trump the carnivalesque celebration of a foreigner marrying the Prince of Wales. In the end, a poem that appears to suggest

a national identity flexible to transformation (however momentary) is ruled by the logic of monarchy's ultimate rule over all.

Tennyson's verses written specifically for the monarchy, or on the occasion of royal events, demonstrate a laureate voice engaged in the struggle to articulate nationalist unity despite – and, more likely, precisely because of – the contested nature of such identities in the mid- and late- nineteenth century. While the poems of marriage discussed above strive to produce a unified national identity, they do so using content that lends itself particularly easily to such a cause – a royal marriage provides an appropriate occasion for texts that emphasize bringing disparate parties together under the monarchy. In some of Tennyson's verses written for the monarchy, echoes of Foucault's concept of sovereignty can be easily heard, for although there is no violent subjugation to the queen's will apparent in Tennyson's texts, the poems discussed above are, nonetheless, both "instrument" and "justification," to use Foucault's terms ("*Society*" 35), of the power of royalty in the nineteenth-century British context. These are ideas Tennyson explored from early on in his laureate period. One of the first pieces of writing he completed after the publication of *Maud, and Other Poems* in 1855 was a short piece of verse titled "Harp, harp, the voice of Cymry." It remained unpublished during the poet's life, but editor Christopher Ricks dates it as 1856, the same year Tennyson took a trip to Wales with his wife and children ("Cymry" is the Welsh word for the Welsh people). The reasons for the poem remaining in manuscript are not clear, and I consider it here not as a piece of Tennyson's early laureate practice, but rather as a text that provides a view into Tennyson's attempts

to negotiate the diversity of the British nation with the construction of a unified national community under the leadership of the queen. The poem represents an attempt to construct a poetic interpretation of Welsh identity as part of the politically unified Britain (a task that was ideologically leveraged to produce the Welsh Arthur of *Idylls of the King* as a distinctly British leader):

> Harp, harp the voice of Cymry,
> Voice, whose music yet prevails,
> Honour to the Head of Britain,
> Honour to our Queen of Wales.
> Speak, speak, thou land of Aedd,
> Land of stream and mountain peak,
> Land of Arthur and Taliessin,
> Land of old Aneurin, speak.
> Speak, speak ye mountain voices,
> Cataracts breaking down the vales,
> Caer Eryri, Cader Idris,
> Honour to our Queen of Wales!
> Hers, hers the men of Cymry,
> High on hill or low on plain,
> Praying God to guard and guide her,
> Guide and guard her long to reign.
> Red, red the blood of Cymry
> Flows through all her mountain-dales,
> Red with life and rich in loyalty
> Runs the noble blood of Wales. (1-20)

The poem is shot through with allusions to Welsh literature, landscape, and political history. Tennyson invokes both Taliessin (now most often Taliesin) and Aneurin, 6th and 7th century poets, respectively, both of whom appear to have been bards for kings. The poem also mentions Caer Eryri, known outside Wales as the Snowdonia region, and Cader Idris, a mountain in the area. Cader Idris was long-known for its mystical power. As one surveyor of Welsh cultural traditions summarized in the late eighteenth century, "[i]t is said, and well believed, that whoever reposes within its hallowed circle [i.e. at the top of the mountain], will

awake either bereft of his reason, or gifted with all the sublimities of poesy" (Jones 80). The references to Welsh political history in Tennyson's unpublished poem are perhaps most important. The poem refers not only to Aedd (also known as Aedd Mawr and Addedomarus), ruler of the Celtic Trinovantes, but also to King Arthur, the legends of whom Tennyson spends much of his later career reconfiguring for the British Victorian reading public.

In some important ways, then, this short piece provides a precise view into Tennyson's much larger nationalist project, the *Idylls of the King*. The ideological justification for devoting himself so wholeheartedly to a poetry of the Arthurian court can be found in "Harp, harp, the voice of Cymry": the attention paid to Welsh historical figures, and to the use of Welsh language (still a point of friction in Welsh nationalist politics) is, at least in some sense, misleading. It is an attempt to recognize what we would now call cultural difference, but here it is in aid of a very *British* nation-building. Put simply, the poem begins by invoking the "music" that "yet prevails" from the "Cymry" (2, 1), but ends by forcibly confirming both the "noble blood of *Wales*" (20, emphasis added) and the "loyalty" of this blood (i.e., "race," to use the other common Victorian term, or what we now term "ethnicity") to the British monarchy (19). The last four lines of the poem drive this point home through its rhyme structure: "Cymry" is rhymed with "loyalty" (17, 19). And so, although the poem urges the Welsh to "[h]arp, harp" and the "land of Aedd" to "[s]peak, speak" (1, 5), it is Tennyson, the *Englishman*, and the *British* laureate, doing all of the talking – lip-service is paid to difference in this rhetorical act of assimilation.

