

THE LAUREATES' LENS: EXPOSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERARY HISTORY
AND LITERARY CRITICISM FROM BENEATH THE DUNCE CAP

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In this project, I examine the impact of early literary criticism, early literary history, and the history of knowledge on the perception of the laureateship as it was formulated at specific moments in the eighteenth century. Instead of accepting the assessments of Pope and Johnson, I reconstruct the contemporary impact of laureate writings and the writing that fashioned the view of the laureates we have inherited. I use an array of primary documents (from letters and journal entries to poems and non-fiction prose) to analyze the way the laureateship as a literary identity was constructed in several key moments: the debate over hack literature in the pamphlet wars surrounding Elkanah Settle's *The Empress of Morocco* (1673), the defense of Colley Cibber and his subsequent attempt to use his expertise of theater in *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* (1740), the consolidation of hack literature and state-sponsored poetry with the crowning of Colley Cibber as the King of the Dunces in Pope's *The Dunciad in Four Books* (1742), the fashioning of Thomas Gray and William Mason as laureate rejecters in Mason's *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Whitehead* (1788), Southey's progressive work to abolish laureate task writing in his laureate odes 1813-1821, and, finally, in Wordsworth's refusal to produce any laureate task writing during his tenure, 1843-1850. In each case, I explain how the construction of this office was central to the consolidation of literary history and to forging authorial identity in the same period. This differs from the conventional treatment of the laureates because I expose the history of the versions of literary history that have to date structured how scholars understand the laureate, and by doing so, reveal how the laureateship was used to create, legitimate and disseminate the model of literary history we still use today.

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INTRODUCTION

Three hundred and thirty-one years after the appointment of John Dryden to the office of poet laureate in Britain, the office proved it still possessed political currency. When Prime Minister of Britain Tony Blair refused to appoint popular favorite Carol Ann Duffy as Poet Laureate in 1999, he claimed that “middle Britain” would not approve of Duffy’s homosexuality (Higgins). Though Blair initially wanted to use the newly vacated office to promote what he termed “cool Britannia,”—someone who was not a part of the traditional establishment—he eventually chose Andrew Motion for the office, a much less controversial figure (Higgins). Ironically, Blair’s choice of Motion later became controversial when Motion commented on the detrimental effect the laureateship had on his ability to write good poetry and declared that he would not include any of his Laureate poetry in his collections (“Laureate Bemoans Thankless Job”). Motion then resigned as Laureate in 2009, becoming the only Poet Laureate of Britain to remove himself from office.

When Duffy was appointed poet laureate after the resignation of Motion in 2009, her appointment was thought to be symbolic of progressive attitudes towards women and the LGBT community: Duffy was the first woman, first Scot, and first openly gay poet to hold the office. However, her tenure to date has also raised questions about the tradition of the laureateship and the function of the office. After penning odes for the royal wedding of Prince William and Duchess Kate in 2011 and the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee in 2012, Duffy was criticized when she refused to pen odes for the births of Prince George in 2013 or Princess Charlotte in 2015 (Eden). Richard Eden complains that Duffy has recently published a poem criticizing the Environmental Secretary Owen Patterson but had not yet published a poem on the royal baby or his christening

(Eden). Likewise, in 2015, Duffy was criticized again when she did not write a celebratory ode for the birth of Princess Charlotte. A writer for the *Daily Mail* elucidates the situation thus: “The title of Poet Laureate is bestowed upon those whose work is deemed of national significance, previously held by distinguished metrists Wordsworth, Alfred Lord Tennyson and Ted Hughes. But while the appointment to the Royal Household is historically charged with marking state events, its current incumbent, Carol Ann Duffy, appears dogged in her reluctance to acknowledge such occasions” (Shakespeare). After describing her poetry before and during her tenure as laureate, the writer argues that Duffy’s refusal to write odes is likely based on her “left-wing” politics. The posted comments by readers of the news story range from questions asking whether a laureate is allowed to decline writing for a royal occasion, to calls to have her removed from the position, to discussions of previous laureates such as Dryden, Tennyson, and Betjeman (Shakespeare).¹

Blair’s conflict in determining the most symbolic poet for his agenda, Motion’s resignation of the laureateship and subsequent desire to truncate his legacy from the laureateship completely, and the conflict between Duffy’s desire for authorial independence and monarchical expectations draw us back to the origins of the laureateship in the eighteenth century. As I will show in this dissertation, the conflicted relationships between Laureates and their political patrons, Laureates and their poetry, and Laureates and the literary market have played vital roles in defining the role of the laureate and the nature of literary history since the commencement of the official position. These modern debates about the laureateship turn us to the eighteenth century and the origin of the office and development of the office, which coincided with contemporary debates about patronage, authorial independence, the value of poetry, and the definition of literature, as well as the development of professional authorship. Likewise, criticism

¹ John Betjeman served as poet laureate 1972-1984.

about the Laureates intervenes in the most pressing debates about literature in the eighteenth century and in modern times. Re-examining the laureateship in light of these changing ideologies provides a new lens of literary history that has been long been covered by the dunce cap.

In this project, I examine the impact of early literary criticism, early literary history, and the history of knowledge on the perception of the laureateship as it was formulated at specific moments in the eighteenth century. Instead of accepting the assessments of Pope and Johnson, I reconstruct the contemporary impact of laureate writings and the writing that fashioned the view of the laureates we have inherited. I use an array of primary documents (from letters and journal entries to poems and non-fiction prose) to analyze the way the laureateship as a literary identity was constructed in several key moments: the debate over hack literature in the pamphlet wars surrounding Elkanah Settle's *The Empress of Morocco* (1673), the defense of Colley Cibber and his subsequent attempt to use his expertise of theater in *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* (1740), the consolidation of hack literature and state-sponsored poetry with the crowning of Colley Cibber as the King of the Dunces in Pope's *The Dunciad in Four Books* (1742), the fashioning of Thomas Gray and William Mason as laureate rejecters in Mason's *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Whitehead* (1788), Southey's progressive work to abolish laureate task writing in his laureate odes 1813-1821, and, finally, in Wordsworth's refusal to produce any laureate task writing during his tenure, 1843-1850. In each case, I explain how the construction of this office was central to the consolidation of literary history and to forging authorial identity in the same period. This differs from the conventional treatment of the laureates because I expose the history of the versions of literary history that have to date structured how scholars understand the laureate, and by doing so, reveal how the laureateship was used to create, legitimate and disseminate the model of literary history we still use today.

The office of the poet laureate began in 1668 when Charles II officially nominated John Dryden.² As laureate, Dryden received the pension that had begun with the unofficial tenure of Ben Jonson: £100 and a butt of sack. Though no duties were officially imposed on the laureate during Dryden's tenure, he contributed Tory propaganda in the form of panegyrics—most notably “Astraea Redux” (1660) and “Annus Mirabilis” (1666)—allegorical poetry such “Absalom and Achitophel” (1681) and *The Hind and the Panther* (1687), as well as dramas such as *The Duke of Guise* (1683).³ Dryden's tenure as laureate ended, however, with the Glorious Revolution in 1688 when Dryden refused to renounce Catholicism upon William and Mary's succession to the throne. Thomas Shadwell was subsequently appointed laureate in 1688, and his appointment was thought by some to be a kind of punishment to Dryden. Although the two collaborated early in their careers such as in the *Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco* (1673), they famously split on political grounds and spent much of the 1680s attacking each other in satires and prefaces.⁴ Known today primarily for his talents as a dramatist, Shadwell also produced

² Ewa Panecka's work renders well the difference between the official office of the poet laureate and the “unofficial poets laureate,” which include Ben Jonson and William Davenant: “they received a patent and a pension but were not officially appointed for the office” (9). Jonson wrote masques such as *The Masque of Lethe*, which were considered to be the responsibility of the court poet as well as a masque to be performed as part of the Christmas festivities at Whitehall in 1607, 1612, 1614, 1619, and 1620 (9). Jonson also wrote occasional poems for James I and Charles I including “To King James, upon the Happy False Rumour of his Death” (1606), “Epigram to King Charles for a Hundred Pounds he sent me in Sickness” (1629), “Epigram to the Prince's Birth” (1630), “Epigram on the Queen then Lying in” (1630), “An Ode or Song by All the Muses in Celebration of Her Majesty's Birthday (1630), “An Epigram to the Household” (1630), “The Humble Position of Poor Ben, To the Best of Monarchs, Masters, Men” (1630), “To the King on his Birthday” (1632), “To My Lord the King on the Christening of his Second Son James” (1633), and a “New Year's Gift Sung to King Charles” (1635). In 1638, Davenant received a patent with terms identical to Jonson: “no official nomination but a pension that did not formally oblige the recipient to perform any duties at court” (12). Like Jonson, he referred to himself as the poet laureate in manuscripts but never received the official appointment. Davenant's main interest was the theater, and he was the first to introduce moveable scenery (12).

³ For close readings of these works as political propaganda, see Philip Harth's *Pen for a Party: Dryden's Tory Propaganda in Its Contexts* (1993).

⁴ See Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe: A Satyr against the True-Blew Protestant T.S.* (1682), *The Medall: A Satire against Sedition* (1682), and *The Vindication of the Duke of Guise* (1683); and Shadwell's *The Medal of John Bayes: A Satyr against Folly and Knavery* (1682) and *Some Reflections upon the Pretended Parallel in the Play called The Duke of Guise* (1682).

poetry during his tenure, including “An Ode on the Anniversary of the King’s Birth by Tho. Shadwell, Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal” (1689) and “Song for St. Cecilia’s Day” (1690). After Shadwell’s death in 1692, Nahum Tate, a dramatist, was appointed laureate. Tate also produced odes for celebratory events such as New Year’s Day and St. Cecilia’s Day; however, as with his predecessors’ tenures, the office did not specifically require them. Tate held the position for twenty-three years (1692-1715). The subsequent three laureates, Laurence Eusden, whose tenure was 1718-1730, Colley Cibber, who served from 1730-1757, and William Whitehead, whose tenure was 1757-1785, were much lesser-known poets or dramatists than their predecessors. All three suffered vicious satiric attacks from other authors as a result of their odes in praise of the Hanoverian monarchs. After the death of Whitehead, Thomas Warton, the historian and scholar, was appointed laureate in 1785 and served until his death in 1790. Henry James Pye, a poet and supporter of William Pitt, served as poet laureate 1790-1813. Upon Pye’s death in 1813, Robert Southey was appointed laureate. Southey’s tenure lasted thirty years until his death in 1843 when William Wordsworth succeeded the position. Wordsworth’s served as poet laureate until his death in 1850.⁵

⁵ The following poets served as poet laureate after Wordsworth’s death in 1850:

Alfred Lord Tennyson (1850-1892)

Alfred Austin (1896-1913)

Robert Bridges (1913-1930)

John Masfield (1930-1967)

Cecil Day Lewis (1968-1972)

John Betjeman (1972-1984)

Ted Hughes (1984-1998)

Andrew Motion (1999-2009)

Carol Ann Duffy (2009-present)

Previous Studies of the Poets Laureate

Studies of poets laureate to date reveal the need for a new approach. Most existing studies of the laureateship depend upon a singular version of literary history that was constructed during the eighteenth century and which favors Augustan satirists such as Pope and Swift, who lampooned these poets, and literary historians such as Samuel Johnson, whose marketplace ideology was antithetical to the laureates. In the first study of the laureates by Wiltshire Stanton and John Ralph in 1853, Stanton and Ralph seemingly relish in their eighteenth century attitude about the laureates. Consciously using a version of Samuel Johnson's title, *The Lives of the Poets-Laureate*, the book references Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* (1781) throughout. For instance, in chapter 4 on John Dryden the writer states, "the triumphs and sufferings of that literary career have been recorded by Dr. Johnson and Sir Walter Scott and upon the genius and writings of this poet some of the best essays in the world have been penned...What remains for us than to compile from their narratives a short memoir of the Laureate..." (142). Stanton and Ralph go on to classify Dryden as "the first place in the second rank of poets" (143), using a form of Alexander Gerard's *Essay on Genius* (1774). This study of the laureates uses the literary history and literary canon constructed in the eighteenth century—and by presenting it as true history, the study established this eighteenth-century perspective as the formative version of the laureates to come.

Although Kenyon West's *The Study of the Laureates of England: From Ben Jonson to Alfred Tennyson, with Selections from their Their Work and an Introduction Dealing with the Origin of and Significance of the English Laureateship* (1895) invites new questions about the laureateship, the structure of his study hinders his analysis, and his conclusions mirror those of Stanton and Ralph. Written shortly after the death of Tennyson, West begins his examination of

the laureates by stating, “Were our judgement of the poets laureate of England to be based upon the current opinion of them and their work in literature, we should not be inclined to consider that it was their great misfortune not only to be poets laureate but that fate imposed upon them any compulsion to be poets at all” (xiii). West then argues that the specific fates of the laureates, including “suffer[ing] at the hands of the critics,” is a result of the conflict inherent in the position itself: a poet who was appointed by the court and thus “must be in sympathy with the monarch and all monarchical measures” (xiv-xv). Concluding that the politics of the office preclude the laureates from being poets of the highest order, West argues that “in other fields of literature these poets sometimes did valuable work, especially in the domain of the drama, but as far as their strictly official poems, which their position made compulsory, are concerned, they cannot be said to deserve high praise” (xvii). Indeed, most of the early laureates including Dryden, Shadwell, Tate, and Rowe were known in their own time primarily as dramatists—not poets. As I show in chapter 2, Cibber, an actor, theater manager, and playwright, specifically attempted to create a legacy outside of the laureateship in his *Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* (1740) that would value his expertise in the theater. Despite this insight, the remainder of West’s work goes on to present the laureates using the same structure as Stanton and Ralph, providing a brief biographical sketch of each laureate with a selection of their poetry. In the Prefatory Notes, however, West declares that he will not exclusively provide laureate poems by each laureate as they sometimes “do not furnish examples of their lyrical genius” (xi). Of Wordsworth, for instance, West provides more than 150 pages of poetry including “Lines Written a few Miles above Tintern Abbey” and “Stray Beauties from *The Prelude*”—none of which were written during the author’s tenure as laureate.⁶ Though West’s study invites further analysis on the tensions between the laureates’ successes outside of the office and the satires of

⁶ “Stray Beauties from The Prelude” is the title West gives to the excerpt he provides from *The Prelude*.

the laureate poetry as well as the office as a hindrance to poetic success, scholars have thus far only examined the conflict between the political appointment as laureate and the attainment of literary honor.

Edmund Kemper Broadus's *The Laureateship: A Study of the Office of Poet Laureate in England with Some Account of the Poets* (1921) is still the most commonly cited study of the laureates to date. Broadus's considerable contribution to the field is in the economic information he provides, such as financial gains and possible motivations for why each poet accepted the office. While his work is superbly researched—it contains information from letters written by and to the laureates that expose their and other's view of their work—Broadus uses the structure of the Stanton and Ralph and West texts, providing biographical information for each poet as well as excerpts of poetry by each laureate. Although my project, along with that of all scholars of the laureateship in Britain, is indebted to Broadus's work, his work—much like Stanton and Ralph's—exposes a reliance on the dominant version of literary history constructed by eighteenth-century writers. For example, the two sections on Eusden and Cibber begin with quotes from *The Dunciad* where these authors figure as “E- lay inspired upon a sink/ And to mere mortals seem'd a Priest to drink” and King of the Dunces respectively. In the Cibber section, Broadus digresses into a description about the literary feud between Pope and Cibber and ends by stating, “From the absurd Birthday Ode of 1732, to 1757, when ‘old Colley’ passed away at the ripe age of eighty-six, there was nothing to lessen his qualifications for the throne of Dulness” (129). Though Broadus undoubtedly contributed much to the field of laureate scholarship, this continued approach to the study of the laureates is unproductive and does not allow us to consider alternate ways of understanding the function of the laureateship. Further, studies that privilege the views of eighteenth-century writers such as Pope and Johnson make us

blind to the strategies deployed by the laureates and their critics to establish the authority and legitimacy of literature as a professional pursuit. As Clifford Siskin reminds us, we must consider the ways our “heroic” writers wielded writing—and writing about writing—for the purpose of elevating their professional status (129).

Kenneth Hopkins’s *The Poet Laureates* (1955) does not provide new information or a new method to the study of the laureates and is structured in the now traditional scale of one chapter per laureate. In his introduction, Hopkins declares of Broadus’s work that “he has not attempted to supersede [Broadus’s work because] it will long be the standard work for students and it traces in great detail the history of the office of Poet Laureate” (11). He delineates that his purpose is instead to “write a book for the general audience, who is interested perhaps more in personalities than in what Johnson somewhere calls ‘remote inquiries’”(11). In invoking Johnson, he accepts the conventional view of the laureates created by eighteenth century writers. Of Nahum Tate, Hopkins writes, “I cannot discover that anybody has ever been enthusiastic over Nahum Tate; it seems that from birth he was the kind of man who survives in footnotes” (44). Discussing, with evident disdain, Tate’s drama, Hopkins uses Addison’s and Johnson’s reviews of his infamous *King Lear*, and cites Swift’s brief mention of his in *A Tale of the Tub* (51-52). Though his stated purpose is different from previous laureate scholars, his end result is the same: a retelling of the laureate history that sounds much like the one written in 1853.

Richard Helgerson’s *Self-Crowned Laureates* (1983) responds to West’s work and considers the laureateship with regard to the conflict between the political appointment and the literary reputation. Helgerson argues that poets such as Spenser, Jonson, and Milton fashioned themselves to be the laureate poet – not in the sense of the political office, but in the sense of the illustrious poet of the age. However, by the time the office of poet laureate was established in

1668, “a split had opened between the idea of a laureate poet and the possibility of any office that could be granted by a mortal king” (7). The laureate poets (as Helgerson refers to them) then had to invent a self-fashioning for themselves outside of a politically motivated office. Indeed, “‘I am a laureate’ is the statement each of [these] poets wanted to make. The problem that faced them was whether that statement could be convincingly made in the language of their own particular generation” (Helgerson 15). The method Spenser, Jonson, and Milton used to accomplish this goal was to compare and contrast themselves with other poets in antiquity, and, in Milton’s case, ignore the political office altogether. For Helgerson then, the laureateship as a political office operated completely outside of the literary honor to which Spenser, Jonson, and Milton ascribed; yet, as all of the laureate poets in Helgerson’s study held political offices as court writers, his argument becomes more complex. Though I agree that these poets certainly were motivated by the literary honor of the laureate poet more than the designated political office itself, I contend that the political office was still important. Though several now-canonized writers such as Swift, Pope, and John Gay could not hold the office for political reasons, I argue that the influence the office had on political culture and even on the writers who did not hold it is important for understanding the ways professional writing and the literary marketplace developed in the eighteenth century.

Recent recovery work has prompted the publication of laureate poetry anthologies, allowing the previously unstudied laureate poetry to be more easily accessible to scholars. Because of these works’ headnotes and introductions however, these anthologies also fit within the paradigms of the previous criticism. Nick Russel’s *Poets by Appointment* (1983) includes brief biographical information and two or three full poems for each poet laureate from Dryden to Benjamin. The biographical sketches include information about the politics surrounding each

laureate's appointment. Additionally, Russel includes quotations and descriptions of the satires of each laureate, creating a depiction of the laureates that is similar to that of Stanton and Ralph, West, and Broadus. Peter Heaney's *Selected Writings of the Laureate Dunces* (1999) argues that the appointments of Nahum Tate, Laurence Eusden, and Colley Cibber were the result of politics and not their great talents as poets (1). To demonstrate these three laureates' "duncery"—or "failure to master the panegyric form"—Heaney's collection provides selections of their bi-annual odes.⁷ Hilary Lauries's anthology, *Verses of the Poets Laureate from John Dryden to Andrew Motion*, which was published in the same year as Heaney's collection, provides brief biographies and writing samples of all of the poet laureates. The biographies reflect the attitudes of previous laureate studies, focusing on the satires of the laureates and using the opinions of writers such as Pope and Johnson as evidence without regard to the economic motivations they may have had for these opinions. For instance, after describing Warton's friendship with Johnson, the editor asserts that "by middle age Warton had developed into a squat, red-faced man, a beer drinker and pipe smoker in not always very clean clothes, who, when he talked, 'gabbled like a turkey,'" a quote from Johnson (57). The biography concludes by noting that "Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt, and Lamb read and admired his work, but the judgment of another of his contemporaries has had more influence on his long-term reputation, Laurie states, 'the gods had made him poetical but not a poet'" (58). Though these anthologies allow scholars more access to laureate poetry, they too reflect the attitudes of eighteenth-century satirists and previous works on the laureates in their introductions and biographical material.

The most recent laureate study, Ewa Panecka's *Literature and Monarchy: The traditional and the Modern Concept of the Office of Poet Laureate of England* (2014), re-evaluates the ways

⁷ In his article, "The Laureate Dunces and the Death of the Panegyric," Heaney argues that the poet laureates' fall from esteem in the eighteenth century was a result of Tate's, Eusden's, and Cibber's failure to master the form of the panegyric as successfully as Dryden.

scholars have studied the laureates and attempts to use the laureateship to consider the relationship between literature and the monarchy. Panecka's stated aim is to "examine the Laureateship as an exponent of the complex relations between literature and the Monarchy [...] to define the nature and specific status of laureate poetry in England" (viii). To achieve this goal, Panecka combines the traditional examination of the laureateship with biographical material for each laureate, information about each laureate's appointment, and historical information about the office, while also providing analyses of laureate poetry. In so doing, Panecka concludes that "English Poets Laureate invite their compatriots to a reflection of cultural memory...laureate poetry is a history of England" (225). She argues, for instance, that in Cibber's *Birthday Ode of 1743*, scholars can understand "Britishness" as a "distinctive... sense of superiority" (223). While Panecka's political reading of the laureateship is useful in understanding the changing politics of the monarchs, working with the assumption—as Panecka does—that "the laureate represents the Nation" and thus uses laureate writings to "address his compatriots" is problematic (226). In chapter 4 of my project, for instance, I discuss the Lord Chamberlain's censorship of Southey's *Carmen Triumphale* (1813) because of Southey's harsh treatment in the poem of Napoleon Bonaparte. This incident in laureate history demonstrates the complexities of the laureates' political writing: it was being patronized by the monarch but did not always correspond with the political positions of the government. Panecka addresses potential problems with her argument when she admits that "to skeptical readers...verses written to order by holders of an office who were paid by the Crown can hardly be expected to provide a reliable perspective on England" (219). After doing so, she uses a quote from Wordsworth to argue that her view of the laureateship is that it "expresses a sense of national importance to poetry" (219). As Panecka suggests, the study of poets laureate with regard to politics requires working with the assumption

that their poetry is representative of their politics and not a reflection of their patron's wishes. Additionally, political studies of the laureates disregard their role in literary history, and specifically the ways that writings by and about the laureate can produce new knowledge about changes in poetry and professional authorship. My project differs from Panecka's by widening the study of the laureates to the larger spectrum of how laureate poetry was produced and received. I argue that the laureateship becomes vitally important in understanding the ways professional authorship evolved in the eighteenth century as both laureates and non-laureates wrote about the office as a way to fashion their identity as an author and critic of literary value.

Studies on individual laureates Southey, Wordsworth, and Tennyson have begun to define a new intervention in laureate studies, revealing how the laureateship demonstrates large implications for professional authorship and literary history. Michael Gamer's "Laureate Policy" (2009) analyzes Southey's laureateship in light of the insurance policy he took out upon his succession, arguing that the office for Southey was a way to simultaneously gain financial stability while also "imagining posthumous fame" (43). While building on Broadus's economic focus, Gamer's essay shifts attention away from eighteenth-century satires on the laureates to argue that Southey's laureateship enables modern readers a glimpse into professional authorship in the Romantic period: "the manner in which he conducted his career [...] signals a new era of professional writing—one characterized neither by patronage nor by venture capitalism, but rather by careful planning and a determination to eliminate unwanted contingencies and turns of fortune" (42). Gamer's work signals a conceptual shift in how to approach the laureateship as a lens to view major changes in literary culture.

Carmen Ellison's dissertation *Civic Subjects: Wordsworth, Tennyson, and the Victorian Laureateship* (2010) examines "the ways in which poets laureate negotiated the terrain between

poetics and politics during the long reign of Queen Victoria [and] the practice of laureateship in a period when the perfunctory tribute odes of the eighteenth century were no longer required” (2).

Though consciously political, Ellison’s work intervenes in studies of the laureateship by examining Wordsworth and Tennyson outside the confines of laureate poetry. Like Gamer, Ellison does not confine her study of the laureateship to laureate poetry; instead, her work re-imagines the scope of laureate studies by including silence as an avenue for analysis.

Additionally, in her conclusion, Ellison calls for study of eighteenth-century laureates:

Much work remains to be done on eighteenth-century laureates... Largely ignored because they present readers with, 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!’ 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. (226)

My dissertation answers Ellison’s invitation to re-examine the eighteenth-century laureateship.

Though I do not analyze the political motivations that led to the appointments of certain laureates, I extend Ellison’s work by studying the laureates outside of laureate poetry. My project puts the laureates in conversation with their adversaries and critics, and I consider the whole spectrum of the work these poets produced. In so doing, I extend Gamer’s work by using the lens of the laureateship to examine how these writers participate in the formation of professional authorship in the eighteenth century.

My agenda is not to merely study the laureates’ biographies, politics, or poems but to understand how the laureateship fits into a literary culture that was changing in response to shifts in authorship, professionalization of writing, and changes in the economics of literary production. Because this project was born out of material that is specifically related to the authorship in the Romantic period, I have configured it as an intervention of authorship as a literary practice across the eighteenth century. Thus, I am intervening in a larger conversation

about professional authorship in different parts of the eighteenth century. Lawrence Lipking traces the careers and writings of Pope, Gray, William Warburton, and Warton, legitimating the traditional literary canon of eighteenth-century poetry by demonstrating a literary lineage that creates the ordering of poetry. However, recent scholars such as Mark Rose and Clifford Siskin have questioned the inevitability of the canonization of authors like Pope and Wordsworth by a reconsideration of the ways they employed writing and supported copyright laws to market themselves as professional writers. Siskin argues that in the eighteenth century, the proliferation of writing allowed writers to define Literature and to employ writing to elevate themselves as professional writers. He reminds us: “we see these intellectual laborers sentimentality and psychologically as individual heroes and anti-heroes and not political professionals wielding a central form of modern power: professional status” (129). Specifically, Siskin traces the lyric poem from its position in 1795 in the hands of “women, ploughmen and madmen” to the ways Coleridge and Wordsworth’s writing about the lyric in *Lyrical Ballads* begins to possess it, creating a new form that is *about* “women, ploughmen, and madmen” (132). Building from Siskin's work, my project considers the ways writers employ writing for the purpose of marketing themselves as *Literary*. Chapters 1 and 3 specifically address the ways authors fashion themselves as the opposite of poets laureate, which they define as feminine, hack, and non-poetic.

In so doing, my project responds to scholarship that has considered the ways Pope marketed himself as a professional writer. Pat Rogers argues that Pope defined himself as a writer of elite literature by contrasting his work with that of the hack scribblers of Grub Street, and in *Grub Street: Studies in a Subculture* (1972), Rogers recovers the topography—physically and metaphorically—of those scribblers. Reaching the same conclusion about Pope’s marketing

from a different angle, Mark Rose analyzes *Pope v. Curl* (1741), arguing that by insisting on his ownership of the letters he wrote to Swift, Pope's suit emphasizes the emergent world of the author as a professional. He additionally argues that Pope's use of this copyright case was a marketing ploy to enable him to publish the letters himself, ensuring personal economic gain. In chapters 2 and 4, I examine the consequences of contemporary views of the laureateship by re-evaluating the ways Cibber and Southey combat these views. My project thus intervenes in the debate about how literature was valued and canonized in the eighteenth century.

Copyright law is essential for my project as Mark Rose reminds that it intersects with the professionalization of authors as the ideology of copyright depends upon the notion of an author creating an original text, for which he or she should reap a profit (*Authors and Owners* (2)). I argue that during their tenures Southey and Wordsworth work to align the anachronistic laureateship and its bi-annual task writings with current ideas of professional authorship and copyright by refusing to publish or write bi-annual odes. Southey and Wordsworth identify their writings as their original property, with which they can do what they wish. Chapter 4 enters into the critical debates about genius and copyright of Rose, Martha Woodmansee, Peter Janszi, and Elizabeth Eilenberg, arguing that Southey's and Wordsworth's actions as laureates provide a symbolic representation of professional authorship and copyright to the nation. William St. Clair use of the history of anthologies argues that economics were the driving force of canonization as the *Donaldson v. Beckett* ruling (1774) allowed cheaper printing for older books in adaptations, abridgments, and anthologies. St. Clair argues that these texts combined to make the traditional canon.

Chapter One interrogates how the laureateship—initially a position of honor when held by Dryden—became the metonym for low culture in Pope's *The Dunciad in Four Books* (1742).

This chapter examines the dramatic work of Elkanah Settle, Pope's Father of Dunces and one of the only named figures in the *The Dunciad in Three Books* (1728), who served the position of City Poet of London in the 1670s. Settle's play, *The Empress of Morocco*, which was performed at court and published in 1673, analogized common literature with common whores enjoyed by men and then cast off. The success of this play, along with Settle's arguments about literature in his Epilogue and Dedication, incited an anonymous response from Dryden, Shadwell, and Thomas Crowne: *Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco* (1673), wherein they pervert Settle's analogy, making him the common whore who birthed hack literature. They additionally criticize the play's grammar, style, and figurative language. I argue that *The Empress of Morocco* thus participates in two distinct lines of argument about the nature of criticism itself as well as the adjudication between good and bad literature, distinct lines which are collapsed in Pope's *The Dunciad in Three Books*. Building on this analysis of Settle's debate with Dryden, Shadwell and Crowne, I delineate the ways *The Dunciad* intervenes in the debate about how to distinguish between high and low art that was established by early critical texts of the Restoration such as the Preface to William Davenant's *Gondibert*, Dryden's "Essay on Dramatic Poesy," and the pamphlet wars surrounding *The Empress of Morocco*. As I argue, *The Dunciad* settles the question of how to distinguish high and low literature by rewriting literary history to cast Settle in the role of the Father of Dulness. *The Dunciad*'s version of literary history is the product of an early debate about the valuation of literature that sets the terms for the reproductive and sexualized definitions of common literature and hack writers, and especially, state-sponsored poets. As I argue, criticism of Settle set the stage for the Popean version of literary history against which the Poets Laureate have been measured since the eighteenth century.

Chapter 2 considers the plight of laureates in the wake of *The Dunciad* and argues that Cibber's *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* (1740) employs a blend of life writing genres to respond to the criticism of his laureateship and to fashion a legacy for himself outside the laureateship as an expert on theatrical history, theatrical criticism, and histrionics. Cibber's narrative thus reveals a tension within the office: the laureate's commitment to duties of the office versus his commitment to his art, and for Cibber, the two were seemingly mutually exclusive. However, vital to his understanding of the laureateship is Cibber's conception of the power of performance. Of his laureate odes, Cibber agreed with criticism of their absurdity even satirizing them himself, arguing that the odes could not be extricated from their performance at court and were not valuable exclusively as poetry. As this view of the odes suggests, Cibber understood his role as laureate to be that of a performer, and in his *Apology*, he delineates what the power of performance can do: provide moral reform and reverse devolving literary tastes. Providing his readers with explicit instructions on evaluating theatrical performances, Cibber empowers middle-class audiences to begin the project of moral reform and taste in the midcentury. In doing so, Cibber's laureateship allows us to understand its value outside of laureate poetry.

Chapter 3 focuses on Thomas Gray and William Mason, the two poets who rejected the laureateship after the death of Cibber in 1757. The chapter argues that William Mason uses his two biographies, *The Poems of Mr. Gray. To Which are Prefixed Memoirs of his Life and Writings by W. Mason, M.A. York* (1775) and *Poems by William Whitehead, esq. Late Poet Laureat, and Register and Secretary to the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Volume III, To which are Prefixed Memoirs of his Life and Writings* (1788), to fashion a new identity for himself and Gray as what I call, "laureate rejecters." Gray's *Odes by Mr. Gray* (1757), published

in the same year as his rejection of the laureateship, used a known laureate form to reject the British monarchy and court writing. In his 1768 annotations to the poems, Gray further aligned himself with Pindar, who was known predominantly for using experimental forms to consider the poet's role. Mason's *The Life of Gray* (1775) expanded upon these ideologies, fashioning Gray as at once a rejecter of the laureateship and a timeless and unique poetic voice. However, Mason's memorialization of Gray was stalled by Samuel Johnson's biographical sketch of Gray in *The Lives of the Poets* (1781), which mostly constructed Gray's identity as an obscure poet, echoing earlier criticism of his work. Within the *Life of Gray*, however, is a rare moment of praise as Johnson lauds Gray's rejection of the laureateship as an "honour" since Johnson perceived the laureateship as an anachronistic form of patronage (178). Johnson's *Lives* enabled Mason to realize the value of the rejection of the laureateship both for himself and for Gray, and he subsequently utilized his *Memoir of William Whitehead* (1788) to assert that Gray's rejection of the laureateship was based upon his superior poetic abilities. Mason drew on the reputation of poets laureate to fashion himself and Gray as their antitheses.

Chapter 4 concerns the ways that the bi-annual odes became symbolic of the problem of the laureateship as this task writing emphasized the ownership of the poet by the monarch and the resulting lack of authorial independence. This chapter argues that Robert Southey understood the symbolism of the bi-annual odes and sought to abolish them in order to reconcile the office with modern ideas of independent authorship. When Southey attempts to have the odes abolished upon his appointment failed, he began to use the form and content of the odes themselves as an act of rebellion. As a result, the odes were abolished in 1821, which enabled Southey to craft a new legacy for the laureateship and for himself as laureate. The changes that Southey made resulted in William Wordsworth's appointment to the laureateship as a sinecure, and his refusal

to publish any laureate-related materials during his tenure solidified the laureateship as a position in alignment with conceptions of ordinary, independent authorship of the time. Wordsworth's tenure as laureate fused his earlier work to secure greater copyright privilege for writers along with his desire to be a laureate poet. Southey and Wordsworth's combined tenures add state sanction to the legacy of the new ideology of authorship that has pervaded future generations.

Taken together, the chapters of this dissertation reveal a meta-history of the laureateship can help us to reconfigure the way we understand the construction of literary history and begin to re-evaluate the ways in which other popular but rarely studied figures from the eighteenth century and beyond were fashioned as the opposite of high art and thus have remained unappreciated by modern scholarship.

CHAPTER 1 THE CITY POET AND THE POET LAUREATE: THE LINEAGE OF HACK
LITERATURE IN THE RESTORATION AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

This chapter argues that canonical writers John Dryden and Alexander Pope created our modern understanding of “hack” literature by contrasting their work against what they defined as feminized, hack, and especially, state-sponsored poetry.⁸ In hindsight, one can see two distinct lines that formed and culminated in Pope’s writing of *The Dunciad*. First, the work is placed in the path of critical texts including the Epilogue of Settle’s *The Empress of Morocco* and *Notes and Observations on The Empress of Morocco* written by Dryden, Shadwell, and Thomas Crowne. Second, *The Dunciad* intervenes in the debate about how to distinguish between high and low art, established by early critical texts of the Restoration such as the Preface to William Davenant’s *Gondibert*, Dryden’s “Essay on Dramatic Poesy,” and the pamphlet wars surrounding *The Censure of the Rota* and *The Empress of Morocco*. Examining the pamphlets and writings about Settle’s *The Empress of Morocco* reveals a lineage of literary critical texts that adjudicates good and bad literature in the period using reproductive and sexual language emerging with *The Dunciad* as their culmination. Tracing the early critical debate about high literature through the pamphlet wars reveals that the literary criticism of the period did not

⁸ Though the word “hack” was not used to describe literary drudgery until the later eighteenth century, its use in this chapter to help the reader understand the metaphor of “common” in its seventeenth-century usage by Davenant, Settle, and Dryden. Anna Foy argues that British writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries presumed that published poetry influenced the “common weal” (the common well-being, typically conceived as a national community.) John Dryden, for instance, utilizes the term in this way in *Amboyna, or The Cruelties of the Dutch to the English* (1673) to describe the atrocities of the Amboyna Massacre to the English Commonwealth. However, other primary writers in the period not considered in Foy’s work problematize the idea of common weal as minor writers such as Settle and Davenant use *common* as a negative connotation. In The Epilogue to *The Empress of Morocco*, the word *common* is used to describe the way a woman becomes a prostitute – she “turns common.” In an even earlier example, William Davenant uses the word *common* to distinguish educated readers of heroic poetry from “the Common Man,” who should neither read heroic poetry nor be considered part of the audience of it. Though this metaphor certainly implicates class in these instances, Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne use it as a metaphor to describe the quality of Settle’s writing—not Settle’s class. To avoid confusing issues regarding class vs. metaphorical literary quality, I will use the term “hack” to describe the kind of literature that Settle writes, that Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne despise, and that Pope rails against in *The Dunciad*.

protect the adjudicators of literature from their own criticism. Pope's *The Dunciad* enters into both of these critical lines by using the sexualized terms set in the pamphlet wars surrounding *The Empress of Morocco* to define high and hack literature for the eighteenth century. Pope's framework of criticism ultimately associates hack literature with state-sponsored poetry, leading to the degradation of the highest office of state-sponsored poetry, the Office of Poet Laureate.

Several scholars have attempted to answer the question of why the laureateship fell from grace in the eighteenth century. In *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton and the Literary System* (1983), Richard Helgerson addresses this question indirectly by arguing that the Poet Laureate could never be a *laureate* in the sense that John Milton or Edmund Spenser were. When Charles II created the court-appointed Poet Laureate, the laureate was automatically decided by politics and not literary merit; hence, the Poet Laureateship would always fall victim to politics. Helgerson uses the appointment of Dryden over Milton and the passing of the laureateship from Dryden to Shadwell as evidence of this theory. While I agree with Helgerson that the Poet Laureateship was politically motivated, politics does not fully explain the downward progression of laureates between 1668 and 1730, nor does it account for how the laureateship became a metonym for low culture and duncery in *The Dunciad*.⁹

Expressing a relatively universal belief about poetic form and laureate poetry, Peter Heaney (1999) argues that the laureates' fall from grace was due to Dryden's successors' – specifically Nahum Tate, Laurence Eusden, and Colley Cibber – inability to master the panegyric form.¹⁰ Heaney asserts that while Dryden both praised the monarch and also

⁹ In this context, “low culture” refers to what someone like Pope despises and is threatened by: prolific scribblers who write and produce popular entertainment for money. For an expanded definition, see Ashley Marshall's *The Practice of Satire in England 1658-1770*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2013 and Pat Rogers's *Grub Street: Studies in a Subculture*. London: Methuen and Co., 1972.

¹⁰ The belief that the poets' laureate could not master the panegyric form originates in the eighteenth century with the satires written about the odes. Satires of the Birthday and New Year's Odes were written by

admonished him by reminding him what a king should be, Eusden, and Cibber wrote majestic and sometimes hyperbolic panegyrics to unpopular kings, and it was thus inevitable that they would be satirized. Although Heaney's argument is convincing as it pertains to Eusden and Cibber (who would probably have even agreed that they were less talented than Dryden in their writing of odes), Heaney admits that Tate is "less deserving of opprobrium than Eusden and Cibber [as] there is something worthy in his well-meaning and serious-minded poetic effort" (2). Heaney goes on to note that Tate consistently "demonstrates his willingness to express uncomfortable political truths within the framework of his innocent-seeming odes" (3). By virtue of admitting that Tate is undeserving of his treatment in literary history, Heaney is also admitting that there is a limit to his formalist approach.

In order to fully understand why the Poets Laureate and state-sponsored poetry were devalued after Dryden's tenure, it is necessary to look beyond the formal elements of the poetry itself, beyond the politics of the day, and expand the examination of the period to include the larger picture of literary culture. Elkanah Settle, the City Poet of London, figures both in the laureateship of John Dryden in the 1670s and as the occasion on which Pope wrote *The Dunciad* in 1729; yet, critics have not considered his relationship to the "decline" of state-sponsored poetry. In this chapter I argue that the controversy between Settle and Dryden in *The Empress of Morocco* and published responses to it, together with Settle's subsequent role in Pope's *The Dunciad*, are the key to understanding how state-sponsored poetry became the object of satire in the long eighteenth century.

Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, and Stephen Duck, Colley Cibber, and others. The satires of these odes resonate in the twentieth-century criticism of the laureates. See Nahum Tate, Laurence Eusden, and Colley Cibber chapters in Edmund Kemper Broadus's *The Laureateship: A Study of the Office of Poet Laureate in England, with Some Account of the Poets*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921. Also, see Peter Heaney's *Selected Writings of the Laureate Dunces: Nahum Tate, Laurence Eusden, and Colley Cibber*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999.

Elkanah Settle and *The Empress of Morocco*

Though a prolific playwright, political commentator, and the City Poet of London, Settle has been reduced to marginalia in literary history. He has been remembered as the occasion upon which *The Dunciad* was written and for *The Empress of Morocco* pamphlet war, where he was attacked by some of dominant writers of the day including John Dryden, Thomas Shadwell, and Thomas Crowne. With this in mind, before delineating Settle's integral role in literary history, I will provide a brief biographical sketch. Born to a barber in 1658, he had the good fortune of being financially supported by his paternal uncle, who paid for his education and promised to leave him property (Brown 7). Not much is known about his early education, but at fifteen, he became a King's Scholar at Westminster and then briefly attended Trinity College (Brown 8). While in college, Settle wrote his first play, *Cambyses* (1666), and it was performed at Lincoln's-Inn-Fields to a full audience for six consecutive nights, where Settle gained the favor of prominent members of court, specifically Anne, Duchess of Buchleugh and Monmouth (11). The Duchess likely introduced him to the king as well as his future patrons, the earls of Mulgrave, Rochester, and Norwich (12). As the new favorite of the court after the success of *Cambyses*, Settle was asked to write a play for presentation at Whitehall, for which he wrote *The Empress of Morocco* (12).

After enjoying court favoritism until 1675, Settle moved into political writing. He famously was tasked to write a pope-burning pageant for the Whigs in 1680 and it was "the most elaborate pageant on record for such an occasion" (Brown 22). It was likely because of his famous spectacles and pope burnings that Settle was offered the post of City Poet of London in

1691.¹¹ It is uncertain how long he held this title; he produced pageants in 1691-1695, 1698-1702, and 1708 but was still recognized as the City Poet by contemporaries until at least 1717 (Williams). After Settle's death in 1724, the position was dissolved. In his later years, he was involved in the entertainments at Bartholomew Fair, where writers could earn more money than they could while working in the theater.¹² Additionally, Settle profited from writing eulogistic poems for distinguished persons on the occasions of funerals, wedding, recovery from illnesses, and return from travels (Brown 22). Despite his diverse career, Settle died in a charterhouse in February 1724. He is said to have still be composing plays and pamphlets the year he before died (Brown 43).

Settle's place in literary history centers on his play, *The Empress of Morocco*. The play opened in 1673 and garnered the attention of literary critics as well as audiences of the court. *The Empress of Morocco* was performed twice at Whitehall and then, with great success, at the Duke's Theater in Dorset Gardens (Iwanisziq 115). For its second run at Whitehall, John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester provided a second prologue and distinguished persons from court acted the parts (Brown 13). Its success led to a publication of the stage in 1673, and the

¹¹ According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Biography*, the following poets and playwrights served as City Poet: Matthew Taubman (1685-1690), Thomas Jordan (late 1650s-1685) and Anthony Munday (1602-1618). These three City Poets responsibilities were similar to Settle's: they were responsible for writing pageants, feasts, and shows for the Lord Mayor. For more information about their individual tenures as City Poet, see their entries in the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Biography*.

The City Poet was usually chosen to prepare the pageants for the Lord Mayor's show (Brown 28). *The London Gazette* described that the post was created "to express the benefits the city enjoys of peace and plenty under his Majesties happy government", the entertainments represented a sequence of visually stunning ratifications of the capital's wealth, status, and influence, while providing simultaneous opportunities for the validation of sovereignty and for London's governing factions to promote the triumph of popular will" (Haresnape).

¹² Bartholomew Fair was located a Smithfield, a 10-acre field, directly in front of St. Bartholomew's Hospital. The fair was originally held to celebrate the Feast of St. Bartholomew in late August, but during the reign of Charles II, it was extended to two weeks, and later in the eighteenth century, moved to September. The fair became primarily a source of entertainment, presenting rope dancing, freak shows, travelling menageries, as well as theatrical entertainments by actors who were unemployed in the summer. The fair also hosted gambling, drinking, prostitution, "vulgar" entertainment, and reformers saw it as dangerous to public morality (Payne 13-15). For more on Bartholomew Fair, see Dianne Payne's "Smithfield's Bartholomew Fair." *Historian* 109 (Spring 2011): 12-16. Also, see Henry Morley's *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1880.

publication included six sculptures, or engravings that illustrated moments of the play. *The Empress of Morocco* is believed to be the first play printed in England to have engraved illustrations (*Encyclopedia of British Writers: 16th, 17th, and 18th Centuries* 349), and the inclusion of these prestigious engravings raised the price from the usual one shilling to two (Brown 14). The published play also included an Epistle Dedicatory to the Earl of Norwich as well as a first and second prologue, which had been spoken on stage by Lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter and co-heir of James Howard, 3rd Earl of Suffolk and 3rd Baron Howard de Walden.¹³

According to Dryden, their quarrel began with the Epistle Dedicatory (Novak iv). In the Epistle Dedicatory, Settle chastises “the impudence of scribblers in this age” who have “so corrupted the Original Designe of Dedications” (*The Empress of Morocco*).¹⁴ Settle argues that these scribblers “make a Dedication when their playes are damn’d” and “make a books-seller rich and a poet famous” by using a person of honor as a ploy to raise their esteem (*The Empress of Morocco*). Instead of following in this tradition, Settle describes that “this play [...] throws itself at your [the patron’s] feet, as your own” (*The Empress of Morocco*). The Dedication would prove to be the least part of their quarrel, however.

