

Literature and the State in Post-Napoleonic Britain

The nineteenth-century British state presents a historical enigma. On the one hand, after expanding in size during the Napoleonic Wars era, the state contracted, as a percentage of GDP, between 1815 and 1870.¹ Beginning in the 1820s, a growing *laissez-faire* consensus critiqued government intervention into private lives. When the state did attempt to manage individual affairs, for example in the intrusive 1834 Poor Laws, it came under harsh criticism. Since government hesitated to interfere in citizens' lives, its social and charitable functions spread across an array of civil and voluntary organizations, aiming to distribute charitable relief or educate the working classes. But while the state decreased in size, recent historians have argued that it nevertheless increased in the scope of functions it covered and in ideological prestige.² Even when proclaiming *laissez-faire* ideology, the state increasingly entered into economic policy both at home and abroad.³ Britain's central administration also continued to carry authority, even if its power was often hidden, functioning indirectly in a matter compatible with British models of freedom and individualism.⁴ The British state taxed its population heavily, even after it repealed the wartime income tax. And in

the years following the Napoleonic Wars, the British government not only founded organizations to launch sociological and statistical studies of the newly expanded colonial territories and populations but also expanded such bureaucratic organizations at home, investigating the numbers of men available for armed service, rationalizing the army (containing largely Scottish, Irish, and Indian troops), and standardizing bank notes and customs.⁵ The army continued to exert a centralizing force, as it was deployed to combat riot and revolt at home (especially in Ireland).⁶ And the ideology of state power grew as the state claimed to be the space for ensuring citizens' interests and well-being at home and as it ruled ever more peoples in the British Empire.⁷ C. A. Bayly suggests that even if the state decreased in size, "what was important, rather, was the charisma of the idea of the state" (*Birth of the Modern World*, 254). Local government, of course, continued to bear much responsibility for day-to-day administration, including running the penal system. This very diffusion of state authority into local and civic organizations, however, provided the occasion for debating who should manage government functions: local or national governments? A governing elite, or paid administrators? Only qualified ratepayers, an expanded middling class, or all men?⁸

For late Romantic authors, the diffusion of governing functions across civil agencies presented both an opportunity and a challenge. As they observed governing functions spreading into civil society, these authors asked whether literature could carry out any of the state's tasks. To do so, they rethought literary agency in the context of state power. For some writers, this meant challenging their own high Romantic claims for the author's singular imagination, and instead taking the state or state agencies as their subject. Many readers have dismissed these interests as reactionary politics; critics from their contemporaries on have complained that in their late careers Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey in particular became tools of the establishment, churning out hack essays and insipid verse praising church and state.⁹ I will not deny that Wordsworth and Coleridge in their late careers were conservative in politics and accommodationist in policy. But like the other authors I study, they do not turn to the state in any simple manner. Works like Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, Coleridge's *On the Constitution of the Church and State*, Scott's historical novels, Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, and De Quincey's *The English Mail-Coach* in fact participate in a culturewide debate about the nature of state authority, asking how the state forms individuals into communities and nations, and who carries state power.

In examining how late Romantic writers revise their accounts of agency and authorship as they envision their relationship to the state, I aim to study in its own terms a period that has often eluded literary critics.¹⁰ In part, critics have overlooked texts written immediately following the Napoleonic Wars because they do not fit into our conceptual paradigms; literature written after high Romantic poetry and before the Victorian novel has proven resistant to critics' strategies for understanding and rendering significant both forms. Recently, several readers have begun to reevaluate the post-Napoleonic period and have discovered new genres like sentimental poetry operating in this supposed vacuum.¹¹ This book finds another group of authors revising their aesthetic theory and literary styles in the years between high Romanticism and the Victorian era. I argue that this literature is unified by a shared concern with the relationship between authorship, the state, and individual agency. When we read Wordsworth and Coleridge in this context, their turn to the Anglican Church and British state appears not as imaginative failure but as an attempt to rethink poetic inspiration in the context of a new model of aesthetics in which perception is located within state frameworks. The late Romantics I study rethink both literature and authorship during a period of imperial expansion, rising nationalist sentiment, and increasing bureaucratization. And as these authors ask who acts for the state and how the state molds individuals, they explore the conditions of agency and subjectivity in an era of centralizing state power.