None of this should be particularly surprising. The poem is primarily a poetic attempt to come to grips with Wales as both different from England, but also bound together with England by a common pre-Norman history. This rendering of a unified, even "pure," British historical origin is common in the Victorian period, but it is nonetheless tied up in important questions about citizenship and nationalism. As Lauren Goodlad argues, "the myth of pre-Norman Anglo-Saxon liberty," was a crucial part of an ideological repertoire that allowed Britons of the period to envision

> themselves as citizens of a self-governing nation and heirs to ancient constitutional liberties. By custom, by nature, by established tradition – even by divine will – Britons were, it was believed, a vanguard people, able to contrast their freedoms to the noxious state interference endured by Continental and Oriental peoples. (3)

But the establishment of Wales and its people as having a rich history all comes in aid of the poem's other insistent focus: the relationship between Wales and the monarchy. The queen is mentioned first at the beginning of the poem; indeed, "the voice of Cymry" is called upon by the speaker to provide "Honour to the Head of Britain, / Honour to our Queen of Wales" (3-4). The sentiment is echoed at the poem's half-way point. "Honour to our Queen of Wales" is repeated (with an additional exclamation point) at line twelve, and the voices of the "men of Cymry" (13) are constructed as both a possession of the queen ("Hers, hers" [13]) and functioning in the theological service of the queen ("Praying God to guard and guide her, / Guide and guard her long to reign" [15-16]). The "yet prevail[ing]" voices of the Welsh (2) are quickly hijacked in this poem – their

longevity is no guarantee of their independence. Their history is swallowed by the laureate's poem, and their voices by the crown.

A first-person voice in this poem is, for the most part, submerged in the insistent use of the imperative tense commanding the Welsh to honour the queen. The speaker is present as a grammatical subject in only one phrase: "our Queen of Wales" (4, 12). The phrase strikes an odd note in a poem that otherwise adopts a grammar that keeps the first-person aloof from the poem's "action." But the collective, possessive pronoun "our" is important here, for it is the only moment that the laureate is grammatically present. The Welsh might be "hers" (13), but she is "our[s]." But what are the constituent parts of this phrase? Queen Victoria is purposefully figured not as the British queen, but only the "Queen of Wales," a choice that does not simply support the poem's discursive work of presenting a unified British identity through history, politics, and literature, but goes further. Wales is constructed in this phrase as a particular possession of the monarch.

What then of the possessive "our"? Plural possessive pronouns always require the inclusion of subject and object – "we" is the collectivization of an "I" and a "you." The "our" of "Harp, harp, the voice of Cymry" includes both the laureate voice (the poem's speaking "I") and those Welsh subjects the laureate voice commands to "harp" and "speak" in loyalty to Queen Victoria. In short, the laureate voice in this poem exists only insofar as it is yoked together with Welsh identity. The ostensible riches of Welsh difference undergo assimilation-by-pronoun. In the end, a poem that makes much of celebrating Wales, including going so far as to use the Welsh language, employs the laureate voice to fuse "the

men of Cymry" with the voice of England – the poet laureate. Together they might "possess" the queen, but they do so only in a pronoun that furthers the poem's other assimilative strategies. And, indeed, what the Welsh possess is ultimately moot, for the "our" refers only to the queen's specific rule over Wales – "our" possession of the queen circulates back into her power over the whole British nation. I provide this lengthy reading of the poem to establish the background to Tennyson's laureate period poetic fashioning of British national identity. In particular, it is crucial to note the ways in which this brief and unpublished poem constructs difference within the Union as the occasion for a careful mode of assimilation. Honouring the literary heritage and geography of the territory is a plausible and allowable difference, but all difference must be not effaced, but instead leveraged into a unified voice expressing loyalty to the queen – difference becomes subjection, and is very much in line with Foucault's theory of sovereignty. As he suggests, sovereignty "live[d] on" into the nineteenth century, both "as an ideology and as the organizing principle behind the great juridical codes" (36-37).