In 1673, the same year as the publication of the play, an anonymous pamphlet, *Notes and Observations of The Empress of Morocco* appeared that criticized the play’s “false grammar, improper English, strain’d hyperboles and downright bulls” (Dryden, Crowne, and Shadwell). Included in the *Notes and Observations* is a Preface, a five act, line-by-line critique of *The Empress of Morocco*, and a postscript. Settle quickly responded with his own version: *Notes and*

¹³ Lady Elizabeth Howard was a prominent member of court and had many courtly lovers including Rochester and the Duke of Monmouth. See notes on Rochester’s “Ballad on Betty Felton” and “Signor Dildo” in John Harold Wilson’s *Court Satire of the Restoration*.

¹⁴ Novak’s *The Empress of Morocco and Its Critics* uses facsimiles of the play as well as the responses, which do not include pagination for the Dedication to *Empress*, the Preface to *Notes*, or the Postscript to *Notes*.

Observations on The Empress of Morocco Revised. In *Notes and Observations Revised*, Settle reveals the names of the anonymous writers of the original *Notes and Observations* to be Dryden, Crowne, and Shadwell and goes on to answer their criticism and also to criticize Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada* (1670).

Until as recently as 2008, criticism of *The Empress of Morocco* has centered upon deciphering what parts of *Notes and Observations*—if any—were written by Dryden, and “recent scholarship has tended to limit Settle’s cultural significance to his role in contretemps with various writers” (Iwanisziq 113).¹⁵ I argue, however, that Settle’s analogy of common women with common—or hack— literature and its subsequent responses in Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne’s *Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco* and Alexander Pope’s *The Dunciad* create definitions for and classify literature in the period. I will thus make four major

¹⁵ Early twentieth-century critics have disagreed on whether Dryden contributed to *Notes* at all and to what extent he did contribute. In his biography, *The Life of Dryden* (1961), Charles Ward dismisses the claim that Dryden was a contributor to the *Notes*, but he does so on the grounds that John Dennis was too young to have remembered the incident correctly (though he was at Cambridge at the time of the quarrel) (Novak ix-x). In contrast, Anne Doyle in “Dryden’s Authorship of *Notes and Observations on The Empress of Morocco* (1674),” argues that Dryden wrote the Preface, Postscript, Act II, and the Errata’s to the Epistle. Doyle compares the pamphlet with Dryden’s other writings from the period and provides historical and economic motivation for Dryden’s participation: Dryden had just dedicated *The Assignment* (1672), which had failed miserably, to Sir Charles Sedley, and Settle’s comments should indeed have pricked an already guilty conscience. Dryden had every reason to be sensitive to Settle’s jibe at this time (425). James Anderson Winn in *Dryden and His World* (1987) partially agrees with Doyle in that “Dryden wrote the preface, postscript and the satiric opening to Act II” and adds that Crowne was the principal author and he persuaded Dryden “to frame his nit-picking criticism of Settle’s play with the more general criticism of the preface and postscript” (582-583). Though these studies are interesting from a biographical perspective, the play has remained little more than a piece of Drydeniana until recently.

More recent critics have moved beyond the literary context of the play and have begun to examine the play itself, particularly with regard to its setting in Morocco. In *Performing Race and Torture on the Early Modern* (2008), Ayanna Thompson considers the relationship between race and violence in the play. Noting that Settle was one of the only Restoration playwrights to use black characters, she argues that the Queen Mother, who murdered her husband to get closer to the power of the throne, and Crimalhaz, her lover, scheme to rule together, and it is they are most associated with “black” color referents” (37). In “Tortured Bodies, Factionalism, and Unsettled Loyalties in Settle’s Morocco Plays,” Susan Iwanisziq argues that the setting is merely a way to curry favor with his patron: Settle’s decision to represent “eastern” characters involved in an obscure Moroccan civil war was merely a ploy to advance his career by currying favor with the court faction and especially with Howard, who was personally involved in ongoing diplomatic relations with Morocco and the maintenance of the English garrison at Tangiers” (115). In introducing their readings, both Iwanisziq and Thompson announce their intention to divorce their readings from the controversy with Dryden. Iwanisziq says, “Recent scholarship has tended to limit Settle’s cultural significance to his role in contretemps with various writers” (113). While this is certainly true, I argue, the answer to this problem is not necessarily to ignore the major controversy surrounding this text either but to read the play alongside its context.

points in this chapter. First, Settle's *The Empress of Morocco*, is a play about female empowerment and disempowerment. Second, Settle's "Epilogue," uses the notion of female disempowerment to define hack literature and himself as a writer of it, stating that both women and literature are made into whores by hypocritical men who enjoy them and then cast them off. This notion of hack literature is challenged by John Dryden, Thomas Shadwell, and Thomas Crowne in their pamphlet, *Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco*. Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne change the metaphors in their Epilogue to suggest instead that Settle is the whore who birthed monstrous hack literature. The writers further define what hack literature is by developing a framework of criticism based on poetic content and poetic structure to critique the play. Third, this debate about hack literature among Settle, Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne was not happening in isolation; this debate—along with *The Censure of the Rota* pamphlet war—between John Dryden and Richard Leigh—culminates a literary critical debate about good and bad literature in the period, beginning with William Davenant's *Gondibert* (1652). In 1673, pamphlet wars surrounding *The Empress of Morocco* and *The Censure of the Rota* revealed the need for a new way of adjudicating literature. Finally, I argue that in *The Dunciad*, Pope transforms this paper war from London *theater* culture into *literary* culture by employing Settle and the reproductive metaphors used in the pamphlet war of 1673 to continue the discussion of how literature should be valued. *The Dunciad*'s version of literary history was the product of an early debate about hack literature. Examining so-called minor texts such as the works and debates surrounding *The Empress of Morocco* alongside canonical texts such as *The Dunciad* allows us to see how canonical writers created our modern understanding of hack literature by contrasting their work against what they defined as feminized, common, and especially, state-sponsored poetry.

Female (Dis)Empowerment in *The Empress of Morocco*

In *The Empress of Morocco*, Settle portrays strong, ambitious women who are eventually subverted by men, and the play thus inflects the way he represents literature and critics in the “Epilogue.”¹⁶ The play opens with a demonstration of the differences between Morena, the strong, foreign-born princess, and her weaker lover, the prince of Morocco, Muly Labas. Both are held in chains and attended by guards. Muly Labas speaks the first words of the play, and he immediately bemoans his sad situation: “Condemn’d to Fetters, and to Sceptors born! / Tis in this Garb unhappy princes mourn.” He introduces Morena saying, “This dazzling object my weak sight invades” as though her presence were unwelcome to him (I.2). Further, labeling himself (via sight) as “weak” and her entrance as an invasion, the traditional gender roles wherein women are weak and men are militant invaders, are immediately reversed. Morena is unsettled by the implication that her sight could be unpleasant to Muly Labas and quickly reminds him that she was “a conspirator in my own rape,” “fled the Countrey,[and] left a Crown” out of love and loyalty to him (I.2).

As a “conspirator” to her own rape, Morena gives herself agency as a sexual being. According to the *OED*, in addition to today’s traditional definition of rape, the word also historically signifies a theft of property (“The act of taking something by force; *esp.* the seizure

¹⁶ Because the latest printed publication of the play was published in 1968 in facsimile, below I have written a brief synopsis of the plot:

At the beginning of the play, the Emperor of Morocco has imprisoned his son, Prince Muly Labas, and Princess Morena, the daughter of the foreign leader, Tassalet, because they eloped. The two lovers make peace with their likely execution because they will die for love. However, the Queen arrives in the prison and announces the death of the Emperor and declares that the lovers are not only free, but are now Emperor and Empress of Morocco. It is also announced that Princess Marianne, daughter of the late Emperor, will marry Muly Hamet, a nobleman. Shortly after Muly Labas is crowned as Emperor, the Queen Mother reveals to the audience that she is discontented with Muly Labas’s behavior and further that she will take his crown and his life. In place of her son, she wishes to crown her lover, Crimalhaz, and rule with him. Muly Hamet discovers the relationship between Crimalhaz and the Queen Mother, and when Muly Hamet tries to inform the Emperor, the Queen Mother accuses him of attempted rape, and he is imprisoned. The Queen Mother then orchestrates the murder of her son, the Emperor, by way of a masquerade, a mistaken identity, and her daughter-in-law, Morena. When Crimalhaz finally ascends the throne, the Queen Mother is betrayed by her lover and eventually commits suicide. The play ends with the death of Crimalhaz, and the re-establishment of the royal family with Muly Hamet and Marianne as Emperor and Empress of Morocco.

of property by violent means; robbery, plundering. Also [it can be used as] as a count noun: an instance of this [is] a robbery [or] a raid. [This use is] now *rare* [and] chiefly *arch.* and *literary*"). In this case, Morena is objectifying herself as property while also creating agency for herself by being a "conspirator" or an actor in her own theft. Using the terminology of the time, Morena labels herself as property in order to reject that Muly Labas is her sole owner and declare some ownership over herself. However, her self-identification as property to gain power ultimately is fruitless as her elopement to Muly Labas makes her a prisoner to the king. In her recent book, *Force of Fraud: British Seduction Stories and the Problem of Resistance, 1660-1760* (2011), Toni Bowers reminds scholars:

From the middle ages to the seventeenth century, 'rape' could be used to denote what we now understand as two separate actions, neither of which would be called 'rape' today: abduction and elopement ... What's more, the victim of *raptus* was not the woman herself, but her father. Edward I's thirteenth century Statutes of Westminster – still official rape law during the eighteenth century – were concerned exclusively with the property implications of 'rape' as the violation of one man by another. (13)

Though she uses her self-identification as property to give her own consent to an elopement with Muly Labas, both the lovers' imprisonment and the war between the Emperor and Tasseleta (Morena's father) affirms that her consent was meaningless. This is the first instance of Settle providing a female character who attempts to show power but is undermined by the machinations of men and ultimately the patriarchy.

In an attempt to diminish the king's power over their love and their deaths, Morena convinces Muly Labas to participate in a suicide pact. Because they have risked everything for love and lost, Morena reasons that "when we're dead, and our reed Souls enlarg'd, / of Natures grosser burdens we're discharg'd" (I.3). He refuses, and she subsequently censures him for being a coward: "Hold sir, and your unmanly fears remove, / And shew your Courage equal to your Love:" (I.3). The sight rhyme in this line also signals his failures in the past. Morena is

successful in convincing Muly Labas to kill himself as he declares at the end of the scene, “Heaven but creates, but Love refines our Souls” (I.3). Muly Labas’s life is saved, however, by the Queen Mother, who surprises them both with the news that the Emperor is dead and Muly Labas will now rule Morocco. With this announcement, Muly Labas becomes Emperor of Morocco, and wields power over Morocco as well as his wife and mother. Though she had demonstrated power over Muly Labas to the point of convincing him to follow her into death, her power is again ultimately subverted by an already dead king.

From her entrance in Act 1, the Queen Mother presents herself as the most powerful person in the play: she plots, she poisons, and she stabs. However, like Morena, her power proves to have limitations when she is betrayed by her lover after she puts him on the throne. In a response to the Queen Mother’s “monstrous” power, Anne Hermanson argues that the evil Queen of Morocco is representative of the threat of the Catholic Church and also the threat of the Catholic Queen Mother, Henrietta Maria, over her son, Charles II.¹⁷ While this reading identifies some moments of “monstrous” female power in the play as evidence of a historical reading, I will examine the results of female power for the male characters in addition to the larger issue of how Dryden responded to the theme of female power in *Notes and Observations* in order to emphasize the connection between women and hack literature in the two texts.

At the end Act I, the Queen Mother confesses to the audience that she poisoned her husband in order to put her son on the throne. However, upon seeing Muly Labas’s weakened state – “grow[ing] dull in your Morena’s arms” (I.6) – she decides that he is unworthy of the crown she has won for him. She is, in fact, so disgusted with his behavior that she plans to kill

¹⁷ For more on this reading, see Hermanson, Anne. “Monstrous women: Aphra Behn’s *Abdelazer* and Elkanah Settle’s *The Empress of Morocco*.” *Aphra Behn (1640-1689): Identity, Alterity, and Ambiguity*. Mary Ann O’Connell, Bernard Dhuicq, and Bernard Bosredon, eds. Paris: L’Harmattan, 2000. 25-32. Print.

him. She says, “Twas not for this I rais’d thee to a crown/ [...] Thou shouldst him in his Fate, not Throne succeed” (I.6). With this, she changes her allegiance from her son to Crimalhaz, whom she also chooses for a lover. Their exchange at the end of Act I demonstrates two things: first, the Queen Mother is the schemer, the brains of the operation. She explains her plan to him step-by-step and also persuades him to carry out his part. First, they must “thy Great General Undermine...then wee’ with ease depose an armless King” and then “I’le place the Crown Imperial on your head” (I.6). When Crimalhaz reveals that he felt pity for the dying king upon seeing him drink from the poisoned cup, the Queen reminds him that “A States-mans Breast should scorn to feel remorse; / Murder and Treason are but things of course” (I.7).

In this exchange, the Queen also emphasizes that she should serve as an example to him of what a “statesman” should be: “poison’d my husband, Sir, and if there is need/ Examples to instruct you in the deed, / I’ll make my Actions plainer understood, / Copying his Death on all the Royal Blood” (I.7). Persuaded by her speech, Crimalhaz identifies himself as a “convert,” saying that he will “shew the world, that even our Souls can die” in pursuit of power (I.7). Crimalhaz labels himself a convert, but his conversion is in reverse: he has converted to evil from good. He rationalizes this conversion by saying, “...for kind Heaven,/ Has to mankind immortal spirits given,/ And Courage is their Life: but when that sinks/ And to tame Fears and Coward-faintness shrinks,/ We the great Work of that bright Frame destroy,/ and shew the world, that even our souls can dy” (I.7). If Crimalhaz has converted to evil, the Queen Mother is his temptress. Act I ends with a re-assertion of the Queen Mother’s role as schemer when she reviews her plans to take the crown for Crimalhaz.

The events in Act III demonstrate the “monstrous” wielding of female power but also its limitations.¹⁸ When Muly Hamet witnesses the Queen and Crimalhaz sleeping on the couch, readers and viewers are met with multiple demonstrations of Crimalhaz’s loss of manhood and power. Muly Hamet’s first thought when he sees the two sleeping on the couch is that he could kill Crimalhaz. In sleeping with the Queen, Crimalhaz is literally without a defense, and Muly Hamet could easily kill him. Muly Hamet then sees Crimalhaz’s drawn sword upon the table and decides instead to take it as “a witness of the crime” (III.15). In having sex with the Queen, Crimalhaz has lost his manhood through the act of ejaculation, and the drawn sword on the table symbolizes this loss.¹⁹ Muly Hamet then takes the sword, declaring that it can serve as not only a witness for what he has seen, but he says it is a way of demonstrating his own power: “to conquer those who I kill” (I.15). Manhood then becomes transferable: women have the power to take it in the act of sex, and men have the power to conquer it in an act of war.

Upon waking up and discovering that both Crimalhaz’s sword is missing and that they have been discovered, Crimalhaz and the Queen fear for their lives and for the loss of this symbol of power. Upon hearing the truth from Muly Hamet, the Emperor then sends a eunuch to check on them. The eunuch, a man with no genitals, further emphasizes Crimalhaz’s loss of manhood, particularly when he enters the Queen Mother’s room without permission. She asks

¹⁸ I am adopting Anne Hermanson’s term “monstrous” in this section as we agree that the Queen Mother’s monstrous villainy in the play comes from her sexuality and masculine ambition.

¹⁹ Paul Smith’s article, “Vas,” considers new ways of thinking about masculinity, arguing that representations of the male body should be reconsidered. Smith returns to the work of Sigmund Freud with a fascinating result. Specifically, Smith argues Freud’s original diagnosis of one of his male patients who suffers from migraines and suggests “psychoanalysis comes to repress...masculinity, or a particular experience with masculinity which is uncomfortably close to hysteria” which is “a desire for access to the power of the other” (Smith 1015). In other words, when Freud attributed a male problem to female hysteria, he was overlooking the notion that the problem might have been *male* hysteria. Consequently, Smith suggests males possess what he terms, ‘vas’ – “that which we can lose...that which we both accumulate and spend” (1020). We can read the act of ejaculation as man losing the essence of his manhood. Figuratively, we can also look for ways men symbolically lose their manhood or ways men demonstrate a fear of losing their manhood, implying that manhood is something that is losable.

who allowed him to enter, and the eunuch answers that the “Royal Signet from the king’s own hand gave him admittance” (III.18). The Queen Mother then asserts power over the Emperor:

Know, Traytor, I am Mother to a King:
His Pow’r subordinate from Me does Spring,
My Orders therefore should unquestion’d stand,
Who have him breath by which he does Command. (III.18)

Women’s power lies then in their capacity for reproduction. Because the Queen birthed the king, she argues, her power should be greater than his. This theory is tested and ultimately fails however as the scene unfolds.

The Queen Mother then takes a dagger – presumably hers – and stabs the eunuch. Indeed, the sword – the symbol of male power – has been taken from Crimalhaz; yet, the Queen still possesses a dagger, a symbol of the power she has usurped from Crimalhaz. She uses this dagger to penetrate Achmet, the eunuch. Achmet’s role here serves two purposes – he serves a foreshadowing of what will eventually happen to Crimalhaz. Once a man loses his manhood, he is vulnerable to penetration and overpowering by a woman. In addition, he becomes part of the narrative the Queen creates to save herself.

In order to save herself from shame and Crimalhaz from death, she instructs him to stab himself in the right hand: “Through your right hand this fatal dagger force: / Then leave the Conduct of the Deed to me; / Fate dares no less than my Protector be” (I.19). Crimalhaz then, according to the stage directions, stabs himself in his right Arm, “which immediately appears bloody” (III.19). Crimalhaz’s wound has several implications: first, the Queen gives him her dagger. Though it is smaller than his sword, she was able to use to assert power and subdue another person. Second, while the Queen Mother was able to use the sword to assert power over another person, Crimalhaz is only able to use it to hurt himself. Third, the Queen instructs him to stab himself in the right arm. In having Crimalhaz wound himself for the purpose of showing it

to Muly Labas, the Queen uses the Roman trope of a wound signifying honor. In showing his wound to the King, Crimalhaz will be seen as heroic (Bulman 19). However, the right arm is also the one commonly used to wield a sword. The Queen has not only made his manhood vulnerable by having a relationship with him, she has instructed him to preclude himself from asserting his own manhood – and he does. After stabbing himself, he “throws away the dagger” (III.19).

When her dagger is thrown away, the Queen then uses the only other weapon at her disposal: narrative. The Queen uses the power of narrative to overpower the king and Muly Hamet. She explains to the King that that Muly Hamet did not witness her in a compromising position with a man; instead, he himself attempted to rape her. She explains that Muly Hamet murdered Achmet, the eunuch, when he tried to save her. Finally, she casts Crimalhaz as the hero of the tale by narrating that “Kind Crimalhaz did to my aid advance” (III.21). Crimalhaz then is able to finish the tale, producing both his wounded arm and the body of the murdered eunuch as proof. Muly Hamet is consequently arrested for the deed he did not attempt to perpetrate.

The Queen Mother continues her quest for the crown in Act IV with an even more extraordinary act: the murder of her son. Just as in the murder of the eunuch and the arrest of Muly Hamet, the Queen Mother continues to use both the dagger and the power of the narrative to wield power. Similar to how she brings about the arrest of Muly Hamet, the Queen Mother creates a narrative that ultimately occasions the death of her son, Muly Labas. She first prompts Queen Morena and Muly Labas to host a masquerade. She then warns Morena that the criminal and traitor, Crimalhaz, will attempt to rape her at the masquerade and arms Morena with a dagger to use against this attacker. When Morena is approached by a masked man, she stabs him – only to immediately realize that she has stabbed her husband, Muly Labas. Morena then attempts to convince everyone that she only stabbed her husband out of fear of being raped by

Crimalhaz. When she asks the Queen Mother to corroborate her story, the Queen Mother tells everyone that Morena has gone mad. At this point in the play, the Queen Mother's wielding of male power has led to the arrest of the hero, the death of two kings, the arrest of the Queen, and the death of an innocent eunuch.

While the Queen Mother has demonstrated power throughout the play, she also begins to expose her weakness: her womanhood. As there is never the option for her to rule alone, she seems to realize that when she places Crimalhaz on the throne, he will be the one who will hold power over her. He will, therefore, have the power to rid himself of her. She seems to realize this flaw in her plan as she reminds him in both Acts III and Act V of her love for him and his subsequent duty and loyalty to her. When she instructs Crimalhaz to find and kill Muly Hamet, she reminds him, "But when Your throne I on his grave have built, / Remember love was Author of my guilt" (III.33). Similarly, once Crimalhaz is "attended as king" in Act V, the Queen reminds him, "Though your designs have met so great success, / Doe not forget I was your patrones, / And she to whom you made this solemn vow, / That I should share the Throne I rais'd you to" (V.57). When Crimalhaz attempts to stall her coronation saying that "my subjects call for veng'ance, and I must to the dead king before my Love be just" (V.57), the Queen Mother is, for the first time, fooled. Believing he will go along with her original plan, she instructs him to, "Bring in the Queen----/ if she delay our love" (V.57) and instructs him to "make haste, more business, and less breath" (V.58). The Queen Mother wants the young Queen dead as soon as possible. However, her fears are confirmed. The Emperor ultimately overpowers her; he arrests the Queen Mother for the murder of husband and son. Just as he was tempted into a relationship with her, he is again tempted into a relationship with a younger woman.

In her final moments, the Queen Mother again wields the power of her dagger and the power of the narrative. Upon her surprise arrest by Crimalhaz, she attempts to appeal to Morena's womanhood: "Fair Innocence, I for your Pardon sue/ T' a condemn'd Traytor, but a Mother too:/Let her repenting Sighs her Grief impart;" (V.52). Just when viewers think that The Queen Mother might once again convince the monarchs of her innocence, she adds, "Who thus -- -Offers her tears ---And thus----and thy Heart," she stabs the young queen, killing her (V.52). In killing Morena, she changes the narrative for Crimalhaz: he will not be able to live happily as King with Morena as his queen. She then attempts to stab Crimalhaz, but she is thwarted by his guards. When she sees that there is no other option for her, she overpowers them in the only way she can: she uses the dagger to kill herself, taking final control of her narrative. In her last words, she re-emphasizes that womanhood is her weakness:

Yes sir and I'de have don the same for You,
But since my Dagger has so feebly don,
Missing thy breast I've sent it to my own.
If some kind Devil had but took my part,
I had pierc'd thy bosom, as I've don thy Heart
Curse on weak nature which my Rage unman'd
A Masculine heart linkt with a Female Hand.
My Stars had been more just had they design'd
Me less of Hell, or less of Woman-kind. (V.60)

Because this is not the end of the tragedy, unfortunately, the Queen Mother's final act falls flat. In killing herself, she simply solved a problem for the men of the play: neither Crimalhaz, Hametalhaz, nor Muly Hamet have to kill her. The narrative of the play is retrieved by the male characters who must battle for the kingship amongst themselves. As it turns out, the one standing with Marianne, the beloved heroine, at the end becomes king. Much like Morena and the Queen Mother, she becomes a kingmaker; however, she reigns alongside him as queen because she does not ever attempt to subvert male power.

Common Women and Literary Value in the Epilogue and the *Notes and Observations*

Though critics have noted the popularity of Settle's play and the corresponding fear it raised for noted court playwrights, Settle's Epilogue reveals that some of the play's popularity stemmed from viewers who loved to hate it. Although in the Prologue Settle criticized scribblers for using their Dedications to excuse away poor reviews, Settle uses his Epilogue to do the very same. In the Epilogue, Settle confronts critics of his play by analogizing it with a woman who has been debauched at court. In making this argument, Settle disempowers women and also disempowers his play and gives complete power to viewers and critics to determine a play's popularity and merit. Where in the context of the play Settle demonstrates the negative consequences of allowing females to have power but ultimately subverts their power through death or marriage, in the Epilogue, he analogizes his play with women, indicating that both common women and literary value are created—not by their own power or merit—but by hypocritical men.²⁰

The Epilogue begins, “Women and Wit on equal forces begin” to create an analogy between women and his play that extends through the Epilogue. Settle begins by likening his play to “a country girle come up to Town [and] Longe'd t' appear fine, in Jewels, and rich gown [...but...] To please you, lost its Maiden-head at court” (*The Empress of Morocco*). Female power in this paratext works in opposition to how it worked in the text: whereas in the play, The Queen Mother and Morena gained power through sex, in the Epilogue, women lose power

²⁰ As Andreas Huyssen argues that by the nineteenth century, women were positioned as readers of “pulp...inferior, literature-subjective, emotional, and passive” while man “emerges as the writer of authentic literature” (47). Mass culture then becomes synonymous with women while authentic culture becomes synonymous with men. “Feminization” thus stems from “the exclusionary practice of the persistent gendering as feminine of that which is devalued” (53). As Catherine Ingrassia has noted in *The Dunciad*, Pope uses “feminization” to signal “a degeneration of literary values caused by Grub Street's influence” (41). Settle's self-feminization (my term) in the Epilogue seems to be the first instance of a writer using the practice of feminization as a way of pointing out problems in the current system of valuing literature.

through sex. The structure of the sentence emphasizes the lack of female agency by containing no actor: “Hoping its pride you Courtiers would support,/ To please you, lost its Maiden-head at court” (*The Empress of Morocco*). Further, Settle’s choice of the word “lost” reaffirms a woman’s lack of agency as it indicates she can no longer control something she once controlled. The lack of female agency here reminds readers of this motif from the play itself and specifically of Morena, who attempts to claim her own agency after her elopement but ultimately cannot.

Upon gaining her maidenhead then, the man (or critic) is able to “cast it off” and both the play and the woman are subsequently “turn’d common” (*The Empress of Morocco*). Where traditionally, the woman would be blamed for her debauchery, Settle chides men saying, “kind usage it deserves from you,” and even further, “A generous gallant though tired and cloy’d, / Should still speak well of what he has enjoy’d” (*The Empress of Morocco*). Though the Epilogue begins as a humorous analogy, Settle progressively moves into a more serious accusation about literary critics:

But you Sirs, who censure but not write;
Who do in Wit as some in War delight;
Whose courage do not much care to Fight:
But though they can’t of Scars nor Conquests vapour
They can draw sieges and take Towns in Paper. (Epilogue)

The literary critic here is not only hypocritical; he is also not manly. He is not courageous enough to fight in wars; instead, he stays at home and attempts to wage war on his fellow Englishman with his pen. The verb *vapours* in this context bolsters the idea of feminized critics: in the eighteenth century, the word vapours was commonly used to describe an illness associated with women. Though the verb form, as it is used here, means “to send *forth, out, or up*, to emit or discharge, to disperse, etc., in the form of vapour,” Settle’s usage is unconventional as the verb form was usually associated with breathing. For instance, the *OED* lists an example from Ligon’s

True History of the Barbados (1657), “He vapours out the grievousest sighes” (*OED*). The usage of vapours here is more than likely meant to connote the noun form, which is associated with female weakness: “A morbid condition supposed to be caused by the presence of such exhalations; depression of spirits, hypochondria, hysteria, or other nervous disorder” (*OED*). While real men win conquests, demonstrated by red badges of courage, literary critics display feminine vapours in their attacks of literature. This is emphasized further by the rhyme, in which “vapours” is coupled with “papers.”

Settle concludes the Epilogue by urging critics to use their powers to encourage better writing; however, in so doing, Settle’s female analogy becomes problematic. The play is no longer a “country girle come up to town” but a “wench with tallow-looks and winter-face [who] continue[s] one man’s favorite seven years space” (Epilogue). This reminds critics that taste is subjective. Though certain critics dislike the play, others enjoyed it immensely. Further, if critics were to provide positive feedback, they will motivate, “Much better Fancies to write better plays” (Epilogue). At the end of the Epilogue, Settle declares:

When meaner Faces are us'd kindly by ye
What power have greater Beauties to deny ye.
So your kind smiles advance the scribbling Trade:
To get good Play's you must excuse the bad. (*The Empress of Morocco*)

Here the play – “the meaner face” – is used in comparison with “greater Beauties,” eliciting a comparison between this play and others. The contrasting adjectives, meanness and beauty, suggest that there is an opposite of this play that is like an ugly woman: a prettier one, a better one. The end of the Epilogue seems to buckle under the weight of its own metaphor; it allows Settle’s play to keep the title of bad, a winter wench who has been spoiled by critical lust. However, the ending also suggests a kind of progressive reproductive cycle. If the critic (man) uses a play “kindly,” he will be able to produce (or engender) better plays by way of moving up

the food chain to criticizing better plays. All plays good and bad thus become a whore that the critic should use to move up in the world. Just as he suggests in the beginning of the Epilogue, common women and hack literature are created and used by men, and he humbly offers his services in the reproductive cycle of literary lineage.

In the same year of its publication, responses to *The Empress of Morocco* including *The Empress of Morocco, A Farce* (1674) and *Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco Or, Some few Errata's to be Printed instead of the Sculptures with the Second Edition of that Play* (1674) arrived onto the literary scene. Attributed to Thomas Duffett, *The Empress of Morocco, A Farce*, is a burlesque of Settle's play. Stating in the Prologue that that the purpose of the farce is to show that the play is a simple one dressed in spectacle, the speaker says, "So when this plot quite purg'd of Ale is/ In naked truth but a plain Tale is;/ And in such dress we mean to shew it, / In spite of our damn'd Fustian Poet" (Duffet). To demonstrate the play's plainness then, Duffet reduces Settle's couplets to the absurd. For instance in Scene One, Muly Labas says to Marianne: "I don't think it proper/ That you so soon shou'd turn Hedg-hopper" (Act I). Similarly, Muly Labas says to Hametalhaz, "By Jove if I new who's th' author/ In his porridge I wou'd pour water" (Act I). The plot of the play is also predictably ridiculous. In Act I, instead of killing Muly Labas, Crimalhaz strikes him with a shoe and runs away. But in the context of these antics, Duffet responds to Settle's assertions about hack literature by making the characters in *The Empress of Morocco* common in terms of their class. Muly Labas, the Emperor of Morocco is also listed as "a corncutter." The Queen Mother is similarly listed as a "hostess" and Morena, young Emperess of Morocco is an "apple-woman" (Duffet).²¹ All of the characters in the play are likewise assigned lower-class occupations. Further, the action of the play is moved from

²¹ Usually titled *Dramatis Personae*, Duffet denigrates this element of drama as well. Duffet's font matter is also not paginated.

Morocco to the court of Hot-Cockles. Duffet responds to Settle's argument about hypocritical men creating hack literature by literally transforming Settle's play into "common" literature: literature about lower-class people in a lower-class place. Duffet's implication here then is that satire too can transform seemingly "high art" into hack literature—a notion Alexander Pope and others would adopt in the early eighteenth-century.

While Duffet's response is satiric, fictional, and relatively light in tone, *Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco Or, Some few Errata's to be Printed instead of the Sculptures with the Second Edition of that Play*, written by John Dryden, Thomas Shadwell, and Thomas Crowne, is an invective against both the play and the poet. Including a Preface, Errata's [sic.] in the Epistle, five acts, Of the Plot and Conduct of the Play, and a Postscript, *Notes and Observations* is only ten pages shorter than the play itself. In the Preface, the speaker identifies the two purposes of the *Notes and Observations*. First, and seemingly most important, the writer stepped outside of his boundaries as "new author" when he wrote "the most arrogant, calumniating, ill-manner'd, and senseless Preface I ever saw" (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne). Settle, "an illiterate upstart scribbler comes amongst the poets like one of the Earth-born brethren, and his first business in the world is to attack and Murder all his Fellows" (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne). Second, Settle's mastery of English playwriting is sub-par: "Never did I see such a confus'd heap of false grammar, improper English, strain'd hyperboles, and downright Bulls" (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne). The *Notes and Observations* then has a dual purpose: this published text of errors in Settle's play will not only humiliate him (as his Dedication humiliated others) but also demonstrate to the world that he has not mastered the art of playwriting at the level of his contemporaries. Indeed, it demonstrates a kind of hierarchy of

writers: those who can articulate what good writing is, and those who can serve as examples for what good writing is not.

Critics have posited multiple reasons as to why Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne wrote the *Notes and Observations*, but these reasons almost always rationalize what is seen by critics as Dryden's bad behavior (Crowne's and Shadwell's motivations have not yet been examined.) Both eighteenth-century critics, such as Samuel Johnson, and recent critics, such as Anne Doyle, cite Dryden's jealousy of Settle's quick rise to a court position as his motivation for participation in *Notes and Observations*. While *The Empress* had enjoyed two successful performances at court, it had been three years since Dryden's work had been acclaimed at Whitehall or on the public stage (Doyle 427). Further, Settle signed the play "Elkanah Settle, A Servant to His Majesty," both imitating Dryden's signature and boasting of his court patronage. Settle also contributed to an epilogue to Edward Ravenscroft's *Careless Lovers*, "a play whose prologue attacked the Laureate [and] it seems quite unlikely that Dryden should be so secure or insensitive as to let it pass unchallenged" (Doyle 427).

In *Dryden and His World*, James Anderson Winn examines the specific charges Dryden uses against Settle and suggests a deeper psychological reasoning behind Dryden's actions: "Dryden, now urgently questioning the whole direction of his own literary career, was attacking in Settle ideas and attitudes he had once held himself" (Winn 256). In other words, by attacking Settle, Dryden was actually attacking his younger self, and in so doing, attempting to break away from the "emphasis of Fancy in his own early education" and moving toward the "effects he was now studying in Milton and Virgil...hoping to emulate in an epic of his own" (Winn 257). The *Notes and Observations*, according to Winn, were for Dryden not necessarily about his personal

feelings about Settle but a way for Dryden to move forward toward a career like that of his literary heroes.

Though these arguments are useful as they relate to Dryden's biography, they do not consider how the attack on Settle became a permanent black mark on his literary record and the permanent impact *Notes and Observations* had on literary culture. By examining how the *Notes and Observations* use Settle's own themes and arguments against himself, and then examining the long-term effects of these arguments in Alexander Pope's *The Dunciad*, it becomes clear that Poets Laureate, Shadwell and Dryden, used Settle's play to define hack literature. Alexander Pope expands upon this definition in *The Dunciad* when he chooses Settle as the dead king of the dunces.

Seeming to portend that the *Notes and Observations* would be a controversial document, the speaker begins by rationalizing his response to *The Empress of Morocco*. The rationale of the Preface is approximately thirty-percent of the document, signaling the writers knew the document necessitated a rationale. First, the speaker addresses his own power over literary culture by noting, "When I first saw the *Empress of Morocco*, though I found it then to be a Rapsody of non-sense, I was very well contented to have let it pass, that the Reputation of a new Author might not be wholly damn'd, but that he might be encourag'd to make his Audience some amends another time" (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne). In this first sentence, the speaker acknowledges both his own importance to literary culture and the weight of his words to the literary community when he suggests that his words have the ability to "wholly damn" a new author.²² Though the speaker "let it pass," the play earned an "ill report" from its Whitehall viewers and even its Ludgate audience, and thus the speaker assumed:

²² Interestingly, the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes a use of the word "damned" as meaning "Condemned by publicly expressed disapproval, as a play, etc.: also *transf.* of an author," as used by Pope in his Correspondence

[...] the Poet should have been sufficiently mortified, and though he were not naturally modest, should have least have deferr'd the showing of his Impudence till a fitter season. But instead of this, he has written before his play, the most arrogant, calumniating, ill-manner'd and senseless Preface I ever saw. This upstart and senseless scribbler, who lies more open to censure than any writer of the Age, comes amongst the Poets like one of the Earth-born brethren, and his first business in the world is to attack and murder all his Fellows. (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne)

The rationale for the *Notes and Observations* then is not necessarily that the play is simply bad (though they certainly argue that later in the document), but that Settle ignored the hierarchy of poets by attempting to humiliate his fellows and superiors. Further, the speakers describe that their purpose in writing *Notes and Observations* was that Settle “shou’d be made an example, to the discouragement of all such petulant Ill Writers and that he shou’d be dragged out of obscurity to which his Poetry would for ever have condem’d him” (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne). Demonstrating their God-like power and responsibility, the speakers damn Settle as a way to provide an example to the rest of the ill writers of the age, the precise opposite of what Settle hoped they would do (as suggested in the Epilogue).

The pamphlet authors transition into this evaluation with a reassertion of both their power and their rationale. They remind readers that this is not the first time that an important author has damned a deserving upstart: “Ben Johnson had done it before to Deeker [sic.], our author’s predecessor, whom he chastis’d in his Poet after under the Character of Crispinus; and brought him in Vomitting up his Fustian nonsense” (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne). Using Jonson’s vomit metaphor to begin, they declare, “Should our Poet have been introduc’d in the same manner, he must have disgorg’d his whole Play ere he had been cleans’d” (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne). In likening themselves to Jonson, one of the most prolific writers and critics of the early modern period, the speakers establish a lineage for both themselves and Settle: they are

in both 1708 and 1710. This type of damnation of an author, I would argue, originates here. This word choice is another example of the many ways in which Pope notably drew from the *Notes and Observations*.

descendants of Jonson while Settle is a descendent of Thomas Dekker. They have thus established both a rationale and an ethos by which they can effectively damn Settle, and it is here that the speakers finally begin to criticize the play.

The commentators mimic the structure of Settle's Epilogue in order to emphasize the problematic analogy of the debauched woman and Settle's hypocrisy in using his Dedication to rationalize poor sales and negative criticism. Using his own analogy and writing structure against him, the commentators critique the play's content and grammar. The commentators conclude with a serious discussion of how hack literature is produced that implicates writers such as Settle but also court audiences and the king himself.

Settle's Epilogue began with a simple analogy: his play is like a "country girle come up to town," who, in trying to please men at court, loses her maidenhead. Like the country girl, Settle's play is "turned common" by hypocritical men who enjoy it and then cast it off. In *Notes and Observations*, the speakers similarly use the analogy of a common whore but with one adjustment: in *Notes and Observations*, Settle's play is not the whore, Settle is. The speakers allege that Settle's plots are plagiarized from other authors: "He steals notoriously from his Contemporaries, but he alters the property, by disguising his Theft in ill English" (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne). Moving into the whore analogy while also using the birthing language from the Epilogue, the speakers continue, "he makes the child his own by deforming it [sic.]" (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne). The speakers repeat this notion of birthing and deformity thirteen lines later when they insult, "he sometimes labors with a thought, but with the Pudder he makes to bring it into the world, 'tis commonly still-born: so that for want of Learning and Elocution, he will never be able to express any thing either naturally or justly" (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne). In both cases, the speakers are reminding the reader of the progressive

reproductive cycle suggested in the Epilogue and adjusting it, making Settle a woman and the play his monstrous birth. In the first example, Settle gives birth to a deformed play. The second example is more graphic: Settle *labors* with a thought and with the pudder he makes to bring it into the world, ‘tis commonly stillborn” (Dryden, Shadwell and Crowne, emphasis mine). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the obscure noun, “Pudder,” is “probably an alteration of the word puddle.” The traditional use of puddle would more than likely connote birthing fluids for readers. In addition, the sixteenth-century definition of puddle was “An impure, degrading, or morally corrupting state or situation; corrupt or degraded behaviour or way of life.” In both instances, Settle’s play is not the whore but the deformed (or stillborn) bastard child of the whore, Elkanah Settle.²³

As a way of transitioning to his discussion of audiences, the speakers mix their metaphors just as Settle had done in the Epilogue. “His king, his two empresses, his villain, and his sub-villain, nay his heroe have all a certain natural cast of the Father: one turn of his countenance goes through all his children. Their folly was born and bred in em’; and something of the Elkanah will be visible” (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne). By representing Settle as father (while also whore mother), the speaker has made Settle hermaphroditic and thus unable to reproduce at all. If Settle is both a father and a mother, the product of their reproduction would be nothing—or at best, a masturbatory effort. The Preface uses the gender politics of the play and Settle’s

²³ This is not the first instance of male writers using birth metaphors—which include conception, pregnancy, and birth—to describe a relationship between writers and writing. Raymond Stephenson traces this metaphor to as early as *Don Quixote* (106). Further, he argues that the metaphor generally existed in two forms: the Athena birth, or the “motherless and painless birth of genius” and the difficult birth, which writers used as a metaphor for a difficult writing process (118). The difficult birth metaphor, he argues, was extended in Pope’s *The Dunciad* to give birth to the monstrous dunces: In the brain of the skilled poet, an amazing child-poem would be born fully-formed or painstakingly nourished and developed, but in the wrong brain—that of the dunce, the Modern, one’s enemy in the literary world—the result was perverse conception, miscarriage, abortion, still-born foetus (sic.) monstrous birth, or deformed off-spring” (119). I argue, however, that this form of the metaphor originates here and this metaphor provides an additional connection between the *Notes and Observations* and *The Dunciad*.

Epilogue to make its argument. With this in mind, the speaker initiates a discussion of the audience for such a play.

In the concluding paragraphs of the Preface Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne offer an alternative explanation to Settle's argument in the Epilogue. Whereas Settle argues that hack literature is produced by hypocritical men (or alternately by the combined cooperation of writers like himself and literary critics), the speakers of *Notes and Observations* assert that hack literature is produced by middle-class authors and misunderstood by the audience. They go on to present the characteristics these authors and this audience by likening Settle to a painter who can only paint one object: "Our poet in writing fools, has very much in him of that Sign-post Painter, who was famous only for drawing Roses; when a Vintner desir'd him to paint him a Lyon, he answer'd he would do it to content him, but he was sure it would be like a Rose" (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne). Much like the painter who can only paint one object, Settle is referred to as a poet though he can only write frivolous characters in bad plays. The commentators leave the analogous story incomplete because the ending to the real-life counterpart is still yet to be determined. The poet has not admitted to the vintner (who is, in this case, the audience) that he cannot truly write poetry, and the audience must distinguish him from a truly great poet. Unfortunately, according to the Preface, the uneducated audience cannot make this distinction; only the educated audience can determine greatness and save literary culture from "turning common."

The uneducated audience is "much of his level, and both the great Vulgar and the Small (as Mr. Cowly calls them) are apt to admire what they don't understand; (*onme ignotum habent pro magnifico*) and think all which rumbles is Heroick" (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne).²⁴ The

²⁴ See Cowley, Abraham. "Horace Lib III Ode I: Odi Profanum Vulgus &C." *The Essays of Abraham Cowley with Life by the Editor. Notes and Illustrations by Dr. Hurd*. Second Edition. London: Sampson, Low, Son

reference to Abraham Cowley's "Horace Lib III Ode I: *Odi Profanum Vulgus &c.*" suggests that the "The great Vulgar and Small" refer to the masses as godless. Stanza one of Cowley's poem, "Horace Lib III Ode I: Odi Profanum Vulgus &C," begins:

Hence, ye profane, I hate ye all
Both the great vulgar and the small
To virgin minds, which yet their whiteness hold
Not yet discolour'd by the love of gold
(That jaundice of the soul which makes it look so gilded and foul)
To you, ye very few, these truths I tell,
The muse inspires my song; hark, and observe it well. (Cowley 85)

The context of line two reveals that, for Cowley, the "great Vulgar and small" was an ethical distinction: it referred to a group whose greed led to "jaundiced souls," and thus, his appeal was wasted on them. He instead appeals to "these very few" whose minds have not yet been "discolour'd by the love of gold" (85). The speaker goes on to warn "these very few" about the dangers of greed, reminding them that "the humblest bush and proudest oak/ Are but of equal proof against God's thunderstroke" (85).²⁵ The allusion to Cowley's poem, then, serves a dual purpose in the Preface: to liken the audience to immorality and avarice, as Cowley does, and to imply that, like Cowley, the commentators cannot appeal to "the great Vulgar and Small" but instead to those "very few" (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne).

They further assert that this audience is "apt to admire what they don't understand;" the speakers then immediately follow this statement with a parenthetical Latin phrase, "(*onme ignotum habent pro magnifico*)" (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne). Roughly translating to "the unknown are grand," the Latin provides an example of something the uneducated audience

and Marston, 1869. 85. According to the note on page 85, the phrase "the great Vulgar" became ubiquitous in the eighteenth century. The Latin roughly translates to "the unknown are grand."

²⁵ The phrase "The great Vulgar and Small" was later used in the nineteenth century to connote the anti-religious masses by figures such as Charles Wesley. See pages 245 and 485 of Thomas Jackson's *The Life of Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A Sometime Student of Christ Church Oxford: Comprising a Review of his Poetry; Sketches of the Rise and Progress of Methodism with Notices of Contemporary Events and Characters* (1842) or page 454 of *Memoirs and Correspondence of George Lord Lyttelton in The Gentleman's Magazine*, Volume 178 (1845).

would not understand. The speakers do not include a translation, suggesting further that they will not pander to an audience who cannot understand them, and that their audience is one who must be classically educated. The audience “think[s] that all which rumbles is Heroick,” and will “rise up in Arms for Non-sense, and violently defend a cause, in which they are engag’d by the ties of Nature and Education” (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne). This notion of the uneducated audience attempting to defend Settle’s play deters the speakers’ audience: according to this line, anyone who rises up to defend Settle’s work is a member of the uneducated audience and cannot tell the difference between “something which rumbles” and a true “Heroick.” To this audience, “the Town Fools and the City Wits,” that “he pass[es] for a great Authour” (Dryden, Shadwell, Crowne). According to the speaker then, hack literature is not produced by hypocritical men, it is produced by whoring authors and upheld by uneducated audiences.