I call this movement "State Romanticism," and I argue that it reconceives both the state and the literary aesthetic in a manner we can understand only by studying the two together. For the late Romantics, the diffusion of state functions does not weaken the central state but rather allows the state to extend its authority over regions it had not previously superintended: both geographical regions, like the Scottish highlands, and conceptual regions, like the individual conscience and emotional life. Trusting the state to form individuals, these writers begin a trajectory that culminates in Matthew Arnold and that defines the state as the administrator of "culture" charged with cultivating and representing the populace.¹² But more than later figures like Arnold, the late Romantics also investigate the conditions of individual agency within the state, asking both who carries state power and how individual identities are formed within a framework of state institutions. Engaging the grounds of agency also entails rethinking the nature of authorship. These authors question the Kantian claim that aesthetic experience points toward a shared human perceptual frame, realized through the

author's imagination. Instead, they suggest that state institutions structure our experiences and our perceptions, creating the very terms by which individuals perceive their identity in the first place.

I have found Michel Foucault's late work especially helpful in thinking about late Romantic authors' engagement with government authority. Although Foucault writes largely in the European context about states that centralized earlier and more strongly than Britain, his work on governmentality is useful in describing both the explosion of government powers and procedures across civil society that we see in nineteenth-century Britain, and the way in which Britain combines a liberal insistence on individual freedom with government procedures focused on ensuring the health and well-being of individuals and the population as a whole.¹³ Foucault's model suggests that the question of whether the central state strengthened in the nineteenth century is less important than the way in which administrative tactics served as a site for negotiating the boundaries between the state and civil society. His analysis suggests, then, the importance of examining precisely the areas of intersection between state and nonstate agencies, the grey areas where state authority shades into individual or local acts of power. Such an approach illuminates the strategy by which late Romantic authors engage with government authority. Although authors like Southey and Coleridge at times conceive their work (especially in the periodical press) as performing a service for the government, more generally the State Romantics ask not whether their work expresses opinions that serve existing authority but whether literature performs any of the state's functions of cultivating individuals and shaping communities.¹⁴ To do so, these writers examine specific state agencies—in the examples I will present, the established Church, the courts, the navy, and the mail—and ask how these agencies form individuals into communities and nations, and whether non-professionals (including authors) may perform any of an agency's work. As they place themselves and their own work within state agencies, the State Romantics share a second preoccupation of Foucault's late work: both consider how individual agency is possible within a disciplinary structure that defines the field of possibilities open to each person. Critics who study the political functions of literature often take the early Foucault as their model for how literature operates as a discourse. Literature, they suggest, creates the ways of thinking that form power structures. Many of these arguments are indeed compelling. But the late Romantics do not see their power in this manner. Instead, they identify the state as the agency that determines

how individuals think, feel, and perceive the world, and argue that literature operates as an accessory to state power.

Focusing on the promise inherent in government administration, the State Romantics appeal to state organizations to restructure a society that seemed increasingly in flux. In postwar Britain, several influences challenged traditional social and economic structures. The end of the Napoleonic Wars dumped large numbers of demobilized men into the economy, and a postwar economic slump made it more difficult for these newly returned soldiers to find employment. Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, these men lent power to the radical call for election reform and manhood suffrage.¹⁵ The issues of Catholic rights and of the status of Ireland within Britain further questioned who composed the body politic. And Britain's increasing imperial expansion also focused British attention on how to understand the relationship between the various peoples joined by British government. In response, writers of various political persuasions considered what it would take to create a new social order. Although Wordsworth and Coleridge, for example, turn to the state as part of an increasing conservatism, both conservative and progressive writers found reason to locate themselves within developing national and imperial organizations. For conservatives such as Wordsworth, Scott, and De Quincey, the increasing demand for populist reform provoked a search for institutional forms that could forcibly mold the lower classes. These writers recognize that the kind of individual moral development they seek does not take place only in state agencies—Coleridge, for example, praises the Bible Association's ministry to the working classes and Bell's system for educating working class children using student monitors—but they rest ultimate responsibility for cohering society with the state. If conservatives seek order in state institutions, however, progressives find in the governing structures of these organizations a role for middle class people and middle class values. Although British government was far from a meritocracy, agencies promised to give positions to certain members of the middle class in a way that older aristocratic structures did not. For writers of all political persuasions the rise of radical reform and the growth of a mass reading audience raised fears about the status of the reading public.¹⁶ Imagining their work as part of a state, these writers hoped to find license and strategic power to shape their audience.

For readers accustomed to Dickens's *Chancery Court and Office of Circumlocution* and other critical portraits of administrative bureaucracy in the Victorian period, the late Romantic attitude to government can seem

surprising. Far from criticizing bureaucracy's intrusiveness, hard-heartedness, or inefficiency, these authors entrust state bureaucracy to form individual morality, stir national identity, and improve the well-being of the British population. There is no single explanation for why the late Romantics find so promising the very administrative practices Victorians will later denigrate. In part, the Romantics simply have less experience with bureaucracy. The late Romantics write at the close of a period of wartime government expansion.¹⁷ But although the bureaucratic age is coming, national administrative agencies are not yet obtrusively structuring individuals' private lives. The late Romantics therefore fantasize about administrative agencies' power to build communities in a way that Victorians, hardened into a skeptically realistic portrait of bureaucratic paralysis, do not.