Tennyson's sovereign poetic model often places the queen at the centre of his verse, including in his dedication of the 1862 edition of the *Idylls of the King* to Prince Albert, who died in December of 1861. The poem celebrates the late prince's many virtues: he is "modest, kindly, all-accomplish'd, wise" and to be known, "[h]ereafter, thro' all times, [as] Albert the Good" (18, 43). As Margaret Linley argues, the poem presents the marriage of Victoria and Albert as "a national celebration of bourgeois domestic values," even as it "challenges the

demarcation of gendered sexuality that those values insist upon" ("Sexuality" 367). He is the "ideal knight" (Tennyson 7) at the poem's opening, but is celebrated, Linley points out, for a number of feminine characteristics – his "fidelity to monogamy, modesty, purity, self-repression, stability, and tenderness" ("Sexuality" 367) – and for his patriarchal role as the "noble Father of her Kings to be" (Tennyson 34). But the poem is not only about the life of the departed prince consort, for its closing lines are addressed not to Prince Albert, but to Queen Victoria:

> May all love
> His love, unseen but felt, o'ershadow Thee,
> The love of all Thy sons encompass Thee,
> The love of all Thy daughters cherish Thee,
> The love of all Thy people comfort Thee,
> Till God's love set Thee at his side again! (44-55)

This dedication to Prince Albert is, quite literally, written "to" the queen. The poem is addressed to her in the second person, aiming to provide solace in her mourning, and is, in this respect, very much in keeping with the model of sovereignty I argue, above, is at work in the royal marriage poems. This is a poem nominally about Prince Albert, but its final lines show that the audience it constructs is in fact the queen herself.

At the same time, the dedication constructs a relationship between Prince Albert and the *Idylls,* as well as a system of poetic authority for the laureate. The prince was a fan of the *Idylls*. Tennyson points out that Albert "held them dear" (1) and indeed Albert requested that Tennyson sign the prince's personal copy of the *Idylls* (Perry xii). But Tennyson suggests in the dedication that the prince's support for the *Idylls* came about because of a personal connection: the prince

found “there unconsciously / Some image of himself” (2-3). That the reflection is unconscious is important, for anything else would contravene the “modest[y]” so valued in the prince (18), but the dedication nonetheless suggests that in the *Idylls* Prince Albert could find his own reflection. The content of that reflection is made clear in a revision Tennyson made to the dedication. In a revised version of the poem, Tennyson writes that Albert “seems to me / Scarce other than *my king's* ideal knight” (emphasis added 6-7), an analysis that, as Pearsall suggests, aligns the prince with Arthur's ideal knight in the *Idylls* – a “non-existent hoped-for person who of course eventually arrives in the person of Prince Albert” (*Arthurian* 121). In the poem's first publication, however, Tennyson writes that Albert “seems to me / Scarce other than my own ideal knight” (6-7). This first published version situates the prince as Tennyson's *own* ideal knight. Pearsall suggests that both Arthur and Lancelot, but more likely the former, are the models suggested here (*Arthurian* 121). In this version of the dedication, Tennyson specifically, rather than his creation Arthur, is positioned as the authority on how best to fulfill the knightly ideal. Tennyson also makes use of the dedication genre's potential to further authorize the poet: not only does the dedication rename Prince Albert (to be known “[h]ereafter” – *after* Tennyson's dedication – as “Albert the Good [43]), the poem is “consecrate[d]” by the poet's “tears” (4). The verb “consecrate” suggests the power of transformation, with the poet having the ability to transform his own verses – to make them holy – through the act of dedication to the dead prince. Linley argues that Tennyson's *Idylls* “[draw] a direct comparison between political empire and the imaginative empire of poets,” ultimately suggesting that

"the endurance of political empire depends on the sovereign power of poetry" ("Nationhood" 421). The text of Tennyson's dedication augments and pushes further this idea with respect specifically to the laureateship. Poetry of laureateship can be the venue both for the poet's transformation of his own verse in honour of the monarchy and for the monarchy to perceive its own reflection in the text.

