The only daughter of George IV (1762–1830) and his ill-fated consort Caroline of Brunswick (1762–1830), history remembers Princess Charlotte Augusta of Wales (1796–1817) primarily in the context of her notorious parents,¹ her popular grandfather George III (1738–1820),² and her long-lived cousin Queen Victoria (1819–1901).³ Aside from three biographies,⁴ Charlotte’s life has been a footnote in historiography on royal women and their role in the evolution of the British monarchy. Historians have not yet acknowledged Charlotte’s contribution to the modernization of the idea of monarchy, nor how the conjuncture of personal conviction, family matters and historical circumstances framed her vision for a more domesticated image of British monarchy. Drawing on published news accounts, parliamentary debates, satires, popular prints, as well as some of her publicly available private letters, this chapter dwells on three ‘episodes’ occurring during the Regency (1811–1820) that featured interaction between public opinion, political partisanship and Charlotte’s own exploitation of a rhetoric of national family values. In order to gain support for a marriage of her own choosing, as opposed to the arranged dynastic one, the princess strategically framed her choices within the template of Protestant middle-class family values, a key discourse informing contemporary ideals of civic masculinity.⁵ In the process, she sought to promote a ‘feminine’ style of sovereign
power at a moment when British politics was rife with discussions on the
devolution of royal power and democratic reform.

Charlotte was born into a royal family that was, like British society
itself, beset with a conflict between competing paradigms of male
civic virtue. George III, Charlotte’s beloved grandfather, acceded to
the throne in 1760, the first of the Hanoverian kings to be born and
raised on British soil. During his sixty-year reign, he faced profound
political turmoil, including the American Revolutionary War (1775–
1783) and the French Revolution (1788–1789), followed by a prolonged
continental war with France (1793–1815). As head of the nation’s ‘family
of families’, George III expected himself, his wife, his children and
their own families to model conjugal domesticity, household economy
and religious observance. Though the annual parliamentary debates
on the Civil List (funds provided to support the king’s and other royal
households each year) inevitably provided frequent grist for disgruntled
taxpayers, George III sought to be transparently frugal and to instil
the same values in his children. However, his heir, Prince George of
Wales (crowned king in 1820), rejected his father’s philosophy of sober,
service-minded kingship, fashioning his own image according to the
‘continental’ model of personal splendour, gallantry, independence
and individualism. While George III was the very model of Protestant
middle-class virtues, his eldest son was, to his critics at least, the epitome
of aristocratic vice and upper-class exceptionalism.

Until 1811, the Prince of Wales was identified with the Whig party,
finding its principles of moral and economic liberty as appealing as its
opposition to his father’s commitment to the Tory party and their ‘king
and country’ conservatism. Throughout his youth, he chafed against
the restrictions imposed on him as heir to the throne, particularly the
constraints of the Royal Marriages Act of 1772. Instituted by George
III to uphold the status of the British monarchy, this law required the
king’s consent for the marriage of any member of the royal family
under the age of twenty-five. In consistent defiance of his father’s rules,
‘Prinny’s’ predilections for female company, gambling and extravagant
spending – exacerbated by his need to fund two separate households
in a bid to (unsuccessfully) hide his secret marriage to the wealthy
Catholic widow Maria Fitzherbert – were legendary among London’s
elite. To avoid further damage to the royal family’s reputation, the king
and his ministers eventually prevailed in forcing the prince of Wales to
abandon Mrs Fitzherbert and agree to an arranged marriage to Princess
Caroline of Brunswick, in exchange for the government’s payment of
his massive debts. A marriage treaty was signed in 1794 and Caroline travelled to Britain in 1795 to assume her place as consort to the heir. From the outset, the Prince of Wales treated his bride with derision and disrespect, especially after he failed to get the financial settlement he desired. Rather than greet Caroline in person when she landed at Gravesend, he sent his mistress Lady Jersey to accompany his new wife to his residence at Carlton House, and even then, he was upset by the warm welcome Londoners had given to the future queen. Upon their introductions back at Carlton House, he openly expressed his disgust with Caroline’s looks and ‘unrefined’ manners, purportedly drinking himself into a stupor in order to consummate the marriage. It was an unpleasant start to what would become a lifetime of often very public royal marital enmity.