The speaker’s audience—the educated men who can discern between good and bad plays—are both called to action and defined even further. The speakers challenge, “it will be for the benefit of Mankind hereafter, to observe what kind of People they are, who frequent this play” (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne). Not only should the educated shun the playwright and play, but they should also shun those who see it. Since the audience for this play, which was performed not only at Dorset Garden by the Duke’s Company, but also at court would include the entire court and the King himself, and they are the audience for this document (Novak vi). In viewing and patronizing this play, the court—and by extension the king—are in danger of becoming an uneducated audience, despite their class and education. They should first shun the play and renounce ever seeing it in the first place, but they additionally have a moral imperative to demonstrate they are part of an educated audience and frequent plays written by true poets.

The Larger Literary Lineage of the *Notes and Observations*

Reading the *Notes and Observations* alongside earlier critical texts reveals that it is not just a response to *The Empress of Morocco* but the culmination—along with Richard Leigh’s *The Censure of the Rota on Mr. Dryden’s The Conquest of Granada*—of earlier literary critical texts that attempt to adjudicate literature in Restoration England. As literary criticism had not yet developed into an organized academic pursuit, authors did not have an institutionalized regime for distributing prestige to the literary field. As Michael Gavin argues, mock epics, prefaces, pamphlets, and libels became a medium for factions of writers to take sides in literary debates as well as the basis for the field of literary criticism that would form institutionally later in the century. Building on Gavin’s work, I argue that the pamphlet wars of 1673—*The Empress of Morocco* and *The Censure of the Rota*—revealed the limitations of this kind of criticism. Writers of the Restoration, including Davenant in his Preface to *Gondibert* and Dryden in “An Essay on Dramatic Poesy” attempt to define the characteristics of “good” literature by demonstrating both good and bad literature in terms of poetic content and poetic structure. This debate was complicated, however, with the anonymous pamphlet, “Censure of the Rota Upon Mr. Milton’s Book Entitled, *A Ready and Easie Way to Establish a Common-wealth*” as it takes volte-face on the earlier critical text, attacking Milton for his high language and modeling a critical approach based on the popular vote of readers. The two pamphlet wars of 1673 revealed the need for a new framework for how readers could discern good and bad literature.

In 1673, the literary sphere was inundated with critical documents in the form of two pamphlet wars: *The Empress of Morocco* including *The Notes and Observations* and *The Notes and Observations Revised*, and *The Censure of the Rota*, which included *The Censure of the Rota on Mr. Dryden’s The Conquest of Granada*; *The Friendly Vindication of Mr. Dryden by His*

Cabal of Wits; M. Dryden Vindicated; and A Description of the Academy of Athenian Virtuosi. These two paper wars marked the need for a pivotal change in literary criticism as critics such as Dryden, Shadwell, Crowne, and Richard Leigh supplied their competitors with a method for judging *their* work. This became apparent when *The Conquest of Granada*, failed to meet many of the principles formulated by the *Notes and Observations*. *The Censure of the Rota* affirmed that John Dryden, one of the very writers who was attempting to discern good versus bad literature, was open to criticism using precise grammar and logical figurative language in his work. These two pamphlet wars combined serve as the culmination of the development of literary criticism in the period, as well as a realization that criticism solely based on poetic form and content would not create a stable standard for literary valuation.

Davenant's Preface provides instructions on how to write good literature, and Dryden's "Essay" builds upon Davenant's framework by providing a basic discussion of "bad" literature. While living in exile in Paris in the 1650, William Davenant published the Preface to his heroic poem, *Gondibert* (without the poem itself). Written as a letter to Thomas Hobbes, who was also in exile, Davenant declares that in his upcoming, heroic poem, *Gondibert*, he "will attempt to combine all the highest forms of literature in one poem" (3). The subsequent exchange between Hobbes and Davenant has been read as "a founding document of English neoclassicism and an important early expression of aristocratic, Royalist poetics" (Gavin 54). In discussing the content of the highest form, Davenant argues that writing that engages with the ancients is preferable to that which engages with the moderns. He explains to Hobbes:

When I consider'd the actions which I describe (those inferring the persons) I was againe persuaded rather to chuse those of a former age than the present; and in a century so farre remov'd as might preserve me from their improper examinations who know not the requisites of a Poem, nor how much pleasure they lose (and even the pleasures of Heroick Poesy are not unprofitable) who take away the liberty of a Poesy, and fetter his feet in the shackles of an historian...I was likewise more willing to derive my theame

from elder times, as thinking it no little marke of skilfulnesse to comply with the common Infirmitie; for men (even o the best education) discover their eyes to be weake, when they look upon the glory of Vertue (which is great Actions) and rather endure it at distance than near. (10-11)

Davenant also creates an important distinction between an educated audience and an uneducated one when he instructs writers not to use lower-class themes in heroic poetry. He advises:

Nor is it needful that Heroique Poesy should be leuell'd to the reach of Common men; for if the examples it presents prevaile upon their Chiefs, the delight of Imitation (which wee hope wee have prov'd to be as effectuall to good as to evill) will recify by the rules, which those Chiefs establish of their owne lives, the lives of all that behold them; for the example of life, doth as much surpasse the force of precept, as Life doth exceed Death. (13)

Davenant's quote indicates that heroic poetry does not have to portray the scenes of life accessible to the uneducated man. In other words, the subject of heroic poetry should be elevated above the experiences of the layman. These principles of theme and audience are echoed in "An Essay on Dramatic Poesy" and the *Notes and Observations*.

In Dryden's "Essay on Dramatic Poesy," fictitious literary scholars Crites, Lisideius, Eugenius, and Neander debate current questions in literary studies. As in Davenant's Preface, they also debate the question of whether writers should use the style of the ancients; however, Dryden's answer is more complicated than Davenant's. Though the four scholars concur that modern English poets have helped to secure and improve English rhyme, they add:

All the rules [of poesy]...were delivered to us from the observations of Aristotle made of those poets who either liv'd before him or were his contemporaries. We have added nothing of our own, except we have the confidence to say our wit is better, of which none boast in our age, but such as understand not theirs. (44)

The scholars argue that poetic form and structure comes from the ancients, and writers who believe they have stronger wit should read more ancient texts and learn their inferior place in the hierarchy. Moreover, the debaters argue that "the best, modern, English playwrights are Shakespeare, Jonson, Beaumont, and Fletcher because of their abilities to master the Aristotle's

unities in English” (79). Writers should aspire to engage in the style of the ancients, but they should also aspire to master the ancients’ philosophies of composition.

Whereas Davenant’s Preface only focuses on how high poetry should be written, the philosophers in the “Essay on Dramatic Poesy” go further and define high poetry based on its opposite. They describe the characteristics of bad poetry and consider potential punishments for “bad” writers. Lisideius describes an unnamed poet as:

One of those who, having had some advantage of education and converse, knows better than the other what a poet should be but puts it into practice more unluckily than any man. His style and matter are everywhere alike...he creeps along with ten little words in every line and helps out his numbers with For to and Unto and all the pretty expletives he can find until he drags them to the end of another line, while the sense is left tir’d half way behind it. He doubly starves his verses, first for want of thought, and then of expressions; his poetry neither has wit in it nor seems to have it like him in Martial. (38)
²⁶

Though Lisideius does not provide a full example of a bad line, he indicates that formal elements matter in the writing of a poetic line. From the first word to the last, a good line must use language—including grammar—to its highest potential but eliminating excess words. The meter should forward the expression of the concept and not “leave it behind.”

In addition to describing what a bad poet does, the characters also debate what should be done with “bad” poets and their poetry, foreshadowing the treatment of Settle by the commentators. Referencing the same unnamed poet, Crites asserts that punishments should exist for poor writing: “ill poets should be as well silenc’d as seditious preachers” (37). He claims that even if the poet lacks talent and “cannot strike a blow to hurt any yet he ought to be punish’d for the malice of the action, as our witches are justly hang’d because they think themselves to be such and suffer deservedly for believing they did mischief, because they meant it” (38). While suggesting the kind of punishment will be enacted upon Settle, the analogy of preachers and

²⁶ Believed to be either Robert Wild or Richard Flecknoe (Miner 38n).

witches with bad poets also insinuates a moral failing. Further, the example of the hang'd witches foreshadows the female association with hack poets in the *Notes*.

The Censure of the Rota Upon Mr. Milton's Book (1660) provides a harsh contrast from the two earlier pieces of criticism but influences both *Notes and Observations* and its successor, *The Censure of the Rota on Mr. Dryden's The Conquest of Granada*, by introducing the idea of sequentially noting and recording all of a document's faults and providing an example of a pamphlet whose sole purpose is to criticize another text. *The Censure of the Rota* is both an attack on political visionaries such as John Harrington and John Milton and also a satire on the Rota, a club that is known to have disbanded by 1660.²⁷ The anonymous writer structures the pamphlet as the summary of minutes from a recent Rota meeting, in which the members have voted on all opinions where the verdict has been to deride Milton. The speaker serves as a reporter of these minutes who has been tasked to deliver them directly to Milton. The bulk of the criticism of Milton's writing centers on the obfuscating nature of Milton's high language. Because Milton writes in poetic language, it is above the intelligence of the masses and can therefore confuse and misguide them: "your stiff formal eloquence, which you arm accordingly with anything that lies in your way, right or wrong, not onely begging but stealing questions and taking everything for granted that will serve your turn" (9). The narrator says further that Milton's writing "is all wind foppery from the beginning to the end, written to the eleution of that Rabble and meant to cheat the Ignorant" (13). High poetic language is dangerous when used politically. The speaker also reports that the Rota attempted to argue against all of Milton's main points until they "stood up and said that if we meant to examin all the particular fallacies and

²⁷ *The Censure of the Rota* is farcically signed by Harrington. For more information on the Rota, see William Riley Parker's *Milton's Contemporary Reputation: An Essay Together with a Tentative List of Printed Allusions to Milton 1641-1674 and facsimile reproductions of five contemporary pamphlets written in response to Milton*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1940. 280-282. Web.

flawes in your writing we should never have done, he could therefore (with leave) deliver this judgment upon the whole...” (9). At this point, the pamphlet drops the satiric element and argues its point directly: a Republic cannot work because it places all of the power of ratifying and enacting laws into the hands of the people, which the speaker says are inherently arbitrary and tyrannical.

In keeping with this literary tradition, in 1673, Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne publish a harsh criticism of *The Empress of Morocco* using the framework suggested in the earlier three texts. The discussion of the content of poetry and its engagement with the ancients appears again both in the Preface and the Postscript of the *Notes and Observations*. In the Preface, the commentators disparage the character of the Queen Mother specifically because of her probable contemporary source. They speculate that Settle, “took her Character from the poisoning Woman, who they say, makes almost as little ceremony of a Murder as that Queen” (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne). Settle not only draws from (or “steals notoriously from”) his contemporaries, but he uses the lowest of his contemporaries – criminals – as inspiration for his characters. In the Postscript, the speakers reiterate the play’s disengagement from the ancients stating, “but there are some pedants who will quit Authorite from the ancients for the fault and extravagancies of some of the modernes, who being able to immitate nothing but the faults of the clasick Authours, mistakes em’ for their excellencyes” (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne).

As Dryden suggested in “An Essay on Dramatic Poetry,” and as the anonymous writer demonstrated in *The Censure of the Rota Upon Mr. Milton*, the commentators of the *Notes* critique the value of Settle’s work based on the grammatical structure of his play. In the *Notes and Observations*, the commentators provide line-by-line annotations for the play’s “false

grammar, improper English, strain'd hyperboles," and misused figurative language.²⁸ The commentators focus their grammatical criticism on the ways in which Settle manipulates language for the purpose of rhyme. For instance, in Act III, Settle's line reads, "No, though I lose the head, , which I before/ Design'd should the Morocco head have wore." The commentators note that proper English dictates the use of "Worn instead of wore" (Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne 25). According to the commentators then, a poet should not manipulate syntax or grammar to create rhyme.

The commentators also attack Settle's lack of logic and reasoning in his lines, noting faulty predication even in his figurative language. An example of this occurs in Act IV when the commentators literalize Settle's metaphoric description of the skies. Of the line, "With patience hear the Language of the Sky, Heaven &c," they respond, "here for want of philosophy he calls Heaven the Sky, and the Language of the Sky as he describes it, presently is Hail, a fine white Language which Hail he thinks is ingendred in the Sky[...]" (40). Because Heaven is not the sky nor located in the sky, and hail is not a language, the commentators reject the line. They take the logic issue even further in the subsequent line: "Heaven writes above what we must read below," saying, "Heaven writes is nonsense, and we must whether we can or no read below what writes above..." (40). Since logic dictates that readers must read below what is written above, the commentators argue that the line is "nonsense." This narrow definition of logic in poetic lines echoes Lisideius's views in "An Essay on Dramatic Poesy." However, in attempting to demonstrate the problems with Settle's deficiencies in writing, the commentators narrow the

²⁸ The commentators' criticism of Settle's grammar and poetic structure shows Dryden's influence in the *Notes and Observations*. Jack Lynch provides a useful discussion about Dryden's place in the history of the standardization of English. He notes that prior to the eighteenth century, one of the most important texts for standardization of English was Horace's *Ars Poetica*, in which Horace contends that usage or custom dictates the rules of speech. Lynch goes on to argue, however, that Dryden was "among the first" to blame other writers for "their lapses and errors in language...for levelling[ing] criticism at those who *did* speak or write like everyone else (35). Lynch traces Dryden's interest in standardized English grammar to his background in Latin and his work on translations, which had very specific rules of language.

rules of poetry to include absolute adherence to syntax and grammar and strict reasoning and logic in the use of figurative language.

In the very same year as the *Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco* (1673), Richard Leigh published *The Censure of the Rota on Mr. Dryden's Conquest of Granada*, which also uses the framework of the earlier texts but does so to criticize Dryden himself. Like its predecessor, *The Censure of the Rota on Mr. Dryden* challenges the framework of criticism set by Davenant and Dryden by interrogating the assumptions and practices of the writers of criticism themselves. Just as in the *Censure of the Rota Upon Milton*, Leigh describes the setting of the meeting of the Rota, which he names the Athenian Virtuosi; he then immediately launches into an attack in which he selects passages from Dryden's plays—mostly *The Conquest of Granada*—that violate the “rules” of criticism. Leigh frames this discussion according to the debates between the ancients and the moderns, recalling a scenario in which Dryden's role model, Ben Jonson, cited his grammar mistakes as a kind of false imitation of the ancients: “Ben Johnson... told them, that in his opinion, Mr. Dryden had given little proof of his Courage, since he for the most part combated the dead; and the dead – send no Challenges; nor indeed need they, since through their sides he had wounded himselfe” (3-4). In having Jonson, one of only four great English playwrights in Dryden's “Essay,” insult both Dryden and his claim that engaging with ancients is the preferable mode of great literature, Leigh shatters the ancient and modern lineage to which Dryden aspires.

Leigh devotes several subsequent pages to exposing grammatical and stylistic errors in *The Conquest of Granada* using the very framework Dryden created in “An Essay” and used against Settle in the *Notes and Observations*. For instance, citing Dryden's line, “thou treadst th' Abyss of Light,” the speaker emphasizes the lack of logic present in Dryden's metaphor: “Abyss is a

word so inconsistent with *Light* that ‘tis scarce bright enough for its shadow” (15). Leigh also criticizes the way Dryden manipulates language for the purpose of rhyme just as Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne do to Settle.²⁹ *The Censure of the Rota* ends with several examples of similar language in Dryden’s plays and insinuates that Dryden plagiarizes his earlier plays in his later ones. The speaker introduces this section, sarcastically stating “[here are] some forms and figurative expressions of so large an extent, that they are adjusted to all Characters in all Plays, Tragedys, Comedys, and Tragi-Comedys, whether written in rhyme, blank verses, or Prose; suitable to all Prologues Epilogues, and Dramatique Essays that are, or shall be written” (19). This accusation of plagiarism is a way of using Dryden’s own claim in “An Essay on Dramatic Poesy”—that great modern works should be original—against him. Leigh then provides categories for similar quotations of Dryden’s plays. For a “magnifique Sound,” he cites similar quotations from *The Indian Emperour*, *The Conquest of Granada Part II*, and *The Maiden Queen*. Leigh’s *The Censure of the Rota* transformed the framework of the *Censure of the Rota of Mr. Milton* to one that was exclusively literary, implying that even prolific writers could be censured for bad writing (under whatever definition of bad writing the author wanted to use).

Leigh’s *Censure of the Rota* prompted multiple responses. *The Friendly Vindication of Mr. Dryden from the Censure of the Rota by His Cabal of Wits* (1673-1674) supports Leigh’s attacks, using the framework from the earlier texts. *The Friendly Vindication* provides additional examples of grammatical and style errors in Dryden’s writing. Specifically, the writer criticizes Dryden’s hare metaphor in “Annus Mirabilis,” asking, “by what reason he calls fearful so rimorous a Creature as a Hare naturally is; since no man ever heard of a valiant hare” (2).

²⁹ Max Novak argues that part of the importance of *The Empress of Morocco* war is that it was an important step toward the incoming movement of blank verse in drama. I would add to his argument that the combination of these two pamphlet wars in the same year – and in particular, Leigh’s invective against Dryden’s rhyme – were central to this movement.

Similarly, “the cabal of wits” criticize the description of the ghosts in Dryden’s *Maiden Queen*, taking particular offense to the word choice of “shrill” and “tender” saying:

Here one took notice how excellently Mr. Dryden had described the Voices, Musick, and Dancing of Ghosts....But why shrill and tender should be the pleasing ornament of their Voices, since in it self no delightful way of speaking, or sining, was to be left to the discussion of the Ghosts...Mr. Dryden did deserve a tender rebuke...(4).

The Friendly Vindication ends with a sort of warning to Dryden; the writers threaten to continue to have meetings on such subjects as Dryden’s changing politics and his penning for political parties. The writers also highlight Dryden’s patronage and allege—like Cowley—that poetry for profit is immoral: “he did write more for Profit than Reputation” (15). The last line threatens Dryden with more Censures: “Finis or not Finis – As Mr. Dryden pleaseth” (17).

In the final two documents of *The Censure of the Rota* pamphlet war, *M. Dryden Vindicated*; *A Description of the Academy of the Athenian Virtuosi*; and Settle’s *Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco Revised*, these early forms of criticism collapse. These criticisms of criticisms (as it were) demonstrate the problems in using a narrow formula of literary criticism: it fails to account for the innovation that marks new, exceptional poets, and it would require adherence from all writers. Charles Blount, the writer of *M. Dryden Vindicated* begins by describing his reaction to *The Censure of the Rota*: “I perceiv’d ‘twas my destinie to share with Mr. Dryden in his abuse...the Zeal and Reverence I had for Learning, Wit, and innocent pleasure urg’d me (in this continuing treatise) to vindicate him, who is so great a Patron of those three virtues” (Blount 1). Just as in *The Censure of the Rota* and *The Friendly Vindication*, Blount provides instances of style and grammatical errors, but the errors lie in *The Censure of the Rota* and *The Friendly Vindication*. He uses the structure of the former two documents: he presents quoted lines from each and then exposes the errors. Of *The Friendly Vindication*, he says, “Here you have borrow’d an objection from the Rota, and for want of

French fallen into their mistake: for gay-humored is nothing else but gayete du Coeur and an expression that may be happily apply'd without forfeiture of Respect to any person how great soever" (3). In addition, Blount argues against the charges against Dryden in both documents. For example, of the criticism of the ghosts' singing and dancing in *The Maiden Queen*, Blount asks:

Now if Ghosts in general may be admitted, I beseech you let us imagine withal, that there is something for them to do; and it shall be all one to me whether they sing & dance, or play the Sackbut or the Jews-trump. But to justify the words shrill and tender, the former relates properly to the exility of the Sound, and the other to the softness of the voice [and] denotes also a gentleness of Disposition of Affectation. (5)

At the end of his document, Blount states, "all these Errors wherewith he [Dryden] hath been tax'd, are so few and inconsiderable, that nothing but a self-conceited Envie could have spy'd" (11). Blount then lists the "erratas" from *The Friendly Vindication*, as a way of demonstrating how absurd they are.

In agreement with Blount that the motivation for the authors of *The Censure of the Rota* and *The Friendly Vindication* is envy, the anonymous author of *A Description of the Academy of the Athenian Virtuosi* also questions their authority in the endeavor of criticism: "But these bastard Criticks without any examination convict any Author and presently suspend him: but who gave them this authority" (3). Moving a step further, he describes the previous authors as monsters who claw and bite at books (a theme Jonathan Swift would employ more than forty years later): "at this I concluded that these Criticks us'd them [nails and teeth] at biting and tearing other men's works; and I was confirm'd in this opinion, when I perceiv'd every one busy..." (15). Drawing on the tradition established by the previous three texts, the writer of *A Description of the Academy*, points out "erratas" in *The Censure of the Rota* and *The Friendly*

Vindication while also arguing against their originally listed errors. For example, of the line “thou treadst the abyss of light” that was criticized in *The Censure of the Rota*, the writer argues:

You assert here that abyss is so inconsistent with light that ‘tis scarce bright enough for its shadow, whilst by proving the contrary let the world judge, if the darkness of your understanding, does not advantage the lustre of Mr. Dryden’s glory. Abyss properly signifies exstream deep waters...as it is by the Greeks for an epithet to signifie anything that is endless...(27).

Much like “An Essay on Dramatic Poesy,” *A Description of the Academy* is structured as a conversation between men, in which they debate (or, in this case, agree) about the two earlier pamphlets. *A Description* ends with one of the men leaving to meet a group of writers – including Dryden – and the other sending along a short poem by Horace as consolation for his recent troubles. Though Dryden’s camp has the last word in this pamphlet war, the cyclical nature of the criticism of the *Conquest of Granada* undermines the legitimacy of all of the criticism.

As the pamphlet wars surrounding *The Censure of the Rota* and *The Empress of Morocco* occurred in the same year, it is not surprising that Settle referred to the criticism of Dryden’s *The Conquest of Granada* in his response to the *Notes and Observations*. In so doing, Settle reveals that the common denominator of both wars was Dryden. In the same vein as *The Censure of the Rota* texts, Settle builds an argument against Dryden, suggesting that Dryden had plagiarized his own work from *Cambyses* (1671) in the *Notes and Observations*. Settle goes on to charge Dryden with more serious plagiarism when he names Dryden’s collaborators and suggests his work is unoriginal.

When discussing the so-called scandal between Settle and Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne, eighteenth-century writers and historians seemed to agree that Settle was the winner. Interestingly, in the eighteenth century, Dryden’s authorship was unquestioned though his

participation in the “quarrel” was seen as a regrettable incident in his biography. In *The Lives of the Poets*, Johnson laments the negative incident in Dryden’s biography saying, “Such was the criticism to which the genius of Dryden could be reduced” (88). Charles Gildon remarked that, whatever the quality of Settle’s plays, “in his Dispute with Mr. Dryden, he had evidently the better of him; tho’ being a modest man, he suffer’d himself to be run down by his Antagonist in his Interest in the Town” (qtd. in Novak xvi). John Dennis recalled the pamphlet war in his *Remarks upon Pope’s Homer*, reporting:

According to the opinion which the town had then of the Matter, for I have utterly forgot the Controversy, had by much the better of the them all. In short, Mr. Settle was then a formidable rival to Mr. Dryden: And I remember very well, that not only the Town, but the University of Cambridge, was very much divided in their Opinions about the Preference that ought to be given to them; and in both Places, the Younger Fry, inclin’d to Elkanah. (118)

If the “opinion of the town” and of critics writing immediately after the incident regarded Settle as the ultimate winner of the incident, prompts two important questions: First, why has Settle not been remembered in literary history as a minor writer who stood up to the dominant writers of the age? Second, or perhaps even more interestingly, why has Dryden’s reputation (or that of Shadwell or Crowne) not suffered in literary history as a result of this incident? The answers lie in the ways that the topics and arguments made by Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne are repurposed and popularized by Pope to become defining aspects of literary critical valuation in the eighteenth century.

Consolidating Literary Lineage in *The Dunciad*

Pope repurposed the idea of the lineage of hack literature born in the *Notes and Observations*, ensuring Settle’s legacy as the Father of Dulness and aligning hack literature with state-sponsored poetry. In his Introduction to the *Empress of Morocco*, Novak notes the

connection between the *Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco* and Pope's *The Dunciad*, stating that Pope's "sooterkins of wits" was the name for "the stillborn children of [Settle's] poetic brain" (xi). In parentheses he adds, "probably echoing the commentators" (xi). Scholars have neglected to further explore the connection between the *Empress of Morocco* and Settle's role in *The Dunciad*. Surprisingly, Pat Rogers's 1975 article is the only examination of Settle's role in *The Dunciad* at all.³⁰ Rogers importantly reminds readers that "Settle occupies a key position...only the King Dunces and Queen Dulness contribute more to the entire action" (447). He further asserts that Pope chose Settle as the Father of Dulness because Settle's play *The Virgin Prophetess, or the Fate of Troy* created an appropriate metaphorical link to Pope's "trajectory in the progress of Dulness" (447). Pope needed a "Grub Street figure who had treated the legendary theme...he found one in the dramatist by whose hand the fall of Troy had been acted at Smithfield" (Rogers 458). Rogers additionally provides a link between Settle and the crowned Kings of the Dunces Theobald (in the first three editions) and Cibber (in the fourth edition): their plays' productions at Smithfield. Though Rogers's article was a necessary first step in considering Settle's role *The Dunciad*, I argue that the *Dunciad*'s version of literary history was the product of an early debate about drama that set the terms for the sexualized stereotype of hack literature. Using Settle as the dead Father of Dulness, whose death occasions *The Dunciad*, allows Pope to continue the earlier lineage of hack writers by naming Settle's monstrous children suggested in the *Notes*: most notably, Lewis Theobald, Laurence Eusden, Nahum Tate, Richard Blackmore, Charles Lintot, and Colley Cibber.

The metaphor of birthing and the lineage of hack literature suggested in the *Empress of Morocco* pamphlet war are compounded in *The Dunciad*. Where Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne

³⁰ In his Introduction to *Pope's Dunciad of 1728*, David Vander Meulen uses references to Settle in the *Dunciad*'s earliest manuscript forms as a way of attempting to write a chronology for the work's composition. He does not mention *The Empress of Morocco* or the *Notes and Observations*.

called Settle both the whore and the father who created hack literature, Pope revises Settle's role to be the father of Dulness, whose death drives the narrative of the new king of Dulness to be crowned (be it Lewis Theobald or Colley Cibber). Pope emphasizes Settle's identity and importance to the epic from the beginning of the poem. Though Pope famously did not provide names for most of his targets in the first edition of the mock epic (1728), Settle's full name appears before the poem begins in "The Publisher to the Reader," shortly before the narrator provides his rationale for the lack of full names: "The time and date of the action is evidently in the last reign, when the office of City Poet expir'd upon the death of Elkanah Settle, and he has fix'd it to the Mayoralty of Sir George Tho---ld (Pope A vi).³¹ Re-stating Settle's name and role as the occasion for the poem in Book I, the narrator describes the setting:

Twas on this day, when Tho---d, rich and grave,
Like Cimon triumph'd both on land and wave,
(Pomps without guilt, of bloodless swords and maces,
Glad chains warm furs, broad banners, and broad faces)
Now night descending the proud scene was o'er,
yet liv'd in Settle's numbers one day more. (A.I.73-78)

Though the Publisher had indicated that Settle's role in the epic was that his death marked the occasion for his successor, the new King of Dunces, to be crowned, Settle's successor is chosen by way of lineage. The Queen reaffirms Settle's patrilineage when she says, "But see great Settle to the dust descend,/ And all thy cause and empire at an end" (A.I.175-76). Pope reemphasizes Settle's dual roles in the epic in his footnote when he adds:

This was the last year of Elkanah Settle's life. He was poet to the city of London, whose business to compose yearly pangyricks on the Lord Mayor and verses for the Pageants,

³¹ Pope A refers to *The Dunciad. A Heroic Poem. In Three Books* (1728). Pope B refers to *The Dunciad. With Notes Variorum and the Prolegomena of Scriberlus. The Second Edition, with some Additional Notes* (1729).

but since the abolition of that part of the shows, the employment ceas'd, so that Settle had no successor to that place. (A.I. note to line 175, pg 10)³²

Just as Settle had suggested in his Epilogue to *The Empress of Morocco*, he fathers a line of literature – though certainly not the one he was hoping for. Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne suggest that his lineage would be monstrous, perverse, and detrimental for the future of literature, and with his death, the new lineage is born.

From the Queen of Dulness's point of view, the narrator describes that the monstrous literature had been born, and he names Settle's monstrous children:

She saw with joy the immortal line run,
Each sire imprest and glaring in his son; [...]
She saw in N—n all his father shine,
And E—n eke out Bl—'s endless line;
She saw how P—s creep like T—te's poor page
And furious D—n foam in Wh—'s rage. (87-94)

The use of reproductive language in this section is similar to that of the *Notes and Observations* as the Queen is able to see Settle's influence and features glaring back at her from her children. Just as Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne had said that 'something of the Elkanah will be visible' in Settle's works, Pope extends the metaphor to include Settle's visible influence on the hack writers of Grub Street.

Though scholars such as Catherine Ingrassia have done important work on the character of the Queen of the Dulness, they have not yet remarked on her similarities to the Queen Mother in *The Empress of Morocco*. Like the Queen Mother, she is widowed at the beginning of the epic, and she wields immense power in the narrative through her task to choose a new King of Dunces. Her power (and her corresponding presence in the epic) is ultimately subverted both by the crowning of the new King of Dunces and by his father, Elkanah Settle. In Books I and II of

³² Though claiming any note in Pope's writing is Pope's can be problematic, this note exists in the first (1728) edition of *The Dunciad* and is also present in all of the subsequent revisions. Warburton did not begin collaborating with Pope and writing notes for *The Dunciad* until the 1743 edition.

The Dunciad, the Queen displays immense power both in choosing the next King and in raising and leading an army of dunces. The Queen engenders an entire army of monstrous dunces. The narrator describes the creation of one such dunce, saying, “She form’d this image of well-bodied air,/ with pert flat eyes she window’d well its head;/ A brain of feathers, and a heart of lead/ And empty words she gave, and sounding strain;/ But senseless, lifeless! Idol void and vain!” (A.II. 26-30). Upon creating the dunces, the Queen takes pleasure in leading them as a general would with an army. The text describes their emasculated following of her: “Now turn to other sports (the Goddess cries)/ And learn, my sons, the wond’rous power of Noise./ To move, to raise, to ravish every heart...Tis yours to shake the soul/ With thunder rumbling from the mustard-bowl” (A.II. 201-206). After the Queen organizes the dunce games and leads the army back to the temple at the beginning of Book III, however, her role in the epic lessens immensely.

The beginning of Book III depicts the Queen “in her temple’s last recess inclos’d” with “th’ Anointed head repos’d” (A.III. 1-2). Though this has previously been recognized as a moment when the Queen emasculates the newly crowned king, I argue that this moment needs further review: while it is true that the king’s head in the Queen’s lap suggests emasculation for him, the enclosed temple suggests a return of domesticity for her.³³ She sits cradling the new king in an enclosed, domestic space, and shortly after, the dead king arrives as a sage and concludes the narrative of the crowning of the new king. After Settle arrives, the Queen disappears from the narrative altogether. Just as the male characters subvert the Queen Mother in *The Empress of Morocco*, the Queen of Dulness is subverted by her son and his father, signaling not only the similarities between the two characters but also the ultimate importance of Settle to the epic.

³³ See Ingrassia, Catherine. “Women writing/ Writing Women: Pope, Dulness, and ‘Feminization’ in the *Dunciad*.” *Eighteenth-Century Life*. 14 (1990): 40-58.

Though the publisher, narrator, and author all insist that Settle is simply the predecessor to the King of Dunces, Settle's role in Book III is to act as a guide and mentor to Theobald, explaining the progress of Dulness. In his speech in Book III, he reveals a direct connection between the *Dunciad* and the *Empress of Morocco* pamphlet war and aligns Dulness with politics, setting the stage for Theobald's successor to the King of the Dunces, Colley Cibber. Settle says to Theobald:

And are these wonders, Son, to thee unknown?
Unknown to thee? These wonders are thy own.
These Fate reserv'd to grace thy royal reign divine,
Foreseen by me, but ah! With-held from mine. (A. III. 223-226)

The word "foreseen" is key to the connection between these two texts. In describing the apocalyptic landscape created by the progress of dullness, Settle remarks that this landscape was "foreseen" by him. Settle's foresight of literary culture directs readers back to his Epilogue of the *Empress of Morocco*, when he suggests to literary critics that they should use his play kindly as a way of birthing better plays:

When meaner Faces are use'd kindly by ye
What power have greater Beauties to deny ye.
So your kind smiles advance the scribbling Trade:
To get good Play's you must excuse the bad. (*Empress of Morocco*)

By directing readers back to this moment, Pope reveals why Settle is his choice for the Father of Dulness. In addition to suggesting a kind of lineage with himself as the Father, in the next phrase—"With-held from mine"—Pope reveals what the reason for his choice of Settle as the dead King. Settle has been used too kindly in literary history, and this has the opposite effect of what Settle envisioned. The kind usage of Settle by critics has bred the current state of literary culture: the dominance of hack writers and hack literature. Pope emphasizes this connection in

the second edition, *The Dunciad Variorum*, providing quotations from critics Dennis, Leonard Welsted, and Luke Milbourn:

In like manner he [Dennis] tells us of Settle, that “he was once a formidable rival of to Mr. Dryden, and that “in the University of Cambridge there were those who gave him the preference. Mr. Welsted goes yet further on his behalf. “Poor Settle was formerly the mighty Rivall of Dryden: nay, for many years, bore his Reputation above him. And my. Milbourn cry’d out, ‘how little was Dryden able, even when his blood run high, to defend himself against Mr. Settle!’ These are comfortable opinions! And no wonder some authors indulge them. (137, note)

Pope scoffs at the kind usage Settle has received from critics and suggests that these misguided quotations have led to the apocalyptic state of Theobald’s vision. In this vision, Settle shows Theobald how duncery has won all of the intellectual battles of the past. For instance, he sees the Great Wall of China, where the Emperor burns all of the great books. In the present day, he sees Grub Street, which has become the Parnassus of duncery, where he can see a hundred sons, “and each a dunce” including Theophilus Cibber, Giles Jacob, Dennis, and Gildon (A.III.124).

In the next several lines spoken by Settle to Theobald, however, Pope’s definition of hack literature begins to deviate from Dryden’s, Shadwell’s, and Crowne’s. Pope highlights Settle’s political career, which included his office as City Poet, as evidence of his duncery:

In Lud’s old walls tho’ long I rul’d renown’d,
Far as loud Bow’s studenous bells resound;
Thos’ my own Aldermen conferr’d my bays,
To me committing their eternal praise,
Their full-fled Heroes, their pacific May’rs
Their annual trophies, and their monthly wars
Tho’ long my Party built on me their hopes
For writing pamphlets and for roasting Popes³⁴
(Different our parties, but with equal grace
Our goddess smiles on Whig and Tory race,
‘Tis the same rope at sev’ral ends they twist,
To Dulness, Ridpath is as dear as Mist.) (227-238)

³⁴ As stated earlier, after Settle lost favor with court, he switched political allegiances and began writing Whig propaganda including pope burning pageants.

Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne made no mention of Settle's political writing or of his fickle allegiances with political parties. Dryden and Shadwell were notable party writers, and Dryden was the Poet Laureate, the ultimate position of court patronage. However, while Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne alleged that if the king and court should shun hack writers in favor of true poets, then Pope alleges that court writers and Poet Laureates are the hack writers who must be shunned. Pope's Settle reminds the readers that alderman (city magistrates) "conferr'd my bays" (A.III.29). In other words, in addition to the undeserved, kind treatment he has received in literary history, the political sphere has bestowed "everlasting praise" in the form of a laurel. For Pope, the combination of politics and kind literary critics has allowed Settle to win a laurel he did not deserve, and his laurel has earned Settle a literary legacy that is dangerous to literary culture.

Pope's purpose in the next section is to change Settle's literary legacy into an absurd performer, dressed as a dragon at Smithfield Fair: "Yet, lo! In me what Authors have to brag on/ Reduc'd at last to hiss in my dragon" (A.III.239-240). However, Pope argues that Settle is not the only poet whose infamy (as he sees it) will be made into a legacy by the combination of current literary culture and politics. Cibber, whose star was on the rise in 1728 as an actor, playwright, and the manager of the Drury Lane theater, was able to wield power over which types of plays were performed. Like Settle, he was also a frequent performer at Smithfield Fair,³⁵ and Pope predicts that Cibber will have a similar fate to that of Settle: "Avert it, heav'n! That thou or C_____r e'er/ Shou'd wag two serpent tails at Smithfield fair" (A.III.241-242). In more ways than one, Pope's prediction was right. Cibber, particularly after his roles in *The Dunciad*,

³⁵ Thomas Wilks, Mrs. Pritchard, Henry Fielding, Sarah Fielding, and Titus Oates also performed there (Brown 36).

lived in infamy in high literary circles; yet, in 1730, he was named Poet Laureate, successor to Laurence Eusden. Of the 1730 laureate race, Daniel Ennis remarks:

The race was fiercely contested. In the last three months of that year, London newspapers made frequent references to the various candidates being considered to replace Eusden. This contest attracted so much attention (and generated so much acrimony) because it made a difference – because it mattered. (218).

The potential candidates at the time were few. Pope was disqualified because of his Catholicism, Swift was in Ireland, and John Gay was living outside London at Amesbury Household at Wiltshire (Ennis 218). This left the new favorite of the court, Stephen Duck as the only other possibility for the office. However, according to Ennis, “while Duck was a bit too guileless, Cibber was savvy, but could feign whatever attitude was most pleasing to his audience” (Ennis 229). Further, Cibber’s ability to laugh at himself in the face of cultural critics “rendered him somewhat immune to Pope’s barbs” (Ennis 229). The newly crowned laureate, much like Settle, was going to inherit a position that was once very distinguished, despite Pope’s warning that state sponsorship could create undeserving literary legacies. It is no surprise then that when Pope added a fourth book to *The Dunciad* in 1742, he changed the King of the Dunces to Cibber, the true descendent of Settle: from City Poet to Poet Laureate.

Examining minor texts such as the works and debates surrounding *The Empress of Morocco* alongside canonical texts such as *The Dunciad* allows one to see a lineage of hack literature and the ways in which writers of the period were attempting to adjudicate good and bad literature. Beginning with *The Empress of Morocco*, Settle extends his play’s theme of female empowerment and disempowerment in his Epilogue to liken hack writers—such as himself—to women who become whores while trying to impress men who only enjoy them once and then cast them off. In the *Notes and Observations*, Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne extend this metaphor to suggest that Settle is the whore who birthed monstrous, hack literature. They affirm

Settle as a hack writer using a developing framework of criticism based on poetic content and poetic language. The framework proves to be too narrow, however, when Leigh, Settle, and other writers of the period use it to criticize Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada*'s poetic content and structure. Their critiques of Dryden ultimately reveal the need for a new form of literary criticism as the existing method did not protect the adjudicators from their own criticism. *The Dunciad* answers this call by rewriting literary history, casting Settle as the Father of Dulness. Pope uses the analogies of the earlier pamphlet war. Settle engenders the existing literary climate of Grub Street. *The Dunciad*'s version of literary history is the product of an early debate about the valuation of literature that set the terms for the sexualized and reproductive definitions of hack literature and hack writers, and especially, state-sponsored poets. The characterization of state-sponsored poets as feminized, hack writers in the earliest version of the *Dunciad*, along with the revision of the *Dunciad* to specify their place in literary history, accounts for the poet laureates' fall from grace in the early eighteenth century.

CHAPTER 2 THE THEATER LAUREATE: A RECONSIDERATION OF COLLEY CIBBER

“How imperfect soever [sic.] this Copious Account of them may be, I am not without Hope, at least, that in some degree shew what Talents are requisite to make Actors valuable; And if that may any ways inform, or assist Judgement of future Spectators, it may, as often, be of service to their publick Entertainments; for as their Hearers are, so will Actors be; worse or better, as the false or true Taste applauds, or discommends them. Hence only can our Theatres improve, or must degenerate.”

-Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber*

Where state-sponsored poets of the Restoration such as Settle and Dryden answered attacks directly through pamphlet wars, poets laureate of the early-to-mid eighteenth century did not engage in pamphlet wars, nor did they attempt to answer their critics in the form of prefaces, letters, dedications, or epilogues. Eusden, for instance, the poet laureate from 1719–1730, was satirized in Swift’s “Directions for making a Birthday Song” (1729; first published in 1765), Pope’s *The Dunciad in Three Books* (1728) and *Peri Bathous* (1728), Thomas Cooke’s “The Battle of the Poets” (1725), and John Sheffield’s “The Election of a Poet Laureate in 1719” (1723), among others. Yet, Eusden never responded to any of the attacks on his person or poetry (Sambrook). Eusden’s unresponsiveness was likely due to two major factors; first, he had powerful allies, such as his friend, Joseph Addison, for whom he wrote several of his poems, and who held a large sway over coffeehouse culture in this period.³⁶ Second, as Pat Rogers notes, one of the criteria for “duncehood” was “a professional ‘Answerer’ of the kind marked out in *A Tale*

³⁶ By 1719, the year Eusden was appointed to the laureateship, Joseph Addison had successfully facilitated 271 issues of *The Tatler* (the last issue was in 1709) and overseen 555 issues of *The Spectator* with his collaborator, Richard Steele. Addison’s “innovatory use of the journal” published some of the most important literary criticism prior to Samuel Johnson (“Joseph Addison”). Addison additionally held several political offices including secretary to the lord’s justices and secretary of state for the southern department. The powerful friendship between Addison and Eusden may have provided Eusden enough power and shielding within the Whig Party that he did not trouble himself to respond to Popean barbs.

Eusden dedicated several poems to Addison including “The Royal Family! A Letter to Mr. Addison on the King’s Accession to the Throne” (1713); he additionally contributed to *The Spectator*, *The Guardian*, and he wrote commendatory verses on Addison’s *Cato*, which were prefixed with the 7th edition of the play in 1713 (Fitzmaurice 115).

of the Tub... a lifelong vocational commitment to the ‘countercheck quarrelsome’” (Rogers 206-207). By providing examples of dunces who engaged in pamphlet wars, such as John Dennis, John Oldmixon, and Charles Johnson, along with examples of their writings, Pope warns other writers that to answer him would only reaffirm their duncery.

Like Eusden, Cibber, poet laureate 1730-1757, did not respond to the multitudes of satiric attacks made on his writings and surrounding his appointment to the laureateship. As with Eusden, most of the criticism about Cibber centers on his position as laureate. In the mist of the laureate race between Cibber and his opponent, Stephen Duck, *The Grub Street Journal* dedicated several sarcastic articles, odes, and epigrams to both contenders.³⁷ Upon Cibber’s appointment as laureate, his 1730 annual ode, “Ode for the New Year” was the first laureate writing to appear in the inaugural issue of *The Gentleman’s Magazine* in January of 1731. *The Gentleman’s Magazine* also printed two parodies of the ode alongside it: “A Hymn to the Laureat,” written by Duck, and a parodic ode written by Cibber under the pseudonym Francis Fairplay.³⁸ From the beginning of Cibber’s laureate tenure, he accepted this criticism as part of the position, but, like Eusden, he did not answer.³⁹ In 1740, however, Cibber published his nonfiction narrative—*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber, Comedian and Late Patentee of*

³⁷ See especially “November 19, 1730,” “December 10, 1730,” “December 24, 1730,” “December 31, 1730,” and “January 7, 1731.”

³⁸ Laureates’ odes were printed in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* until the abolishment of the ode in 1821. Robert Southey bemoaned the publication of his odes and admitted that he successfully withheld them from publication, indicating that the publication of the odes in this publication was, as Cibber said, not necessarily with the consent of the writer (Southey 392). There is a larger discussion of the publication of Southey’s odes in chapter 4.

³⁹ In his *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber, Written by Himself* (1740), Cibber draws attention to his silence, saying he was never tempted to enter into a paper war. He adds that he hopes his readers will form their judgments by reading his own words, forming an opinion outside those of critics: “Will they not judge me from what I say, as from what you say? If then you attack me merely to divert yourself, your Excuse for writing will be no better than mine. But perhaps you may want Bread: If that be the case, even go to Dinner, I’ God’s name” (28-29). Citing financial gain for his critics’ attacks, Cibber accuses critics of the very hackery for which he was criticized.

the Theatre-Royal, With an Historical View of the Stage in his Own Time. Written by Himself— and the title clarifies the work's purpose as a justification or defense.⁴⁰ Though Cibber had not engaged in pamphlet wars like his predecessors, the title of his work categorizes it with the genre employed by Plato, Sidney, and Sir Thomas More. Plato's *Apology* is an account of Socrates's defense at his trial and subsequent execution in 399 BC.⁴¹ Sidney emulated Plato's rhetorical strategy in his *Apology for Poetrie* (1595), in which he defends literature and advocates for its place in the aristocratic state, rationalizing that through fictional realities, literature can move readers to virtuous action.⁴² In *The Apology of Sir Thomas More* (1533), which was published right after the coronation of Anne Boleyn, More defends Catholicism, encouraging all Catholics to stand firm in their faith during the Reformation.⁴³ In titling his work *An Apology*, Cibber not only aligns himself with famous intellectual martyrs who defended themselves and their ideologies against critics and reform, but he also joins a literary lineage preceded by Sir Phillip

⁴⁰ See "Apology" in the *OED*, which states that an apology is "less formally" a "Justification, explanation, or excuse, of an incident or course of action." Similarly, in *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* an apology is defined as "The term apology suggests a defense or vindication, although there is a disarming tone of humility and an implication of frankness and honesty."