Tennyson's powers of poetic transformation are extended further in yet another text produced in honour of the royal family. The 1878 death of Queen Victoria's daughter Alice, then Grand Duchesse of Hesse, brought with it a poem of mourning written by Tennyson. The "Dedicatory Poem to the Princess Alice" was published as introductory verses to one of Tennyson's most dramatic imperialist poems, "The Defence of Lucknow." If marriages can be read as always already a trope for unity, then death and imperial uprisings (for the latter poem takes up the topic of the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857) are more likely to represent fractures, personal and national wounds that require the laureate's poetic suturing. Tennyson fuses the public mourning of a lost princess with the memory of imperial triumph in India. Paired together in the *Nineteenth Century*, "Dedicatory Poem to the Princess Alice" and "The Defence of Lucknow" The short dedicatory verses address the untimely death of Princess Alice, by diphtheria, which she contracted when she kissed one of her infected children.

> Dead Princess, living Power, if that which lived
> True life live on—and if the fatal kiss,
> Born of true life and love, divorce thee not
> From earthly love and life—if what we call
> The spirit flash not all at once from out
> This shadow into Substance—then perhaps

> The mellow'd murmur of the people's praise
> From thine own State, and all our breadth of realm,
> Where Love and Longing dress they deeds in light,
> Ascends to thee; and this March morn that sees
> Thy Soldier-brother's bridal orange-bloom
> Break thro' the yews and cypress of thy grave,
> And thine Imperial mother smile again,
> May send one ray to thee! and who can tell–
> Thou–England's England-loving daughter–thou
> Dying so English thou wouldst have her flag
> Borne on thy coffin–where is he can swear
> But that some broken gleam from our poor earth
> May touch thee, while, remembering thee, I lay
> At thy pale feet this ballad of the deeds
> Of England, and her banner in the East?

These dedicatory verses celebrate the life of the princess (her "true life and love"), but concentrate much of their energy on celebrating her essential Englishness. As a child of the queen married into another European royal family, Alice had lived abroad for a number of years. In death, however, she is brought closely into the fold of Englishness and the monarchy of her country of birth. England is her "own State" and she is "England's England-loving daughter" – so English that her coffin is draped with the English flag.

"The Defence of Lucknow" can be closely linked to the dedicatory verses in a number of ways, beginning with its opening lines that echo the flag draped over Princess Alice's coffin:

> Banner of England, not for a season, O banner of Britain, hast thou
> Floated in conquering battle or flapt to the battle-cry!
> Never with mightier glory than when we had rear'd thee on high
> Flying at top of the roofs in the ghastly siege of Lucknow—
> Shot thro' the staff or the halyard, but ever we raised thee anew,
> And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew. (1-6)

Picking up the image of the flag from the dedicatory verses, Tennyson expands on the importance of the flag – it accompanies soldiers in battle and in their battle

cries. It is, in other words, both the companion to action and the companion to self-representing utterance. The flag signifies the connection between acting and speaking as an appropriate Englishman – the intrinsic connection between representation and action. But the flag is more than just a companion. By the end of these first lines, the flag represents the stalwart refusal to give up and the unquestionable domination (figured as spatial here through the term "topmost") of Englishness.

As John Timothy Lovelace argues, the two poems have a number of important connections aside from the flag. Alice's "fatal kiss" can be compared to the kiss bestowed on the "[C]old…brows" of the fatally wounded British commissioner, Sir Henry Lawrence. For Lovelace, the relationship between the two poems is represented in terms of analogy and connection: "Princess Alice's selflessness and patriotism are made analogous to the heroism of the British soldiers at Lucknow" and "[t]he symmetry between the scenarios – dying from kissing the living, and living more fully from kissing the dead – enhances the connection between Alice and the soldiers" (115). But where Lovelace identifies "symmetry" as functioning in aid of the "connection" between soldiers and the princess, I would argue that it is precisely Tennyson's construction of this symmetry that is the site where poetic authority vests itself. The princess kisses her sick child, dies, and her death becomes the occasion for nationalist feeling; the soldiers, acting in a context of nationalism, meet with death, yielding the kiss on the brow of the fallen leader. If the reflective qualities of the *Idylls* involve Prince Albert's recognition of an image of himself as (in the first published version at

least) the ideal of Arthur, and if the medium for reflection is the royal reader's unconscious experience with the text, then the reflection constructed between the dedication to the princess and "The Defence of Lucknow" employs the *poet* as its reflective medium. It is the poet laureate Tennyson who constructs this reflection (quite literally, the two kisses share a likeness, but are also opposites). It is not the poem or the reader that produces reflection, but the poet placing the two poems in dialogue with one another. Tennyson therefore vests poetry with the power to function as cultural and historical mirror – *the* medium for reflecting the experiences and character of the princess in the context of what he considers a profound triumph in England's recent imperial history.