In asking how individuals and authors participate in the state, these authors take part in Romantic-era Britain's redefinition of the relationship between nation, state, and government. Before proceeding, I would like to discuss each of these terms. At its most narrow, "government" refers to the central political structure and its administrative apparatus, as well as to regional and local governing bodies; these agencies are, in popular parlance, "the government." In his late work on "governmentality," however, Foucault suggests a broader definition in which "government" signifies "not only the legitimately constituted forms of political or economic subjection but also modes of action, more or less considered and calculated, that were destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people" ("Governmentality," 341). Although the term is diffuse, he defines it most specifically as a set of goals and procedures: the tactics he refers to as "governmentality" seek to measure and improve the well-being of the population and adopt political economy and statistics as their primary investigative tools. These tactics spread beyond the confines or control of the state to individuals and institutions that perform governing functions. "Government" here includes the multiple disciplinary institutions that intend to influence others' actions, such as the courts, the schools, the asylums, and the Church, as well as the individuals who take on such institutional functions (such as employers who dictate and enforce codes of behavior).¹⁸

But even if governmental tactics spread across the population, the state is inextricable from the process of governance. Foucault insists that we should not see the state as the origin of government. Instead, the state is continually shaped by the process of bringing government functions under local and central control: "governmentality" is "at once internal and external to

the state—since it is the tactics of government that make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on” (“Governmentality,” 221). The state calls for greater central authority by locating perceived social needs and creating policies to address them, and the question of who should have responsibility for any particular problem incites debates over the boundaries of state authority. In Britain, the state and reformers used issues like poor relief, penal reform, education, and sanitation to negotiate the boundaries of central, local, and civil authority. The very process of debate justified central oversight, however; although Parliament reserved many governing responsibilities for the localities, it was Parliament that decided what the balance should be. As a result, David Eastwood suggests, “[g]eneral rules and directions’ were increasingly becoming the prerogative of the centre, and ‘details’ the substance and limit of local discretion” (164). The question of who constituted the government was also complicated by the development of an administrative class. After the 1818 and 1819 Sturges Bourne reforms allowed the creation of a “select vestry” to administer parish governments, both local government and civil organizations increasingly relied on paid administrative staff.¹⁹ The poor laws and subsequent reforms also created a central body of administrators, even as they assigned responsibility for the poor to local parishes.²⁰ Throughout this period, then, reformers and counterrevolutionaries alike debated who should carry government authority, and the state extended authority into local and civil organizations even as it created the conditions of statewide central supervision.

Foucault’s analysis of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century government is also helpful in describing how two at times contradictory and at times complementary government rationalities, the pastoral and the liberal, provided the terms for this debate over who should carry government power. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, the state no longer defines itself by its territory, or by the sovereignty of a monarch, but through its ability to administer a population. As I will discuss in Chapter 2, Foucault argues that this model of the state originates in, but secularizes, the Christian model of pastoral care. Just as the pastor attempts to see into each conscience in addition to and as a means toward shepherding the congregation as a whole, the pastoral state seeks “to develop those elements constitutive of individuals’ lives in such a way that their development also fosters the strength of the state” (“*Omnes et Singulatim*,” 322). Pastoral power grants the state, through its representatives, access to and supervision over an individual’s interiority,

including personal relationships, emotional life, and moral development, aspects of the individual that would otherwise fall outside the state's purview.²¹ In this way, governmentality expands the state's power even as state functions spread to civil organizations.

But if the pastoral idea shapes the role of both civil and state government, a second liberal rationality also beginning in the mid-eighteenth century arises concurrently with and as a correlate of the pastoral state. Whereas the pastoral state attempts to supervise and make visible the health of a national population, liberalism contends that the state cannot see into individual interests and cannot fully comprehend "the economic mechanism which totalizes every element" of society (*Birth of Biopolitics*, 280). In this view, to create the strongest society, government must allow free individuals to pursue their interests.²² Even a liberal government does not completely step aside, however. Foucault argues that from the eighteenth century on, the role of government is to create the conditions under which individuals can pursue their interests and supposedly "natural" phenomena (like free markets) can operate.²³ And here, the liberal and pastoral rationalities converge to the extent that both measure the state's success through its ability to increase the well-being of the population. In Foucault's view, liberalism is not a matter of "letting" individuals exercise a freedom they already possess but rather of creating the possibility of freedom in the first place: "Liberalism formulates simply the following: I am going to produce what you need to be free. I am going to see to it that you are free to be free" (*Birth of Biopolitics*, 63). Foucault notes that this new government rationality involves "mechanisms with the function of producing, breathing life into, and increasing freedom, of introducing additional freedom through additional control and intervention. That is to say, control is no longer just the necessary counterweight to freedom . . . it becomes its mainspring" (*Birth of Biopolitics*, 67). For this reason, Foucault analyzes liberalism not as a philosophy but rather as itself a governmental tactic, a way both of critiquing excessive or ineffective government and of arguing for and extending government power. Foucault suggests that this dual dynamic characterizes liberalism: "it is clear that at the heart of this liberal practice is an always different and mobile problematic relationship between the production of freedom and that which in the production of freedom risks limiting and destroying it. . . . Liberalism must produce freedom, but this very act entails the establishment of limitations, controls, forms of coercion, and obligations relying on threats, etcetera" (*Birth of Biopolitics*, 64).