⁴¹ The Greek word ἀπολογία, or apologia, translates to "a verbal defense." Socrates was tried and found guilty of two impious acts: failing to acknowledge the gods that the city acknowledges and introducing new deities. In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates defends his actions by arguing that through the use of debates and dialogues, his teachings can reform Athens to a state of production and virtue.

⁴² Sidney's *Apology for Poetrie* directly responds to pamphlets such as Stephen Gosson's *The School of Abuse*, which was dedicated to Sidney, and argued that poetry "winnes the body from labor, and conquereth the sense; the allurement of the other draws the mind from virtue, and confoundeth wit" (22).

⁴³ A cursory search on Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO) shows that More's *Apology* genre was emulated by religious writers through the eighteenth century in titles such as *An apology for the true Christian divinity, as the same is held forth, and preached, by the People, called in Scorn, Quakers* (1703), *An apology for the Church of England, and vindication of her learned clergy: or the clergyman's free gift to Mr. Woolston* (1725), and *An Apology and vindication, or, The practice, and binding obligation of following Christ's institution and example in the administration of the Supper, Asserted and Defended* (1783).

Sidney of defending literature against its critics.⁴⁴ Cibber's *Apology* is a defense of a type of literature that— like Cibber himself—has been criticized and marginalized.

Though the term “autobiography” as our modern concept did not exist until the Romantic period, modern critics have anachronistically categorized Cibber's text as such.⁴⁵ Patricia Meyer Spacks, in *Imagining a Self*, labels Cibber's *Apology* (among others) as a superficial autobiography because Cibber never mentions “how he felt” (24). She adds later in the text that like several other eighteenth-century biographers, “Cibber apparently considers much of his youthful experience irrelevant to his mature accomplishment,” and she argues further that the two main events of his youth are included in the account to counteract the recent controversy surrounding his laureateship because both episodes set him apart “for both glory and doom” (221). Scaffolding from this argument, Brian Glover similarly argues that Cibber's selective autobiographical material is meant for his critics, and the narrative itself is his (failed) attempt to crown himself King of Show Business, as opposed to King of the Dunces. The term “autobiography” is problematic in these readings. Cibber's *Apology* is not an autobiography with missing crucial elements; it is a defense and should be read according to the life writing genres of the time.

Biographers such as B. R. S. Fone have also analyzed the autobiographical omissions in Cibber's *Apology*, and, in particular, the exclusion of Cibber's laureateship from the narrative. In the title of his *Apology*, Cibber establishes his credibility “to provide a historical view of the

⁴⁴ Ann Hartle discusses the differences between the apology and confession genres using Plato's *Apology* and Augustine's *Confessions* as examples. She notes that “an apology is above all an account aimed at showing or explaining how an action of a way of acting is good. Confession, on the other hand, is primarily an admission of some wrong and entails feelings of shame” (85). In the Romantic period, works such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* and Thomas DeQuincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* transformed the confession genre into what we now consider secular autobiography when they combined their confessions with “self-representing and self-authorizing...embodying their own histories” (Mitchell 644).

⁴⁵ According to the *OED*, the term's first use was in 1797 (“Autobiography”).

theater in his own time” by self-identifying as a comedian and theater-manager—not as a poet laureate (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 7). Cibber’s position as poet laureate is not mentioned in the work at all. Biographers and scholars have used his omission to affirm Cibber’s supposed duncery and have not considered the omission as part of Cibber’s larger objective.

Fone states:

Cibber, usually vain about his achievements and ready to gloss over his shortcomings does not elaborate on his good fortune [of being appointed Poet Laureate] in the *Apology*. Perhaps the ridicule which followed his appointment led him to discretion, or perhaps he felt some of the dignity which clings to the title, despite the general inferiority of its holders, and was moved to silence. What is sure is that he recognized what all the world was saying, that is, that his poems were bad, and he candidly admitted it. (xii-xiii)

According to Fone then, Cibber omitted all discussion of his laureateship because he knew that his poetry was poor and that he was undeserving of the title. However, Cibber’s *Apology* delineates how he hopes to define his legacy. The narrative begins with Cibber’s rationale for his work, which includes his fear of another writer mishandling his life and legacy in a biography. Citing memoirs of Anne Oldfield, Robert Wilks, and Barton Booth, he warns “when my Time comes, lest they shou’d think it worthwhile to handle my memory with the same Freedom, I am willing to prevent its being so odly [sic.] besmear’d (or at best but flatly white-washed) by taking upon me the Publick This, as a true picture of myself as a natural Vanity will permit me to draw” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 7).⁴⁶ In answering specifically how his narrative will be of use to the public, he answers that “a theatrical history of my own time, from my first appearance on the stage to my last exit [...] will advance to [...] the prosperity and improvement

⁴⁶ Anne Oldfield (1683-1730) was an actress and eventual managing partner in the Drury Lane Theater. Upon her death two memoirs were published about her life in 1731: *Authentick Memoirs of Anne Oldfield*, which was published anonymously and W. Egerton [E. Curll]’s *Faithful memoirs of the life, amours and performances of Anne Oldfield* (Milling). Robert Wilks (1665-1732) was an actor and manager (along with Colley Cibber) of the Drury Lane Theater. After his death in 1732, Edmund Curll published *The Life of that Eminent Comedian Robert Wilks* (Murtin). Barton Booth (1681–1733) was a lauded actor, who performed at Drury Lane and Lincoln’s Inn-Fields. After his death in 1733, his friend, Victor Benjamin, published *Memoirs of the life of Barton Booth, Esq. :* (Batty).

of the stage” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 7-8). In this chapter, I am coining the term “Theater Laureate” to argue that Cibber’s legacy as a poet laureate should be reconsidered in accordance with his expertise on theater history, theater criticism, and histrionics. Specifically, I argue that through an understanding of Cibber’s ideas of performance, Cibber’s laureateship can be understood as an experiment in moral reform.

My project in this chapter builds on recent revisionist scholarship of Cibber criticism that considers Cibber’s work outside of the satires written about him by Pope and other eighteenth-century satirists.⁴⁷ J. Paul Hunter and Patricia Meyer Spacks identify the ways in which *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* (1740) prepared reading audiences for the emergence of new genres. Hunter notes that the appearance of Cibber’s *Apology* indicates the major changes that had taken place in the public sensibility with regard to an interest in the private and personal spheres as Cibber’s work represents “a merger between private and public history, the story both of personal life and larger events” (324-325). Hunter posits that Cibber’s work prepared reading audiences for fictional novels about characters’ private lives. Spacks similarly identifies the ways in which Cibber could be compared to the fictional character of Pamela, but her argument extends to an examination of the ways Cibber invents a self through his writing. Spacks argues

⁴⁷ Cibber’s adaptations have long been treated as evidence for his duncery. However, two recent articles on Cibber’s adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Richard III* invite a new era in Cibber studies, wherein scholars can begin to reconsider Cibber’s legacy outside of the satires written about him in the eighteenth century. Julia Fawcett argues that Cibber’s revisions to Shakespeare’s *Richard III* use the character of Richard to demonstrate how can maintain celebrity status in spite of criticism. Gillian Day argues that the revisions made to the character of Richard III in the play present a more interesting character: one who possesses a deep inner conflict between his integrity and his personal advancement. Further, remnants of these changes to Richard’s character can be seen in the twentieth-century performances and adaptations of *Richard III*.

Elaine McGirr and Vivian Davis have reconsidered Cibber’s use of genre and the way he uses genre to represent women. McGirr’s recent article asserts that Cibber’s comedies dramatize the importance of female desire and female virtue and argue that without desire there can be no virtue. Demonstrating the need for a re-examination of these plays, McGirr calls for a revaluation of Cibber’s dramas as aesthetic and ideological works. Davis argues that Cibber’s mixed genres in his *Apology* allow him to experiment with changing notions of sexual difference. Cibber “revalues mixed genres and gender confusion as a site of illicit pleasure, providing an affective yet ephemeral other against which tragedy’s formidable narratives about gender and nation took shape” (Davis 537). This chapter will scaffold from these efforts to re-conceptualize both Cibber and his use of genre.

that Cibber's identity is constructed by his speech and actions in the text, as well as by the biographical information he omits from the text—especially information about his youth and his marriage. Cheryl Wanko's work also interrogates Cibber's contributions to life writing, and in particular, the ways in which thespian biographies such as Cibber's *Apology* provided a medium for the uncultured middle classes "to acquire cultural competence in the privacy of their own homes" (4). Like Spacks, Wanko is interested in Cibber's authorial voice, but her focus lies in how he uses his voice to articulate issues of class. Wanko argues that the "uproar" over Cibber's popularity was due to his ownership of his lack of education and middle-class roots. These critics all provide important foundational work in acknowledging Cibber's contributions to eighteenth-century literary culture and the ways in which scholars can begin to reconsider his legacy.

Cibber's chosen genre has further implications about audience and purpose. According to Felicity Nussbaum's *The Autobiographical Subject*, life writing in the eighteenth century was an activity of the middle class:

The ideology of genre makes it possible to assume a unified and authoritative narrative position of an "I" who holds the discrete particulars together... the autobiographical texts [are] crucial to the formulation of a gendered bourgeois subjectivity that learns to recognize itself...eighteenth-century self-biography [is] a matrix of conflicting discourses and practices that produce, reflect, contain, and transform class and gender identities. (xiii)

The burgeoning life writing genre allows the middle class to recognize their position and reflect upon it. I argue that Cibber's *Apology* recognizes its middle-class voice and audience and attempts to mobilize it for the purpose of bettering theater criticism.

Cibber Criticism: From the Eighteenth Century to Present

Though *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* was widely popular in its time and into the mid-nineteenth century, its place in current literary criticism is marginal at best. Cibber's

Apology was first published on April 7, 1740, and its popularity was demonstrated by the almost immediate second edition published just one month after the first on May 14, as well as the immediate criticism it garnered from pamphlets such as *The Laureat* and *The Tryal of Colley Cibber*, which both appeared in 1740 (Fone xvi). These pamphlets heavily criticize the style and content of the narrative in ways reminiscent to the pamphlet wars surrounding *The Empress of Morocco* and *The Censure of the Rota*.⁴⁸ In *The Tryal of Colley Cibber*, the anonymous author criticizes Cibber's "little advantage to learning, or grammar" by pointing out grammatical errors from Cibber's text. For instance, the writer satirizes Cibber's "boldness of expressions" noting phrases such as "Betterton excels himself" and "Betterton was not equal to his former self" (*The Tryal of Colley Cibber* 14). *The Laureat* criticizes the style and grammar of Cibber's *Apology*, but additionally criticizes content. In the Preface, the anonymous writer explains his purpose:

I was call'd upon to explain the meaning, or to expose the no Meaning, to take off the Vernish [sic.] of rhetorical Flowers, and to undress a certain Book lately publish'd, intituled [sic.] *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber*...I found, that to go thro' and examine him particularly wou'd be more than *Herculian* Labor, and that the cleansing of this *Augean* Stable was unequal both to my Inclination and my strength. (1-2)

That being said, the writer begins with the Dedication and criticizes all manner of Cibber's writing including grammar, style, and content similar to *The Censures of the Rota*.

Although Cibber's work was widely read, resulting in new editions in 1742 and 1750, the work of Augustan satirists such as Pope and Fielding have overshadowed the success of Cibber's *Apology* in the period. Cibber published an abbreviated edition of his *Apology* titled *The Life of Colley Cibber* in 1742, but this edition was met with the publication of Henry Fielding's *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* (1741) and *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his Friend Mr. Abraham Abrams* (1742). In addition to parodying Cibber's title, Fielding remarks in the first chapter of *Joseph Andrews* that Cibber's *Apology* "...deals in

⁴⁸ See Chapter 1 for a detailed account of the criticism in these pamphlet wars.

Male-Virtue, was written by the great Person himself, who lived the Life he hath recorded, and is by many thought to have lived such a life only in order to write it” (Fielding 16). Criticism of Cibber’s *Apology* had crossed genre boundaries: it moved from nonfiction pamphlets to novels and soon would enter into poetry. In 1743, Pope published *The Dunciad in Four Books*, in which the hero of the epic—the King of the Dunces—was revised from Lewis Theobald to Colley Cibber. In this version of *The Dunciad*, Pope not only changed the crowning of the King of the Dunces from Theobald to Cibber, but he also revised moments in Books I-III to refer specifically to Cibber where they had originally pointed to multiple hack writers (including Theobald).⁴⁹ While Cibber’s *Apology* was shadowed by varying degrees of scathing responses to it, prior to 1750 Cibber is said to have made more than 1500 pounds in royalties (Barker 194). In 1750, Cibber sold his copyright of the work to Robert Dodsley, who published a third edition that year. In 1756, the fourth edition, which was also published by Dodsley, appeared in two volumes; it was the last edition in Cibber’s lifetime (Fone xvii). The popularity of Cibber’s *Apology* has waned in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries with readers and critics alike, and, correspondingly, Cibber criticism to date has not focused on his contributions to the theater.

Nineteenth-century reviewers recognized Cibber as primarily an actor and theater historian, and they set his position as poet laureate in opposition to his work in the theater. In a review of the 1822 edition, William Blackwood states, “[i]t was the fashion to decry [Cibber]. He was obnoxious to the Tories as poet laureate, and as the author of the *Non-Jurors*. As a player he was subject to the dis-esteem which was then, even more than it is now, attached to his profession” (Blackwood 295). However, the review adds that “Cibber was a poet-laureat [sic.]

⁴⁹ In Book I of the *The Dunciad in Four Books*, for instance, the Queen of Dulness surveys all of the potential dunce kings, and when she beholds Bays, she describes, “In each she marks her image full express’d,/ But chief in Bayes’s monster-breeding breast;/ Bayes formed by nature stage and town to bless,/ And act, and be, a coxcomb with success” (Pope I. 107-110).

and successful as a dramatist whilst Pope was neither” (Blackwood 294). Similarly, in 1889, a book reviewer in *The Scots Observer* for 1888-1890 states, “[t]here is no doubt that he [Cibber] was a coxcomb of the first water; none, that he was as ridiculous a poet laureate as ever penned an ode” (217). (The *OED* notes that the phrase “of the first water” was as a phrase designating something to be “of the finest quality, often applied to jewels generally.”) He goes on to add, however:

He was a person of excellent parts, that he was an actor of uncommon versatility and talent, that he was the author of some capital stage-plays (the acting version of *Richard III* among others), and that in his *Apology for the Life and Writings of Colley Cibber*, he not only invented the art and mystery of the criticism of histrionics, but produced a certain number of examples in that art with, which Lamb and Hazlitt to the front, have still to be surpassed. (217)

After Cibber’s *Apology* stopped being printed in 1889, critics relied on Cibber’s reputation as a poet laureate, and as a result, modern scholars have almost exclusively approached his work through his bi-annual odes. Fone recognized the conflict in Cibber scholarship when he edited and republished Cibber’s *Apology* in 1968, the first edition to be published in the twentieth century. In his Introduction, Fone argues that the multiple attacks on Cibber in pamphlets as well as in Pope’s *The Dunciad* had become Cibber’s legacy with critics. He indicates further that the *Apology* is deserving of more critical attention for its “value as a theatrical document” (Fone ix). However, Fone himself struggles with completely casting off the eighteenth-century evaluation of Cibber, and this is apparent in phrases such as “the *Apology* may be everything an Autobiography should not be” (Fone ix). Additionally, in describing the style of Cibber’s narrative, Fone states: “One cannot speak of Cibber’s style, for if he has one, it is badly faulted. He is discursive, ungrammatical. Metaphors take wing and fall in confusion” (Fone xxiii). Fone’s conflicted representation of Cibber demonstrates the nineteenth-century notion that Cibber

should be remembered for his contributions to the theater, but the criticism of his writing reveals his difficulty in removing stain of eighteenth-century satirists and critics.

Of his laureateship, scholars have almost exclusively narrowed their criticism of Cibber to the examination of his bi-annual odes. Universally cited to date as the foremost book on the poets laureate, Broadus's *The Laureateship: A Study of the Office of Poet Laureate in England with Some Account of The Poets* focuses all of Cibber's contributions to the laureateship on his bi-annual odes. Broadus says, "Cibber punctually produced his annual New Year and Birthday Odes...[and] the genius of Pope singled him out to remain for all time as the example of degradation of the laureateship" (Broadus 121). Though Broadus does admit that "Cibber has the unenviable distinction of having been more abundantly (and it may be added scurrilously) ridiculed than any other holder of the title," he goes on to criticize that "Cibber did not consider the duties of the laureateship a serious challenge to the Muse. When he took it over from Eusden, the office was a joke, and it did not occur to him to better it" (Broadus 134-135). Heaney, in attempting to ascertain why laureates were so unpopular in the mid-eighteenth century, argues that "responsibility for this fall from grace lies, in varying measures, with the laureate practitioners who succeeded Dryden" (Heaney 2). Heaney argues that Tate, Eusden, and Cibber are responsible for the decline of the laureateship because of their inability to master the panegyric. Heaney describes the odes of all three "laureate dunces" and says of Cibber that he "was either unable or unwilling to take his laureate pieces beyond the simplest (and grossest) of flatteries. [Thus], the noble panegyric declined from the lofty assessor of monarchs and monarchy, the commentary of the state of the nation, to the feeble joke that was the Cibberian ode" (Heaney 7).⁵⁰ Both critics acknowledge that Cibber was treated worse by satirists than his

⁵⁰ The universal complaint about Cibberian odes by critics from Heaney to Andrew Motion (poet laureate of Britain 1999-2009) is the exaggerated praise of George I and George II, who were difficult monarchs to praise.

predecessors, but because both critics use the bi-annual ode as the measure of the laureates' successes, their conclusions cannot help but affirm Augustan ideology.

Modern critics have also questioned Cibber's appointment as poet laureate over his competitor Stephen Duck. Cibber's previous biographers, including Leonard R. N. Ashley and Helene Koon, are in general agreement that Cibber won the laurel as a reward for his 1718 pro-Hanoverian comedy, *The Non-Juror* (Fone 228). Daniel Ennis describes the candidacies of both Duck and Cibber finally determining that "Duck was attractive...because he stayed a humble thresher in spirit;" however, for all of Duck's personal attractiveness as a candidate, the laureateship was a political job, and Cibber had spent "long years as a Whig partisan" (Ennis 224, 228). All of these critics contend that Cibber's appointment was entirely politically motivated, and they harshly judge him for the politics that led to his appointment. As Abigail Williams argues, this is likely an inheritance of the Tory attitudes of the writers of the day such as Pope and Swift, who were resentful of their lack of patronage by members of the government.⁵¹ Ennis does concede however that Cibber possessed certain strengths for the position, specifically "Cibber was savvy, [and] could feign whatever attitude was most pleasing to his audience..." (229). What is missing from Ennis's astute observation, however, is that Cibber could be pleasing to multiple audiences because he was first and foremost an actor as was recognized in the nineteenth-century reviews of the *Apology*.

I argue that there is not a radical disconnect between Cibber's role as an actor and the selection of him as a poet laureate; instead, Cibber reads his laureate work through the lens of

For instance, Cibber's "Birthday Ode" (1732) contains hyperbolic adulations such as "High heav'n announced this instant hour/ The best of monarchs shall be born!" (51).

⁵¹ Williams details the ways in which "Whig writers were coopted into the machinery of government to such an extent that they and their work became at times indistinguishable from party-political life" (204). Moreover, "party-specific financing for literary endeavors could not but create resentment in those writers clearly excluded from the spoils" (205).

performance. Cibber agreed with criticism of the absurdity of the laureate odes, sometimes even satirizing them himself, but he also argued that the odes could not be extricated from their performance at court and were not valuable exclusively as poetry. Cibber understood his role as laureate to be that of a performer, and in his *Apology*, he delineates what the power of performance can do: provide moral reform and reverse devolving literary tastes.

Cibber's *Apology*: Performance and National Reform

Though Cibber does not explicitly discuss the laureateship in his *Apology*, his references to court performances of poetry as well as his discussions of laureate poetry in later narratives such as *The Egotist* (1743) clarify his opinion about the requirements of the office and his execution of them. In his *Apology*, Cibber contrasts the high value of the mid-century theater against musical performances in concerts, operas, and court performances of poetry. Of opera, Cibber appeals to both class and patriotism to emphasize opera's foreignness, as well as its popularity with upper-class audiences. Cibber states: "Opera is not a Plant of our Native Growth, nor what our plainer appetites are fond of, and is of so delicate a Nature, that without excessive Charge, it cannot live among us" (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 210). Contrasting the talents of opera performers against those of actors, Cibber asks, "When the following Numbers came from the Mouth of [Thomas] Betterton, the Multitude no more desired Sense to them, than our musical Connoisseurs think it essential to celebrate Airs of an Italian opera. Does not this prove, that there is very near as much Enchantment in the well-govern'd Voice of an Actor, as in the sweet Pipe of a Eunuch?" (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 63). The contrast between Betterton and a eunuch here affirms the masculinity of the theater as opposed to the feminized art of opera. Additionally, the tone and elocution of an actor contains the same kinds of allurements of a singer; however, the singer must rely on the musical elements of the

composition as well as other instruments to move the audience, where the actor can only rely on his vocal tone and inflection. Further, setting poetry to music, according to Cibber, presents a conflict because listeners attach their own feelings to music and “regard not one word of what we hear” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 67). Listeners hear the music and “annex ideas of our own creation, and in some sort, become ourselves the Poet to the Composer” (67). In articulating this conflict, Cibber indirectly denounces laureate poetry—odes that are set to music. This criticism portends the claims Cibber later makes in *The Egotist*: laureate poetry is a court performance that cannot be extricated from its performance at court and thus has no value as solely performance or solely as poetry.

While laureate poetry in its published form had been the target of satiric attacks by Swift, Pope, and others since the beginning of the century, Cibber attempts to change the conversation about laureate poetry by questioning the structure of the genre altogether—poetry set to music. In *The Egotist*, Cibber asserts that, “Dryden seldom if ever suffered any of His to go farther than the Room they were sung in [...] Does not this look as if he knew, without the Musick to them, they had but an Adjective Merit, and would not stand by themselves?” (49-50). Because the genre calls for music and must be written in such a way that emphasizes the combination of poetry and music, one will not stand without the other; thus, to judge the merit of the poetry alone is to misunderstand the genre. The mention of “the room they were sung in” also echoes the importance of the performativity as the court performance of the laureate ode would be a completely distinct experience from reading it in a publication. The publications of these odes, Cibber states unequivocally, were completed without his consent (50). Cibber answers the attacks on the bi-annual odes by suggesting that they were not poetry at all but poetic performances set to music.

That Cibber questioned the genre of laureate poetry yet continued to write and perform it punctually throughout his long service is unsurprising given that he did so in order to sustain himself financially. In “A Letter from Mr. Cibber, to Mr. Pope” Cibber admits that he wrote poetry “more to be fed than to be famous” and even cites the *Non-Juror*, upon which Pope lamented the decay of poetry, as successful as it earned Cibber two hundred pounds from the King (“A Letter from Mr. Cibber to Mr. Pope” 9, 22). Cibber’s letters and pamphlets indicate that writing—poetry and drama— were a means for financial stability and not what he considered his true profession.⁵² However, I argue that examining his *Apology* through the lens of his laureateship reveals that though Cibber rejects laureate poetry, he subsumes his position as laureate into another genre—theater performance—that he elevates and claims authority in. He then carefully delineates what performance can do: provide moral reform and reverse devolving literary taste.

Cibber’s *Apology* confronts the criticism of theater, acting, and playhouses, as well as threats to the success of the continuing theater by suggesting that the solution to these issues lies in performance of reform comedies. Contemporary critics have noted the decline of drama in the early- to mid-eighteenth century and cited degenerating audiences’ tastes as the culprit. In “A Large Account of the Taste in Poetry, 1702,” John Dennis chides readers for the deteriorating tastes of audiences: “I believe no English man will wonder if an English writer is dissatisfied

⁵² Cibber reinforces this theme of writing for money again in his *Apology* when he describes that the composition of his first play was the result of his desire to make more money and to be able to write himself better parts to act:

If after this, to complete my Fortune, I turn’d Poet too, this last Folly indeed, had something [sic?] a better Excuse --- Necessity: had it ever been my lot to have come to the Stage, tis’ probable, I might never have been inclin’d, or reduc’d to have wrote for it: But having once expos’d my Person there, I thought it could be no additional Dishonour to let my Parts, whateer they were, take their Fortune along with it.---But to return to the Progress I made as an Actor. (104)

Robert Southey, poet laureate 1813-1843 also used his appointment to the laureateship to secure his financial legacy in the form of insurance. There is a larger discussion of this topic in chapter 4. Also, see Michael Gamer. "Laureate Policy." *Wordsworth Circle* 42.1 (2011): 42-47. Print.

with the taste of the English at this present conjecture...And the English were never sunk so miserably low in their taste, as they are at present” (131). Taking a similar stance with a more positive approach, Richard Steele, in *The Tatler*, No. 1 (1709), praises a recent staging of *Love for Love* and hopes that, “plays will revive, and take their usual place in the opinion of persons of wit and merit, notwithstanding their late apostasy in favour of dress and sound” (*The Tatler* No. 1). Steele’s disappointment in the theater’s inclusion of music and spectacle is unsurprising. The Restoration theater had often included dancing and music between acts, but early-to-mid-century playgoers were offered an even greater variety including “afterpieces” which entailed everything from French dancing to tumblers and acrobats, to rope dancing and farce (Brewer 362). Writers continued their complaints about these additions to the theater throughout the century. In his Preface to Joseph Addison’s *The Drummer* (1716; published in 1765), Steele again bemoans the “false taste that has prevailed for many years in the British Theater” and then urges “readers to see the beauties that escaped the audience; the touches being too delicate for every taste in a popular assembly” (Steele Preface). In this example, Steele urges reading audiences to appreciate the beauty of the language that viewers evidently missed. In appealing to the reading audience for the play’s artistry, Steele is targeting an audience he perceived to be much different than that of the theater.

The theater was viewed as a cross section of British society that included kings, lords, and commoners (Brewer 351). The commoners constituted a large percentage of the theater audience, and policies that attempted to discriminate against them were met with anger and rioting. Theater-goers prevented David Garrick from halting the practice of the half-price admission ticket after the third act (or 9:00 PM), which had been in place since the 1690s (351). Similarly, when John Kemble tried to raise prices after the opening of the new Covent Garden

Theatre in 1809, sixty-seven nights of rioting ensued, and he was eventually forced to concede to the former price (351). Where commoners attended the theater and even exercised agency in their ability to attend, the reading public was made up mostly of aristocrats, gentry, rich merchants, and shopkeepers; laborers could not read at all (Brewer 167-168).⁵³ In calling for the reading audience to appreciate the beauty of the language then, Steele is assuming and calling for a higher literary taste in the upper classes.

In his *Apology*, Cibber defends the theater against associations of audiences' bad taste by emphasizing the power of the performance with regard to the "school of Manners and Vertue" (196). Cibber agrees that "nothing is more liable to debase and corrupt the minds of the People than a licentious Theatre;" however, he argues that the theater is correspondingly the place for reform (196). Citing political examples from Papal countries such as Spain and ancient examples such as the power of Cato's tragedies on Athens, Cibber argues that only the theater has the power to transform an audience—be it in taste or politics. The theater's power over audiences stems from the performances that can instruct audiences. He writes:

It would then have no more immediate weight with the Publick, than our poring upon the many ancient Authors, through whose Works the same Sentiments have been, perhaps, less profitably dispers'd, tho' amongst Millions of Readers; but by bringing such Sentiments to the Theatre, and into Action, what superior Lustre did they shine with? There, Cato breath'd again, in Life; and tho' he perish'd in the Cause of Liberty, his Virtue was victorious and left the Triumph of it in the Heart of every melting Spectator. (197)

Inherent in Cibber's argument about the power of performance is a subtle dig at critics such as Dennis and Steele who—in Cibber's mind—have not addressed this problem in the right way. If they wanted to reform audience tastes, they should attempt to write instructive, moral plays that would do so, transforming the taste and morality of audiences from within. Indeed, such plays

⁵³ Brewer, as well as scholars such as J. Paul Hunter and Robert Hume, notes that literacy in the period is difficult to measure (168).

were written in the mid-century by Cibber himself, as well as George Farquhar, Richard Steele, Mary Pix, Susannah Centlivre, and John Vanbrugh.⁵⁴ Categorized by Allardyce Nicholl and others as sentimental dramas, these plays appeal to passion rather than reason and usually involve a middle-class protagonist triumphantly overcoming a moral trial (Nicholl 189). In suggesting that this genre could solve the issues of taste and morality in the theater, Cibber defends authors' and performers' experiments to reform the nation. He additionally chides critics for their inability to accept experimental new forms: "that severity with which they damn a bad play, seems to terrible a Warning to those whose untried Genius might hereafter give them a good one; Whereas it might be a temptation to a latent Author, to make the Experiment, could he be sure that, though not approved, his Muses might, at least be dismiss'd with decency..." (100). The use of the word "experiments" in this content connects to an experimental discourse prevalent at the time.

Part of Cibber's project of reform is his support of censorship of the theater and the Licensing Act of 1737, which Cibber defends in two important ways: he argues that censorship of the theater can be appropriate as the experience of watching a performance is the most impactful form of art for audiences, and he demonstrates the inefficiency of the previous system, and especially the Master of the Revels. In defending the Licensing Act, Cibber shows the misuse of power by the Master of the Revels and the need for a more efficient system of licensing plays.

The Licensing Act of 1737 modified the laws against the unpredictability of playwrights, attempted to eliminate illegitimate theatres, and prohibited insurgent works that had been finding their way into the theatres (Straughn). The law required that all licensed theaters submit the texts

⁵⁴ See especially Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* (1696) and Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1722) for examples of this genre.

of their plays to Lord Chamberlain for review and censorship prior to the performance, thus allowing him to filter out any subversive material contained in the texts and denying the performance of any play that he felt was distasteful to the public (Straughn). The Puritanical opposition to dramatic entertainments that had closed the theaters from 1642 to 1660 and had rallied to Jeremy Collier's *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) was still wide-spread in the 1730s, and the censorship of the Lord Chamberlain helped to assuage these kinds of oppositions (Liesenfeld 3). Furthermore, tradesmen and merchants tended to disapprove of playhouses, and "a significant number of London citizens felt the city would be improved by their extermination, or at least by their removal from the surrounding area" (Liesenfeld 3).

A significant amount of backlash immediately followed the passage of Licensing Act of 1737, and most notably from Phillip Dormer Stanhope, the fourth Earl of Chesterfield. He likened actors to publishers and questioned whether the Licensing Act would be followed by a significant censorship of the press (Kinservik 125). Chesterfield additionally pointed out that the prohibition of the performance of these plays in the theaters would not lead to the disappearance of scandalous literature but would instead lead to the mass printing of it in the form of manuscripts or in other genres. Legitimizing Chesterfield's concern, plays such as Henry Brooke's *The History and Life of Gustavas Vasa, or The Deliverer of his Country* (1739) were published after rejection by the Lord Chamberlain (Kinservik 129). Other writers such as Henry Fielding left the theater entirely in pursuit of other genres as a result of censorship. The Licensing Act was thought to create a very narrow vacuum of plays that would survive the censorship of the Lord Chamberlain and would subsequently cause only didactic adaptations of Renaissance plays to be performed in the new theater.

When the theaters were re-established after the Restoration, their operations were under the control of the Lord Chamberlain and his subordinate, the Master of the Revels. The Lord Chamberlain controlled the management of the theaters and the relationships with actors and actresses, and the Master of the Revels controlled content of the drama itself (Liesenfeld 9).⁵⁵ The duties of the Master of the Revels were threatened, however, by the two patentees as their positions authorized them to act as censors of plays performed by their companies (Nicholl 10). This power struggle was publically demonstrated when Lord Chamberlain Edward Montagu ordered local officials throughout the country to suppress every play performed without a license from the Master of Revels, Sir Henry Herbert.⁵⁶ Herbert subsequently entered two lawsuits against William Davenant to recover the fees he claimed were due him (Nicholl 10). Due to the close relationship between the court of Charles II and the stage, along with “the continuing role of the Killigrews,” the practice of submitting plays to the Master of the Revels for official approval seems to have dissipated, and until The Licensing Act of 1737 the Master of Revels only seems to have exercised control over plays that were voluntarily submitted to him (Nicholl 10). However, court officials attempted to revive the authority of the Master of the Revels several times during periods of political instability (Nicholl 11).

Cibber provides anecdotal evidence of the power struggle between the patentees and the Master of the Revels in his *Apology*. By narrating his own victory over the Master of the Revels, he demonstrates the need for a more defined and efficient process of approval and additionally defends his own actions as a London theater manager. Cibber details an instance of an attempt by the Lord Chamberlain and Master of the Revels to censor a play at Drury Lane. After the Collier

⁵⁵ Charles II granted patents to Thomas Killigrew and William Davenant, allowing them a monopoly in the operation of London theaters: they had the right to “mount comedies, tragedies, operas, and any other sort of show (providing they took responsibility for the scripts)” (*The London Theater World* 2).

⁵⁶ Sir Henry Herbert served as Master of the Revels 1640-1665 (Dutton).

Controversy, Cibber explains that the Master of the Revels assisted the reformation of plays “with a more zealous severity, than ever [and would] strike out whole scenes of a vicious or immoral Character, tho’ it were visibly shewn to be reform’d or punish’d” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 151-152).⁵⁷ As an example, Cibber narrates that when the Master of the Revels read Cibber’s adaptation of *Richard III*, he “expung’d the whole first Act, without sparing a line of it [because of] the Distress of King *Henry the Sixth*, who is kill’d by *Richard* in the first Act, would put weak people too much in mind of King *James*, then living in France” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 152). The Master of Revels then demanded a payment of forty shillings for the acting of the revised play. Narrating this incident as a great injustice against the power of the patentees, Cibber states:

The Patent granted by his late Majesty, King George I, to Sir Richard Steele, and his Assigns, of which I was one, made us sole Judges of what Plays might be proper for the Stage, without submitting them, to the Approbation, or License of any particular person... That his Pretensions were not back’d with any visible Instrument of Right, and his strongest Plea was Custom, we could not so far extend our Complaisance, as to continue his Fees upon so slender a Claim to them: And from that time, neither our Plays, nor his Fees, gave either them or us any farther trouble. (152-153)

In narrating a conflict between himself as a patentee and the Master of the Revels, Cibber shows that a new process for approval of plays was needed, clearly articulating the offices of the Master of the Revels, the Lord Chamberlain, and the patentees. The Licensing Act of 1737 gave full authority to the Lord Chamberlain in the licensing of plays. This example also serves Cibber as it casts him as the hero of his own story. In defending the Licensing Act, he also demonstrates his ability to take advantage of loopholes in the conflict between the Master of the Revels and the patentees.

⁵⁷ Charles Henry Lee served as Master of the Revels 1725-1744.

Cibber defends the censorship of the theater more generally, arguing that because the art of performance can strongly impact the minds of the spectators, censorship can be appropriate.

Comparing performance to reading, Cibber argues:

Reading is but Hearing at second-hand; now Hearing, at best is a more languid Conveyance, than Sight...the eye is much more affecting, and strikes deeper into the Memory, than the Ear: Besides, upon the Stage, both the Senses are in conjunction...Thus, a dramatic Abuse is riveted in the Audience; a Jest is improv'd into Argument, and Rallying grows up into Reason...To give them an unlimited Range, is in effect to make them Masters of all moral Distinctions, and to lay Honour and Religion, at their Mercy. (157)

Cibber goes on to assert that Jeremy Collier's infamous *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) was laudable because after its publication, writers were more on their guard with regard to indecency. In addition, Collier's book enabled women to "again fill the Boxes, on the first day of a new Comedy, without Fear or Censure" (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 151). Censorship in this case allowed the theater to be more inclusive of women. In discussing the Licensing Act, Cibber again asserts that the necessity of censorship stems from the influence of performance.⁵⁸ He contends:

The quiet Reader of the same ingenious Matter, can only like for himself and the Poison has a much slower Operation, upon the Body of People...But against Contempt, and Scandal heighten'd and colour'd by the Skill of an Actor, ludicrously infusing it into a Multitude, there is no immediate Defence to be made, or equal Representation to be had for it; for it would be but a poor Satisfaction, at last, after lying long patient, under the injury, that Time only is to shew (which would probably be the Case) that the Author of it was a desperate Indigent, that did it for Bread. How much less dangerous, or offensive, then is the written, than the acted Scandal? The Impression of the Comedian gives to it a kind of double Stamp upon the Poet's Paper, that raises it to ten times the Intrisick Value. (161)

Cibber defends the Licensing Act against the criticism raised by Chesterfield, arguing that the performance of scandalous material is more harmful than the reading of it in a publication. In so doing, Cibber raises the power of a viewers' response to actor's performance above that of the

⁵⁸ For a useful history of The Licensing Act of 1737 and the events leading to its passing, see Vincent J. Liesenfield, *The Licensing Act of 1737*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984. Print.

reader's response to writing, arguing that the experience of watching a performance is more impactful than reading words on a page. In defending the Licensing Act in this way, Cibber not only argues against Chesterfield but also inherently argues for the higher importance of theater performances over other genres. Cibber's project of moral reform is evident in his advocacy for writers' experimentation with reform comedies and his support of censorship; both use the power of performance for the purpose of reforming the nation. Cibber's then begins an experiment of his own, aligning himself with the middle-class readers and then providing them with explicit instructions on evaluating theatrical performances. Cibber thus empowers middle-class audiences to begin the project of moral reform and taste in the midcentury.

“We of the Vulgar”: Middle-class Ethos in Cibber's Apology

In his *Apology*, Cibber emphasizes his position as a middle-class man of no formal education in order to demonstrate the value of observation and experience in theater history, theater criticism, and histrionics. Beginning with his Dedication to “A Certain Gentleman” in his *Apology*, Cibber emphasizes his rank in comparison to his patron's, and though this is a familiar trope in Dedications, it provides a framework for Cibber's emphasis on class status throughout the *Apology*.⁵⁹ Beginning with his description of his patron, Cibber remarks: “Encomiums to Superiors, from Authors of lower Life, as they are naturally liable to Suspicion, can add very little Lustre to what before was visible to the publick Ey” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 2). Cibber immediately marks the differences between himself and his patron in terms of class. Similarly, of his friendship with his patron, he says, “When I see you lay down aside the Advantages of Superiority, and by your own Cheerfulness of Spirits, call out all that Nature has given me to meet them; then 'tis I taste you! The Life runs high!” (*An Apology for the Life of*

⁵⁹ The “certain gentleman” in the dedication is identified as Henry Pelham, the brother of Cibber's friend, the Duke of Newcastle (Fone 2).

Colley Cibber 3). Here, Cibber compliments his patron's willingness to befriend him by "casting down aside" his superior rank.

Class identification in the Dedication moves past the traditional language of patron and writer however when Cibber metaphorizes his *Apology* as his progeny. Of his work, Cibber describes, "the brat is now born, and rather, than see it starve, upon the Bare Parish Provision, I chuse thus clandestinely, to drop it at your Door, that it may exercise One of your Many Virtues, your Charity, in supporting it" (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 2). Cibber employs the ubiquitous child-as-literature metaphor but uses it to emphasize his low rank. The text thus becomes a foundling, dropped at the door of a wealthy nobleman, and Cibber becomes the poor beggar woman who hopes for the nobleman's charity.⁶⁰ However, by invoking the image of the foundling, Cibber also invites the reader to think in terms of the common good. The charter for the Foundling Hospital in London had been signed by George II in the previous year, and it promised "Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children" ("Thomas Coram and the Foundling Hospital"). The choice of the foundling as a metaphor for Cibber's text invites the reader to consider the ways they can adopt his text for the purpose of the commonwealth.

In his *Apology*, Cibber emphasizes his low birth and lack of education in order to place higher value on his observations and experiences. The bulk of the early biographical material in Cibber's *Apology* could be described as a narrative of the obstacles to Cibber's formal education.

In Chapter III, Cibber narrates that his first foray into college resulted in rejection because his

⁶⁰ This reference to Cibber's work as his illegitimate child should remind readers of instances of Elkanah Settle, John Dryden, Thomas Shadwell, and Thomas Crowne using reproductive and birthing metaphors to criticize hack writing and criticism of hack writing. As a named descendent of *The Dunciad*, Cibber's use of the metaphor here, I argue, consciously harkens back to *The Dunciad*, and his identified lineage, in his noted, self-deprecating way. For larger discussion of male writers using birthing metaphors across genres of literature in the Restoration and Eighteenth Century, see Raymond Stephanson's "The Symbolic Structure of Eighteenth-Century Male creativity: Pregnant Men, Brain-Wombs, and Female Muses." *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*. 27 (1998): 103-130. Print.

father, a man of low birth and no education, did not understand that the educational system was based on class. Cibber describes: “my father...sent me simply down thither without the least favourable Recommendation or Interest, but that of my naked Merit, and a pompous Pedigree in my Pocket. Had he tack’d a Direction to my Back and sent me by carrier to Parliament there, I might have had as much chance to have succeeded” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 36). Due to the Cibber family’s low birthright, Winchester College rejected him from higher education; however, as the narrative progresses, Cibber rejects higher education as well.

Though Cibber’s father is reportedly disappointed at his rejection from Winchester, Cibber is not the least disappointed, and exclaims in that moment, “I blest myself to think what a happy reprieve I had got, from the confin’d Life of a School-boy!” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 36). Cibber’s blessing is reaffirmed when he compares his life to that of his brother’s. Lewis Cibber was able to receive a formal education as Colley’s experience at Winchester College “taught [my father], some years after to take a more judicious care of my younger brother” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 36). His father’s care came in the form of bribery: “with the Present of a Statute of the Founder, of his own making, he was [Lewis Cibber] recommended to the same College. This statue stands over the school door...it was no sooner set up, than the Door of Preferment was open to him” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 36). Though his brother was successful in earning an education, Cibber is quick to divulge that though he was less educated than his brother, he was able to provide for his brother financially: “it is a melancholy Reflexion to observe, how unequally his Profession and mine were provided for; when I, who had been the Outcast of Fortune, could find means, from my income in the Theatre, before I was my own Master there, to supply, in his highest Preferment, his common necessities” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 37). Cibber ends the comparison between

himself and his brother by mourning Lewis Cibber's early death and contemplating the value of education even more broadly. Though his brother was a successful scholar – “a Fellow of New College in Oxford...ordain'd by Dr. Compton,” Lewis Cibber died “from too great a Disregard to his health” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 37). Where Colley Cibber was uneducated, he flourished in health and prosperity while his brother met his family's expectations by obtaining a formal education and died young. Cibber's experiences then become more valuable than his brother's education.

In the year after his rejection from Winchester, Cibber's father made a plan to get him into Cambridge, but during his journey to Cambridge, the revolution began, and Cibber fought in his father's stead. Cibber is again grateful for a reprieve from a formal education and remarks, “thus in One day, all my Thoughts of University were smothered in ambition!” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 38). In remembering these missed opportunities, Cibber reflects on the ways an education may have changed the course of his life. He remarks:

Had my father's business permitted him to have carried me, one Month sooner (as he intended) to the University, who knows but, by this time, that purer Fountain might have wash'd my Imperfections into a Capacity for writing (instead of plays and Annual Odes) Sermons, and Pastoral letters. But whatever care of the Church might so, have fallen to my share, as I dare say it may be now, in better Hands, I ought not repine at my being otherwise dispos'd of. (39)

The use of the phrase “purer fountain” might allude to the metaphor of Christ as a fountain that could have washed away his impurities—both as a man and as a writer.⁶¹ If Cibber had attended Cambridge, his life and his writings would have been devoted to the church; he would not have written *lower* genres such as plays and annual odes; however, just as in his earlier reflections of

⁶¹ For an example of a verse that reference the fountain as a metaphor for how God washes away impurities, see Zechariah 13:1: In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.” For uses of the metaphor of Christ as a fountain, see, for instance, Psalms 39:6: “For with thee is the fountain of life...” and Jeremiah 2:13 “For my people have...forsaken me, the fountain of living waters...”

missed opportunities, Cibber does not mourn his lack of education. Pastoral letters and sermons are in better hands, and in his hands are plays, annual odes, and now, the history of the theater.