In the end, then, the authority of Tennyson as laureate rests not just in the construction of verse to justify and shore up the monarchy, following Foucault's idea of sovereignty discussed above. It should come as no surprise, then, that in one of Tennyson's final poetic compositions, a brief set of lines written for Queen Victoria, the voice of the poet disappears entirely while scrupulously maintaining the authority of laureateship via extratextual means. In the occasional poems dealing with marriages and deaths, even if Tennyson exceeds both Foucault's theory of sovereignty and Bourdieu's role of the plenipotentiary, these poetic roles are still apparent, running alongside Tennyson's laureate practice of increasingly placing poetry and the poet's critical view of national history at the centre of cultural authority. And Tennyson's final pieces of laureate verse push his practice even further away from the traditional laureate ode's unification of the national population into one voice – the "our" of "Harp, harp, the voice of Cymry" and the

"hearts united" who "address the throne" in Cibber's 1731 "Ode for New-Year's Day" discussed in Chapter One. Over breakfast on the morning of what would have been her fiftieth wedding anniversary – February 10, 1890 – Queen Victoria's children presented her with a specially bound volume of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Elaborately boxed and bound, tooled in gold and with flowered clasps of enamel, the volume contains a four-line dedication by the poet laureate. It had been written just days earlier, at the request of Princess Beatrice:

> Remembering Him who waits thee far away,
> And with thee, Mother, taught us first to pray,
> Accept on this your golden bridal day
> The Book of Prayer

The short verses, printed on a frontispiece designed by the librarian of the Royal Library, Sir Richard Holmes, is, like the volume itself, a singularity – but not only because it was written for this one volume, and was not published again until much after Tennyson's death. The lines are written from the collective point of view of the queen's children, addressing the queen as "Mother" and using the plural first-person "us" in the second line. The voice of "Tennyson" is completely absent, but just because Tennyson's voice is absent doesn't mean his authority and value as poet laureate disappear. Queen Victoria was well aware that the lines had been written by Tennyson; she notes their beauty in a letter of thanks written to Tennyson on the same day (Tennyson, *Memoir* 2: 796). The poet laureate thus enters the domestic space of the family in these lines – a space of sad and intimate anniversaries, of the lost husband and the lost father. In this small, private poem, Tennyson's laureate voice divests itself of authority, but the effect is self-reflexive – a laureate practice that cements poetic authority through disavowal. The first-

person laureate voice is absent, but the authority of the office itself occupies the text in important ways. The privacy of the final poem can be linked with Tennyson's earliest works as poet laureate – the anonymous verses on Napoleon. It is not that Tennyson absents himself from authority, as poet or as poet laureate. He can be identified, but he does not identify himself in verse. Rather than become a name, his poetics of laureateship, his construction of authority, is tied to his invisibility – power is legible through a hegemonic rather than a named presence. In the end, the poet laureate speaks to the queen not as her servant but as her family. Abjuring his own agency, it must be unearthed by its reader.

One final moment from Tennyson's laureate career clarifies what is at stake in the changing face of Tennyson's poetic practices. On the recovery of the Prince of Wales from a dangerous illness in 1872, The Duchess of Argyll (one of the queen's daughters) wrote to Tennyson requesting a poem to mark the occasion of his recovery and much-celebrated return to public life – featuring a procession through London's crowd-lined streets. Tennyson refused, politely, by asking the Duchess the following question: "was not the people the best poet laureate and their shouts the truest song?" (*Letters* 3: 26). Foucault argues that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries brought with them what he termed biopower – power played out not in terms of the individual sovereign (or of the individual's relationship *to* the sovereign). And although Foucault's analysis looks at this new power's appearance in systems and techniques that consider the body specifically (e.g., interventions to control the birth rate), biopower is crucially concerned with "populations" – "as political problems, as a problem that is at once scientific and

political, as a biological problem, and as power's problem" (*"Society"* 245).