This problematic—what Colin Gordon calls the “liberal problem-space”—is quite helpful in accounting for the State Romantics’ dual interest in proclaiming Britain’s tradition of liberty while simultaneously insisting that state institutions develop individual character and mold individual behavior.²⁴ Foucault’s analysis is also helpful in depicting the way in which these authors structure the relationship between society and the state and between themselves as individuals and the state. Just as Foucault suggests that government operates both inside and outside of the state, and serves as a mechanism for defining the state’s authority, he similarly locates civil society at the boundary of the state. Liberal philosophy was incorrect, he suggests, to state that individuals and society exist outside of government.²⁵ Civil society “is not an historical-natural given which functions in some way as both the foundation of and source of opposition to the state or political institutions. Civil society is not a primary and immediate reality.” Instead, Foucault describes it as a “transactional reality” which is “born precisely from the interplay of relations of power and everything which constantly eludes them, at the interface, so to speak, of governors and governed”; he suggests that civil society is “absolutely correlative of the form of governmental technology we call liberalism” (*Birth of Biopolitics*, 297). This formulation is especially useful because late Romantic writers locate civil society and individual character both inside and outside the state. Late Romantic writers at times take a philosophically liberal stance, assuming that individuals lie outside of and prior to government and that the state and all other forms of government should therefore respect individuals’ rights to freely pursue their own interests. Simultaneously, however, many of these writers take conservative or communitarian positions, suggesting that institutions and in particular the state government construct society and individuals in the first place. They imagine, then, both that state institutions structure society and that they must nevertheless continue to reach out to develop individuals more fully and pull into the nation elements of society that are not yet fully incorporated. And the State Romantics find their own agency in this contradiction: the state needs agents because it defines some people, regions, and areas of life as outside its immediate purview or as closed off from its view. Agents work for the state precisely because they are not actual state officials.

Foucault’s model of the pastoral state demonstrates what the late Romantic writers seek in the state: an agency that molds individuals and through them the nation as a whole. But if these authors see the nation as determined by the shared strength of its people, they also suggest that building a

sense of national identity is part of the state's strategy for forming each individual. Indeed, these authors suggest that a strong moral and ethical community arises only when a shared sense of nationality connects individuals to one another. The State Romantics reserve the task of nation-formation for the state, in part because they have watched state institutions literally incorporate the Celtic periphery into Britain. But they also grant the state a crucial role in forming the nation as an aesthetic category. As many critics have noted, it is no coincidence that the modern nation, so influentially described by Benedict Anderson as an "imagined community," arose during the Romantic period at the heyday of the imagination as an aesthetic concept.²⁶ Anderson calls the nation "imagined" to suggest that all nations are mental constructions: because no individuals know every person and every place in their nation, they must inevitably imagine the national community. For Anderson, there is no deeply "true" national identity, and therefore no imagination of nation can be truer than any other. While some late Romantic authors, like Walter Scott, foreground the very constructedness of nation in a manner that agrees with Anderson, others, like Wordsworth and Coleridge, believe that there is one true national identity that is in the process of formation. Nevertheless, these authors resemble Anderson in that they treat the nation at least in part as an aesthetic rather than ontological category: nationalism is based in how people perceive the whole to which they belong, and the nation-state actively teaches citizens to recognize their national identity. State institutions, like the education system, therefore make the collective sentiments of nationalism possible.²⁷ The authors I call State Romantics rely not only on the education system but also on a multitude of state organizations to teach people to know and to feel their nationality.