The phrase “purer fountain” also alludes to the writings of Francis Bacon, illuminating Cibber’s reliance on experimental science. First citing the fountain-as-Christ-metaphor as a rationale for how philosophy and religion can work together, Bacon uses this metaphor more than 30 times in his *Philosophical Works*.⁶² Bacon repurposes the Christ-as-fountain metaphor in his writings to a knowledge-as-fountain metaphor, which associates the attainment of knowledge at the fountain with the attainment of Christ. For instance, of new knowledge and discoveries, Bacon uses the metaphor, “The next Fountain of hope for the Improvement of knowledge is the prospect men have for future Discoveries” (Bacon 576). In using this well-known Baconian metaphor, Cibber reminds readers of Bacon’s theory of induction, which was widely read in the eighteenth century.⁶³ Like Bacon, Cibber uses induction to observe, record, connect, and distinguish for the purpose of concluding something new and innovative. Where Bacon wanted his readers to reconsider the value and methods of attaining knowledge of nature and the place of science with regard to religion, Cibber wants his audience to reconsider the ways in which people place value on acting and the theater. This choice of metaphor allows Cibber to align himself with modern innovators such as Bacon who were fighting against the old traditions and also provides a segue

⁶² Though Cibber was admittedly uneducated, “Baconian doctrine and Baconian principles had become ideological catchwords in revolutionary England, coinciding with the publication of some of Bacon’s unknown works” (Perez-Ramos 12). A cursory search on Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) reveals roughly 30 publications of Bacon’s works between 1700-1740, including his *Philosophical Works*, which were published in three volumes in 1737.

⁶³ For a detailed history of evolution of Baconianism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Antonio Perez-Ramos. *Francis Bacon’s Idea of Science and the Maker’s Knowledge Tradition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988. For useful explication of turning experience into evidence, see Peter Dear. *Discipline and Experience: The Mathematical Way in the Scientific Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995 and Lorraine Daston. “Marvelous Facts and Marvelous Evidence in Early Modern Europe.” *Critical Inquiry*. 18.1 (1991): 93-124. Print.

for readers to begin placing value on observation and experience, which Cibber will draw on throughout the text.

Cibber uses his experiences as a soldier in the Glorious Revolution to continue to establish his ethos as a member of the middle class, but he also uses it to begin to establish himself as a credible observer and man of experience. He narrates his feelings about the Glorious Revolution by punctuating them with remarks on his class. He remembers how “the common People, in the open streets,” would talk about the King’s “wild measures to make a whole Nation Protestant Nation Papists” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 40). Furthermore, the King “would never be able to get the better of... we of the vulgar...” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 40). Indeed, trying to convert the members of the middle classes, the King would learn, would be like “teaching an old Lion to dance” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 40). In this section Cibber also begins to use observational language to establish his credibility as an observer of important events. In these moments, he again punctuates the narrative with remarks of class, reminding his audience that to be a credited observer is not predicated upon one’s high education or class. Before detailing his first-hand observations of the final moments of the Glorious Revolution, Cibber remarks, “I will not pretend to give you any farther Account that what my simple Eyes saw of it” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 42). The use of the word “simple” here hearkens back to Cibber’s middle-class status and also establishes his ethos as an observer by promising the reader not to embellish any details of the incident. He will only narrate what he saw. Similarly, when describing a dinner among Princess Mary and the noblemen of arms where Cibber worked as a server, he reminds his audience of his station – a server to royalty and noblemen – while also demonstrating his observational limits, resulting in additional trust between him and the reader: “Being so near the table, you may naturally ask me,

what I might have heard to have pass'd in Conversation at it? Which I should certainly tell you, had I attended to above two Words that were utter'd there, and those were, *Some Wine and Water*" (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 43). Cibber's narration of his experiences during the Glorious Revolution reaffirm his status and establish him as a credible observer, preparing his readers for the remainder of the autobiography where he will use this observational ethos to provide a basis for a history and critique of the mid-century theater.⁶⁴

"Shew what Talents are requisite to make Actors valuable...to assist the Judgment of future Spectators": A Manual for Critiquing Acting

Providing a kind of manual wherein a middle-class, uneducated man of experience can become a theatrical and histrionic critic, Cibber models histrionic and theatrical criticism by articulating the most important elements and providing in-depth studies of actors he personally observed in his time in the theater.⁶⁵ In the lengthy study he provides of the career of Thomas Betterton, as well as smaller studies of the careers of Edward Kynaston, Samuel Sandford, himself, and actresses such as Elizabeth Barry, Mary Betterton, Charlotte Butler, Susanna Mountfort, and Anne Bracegirdle, he delineates a new criticism of the theater for the middle-

⁶⁴ Similarly, Cibber discusses his marriage to Katherine Shore in terms of how little money he had to help establish his dedication to acting: "But to think you, Sir, of --- Matrimony? Which, before I was two-and-Twenty, I actually committed, when I had but Twenty pounds a year, which my Father had assur'd to me and Twenty shillings a Week from my Theatrical Labours, to maintain, as then I Thought, the happiest Couple, that ever took a Leap in the Dark!" (103-104). Cibber never mentions his wife or his married life again. The emphasis on the Cibbers' small income reinforces his middle class, as well as my argument that Cibber's text is not meant to be read as an autobiography but as an extended argument and call to action for the theater.

⁶⁵ Much has been written about the class and literacy in the eighteenth century, producing diverging accounts of the number, class, and gender of literate people at the time. That Cibber did have a wide audience for this work, however, is clear from the sheer number of editions between 1740 and 1756. Additionally, the emerging middle class relied on their ability to discuss literature and literary culture as a sign of status (Marsden 3). These middle-class discussions of literature were seen in the coffeehouses and periodical publications from the beginning of the century, and this same middle-class audience is the target of Cibber's work.

class audience, demonstrating what aspects of actors should be valued.⁶⁶ These models of criticism allow middle-class audiences to use scientific method to evaluate performances, which they can employ to reform the theater.

Introducing him with the analogy, “Betterton was an actor as Shakespeare was an author,” Cibber’s description of the career of Thomas Betterton emphasizes the excellence of Betterton’s role versatility, his vocal elocution, and his ability to analyze and interpret his roles (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 59).⁶⁷ Of his role versatility, Cibber describes that Betterton “could vary his Spirit to the different characters he acted”; specifically, the audience would not see “those wild, impatient starts, that fierce, flashing fire” that viewers remember vividly from his portrayal of Hotspur in *Henry IV Part One* and in his portrayal of “unruffled Brutus” in *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 62, 65). In his descriptions of Betterton’s vocal eloquence and analytical abilities, however, Cibber raises

⁶⁶ For more information about eighteenth-century performers, see their biographies in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. For information on Edward Kynaston, see Milling, J. “Kynaston, Edward (*bap.* 1643, *d.* 1712?).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: OUP, 2004. Online edition. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Sept. 2013. Web. 29 June 2015. For information on Samuel Sandford, see Milhous, Judith. “Sandford, Samuel (*fl.* 1661–1698).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: OUP, 2004. Online edition. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Jan. 2008. Web. 29 June 2015. For information on Elizabeth Barry, see Backscheider, Paula R. “Barry, Elizabeth (1656x8–1713).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: OUP, 2004. Online edition. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Sept. 2014. Web. 29 June 2015. For information about Mary Betterton, see Milhous, Judith. “Betterton [Saunderson], Mary (*c.* 1637–1712).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online edition. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: OUP, 2004. Web. 29 June 2015. For information about Charlotte Butler, see Baldwin, Olive and Thelma Wilson. “Butler, Charlotte (*fl.* 1674–1693).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online edition. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: OUP, 2004. Web. 29 June 2015. For information about Susanna Mountfort, see Heddon, Deirdre E. “Verbruggen, Susanna (*bap.* 1666, *d.* 1703).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online edition. Ed. Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: OUP, 2004. Web. 29 June 2015.

⁶⁷ Jean Marsden has noted that the period of 1700-1750 was one of radical change with regard to how scholars and critics viewed Shakespeare. In the period right after the Restoration, playwrights published multiple adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays (Marsden 15). Though Shakespeare was revered as poet, his language was not revered *per se* (2). Playwrights—including Cibber, who famously adapted *Richard III* (1700)—changed the texts of Shakespeare’s plays for a myriad of reasons, but the most popular was to align his endings with poetic justice (65). Beginning with the publication of Lewis Theobald’s *Shakespeare Restored* (1726), which sought to “correct the ‘mangled condition’ of Shakespeare’s text [and create] the genuine text,” attitudes about authorship and copyright began to evolve toward those of the Romantic period (70). Cibber’s analogy between Shakespeare and Betterton in this moment bolsters Marsden’s notion that the canonization of Shakespeare was beginning to happen much earlier than with David Garrick in the 1750s (Marsden 3).

Betterton to the status of an artist and acting to an art form—even above that of writing and poetry. Further, the artistry of acting is appreciated wholly by the audience members’ experience in observing it.⁶⁸ Of “harmonious elocution,” Cibber describes that actors like Betterton can transform mediocre plays into sold-out hits (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 60). For instance, Cibber describes Betterton in the “toilsome part of Alexander” in the play *The Rival Queens, or the Death of Alexander the Great* by Nathaniel Lee (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 66). Providing the lines from a sub-par speech in the play, Cibber describes how from Betterton’s superior elocution of the speeches, he took a play “too frequently acted” and “worn out [...and...] immediately revived it so new a lustre that for three days together it filled the house” (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 60). He goes on to describe the ways in which experiencing Betterton’s speech goes beyond the artistry of visual or written art:

The most that a *Vandyke* can arrive at, is to make his Portraits of great Persons seem to think; a *Shakespeare* goes farther yet, and tells you what his Pictures thought; a *Betterton* steps beyond them both and calls them from the Grave, to breathe, and be themselves again, in Feature, Speech, and Motion. When the skillful Actor shews you all these Powers united, and gratifies at once your Eye, your Ear, your Understanding. To conceive the Pleasure rising from such Harmony, you must have been present at it! Tis’ not to be told you! (66)

The eloquence of an actor then has the power to take the words of poetry—good or bad—and to transfix the audience with his or her performance. Correspondingly, it is the actor who should receive the credit by the audience for the performance more than the writer for the words because it is the actor who is able to create the experience that the audience can observe.

The largest part of the Betterton study in the *Apology* is an examination of Betterton’s excellent interpretations of the roles he performs, and, once again, Betterton’s ability to analyze

⁶⁸ More than forty-six years later, acting would become a recognized art form when Joshua Reynolds included it in his *Thirteenth Discourse*, which was delivered to the students of the Royal Academy, on the Distribution of the Prises, December 2, 1786. See Joshua Reynolds. *Discourses*. Ed. Edward Gilpin Johnson. Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co, 1891. Web.

and interpret the writer's words is elevated to an art form that can be experienced by any audience member. Cibber narrates his own experience as an audience member watching Betterton's performance of Hamlet, contrasting the performance with those of other actors. Specifically, Cibber focuses on Betterton's interpretation of Hamlet's interaction with the ghost. Cibber focuses on Betterton's interpretation of the scene and the state of mind of Hamlet, then describes how Betterton achieves his interpretation through his performance, and finally describes the impact that it has for the audience:

...because the late Mr. Addison, while I sat by him, to see this Scene acted, made the same Observation, asking me with some Surprise, if I thought Hamlet should be in so violent a Passion with the Ghost, which tho' it might have astonish'd, it had not provok'd him? For you may observe that in this beautiful Speech, the Passion never rises beyond an almost breathless Astonishment, or an Impatience, limited by filial Reverence, to enquire into the suspected Wrongs that may have rais'd him from his peaceful Tomb! And a desire to know what a Spirit so seemingly distress'd, might wish to enjoin a sorrowful Son to execute towards his future Quiet in the Grave? This was the light into which Betterton threw this Scene; which he open'd with a Pause of mute Amazement! Then rising slowly, to a solemn trembling Voice, he made the Ghost equally terrible to the Spectator, as to himself! And in the descriptive Part of the natural Emotions which the ghastly Vision gave him, the boldness of his Expostulation was still govern'd by the Decency, manly, but not braving; his Voice never rising into that seeming Outrage, or wild Defiance of what he naturally rever'd. But alas! To preserve this Medium, between mouthing and meaning too little, to keep his Attention more pleasingly Awake by a temper'd spirit, than by Vehemence of Voice, is of all the Master-strokes of an Actor the most difficult to reach. In this none yet have equall'd Betterton. (60-61)

Sitting in the audience, Addison and Cibber discuss their interpretation of the scene—that Hamlet seeing his father's ghost would not necessarily incite violent rage, but more likely astonishment and wonder. Betterton is able to achieve these sentiments with subtlety in his voice and emotions, and the effect for the two viewers is the same astonishment and wonder for Betterton as Hamlet has for seeing the ghost. Addison and Cibber thus model for the readers of the *Apology* the way that middle-class theatergoers can engage with a play, become transfixed by performance, and evaluate the acting accordingly.

The studies on other actors in Cibber's *Apology* reaffirm the three facets of acting delineated in the study of Betterton: excellence in interpretation and analysis of scene and character, role versatility, and vocal elocution. Cibber's repetition of these three, easy-to-understand facets of acting in the studies of the actors and actresses throughout his *Apology* creates a never-before-seen instructional manual that middle-class theater audiences can imitate. In chapters labeled descriptively by periods and years, Cibber moves through the seventeenth and eighteenth century, using these terms to praise actors and actresses, based on his observation of their performances and the impact that he felt as an audience member. In this way, Cibber continues to use the observation-based approach of experimental philosophy to ensure the verifiability of the results thus turning his experiences into evidence.⁶⁹

Reaffirming the importance of role versatility for the valuation of acting, Cibber applauds Edward Kynaston stating, "he could entirely change himself; could at once throw off the Man of Sense, for the brisk, vain, rude, and lively Coxcomb, the false, flashy Pretender to Wit, and the Dupe of his own Sufficiency" (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 76). Just as in his Betterton example, Cibber delineates that good actors should be versatile, and this can be demonstrated by effortlessly showing effectiveness in different character types. Similarly, reiterating the necessity of actors' abilities to interpret and analyze a scene, Cibber discusses, among others, the versatility of Susannah Mountfort, whom he described as having "an ability to transform into vastly different roles," by transforming her entire being—body, language, and look—to accommodate diverse roles, including male roles (*An Apology for the Life of Colley*

⁶⁹ Larry Stewart's important essay considers the ways in which public demonstrations of science in the eighteenth century emphasized method, and specifically, the link between public demonstration and the importance of public replication. Cibber replicates his observations on Betterton and his conclusions about superior acting as a way of demonstrating the replicability of his experiences—or experiments. The chapter titles affirm this as they provide descriptive information about the period Cibber is describing as well as specific years. For example, Chapter IV is titled, "A Short View of the Stage, from the Year 1660 to the Revolution. The King's and Duke's Company united, composed of the best of English actors yet known. The several theatrical characters" and Chapter V is titled, "The Theatrical Characters of the Principal Actors in the year 1690, Continu'd. A Few Words to Critical Authors."

Cibber 95). Cibber goes on to describe Mountfort's unusual ability to perform male roles: "Nor was her humour limited to her sex; for while her shape permitted, she was a more adroit pretty fellow than is usually seen upon the stage" and she was successful by the transformation of "her easy air, action, mien, and gesture" (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 97). The use of this consciously controversial example of an actress playing a man is punctuated by Cibber's emphasis on the audience's positive reaction to Mountfort's performances, reaffirming that the audience's evaluation of the performance is more important than the social taboo of her ability to perform the male gender. Cibber recalls that the audience asked for her to revive the role of Bays in *The Rehearsal* because "they were so fond of seeing her as a man" (96), and he adds that his description of her versatility commemorates "the delight which the public receiv'd from her Appearance while she was an Ornament to the Theatre" (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 97).

Moving a step forward in later chapters, Cibber discusses the career of Samuel Sandford to demonstrate how an audience member might interpret a character while also hypothetically casting an actor based on that interpretation. Known for playing villainous roles, Cibber describes that had Sandford lived in Shakespeare's time, he would have been Shakespeare's choice to play Richard III:

...he had sometimes an Uncouth Statliness in his Motion, a harsh and sullen pride of Speech, a mediating Brow, a stern Aspect, occasionally changing into an almost ludicrous Triumph over all Goodness and Virtue: From thence falling into the most asswasive [sic.] Gentleness, and soothing Candor of a designing Heart...Sandford must have shown as many masterly Strokes in it (had he ever acted it) as are visible in the Writing it. (81)⁷⁰

⁷⁰ The implication in this section of Cibber's *Apology* is that Sandford was known for playing villainous characters because of his unattractiveness. However, Cibber is quick to note of his hypothetical casting of Richard III that "tho' naturally made for it, yet that would have been the least of his recommendation" (81).

In providing the hypothetical casting of Sandford in *Richard III*, Cibber models how an audience member can use her knowledge of vocal elocution, role versatility, and character and scene interpretation to metaphorically engage in the theater behind-the-scenes, casting an actor into an appropriate role and thus demonstrating the experimental process of how observations can be transferred to knowledge.

While applauding the vocal style of multiple actors (including himself), Cibber praises the vocal elocution of several actresses. Cibber states that Elizabeth Barry's voice "was full" and perfected "the art of exciting pity" (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 92). Similarly, Charlotte Butler possessed a "sweet-ton'd voice...genteel air [and] sensible pronunciation" (*An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* 93). Praising actresses was certainly unusual; Felicity Nussbaum has demonstrated that actresses were often associated with sex workers, because an actress had to negotiate between the identity of worker, working for an income and the identity of a performer, responding to the changing definitions of femininity and performance (Nussbaum 26). By including actresses in his depictions of descriptions of good performances in the period, Cibber is not only helping to legitimize the still emerging identity of actresses as performers, but also attempting to define acting as a legitimate profession for women.⁷¹

Using observation as experience and replication, Cibber establishes the tenets of theater criticism that can be adopted by the middle class and constructs himself as an authority on and critic of the theater.

⁷¹ As Cibber was married to actress, Katherine Shore, and also helped establish the career of his daughter-in-law Susannah Cibber, he had a vested interest in establishing the credibility of actresses; however, his contributions to the legitimization of actresses in the period should not be ignored.

The Theater Laureate's Legacy

Scholars have been critical of Cibber's text particularly with regard to genre and style, and this criticism has stopped previous scholars from appreciating Cibber's influence on the most anthologized acting treatises of the period, including David Garrick's *An Essay on Acting* (1744), Aaron Hills's *The Art of Acting* (1746), James Eyre Weeks's *A Rhapsody on the Stage; or the art of playing in imitation of Horace's Art of Poetry* (1746), Haywood's *A Companion to the Theater* (1747), and thus recognizing Cibber's legacy as the Theater Laureate. Scholars have examined Cibber's writing style in light of Pope's and others' satires of it, echoing the eighteenth-century ideology of him.⁷² For instance, in his Introduction to Cibber's *Apology*, Fone says of the structure of the narrative: "I am sure he digressed because his mind was not one which processed logically from event to event" (Fone xxii). Of Cibber's overall style, he says, "Cibber is readable, though, not because he writes well, but because he writes with character. One cannot speak of Cibber's style, for if he has one, it is badly faulted. He is discursive, ungrammatical. Metaphors take wing and fall in confusion" (Fone xxiii). I contend that Cibber's style is attuned to his audience and in alignment with his purpose. Cibber uses carefully constructed autobiographical details and conversational style to construct a middle-class ethos in the first three chapters of *An Apology*. These choices allow him to emphasize his experiences and observations when he moves into theater and histrionic criticism in the rest of the narrative. Because his purpose was to educate the middle class audiences about theater criticism and histrionics and thereby to reform the theater, the style of his narrative appears different from the texts that came after him, whose styles read more like textbooks; however, looking past Cibber's

⁷²An exception to this rule is Julia Fawcett's recent article in which she credits Cibber with influencing the digressive style of *Tristram Shandy*. Though Sterne scholars have long been aware of Sterne's appreciation of Cibber, critics have previously compared the two only in terms of their shared "excessive self-description" (Fawcett 145).

rhetorical moves in style and genre allow us to see the influence of Cibber's text on major acting treatises of the eighteenth century and reevaluate his contributions as Theater Laureate.

David Garrick's *An Essay on Acting* was published four years after Cibber's narrative in 1744 and contains echoes of Cibber's *Apology* in its denouncement of current theater criticism and in the importance of an actor's ability to analyze and interpret scenes and characters. Garrick published his work anonymously upon his revival of *Macbeth* and wrote a satirical critique of himself before other critics could lambaste his performance in an appendix to *An Essay on Acting. Some Critical Observations upon the Character of Macbeth, as it is at present Attempted at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane*. Like Cibber, Garrick chose a nonfiction genre and unique style to instruct theatergoers about acting; however, Garrick's essay also emphasizes the importance of actors' interpretation in histrionics. In *Some Critical Observations*, Garrick adopts the tone and manner of a theater critic at the same while offering ironic commentary on Macbeth's physique and costume. Yet, he also provides an interpretation of Macbeth's character that he will emphasize in performance—that of horror and internal conflict (Donahue 236).⁷³ Just as Cibber had done four years earlier, Garrick's essay uses mixed genres to emphasize the importance of an actor's interpretation of character and change the course of criticism of the theater.

James Eyre Weeks, in his *A Rhapsody on the Stage, or The Art of Playing* (1746) experiments with generic forms as Cibber did with life writing and delivers his theory of acting in an imitation of Horace's "Art of Poetry." This important generic distinction echoes Cibber's claims in his *Apology* that acting should be elevated to an art form, equal to or even above that of poetry. Weeks begins his imitation by establishing his credibility. In "To the Players," he begins

⁷³ For a concise discussion of the ways Garrick's Essay introduces his characterization of Macbeth and its influence on the audience, see Joseph A. Donahue. *Dramatic Character in the English Romantic Stage*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970. Print.

by stating that “Horace, who took upon him to Dictate to the Poets, by laying down Precepts to regulate their Taste and correct their Depravity, is justified, by his Excellence in the Science he professed” (Weeks 165). He rhetorically diverges from Horace in this moment, and asks “But how is the Writer of the following indigested Piece to be excused, who never professed the Science he pretends to improve?” (Weeks 165). He answers this conundrum by demonstrating that his credibility is not based on his personal expertise of acting; it is instead based on his “experience and observation...the two great inlets of human Knowledge” (Weeks 166). As an author and “constant observer to the stage” for four years, Weeks insists that his observations can be replicated by anyone who has had similar experiences to his (166). After all of his scientific writing and terminology in the Preface, which is certainly similar to Cibber’s emphasis on observation and experience, Weeks proceeds with his acting theory in an imitation of Horace—that is, in a poem. In addition, Weeks’s poem includes small studies of actors from the Renaissance (Shakespeare notably) through to his time. Echoing Cibber, Weeks includes Booth, Wilks, and Betterton and goes on to add Garrick and Milward.⁷⁴ He also emphasizes the importance of an actor’s elocution and ability to interpret and analyze a scene and character; however, Weeks elevates the author to the same level as the actor. Weeks writes: “Study your Author’s language ev’ry line,/ And thus the Critic to the Actor join,/ Mark as he Marks, the Meaning words attend,/ Soar as he soars, and as he falls descend,/ Trace his design, and fathom his intent,/ Nor mind what’s said, so much as what is meant” (Weeks 216-221).

Cibber’s influence on John Hill’s *The Actor: A Treatise on the Art of Playing* (1750) and Aaron Hill’s *An Essay on the Art of Acting* (1753) can be seen not only in the overarching dual purposes of raising acting to an art form but also in providing a new framework for histrionic criticism. As Cibber’s was, both of these theater texts are instructional in nature for the purpose

⁷⁴ See especially lines 159-179.

of revolutionizing criticism; however, the audience and purpose of the texts differ from Cibber's as these are meant to instruct the theater managers, theater critics, and theater actors of the day. Like Cibber's advice to critics, the scope of these two projects then is to reform the theater from within.

In discussing the artistry of acting, John Hill's text hearkens readers back to the words Cibber used to describe the power of an actor over a play. Hill's text reads, "How truly pitiable is the condition of that author, who is under a necessity of entrusting his success, his reputation, in a new piece, to these miserable automatons: And on the other side, how happy is the fortune of that writer, who sees his play fall into such hands... who will not only be capable of preserving all the spirit...but of adding graces to those which are less eminent or striking" (Hill 11). In this instance, Hill takes Cibber's earlier discussion of artistry and uses the power of the actor's artistry to indirectly pose a threat: actors have the power to add graces and uplift characters as well as the power to ruin an author's or theater manager's success and reputation.

Although Aaron Hill's *An Essay on the Art of Acting* is seemingly addressed to actors, instructing them on how precisely to achieve acting the "ten dramatic passions," and to theater critics, instructing them on how to properly criticize actors, Hill's essay is—like in Cibber's *Apology*—an instructive guide for the audience (Hill 357). Hill provides specific information on how actors should properly and scientifically portray the emotions of joy, grief, fear, anger, pity, scorn, hatred, jealousy, wonder, and love. For instance, to properly display the passion of grief, "His muscles must fall loose and be unbrac'd into the habit of languor...His voice must also associate its sound to the plaintive resignation of his gesture, and the result both of air and of accent will be the most moving resemblance of a heart-felt and a passionate sorrow" (Hill 364). Though these instructions are seemingly written for an actor or critic, they also give the audience

a framework and a vocabulary for criticism. A middle-class audience member, after reading this text, could watch for a successful performance of grief in the form of relaxed muscles and resigned vocals. Like Cibber's *Apology*, Hill's text empowers the middle-class to evaluate the theater by providing a clear, evaluative method.

Cibber's legacy has been bound up in his position as the poet laureate, a position that was lambasted from before the time he took office until the mid-nineteenth century, and Cibber's legacy in literary history has, until recently, echoed the satires, pamphlets, and parodic odes written about him. His literary reputation has been one-sided and has not taken into account his efforts as the Theater Laureate to improve the state of the theater by way of educating the middle-class audience about history, criticism, and histrionics. Though Cibber rhetorically distanced himself from the laureateship in his *Apology*, an examination of it in light of Cibber's other writings about laureate poetry reveal that Cibber's notion of his laureateship lies in his beliefs about performance. Believing that the bi-annual odes were not poetry but poetic performances—poems that could not be extricated from their musical accompaniment and court performances—Cibber understood his role as laureate to be that of a performer. In his *Apology*, Cibber parlays this idea of the laureateship into an argument about how performance can result in moral reform and the reversal of devolving literary tastes. Cibber then self-identifies as a member of his middle-class readership and creates an ethos in which he can provide them with explicit instructions on evaluating theatrical performances in order to for them begin the project of moral reform and taste in the midcentury. Though Cibber's legacy as a Theater Laureate has not been recognized by modern critics, his influence was felt by writers such as Garrick, Weeks, and Hill, who emulated facets of Cibber's narrative for the purpose of reforming the theater.

Cibber’s legacy as the Theater Laureate demonstrates the need for the poet laureateship to be reconsidered outside the ideology of satires of the period, as well as the need for our understanding of the eighteenth-century laureateship to move outside the purview of laureate poetry and to consider the ways “laureate dunces” re-conceptualized the office in the wake of *The Dunciad*.

CHAPTER 3 LAUREATE REJECTERS: THE CONSTRUCTION OF ANTI-LAUREATE LEGACIES IN WILLIAM MASON'S BIOGRAPHIES

After the death of Cibber in December, 1757, writers and government officials alike began to reconsider what they wanted for the laureateship. As Chapter 2 argues, Cibber specifically sought a legacy for his laureateship outside of laureate poetry; as a result, his tenure did not help the office to regain credibility with regard to poetry. The new Lord Chamberlain, William Cavendish, who had been appointed the previous May, attempted to realign the office with poetry by offering the laureateship to Thomas Gray.⁷⁵ Gray's popularity was at a high as a result of his wildly successful *An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751), which had gone through five editions in the year of its publication. Additionally, *Designs by Mr. R. Bentley, for Six Poems by Mr. T. Gray* (1753), a collection of six of Gray's poems, which included illustrations by Richard Bentley, was printed twice in the year of its publication.

William Mason, who was a lifelong friend and eventual biographer to Gray, served as a tutor to Cavendish's younger brother, Lord John Cavendish, and it is likely that this connection brought Gray to the forefront of the laureate contenders.⁷⁶ Indeed, according to the letters between Gray and Mason, Cavendish actually made the offer of the laureateship with Mason serving as an intermediary (*Poems of Mr. Gray* 258n). Mason offered the laureateship to Gray on December 13, 1757, and, in order to entice Gray to accept it, the Lord Chamberlain proposed that

⁷⁵ William Cavendish, the fourth Duke of Devonshire, was appointed Lord Chamberlain in May 1757.

⁷⁶ Edmund Kemper Broadus notes the connection between Gray, Mason, and the Cavendish family; however, some of the dates in his work are incorrect. Broadus states that "Two years before Cibber's death, Lord John's elder brother, who was also a lover of learning, had inherited his father's title as Duke of Devonshire, and had been made Lord Chamberlain" (135). However, though Cavendish did inherit his father's title in 1755, he did not become Lord Chamberlain until May 1757 (Farrell).

the annual New Year and Birthday Odes be abolished (*Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Whitehead* 88).⁷⁷

Surprisingly, Gray not only rejected the office, but his letter of rejection revealed a complete disdain for it—with or without the odes. Gray wrote:

Tho' I very well know the bland emollient saponaceous qualities both of Sack and Silver, yet if any great Man say to me, 'I make you Rat-Catcher to his Majesty with a salary of 300L a-year & two Buts of the best Malaga; and tho' it has been usual to catch a mouse or two (for form's sake) in publick once a year, yet to You Sr, we shall not stand upon these things'. I can not say, I should jump at it. Nay, if they would drop the very name of the Office, & call me Sinecure to the King's Majesty I should still feel a little awkward, & think every body, I saw, smelt a Rat about me: but I do not pretend to blame any one else, that has not the same sensations. For my part I would rather be Serjeant-Trumpeter or Pin-Maker to the Palace. (Gray to Mason *The Correspondence of Thomas Gray* III 544-545)

Gray's amusing comparison of the laureateship to a palace rat catcher has been used by laureate scholars to consider the political implications of Gray's rejection and to illustrate the dichotomy between unworthiness of the office and Gray's position among the literary elite. Ellison argues that Gray's rejection initially indicates a resistance to the office as an institution of the monarchy. As the Hanoverian monarchies were difficult (at best) to defend, she argues that the "fortunes of the office were tied to the stature of the monarchy" (65).⁷⁸ Ellison notes that the rejection additionally signals "the extent to which the office was perceived, at least in some circles, as being unimportant" (65). Similarly, Broadus argues that the office was in crisis at this time, and Gray "characterized the office in terms which show that not even the influence of Lord John and the duke induced him to give it consideration" (135). Gray's rejection of the laureateship without

⁷⁷ I will be shortening the in-text references to *Poems by William Whitehead, esq. Late Poet Laureate, and Register Secretary to the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Vol. III. To Which Are Prefixed, Memoirs of his Life and Writings to Memoirs of the Life* to the following *Memoirs to the Life and Writings of William Whitehead* to avoid confusion when discussing his poetical works.

⁷⁸ Like his father, George II was born outside of Great Britain in northern Germany. Though he was not as unpopular as his father, who lived almost exclusively in Hanover, George II's reign was plagued with the Jacobite Rebellions (1688-1746), a difficult relationship with his son and heir apparent Frederick, Prince of Wales, and the Seven Years' War (1754-1759).

the bi-annual task writing confirms that his rejection was more complicated than the task writing obligations of the office. Gray produced task writing later in his life including “Ode for Music” (1769), which he wrote as a favor to the Duke of Grafton for his assistance in Gray’s Cambridge professorship (Levine 239). The ode was performed at a commencement ceremony for Grafton’s installation as Chancellor at Cambridge (235). Additionally, Gray published odes throughout his poetic career including “Distant Prospect of Eton College” (1747), “Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat” (1748), “Ode on the Spring” (1748), “Ode on Adversity” (1753), and “Odes by Mr. Gray” (1757).⁷⁹

By examining Gray’s Pindaric odes, which were published the same year as his rejection of the laureateship, and his later annotations of these odes, I argue that Gray employs the ode—a known laureate form—to reject the British monarchy and the possibility of court writing. Further, I contend that in *The Life of Gray* (1775), Mason expanded upon Gray’s representation of himself as a rejecter of the monarchy by revealing Gray’s rejection of the laureateship and fashioning Gray as a timeless and unique poetic voice. Mason’s project of constructing Gray’s legacy was complicated, however, when Samuel Johnson’s *Lives of the Poets* (1781) criticized Gray as an obscure poet but praised him for being a laureate rejecter. Ultimately understanding the value of Gray’s identity as a laureate rejecter, I argue that Mason reconstructs Gray’s—as well as his own—literary legacy in opposition to poet laureate William Whitehead’s in the *Memoirs of William Whitehead*, where Mason reveals that he was also a laureate contender. After Gray’s rejection of the office, the Lord Chamberlain wrote to Mason, explaining why the office would not be formally extended to Mason, who was also a well-known poet: “being in

⁷⁹ “Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College” was printed anonymously by Dodsley in 1747. “Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes”, and “Ode on the Spring” were published anonymously in *Collection of Poems* in 1748, and “Ode on Adversity was printed in *Designs by Mr. R. Bentley, for six poems by Mr. T. Gray* in 1753.

orders, I was thought, ‘merely on that account less eligible for the office than a layman’” (*Memoirs of William Whitehead* 88).⁸⁰ Though the Lord Chamberlain never actually made an offer to Mason, Johnson’s *Lives* enabled Mason to realize the value of the rejection of the laureateship both for himself and for Gray, and he subsequently utilized his *Memoir of William Whitehead* (1788) to fashion himself and Gray as antitheses of laureates.

Gray’s Rejection of the British Monarchy: *Odes by Mr. Gray* (1757)

Examining the publication and reception history of Gray’s Pindaric odes reveals that Gray used odes—a laureate form—to interrogate the relationship between poets and Kings. Although *Odes by Mr. Gray* (1757) was published the same year that Gray rejected the laureateship, the relationship between these odes and Gray’s rejection of the laureateship has not yet been explored. Broadus hypothesizes about the lost potential of the odes for the laureateship:

If Gray had accepted a post thus freed from ignominious duties, and actually conferred as a tribute to genius, and if, as poet laureate, he had brought out his two great odes of the ensuing year, *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard*, the laureateship would have been permanently raised beyond the reach of mere poetaster. (135).⁸¹

Broadus’s analysis, however, ends here. Linda Zionkowski alludes to a relationship between Grays’ Pindaric odes and his rejection of the laureateship when she states, “recent scholars attribute Gray’s reluctance to publish, refusal of the laureateship, and much-noted obscurity in his later poems either to a temperamental instability or to a typically ‘pre-Romantic’ alienation from his age, a conventional self-characterization of the poet as ‘a sensitive fugitive from his

⁸⁰In Walpole’s *Memoirs of the Reign of King George II*, Volume III (1822), Walpole narrates the laureate offers of 1757 with regards to Mason, insinuating that Mason declined the offer: “His grace had first designed it for Gray, then for Mason, but was told that both would decline it... Mason, though he had not then displayed all the powers of his genius, had too much sense and spirit to owe his literary fame to anything but his own merit” (81-82).

⁸¹ Broadus’s dating is incorrect. *Odes by Mr. Gray*, which included “The Progress of Poesy” and “The Bard” were published earlier. The original edition (in which the odes are named “Ode I” and “Ode II”) were published in August 1757. The odes were renamed in the 1768 edition, in which Gray provides annotations to “The Progress of Poesy: A Pindaric Ode” and “The Bard: A Pindaric Ode.”

society” (331). Yet, her work is a materialist account of Gray, arguing that the publication of Gray’s odes demonstrates “specific anxieties over the poet’s function during this period of commodified texts and expanding readerships” (333). Zionkowski does not specifically address the laureateship; yet, extending this reading of Gray’s hesitancy to participate in the commodification of texts to his rejection of the laureateship affirms the Popean notion of the laureateship as a metonym for the Grub Street writers. His rejection of the laureateship then is a rejection both of politics as well as that of a certain kind of literary legacy—the legacy of a poets laureate such as Cibber. I argue that Gray’s Pindaric odes claim a specific poetic legacy that was incompatible with the laureateship, and thus became part of the arsenal Mason uses to fashion Gray’s identity in his biography.

The poetic legacy Gray sought is evident from the way he carefully solicited an elite audience for the odes prior to their publication. Gray published *Odes by Mr. Gray* on August 8, 1757, using his friend Horace Walpole’s Strawberry Hill Press. As one thousand copies were finished by August 3, Walpole sent advance copies to many powerful, intellectual friends including Garrick, Arthur Onslow, Horace Mann, and Bishop Lyttleton.⁸² Specifically targeting an elite literary audience, Gray included an epigraph from Pindar’s *Olympian Ode II* on the title page, which translates to “vocal to the intelligent alone.”⁸³ Gray also “arranged for several copies to be...distributed among the Master and the Fellows of Pembroke, and among other, select members of the University community. Copies of ‘The Bard & his companion’ as Gray put it, were also dispatched to Bedingfield for distribution among friends and family” (Mack 493).

⁸² In 1757, David Garrick was the manager of the Drury-Lane Theater, Arthur Onslow was the speaker of the House of Commons. Bishop Lyttleton was the Dean of the Exeter (Jones 64). Horace Mann was named a Baronet for his work for British diplomacy in Florence in 1755 (Belsey).

⁸³ Gray translates the Greek in a letter written to a friend, James Brown, in 1763. Gray states, “the odes in question, as their motto shews, were meant to be vocal to the Intelligent alone” (*Correspondence II* 797).

Critics such as Roger Lonsdale and Robert Mack assert Gray was trying to control the response to his poems after the wide popularity of his “Elegy on a Country Church-Yard,” (Mack 493-494).⁸⁴ Despite Gray’s selected literary audience, readers still had difficulty in deciphering his work, in his letter to Horace Mann on August 4, Walpole admitted that the genre and content of the odes were obscure: “They are Greek, they are Pindaric, they are sublime! Consequently, I fear a little obscure...I could not persuade him to add more notes; he says whatever wants to be explained, don’t deserve to be” (Jones 65n). Walpole repeated his concern about the obscurity of the odes and the necessity for explanatory notes in letters to Lord Lyttleton and other correspondents. The odes’ form and elite audience would later be used as evidence of Gray’s obscurity by Johnson.

In choosing the form of a Pindaric ode, Gray was consciously writing against the popular taste of the day. Though odes had been widely read in the years immediately following the restoration of Charles II, the end of the seventeenth century—following the success of Abraham Cowley’s “Ode upon the Blessed Restoration” (1660) and *Pindarique Odes* (1656)—readers began to witness a decline in the form (Mack 449-450). Pindaric form is strict and obeys a triadic structure, modeled on the songs sung by the chorus in a Greek drama: “moving in a dance rhythm to the left, the chorus chanted the strophe; then to the right, the antistrophe; then standing still, the epode” (Abrams and Harpham 262). The Pindaric ode uses form to imitate the triadic voices of the chorus; the ode is structured in three stanzas with each stanza containing three parts. Eighteenth-century criticism of the Pindaric was not necessarily about the form itself but

⁸⁴ In February 1751, Gray received word that a disreputable magazine, *The Magazine of Magazines* had obtained a copy of “An Elegy Wrote on a Country Churchyard” and intended to publish it without Gray’s participation or consent (Mack 421-422). As a result, Gray turned to his friend, Robert Dodsley, who agreed to print it immediately. “An Elegy Written on a Country Churchyard” was published one day prior to its publication in *The Magazine of Magazines*, “replete with copying errors and typographical changes inimical to Gray’s personal vision” and with a Preface by Walpole bemoaning current state of copyright for authors (422-423).

the distortion of it by Cowley. William Congreve's "A Discourse on the Pindarique Ode" accused Cowley's odes and those imitating them of being "deformed poems...caricatures of [Pindar]" (Congreve).⁸⁵ Similarly, Joseph Addison in "The Spectator 160" refers to modern Pindarics as "monstrous compositions...the distortion, grimace, and outward figure, but nothing of that divine impulse which raises the mind above itself, and makes the sounds more than human" (291). In "The Spectator 514" (1712), Richard Steele also criticized the form of modern Pindarics by imagining Pindar himself in Cowley's company: "I saw Pindar walking all alone, no one daring to accost him till Cowley joyn'd himself to him, but, growing weary of one who almost walk'd him out of Breath, he left him for Horace and Anacreon, with whom he seemed infinitely delighted"(197). Gray's "The Progress of Poesy" and "The Bard" answer these critiques of the Pindaric ode by strictly adhering to form: each strophe and antistrophe are identical in form, followed by a longer and metrically different epode. Suvir Kaul closely examines Gray's adherence to the Pindaric form, noting that it had an "appreciably high-cultural tone...that...allows thematic discontinuities and syntactic and metrical irregularities, and is thus suited to the kind of highly qualified, internally dialogic, panegyric that is Gray's subject" (201).

"The Progress of Poesy" is an exploration of how the poetic muse finds instruments—poets—for her task. In the first strophe, antistrophe, and epode, Gray demonstrates his adherence to form by invoking Pindar and Mount Helicon for inspiration while describing the "traditional discourses of poetic origin and achievement and then celebrating the powers of poetry and poetic inspiration by invoking Aphrodite (l.29), Loves (l. 28), and Graces (l.37)" (Kaul 190). The second strophe begins with a stark contrast:

Man's feeble race what ills await,

⁸⁵ Congreve's *A pindarique ode, Humbly Offer'd to the Queen, on the Victorious Progress of Her Majesty's Arms, under the Conduct of the Duke of Marlborough. To which is prefix'd, A discourse on the pindarique ode* is not paginated.

Labour, and penury, the racks of pain,
Disease, and sorrow's weeping train,
And death, sad refuge from the storms of fate!
The fond complaint, my song disprove
And justify the laws of Jove.
Say, has he given in vain the heavenly Muse? (II.42-48)

In addition to presenting a completely different tone than the first stanza, the speaker in this strophe also moves from the larger picture of poetry and poetic inspiration to the personal: “*my song disprove and justify the laws of Jove*” (46-47; original italics). The speaker asserts his own poetic voice, which has the power to show both the righteousness and the fallacies of humanity. In the next line, the speaker questions whether humanity understands the power of poetry. The question mark in the middle of the antistrophe causes the reader to pause in this moment and deliberate before the remainder of the stanza traces a geographical movement of the muse throughout cultural history (Kaul 193). Moving at the end of the epode from Greece to Italy to Britain, the third stanza describes the arrival of the Muse in Britain and concludes with Gray's deliberation of the power of his own poetic voice.

While celebrating the established English poetic canon, in the third stanza Gray establishes his authority by linking himself to British classical and British authors. In the first strophe, the speaker describes Shakespeare's instinctive understanding of the arrival of his Muse: “In thy green lap was Nature's darling laid,/ What time, where lucid Avon strayed [...] the dauntless child/ Stretched forth his little arms and smiled” (III. 84-88). Similarly, in the antistrophe, the speaker describes the “ecstasy” (l.96) of Milton, struck blind with the vision of the angels: “Where angels tremble while they gaze,/ He saw; but blasted with excess of light, Closed his eyes in endless night” (III. 100-102). The last British poet mentioned in the third stanza is Dryden, whom the speaker describes:

Hark, his hands the lyre explore!

Bright-eyed Fancy hovering o'er
Scatters from her pictured urn
Thoughts that breathe and words that burn.
But ah! Tis heard no more – (III. 107-111).

After providing this lineage, the speaker asks, “Oh, lyre divine! What daring spirit/ raises thee now?” (III.112-113). The speaker answers his own question by identifying himself in the subsequent lines as an imitator of Pindar. The ode reads:

[...] Though he inherit
Nor the pride, nor ample pinion,
That the Theban eagle bear
Sailing with supreme dominion
Through the azure deep of air:
Yet oft before his infant eyes would run
Such forms, as glitter in the Muses's ray
With orient hues, unborrowed of the sun:
Yet he shall mount his distant way
Beyond the limits of a vulgar fate,
Beneath the Good how far—but far above the Great.

The Theban eagle was a favorite symbol of Pindar: Horace borrowed it to construct the first four stanzas of his Pindaric imitations and then represented both himself and Pindar as “soaring birds” (Stoneman 188). As an imitator—and natural poetic descendant (demonstrated by the geographic movement of the Muse)—of Pindar and Horace, Gray establishes his poetic authority.

In the final lines, Gray uses sun imagery as well as his affiliation with other poets to depict his authority as separate from the monarch. Of Horace and Pindar, Gray says that he has not inherited their pride nor their influence; yet, his Muse has shown him “Such forms” of the “Muse's ray” (III.119). Gray specifies that the ray contains “orient hues, unborrowed of the sun,” which is where readers can see Gray's rejection of the monarchy (III.120). The imagery of the sun as the representation of the monarch had been famously used in Shakespeare's *Henry V* (1599), Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness* (1605), as well as in the eighteenth century with Louis XIV of France, who chose the sun as his emblem. The light from his Muse does not

originate from the monarch but contains “orient hues.” The OED states that the orient is not only the place of dawn in the east, but also that the poetic use is “that part of the heavens in which the sun and other celestial objects rise.” Gray’s inspiration comes from the heavens—a higher power than the monarch.