While Tennyson's laureate practice hardly extends into the realm of biopower outlined by Foucault (e.g., interventions to control the birthrate [*"Society"* 246]), it relies upon this concept of a population. Tennyson clearly recognized the role of the traditional laureate voice – one that brings together the voices of many into one, as Cibber's ode does. In London at the end of the nineteenth century, where the population now subject not to the sovereign but to biopower, so abundantly celebrates the monarchy, what need, then, for a poet laureate? This type of laureate, Tennyson's practices in office suggest, is only necessary or useful, it would seem, where poetry itself is required to partake in the state's work of molding a divided national community into a singular, unified voice. And so, Tennyson's late laureate practice should be read not just in the context of the laureateship's inherited institutional heritage. It can also be understood in terms of a poetics that constructs the traditional laureate voice as absent and the poet's authority as present through its ability to speak in the voice of the monarchy back to itself and its crucial responsibility for constructing a narrative that links the monarchy to the history of the imperial endeavour. In the face of a continually-changing cultural and political landscape in which the sovereign is no longer a defining source of state power over the population, monarchy becomes instead an historical, unifying touchstone in narratives that shore up an increasingly wide-reaching regime of governmentality and biopower.

CONCLUSION

The history of laureateship has received relatively little scholarly attention. If the history of the office is embedded in the history of statecraft, from sovereignty to governmentality, then its historical practice is worthy of considered study. Certainly there is room for much more work to be done in this area. For example, the breadth of Tennyson's long career as laureate is beyond the scope of this project. In recent years, much research has been devoted to both the imperialist ideologies and relationship to the monarchy of *Idylls of the King*, Tennyson's major poem sequence during his late career. Because the *Idylls* have enjoyed rather a comparatively larger share of attention in the contexts of nationalism, imperialism, monarchy, and the state than have the official poems written for the monarchy, I have not examined them here.[36] However, any expansion of this project would include discussion of the *Idylls* as forming an important part of Tennyson's laureate practice – especially insofar as they engage specifically with the question of the king's sovereignty, a fictionalized pre-Norman English history linked to nationalism, the role of marriage and gender in statecraft, amongst other themes. In addition, much work remains to be done on the work of the eighteenth-century laureates. Largely ignored because they present readers with,

[36] See, for example, the following texts that specifically link the work of the Idylls with High Church Anglicanism, Queen Victoria, and the laureateship: Noelle Bowles, "Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* and Anglican Authority," *Christianity and* Literature 56.4 (Summer 2007): 573-94; and Linda K. Hughes, "'Scandals in Faith and Gender in Tennyson's Grail Poems," *The Grail: A Casebook*, Ed. Dhira B. Mahoney, New York: Garland, 2000, 415-45. For a consideration of the *Idylls* in the context of the death of Prince Albert, see Margaret Homans, *Royal Representations: Queen Victoria and British Culture, 1837- 1876*, Women in Culture and Society Series, Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998, especially pages 179-201.

as Edmund K. Broadus puts it in reference to the odes of eighteenth century laureate Henry James Pye, “the hopeless sameness, the endless repetitions, the eternal saccharine” (158), the odes of this period are certainly worthy of further study in order to explore their own representation of monarchy as well as the reception that officeholders received. Serious study of the laureateship of this period would likely yield important insights about the vexed relationships between poetry and the state – both of which change profoundly across the century.

The laureateship after Tennyson has been similarly ignored (perhaps with the exception of Ted Hughes). But even the laureate who succeeded Tennyson managed a dramatic career. Alfred Austin, most well known now for his 1870 *The Poetry of the Period*, which vilified numerous poets (Tennyson and Browning among them) seems to have sought to repeat Tennyson's triumph in “The Charge of the Light Brigade” of 1854. His first work, published (like “Charge”) in *The Times*, celebrates the failed Jameson Raid, an outing planned by Cecil Rhodes and led by Leander Starr Jameson. Aiming to annex the Boer republic Transvaal, thus freeing its British residents from suffrage-less oppression – and the region's diamonds with them – the action failed quite miserably (Meyer 51). Winston Churchill would later refer to the Jameson Raid as the beginning of the British empire's “downward slide” (Meyer 51). Soon after the raid, Austin published his celebratory poem. And soon after that, Jameson, along with five of his officers, was brought back to England and securely deposited in Holloway prison (Lowry). Austin's poem, which had so much in common with the military 'blunder' of

Tennyson's "Charge," became rather an embarrassment. Was it poetry that had changed, or the poet laureate, or everything else?