Some historians have suggested, like the late Romantics, that the central state played a predominant role in cohering national identities. Eric Hobsbawm and the school of historians associated with him argue that the state is more important than language, history, religion, or any other form of collective identity in building nations: "[n]ations do not make states and nationalisms, but the other way around" (10).²⁸ Other historians, however, and most notably Linda Colley, suggest that national identity arose among the populace. In her highly influential history, *Britons*, Colley argues that the English, Scots, Welsh, and to a lesser extent, the Irish, began to identify as a single nation during the eighteenth century as Britain fought a series of wars against France.²⁹ This nationalism was based in a sense of shared

values in the face of French difference: as they gazed across the channel at France, the English, Scots, and Welsh found pride and unity in their religion, their wealth of trade, and their tradition of liberty. Colley argues that Britons from all of the nation's regions freely and rationally chose their British identity, and that "it would be wrong, then, to interpret the growth of British national consciousness in this period in terms of a new cultural and political uniformity being resolutely imposed on the peripheries of the island by its center" (373). When the British monarchy finally, under George III, attempted to construct itself as a center of British identity, it imitated and sought a role within an already extant popular nationalism (195–236). Colley's model has its critics.³⁰ Laurence Brockliss and David Eastwood question whether eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain developed a single identity at all, countering that "[o]ne should not confuse a patriot rhetoric of Britishness, forged or deployed in wartime, with a pervasive or persistent sense of Britishness as a primary or normative identity." They also contest the idea that any "British" features arose from folk culture. Instead, they suggest, Parliament held the country's peoples and regions together by providing "a political framework through which differences could be accommodated or contested."³¹ Colley's model of national identification as a moment of specular exchange also neglects the role that other state organizations play in determining the very categories with which people identify. For each of Colley's sources of national pride, we could identify a corresponding national bureaucratic institution: for Protestantism, the English Church; for trade, the East India Company and other trading organizations; for liberty, the courts.

In the lectures collected in *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault provides an alternative account of nineteenth-century nationalism. Foucault suggests that whereas earlier discourse (indeed, as Colley argues) defined nations as peoples in conflict with other peoples, nineteenth-century nationalism instead defined a nation through the state's administrative boundaries. At this moment the nation "is not essentially specified by its relations with other groups (such as other nations, hostile or enemy nations, or the nations with which it is juxtaposed). What does characterize the nation is, in contrast, a vertical relationship between a body of individuals who are capable of constituting a State, and the actual existence of the State itself" (223).³² In contrast to the nationalism Colley describes, then, Foucault argues that nineteenth-century nationalism is less concerned with a nation's culture or a shared past; what is at stake is not one nation's ability to dominate another

nation (like England's rivalry with France) but the state's "ability to administer itself, to manage, govern, and guarantee the constitution and workings of the figure of the State and of State power" (224).

Benedict Anderson comes closer than Colley to this insight. Anderson grants the state two crucial roles in creating the earliest instances of nationalism. First, in both the colonies and European nations the language used for state administration becomes the national language. And second, colonial administrative structures provide the framework for the first assertions of national identity. For Anderson, the first people to envision themselves as nationals were Creole administrators who found their rise within their motherland's administration limited to positions in the colony of their birth. As they discover that full "British" or "Spanish" identity is closed to them, they come to identify as Americans. However, when Anderson traces the later rise of nationalism within Europe, he, like Colley, attributes nationalism to the people rather than to administrative categories. Government administrations, he argues, embrace nationalism only after the people and so as not to appear out of step with them. These "official nationalisms," he suggests, "developed after the popular European nationalisms of the 1820's, and were *responses* by power groups—primarily, but not exclusively, dynastic and aristocratic—threatened with exclusion from, or marginalization in, popular imagined communities" (109–10, Anderson's emphasis). As Marc Redfield has noted, even as Anderson argues for the role of the state, he continues to see nationalism in its European manifestations as a popular phenomenon, with which the state becomes involved only belatedly and artificially, in a manner that corrupts the previously more natural identity.³³ Anderson neglects, therefore, the role of state institutions in creating a sense of nationalism in the populace.

The State Romantics provide an account of how state administration structures national identity. In seeking a role for themselves within this official nationalism, they participate in and attempt to profit from both of the somewhat contradictory tendencies active within Britain, the drive toward central state supervision and the diffusion of governing authority. The State Romantics' reliance on the state to construct national identity presents a sharp contrast to their earlier models of community and nation. Whereas high Romantic writers had implicitly defended a notion of community as an organic outgrowth of a population with a shared past, the State Romantics envision a national identity that is imposed through a mesh of interlocking administrative systems. In describing how the state acts on individual

subjectivities, they adopt a model similar to Althusser's description of interpellation.³⁴ For the Romantics as for Althusser, state structures provide an identity that people do not choose but simply recognize as their own. This definition of nation opens the way for one defense of imperialism. If nation is no longer defined through history, or through qualities, traits, or values, then a nation can be extended as far as its administration extends. In redefining nationalism as a function of the state, the State Romantics make their models of nation and of authorship suit each other. Locating national and individual identity within state frameworks allows them to imagine that the state and the authors who work in its name actively shape their readership, a comforting thought in an era in which the mass readership was increasingly fragmented and politicized. Insisting that the state administers nationalism also allows them to define an important role for themselves as state agents. To do so, however, they must alter their model of aesthetics.