That Gray is making a distinction between his Muse and the monarch is affirmed in ode’s last lines: “Yet he shall mount his distant way/ Beyond the limits of a vulgar fate,/ Beneath the Good how far—but far above the Great” (III. 121-123). Scholars have debated the meaning of these final lines, but they all agree that “he” in the final lines refers to Gray himself and thus portends his poetic legacy. Kaul argues that “the uneasiness that had accompanied the position of the poet-figure in the *Elegy* [exists] somewhere between the ‘Good’ and the ‘Great,’ solitary in his ‘distant way’ separated from the vulgar crowd” (200). Zionkowski similarly reads of the final lines as Gray distinguishing himself in an isolated way, but Zionkowski reads the distance specifically in terms of the literary market. Examining the absence of audience and reception in the final lines, she argues: “Gray offers a theory of poetry that excluded a dialectic involving audience and poet...poesy evolves and progresses without being affected by the thoughts or desires of the specific audiences in specific historical contexts. Instead, this power is inherited from poet to poet” (343). While Kaul and Zionkowski read the “Good” and the “Great” as referring to literary figures, Frederick Keener regards the lines as Gray aligning himself with ideologies rather than poets. Using Gray’s earlier writings from his commonplace book, Keener contends that the “Good” in the ode is more abstract—relating to the Platonic Good:

Only to be good at writing poetry is not necessarily to pursue the good therein or elsewhere. Only to have a Muse is not necessarily to be in secure philosophical connection with the good. Only to be attuned to the general taste is not necessarily to have adequate principles of literary judgment if one thereby spares oneself “knowing and enquiring” into the “Excellence” of a work, a procedure that for Gray and his chosen company prominently includes attention to the logical sense. (199)

I agree with Keener that Gray uses “Good” more abstractly in this context, and I would add that the Platonic good Keener describes aligns with Pindar’s values. Anastoplo reminds us that “critical to Pindar's victory odes is the proposition that the winner ‘shares the marvelous munificence of deity’ thereby promoting in this way both virtue and the common good” (84). “Beneath the Good,” therefore, refers to both the Platonic ideal and Pindar: Gray will always be subordinate (as Keener explains) to both.

Just as in “the Good,” Gray is using the noun form of “the Great,” which is affirmed by the preceding article. “The Great” then is likely referencing a person of high social or official position. The OED indicates that “the Great” can reference a person “occupying a position towards the top of a hierarchy,” or, in official titles, “highest in rank or authority, chief, head” (“Great”). Synthesizing this with the earlier lines, the “Great” in this context likely refers to the King. Gray’s “distant way” is to follow his Muse, who is unconnected in any way to the monarchy. He writes beneath the Good of Pindar, but above the great King. “The Progress of Poesy” delineates Gray’s legacy as being above that of the monarchy or the laureateship and thus rejects the ode as a nationalist genre.

The sequencing of “The Bard” directly after “The Progress of Poetry” in the 1757 volume supports this argument, as “The Bard” is a more blatant rejection of the British monarchy and British imperial projects. “The Bard” reveals the tragedy of the Welsh under the rule of King Edward. These two odes together can thus be read productively as Gray fashioning a legacy outside of the British monarchy. Gray’s “The Bard” is also antithetical to unitary British poetry while strictly adhering to Pindaric structure. The poem uses the triadic form to describe the tragic meeting between King Edward and the last Welsh Bard. Mimicking the orality of Pindar’s original odes, the second stanza’s strophe, antistrophe, and epode are spoken by the bardic choir

and prophesize “the misfortunes of Edward’s race” (*Odes by Mr. Gray* 16). The bard comes to represent a kind of anti-laureate: a poet who speaks on behalf of the people in defiance of the King, criticizing his wrongdoings. In the final stanza, the Bard celebrates the triumph of the Welsh Tudor monarchs at the end of the War of the Roses—Elizabeth in particular, as well as the subsequent Golden Age of literature of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. The final lines of the ode describe the Bard addressing Edward once again, declaring his own triumph by his refusal to allow Edward to order his death. He takes control over his destiny with suicide:

‘Enough for me: With joy I see
The different doom our Fates assign.
Be thine Despair, and Scept’red care,
To triumph, and to die, are mine.’
He spoke, and headlong from the mountain’s height
Deep in the roaring tide he plung’d to endless night. (21)

Though the Bard’s victory seems semantic as the poem ends with his death, his victory echoes throughout time as readers know that his prophesies will eventually come to fruition. Though his physical body is dead, the Bard’s ultimate power comes from his words and his legacy: “English history is transformed retroactively into Welsh prophecy—[which] grants the Welsh bard a power that is accentuated by contemporary readers’ collective acceptance of the history he tells” (Mulholland 117). This power of this prophecy is granted by Gray himself. The historical sources Gray used to compose the poem did not include a dialogue between the bard and the King and usually depicted Edward I as a great King (Hinnant 322).⁸⁶ Gray gives the bard a voice, allowing his prophecy to have a final victory over the King even after death. Just as in

⁸⁶ Charles Hinnant’s article compares “The Bard” to its historical source, Thomas Cartes’s *History of England* (1747) arguing that Gray’s poem deviates from “the conventional attitudes of the historians of his age,” who viewed Edward’s actions as “barbarous but not absurd” (323). Hinnant contends that Gray’s “failure to choose a subject that would conform to the historical beliefs of his readers” and was partially responsible for the ode’s unpopularity (318, 326).

“The Progress of Poesy,” “The Bard” concludes with Gray imagining a poetic legacy above (and this case, in spite of) the monarchy.

The Re-Fashioning of a Pindaric Poet: *A New Edition* (1768)

Although Gray’s *Odes* (1757) revealed his rejection of the British monarchy, harsh criticism of them resulted in Gray re-asserting his poetic (and Pindaric) authority with a new edition that included annotations to the *Odes*. Gray’s annotations re-fashion his identity as a Pindaric poet by canonizing poets of the past and present and experimenting with poetic voice. Mason later repurposes these Pindaric ideals in *Poems by Mr. Gray* (1775).

Though Gray was using the publication of *Odes by Mr. Gray* (1757) to define his legacy as a rejection of the monarchy, contemporary readers—even the elite audience—did not understand the two Pindarics, resulting in Gray having to re-evaluate the medium of his message. Though the *Odes* initially sold very well with 1200-1300 sold within the first two weeks, they were not understood or appreciated by the general reading public (Jones 72, 78). W. Powell Jones explains that the high volume of sales were likely due to the curiosity of the nobility—not only in reading Gray’s new poetry—but also because they were the first publication of Walpole’s Strawberry Hill Press, and readers were interested in the work of the press of a “dilettante son of a powerful former prime minister” (67). Nonetheless, the reception of the two odes was lukewarm at best, and Mack alleges many of the reviewers analyzed Gray’s odes in terms of writing they wished he had produced—a sequel to the *Elegy* (Mack 496).⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Jones also notes that many reviewers and letters about the *Odes* either mention the *Elegy* or directly compare the two works. For instance, Arthur Onslow, in his letter to Horace Walpole said that “The Bard” was “a pretty good tale, but nothing to the Churchyard” (67; quoted from *Walpole Letters* IV, 88).

Almost all of the contemporary criticism of the *Odes* centered on their obscurity, and even Gray's admirers could not ignore the enigmatic in their praise.⁸⁸ Oliver Goldsmith's review in *The Monthly Review* (1757) bemoans Gray's choice to write in such a way that only a small audience will understand: "We cannot, however, without some regret behold those talents so capable of giving pleasure to all, exerted in efforts that, at best, can amuse only the few; we cannot behold this rising poet seeking fame among the learned, without hinting to him the same advice that Isocrates used to give his scholars, 'study the people'" (296). Similarly, *The Critical Review* praises Gray's work for "the production of a real live genius;" however, the reviewer goes on to complain that Gray imitates Pindar "too closely, in affecting an obscurity of transition. Though even this obscurity affords kind of mysterious veil, which gives a venerable and classical air to the performance" ("Article XI: Odes by Mr. Gray" 167).

Gray's letters during this period and the consoling verses of his friends reveal both the lack of appreciation of the odes from the reading public as well as the subsequent toll this lack of appreciation took on Gray. In August 1757, Bentley, who was the designer for the 1753 edition of Gray's poems, wrote "The Sonnet to the Printing Press at Strawberry Hill."⁸⁹ The poem praises the press's support of literature like Gray's while denouncing current literary taste:

[...]Ah! When perform'd thy very best,
Small good is brought to pass;
Writers & Readers are increas'd,
But Judgment's where it was.

Clarissa still and Grandison

⁸⁸ Samuel Richardson was an admirer of Gray, but in his letter to Miss Highmore, he said "My opinion of Mr. Gray's Odes? You know I admire the Author...I have no doubt that [their beauties] are numberless—but indeed have not had head clear enough to read them more than once, as yet" (*The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson* 310).

⁸⁹ Bentley, son of the scholar of the same name, became acquainted with Horace Walpole in 1750, and over the course of their friendship helped Walpole to renovate Walpole's Strawberry Hill residence in the Gothic style, designed the 1753 edition of Thomas Gray's poems, provided illustrations for Walpole's *King George II* (1822), and contributed translations of Bentzer and Lacan for the Strawberry Hill Press (Bentley).

Their empire shall maintain;⁹⁰
Congenial Souls their scepter own:
Gray waits for Sense's reign.

Truly to benefit Mankind
I fear exceeds thy art;
Thou canst not stamp upon the mind
Nor print upon the heart [...]. (ll. 13-24)⁹¹

Though the printing press is attempting to change popular taste, the printing of works such as Gray's *Odes* has not altered the judgement of the empire of readers who prefer the sentimentality of Richardson's novels. Concerned about the consequences of Gray taking all of the criticism to heart, Garrick published "To Mr. Gray, on his Odes" (October 1757) begging, "Repine not, Gray, that our weak dazzled Eyes/ Thy daring heights and brightness shun," and instead "Again thy wondr'ous Powers reveal,/ Wake slumb'ring Virtue in Briton's Heart./ And rouse Us to *reflect and feel!*" (Garrick; original italics). Garrick's use of the word "virtue" could refer to the earlier sonnet by Bentley and the dichotomy between the readers of Richardson's novels and Gray's poetry, arguing that only poetry—and not the sentimentality of Richardson's novels—can "wake slumb'ring Virtue in Briton's heart."

Garrick was correct in assuming that Gray had taken the criticism to heart; Gray made mention of the reading public's lack of understanding of his *Odes* in letters to Mason, Walpole, and Brown before the new edition in 1768. In a letter to Mason in August 1757, Gray tells Mason that he will absolutely not include notes with the *Odes* even though readers are confused

⁹⁰ The metaphor of *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison* as "empires" in this line aligns with Mary Helen McMurrin's recent argument that domestic novels created a synecdoche in which the domestic plot stands in for the national novel, and Richardson's novels, in particular, propelled the recognition of the novel as "both domestic and universal" (131).

⁹¹ Though this work is titled "A Sonnet to the Printing Press at Strawberry Hill," its 28 lines defy the standard sonnet form. Additionally, the 28 lines of the poem are all written in quatrains except for the fourth stanza, which would traditionally be the last lines of the poem. The lack of rhyme scheme in the fourth stanza (first stanza quoted above) creates emphasis for that stanza, which states that the judgment of the reading public is not what it should be.

by their meaning: “I would not have put another note to save the souls of all the Owls in London. It is extremely well, as it is. Nobody understands me, & I am perfectly satisfied. Even the *Critical Review*...that is rapt & surprised, & shudders, at me; yet mistakes the *Aeolian Lyre* for the *Harp of Aeolus*” (*Correspondence of Thomas Gray* II 523). In later letters, Gray’s frustration with the reception of the Odes is more evident. In 1763, he wrote to Brown: “the odes in question, as their motto shews, were meant to be vocal to the intelligent alone. How few they were in my own country” (*Correspondence of Thomas Gray* II 797). In a letter to Count Algarotti in the same year, he identifies the higher audience for poetry as well as the lower audience for other genres:

Poetry implies at least a liberal education, a degree of literature, & various knowledge, whereas the others (with a few exceptions) are in the hands of slaves & Mercenaries, I mean of People without education, who, tho neither destitute of Genius nor insensible to fame, must yet make gain their principal end & subject themselves to the prevailing taste of those, whose fortune only distinguishes them from the multitude. (*Correspondence of Thomas Gray* III 811).

Gray’s letters demonstrate his increasing botheration at the lack of understanding of his odes, leading to the *New Edition* in 1768.

Scholars have read these parts of Gray’s correspondence, along with his sparse poetic output in his later life, as evidence that he gave up on his desire for public literary authority and retreated to a life of scholarship at Cambridge.⁹² However, as Mulholland notes, Gray “repeatedly relied on commercial printing”—even in his later work (110). Gray not only

⁹² After the publication of the *Odes*, Gray wrote very little poetry: “a few epitaphs, a few translations from Norse and Welsh poetry, two pastoral airs, two satires, and a congratulatory ‘Ode for Music’” (Kaul 223). Both Zionkowski and Kaul suggest that Gray’s low poetic output was the result of the negative criticism of the odes. Zionkowski argues:

Poets it seems, lost their function as leaders of the public when the ‘generals,’ ‘statesmen’ and ‘moralists’ who made up their audiences were replaced by common readers or became common readers themselves. To Gray, retreat from the market in letters and from the mass audience that print culture created is necessary to composition, for in his view, ‘the still small voice of poetry was not made to be heard in a crowd’ (347; quoted from *Correspondence of Thomas Gray* 1:296).

continued printing his works, but he also provided annotations for his earlier, more obscure works. Scholars have thus far not included his annotations in their analysis, and I argue that *Poems by Mr. Gray* (1768), along with his decision to appoint Mason as his biographer, reveal that Gray did not quietly recess into a life of solitary scholarship. Instead, his later works and the revisions and annotations he makes to the *Odes* forge his legacy as a Pindaric poet and laureate rejecter—a desire Mason would expand upon when he fashioned Gray’s identity in *The Poem of Mr. Gray* (1775).

In *Poems by Mr. Gray. A New Edition*. (1768), Gray uses form to align himself with Pindar, and he uses the content of the annotations to associate himself with Pindar’s ideology about the role of the poet. Gray’s *New Edition* manipulates the poetic voice, further solidifying his alignment with Pindar, who was known for his “sophisticated manipulation of generic conventions” (Rutherford 10). The new edition of Gray’s poems included his earlier work such as “Elegy Written on a Country Churchyard” along with “The Progress of Poesy” and “The Bard,” as well as his never-before published imitations: “The Descent of Odin,” “The Triumph of Owen,” and “The Fatal Sisters.” “The Fatal Sisters,” is preceded by a two-page preface, in which Gray explains the occasion of the poem, and he additionally provides annotations throughout. Similarly, “The Triumph of Owen” begins with an Advertisement, providing the reader with the necessary historical information about Owen, and a separate overall Advertisement that describes the evolution of texts from Latin transcriptions into English (Mulholland 124). This textual evolution recasts Gray’s authorial identity into that of a reporter. In the Advertisement to “The Fatal Sisters,” for instance, Gray writes that “a native of Caithness” watches twelve women weaving on a loom and “they Sung the following dreadful Song” (*Poems of Mr. Gray* 78). Transcribing “The Fatal Sisters,” while inserting editorial remarks throughout

emphasizes Gray's role as an editor, in addition to that of an author. Similarly, Gray titles "The Triumphs of Owen: A Fragment," accentuating his role as an editor who has selected the part of the text to present rather than an author who has created it (Mulholland 125). While Mulholland suggests that Gray's representation of himself as an editor and imitator of poems emphasizes the orality of his printed voice, I argue that these choices, together with the annotations, align Gray with Pindar.

Prior to his annotations to the *Odes*, Gray wrote to Walpole that the annotations are "little notes, partly from justice (to acknowledge the debt, where I had borrowed any thing), partly from ill temper, just to tell the gentle reader, that Edward I was not Oliver Cromwell, nor Queen Elizabeth the witch of Endow. That is literally all; and with all this I shall be but a shrimp of an author" (*Correspondence of Thomas Gray* III 1017-1018).⁹³ Though his disdain for the necessity of the notes is clear, Gray still provided them. If he had truly only wanted to be "vocal to the intelligent alone," he would not have published the new edition and provided annotations for his misunderstood odes. In the new edition, Gray labeled the odes as Pindaric, signaling the form to the reader. With a similar tone to that in this letter to Walpole, Gray added an Advertisement to "The Progress of Poesy," which states, "When the author first published this and the following Ode, he was advised, even by his friends, to subjoin some few Explanatory Notes; but had too much respect for the Understanding of his readers to take that liberty" (*Poems by Mr. Gray* 36). In part, of course, the subtext of this Advertisement is that in his earlier publication, Gray gave his readers too much credit, and now that he must provide annotations as he has lost respect for them. While this may be true, the existence of the annotations in spite of this invites scholars to examine them more closely.

⁹³ This note implies that readers incorrectly connected Edward I to Oliver Cromwell. My earlier argument about "The Bard" reads Edward I as a representative for George II.

Gray's *A New Edition* articulates his association with Pindar by re-titling his *Odes* as "The Progress of Poesy: A Pindaric Ode" and "The Bard: A Pindaric Ode." By titling his poetry thus, Gray also identifies himself as an imitator and follower of Pindar, who considered himself, "a public voice bestowing praise and blame in communal gatherings and preserving for the future what is memorable, noble, exemplary, and therefore useful" (Segal 10). In "The Progress of Poesy: A Pindaric Ode," Gray annotates of the first line of poem— "Awake, Aeloian lyre, awake!"—with the following: "Pindar styles his own poetry with its musical accompaniments" (37n).⁹⁴ From the first line of the poem, readers should understand that even the symbols are Pindaric in nature, directing the readers to consider that the implications are Pindaric as well. In "The Progress of Poesy," of the twenty annotations Gray makes in the *New Edition*, sixteen of the notes explain allusions. In the poem, Gray alludes to Pindar, Homer, Athenaeus of Naucratis, Lucretius, Virgil, the Bible (describing Milton), Petrarch, Shakespeare, Milton, Cowley, and Mason. These allusions not only reinforce Gray's tracing of the geographical movement of the poetic muse from Greece to Italy to Britain, but also canonize writers who have been gifted with the Muse. This canonization includes writers such as Pindar, Shakespeare, and Milton, who had been previously identified by multiple writers and critics (William Collins, Jonson, and Pope) as the great writers. Additionally, Gray canonizes himself and his contemporaries, William Mason and William Cowley. After describing the Muse's interactions with Shakespeare (l.84n), Milton (l.95n), and Dryden (l.104), the note to line 111, which describes the death of Dryden—"ah! 'tis heard no more"—creates a literary parallel between Dryden and William Mason. Gray's annotation reads:

We have had in our language no other odes of the sublime kind, than that of Dryden on St. Cecilia's day: for Cowley (who had his merit) yet wanted judgment, style, and

⁹⁴ Similarly, of line 3, Gray notes, "the subject and simile [in the first stanza] as usual in Pindar are united. The various sources of poetry, which gives life and lustre to all it touches, are here described" (38n).

harmony for such a task. That of Pope is not worthy of so great a man. Mr. Mason indeed of late days has touched the true chords, and with a masterly hand, in some of his Choruses, – above all in the last of *Caractacus*. (l.111n)⁹⁵

This link between Dryden and Mason re-writes the usual lineage between Dryden and Pope, eliminating Pope's influence altogether and replacing him with Mason.⁹⁶ This rhetorical move not only revises the literary history that Pope told, but also aligns Gray's future biographer with canonical writing. Just as Mason will fashion Gray's identity in his biography, Gray fashions Mason's identity and literary lineage with a form of life writing: poetic revision. Mason extends Gray's own construction of himself as a Pindaric writer when he melds life writing genres and used Gray's own poetic voice to construct Gray's biography in *The Poems of Mr. Gray* (1775).

Establishing the Legacy of Thomas Gray

Mason builds upon the Pindaric identity Gray created for himself in the 1768 *New Edition* by blending biography with personal correspondence to construct part of Gray's legacy as a laureate rejecter. At the end of his life, Gray was already thinking about how he would establish his legacy in death, and he appointed his friend and fellow writer, Mason, as executor of his will as well as the recipient of all of his "books, manuscripts, coins, musick printed or written, & papers of all kinds to preserve or destroy at his own discretion" ("Appendix X: Gray's Will" 1285).⁹⁷ In 1775, four years after Gray's death, William Mason published *The Poems of Mr. Gray. To which are Prefixed Memoirs of his Life and Writings by W. Mason, M.A*, which

⁹⁵ *Caractacus: a dramatic poem: written on the model of the ancient Greek tragedy. By the author of Elfrida* [William Mason] was published in 1759.

⁹⁶ The literary lineage between Dryden and Pope was established by Pope himself when he praised Dryden in his imitation of Horace, Epistle II.

⁹⁷ Gray's will was quoted in John Murray's "A Letter to W. Mason, A.M. Precentor of York, Concerning his Edition of Mr. Gray's Poems and the Practices of Booksellers" (14), and the entire will appears in Murray's *New Edition of Poems by Mr. Gray* (1778). Since Murray's publication of the will, Gray's subsequent editors have followed a tradition of adding the will to an account of his life ("Appendix X: Gray's Will" 1283).

included all of Gray's poetry in addition to a collection of his letters to friends and writers such as Walpole, Brown, Thomas Warton, Richard West, and Mason himself. For each of the five sections of letters, which correspond to periods of Gray's life, Mason provides an introduction and brief biographical material, explaining the letters when necessary.⁹⁸

Since its publication, critics have debated the effectiveness of the inclusion of the letters and the overall structure of the biography, but they have not yet considered the ways in which Mason's biography attempted to make Gray marketable to a larger reading audience, much as Gray's annotations in *Poems by Mr. Gray* (1768) had done. John Murray argues that the inclusion of Gray's "private correspondence, without paying any regard to the reputation of his friend, which from this use made of his letters hastily written has suffered considerably" (Murray 17). He goes on to assert that if Gray were alive, Mason "would be accosted by Gray" with some of the following questions: Did it prevail with you to *betray* a man who trusted to you to *guard* his reputation not to *expose* it? [...] Does the editor retail childish and ill-written letters, the publication of which I would sooner have died than have consented to?" (Murray 51, 53). The letters, in other words, could hurt Gray's reputation because of their informality or private content. Indeed, many of Gray's friends, including Walpole, were alive and understandably concerned about Mason's control over the portrayal of their relationships with Gray. When Walpole sent letters to Mason for the biography, he said:

I have selected for your use of Gray's letters, as will be intelligible without many notes: but though all his early letters have both wit and humour, they are so local or so confined to private persons and stories, that it would be difficult even by the help of a comment to

⁹⁸ For example, before the first section of letters, several of which are to Richard West, Mason offers this commentary:

While at school, he contracted a friendship with Mr. Horace Walpole and Mr. Richard West...but as the latter died before he could exert his uncommon abilities, it seems requisite to premise somewhat concerning him; especially as almost every anecdote which I have to produce, concerning the juvenile part of Mr. Gray's life, is included in his correspondence with this gentleman.(3)

Mason goes on to provide biographical information about Richard West for the reader before the early letters.

make them interesting to the public.” (*The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence* 27)

Critics such as Heidi Thomson, Zionkowski, and Mack have analyzed the omissions of letters and events, such as the ones mentioned above by Walpole, arguing that Mason interfered with Gray’s documents. Thomson argues that Mason’s omissions are an “effort to control the legacy of Gray’s life and work [and] constitute a fine example of tensions between text as ‘authorially sanctioned, contained, and historically definable’ and ‘text as always incomplete and therefore open, unstable, subject to a perpetual re-making by its readers, performers or audience’” (106). Mack, however, is far harsher in his view of the biography and its representation of Gray: “systematic and devastating bowdlerization of the materials left at his disposal... would help fuel the notion that Gray was...an emotionally handicapped individual who lived more even than the rest of us, in an involuntary isolation, a pathetic type of solitude of the soul” (682). In “Bridging the Gulf: The Poet and the Audience in the Work of Gray,” Zionkowski takes a more middle-ground approach to analyzing the biography, using the omissions—specifically the omissions about potential homosexual relationships with West, Walpole, and others—to consider the larger implications of representing effeminacy in life writing. Zionkowski argues that Gray’s reticence to commercially publish his work, along with the omissions about his relationships in the biography and rumors of his sexuality during his lifetime, contribute to the stigma of effeminacy and patriarchal discourse of the commercial literary market in the eighteenth century. Though Mason’s biography certainly involved editorial choices—including omissions, additions, and a selection of letters—a close examination of the biography reveals that these decisions imitate those of Gray in his *Poems by Mr. Gray* (1768).

Just as Gray had experimented with poetic voice by representing himself as an editor of his work, Mason’s use of Gray’s correspondence in his biography mimics the popular epistolary

novel form. Works such as Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), Henry Fielding's *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* (1741), Richardson's *Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady* (1748), John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748), and Richardson's *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) typify this genre.⁹⁹ Just as in these epistolary novels, providing correspondence in the biography allowed Mason to significantly lessen his role as the speaker/narrator. In the Introduction, Mason declares that the letters "will give a much clearer idea of Gray...than any narrative of mine" (*Memoirs of the Life and Writing of Mr. Gray* 5). Furthermore, the letters allow Gray to "become his own biographer" (5). Just as Gray had done in his imitations, Mason fuses forms in order to allow Gray a Bard-like voice—victorious from the grave.

Gray's unique voice in the biography by way of his private correspondence provides the reader the ability to read an intimate view of Gray's thoughts and feelings as they are expressed to his closest friends and family. In the letters between Gray and West, for instance, readers see Gray's growing concern for West's health, as well as the respect Gray has for West's opinion of his works (138). Mason additionally provides the reader with the never-before-published "Sonnet on the Death of Richard West," and "De Principiis Cogitandi," which both reveal the sorrow and grief Gray feels after the loss of his friend. Mason introduces the sonnet stating, "But the first impulse of his sorrow for the death of his friend gave birth to a very tender sonnet in English, on the Petrarchan model" (157). Lonsdale observes that the sonnet imitates Petrarchan verses in form (rhyme scheme and stanza breaks), as well as in content because the sonnet is an imitation

⁹⁹ Some earlier examples of the epistolary form can be found in James Howell's *Familiar Letters* (1645) and Aphra Behn's *Love Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1684). Additionally, the rise of the epistolary form can be traced in other genres when one considers poetry such as Alexander Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard" (1717), which was based on the four love letters sent between the two lovers.

of Sonnet 310, which describes the contrast between the beloved's death and the return of spring ("Sonnet on the Death of Richard West" 66n). The sonnet reads:

In vain to me the smiling Mornings shine,
And redd'ning Phoebus lifts his golden fire:
The birds in vain their amorous descant join;
Or chearful fields resume their green attire:
These ears, alas I for other notes repine,
A different object do these eyes require.
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire.
Yet Morning smiles the busy race to chear,
The new-born pleasure brings to happier men:
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear:
To warm their little loves the birds complain:
I fruitless mourn to him, that cannot hear,
And weep the more, because I weep in vain. (*The poems of Mr. Gray* 60)¹⁰⁰

The addition of this sonnet works similarly to the addition of Gray's imitations in his *Poems by Mr. Gray* (1768). The sonnet had fallen out of favor during the eighteenth century, and Mason's decision to include it reveals his desire to resurrect a traditional form and fuse it with popular taste as Gray had. The sonnet form had not been popular since Milton's sonnets in the late seventeenth century, and it was most associated with private love poetry ("Gray, the Marketplace, and the Masculine Poet" 594). Fumerton reminds us that in the Renaissance, sonnets were "guardedly 'published' between intimates in private rooms...The locking of love poems within these containers usually reserved for one's greatest valuables" (72). Moreover, the prefaces to published sonnets "again and again... describe the publication as a betrayal to the 'common public' of the poet's secrets" (73). Even for later sonneteers whose works were published during their lifetime (such as Shakespeare and Lady Mary Wroth), the sonnet emphasizes the private, personal nature of the writing. The reader of the sonnet, therefore, often undergoes a voyeuristic sensation akin to that of the epistolary novel. By including the "Sonnet

¹⁰⁰ In *The Poems of Mr. Gray. To Which are Prefixed Memoirs of the Life and Writings by W. Mason, M.A.* pagination restarts in the final section, "The Poems of Mr. Gray."

on the Death of Richard West” in *Memoirs of the Life and Writings*, Mason combines the popular epistolary form with a more traditional one. The sonnet form is best able to express Gray’s innermost feelings about the death of his friend and his grief over the loss. Additionally, because the sonnet had only ever been written in Gray’s Commonplace book, readers were able to see a truly private document while being taught that sonnets are the most appropriate form to convey private feelings.¹⁰¹

While encouraging readers to see a personal side of Gray in his private correspondence and never-published works, Mason also strategically adds and omits life events to the *Memoirs* that carve a literary legacy for Gray as an infallible writer, translator, and laureate rejecter. Mason admitted to Walpole that he planned to omit anything that might be inappropriately affectionate or infantile in Gray’s correspondence. In a letter to Walpole, Mason states: “I have only to say that I wish when you look them over, you would only erase passages, as for instance the infantine beginnings and conclusions of some of them, which are hardly fit for schoolboys and yet will not be considered as written by a schoolboy” (*Correspondence of Horace Walpole* 125). Mason wanted to construct Gray as being above the affections and immaturity of other children. Walpole similarly expressed concerns that Mason would reference Gray’s withdrawal from Peterhouse, Cambridge, where he left without taking a degree in 1738, as well as his maneuvering for the Regus Professorship of Modern History at Cambridge in 1762, the appointment he later obtained in 1768 (Thomson 108).¹⁰² In an effort to cover any of Gray’s

¹⁰¹ In “Gray, the Marketplace, and the Masculine Poet,” Zionkowski analyzes Gray’s choice of the sonnet form; she argues that Gray’s “Sonnet on the Death of Richard West” shows not only his “rejection of the proprietary view of his work that the market encouraged, but also his cultivation of the more fluid gender identity that accompanied the private circulation of texts” (595). While Gray’s motivation for using the sonnet form may have been related to his sexuality, my argument lies with Mason’s motivation for publishing it rather than Gray’s motivation for writing it.

¹⁰² After living at Peterhouse, Cambridge for three weeks Gray characterized his college Fellows as “sleepy, drunken, dull, illiterate things,” and, as Mack notes, scholars have generally used this line to explain Gray’s departure from the college four years later (Mack 149). However, Mack attributes Gray’s departure from Cambridge

errors, Mason additionally asked Walpole to correct Gray's French and Italian, to which Walpole responded that Gray was superior to such treatment (Thomson 109).

Prior to Mason's publication, Gray's rejection of the laureateship had been concealed among Lord Cavendish, Mason, and Gray. Yet, in *The Poems of Mr. Gray* (1775), Mason published a letter written to him in 1757, in which Gray says the following:

I hope you couched my refusal to Lord John Cavendish in as respectful terms as possible, and with all due acknowledgements to the Duke. If you hear who it is to be given to, pray let me know; for 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. Rowe was, I think the last man of character that it; Eusden was a person of great hopes in his youth, though at last he turned to be a drunken parson; Dryden was as disgraceful to the office, from his character, as the poorest scribbler could have been from his verses. (*The Poems of Mr. Gray* 258-59).

Mason additionally provides a footnote, detailing that the "it" in Gray's letter is the poet laureateship: "Of being Poet Laureat on the death of Cibber, which place the late Duke of Devonshire (then Lord Chamberlain) desired his brother to offer to Mr. Gray; and his Lordship had commissioned me (then in town to write to him concerning it)" (258n). Though Mason chose not to publish the rest of the letter, in which Gray analogizes the laureateship with the palace rat catcher, his decision to include Gray's rejection of the laureateship establishes a part of Gray's identity of which the public was not aware. In publishing Gray's rejection of the laureateship, he forms a literary identity never seen before: prior to Gray, no writer had ever turned down a laureateship. The symbolic nature of this rejection has two primary implications: Gray rejected royal patronage (financial stability) and royal recognition of his poetic genius. In revealing Gray's rejection, Mason demonstrates a power never before seen, the power of a poet to reject the monarch, providing Gray with an original legacy.

to, among other things, isolation from Richard West, as well as Walpole's departure from Cambridge the same year. Walpole subsequently invited Gray to accompany him on his Grand Tour (215). Despite Gray's earlier assertion that he would never debase himself by soliciting a "post or pension," he applied for the Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge in 1762 to Lord Brute, but the position was awarded to Sir John Delaval (Mack 545).

A Legacy Under Fire: the Posthumous Reception of Gray

The letters between Walpole and Mason prior to the publication demonstrate Mason's desire for the *Memoirs* to be commercially successful, creating a larger legacy for Gray after his death and financial stability for himself. When discussions about the publication began, Walpole envisioned printing the *Memoirs* at his printing press at Strawberry Hill: "If he has left anything for the press, I flatter myself mine will be allowed to contribute to that office. I shall be very happy to bear all the expense" (*The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence* 18-19). If Gray's materials had been printed on the Walpole's private printing press and confined to the appreciation of the elite, the result would likely have been a radically different construction of Gray (Thomson 110). However, Mason immediately informed Walpole that any publication resulting from Gray's papers would be profitable:

After thanking you for the very obliging offer you make of publishing his poems, etc., I will with the same freedom tell you my opinion upon that subject. I always thought Mr. Gray blamable for letting the booksellers have his MSS gratis [...] My first business therefore will be to ascertain the [copy]right, and afterwards to make as much profit of the book as I possibly can. I hope you will do me the justice to believe that I shall dispose of the money that may accrue in a way that will do honour to the memory of Mr. Gray, and in so doing I flatter myself you will think that I shall do much better in this point than he did, who had certainly much better have taken the profits, and bestowed them on such benevolent purposes, for which his purse was never, till of late, sufficient to answer the demands of his heart... I only mean that the edition for public sale shall be contrived to be a lucrative one. (*The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence* 22-23)

The work was published by J. Dodsley in 1775, and despite Mason's desire to produce a commercial success, the public response was less enthusiastic than hoped for (Thomson 114). In an attempt to cheer Mason after the publication, Walpole stressed the work's place as a future classic: "The best books are certainly never calculated for their plurality of readers; or, which is wondrous rare, some very good judge must be the dictator of the age. Still, it is a comfort that

works of genius are indestructible” (*The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence* 190).

Though the work’s sales were disappointing, Mason continued building his and Gray’s legacies through copyright. In the Advertisement to his own poem, *The English Garden*, Mason writes:

The Author printed a certain number of copies of this second book last year to give to his friends, intending at that time to defer the Publication till he had completed the whole of his plan in four books. His experience of the fraudulent Practices of certain Booksellers has since intimated to him the danger of a Piracy; and therefore he had thought it expedience to reprint it, for public sale. He has also entered it (as the act directs) in Stationer’s Hall...though it encourages an injured Author to prosecute, seems not (as it now stands) to give him damages from the delinquent, adequate to the injury he may sustain. (*The English Garden*)¹⁰³

Mason’s Advertisement served as both an attack on Murray as well as the copyright process itself, where he hoped to set a legal precedent for greater compensation (Zachs 172). Murray retaliated with “A Letter to W. Mason, A.M. Precentor of York, Concerning his Edition of Mr. Gray’s Poem and The Practices of Booksellers” (1776), in which he accused Mason of prostituting Gray’s work out of greed. Therein he pronounces:

But even all the poems of Mr. Gray were insufficient to gratify the avarice of his executor; who discovered that they could be extended into a small volume only of one or two shillings price; whereas his idea was to publish a large book at the price of eighteen shillings, which, advertised to the public under Mr. Gray’s name, assured him of a rapid sale and much profit. (16).

Mason won the copyright suit, and Murray was denied the right to republish work that had been exclusively published in Mason’s *The Life of Gray*. Though Murray did profit from his later edition of Gray’s work without the three poems (1778), Mason ultimately won the suit because he could prove ownership of the material. His victory has been praised as “a judgment that established an important point in copyright law” (Zachs 175). In successfully proving his

¹⁰³ The Advertisement of Book II of *The English Garden* is not paginated.

copyright over Gray's manuscripts and unpublished works, Mason exerted control over Gray's legacy and ensured his own.

Mason's attempt to secure the legacies of himself and Gray with a wider audience had not been as successful as he had hoped. However, the publication of Samuel Johnson's "Life of Gray" in his *Lives of the Most Eminent Poets* (1779-1781) proved an even greater hurdle in establishing the literary legacy of Gray and ultimately resulted in Mason's second fashioning of Gray—and himself—as laureate rejecters in the *Memoirs of William Whitehead*. Johnson reverses Mason's attempts to make Gray more approachable to the reading public. Johnson describes that in his early life Gray "lived sullenly," and of his time at Cambridge, Gray, "without liking the place or its inhabitants, or professing to like them, Gray passed, except a short residence at London, the rest of his life" (176). Echoing the criticism of "The Progress of Poetry" and "The Bard," Johnson states that "some that tried them confessed their inability to understand them, [and] Some hardy champions undertook to rescue them from neglect, and in a short time many were content to be shewn beauties which they could not see" (178). Finally, of Gray's overall influence, Johnson argues that Gray:

...seemed to value others chiefly according to the progress they had made in knowledge, yet he could not bear to be considered himself merely as a man of letters; and though without birth, or fortune, or station, his desire was to be looked upon as a private independent gentleman, who read for his amusement. Perhaps it may be said, What signifies so much knowledge, when it produced so little? Is it worth taking so much pains to leave no memorial but a few poems? (179)

Though some contemporary critics such as Anna Seward, Joshua Reynolds, and Elizabeth Montagu were displeased with Johnson's representation of Gray, as time passed Johnson's

judgments, which had formerly seemed formerly reactionary assumptions, “came to be more or less acceptable” to William Hazlitt and others (Lonsdale 80).¹⁰⁴

Modern critics, such as Stephen Clarke, Lonsdale, and Zionkowski have questioned the reasons behind Johnson’s obvious dislike for Gray. Both Clarke and Lonsdale agree that Johnson’s disdain for Gray stemmed from what he saw as Gray’s “inflated, over-rated and corrupted style of poetry,” as well as the obscurity of his verse (Clarke 25). Lonsdale adds that in Gray’s *Odes* in particular, Johnson sees the “deplorable” tendencies of English poetry since the death of Pope such as: “exhibitionist diction in which plain prose meaning was diluted or distorted; remoteness from the central human experience and the absence of explicitly ‘improving’ concerns; the exclusion of the ‘common reader’ from the envisaged audience [...] which Gray’s own epigraph proclaimed to be ‘vocal to the intelligent alone’” (78-79). Zionkowski argues, however, that the main point of contention between the two men was based upon Johnson’s contempt for Gray’s minimal publication efforts and his representation of himself as a lifelong gentleman and scholar: “Samuel Johnson, who took pride in his ability to support himself by writing, implicitly censured Gray’s desire to be looked upon ‘as a private independent gentleman, who read for his amusement’” (“Bridging the Gulf” 331). Building on these critics’ arguments, I contend that Gray’s rejection of the poet laureateship is the area upon which Johnson and Mason agree. While Johnson disliked Gray’s position as a lofty scholar,

¹⁰⁴ Anna Seward, for example, published an advertisement in *Gentleman’s Magazine*, urging Mason to retaliate (Lonsdale 74).

In His *Lectures on the English Poets* (1818), Hazlitt describes of Gray:

I should conceive that Collins had a much greater poetical genius than Gray: he had more of that fine madness which is inseparable from it, of its turbid effervescence, of all that pushes it to the verge of agony or rapture. Gray’s Pindaric Odes are, I believe, generally given up at present: they are stately and pedantic, a kind of methodical borrowed phrenzy. But I cannot so easily give up, nor will the world be in any haste to part with his “Elegy in a Country Church-yard” [...] “The Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College” is more mechanical and common-place; but it touches on certain strings about the heart, that vibrate in unison with it to our latest breath. No one ever passes by Windsor’s “stately heights,” or sees the distant spires of Eton College below, without thinking of Gray [...] His Letters are inimitably fine. If his poems are sometimes finical and pedantic, his prose is quite free from affectation. (229-231)

Gray's rejection of the laureateship bolstered Johnson's extensive negative writings about patronage.

Indeed, Gray's refusal of the laureateship is the only incident from his life that Johnson praises. Johnson states, "Gray's reputation was now so high that, after the death of Cibber, he had the honour of refusing the laurel, which was then bestowed on Mr. Whitehead" (178). That Johnson considered the refusal of the laurel an "honour" is not surprising given his feelings about patronage. Where Pope and Jonathan Swift had used satire and creative marketing to promote themselves as above patronage, Johnson went further and declared patronage to be a tradition all writers should avoid. In Johnson's poem, "The Vanity of Human Wishes" (1749), the speaker warns writers that patrons "marked ill the scholar's life" (ll.159-160). Similarly, in *The Rambler, Number 21* (1750), Johnson pronounces one major problem in writing for hire: writers cannot truly express themselves when they must espouse a patron's ideology in order to earn a living. He states:

Among the motives that urge an author to undertakings by which his reputation is impaired, one of the most frequent must be mentioned with tenderness, because it is not to be counted among his follies, but his miseries. It very often happens that the works of learning or of wit are performed at the direction of those by whom they are to be rewarded; the writer has not always the choice of his subject, but is compelled to accept any task which is thrown before him without much consideration of his own convenience, and without time to prepare himself by previous studies...But, though we suppose that a man by his fortune can avoid the necessity of dependence, and by his spirit can repel the usurpations of patronage. (119-120)

Five years later, in the moment earlier critics have defined as the end of the patronage system, Johnson famously and publicly chides his patron, Lord Chesterfield. In his 1755 letter upon the completion of his *English Dictionary*, Johnson accuses his patron thus:

Seven years, My lord have now past since I waited in your outward Rooms or was repulsed from your Door, during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of Publication without one Act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of

favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron. (“Letter to Chesterfield”)

For Johnson, Gray’s rejection of the laureateship was rejection of royal patronage: the laureateship was the highest symbol of patronage in England at the time. In making Gray’s rejection of the laureateship public in *The Poems of Mr. Gray* (1775), Mason began to construct an identity for Gray that even Johnson could not criticize: a laureate rejecter. Mason would continue this process in his edition of Whitehead’s poems.

Legacies Revised: Poems by William Whitehead, Esq. Late Poet Laureat [...] To Which are Prefixed Memoirs of his Life and Writings by W. Mason, M.A.

Upon the death William Whitehead in 1785, Mason set about writing a memoir for his friend that would memorialize Whitehead while also using his laureateship to further both Mason’s and Gray’s legacies as laureate rejecters. Where Mason had structured *The Poems of Mr. Gray* (1775) with Gray’s own correspondence in order to allow Gray “to become his own biographer” (5), *Poems by William Whitehead, Esq. Late Poet Laureate, and Register and Secretary to the Most Honourable Order of the Bath. Vol III. To Which are Prefixed Memoirs of his Life and Writings. By W. Mason, M.A* (1788) does not contain letters, and Mason’s involvement in the construction of Whitehead is clear from the first page. Though the titles of the two memoirs are similar, the purposes are vastly different. Of the Whitehead memoir, Mason writes that “the ingenious, learned, and amiable man, whose writings, either uncollected or unpublished by himself, I here form into a third volume of his works; and the Memoirs of whose life I think it a duty on my friendship for him to prefix, was born at Cambridge in the beginning of the year 1714-1715” (1). The use of passive voice when referring to Whitehead and active voice when he refers to himself reveals the agency Mason sees for himself in writing the memoirs: he “forms” the memoirs and the previously unpublished works into a volume. This

self-described formation is the antithesis of his purpose in Gray's memoirs, where he specifically used private correspondence in an effort to remove his own narrative from the biography. Throughout the text, Mason narrates Whitehead's life, and, significantly, interrupts it to praise and criticize other important literary figures of the day—especially Gray and Johnson. Though Mason's text serves as a memorialization of Whitehead, it simultaneously works to defend Gray—and Mason by extension—against the attack from Johnson in "The Life of Gray."

Mason had previously published anonymous attacks on Johnson after the publication of *Lives of the Poets*; however, it was not until four years after Johnson's death that Mason used his name to answer Johnson's criticism of Gray in *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Whitehead* (1788).¹⁰⁵ Mason's first mention of Johnson occurs in the second section of the text, in which he discusses Whitehead's early poetry. Mason compares Whitehead's "Ann Boleyn to Henry the Eighth: An Epistle" (1743) to Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard" (1717). While Mason acknowledges that Pope's poem is a "*chef d'oeuvre* [and], that nothing of the kind can be relished after it," he then continues by saying that "it is not the story itself, nor the sympathy it excites in us, as Dr. Johnson would have us think...it is the happy use he has made of the monastic gloom of the parraclete, and [...] papistical machinery, which gives it its capital charm" (35).¹⁰⁶ Mason contradicts Johnson's reading of "Eloisa and Abelard," and inherent in this contradiction is a desire to revise Johnson's version of literary history.

¹⁰⁵ Mason's anonymous satirical poems "The Heroic Epistle to Sir William Chambers" (1773), the "Ode to Mr. Pinchbeck" (1776), the "Epistle to Dr. Shebbaeare" (1777), the "Epistle to Sir Fletcher Norton" (1777), and the "Archeological Epistle to the Reverend and Worshipful Jeremiah Miles" (1782) all contained attacks on Johnson (Clarke 18). Because he waited more than ten years after "Life of Gray," the tardiness of Mason's words is mocked in *On Mr. Mason's abuse of the late Dr. Samuel Johnson in the Memoirs of Mr. William Whitehead* (1795).