Laureates after Austin are of perhaps even more interest, not least because poetry after the Victorian period becomes less important as a venue for public political discourse. Robert Bridges, handed the laureateship over Kipling in 1913, was a best-selling poet, but came into office just one year before the First World War – and wrote numerous poems between 1914 and 1918 (Hamilton, *Poets* 14). John Masefield, poet laureate from 1930 to 1967, suggested the idea of king's and queen's gold medal for poetry, and accepted the laureateship, but turned down knighthood – several times (Gervais). Cecil Day-Lewis, former communist, was the subject of a serious, but unsuccessful, 2003 bid to have his remains moved to Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey. According to the Times Literary Supplement, the request was made to the Dean of Westminster, accompanied by a petition signed by Seamus Heaney, A.S. Byatt, and P.D. James (among others) – to which the Dean responded, rather without empathy, that "[w]e have to take a very strict view of the literary contribution of the candidate" and that "[t]here seems to be a view around that anyone who is Poet Laureate is automatically memorialized in the Abbey" (J. C. 16). As the TLS points out, this explanation does not go far in answering the question of why the Dean of Westminster had recently arranged for the last remaining piece of real estate in Poets' Corner be filled by Laurence Olivier (16). John Betjamen, laureate from 1972-1984, came to the office with a level of popularity (measured by sales) not seen since much earlier in the century (Amis), while Ted Hughes' appointment to the office was a

national shock (Sagar). Andrew Motion, the first laureate to be appointment for a ten-year term, rather than the traditional 'til-death-do-us-part laureateship, was not viewed an interesting choice at first – and turned down a request to write about head lice, possibly ensuring he would never be very interesting (Motion, "Harry") – but went on to write two pieces, widely circulated online, proclaiming critique of British involvement in the U.S.-led Iraq war ("Causa Belli" and "Regime Change"). The most recent poet laureate, Carol Ann Duffy, is both the first woman and the first openly queer person to hold the office. There is, in the twentieth and twenty-first century, much material for further study of the British laureates, as the role of the monarchy and the public life of poetry continue to shift.

Politics, publishing, and poetry all move quickly, but one of the key issues at stake in laureateship persists – what is the laureate's relationship to the state? To conclude, I turn to one of the most recent representations of laureateship. In an early episode of the American television drama *The West Wing*, actress Laura Dern assumes the role of Tabatha Fortis, the United States poet laureate. Circulating around the day-to-day work of the president and his senior White House advisors, *The West Wing* is always concerned with easing the tension between political action and political speech – between what must be done and what must be said, or not said. The image of the presidency is carefully controlled, and this often involves uncomfortable compromises deemed necessary in the context of global realpolitik. When Tabatha Fortis arrives in Washington feeling that she must use her position as poet laureate to chastise the president for

his failure to sign a landmine treaty, she is about to be schooled in the strength of the White House. She meets with Director of Communications, Toby Ziegler (Richard Schiff), who patiently explains that the U.S. is unable to sign the treaty because they have not been able to make the heavily-mined demilitarized zone between South and North Korea exempt. Fortis asks why it should be a problem that she disagrees with the administration, and Ziegler explains that it is "[n]ot a big deal at all" for her to privately disagree, but warns of the consequences of airing her opinions in public: "If you voice your disagreement at a party in your honour hosted by the president with the press in attendance, then it's a gigantic deal." But the poet laureate is not easily controlled – she cancels the party and leaves the White House, choosing the principle of her own public political speech over the silence required of one who receives the public endorsement of the president.

At the same time, however, the poet laureate understands herself to be in a privileged position – even as the laureateship effectively requires her silence, it is this connection with the White House that puts her in the position where she might speak truth to power in a context where someone (i.e., the press and lawmakers) might listen. A few days later, she has an emotional episode while giving a lecture at Georgetown University. Ziegler is called in, at her request. It turns out that she is not just a radical poet trying to use her small moment of power to coerce the president into acceding to her demands. It turns out that she saw an Italian child in Bagna di Lucca blown up by a landmine. Her demands, in the end, are borne out of individual experience and personal responsibility, and

their intersection with the laureateship reveals her mixed feelings about her own poetic appropriateness. She explains her failure to complete the lecture, and her earlier demand that the president sign the landmine treaty:

> I decided to highlight poets who were never chosen poet laureate because they were too rebellious: Adrienne Rich, Anne Sexton, Allen Ginsberg. Then I went into *Howl*. I know *Howl* like you know voting districts: "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving, hysterical, naked, dragging themselves through . . . ." And then . . . I couldn't remember any more. You think I think that an artist's job is to speak the truth? An artist's job is to captivate you for however long we've asked for your attention. If we stumble into truth, we got lucky. And I don't get to decide what truth is. What you said about South Korea makes sense. You know, you people know more than I do. I shouldn't be, uh, you know . . . . I write poetry, Toby; that's how I enter the world. I was thinking maybe, you know, I don't know if you can do this, but I was thinking, if I could get a few minutes alone with the president so I could tell him what I saw in Bagna Lucca, and it wouldn't have to be a thing, you know, at the dinner, and there, I could . . . I have 64 couplets on the American experience that I think might be appropriate.

The poet laureate's lecture honouring those deemed inappropriate for laureateship belies both guilt and responsibility – those "too rebellious" poets deserve a public airing by the poet who, in the end, chooses to "be appropriate" at her dinner.[37] In this monologue, Fortis moves from someone who at first appeared to be using her position to influence international affairs to one who instead was seeking only to naively graft her personal sorrow onto the shoulders of a president who "know[s] more." She recognizes that she has mistaken her role in the world. The poet should, she argues, "captivate" – she should entertain, but not instruct.

[37] That the poet laureate's recitation of *Howl* ends before she can complete the line "dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn" is a telling moment – *Howl* does not just make Ginsberg inappropriate for laureateship, but also for unedited recitation on American network television. Neither Fortis, nor *West Wing* writer Aaron Sorkin, can provide their respective audiences with "any more" of Ginsberg's most famous poem. Sorkin, too, in deference to that other seat of power, the global media conglomerates, must also choose to "be appropriate."

Knowledge, truth, and the political actions these inform are not for the poets. In the end, for Fortis, the way to "be appropriate" is to read poetry "on the American experience." Political influence, individual experience, and public disagreement with power give way to a private audience with the president, and the seamless display of public agreement through poetry that celebrates collective national identity. Fortis might *be* rebellious, but not in writing, and not in public – and *this* is all that counts. This episode of *The West Wing* conveys the possibility of behind-the-scenes dissent in the halls of the executive branch of government, and how that dissent is carefully managed in order to maintain a public face of unity. As the famous aphorism goes, "Laws are like sausages. You should never see them being made." We see what ingredients go into the making of this Law of public unity, but we never see the laureate's dinner where her poems on the collective identity of the "American experience" are read. Her compliance is not of interest to the plot of *The West Wing*, but instead the processes involved in managing her dissent.

Laureates are rarely so insubordinate as the fictional Tabitha Fortis, and rarely do their actions require the management of their dissent. However, in the wake of the World Trade Centre attacks and the subsequent build-up to war in Iraq, the British laureate Andrew Motion published two anti-war poems written in early 2003. Both "Causa Belli" and "Regime Change" are characterized by Motion's opposition to the war. His decision to circulate anti-war poems was controversial precisely because the poet laureate is not expected to write poems critical of state policy. "Causa Belli," the first of Motion's anti-war poems, was

first printed in *The Guardian* and read aloud by the poet on BBC Radio. Motion, for his part, was aware that the poem would create a stir because of his position: "I have no misgivings," he said, "about getting short words from the Queen" (Ezard). Furthermore, Motion located the poem as well within his jurisdiction as laureate:

> I think that when I took on this post I said to myself, and anyone that would listen, that there is a good reason for thinking that if it was going to mean anything significant it should be interpreted in a way that allowed me to write about events in the royal calendar as and when I can, but also to write about matters of national interest. ("Poet laureate pens")

Motion's interpretation of "matters of national interest" extends, it would seem, to representing opinions that radically dissent from official government policy. Each incarnation of the bestowing of real or symbolic laurels on a poet marks a relationship between the poet and the state. Further considerations of the British laureateship might usefully take up how laureates of the twentieth and twenty-first century navigate the thorny terrain of producing verse in a context where poetry inhabits a much different cultural position than it did in the nineteenth century, and where the monarchy entails more celebrity than politics.

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