Placing authority within the state means reducing these writers' claims for literary agency. They no longer claim to originate unique visions but instead to transmit a message that begins in the state. Whereas high Romantic writers portrayed themselves as lone geniuses recording their solitary effusions in lyric poetry that aimed to give readers a glimpse of the transcendent truth the poets had experienced, the authors I study in this volume portray themselves as functionaries in an increasingly bureaucratized cultural economy. The State Romantics still seek a kind of authorial charisma, but they suggest that individuals take on what Weber calls a "routinized charisma"; they borrow the state's power and glory rather than develop a power of their own.³⁵ High Romantics like the young Wordsworth and young Coleridge claim that their poetry derives organically from the people. In his 1802 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth argues that poetry must reestablish its relationship to everyday people and language: in "low and rustic life," he suggests, "the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity," and rustic language, "arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more important, and a far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets."³⁶ By portraying the genuine passions of rustic people, he promises, his poetry will be "important in the multiplicity and quality of its moral relations" (158).³⁷ But Wordsworth grounds the ability of his poetry to improve its readers not only in the kind of story he tells and the kind of language he uses but also in his own character.³⁸ The poet is a man "endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human

nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind" (138). In contrast, the State Romantics I study no longer hope that a single author "possessed of more than usual organic sensibility" can restore poetry and language to its common origins (126). Faced with an expanding radical press, these writers worry that they cannot constitute their own audiences and influence the taste of a reading community. They argue instead that the state shapes communities and that literature assists in this work as the state's adjunct.

The State Romantics draw sharp distinctions between the authority of writing and the authority of government. Whereas authors like Percy Shelley claim a direct political power for poets as "the legislators of the world," Wordsworth, Scott, and Austen think that literature cannot directly assume social or political power. In fact, for these authors, thinking over literature's role as an agent of state authority points toward the many ways in which literature lacks power. Unlike the courts, literature cannot punish offenders; unlike the Church, literature cannot come to know and individually supervise readers. For the State Romantics, attributing a person's identity or a writer's imagination to a national organization therefore entails revising high Romanticism's definitions of the poet. We can see this reduction as a turning away from all types of revolutionary claims toward the more realistic practical and empirical goals that Virgil Nemoianu has argued characterize the "Biedermeier" period.³⁹ These authors also wish to distance themselves from the agency of radical writers, which they suspect has tainted the public sphere.⁴⁰ However, in reducing their claims for literature, the State Romantics have a positive as well as negative goal. They aim not only to dissociate from radical literature but also to develop a new literary authority grounded in a different model of social totality. Since the State Romantics no longer trust individual vision to achieve a whole, they instead turn to the state to achieve this process. They also, however, turn to the state to find a new role for themselves. Paradoxically, they imagine themselves giving up their own agency by working within the state but also being useful to the state in their private capacity precisely because they carry state authority into areas it could not otherwise reach.

As they retreat from claims of individual authorial agency, these writers' thematic concerns change as well. Instead of considering, like Wordsworth's *Prelude*, the sources of the poet's genius, or like Coleridge's "Kubla Khan," the elusiveness of the imagination, the late Romantic writers I study thematize the question of who can carry *national* authority and how. Like the

high Romantic authors, the State Romantics still search for a transcendent experience; they find it, however, not through the agency of their imaginations but in the nation and in the administrative apparatuses by which the nation addresses its people. As part of this change, some late Romantics experiment with prose genres. Whether writing in poetry or prose, however, these writers revise traditional romantic tropes to operate through the state. Where the early Wordsworth, for example, finds sublimity in nature, the late Wordsworth and Thomas De Quincey find sublimity in the rituals of the Anglican Church and the reaches of British power, respectively. Sympathy and imagination no longer are characteristics of an individual visionary but rather a function of the system into which he inserts himself.