¹⁰⁶ In "The Life of Pope," Johnson states of "Eloisa to Abelard" that "the mixture of religious hope and resignation gives an elevation and dignity to disappointed love, which images merely cannot bestow" (11). He reiterates the value of the story for readers later in the section when he says:

The *Epistle of Eloise to Abelard* is one of the most happy productions of human wit: the subject is so judiciously chosen that it would be difficult, in turning over the annals of the world, to find another which

Mason uses discussions of Whitehead's works to bring up instances of questionable criticism from Johnson. With *The Roman Father* (1750), Mason criticizes Johnson's disregard for blank verse. In discussing Whitehead's play and the attention it garnered from David Garrick, Mason pontificates on the use of blank verse and "tragic style" (59).¹⁰⁷ Mason uses Voltaire's Preface to *Mariamne* (1724) to argue that the elements of good published tragedy will stand alone as publications, where tragedies that do not adhere to the unities will disappear after they have had their time on the stage (56). Though Mason criticizes *The Roman Father* for its defectiveness in the unity of place, he applauds Whitehead for his tragic style. Though Johnson never specifically criticized *The Roman Father*, Mason uses this opportunity to deride him for his dislike of blank verse: "Of all this I cannot help supposing the Doctor, through life, very ignorant; and therefore, succeeding so ill as he did in his species of versification, I am apt to think that he was thence led to decry blank verse in the lump" (62).¹⁰⁸ After criticizing Johnson's dislike of blank verse as well as his poetry, Mason chastises Johnson's animosity for eighteenth-century writers' integration of classical mythology, and Mason subsequently criticizes eighteenth-century audience's acceptance of this flaw in Johnson:

I must own I am at a loss to account for this from any other cause, than that the public taste chuses to submit to the dogma of their late critic, who has so very universally, and

so many circumstances concur to recommend. We regularly interest ourselves most in the fortune of those who most deserve our notice. Abelard and Eloise were conspicuous in their days for eminence of merit. The heart naturally loves truth. The adventures and misfortunes of this illustrious pair are known from undisputed history. Their fate does not leave the mind in hopeless dejection; for they both found quiet and consolation in retirement and piety. So new and so affecting is their story that it supersedes invention, and imagination ranges at full liberty without straggling into scenes of fable. (72)

¹⁰⁷ Whitehead's *The Roman Father* was first performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, on 24 February 1750 and was a commercial success. It was reprinted frequently after its first publication in 1750, adapted by Whitehead for revival in 1767, and even translated into French. Perhaps more importantly, it brought Whitehead into contact with Garrick (though he had already written a flattering poem to the actor on his appointment as patentee at Drury Lane), who played the leading role (Scott).

¹⁰⁸ In "The Life of Milton," Johnson considers the role of blank verse in Milton's poetry and demonstrates his conflict between his preference for rhyme and his refusal to say anything critical of Milton: "But whatever be the advantage of rhyme I cannot prevail on myself to wish that Milton had been a rhymer, for I cannot wish his work to be other than it is; yet like other heroes he is to be admired rather than imitated" (276).

without any exceptions, reprobated whatever he is pleased to term mythological, in which class he would undoubtedly place the drama in question, notwithstanding the care which the poet has taken to expunge the miraculous and improbable from history, and consequently, to remove every thing that might be thought objectionable on that account. (74)

This is the first direct reference to Johnson's "Life of Gray," in which Johnson criticized Gray's "The Bard" for "the puerilities of obsolete mythology" (183). Mason not only derides Johnson for his lack of appreciation for mythology but also questions his two positions as a literary historian and arbiter of taste. Mason questions whether Johnson should be considered the trusted, preeminent literary critic of the day if Johnson cannot appreciate classical mythology.

While questioning Johnson's position as an arbiter of taste, Mason is presenting himself as an alternative literary critic and Gray as a more appropriate alternative for Johnson's current position. For instance, Mason uses Gray's opinion as evidence for the superior quality of Whitehead's poem, "On Friendship" (1774). Of the poem, Mason states:

I speak not here merely my own opinion, but that of Mr. Gray, who, when I was permitted by the author, at my own request, to shew it to him in manuscript, gave it, in point of poetry higher commendations than ever I heard him give on a similar occasion, yet, at the same time, he as much disapproved the general sentiment which it conveyed, for he said it would furnish the unfeeling and capricious with apologies for their defects; that it ought to be intitled a Satire on Friendship, and much more to the same purpose. (*Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Whitehead* 40-41)

Moreover, Mason notes that Whitehead held Gray's opinion in such high regard that he "made a considerable addition to the concluding part of the piece" as a result (41). Gray, acting as a teacher, alerted Whitehead to a problem in his writing, and Whitehead, the dutiful student, fixed it, creating a superior piece of poetry. Similarly, when discussing the publication of Whitehead's *Elegies* (1757), Mason reasons that they sold poorly because "Mr. Gray's elegy was better than any of them" and the climate of poetry was such that if it was not the best, it could not have merit (84). Gray's writings are the standard to which Whitehead's writings are held. He declares that

publishing Whitehead's travel correspondence is unnecessary as Mason has already published Gray's correspondence while travelling through the same areas. He additionally notes that he possesses "very few entertaining [letters from Whitehead]" (83). In identifying Gray's writing as a standard, Mason's memoir reduces Whitehead's writings to second-rate.

While Mason authorizes Gray as a timeless adjudicator of taste, he also establishes himself as an authentic biographer who writes with permission from his subjects or from their executors. Describing the process by which he came to write Whitehead's *Memoirs*, Mason states in a footnote: "[General Stevens] some years before his death, by will, appointed his [Whitehead's] executor; and it is by his communication of the MSS. found since his decease, and the obliging confidence he has placed in me, as believing I shall make no improper use of them, that I have been enabled to trace his growing abilities from their earliest exertion" (52n). Because Mason was specifically selected by Gray and Whitehead (by way of his executor) to write these memoirs, readers can be more assured of the authenticity of the content. In contrast, Johnson's Prefaces in *Lives of the Poets* were solicited by a consortium of booksellers, and Johnson profited more than 200 pounds from the publication.¹⁰⁹ Mason highlights these differences between himself and Johnson at the end of the memoirs, where he distances himself from the Johnsonian school of life writing, which he refers to as "vituperative criticism" and "intellectual indigestion." Mason instructs his critics simply wait for one of Johnson's "disciples who may follow their master's example" to write a memoir of Whitehead that is more to their liking and thus inauthentic (129).

¹⁰⁹ The booksellers who initially proposed the project to Johnson are Tom Davies, William Strahan, and Thomas Cadell. It is believed by many modern scholars that Johnson could have asked for more money (Rogers).

Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Whitehead and the Laureate Rejecters

Johnson's "The Life of Gray" had demonstrated that Gray's rejection of the laureateship had value even for his critics; therefore, in *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Whitehead*, Mason uses Whitehead's laureateship to further establish the legacies of himself and Gray as laureate rejecters. Framing the discussion of their rejections with basic information about Whitehead's tenure, Mason quickly moves into his actual objective, which is to reveal more information about Gray's rejection and create value for himself by revealing that he too rejected the laureateship: "the memoirs, which I published of Mr. Gray's life, have acquainted the public, that the place was before offered to him by my mediation. Let me then be permitted, from a personal motive, of gratitude to the memory of the late Duke of Devonshire, here to add, that I was not myself overlooked on the occasion" (87). Mason describes that Lord John Cavendish apologized because "being in orders, I was thought merely on that account, less eligible for the office than a layman" (87). Though the offer Mason describes is half-hearted at best, Mason's inclusion of it in Whitehead's memoir demonstrates the value he thought it held for him.

Modern critics have adopted earlier critics' assumptions about Mason as a potential laureate contender. Recent laureate studies such as *Verses of the Poets Laureate from John Dryden to Andrew Motion* (1999) and Ellison's *Civic Subjects: Wordsworth, Tennyson, and the Victorian Laureateship* (2010) do not consider Mason a laureate rejecter or even a contender. Both Ellison and Laurie skip over him altogether, and Panecka only briefly mentions Mason as a nominee who was "passed over" (40).

Laureate scholars and Mason's biographers have been remiss in considering Mason's rejection of the laurel. John Draper's biography of Mason briefly quotes the above section of Whitehead's memoir but offers no further information about the offer to Mason (50). Draper

does, however, note the high volume of satires about Mason's potential for the laureateship in 1785 after the death of Whitehead (106).¹¹⁰ Similar to Draper, Broadus quotes the same section of the Whitehead memoir, but other than confirming it by providing a corresponding newspaper articles that mentioned the offer, Broadus says only "the position disdained by Gray was coveted by Mason" (136).¹¹¹ Mason never states either in Gray's or in Whitehead's memoir that he wanted to be laureate or that he coveted Whitehead's position. One might infer that Mason was jealous of the offer of the laureateship as a sinecure to Gray; however, the evidence for even that is slight at best. Moreover, after Whitehead's appointment, Mason wrote to Gray that, "I can't finish my letter without telling you an excellent Story of Fobus. On the death of the Laureat, Lord Barrington told him, he was very glad to find I was not going to succeed because it would be a shame to employ me in writing such stuff as Birthday Odes" (*The Correspondence of Thomas Gray* II 258). Mason understood that the value of the laureateship was not in holding the office but in his ability to fashion himself as a laureate rejecter—just as he had earlier done for Gray and examining the ways Mason uses both his and Gray's rejections of the laureateship in Whitehead's memoir allows us to understand how the laureateship functioned as an antithesis to good poetry in the period.

Mason uses Whitehead's memoir to reveal more information about Gray's rejection of the laureateship, including the offer of the laureateship as a sinecure, which increases Gray's value as a laureate rejecter as well as Mason's as a biographer. Mason describes of the offer: "I

¹¹⁰ *The Monthly Review* reprinted "An Epistle From the Rev. William M---n to the Right Hon. William Pitt...petitioning for the vacant Laureateship," and Richard Tickell ascribed to Mason one of their Probationary Odes (#30), where a dozen or more "poets" of the day (including Mason) are represented as assembling at the Lord Chamberlain's office 'on Wednesday last/ each to recite a specimen of his work and to apply for the vacant honor...' (106). Of Mason's potential in 1757, Draper only quotes the statement made by Mason himself in Whitehead's memoir.

¹¹¹ *Lloyd's Evening Post* December 14, 1757 states, "We hear that Mr. Mason, author of *Elfrida*, is to succeed Colley Cibber, Esq. as Poet Laureat."

may now also add another circumstance, which before I had my reasons for omitting that the office of Laureat was offered to Mr. Gray, with permission to hold it as a mere sinecure. This was not the case it was given to Mr. Whitehead, and I have often wondered why” (88). This offer would have been the first time the laureateship held no official duties since the tenure of Nahum Tate and shows the high regard the Lord Chamberlain had for Gray. Gray’s rejection of the office reveals a rejection not only of the duties of the office, but also a rejection of what the office represented for his legacy. In Whitehead’s *Memoirs*, Mason provides a large fragment from Gray’s 1757 letter to him, rejecting the offer for the laureateship. In the letter, Gray describes that the reputation of the office—regardless of its duties—can destroy the reputation of its holder whether he is a great writer or an unknown writer:

In short, the office itself has always humbled the Pos[ses]or hitherto (even in an age when 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 Laureat.(92)¹¹²

Gray implies that he did not believe the office was redeemable, for even if a great poet were to accept the position, his legacy would be tied up in the satires about his laureateship, and if an unknown writer accepted the position, his only notoriety would come from his the position and the subsequent satires. Gray’s letter affirms this when he says at the end of the letter that he “rather wish[es] somebody may accept it, that will retrieve the credit of the thing, if it be retrievable, or ever had any credit” (*Correspondence of Thomas Gray* II 544-545). By including these excerpts, Mason elevates Gray’s status as a laureate rejecter. He did not simply reject the office—something that had never been done before—he also rejected an offer of a new version

¹¹² *The Correspondence of Thomas Gray* Volume III discloses the rest of the letter, which specifically discusses the legacies of previous laureates: Nicholas Rowe, who served as Poet Laureate 1715-1718, and Laurence Eusden, who was Poet Laureate 1718-1730:

Rowe was, I think, the last Man of character that had it. As to Settle, whom you mention, he belong’d to my Lord Mayor, not to the King. Eusden was a Person of great hopes in his youth tho’ at last he turned out a drunken Parson. Dryden was as disgraceful to the Office from his character, as the poorest Scribbler could have been from his verses. (*Correspondence of Thomas Gray* II 544)

of the laureateship especially created for him and one that would have aligned the office with more modern ideas about patronage held by Johnson and others.

Mason's discussion of Whitehead's tenure as laureate centers on laureate task writing and the satires he endured at the hand of Charles Churchill; Whitehead's laureateship thus justifies the rejection of the office by Gray and Mason.¹¹³ After revealing that the offer of the office as a sinecure did not apply to Whitehead, Mason discloses the advice he gave to Whitehead upon his appointment in how to bypass the task writing: "I advised him to employ a deputy to write his annual odes, and reserve his own pen for certain great occasions that might occur, such as peace or a marriage; and then to address his Royal Master with some studied ode or epistle, as Boileau and Racine had done in France, for their pensions" (88-89).¹¹⁴ As to whom Whitehead could employ for these task writings, Mason suggests "needy poets of the day, who, for the reward of five or ten guineas, would write immediately under the eye of the musical composer" (89). Because these poets are "needy," they would not be bothered by the "humiliating" task of writing bi-annual odes that must "cut their lines shorter or spin them out longer in order to fit them to any given air" (89). The laureate poetry was not written for the purpose of showing the poet's prowess in the genre; it was written to be performed with music during the bi-annual celebrations. The poetry had to adhere to the structure of the music and was not written to be read without it—a point Cibber attempted to make during his tenure as laureate. Whitehead, however, did not take this advice, and Mason describes that "He [Whitehead] set himself to his

¹¹³ Charles Churchill (1732-1764) was a poet most known for his satire including *The Rosciad* (1761), a satire of actors of the day (Sambrook). Of Churchill's satires of Whitehead, Broadus remarks that he used "a bludgeon" (40). For instance, his poem "William Whitehead," which is part of his larger work, *The Ghost Part III* (1762) invokes Whitehead's laureate odes to "Trite be each thought, and ev'ry line/ As moral, and as dull as thine!" (Churchill).

¹¹⁴ Nicholas Boileau (1636-1711) was a French writer and critic. He was appointed Historiographer Royal in 1677 and served for fifteen years ("Nicholas Boileau"). Jean Racine (1639-1699) was a French dramatist and critic. Racine also served as Historiographer Royal ("Jean Racine").

periodical task, with the zeal of a person who wished to retrieve the honours of the laurel” (88-90). Mason’s construction of Whitehead’s tenure would show, however, that the laurel could not be retrieved—even with superior poetry.

Mason asserts that the prescriptive nature of the odes themselves, along with the vitriolic satire the laureate endures, prevents the formation of a positive legacy. Mason lauds Whitehead’s first bi-annual ode, a birthday ode for George II in 1758, for its “poetical merit,” noting that it “had the very just approbation of Mr. Gray” despite that the ode was ignored by the public (90). Mason reasons that this was a result of the genre as odes were “least adapted to the taste of the times,” a fact Gray had learned earlier in the year (90). Whitehead’s laureateship was also plagued by the satires written about him, and Mason declares that “it is almost inconceivable what a quantity of sarcastic squibs were flung at Mr. Whitehead” (91). Where Cibber endured the attacks of Pope, Whitehead endured those of Charles Churchill. Churchill berated Whitehead in several of his works including *The Ghost* (1763), *The Prophecy of Famine* (1763), and *Independence* (1764), and Mason likens the cheap criticism of Whitehead to the low price of the “Penny-Post letters, or the still cheaper vehicle of the newspapers, in which scandal is almost the only thing that can inserted gratis” (91). These criticisms are ubiquitous, yet, as Mason notes, the only options for writers are either to suffer them in silence or “wage war with the said little fry” (92). Mason commends Whitehead for refusing to engage in public paper wars with his critics, while also enabling him to have the last word with them by publishing his poem, “A Pathetic Apology for all Laureats, Past Present, and to Come” in the *Memoirs*. The poem had previously only been circulated “for the amusement of his friends” but after his death, Mason publishes it as “there will be no impropriety in making [it] more public” (93). In so doing, Mason uses Whitehead’s poetry to validate his opinions about the laureateship.

As with Cibber's *Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber*, Whitehead's "A Pathetic Apology for all Laureats, Past, Present, and to Come" uses the word "apology" to connote a defense; however, Whitehead's apology is written directly to his critics and argues that criticism of the laureates and especially the bi-annual odes makes the critic far more ridiculous than the laureate. The speaker begins by reminding critics that laureates have no agency in choosing their form or subject:

His muse, oblig'd by sack and pension
Without subject or invention—
Must certain words in order set
As innocent as a Gazette;
Must some half-meaning half disguise,
And utter neither truth nor lies. (ll. 9-14)

The speaker then echoes Mason's (and Gray's) claims earlier in the memoir, arguing that the satires written about the laureates and the odes are excessive, but the speaker amusingly frames his argument in terms of task-writing. Unlike laureates, critics are not tasked with bi-annual writings, and the speaker questions why they do it without a pension:

But why will you, ye volunteers
In nonsense, teize us with your jeers,
Who might with dullness and her crew
Securely slumber? Why will you
Sport your dim orbs amidst her fogs?
You're not oblig'd—ye silly dogs! (ll.15-20)

The speaker continues to compare the laureate to his critics, referencing the performance of the bi-annual odes, which are "sung but once" whereas "your renown/ for half a season stuns the town" (ll. 85-87). In the last lines of the poem, the speaker turns laureate criticism on its head when he says:

To Laureats is no pity due,
Incumber'd with a thousand clogs?
I'm very sure they pity you,
--Ye silliest of all silly dogs! (ll. 108-111)

This poem then encapsulates all of Mason's and Gray's arguments about the laureateship: any laureate will endure immense personal criticism and criticism for his task poetry even though he has no control over the structure or content of it. By publishing this poem posthumously in Whitehead's *Memoirs*, Mason uses Whitehead's voice to confirm his beliefs about the laureateship. Mason also—whether consciously or unconsciously—ensures that Whitehead's legacy will be fused with criticism about the laureateship. Mason's construction of Whitehead has reverberated in modern critics have amalgamated Whitehead with his bi-annual odes and the satires written about him by minor authors of the time. Studies of Whitehead have focused exclusively on his tenure as laureate and mostly written by laureate scholars as part of large-scale projects on the laureates such as those by Broadus, Panecka, and Ellison. W.B. Carnochan uses Whitehead as an example of the conflict of modern authorship as his "A Charge to the Poets" (1762) urged writers not to publish too quickly; yet, when he became poet laureate, he was required "to versify on demand" (141). Though Whitehead was named poet laureate five years prior to "A Charge to the Poets," Carnochan uses Whitehead's "An Apology for Laureates, Past, Present, and to Come," to argue that Whitehead "chafed" under the laureateship's requirement of task writing (141). For Carnochan, Whitehead—and the laureateship—serve as cautionary tales of professional authorship in the eighteenth century. Authors who could not afford "to act out the fantasy of the disinterested professional," such as Gray and Mason, were forced into positions of patronage like the laureateship (141). Using his biography, Mason constructs Whitehead as the antithesis to himself and Gray: they will be remembered for rejecting the laureateship, and he will be remembered as a victim of it.

Mason's construction of his and Gray's identities as laureate rejecters expands the opportunities for writers to create legacies for themselves and their peers through life writing

genres. His construction of Gray through the use of his private correspondence and previously unpublished works build from Gray's rejection of the monarchy in his Pindaric odes. Johnson's *The Lives of the Poets* stalls Mason's attempts to memorialize Gray as Britain's preeminent poet when Johnson's "Gray" casts Gray as an obscure poet. Johnson's biographical writing reveals the value of Gray's rejection of the laureateship, however, and Mason thus uses their combined rejections to fashion themselves as the antitheses of Whitehead and all poet laureates in Whitehead's memoir. Mason's biographies thus use a new genre to affirm the representation of the laureates that Pope began earlier in the century with satire, aligning poets laureate with hack poetry and hack poets. Mason expands Pope's notion of laureates by doing the reverse: aligning good poets with laureate rejection.

CHAPTER 4: MODERN LAUREATES: SOUTHEY, WORDSWORTH, AND THE LAUREATE BI-ANNUAL ODES

After Whitehead's death in 1785, the laureateship continued to decline in popularity during the tenures of Warton and Pye, who like their predecessors, suffered the criticism of satirists throughout their tenures, specifically with regard to their laureate odes. Upon Warton's first birthday ode for King George III, Sir John Hawkins released *Probationary Odes for the Laureateship with a Preliminary Discourse* (1785), which satirized the office's history as well as including mock probationary odes from the laureate contenders of 1785.¹¹⁵ All of the mock odes in the collection are satiric except for the probationary ode written by Warton, which is published exactly as performed on the king's birthday. *Probationary Odes* concludes with a mock announcement by the Lord Chamberlain declaring Warton the victor of the competition and the new poet laureate:

[We] have made, ordained, nominated, constituted, and appointed, and by these presents do make, ordain, nominate, constitute, and appoint the Rev. Thomas Warton, B.D. to be our true and only legal Poet and Poetaster, that is to say, to pen, write, compose, transpose, select, dictate, compile, indite [sic.], invent, design, steal, put together, transcribe, frame, fabricate, manufacture, make, join, build, scrape, grub, collect, vamp, find, discover, catch, smuggle, pick up, beg, borrow, or buy in the same manner and with the same privileges as have been usually practiced, and heretofore enjoyed by every other Laureate...and for this purpose to produce, deliver, chaunt, or sing, as in our wisdom aforesaid we shall judge proper, at the least three good and substantial Odes, in the best English and German verse, in every year, that is to say, one due and proper ode on the Nativity of our Blessed Self; one due on the proper Ode on the dearest and best beloved Royal Consort, for the time being; and also one due and proper Ode on the day of Nativity of every future year. (Hawkins 124-125)

The mock odes, combined with the above job description, in Hawkins's text demonstrate the ways in which the laureate odes had become symbolic of the problem with the laureateship: the

¹¹⁵ Mock odes are written by laureate contenders including Cecil Wray, Joseph Mawbey, Richard Hill, William Mason, Thomas Warton, William Markham, Michael Angelo Taylor, James M'Pherson, Major John Scott, Nathaniel Wraxhall, William Hayley, Arthur Murphy, Richard Cumberland, and George Prettyman (Hawkins 8-9).

odes emphasized the ownership of the poet by the monarch. The odes precluded the poet's ability from changing the form or the content—forced praise—and denied authorial independence.

Laureates endured criticism for the poetry they wrote as part of their official responsibilities as court employees. Cibber engaged this criticism by way of demonstrating his expertise in the theater and attempting to change the conversation about what laureates can do. Understanding the negative climate for laureates in the mid-century, Mason used his and Gray's rejections of the laureateship to fashion an identity for themselves as anti-laureates. The symbolism of laureate poetry worsened during Pye's tenure as George III's illness worsened and until 1804, Pye was still required to produce bi-annual odes praising him. As a result, Pye suffered myriads of criticism for his odes—most notably, Peter Pindar's *The remonstrance. To which is added, an Ode to my ass* (1791), which questioned whether the purpose of the odes was simply “proving the great King alive” (8). But no laureate attempted to change the ideology of the laureateship with regard to poetry until Southey's tenure (1813-1843).

In this chapter I shall argue that Southey sought to reconcile the laureateship with the modern ideas of authorship in the Romantic period by attempting to abolish the laureate task writings prior to his appointment. Failing in this goal, he subsequently used the task poetry itself as an act of rebellion. In so doing, Southey created a new legacy for the laureateship and for himself as laureate. The changes that Southey made resulted in Wordsworth's appointment to the laureateship as a sinecure, and Wordsworth's refusal to publish any laureate-related materials during his tenure solidified the laureateship as a position in alignment with conceptions of independent authorship at the time. Wordsworth's tenure as laureate fused his earlier work to secure greater copyright privileges for authors and his pronouncements about poets as originary

geniuses with his desire to be a laureate poet: his tenure then does not stand in opposition to his early work but as an appropriate conclusion to his life's work.

Poets Laureate in Context: Previous Studies on the Laureateships of Southey and Wordsworth

Southey studies have undergone a renaissance in the last ten years with the publication of his *Poetical Works 1793-1810* (2004), *The Collected Letters of Robert Southey* (2009), and *Robert Southey: Later Poetical Works 1811-1818* (2012). In 2006, Lynda Pratt urged this revitalization of Southey forward with her collection, *Robert Southey: Romanticism in Context* (2006), stating that “there was a marked disjunction between his lifetime and posthumous reputations” (xvii). Pratt argues that after the collected editions of Southey's works in 1837-1838, the family feud and rival posthumous editions had a negative impact on Southey's reputation and on the attempts to reconsider his life and works in the twentieth century (“Family Misfortunes? The posthumous editing of Robert Southey” 237). In 2011, *The Wordsworth Circle* devoted an entire issue to papers that had been presented at the first international conference on Southey in Keswick in 2008, which featured work from Pratt, Fulford, Gamer, and others, and the essays demonstrated both Southey's centrality to scholars' understanding of Romanticism and urged the renaissance of Southey studies forward (Preface). This current surge in Southey editing and scholarship has examined a myriad of issues related to Southey: his relationship to religion, his poetical output and composition strategies, his relationships with other Romantic writers, his abolition poetry, and his desire for the position Historiographer Royal.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ For scholarship on Southey's relationship to religion, see Stuart Andrews's *Robert Southey: History, Politics, Religion* (2011); Stuart Andrews's “Wordsworth, Southey, and the English Church” in *Wordsworth Circle* 44.1 (2013); and Daniel White's “Idolatry, Evangelism, and the Intense Objectivism of Robert Southey” in *Romanticism* 17.1 (2011). For recent scholarship on Southey's poetical output and composition strategies see Pratt's “What Robert Southey did not Write Next” in *Romanticism* 17.1 (2011) and Dahlia Porter's “Poetics of the Commonplace: Composing Robert Southey in *The Wordsworth Circle* 42.1 (2011); For recent scholarship on Southey's later work, see Tim Fulford's *The Late Poetry of the Lake Poets* (2013). For recent scholarship on Southey's abolition poetry, see Peter Kitson's “Fictions of Slave Resistance and Revolt: Robert Southey's Poems on

Because of Southey's fame and positive reputation prior to the appointment and his desire to abolish the bi-annual odes, Southey's tenure has been marked by scholars such as Broadus and Panecka as a "transition from the old order to the new" (Broadus 163).¹¹⁷ Using excerpts from his letters and the two different versions of "*Carmen Triumphale*," as well as Byron's satire of Southey in "The Vision of Judgment" (1822), Broadus's depiction of Southey's tenure is one of disappointment and satiric legacy. Broadus elucidates that "the very names of Southey's epics are forgotten, the unfortunate laureate lives in Byron's burlesque of his own vision" (Broadus 178). Likewise, though Broadus describes Southey as "a man of firm character and honest convictions," he writes of Southey's poetry that "the perspective of time has imparted to Wordsworth's egoisms a kind of simple grandeur, and has made of Southey's pretensions only sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal" (Broadus 176). Panecka echoes Broadus's conflicted representation of Southey's tenure. Of his laureateship, Panecka states, "Southey's poetry was inferior to Byron's and his odes no more accomplished than some produced by Whitehead, Warton, or Pye. However, by treating the Laureateship as a responsibility before the nation and not just a sinecure, Robert Southey allowed the office to regain its dignity" (Panecka 111). Carmen Ellison considers Southey's laureate legacy as it relates to his successors, noting that after Southey's laureateship brought an end to the bi-annual odes, Wordsworth and Tennyson could "construct new models of the laureateship to accommodate these often conflicting claims on their poetic vocation" (Ellison 74-75). All of these studies demonstrate multiple conflicts in the study of Southey's laureateship: the discrepancy between his early work and his reputation

the Slave Trade (1797) and Charlotte Smith's 'The Story of Henrietta'" in *Race, Romanticism, and the Atlantic* (2013). For recent scholarship on Southey as a historian, see David Fairer's "Southey's Literary History" (2006); Alison Morgan's "Let no Man Write my Epitaph": The Contributions of Percy Shelley, Thomas Moore and Robert Southey to the Memorialisation of Robert Emmet" in *Irish Studies Review* 22.3 (2014); and Stuart Andrew's "Before the Laureateship: Robert Southey as Historian" in *Romanticism* 21.1 (2015).

¹¹⁷ Panecka similarly describes Southey as "the last traditional laureate" as well as a "dignified functionary of the office" as he focused on the restoration of the office's reputation (19).

(both with his contemporaries and with modern critics); the discrepancy between the end of the bi-annual odes during his tenure and the lack of recognition he receives for as laureate who valued the “modern laureateship,” and the discrepancy between him as a valued early writer and his decision to accept an office known for the satires of it rather than its literary recognition or even financial value.¹¹⁸ Only a few recent scholars, including Storey and Gamer, have attempted to bridge these gaps in Southey studies.

Storey addresses the gap between Southey’s work and reputation by arguing that Southey’s attitude toward public politics—and therefore his attitude about his position as laureate—changed drastically after his pilgrimage to the site of the Battle of Waterloo. Examining Southey’s edits of “Carmen Triumphale” (1813), Storey argues that Southey never resolved the awkwardness of being a public poet and thus transitioned from writing poetry to writing history in his late life (90). Gamer considers Southey’s career as a laureate by arguing that the key to understanding Southey’s acceptance of the laureateship is that “the manner in which he conducted his career [...] signals a new era of professional writing—one characterized neither by patronage nor by venture capitalism, but rather by careful planning and a determination to eliminate unwanted contingencies and turns of fortune” (42). Re-thinking the insurance policy that Southey took out upon his laureateship, Gamer argues that the laureateship was a way for Southey to assure his financial legacy and his place in posterity.¹¹⁹ My work on Southey’s laureateship builds from these arguments: like Storey, I am interested in the ways that Southey reconstructed his poetic legacy after the laureateship was not what he thought it would

¹¹⁸ In his biography of Southey, Speck notes that the laureateship “did not bring with it any great material award, yielding only about £90 per year” (156). The office also provided the poet with a sack of wine, a tradition—like the salary—that had not been changed since Jonson’s 1630 pension.

¹¹⁹ In chapter four of his forthcoming book, *Recollections in Tranquility: The Romantic Art of Self-Canonization, 1765-1832*, Gamer extends this argument to contend that an analysis of Southey’s laureateship invokes a wealth of other facets including the economic and political aspects of Southey’s career, his early career as a professional writer, and insurance, creating a new picture not only of Southey, but of authorship in the period.

be. While I recognize that Southey produced little poetry after 1821, I argue that his poetic silence was part of Southey's strategy in changing the reputation for laureateship. This said, I agree fully with Gamer that Southey viewed his laureateship as a way to establish a legacy. Like Cibber before him, he was aware that the bi-annual task writings would never allow him to establish himself as a poet. In the fifty years since Cibber's laureateship, the idea of poetic task work was even more in conflict with modern authorship than before as writers from Johnson to Ann Yearsley had publically fallen out with patrons, and writers like Hazlitt had denounced the office's ability to write "at liberty" (Hazlitt).¹²⁰ Southey's laureateship addresses these changes in the literary marketplace, aligning the laureateship with modern ideas of authorship.

While studies in Southey have undergone revitalization over the last ten years, Wordsworth studies have never suffered a lapse in scholarship; however, studies of his later work—including that of his work as poet laureate—have been neglected by scholars until recently. Laureate scholars such as Broadus, Hopkins, and Panecka all similarly view Wordsworth's laureateship as a missed opportunity that was given to him "forty years too late"

¹²⁰ The question of patronal influence in the eighteenth century led to conflict between author and patron, notoriously demonstrated by the relationship of Yearsley and Hannah More. Yearsley was famously discovered as a milkmaid, peasant poet by More, and went on to become an overnight success; however, problems arose between the two when More's position as patron carried too much power over Yearsley and her finances. More, along with Lady Mary Montagu famously placed all of Yearsley's earnings from her publications into a trust, which they controlled. Kerri Andrews's article renders well the conflict between the author-patron relationship, class clashes, and the budding professionalism of writing. According to Andrews, at the heart of the breakdown of the two writers' relationship were concerns about class identity: Yearsley was not sufficiently grateful for her the kindness bestowed upon her by her patron. Indeed, "the relationship between More and Yearsley...serves to illustrate that one of the consequences of patronage by the new middling classes was the breaking down of clear cut boundaries which had separated patrons from their protégés. No longer were peasants being patronized by queens, but by those whose claims to social superiority were harder to define" (95). After her fall-out with More, Yearsley continued working with patrons, but with a completely different kind of relationship. Instead of being entirely dependent on one patron as she had been with More, Yearsley worked with several patrons, including Frederick Hervey, Fourth Earl of Bristol, with whom she was able to sustain a mentor relationship. As Andrews notes, "one of the legacies of her relationship with More was a refusal to rely so utterly on one person again" (Andrews 95). The example of More and Yearsley demonstrates not only the movement toward more authorial independence in patronal relationships, but also the financial struggle of writers of the nineteenth century.

In *The Examiner* No. 483, Hazlitt reminds readers of Southey's authorship of the controversial poem, "Wat Tyler," which is a poem about the 1381 Peasants' Revolt and argues that Southey's future work as laureate will likely be disingenuous as the laureate is not at liberty to voice his own opinions on political matters (Hazlitt).

(Hopkins 151).¹²¹ These scholars thus focus their attention on what Wordsworth could have accomplished during his tenure. Recent scholarship by Fulford and Ellison, however, has begun to more closely examine Wordsworth's later work, including work produced during his laureateship. In *The Late Poetry of the Lake Poets*, Fulford argues that the Romantic period's fascination with youth and neglect of age has resulted in a neglect of scholarship of older writers from the period: "What they wrote after 1814 is too often dismissed unexamined as 'apostasy' 'reaction' and 'decline,' or passed over in silence as if it did not exist. It is time to extend our view to take in all of their careers, accepting that what we think of them, and of Romanticism, may be changed in the process" (3). Fulford's work presents a Wordsworth whose later work was "shaped by the pressure of his public reception" as he was "forced to revise his commitments and repertoires under the new uncomfortable circumstances that come with age" (201, 203). Though Fulford's work focuses primarily on Wordsworth's later work from the 1820s and 1830s, Fulford's arguments invite a reconsideration of all of Wordsworth's work, specifically in relation to public reception and changing ideas of authorship, which the laureateship exposes.

Carmen Ellison answers Fulford's invitation by specifically examining the writing—and "refusal silence"—of Wordsworth's laureateship. Ellison examines the circumstances surrounding Wordsworth's appointment and his initial refusals of the office to argue that the "refusal silence" he practiced during his tenure, along with the personal relationship he cultivated with Queen Victoria, created a laureateship that symbolized what Wordsworth termed 'the national importance of poetic Literature' (77; quoted from Wordsworth, *Letters* 7.4: 425).

¹²¹ Panecka uses the same phrase: "The laureateship came to Wordsworth forty years too late" (112). Likewise, Broadus argues that "if Wordsworth could have been made laureate, say, in 1803, and as laureate, had written his prose tract on the Convention of Cintra, and the *Happy Warrior*, and the sonnets dedicated 'To Liberty'; if through all the years between 1803 and 1850 he had pursued his wonted course...the laureateship would have come to mean all that, ideally, it might mean" (184).

Ellison further contends that Wordsworth's silence "widened" the scope of the laureateship to one that Tennyson would continue to evolve (120). My work challenges Ellison's as I argue that Wordsworth's tenure as laureate was the culmination of his life's work in developing a place for poetry in the midst of evolving ideas of authorship and the divisions in the academy. Wordsworth's refusal to publish any laureate-related materials during his tenure solidified the laureateship as a position in alignment with ideas of authorship of the time and fused his earlier work on copyright and his pronouncements about poets as ordinary geniuses with his desire to be a laureate poet. Where Ellison argues that the combination of Wordsworth and Tennyson changed the reputation of the laureateship, I contend that the laureateship's reputation rose when Southey and Wordsworth brought it into alignment with Romantic ideas of authorship. In his attempts to abolish laureate task writing, which had become a symbol for the problems with the laureateship, as well as his subsequent use of the writings themselves to rebel against the tradition of task writing, Southey uses his laureateship to demonstrate authorial independence. Wordsworth then enacts authorial independence through silence during his tenure, refusing to participate in the laureate writing tradition at all.

Laureate Task Writing and Evolving Views of Patronage in the Long Eighteenth Century

Writers of the late eighteenth century saw significant changes to both the literary market and professional authorship as patronage declined. In this changing climate, the laureateship became a stage where these issues played out. Though writers continued using the patronage system throughout the eighteenth century, as early as the Restoration, John Dryden denigrated both the system and his patrons in writing, symbolically asserting his artistic freedom (Griffin 280). In *The Vindication of the Duke of Guise*, he calls attention to the lack of monetary favors from his patron: "If I had not greater, the fault was never in their want of goodness to me, but in

my own backwardness to ask, which has always, and I believe will ever keep me from rising in the world...If I am a mercenary scribbler, the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury best know: I am sure, they have found me no importunate solicitor” (Dryden 108). Though Dryden is a paid writer of the court, he has to ask his patron for money. As Broadus notes, Dryden had difficulty even in receiving his laureate salary as in 1684, a Treasury warrant directs payment to Dryden for arrears of his £300 salary since 1680 (63). Even in the highest office, patrons’ payments to writers were unreliable. When Dryden famously defied King William by refusing to convert to Anglicanism, “a warrant was issued for the appointment of his old antagonist [Thomas] Shadwell to the post of Poet Laureate” (Winn 435). Dryden’s public ousting from the laureateship as a result of opposing religious ideologies demonstrated the strains of the traditional patron-writer relationship at the highest levels.

In the early eighteenth century, Swift and Pope distanced themselves from traditional patronage by marketing themselves as independent writers. Swift created facetious dedications to satirize the tradition of writers excessively praising patrons in past dedications. For instance, in *The Tale of the Tub* (1704), Swift includes a letter To the Right Honourable Lord John Sommers in which the bookseller goes through the formulaic ways writers dedicate works to their patrons. He says, “I should now, in right of a Dedicator, give your lordship a list of your own Virtues, and at the same time be very unwilling to offend your modesty; but Chiefly, I should celebrate your liberality towards Men of great Parts and small fortunes, and give you broad hints, that I mean my self” (Swift 12). He goes on to bemoan that he cannot find effective words or phrases to describe his patron because the same words and phrases have been used countless times to describe other patrons. While he could (as his betters have done) simply use the same words and say they describe only Sommers, he is unwilling to do that. However, the speaker ends the

dedication demonstrating the conflict inherent in satirizing a patron: the speaker calls for the patron's patience stating, "I can put not greater Occasion to exercise it at present" (14). Though Swift calls attention to the absurdity of excessive praise for patrons and refuses to participate in the tradition, he cannot escape praising his patron in a small capacity because he cannot risk losing the patronage.¹²²

Part of Swift's construction of himself as an independent author was to contrast himself with then poet laureate Eusden by satirizing the form of Eusden's laureate task writing. The laureate task writing was a tradition consciously steeped in patronage—a distinguished writer patronized by the greatest patron in the land—and the laureate honored his king twice per year with odes written on New Year's Day and the king's birthday. This tradition began with Thomas Shadwell's tenure and became a formal part of the laureate duty during the tenure of Nicholas Rowe (Broadus 102).¹²³ The bi-annual odes, written by obscure poets and playwrights holding the office that represented the most distinguished poet in the land, became the instrument by which to satirize the laureates as they were the perfect example of forced and false praise. The public nature of office and the odes also afforded Swift and Pope an easy and symbolic target with which to mock patronage. As Swift asks in "Directions for Making a Birthday Poem"

¹²² Swift more harshly criticizes the politics of the patronage system, arguing that governmental positions are not given based on merit but on politics alone with disastrous consequences: "Upon Queen ANNE's Death the Whig Faction was restored to Power, which they exercised with the utmost Rage and Revenge; impeached and banished the Chief Leaders of the Church Party, and stripped all their Adherents of what Employments they had, after which *England* was never known to make so mean a Figure in *Europe*. The greatest Preferments in the Church in both Kingdoms were given to the most ignorant Men, Fanaticks were publickly caressed, *Ireland* utterly ruined and enslaved, only great Ministers heaping up Millions, and are likely to go on in the same Manner" (ll.380n).

¹²³ Though both Shadwell and Tate wrote birthday and New Year's odes, the practice was not yet part of the laureates' official duties. Shadwell only wrote one birthday ode for the King William (1689) and one New Year's ode (1692). Tate wrote more odes than Shadwell,—publishing seven birthday odes (two in 1693 and one for each monarch in 1694, 1697, 1707, 1711, and 1715) and eight New Year's odes (1693, 1698, 1702, 1703, 1705, 1706, 1707, and 1708)—but the practice was not officially part of the laureate's obligations (Spencer 122). Until the laureate himself became a "regularly paid officer of the Lord Chamberlain's household," he was not obliged by his position to write them (Broadus 91).

(1729), how can a prescribed ode be anything but absurd, and, more importantly for laureates, how can the writer of a prescribed ode be anything but ridiculous?¹²⁴

In “Directions for Making a Birthday Poem,” Swift uses classical mythology to satirize the formulaic praise of a birthday ode.¹²⁵ The poem begins by prompting the laureate to select Roman and Greek gods and goddesses who will relate best to the king, indicating that every birthday ode begins in this formulaic manner: “Take twenty gods of Rome or Greece,/ Whose godships are in chief request,/ And fit your present subject best” (2-4). In the same way that the objects of praise in birthday poems—kings—succeeds one another according to primogeniture, Swift presents potential gods to praise them generationally. Beginning with Saturn, and then his two sons, Jove, Neptune, and his stepson, Mars, and grandson, Apollo, the poems give a generational parallel for the Hanoverian monarchy. Using Roman mythology, the speaker then explains how the poet can mythologize kings. In the same way that Roman gods have dominion over specific areas or things, the speaker emphasizes the way that a king must be praised for his specific contribution. For instance, if the poet wants to capitalize on his king’s glories on the battlefield, the speaker urges him to compare the king to Mars:

[If] Your hero now another Mars is [...]
Behold his glittering falchion mow
Whole squadrons at a single blow;
While Victory, with wings outspread,
Flies, like an eagle, o'er his head;
His milk-white steed upon its haunches,
Or pawing into dead men's paunches [...]. (ll.29-36).

¹²⁴ “Directions for Making a Birthday Song” was written in 1729, but it was not published until after his death in *The poetical works of Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick’s, Dublin. In four volumes. With the life of the author* (1778).

¹²⁵ J.A. Downie briefly references “Directions for Making a Birthday Song” when he argues against Norman’s Ault’s contention that Pope wrote the satiric *An Ode for the New Year. Written by Colley Cibber, Esq; Poet Laureat* (1731). Otherwise, scholarship on this poem has been absent.

The gory image of the “dead men’s paunches” emphasizes contradiction of praising a warrior king, who as such, has likely committed atrocities and murder.

In addition to adulating a king for his specific merits, the speaker cautions praise for each king should be greater than the praise for the previous king: “He must be greater than his sire; / For Jove, as every schoolboy knows, / Was able Saturn to depose” (22-24). In stanzas eight and nine, the poem shifts from Horatian satire to Juvenalian satire, as the speaker more directly criticizes the laureate to contrast himself against the poet. The stanza reads:

'Tis not denied, that, when we write,
Our ink is black, our paper white:
And, when we scrawl our paper o'er,
We blacken what was white before:
I think this practice only fit
For dealers in satiric wit.
But you some white-lead ink must get
And write on paper black as jet;
Your interest lies to learn the knack
Of whitening what before was black. (ll. 105-114)

Stanza eight is the first time readers see the use of the second-person plural, and the use of the words “we” and “you” dramatize a direct conflict between the laureate poet and the poem’s speaker. The stanza identifies the speaker and the poet as opposites, as clear as black and white. In addition, by contrasting himself against the poet, the speaker is able to identify himself as a “dealer in satiric wit,” and subsequently, the poet as one who cannot do as much (ll.110). The speaker is able to simultaneously praise himself while disparaging the poet, who of necessity must gloss over black deeds when writing for the king.

In stanza nine, the derision of the laureate poet is even stronger and also reaches to the patron:

Thus your encomium, to be strong,
Must be applied directly wrong.
A tyrant for his mercy praise,

And crown a royal dunce with bays:
 A squinting monkey load with charms,
 And paint a coward fierce in arms.
 Is he to avarice inclined?
 Extol him for his generous mind:
 And, when we starve for want of corn,
 Come out with Amalthea's horn:
 For all experience this evinces
 The only art of pleasing princes:
 For princes' love you should descant
 On virtues which they know they want.
 One compliment I had forgot,
 But songsters must omit it not;
 I freely grant the thought is old:
 Why, then, your hero must be told,
 In him such virtues lie inherent,
 To qualify him God's vicegerent;
 That with no title to inherit,
 He must have been a king by merit.
 Yet, be the fancy old or new,
 Tis partly false, and partly true:
 And, take it right, it means no more
 Than George and William claim'd before. (115-140)

At the beginning of the stanza, the speaker states that the birthday ode is, in essence, “wrong” because the poet is not extolling praise on a worthy subject, and Swift uses feminine rhyme to emphasize the unworthiness of the prince: “for all experience this evinces/ the only art of pleasing princes” (125-126). The speaker then discusses all of the different gods to whom the poet can liken the prince depending on the prince’s strengths and weaknesses. In the line, “A tyrant for his mercy praise,/ And crown a royal dunce with bays,” the speaker gets even more personal as the subject of the poem is identified as Eusden (117-118).¹²⁶ The crown of bay leaves represents the laurel wreath, the sign of the poet laureate. Eusden suffered bullying from the Scribberians, especially Pope and Gray. For instance, Book One of *The Dunciad* lists Eusden as the literary ancestor of Richard Blackmore, whom Pope criticized in multiple forms beginning in

¹²⁶ Though traditionally, the word dunce is associated with Colley Cibber, Cibber did not become Poet Laureate until the death of Eusden in 1730. In addition, *The New Dunciad*, in which Pope crowns Cibber The King of the Dunces, was not published until 1742; The King of the Dunces in the original *Dunciad* was Lewis Theobald.

1717: “and Eusden eke out Blackmore’s endless line” (ll. 92).¹²⁷ Though this is the only line of poetry that includes Eusden’s name in the *The Dunciad in Three Books* (1728), in his remarks in *The Dunciad Variorum* (1729), Pope includes satires and critiques of Eusden by other poets including Cook’s “The Battle of the Poets” and Oldmixon’s *The Arts of Logic and Rhetoric* (1729). Using “dunce” and “bay leaves” to describe the poet, Swift again emphasizes the marked difference between himself and the laureate: the poet laureate is a dunce, and he (like Pope) is a satirist who can identify dunces.