Princess Charlotte was born on 7 January 1796, the first and only child of her parent’s unhappy union. Three months later, her father banned her mother from Carlton House after Caroline’s complaint to the king that his son was openly keeping his mistress in their home. The Prince of Wales refused to let Caroline take their infant daughter, who was instead to be raised by governesses in a separate establishment, while he continued to live with Lady Jersey. George III doted on his baby granddaughter and sought to mitigate his son’s shoddy treatment of Caroline, though even he could not legally interfere in another man’s family affairs and did not himself approve of Caroline’s lifestyle and manners. Against his estranged son’s wishes, the King allowed his daughter-in-law free access to court and regular visits with Charlotte, who became second in line for the throne once it was clear that the marriage would produce no more children. From this moment, Charlotte’s family was in every way a house divided, one requiring constant refereeing by the King and the government, and thus providing a focus for public scrutiny and even constitutional debate over the course of the young princess’s lifetime.

For his part, the Prince of Wales continued to seek ways to rid himself of Caroline entirely. In 1805, he went so far as to engage Lady Douglas, wife of his brother the duke of Sussex’s groom Lord Douglas, in giving false testimony against Caroline on allegations that, in 1802, she had committed adultery and secretly given birth to an illegitimate child. Given her status as wife of the heir to the throne, this was a most serious accusation that could have resulted in a charge of treason. When he was informed of the allegations in 1806, George III ordered members of his Tory ministry to discreetly conduct a secret enquiry (referred to later as
the ‘Delicate Investigation’) into the matter.13 This ‘Secret Commission’ ultimately determined that there was no evidence of adultery, and no legal action was taken against Caroline, but the whiff of scandal had already done its damage and she was never publicly exonerated. Though he did not get the dissolution of the marriage he was seeking, the Prince of Wales was delighted when his father determined that Caroline would no longer be welcome within the family fold, given her proven propensity for ‘levity and profligacy’ and, perhaps even worse, her social machinations as a ‘female politician’.14 The King did allow, however, that, as the mother of the future queen, she be permitted to retain her house and allowance, appear at formal court functions and continue to receive visits from Charlotte at Blackheath, in the interest of preserving a very thin veneer of a united royal family. This incident would be significant to Charlotte’s future and to the future of the nation itself, as the details of the Delicate Investigation would resurface six years later, colouring public feeling towards both royal parents at just the moment that a maturing Charlotte was entering society and her own process of self-determination.

As Charlotte grew and as the war on the continent dragged on, the Prince of Wales enjoyed the benefit of the doubt among the London elite, given their general distaste for Caroline’s ‘common’ manners and her regular reception of liberal politicians, writers and artists at Montague House, her home in Blackheath (straddling the borders of Greenwich and London). By 1809, however, public opinion began to turn against him and his brothers, particularly in light of the parliamentary debates on the negligence of his younger brother, the Duke of York, in allowing his mistress Mary Anne Clarke to influence and profit from the sale of army commissions. This was a prolonged scandal that resulted in the duke’s unprecedented resignation as Commander-in-Chief of the British Armed Forces and then further led to widespread reforms of Britain’s major institutions, including the monarchy.15 The mood was not so much revolutionary as much as reformist, and George III’s popularity surged during the inaugural 1809 Golden Jubilee celebrations amid public condemnation of his eldest two sons’ open philandering.16 However, unforeseen events forestalled any public comeuppance of the royal heir himself. By the end of 1810, deteriorating health forced the very popular King George III to retire from public life, leading to the investiture of the Prince of Wales as Prince Regent. Without the King to block him, he reinitiated the plan to divorce his wife, again denying her access to their daughter Charlotte, who was then sixteen-years old and
ready to be formally brought out in public and trained for her future role as queen.\textsuperscript{17}

In what follows, I seek to show how Charlotte used motifs of family values to advance her own interests and to foster popular support for the monarchy in an era of anti-aristocratic sentiment and mounting anti-monarchist radicalism. I am mindful of following historian Joan Wallach Scott’s call for examining how social codes of gender actually structure the development and enactment of political strategy in divergent political movements (including working class and republican politics), places and periods, and how that politics in turn constitutes social norms in particular and gendered ways.\textsuperscript{18} In Charlotte’s case, it was not only that the mere promise of a female heir offered a more ‘feminine’ and personable performance of kingship, as other historians have argued.\textsuperscript{19} Rather, in the process of forging her own destiny within the normative and legal constraints of her station, Charlotte articulated a discourse of British royalty that expressly signalled a shift in the relationship of the monarchy to the House of Commons and House of Lords. In Charlotte’s strategic vision of her own future reign, Britain’s constitutional form of monarchy and its tripartite parliamentary system of government would remain intact, but the monarchy and its royal family would primarily serve the nation as the living embodiment of the nation’s identity and values, rather than as an active agent in the nation’s governance. In retrospect, Charlotte’s vision was brilliant in humbly acknowledging the headwinds of democratic reform while offering an alternative to the more radical republican remedy of abolishing the monarchy altogether.