In asking who participates in government and how the increasingly pervasive role of government changes the conditions of individual and literary agency, the State Romantics explore a set of issues that faced all early nineteenth-century writers. Not all of their contemporaries defined the relationship between individual and state in the same way, however. Byron and Shelley share with the State Romantic authors I study an interest in state bureaucratic institutions. Neither, however, wishes to speak for or as part of existing state institutions. Byron wants poets to change institutions rather than take their projects from them. Shelley presents a complicated case, because although he too claims to be more interested in using the imagination to tear down repressive institutions than in using institutions to empower his authorship, his plays, and particularly *The Cenci*, resemble the State Romantics in that they do not so much explode these institutions as interrogate the terms by which law and government attain legitimacy.⁴¹ Both Byron and Shelley ultimately avoid the reach of government by leaving Britain altogether.⁴² Poets like Dorothea Hemans and Letitia Landon are equally suspicious of the bureaucratic state but respond in a different manner. Instead of locating their poetry within the state, they authorize their work through an appeal to domestic sentiment. Several of Hemans's most famous lyrics, such as "Casabianca," in fact suggest that state authority pales in the face of human bonds like the love of father and son.

If I would not, therefore, argue that all authors writing between what we think of as high Romanticism and the Victorian period were State Romantics, I would nonetheless contend that the concerns the State Romantics most vividly portray were crucial in shaping British literary culture in this era.⁴³ Indeed, I see authors' increasing preoccupation with state agency as both cause and symptom of two developments literary historians have dated

to the late Romantic era. First, the number of authors claiming affiliation with the state is one symptom of the closing of Habermas's ideal public sphere. Instead of seeing the private sphere as authorizing one's public participation, these authors rely on the state to regulate both the public and private spheres, including the formation of individual character and personal relationships. The late Romantics take the division between state and non-state as a starting point but see this separation as an unfortunate condition that atomizes individuals and makes them unable to relate to one another as part of a moral and ethical community. These authors do not believe that private individuals will be able fully to form as individuals, much less able to cohere into anything that we would call a "public" or a social totality. Those "publics" that form outside of state auspices prove either degenerate or even (for the more conservative writers) dangerous to the social order. To remedy this gap, they suggest, the state should expand into ever more areas of social life, acting through recognized agencies and agents. Second, the need for authors to claim state affiliation also suggests an additional factor in the decline in the number of women authors publishing after 1815. Women were active in the public sphere, both as authors and in debating societies, in the early years of the nineteenth century.⁴⁴ However, after 1815 male authorship increased and female authorship declined. Whereas male novelists might take female pen names, or sign "a lady," in the early part of the century, only a few decades later female authors like the Brontës felt obliged to cloak their identities in male pseudonyms.⁴⁵ There are many reasons for this change; certainly Victorian separate-spheres ideology suggested that women should stay away from the frays of public discourse, and the immense popularity of Walter Scott's *Waverley* novels created a newly masculinized aesthetic.⁴⁶ However, the need for authors to claim state affiliation, and the increasing interest in debating the boundaries of state power, suggest reasons why women might find it more difficult to write in a period when the State Romantics were redefining the Romantic aesthetic. Because women could not be employed by state agencies, they find it more challenging to claim state power through them. Jane Austen, I will suggest, proves the exception; she argues that women participate in the state through the professions of their husbands. Women writers like Hemans and Landon, in contrast, sidestep the state by appealing to domestic sentiment.

The State Romantics rethink agency and aesthetics in the context of a state that increasingly penetrates individual lives. They inflect this shared preoccupation in different ways, however, and for this reason the chapters

that follow constitute a series of case studies rather than the description of a single coherent school of thought. Each chapter examines how a late Romantic writer engages a specific state agency—the established Anglican Church, the courts, the navy, and the mails—to question who performs the work of the state, and how the writer revises a Romantic form or concept—the fragment in Coleridge; the distinction between imagination and fancy in Wordsworth; the historical novel genre in Scott; the sublime in Austen; and sympathy, vision, and organic form in De Quincey—to empower literature to assume state functions. I begin with Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth because both examine how the most traditional state institution, the established Church, molds individuals. Both, however, update the function and governing strategies of the Church in the context of a modern, rationalizing state. Chapter 1, “Fragment Poems and Fragment Nations: The Aesthetics of Ireland in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s Late Work,” examines how Coleridge’s late work, including *On the Constitution of the Church and State*, transposes his model of organic form from poetry to politics to consider the interrelationship of Britain’s component regions. In doing so, Coleridge casts colonies like Ireland as fragments, “parts” that cannot be wholes of their own but are not fully incorporated into the British nation. Reading Coleridge’s vitriolic essays on Ireland alongside his fragment poems, I argue that both his early and later use of fragments assume that social frames structure our perceptions and that the absence of these frames produces social disintegration and poetic failure. Coleridge’s late work relies on the bureaucracy of the Anglican Church to create an organic nation that reconciles individual freedom with collective totality, interpellating individuals into the state even while cultivating the character that establishes their capacity for free will, and their ability to recognize their national identity, in the first place. Because Irish Catholics refuse to participate in the administrative bureaucracy of the Anglican Church, he argues, they cannot be fully incorporated into Britain, and the Irish people will never learn to perceive their national identity correctly. For Coleridge, Ireland therefore remains a fragment that requires British rule, and its people, subjects who cannot aspire to full citizenship.