In the last stanza of Swift’s poem, the speaker emphasizes the musicality of the laureate’s odes, while at the same time, further illuminating the patron’s claim to the poem. The poem reads:

Supposing now your song is done,
To Mynheer Handel next you run,
Who artfully will pare and prune
Your words to some Italian tune:
Then print it in the largest letter,
With capitals, the more the better.
Present it boldly on your knee,
And take a guinea for your fee. (275-282)

When the poet finishes composing the poem, it leaves his hands and is transformed from a poem to a court performance with music. This inauthenticity is furthered by the myriad of influences that shape the song, specifically German and Italian music. The poem ceases to be a poem and ceases to be English. Swift’s reference to “Mynheer Handel” in line 276 reminds readers of George I’s reliance on his German lineage and culture. However, the word “Mynheer” is an interesting choice as it is a nonsensical word. Most likely a conscious misspelling of the phrase

¹²⁷ John Arbuthnot, Gay, and Pope criticized Blackmore in *Three Hours after Marriage* (1717). Pope further picked out Blackmore’s foolish lines in *Peri Bathos* (1727) and gives a devastating characterization of “Never-ending Blackmore” in *The Dunciad* (1728).

mein heir which is German for Mister, the word calls attention to Handel's German ancestry.¹²⁸ Perhaps even more interesting though is that Handel is brought up at all since he did not compose music for laureate odes. The connection between Handel and the laureate is that they are both patronized by the king. The King appointed Handel as the director of the Royal Academy of Music, which performed the first season of Italian operas at Covent Garden. The contradiction of an Italian opera house, located in England, directed by a German serves to emphasize the absurdity of court patronage. "Directions for Making a Birthday Poem" thus uses both Horatian and Juvenalian satire to call into question the worthiness of the poet laureate to make the praise, the monarch to receive it, and the bi-annual ode as the genre. These critiques of the laureates' task writings would be echoed throughout the eighteenth century by other writers including Pope, Duck, Churchill, Pindar, and John Sheffield.¹²⁹

Like Swift, Pope purposely promoted himself in prefaces and dedications as an independent author who lived by the pen. For instance in *Imitations of Horace, Epistle II*, Pope states, "With thanks to Homer since I live and thrive, / Indebted to no Prince or Peer alive...Unplac'd, unpension'd, no Man's Heir or Slave" (*Imitations of Horace* 349). Though he has long been regarded as the first professional writer, Pope maintained connections with a large circle of figures who were interested in helping him maintain his lifestyle (Griffin 123). Like

¹²⁸ Thomas Mann, a German writer (1875-1955) wrote a character in his major work, *Magic Mountain* (1924), named Mynheer Peppercorn, which was read in the same way: to poke fun at a German character.

¹²⁹ John Sheffield's "The Election of the Poet Laureate" (1718) used the same formula to satirize the selection of the laureate in 1718 as the "Sessions" poems by John Suckling. Churchill's "The Prophecy of Famine" (1763) was so critical of William Whitehead, Whitehead was forced to remove his name from a play he authored for its performance at Drury Lane (Churchill 109n). In "On the Abuse of Satire" (1791), Peter Pindar (John Wolcot) asks Warton to punish him for his satires of the monarch with his own satire.

Swift, Pope engaged in satiric writings of laureate poetry to in order to contrast his works with task writing, further establishing himself as an independent author.¹³⁰

Pope's "To Quinbus Flestrin the Man-Mountain. An Ode. By Titty Tit, Esq; Poet Laureate to his Majesty of Lilliput" (1727), which was published as part of *Verses on Gulliver's Travels* (1727), mocks the task writing of a bi-annual ode in a way that is accessible to even the population of hack writers Pope warns about in *The Dunciad in Three Books* (1728). Specifically mimicking the laureate verses with "To Quinbus Flestrin..." Pope "retains the various paratexts usually associated with a greater ode" (Van der Goten 4). Pope satirizes not only the content of the laureates' work but also the form, including the typography of the frontispiece. The typography matches that of the laureate odes as they were printed in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, including "An Ode" in all capital letters, and "By Titty Tit, Esq; Poet Laureat to his Majesty" uses the exact font and punctuation as a laureate ode. Additionally, the publication of *Verses on Mr. Gulliver's Travels* was printed in Dublin as a 16-page octavo and issues as a multi-slip song broadsheet with the poems printed in three columns (Van der Goten 4). With the use of a slip format and the price set at half of a broadside ballad, slip-songs were usually disseminated by the thousands (4). This choice of print not only imitates the low quality of form and content of laureate odes, but allows lower classes of readers to consume it, mobilizing a new audience for Pope's agenda of adjudicating literature.

Satirizing the formulaic structure of the laureate odes, Pope employs absurdist structure for his ode that consists of three parts, each containing lines of three syllables with rhyming couplets. For instance, the ode begins: "In amaze/ Lost, I gaze! Can our eyes/ Reach thy size?" (5). The content of the poem is equally as ridiculous, describing the enormous size of the Man

¹³⁰ Chapter 1: The City Poet and the Poet Laureate argues that *The Dunciad* re-purposes analogies and metaphors previously used in a 1673 pamphlet war between Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne, to denigrate former City Poet of London, Elkanah Settle. In so doing, *The Dunciad* associates state-sponsored poetry with hack writing.

Mountain with phrases such as “When he drinks, Neptune shrinks!” (8). At the end of the poem, however, the form and the content develop, as the speaker shifts from describing the Man Mountain to describing how the Man Mountain can aid the “laureate,” Titty Tit, and doubles the syllables from three to seven: “On thy hand/ Let me stand,/ so shall I,/ Lofty Poet, touch the Sky” (9). The Man Mountain will elevate the laureate to apotheosis. Pope then satirizes the patronage relationship in which the laureate assumes a servile position to the King for the sake of achieving his apotheosis. In so doing, Pope invites readers to question whether a King can grant a poet a literary legacy.

In the middle of the century, Samuel Johnson likewise began to market himself as an independent author who abhorred patronage. Where Swift and Pope used satire and creative marketing to promote themselves above patronage, Johnson took it a step further and declared patronage to be a tradition all writers should avoid. In Johnson’s 1749 poem, “The Vanity of Human Wishes,” the speaker warns writers that patrons “marked ill the scholar’s life” (ll.159-160). In 1750, in *The Rambler, Number 21*, Johnson intimates that writers cannot truly express themselves when they must espouse a patron’s ideology in order to earn a living. He states:

It very often happens that the works of learning or of wit are performed at the direction of those by whom they are to be rewarded; the writer has not always the choice of his subject, but is compelled to accept any task which is thrown before him without much consideration of his own convenience, and without time to prepare himself by previous studies...But, though we suppose that a man by his fortune can avoid the necessity of dependence, and by his spirit can repel the usurpations of patronage...” (140-141).

In 1747, in his *Plan of a Dictionary*, Johnson attempts to navigate between his authorial independence and his patron’s wishes: he does not expect to defer to Lord Chesterfield, his patron, in all matter, nor to serve merely as Chesterfield’s spokesman (Griffin 283). He concludes the Plan, however, by referring to Chesterfield as “My Lord” and insinuating that he is open to negotiation regarding their relationship (283). Upon completion of the *English*

Dictionary, his patron, Lord Chesterfield wrote two anonymous reviews, of which Johnson was not pleased. He responded to them by accusing Chesterfield of not adequately supporting the project. He wrote that Chesterfield did not provide, “one Act of assistance, word of encouragement, or one smile of favour”—during the seven years he spent writing the dictionary (“Letter to Chesterfield” 7 February 1755). Johnson further asks, “Is not a patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a Man struggling for Life in the water and when he has reached ground encumbers him with help?” (“Letter to Chesterfield” 7 February 1755). John Brewer notes that as patronage was declining, Johnson’s complaint is not about the Lord’s failure to fund the dictionary; instead, Chesterfield should have been supporting the project by praising its aim and its author in proper literary circles and fashionable society in hopes of popular support by reading audiences (163-164). Johnson’s *Letter to Chesterfield* was published in Boswell’s *The Life of Johnson* (1790), and Boswell narrates that Chesterfield displayed Johnson’s letter on a table for his visitors to see in act of insolence, further vilifying patrons.

Though Johnson did rely on patrons such as Chesterfield for some of his projects, he additionally demonstrated how writers could avoid it by publishing some of his works by subscription and organizing subscriptions for those he admired or for writers he viewed as being in need. For instance, he spent more than fifteen years helping to organize a subscription to Anna Williams’s *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse* (1766) (Brewer 164). Subscriptions secured down-payments and promises to purchase books once they were published and allowed authors to print works they might never otherwise have gotten published (165).¹³¹ Subscription also alleviated

¹³¹ The number of works published by subscription is difficult to estimate. James Raven, for instance, recently concluded that books published by subscription increased, but only in proportion with the rest of the market and remained rare throughout the century, comprising only 2-4% of literary production (316). Though the number of subscriptions may be small in number overall, I contend that Johnson’s vocal advocacy of subscription contributes to the declining view of patronage overall.

problems of writers have to answer to the ideology of one patron by replacing the single patron with the reading public.

Like Swift and Pope before him, Johnson's views on the laureateship helped to establish him as an independent author. In *Lives of the Poets*, Johnson only includes biographical information about two poets laureate: John Dryden and Nicholas Rowe, and in both cases Johnson's biographies validate his earlier claims about patronage. Of Dryden's appointment to the laureateship, Johnson states, "He was now so distinguished, that in 1668 he succeeded Sir William Davenant as poet-laureat" (83). Though Johnson speaks mostly positively of Dryden's works as laureate, he emphasizes the necessity of a common ideology between the monarch and the poet when he says of Dryden's removal from office, "A papist now could no longer be a Laureat" (106). Johnson's emphasis on "now could no longer be" reminds readers that Dryden's Catholicism only became problematic when a Protestant ascended the throne. Furthermore, "The revenue, which he had enjoyed with so much pride and praise, was transferred to Shadwell, an old enemy..." (106). In labelling Shadwell "an old enemy," Johnson implies that Shadwell was appointed because of his antagonistic relationship with Dryden—and not for his poetic prowess. Johnson's biography of Rowe is much less flattering than that of Dryden and questions the choice of Rowe as a laureate. Johnson declares that "Rowe is chiefly to be considered as a tragick writer and a translator" but Johnson quickly adds that "in the construction of his dramas, there is not much art [...] any deep search of nature, or nice display of passion in its progress; all is general and undefined" (205). Conscious that his words do not entitle Rowe too much of a literary legacy, Johnson adds, "Whence, then, has Rowe his reputation? From the reasonableness of and propriety of some of his scenes, from the elegance of his diction, and the suavity of his verse" (205). Johnson's description of Rowe's laureateship is similarly vague: "At the accession

of King George he was made poet-laureate; I am afraid, by the ejection of poor Nahum Tate, who, 1716, died in the Mint, where he was forced to seek shelter by extreme poverty” (202). Johnson’s narration— “I am afraid”— at the beginning of the clause indicates that he is giving his own opinion on the matter, and that the sentence contains an argument. The use of the nominalization “ejection” in this sentence, combined with the sentence’s lack of an actor (passive voice), makes the reader question who the actor of the sentence is: who ejected Tate? In reading further, the ejection is not “the casting out or expulsion from a particular place or position,” in the usual way, but an ejection due to Tate’s death (*OED*).¹³² Johnson’s construction of this sentence implies then that the office itself expelled Tate into the poorhouse, where he died of “extreme poverty” (202). Johnson contrasts Tate’s fate with Rowe’s, for whom he describes that “an accumulation of employments undoubtedly produced very considerable revenue” (202). The financial fate of the laureates is fickle, and their literary legacies—especially in the case of Tate, who otherwise does not appear in the *Lives of the Poets*—are shaky at best. These views of the laureateship as antithetical to artistic freedom opened the door for poets to reject the position when it was offered to them.

Upon the death of Cibber in 1757, Gray became the first writer to reject the laureateship, and his biographer, Mason, fashioned Gray’s literary legacy from this rejection in *The poems of Mr. Gray. To which are prefixed Memoirs of his life and writings by W. Mason, M.A. York (1757)*. Mason later fashioned his own identity as a laureate rejecter as well in *Poems by William Whitehead, esq. late poet laureat, and register and secretary to the most honourable Order of the Bath. Vol. III. To which are prefixed, memoirs of his life and writings. By W. Mason, M.A*

¹³² This use of “ejection” is listed in the *OED* as having been used this way by Johnson himself in *The Preface to Shakespeare’s Plays* (1765).

(1788).¹³³ These rejections by Gray and Mason enabled later poets William Hayley and Walter Scott to reject the laureateship on their own terms and the reputation of the laureateship to continue to decline.

Hayley, who rejected the laureateship after the death of Thomas Warton in 1790, did not construct his identity on his rejection of the laureateship as Mason; however, he included it as part of his posthumous legacy in his *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Hayley* (1823). Included in Hayley's *Memoirs* is a 500-page memoir written by his son, Thomas Alphonso Hayley, who died young. Though Hayley does not mention his rejection of the laureateship at all, it is briefly mentioned in his son's memoir, which Hayley appended to his own memoir and gave to John Johnson to be published after his death. Thomas Alphonso Hayley wrote of his father's rejection: "In June, the retired author was tempted to visit the metropolis, for the sake of returning personal thanks to his friends who had graciously offered him the post of Laureate, a post he graciously declined" (35). In his article on Hayley in *Dictionary of Literary Biographers*, Paul Baines hypothesizes that Hayley likely "rejected the office for political reasons" (138).¹³⁴ Though Hayley's rejection of the laureateship was not public during his lifetime, by putting the incident of his rejection in his memoir, Hayley's son emphasizes a crucial component of it: to be a laureate is to subordinate your personal belief system to the position. As laureate, Hayley would have been required—at least twice per year—to produce poetry in praise of the monarchy in the form of birthday and New Year's odes and would thus disallow artistic freedom to express his political beliefs.

¹³³ See Chapter 3, "Laureate Rejecters: The Construction of Anti-Laureate Legacies in William Mason's Life Writings," for a more detailed argument on Mason's fashioning of himself and Gray as laureate rejecters.

¹³⁴ This explanation of Hayley's rejection seems plausible, especially in light of the recent work by Gabriel Cervantes and Dahlia Porter, in which they argue that Hayley's *Ode Inscribed to John Howard* (1780) memorializes the prison reformer as a Christian who emanates light, but whom also acts as "a shield against contagion." The poem doubly memorializes Howard by remembering his work in life and by bringing further attention to prison reform needs after his death.

Scott's rejection of the office in 1813 would echo these concerns more specifically. When Scott was offered the laureateship upon the death of Henry James Pye, Scott wrote to his friend and patron the Duke of Buccleuch for advice:

I have a very nattering offer from the Prince Regent of his own free motion to make me poet laureate. I am very much embarrassd by it – I am on the one hand afraid of giving offence where no one would willingly offend & perhaps losing an opportunity of smoothing the way to my youngsters through life. On the other hand the office is a ridiculous one somehow or other-item...there seems something churlish & perhaps conceited in rejecting a favour so handsomely offerd on the part of the Sovereigns representative & on the other hand I feel much disposed to shake myself free of it. I should make a bad courtier & an ode-maker is described by Pope as a poet out of his way or out of his senses. (*The Correspondence of Walter Scott III* 324)

Scott's hesitance to accept the office centers on the conflict between the office's ability to provide financial stability for his family and the knowledge that the office could ruin his literary legacy through the requirement of the bi-annual odes. In citing Pope, Scott demonstrates his understanding that the odes—and himself—would be satirized mercilessly. The office's production of the odes meant that the laureate could not exercise authorial freedom. The Duke's reply affirmed Scott's fears about the odes negatively affecting his reputation. He responded, "Only think of being chaunted and recitative by a parcel of hoarse and squeaking choristers on a birthday, for the edification of the bishops, pages, maids of honor, and gentleman-pensioners! Oh horrible!" (Broadus 164). In consequence, Scott refused the offer of the laureateship, and wrote to his friend, Southey, informing him that he would recommend him for the position.¹³⁵ In detailing his rejection to Southey, Scott again refers to the bi-annual odes as the primary reason for his rejection: "I have declined the appointment, as being incompetent to the task of annual commemoration" (*The Letters of Walter Scott III* 335). Furthermore, upon informing Southey that he had recommended him for the post, Scott implies that Southey may be able to restore the

¹³⁵ According to Speck, Southey believed the laureateship was going to be offered to him after the death of Henry James Pye and "must have been discomfited [...] to discover that the prime minister, Lord Liverpool, had written to Sir Walter Scott to offer it to him" (155).

office to its former glory by abolishing the bi-annual odes: “the laurel has certainly been tarnished by some of its wearers, and as at present managed, its duties are inconvenient and somewhat liable to ridicule. But the latter matter might be amended, and I should think the Regent's good sense would lead him to lay aside these regular 2 commemorations” (*The Letters of Walter Scott* III 336). Just as Scott recommended, Southey accepted the post with hopes of bringing it out of obscurity by aligning with ideas of independent authorship in the early nineteenth century. Southey’s tenure as laureate allowed the debate about authorship to play out on a national stage, and his eventual dissolution of task writing achieved a new relevance for the laureateship, making it possible for Wordsworth and later Alfred Tennyson to accept it on their own terms.

Southey’s Symbolic Change: Rebelling Against the Ultimate Patron

Though he was less celebrated than Scott, Wordsworth, or Coleridge at this time, Southey’s name commanded more respect for the office than any of the previous three laureates—Whitehead, Warton, or Pye—and he accepted the position under the auspices of creating a legacy both for himself and for the office. Gamer has recently drawn attention to the life insurance policy that Southey took out upon his acceptance of the laureateship, arguing that the office “reconfigured uncertain future sales and life expectancy into a system of regular, fixed payments as a way of insuring his financial legacy” (Gamer 47). Further, the laureateship played an integral role in Southey’s consideration of posterity in general, as his name would forever be remembered as a laureate. I would contribute to this important historical account that Southey sought to change the patronal relationship between the laureate and the monarch. He was determined to create a legacy for himself through his tenure as laureate, and, specifically, by abolishing the now seemingly anachronistic, bi-annual odes.

Southey's acceptance of the laureateship in 1813 was dependent (at least according to him) on his ability to make changes to it. Indeed, in his letter to Scott, Southey stated that he wanted to "rescue it from the contempt into which it had fallen," and called for the dissolution of task writing as a condition of his acceptance of the position: "time was passed when I could write verses on demand, but if were understood that, instead of the old formalities, I might be at liberty to write upon the great public events or be silent, as the spirit moved – in that case the office should become a mark of honourable distinction" (Southey, 1850, 46). Consequently, he gave these conditions to John Croker, Lord of the Admiralty, and trusted they would be implemented: "when next I saw him he told me that, after the appointment was completed, he or some other person in the Prince's confidence, would suggest to him the fitness of making this reform, in an office which requires some reform to rescue it from the contempt into which it had fallen" (46). It was upon this agreement that Southey accepted the laureateship with hopes to bring it out of its recent infamy.

Unfortunately for Southey, abolishing task writing would be harder than he initially thought and the bi-annual odes quickly became a thorn in his newly claimed laurel. When prompted to write the first birthday ode for George III, Southey wisely replied that because of George's illness, "any festal celebration of the birthday would have been a violation of natural feeling and public propriety" (McGuinness 230). He successfully suspended one of his bi-annual duties—the birthday ode—during George III's reign, but he was still required to write New Year's odes. In November, Southey wrote to Wade Brown that "At all events I purpose preparing a lyric poem upon the present state of public affairs, as soon as I reach home, – so that something for the Court Fiddlers may be ready if called for" (RS to Wade Brown, *CLRS*

2327).¹³⁶ Southey already had a subject prepared for his New Year's Ode: the defeat of Napoleon in Russia in 1812.¹³⁷ Already an avid political writer about Napoleon in articles in *The Quarterly*, *The Edinburgh*, and *The Edinburgh Annual Register*, Southey remarked, "I am not averse to the task [given] the state of foreign and domestic affairs" (RS to William Taylor *CLRS* 2334). Though Southey was enthusiastic to use the occasion of the New Year's ode to express his feelings about the "tyranny" of Napoleon and the "deliverance of Mankind" at his defeat, Southey complicated the New Year's Ode in a variety of ways (Broadus 168). First, he chose not to use the poetic form of his predecessors: one that was easily set to music (short and rhymed), opting instead for an ode of irregular and unrhymed 19 verses – a very difficult task for the court musician. Additionally, he did not title it as a New Year's ode; Southey first titled his work "Carmen Annuum," describing it as an "oration in verse" (*Robert Southey: Later Poetical Works* 3). This nomenclatural distinction is even more evident in contrast to the New Year's Ode Southey wrote in the 1794, which was titled "Ode Written on the First Day of January, 1794."¹³⁸

Inserting controversial content in the poem, however, would prove to be more difficult than repurposing the name and structure of the task writing. Upon receipt of the first draft, the government official, John Rickman, reminded Southey of his place in the governmental structure when he referred to "[*Carmen Annuum* in its current state] appearing as the Poet Laureat's production" as an "impropriety" (Southey 1850, 52). Rickman chastises, "I am not sure...that

¹³⁶ For citations from the web edition of *The Collected Letters of Robert Southey* (CLCS), the number corresponds to the letter number in the web edition. Wade Brown (1760-1821) was a wealthy woolen merchant, who was Mayor of Leeds in 1791 and 1804, Justice of the Peace and Deputy Lieutenant for Yorkshire. He and Southey met in 1808 and corresponded until Brown's death in 1821 (Pratt, Fulford, Packer).

¹³⁷ The final defeat of Napoleon occurred in 1815, but his defeat in Russia in 1812 is considered by historians to be a turning point in the Napoleonic Wars.

¹³⁸ "Ode Written on the First of January, 1794" was published in *Poems by Robert Southey* (1797). As Pratt et al. note in the Introduction to *Robert Southey: The Later Poetical Works*, this New Year's ode as well as the two Birthday Odes Southey wrote for Grosvenor Bedford, which were also published in 1797, could be read as proof that Southey "long had the laureateship – and official permutations of the Laureate's role – in his sights" (xii).

you do not forget that office imposes upon a man restraints besides the long day's bag and sword at Carlton House. Put the case that, through the mediation of Austria, we make peace with Bonaparte, and he becomes, of course, a friendly power; – can you stay in office [with] this Carmen remaining on record?" (Southey 1850 52). Southey acquiesced to Rickman's proposed changes of *Carmen*, which included omitting the last three stanzas and replacing them with three new ones, and "there were a number of other re-arrangements and omissions, including comments on those countries who had, at one time or another allied with Bonaparte" (*Robert Southey: Later Poetical Works* 6). The new, revised poem became "Carmen Triumphale" and was performed for the New Year celebration and additionally published (7). However, Southey was unhappy with the incident and referred to the poem as "Carmen Castratum." He bemoaned to a friend, "I spoilt my poem, in deference to Rickman's judgment, and Croker's advice, but cutting out all that related to Bonaparte, and which gave strength, purport, and coherence to the whole" (RS to Herbert Hall 28 December 1813 *CLRS* 2356). Rebelling against the censorship of his governmental patron, Southey re-purposed the three stanzas that were taken out of "Carmen Annum" into a new poem, which he titled "The Ode [Who Counsels Peace]," which appeared anonymously in the *Courier* on February 3, 1814 (*Robert Southey: Later Poetical Works* 6-7). Admitting his rebellion, Southey said of the poem, "I may discharge my conscience by putting these rejected parts together, and letting them off in a courier before it becomes a libelous offence to call murder and tyranny by their proper names" (RS to Herbert Hall 28 December 1813 *CLRS* 2356). Even in his first official task-writing as Laureate, Southey worked against the tension between his independence and his duty as a patronized writer. This was his first attempt in distancing the laureateship from traditional patronage, but *Carmen Triumphale* would not be

the last time Southey would choose a controversial topic for his New Year's ode, nor the last time he would go against the convention of publishing his laureate odes.

Though his goal of abolishing bi-annual odes would have to wait, Southey continued to subtly and not-so-subtly rebel against the bi-annual odes by choosing forms that were difficult to perform in song at court and by electing to write about controversial topics. In a letter to Grosvenor Bedford in 1814, Southey wrote, "I shall never get more from Government than has already been given me, and I am and ought to be well contented with it; only they ought to allow me my wine in kind, and dispense with the Odes. When did this fool's custom begin? Before Cibber's time? I would have made the office honourable if they would have let me" (99).¹³⁹ Soon after this, he followed *Carmen Triumphale* with another long poem that didn't rhyme. Likewise, he told Bedford on 21 December that he would continue writing "Laureate verses that were not just 'laudatory' but admonitory" (*Later Poetical Works of Robert Southey* 78). The New Year's ode for 1815—referred to by Southey as "Ode Written in December 1814"—concentrates on a plan for English advancement, which attempts to solve the "squalid poverty in Britain" by advancing better education and emigration to other parts of the Empire such as Canada, Australia, and the United States (with whom they were still at war) (*Later Poetical Works of Robert Southey* 78). In addition, the poem includes some praise of one of Southey's personal heroes, George Washington. Eerily echoing the situation with *Carmen*, Bedford and Croker deemed the poem, specifically the lines about Washington, to be inappropriate. After hearing of the end of the War of 1812, Southey assumed that these lines would no longer be an

¹³⁹ Grosvenor Bedford (1773-1829) was a civil servant and miscellaneous writer whom Southey met at Westminster School, and their friendship endured all their lives. Though he did not attend university, Bedford served Assistant clerk in the Exchequer Office, 1792–1803; clerk of the cash book, 1803–1806; clerk of the registers and issues, 1806–1822; chief clerk in the auditor's office, 1822–1834. Additionally, he collaborated with Southey on *Specimens of the Later English Poets* (1807) and contributed an unsigned notice of Southey's *Roderick, the Last of the Goths* (1814) to the Quarterly Review (Pratt, Fulford, and Packer).

issue, but he was told to edit the poem. Just as with *Carmen*, he completed the suggested edits, which this time even included changing the form to short, rhymed verse. But again echoing the *Carmen* incident one year earlier, Southey published the unedited version of the poem. As Pratt and Fulford note in *Volume 3 of The Later Poetical Works*, no complete copy of the edited poem survives (81).

Southey's pattern of writing odes on controversial topics continued from 1817-1819. This period saw three consecutive funeral/ mourning poems as the yearly odes: "Europe Has Suffered," "An Ode on the death of Queen Charlotte," and "Funeral Song on the death of Princess Charlotte/ Lines written Upon the Death of Princess Charlotte." These three poems differed from his earlier ones in that Southey used rhyme, but in addition to being of difficult subject matter, they were long and hard to set to music. Bedford expressed concern over Southey's chosen topic of the death of Queen Charlotte, but Southey replied that "the topic was not a matter of choice – the Queen's death coming so close upon the end of the year" (*Later Poetical Works of Robert Southey* 136), and he subsequently neither revised the poem nor published it. In the New Year's Odes for 1820 and 1821, the so-called *Warning Odes*, Southey returned to irregular, unrhymed verse (*Later Poetical Works of Robert Southey* 144). He said this was because he wanted to return to writing on the state of the union, and to do so, he needed to use the form he liked best. For the *Warning Odes*, Southey used a kind of prophecy voice along with language like that of the Old Testament. This voice emphasizes Southey's believed position as what Pratt, Fulford, and Packer refer to as "a prophet who warned and instructed his fellow countrymen at the time of national crisis" (*Later Poetical Works of Robert Southey* 145). The New Year's Odes for 1822-1823—which were never published nor performed at court—were also on controversial topics: England's relations with Ireland and England's relations with

Scotland respectively. Though he was not able to abolish the task writing completely, Southey's choice of controversial topics for his New Year's odes constantly pushed against the traditional patronage relationship and asserted his independent authorial voice as laureate.

The publication history of these odes also demonstrates Southey's quiet rebellion from traditional patronage and constant forward movement toward independent authorship. Whereas every laureate from Cibber to Pye had obediently and religiously published their bi-annual odes in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Southey refused to continue this tradition. In 1820, Southey wrote to Neville White, "the annual odes [...] have been regularly supplied, though I have hitherto succeeded in withholding them from publication" (Southey, 1865, 392).¹⁴⁰ Southey adhered to the new ideas about copyright with his poetry—that these poems were original and therefore his property—and published them when and where he pleased.¹⁴¹ Indeed, only *Carmen Triumphale*, the *Lay of the Laureate*, and *A Vision of Judgment*—none of which he considered to be New Year's odes—were published at the time they were written, and Southey published the New Year's Odes on a case-by-case basis. Southey published banned versions of both the 1814 and 1815 odes, the 1816 ode as an epigraph in *Roderick, the Last of the Goths* (1814) while the rest were published later in his life in the *Poetical Works* (1837-1838) or not at all.

¹⁴⁰ Neville White (1782-1845) was a regular correspondent of Southey's who worked as a hosiery merchant. As such, he helped Southey acquire books and newspapers from South America for his work on the *Edinburgh Annual Register* (1810-13) and the *History of Brazil* (1810-19). He later became a clergyman in Norfolk. His son, Herbert Southey White married a granddaughter of Southey's, Edith Frances Warter and united the two close families (Pratt, Fulford, and Packer).

¹⁴¹ As Mark Rose argues in *Authors and Owners*, the eighteenth century saw an evolution in the understanding of authorship, which is revealed in the changing copyright laws and culminates in the Romantic period with the heroic self-representation of Romantic poets. The understanding of copyright as a "concept of a unique individual who creates something original and is entitled to reap a profit from those labors" originated with Romantic poets such as Wordsworth who sought to define their work as "original" and thus the property of its creator (Woodmansee and Jaszi 3). Wordsworth attempted to enlist the law in support of his authorial vision of an originary genius by intervening directly in Parliamentary debates in favor of perpetual copyright and then copyright for sixty years (Woodmansee and Jaszi 3-4). These debates about copyright and authorship took place publically from 1808-1842 (Eilenberg 351).

The ode for Saint George's Day in 1821 marks a pivotal change in Southey's tenure as laureate. Though the birthday ode had been abolished upon Southey's acceptance of the position due to George III's illness, upon George IV's ascension to the throne, he was once again called on to write an ode for George IV's birthday in 1821. He said in a letter to John May:

Of course, my immediate business is to get into harness and work in the mill. Two or three precious days will be good for nothing; for as making anything good of a birthday ode, I might as well attempt to manufacture silk purses from sows' ears. Like Warton, I shall give the poem a historical character; but I shall not do this as well as Warton, who has done it very well. He was a happy, easy-minded, idle man, to whom literature in its turn was as much amusement as rat hunting and who never aimed at anything above such odes. (Southey, 1865, 395)¹⁴²

This ode was never performed, and Southey said of the event, "the annual performance had, however, by this time fallen completely into disuse; and thus terminated a custom which may be truly said to have been more honoured in the breach than in the observance" (McGuinness 227). Though he did furnish additional New Year's odes for 1822 and 1823, these odes were never performed and remained in manuscript form until 1829. Southey did not write any more bi-annual odes from 1823 to 1843. Ten years into his tenure, Southey finally succeeded in what he promised to do when he accepted the laureateship: he abolished task writing. Interestingly, to date Southey has not been credited for this legacy to the laureateship. Indeed, most critics believe that the suspension of the odes occurred for political reasons. Because the birthday odes had already been suspended during George III's illness while George IV was Prince Regent, he was politically savvy enough to detract attention from his father's mental instability and never bring them back. While this may be true, Southey was responsible for the dissolution of the New Year's odes—the last remaining annual odes—and worked steadily against the practice for the

¹⁴² John May (1775-1856) served as a financial advisor and close friend to Southey until Southey's death in 1843. May visited the Southeys on several occasions and acted as godfather to Southey's two eldest children—Margaret Edith and Edith May, the latter named in his honor. *The Poet's Pilgrimage to Waterloo* (1816) was dedicated to him "in testimony of the highest esteem and affection" (Pratt, Fulford, and Packer).

first ten years of his tenure. This dissolution changed the way both monarchs and poets viewed the laureateship. It was no longer simply a laughable mouthpiece for the monarchy where poets churned out meaningless odes every six months but a place where prominent poets could create a legacy for themselves. Wordsworth, who had been at the forefront of enacting changes in authorship during Southey's laureateship, would continue progressing the laureateship towards legitimacy by using it to demonstrate independent authorship.

Wordsworth's Laureateship: A Public Demonstration of Ideology

Achieving the poet laureateship represented an apex for Wordsworth, in which he could demonstrate both his position as a laureate poet—a recognized poet in the tradition of Spenser, Jonson, and Milton— while also exercising the authorial independence he spent his life describing and pursuing.¹⁴³ The seeming contradiction between Wordsworth's early life and his tenure as laureate has bewildered laureate scholars and Wordsworth scholars alike, and many have bemoaned his acceptance of the office as an overturning of his life's work. I argue, however, that Wordsworth's tenure as laureate marks the culmination of his life's work as he continued Southey's efforts to align the laureateship with modern ideas of authorship as both a laureate poet and ordinary genius.

Wordsworth spent his career justifying his place as an independent author in a changing literary marketplace. Though patronage continued to exist, it was less publically visible; writers were forced to pander to the tastes of fickle literary audiences, as opposed to the tastes and ideologies of individual patrons. Writers of the period complained about the new market: Richard Cumberland complained that “publishers hate poetry.” Oliver Goldsmith wondered

¹⁴³ I am using Helgerson's term here, as he astutely notes in *Self-Crowned Laureates* that poets from the early modern period to the Restoration such as Spenser, Jonson, and Milton were interested in self-fashioning. They wanted to claim themselves to be the laureate poet—not in the sense of the political office, but in the sense of the illustrious poet of the age (7).

“how any man could be so dull as to write poetry at present as prose hardly paid,” and Edmund Burke said he was “by no means eager to rely on the patronage of the public” (Griffin 288). Additionally, disciplines began to professionalize, dividing into clear subjects, and poetry’s place was becoming uncertain. The first volume of Diderot’s *Encyclopédie* (1751) opens with a diagram of the “Detailed System of Human Knowledge, which depicts Francis Bacon’s *Advancement of Learning* (1605). The epistemological tree reduces the realm of imagination, making poetry and art to barely one-sixth of the space allotted to other disciplines (including theology, mathematics, medicine, botany, chemistry, etc.) (Valenza 139). Although traditionally it had been a requirement of students’ academic study, poetry was being questioned for its utility as “it had no apparent object of study, and no obvious subject to illuminate. The poet’s usefulness to the accumulation of wisdom therefore seemed less evident, and poetry’s need to vindicate its place among the intellectual disciplines [was therefore] more difficult” (Valenza 144). The 1798 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, for instance, sold so poorly that its publisher gave the publishing rights back to Wordsworth because “the value of *Lyrical Ballads* was reckon’d at nothing” (Gamer and Porter 16).

Wordsworth combatted these problems in the literary market—including the negative, nonfunctional view of poetry, the subsequent lack of market for poetry, and the poets’ uncertain financial future with one idea with the creation of the notion of the author as an *originary genius*. Predicated upon the disastrous sales of the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth transformed himself into the originary genius he is now known to be. In the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), he writes:

For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; but though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached, were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility had also thought long and deeply...we discover what is really important to men, so by the

repetition and continuance of this act feelings connected with important subjects will be nourished, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much organic sensibility...the understanding of the being to whom we address ourselves, if he be in a healthful state of association, must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, his taste exalted, and his affections ameliorated. (Wordsworth 175)

In this passage, Wordsworth not only establishes the poet as divinely inspired, a man “possessed of more than usual organic sensibility,” but he also addresses how his poetry should be received by the literary market: the reader should be, “in some degree enlightened, his taste exalted, and his affections ameliorated” (175). As Robin Valenza claims, Wordsworth was interested in “separating those who could generate and use a truly poetic language from those who could only learn to appreciate it” (145). He knew that in order for poetry to survive he needed to re-invent not only the poet, but also the readership by re-instilling a taste for poetry. Wordsworth also knew that he needed to address the problems of poetic utility. Valenza articulates this by arguing, “the Romantic poets’ cultivation of the view that poetry is received by inspiration rather than crafted by a learned and practiced artist coincides directly with a need to dissociate the poetic career from other, specifically scientific professions, whose productions might be assigned financial value” (Valenza 148). Having articulated a theory in 1800, Wordsworth proceeded to scaffold this idea in his 1815 edition of his collected poems.

This edition of poetry progressed in its treatment of the poet and readership. In the new edition, which included poems from *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth inserted his name into the title of the work itself, calling it, *Poems by William Wordsworth including the Lyrical Ballads and Miscellaneous Pieces of the Author including a New Preface and a Supplementary Essay in Two Volumes*. The 1800 edition had proclaimed Wordsworth to be made of more than usual organic sensibility, and his poetry had the ability to enlighten. In this edition, he wrestled with the problems of poetic utility and readership in the content of the edition itself. As a way of

addressing the utility of poetry, Wordsworth categorized his poems by theme. Indeed, the themes themselves are chronological in nature beginning with the first section of Volume I, Poems referring to the Period of Childhood (under which heading, there are sixteen poems) and ending with the last sections of Volume II, Epitaphs and Elegiac Poems (for which there are eleven). For every period of life, readers could look to the poet for a glimpse of how to respond to the problems of men. The *Preface* explains each category and how and why he assigned each poem into its specific category. The *Essay Supplementary to the Preface* of the 1815 edition articulated problems with the current literary market and readership. After delineating who is qualified to critique poetry (a select few) and reviewing the number of lesser writings that have been made popular in his time and before, Wordsworth announces that the poet must create readers' taste:

If there be one conclusion more forcibly pressed upon us than another by the review which has been given of the fortunes and fate of poetical Works, it is this – that every author, as far as he is great and at the same time original, has had the task of creating the taste by which he is to be enjoyed; so has it been, so will continue to be...the predecessors of an original genius of high order will have smoothed the way for all that he has in common with them. (368)

Wordsworth aligns himself with great geniuses by first identifying that geniuses must change the tastes of their readerships and then by attempting to do so.¹⁴⁴ The essay begins by describing who precisely is qualified to be a critic of poetry. He disqualifies the young, those who find poetry as older men, those who seek poetry as a religion, those who pursue poetry as leisure enjoyment, and most poets. He admits that the pool for legitimate critics is small; furthermore, unqualified critics are the reason why so much underwhelming poetry has been published and

¹⁴⁴ In writing about writing and declaring his experiment of literature here, Wordsworth demonstrates Siskin's argument that "we can then begin to see how specific genres of writing helped to empower professionalism, both by generating the discourse of professional behavior, and by rewriting the discourse of the hero, turning our professional attention from it" (129). Though my argument is different from Siskin's, it runs parallel to it in that part of Wordsworth's and Southey's quest for professional writing involved them re-appropriating the idea of the laureateship.

popularized. His novel defenses of poetry and poets were successful as they would come to be the common-place ideology in literature for years to come.

Along with creating a philosophy by which poetry could be understood as an intellectual pursuit and a discipline, Wordsworth was also invested in securing his financial legacy. His involvement in the Copyright Laws of 1814 and 1842 were essential to this legacy. Although Wordsworth was changing the way the reading audience viewed authorship, the new ideology was not translating quickly enough to help him survive as a professional author or provide for his family. As Rose argues, the notion of the author as an originary genius “is a relatively recent formation, and as a cultural formation, it is inseparable from the commodification of literature” and the invention of modern copyright law (Rose 1). Much of the language Wordsworth used when talking about himself as an author mirrors the ideology behind copyright itself, which centers on “the concept of the unique individual who creates something original and is entitled to reap a profit from those labors” (Rose 2). The first copyright law in England, The 1710 Statute of Anne, first made it legal for anyone—even a writer—to own his or her own copyright; however, this copyright was limited to fourteen years, or twenty-eight if the author was still living after the first fourteen (Eilenberg 361). After the 1695 Licensing Act, which disbanded the Stationer’s Company and the passing of the Statute of Anne, piracy had become a major source of concern in the literary market. Beginning quietly in 1808 and getting progressively louder, Wordsworth presented himself in the copyright debate as “the defender of the beleaguered genius, writing on behalf of those who wrote for the ages” and argued that copyright reform was “the opportunity for the nation to make up for its sins against Shakespeare and Milton” (Eilenberg 352). Wordsworth composed more than fifty letters (and even more anonymous ones) along with two sonnets—“A Plea for Authors, 1838” and “A Poet to his Grandchild”—on the subject of

copyright between 1808 and 1843. Lurking underneath his show of support for the writers of the past was a concern for his own financial legacy. Wordsworth writes in his letters: “Many of my poems have been upwards of 30 years subject to criticism, and are disputed about as keenly as ever, and appear to be read much more. In fact thirty years are no adequate test for works of imagination, even from second or third-rate writers, much less from those of the first order, as we see in the instances of Shakespeare and Milton” (*Letters* 1:481). Wordsworth enlisted the law to support his claims about authorship and protect his financial and literary legacies.

Though Wordsworth and his contemporaries succeeded in the passing of the Copyright Law of 1814, which doubled the previous time authors held copyright—twenty-eight years—Wordsworth wanted perpetual copyright (Eilenberg 364). He feared that by the time his genius was realized, neither he nor his family would be able to profit from it. Indeed, Wordsworth specified to his readers that he did not want a monument upon his death but that copyright could be his monument. As Susan Eilenberg argues, Wordsworth saw copyright as his legacy: both in terms of his place in literary history and in terms of his family’s financial security. Though his methods were vastly different—and more subtle—than they had been in his earlier life, Wordsworth’s seven years as laureate mark the successful end of his quest to define the author as an *originary genius*.

Upon Southey’s death in 1843, the Lord Chamberlain immediately wrote to Wordsworth, offering him the newly vacated office. Wordsworth politely declined the offer, graciously replying:

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. (*The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* 377)

Wordsworth presents himself as being gratified by the offer of the office: one he describes as an "honor," not only because it shows his approval by Queen Victoria, but also because he could be the successor to his friend Southey. Yet, in this same letter, he rejected the laureateship on the basis that he could not perform the necessary "imposed duties." As the bi-annual odes had long been retired traditions, Wordsworth subtly stated that he could not perform any required duties at all. He had by now built a successful career and literary movement on the notion that an author is divinely inspired, and agreeing to a position with prescribed writing would be detrimental to his literary reputation. The Lord Chamberlain, however, did not accept Wordsworth's refusal. He wrote to Prime Minister Robert Peel, where they agreed that the Wordsworth was valuable enough to the office to not require any additional writing. The Lord Chamberlain's second appeal to Wordsworth assured him that the office would not "in any way interfere with [his] repose and retirement" (*The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* 378). Peel additionally sent a letter to Wordsworth, emphasizing 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. (*The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* 379)

The Prime Minister wrote to Wordsworth, urging him to accept the office and promised, “I will undertake that you shall have nothing required from you” (Broadus 183). Wordsworth had finally succeeded in what he spent his entire career trying to accomplish: his name was synonymous with literary greatness. So much so, that the government wanted his name attached to their high position of poet laureate without the requirement of any additional literary output. Having the Wordsworth name attached to the monarchy was so powerful that he did not need to do any more work to prove either his own greatness or theirs.

Wordsworth thus accepted the laureateship in 1843, and subsequently “wrote not one line of poetry which could be construed as in any way pertaining to the laureateship” (Broadus 183). He was tasked with duties on several occasions, but always eluded them for one reason or another. When asked to create an engraving for the royal children, he declined due to his daughter’s illness. Similarly, though the “Ode on the installation of his Royal Highness Prince Albert” (1847) appeared in his *Works*, it was probably composed either by Wordsworth’s son-in-law Edward Quillinan or by his nephew, Christopher Wordsworth.¹⁴⁵ Wordsworth’s refusal to compose anything related to the monarchy was even perplexing to his son, who stated on the subject:

It has occurred to me that Mr. Wordsworth may, in his grand way, compose a hymn to or on the king of kings, in rhymed verse, or blank, invoking a blessing on the Queen and country, or giving thanks for blessings vouchsafed and perils averted. This would be a new mode of dealing with the office of the Laureate, and would come with dignity and propriety, I think, from a seer of Wordsworth’s age and character. I told him so; and he made no observation. I therefore think it likely that he may consider the suggestion. (149)

Though no one expected Wordsworth to resurrect the hated odes, even his son expected him to compose for the state when inspired and told him so. Wordsworth exercised his authorial

¹⁴⁵ Both Hopkins and Panecka argue convincingly that Wordsworth is not the author of the Installation Ode, noting that the diction is far removed from Wordsworthian language and Wordsworth’s daughter Dora was terminally ill at the time of the composition (Panecka 113).

independence to stay silent on matters of state and thus created a new kind of laureateship that would be built upon complete authorial independence. This is the laureateship still in operation today.

In thirty years, the duties of the laureate had changed from mandatory odes for birthdays, New Year's, royal weddings, and other events to becoming completely "nominal." The abolishment of these laureate duties, however, are in alignment with the ideas pervading authorship at the time—namely, the Copyright Laws of 1810 and 1842 and the ideas about poets as ordinary geniuses touted by Wordsworth himself. When examined in light of these changes, the laureateship becomes symbolic of the major changes in the literary climate taking place in the early-nineteenth century. Much like the satirists of the eighteenth century, scholars have previously viewed the Poet Laureateship as an empty office that pandered to its patron. However, Southey and Wordsworth used the laureateship to add state sanction to the new ideology of authorship that pervaded future generations.

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