The British Monarchy and the Rhetoric of Gender in the Late Georgian Period

Charlotte entered the public stage in the year 1811, at the same time her highly unpopular father was appointed as Prince Regent, empowered to rule in his father’s stead. As his sole heir and next in line to the throne, her future was a matter of public concern, but the fact that she was female added a degree of complexity to her future plans and choices. Although British constitutional theory had allowed for ‘female kings’ since Mary I’s reign, the practical enactment of their sovereign power was still constructed and interpreted through a logic of gender, which is defined here as a language for assigning relationships of authority and codes of proper conduct on the basis of sexual difference, according
to prevailing social paradigms of masculinity and femininity. Although kingship and monarchy were both coded as masculine in this period, the logic of gender offered royal figures of both sexes with potent arguments for their right and responsibility to wield that sovereign power, just as a gender calculus also structured cultural assumptions that lay at the heart of all debates about the persistence of the British monarchy and the question of civil rights more generally. In Charlotte’s era, the middle-class British ways of organizing the social meanings of sexual difference around child-rearing and property transmission provided a naturalized ‘family values’ template that allowed for a reimagining of the relations of power on which rested the very concepts of British national sovereignty and royal prerogative. Thus it was that loyalists and radical reformists alike used the rhetoric of family values to argue for and against the merits of limiting monarchical power, relaxing censorship and levelling social inequalities.

Charlotte came of age at the advent of the Regency period (1811–1820), a time of anxiety and austerity, with many Britons suffering from the high economic and human costs of the Napoleonic Wars and rapid industrialization. Britons had largely rejected the republicanism that had so recently inspired the American and French revolutions, in part due to fears that the French Terror would be re-enacted in Britain and lead to a clampdown on seditious speech. Equally, the popularity of George III and the long continental war with Bonaparte consolidated a strong sense of loyalty to king and country. A less radical rhetoric of ‘democratic reform’ persisted, but in ways that sought to associate British civic virtue with the conservation of the country’s institutions and symbols – like the monarchy – that had been so violently repudiated by French and American republicanism. A long English parliamentary tradition had provided the nation with an outlet for populist anger and reasoned arguments for the expansion of rights. Most criticism of the royal family was a critique of immoral behaviour by royal individuals, and Britons were more concerned with the impunity of the House of Lords and aristocratic influence in politics. Britain would modernize its institutions, but under its own terms.

A core element of British identity in this period was an ideal of family life that valued frugality and sexual probity, in opposition to the legal exceptionalism that flourished among the aristocracy, especially on the issue of divorce, illegal for ordinary Britons. While there was widespread agreement on the need for a national ‘good father’, public debates about the rights and responsibilities of male heads of households in this
period reveal disagreement on the degree of authority granted to the father figure. At a time when public opinion welcomed legal reforms, Charlotte’s strategic advancement of her own Whig principles (the notion that Parliament should be supreme, and the king’s power further limited) provided a material example of royal humility that the public could use to envision its monarchy as a politically neutral institution that would leave the executive function to the House of Commons. Using the ‘British family’ metaphor as her structuring motif, Charlotte’s image of a modern monarchy could be likened to national maternalism, wherein the monarch would eschew politics and serve as a symbolic mother to the nation, taking a more ‘wifely’ or service role in relation to the executive or ‘manly’ legislative work of governing.

Shifts in the media landscape during George III’s reign had amplified the role of public opinion, which was largely on Charlotte’s side during her struggles with her father and supportive of her goals. Bob Harris has shown that even the earliest printers of newsbooks and newspapers variously used to hold the king and his ministers to account, promote the virtues of the monarchy, and share court gossip, seeking a balance between their commercial interests and the reputational interests of the king. Providing readers across the nation with insider knowledge of royal family life was good for business and good for democracy, particularly information relating to impropriety or outright scandal, and Britons could rely on robust metropolitan and provincial press networks for their news of royal events and personages. Themes of divorce and adultery in high life – and of wife abandonment, prostitution and illegitimacy in low life – were covered by newspapers, magazines, prints and pamphlets, which in turn lent fuel to national debates on constitutional reform. Recognizing the power of the press to instil feelings of loyalty or revolt, George III proactively exploited the emerging private press in his era, aiming at a growing middle-class consumer market to present himself as a modern ‘patriot King’ with whom all his subjects could relate.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, and despite the government’s wartime repression of freedoms of assembly and speech, more people could enjoy more timely access to royal and political publicity. As the consumer marketplace and public sphere expanded and grew more varied and complex, women representing a wide range of political and religious beliefs participated in the calls for parliamentary, economic and moral reform that dominated Georgian loyalist and constitutional reform movements. From radical thinker Mary Wollstonecraft’s 1791