Like Coleridge, Wordsworth in his late career trusts the Anglican Church administration to interpellate British citizens; unlike Coleridge, he drastically revises his earlier aesthetic in order to do so. In Chapter 2, “Wordsworth’s Establishment Poetics,” I argue that the late Wordsworth does not lose his youthful poetic genius but adjusts his high Romantic aesthetic to

integrate poetry as part of the state. In his early Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth hopes to convert readers to a new form of poetic taste that would restore the moral ties between individuals. In the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, in contrast, Wordsworth suggests that only the state Church has the institutional structures to convert readers and place them in a national ethical community. In an interesting permutation on Foucault's concept of pastoral state power, Wordsworth uses the Anglican pastor to model how the state works: the pastor takes his authority from the state Church, and by coming to know each parishioner interpellates them into the state. Wordsworth rethinks the role of the poet to assist in this task. He is in fact so committed to state religious administration that he fears excessive or imaginative language will emphasize the poet's vision at the expense of the Church's institutional functioning. The *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* find a partial solution in the restrictions of the sonnet form and in diction; Wordsworth deliberately chooses insipid language that aims not to force readers to convert but subtly to remind them of the truths they already know.

Whereas Wordsworth and Coleridge use the Church as a model for how to incorporate individuals into the state, the other authors in this study model government power by examining state institutions—the courts, the navy, and the mail—that became increasingly important as Britain fought an international war and expanded both its internal and overseas empire. In Chapter 3, “Speaking for the Law: State Agency in Scott's Novels,” I argue that Scott's novels rethink how the law can best enfold Scotland into Britain. Scott suggests that both statutory and common law fail to administer justice in Scotland. Drawing again on Foucault's model of pastoral state power, I argue that Scott develops the historical novel in part to suggest that non-governmental individuals better mediate the passage of British order into regions, such as the highlands of Scotland, that it has not yet penetrated. For Scott, these agents succeed where the courts fail because they know local populations and bend British law and order to address the population's needs and to ease the working of British legitimacy. Scott suggests that novelists demonstrate the kind of attention to individual and regional differences that he thinks the pastoral state provides, and that they themselves serve as pastoral agents, showing the context in which the government should understand the information it collects about individuals.

Like Scott's novels, Jane Austen's final novel, *Persuasion*, engages with a state institution to endow a new class of individuals with state power; in doing so, however, Austen in fact reduces her earlier claims for the po-

litical agency of novels. In *Persuasion*, Austen marries heroine Anne Elliot to a naval man in order to free her from her corrupted aristocratic family and provide an alternative middle class community founded upon the professional ties of the navy. Chapter 4, “A Nation Without Nationalism: The Reorganization of Feeling in Austen’s *Persuasion*,” argues that this novel demonstrates one rather paradoxical way in which women can become members of state professional organizations: by joining the profession of their husbands. More crucially, professions such as the navy model for Austen a form of community and of national identity that does not rely on notions of landed property or of inheritance from one’s forbearers. In contrast to the strategies depicted in much current historical work on British nationalism, Austen sharply differentiates an “English” identity, defined through landed inheritance, from a “British” identity, which promises to replace it and to better position individuals in ethical relationships to one another. This Britishness, she suggests, must be administered to the populace through administrative agencies exemplified by the navy and is felt only in a moment that restructures the Romantic sublime, when individuals become aware of the sacrifice that the nation demands from the professionals who serve it.

Even more blatantly than the other authors I study in this volume, Thomas De Quincey, in his essay “The English Mail-Coach,” locates himself and his writing at the center of English nation-formation. In doing so, he evacuates individual agency, placing the responsibility for his words and actions in the mail and in the nation. Chapter 5, “De Quincey’s Imperial Systems,” argues that De Quincey imagines the British mail system during the Napoleonic Wars as an organ spreading British identity from a single, central point across the countryside. And as De Quincey rides on the British mail coaches, he claims to be a part of the medium that conveys the news of victory to the masses. De Quincey combines an ethnic model that locates nationality in a people’s blood with a nonorganic model in which nationality is imposed from the outside by an imperial administration. In such a model, Romantic inspiration derives solely from organization: terms such as “sympathy” and “vision” no longer refer to personal attributes but rather to the author’s imbrication within vast communication networks overseen by the British state. In this way, De Quincey exemplifies the late Romantic recontextualization of Romantic aesthetics as part of the British state as he redefines the state as the privileged agent of national identity.