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tract ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Women’, to conservative social reformer Hannah More’s 1799 publication of ‘Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education’, women’s voices were part of the public debate on constitutional matters of the day, issues in which Charlotte herself was very much involved and engaged.36 Indeed, by 1812, the point at which Charlotte became a focus of the public discourse, both the image of male sexual libertinism and the citizen rights discourse associated with radicalism and certain Whig perspectives had become too politically provocative and alienating to a public concerned with the war against Bonaparte. In the fight against the French, Britons prioritized the protection of their national identity and its primary symbol, the constitutional form of monarchy. There was, for the duration of the war, great legal risk in mounting any criticism of the government or the king, but there is ample evidence that the press, Opposition politicians and critical readership found ways around censorship laws, whether through cryptic allusions that would be meaningful only to political elites, cheap and unstamped papers, or live protest that would then be covered by the press.37 In matters concerning the royal family, public opinion became an increasingly salient factor in constitutional debates.38

In what follows, I trace three distinct episodes of Charlotte’s interactions with her family, the press and the British people, from which emerged her vision of a quiet, politically agnostic, service-minded monarchy. Though it was not illegal for a father to lock up his daughter and refuse her access to her mother and society, the Prince Regent’s actions in this regard flew in the face of British norms of a healthy and harmonious family life. Yet in terms of publicity, the dysfunctional dynamics between the Prince Regent, his estranged wife Caroline and their plucky teenaged daughter Charlotte did not disappoint. It is towards this interaction between royal family members, the press, public opinion and the fate of the monarchy itself that I now turn.

A Dutiful Daughter, and a Whig Through and Through

When it became clear near 1810 that George III’s health was in steep decline and that he was too ill to fulfil his public duties, Perceval’s government immediately granted regency powers to the Prince of Wales. Pending the King’s recovery, however, the royal prerogatives granted to the Prince Regent were not total and they excluded the right to create peers, the right to grant offices and pensions and the
care of the king’s person and private household. This last condition meant he would still be required to honour George III’s directive that Caroline should be received at court and that she and Charlotte might continue to be in regular contact.\(^9\) The Prince Regent would be forced to wait a year until the regency restrictions were lifted in early 1812, upon which he immediately exercised his prerogatives towards the goal of securing a divorce and severing the connection between Charlotte and her mother. For their part, the Whig Opposition had expected that the Prince Regent would dissolve his father’s Tory cabinet and appoint Whigs in their stead at the first opportunity following the relaxation of the regency restrictions. However, any hopes they had that their lifelong royal patron would rescue them from their position on the Opposition benches was thwarted when the Prince Regent retained his father’s government, in bitter retaliation against the leading Whigs Lords Grenville and Grey, who had voted against his brother the Duke of York and lobbied for his resignation as Commander-in-Chief in 1809.\(^{40}\)

It is at this point that Charlotte became a central character in her parents’ royal family battle, garnering the full support, with her mother, of the Whig Opposition and some radical reform MPs. A ‘budding Whig’ herself, Charlotte was mortified upon witnessing her father denouncing his former Whig friends during an informal dinner at Carlton House on 22 February 1812. She demonstrated her displeasure by riding back and forth outside Carlton House while her father sealed the contract with Perceval and his Tory cabinet.\(^{41}\) It was most opportune for the scorned Whigs that the private tears she shed on that occasion were then publicly commemorated by Lord Byron (a frequent guest at her mother’s salons) in a lyrical but scathing attack on her father, printed by the *Morning Chronicle* just two weeks later:

Blest omens of a happy reign,
   In swift succession hourly rise,
Forsaken friends, vows made in vain
   A daughter’s tears, a nation’s sighs.
Weep, daughter of a Royal line,
   A sire’s disgrace, a realm’s decay;
Ah ! Happy if each tear of thine
   Could wash a father’s fault away!
Weep – for thy tears are Virtue’s tears –
   Auspicious to these suffering isles;
And be each drop in future years
   Repaid thee by thy people’s smiles!\(^{42}\)
When Byron’s poem was published, Charlotte’s father was so enraged that he forbade her to have any further interactions with her mother or her Whig friends and packed her off to Windsor Castle, to be watched over by her staunchly Tory grandmother Queen Charlotte.

This was a politicizing moment for the young princess, one that cemented her liberal perspectives and secured for her the backing of her father’s political enemies. From the beginning of their separation, Charlotte and her mother looked to the Whig Opposition and public opinion for protection and to advocate on their behalf. In April 1812, when the House of Commons received a request from the Prince Regent to discuss suitable settlements and household arrangements for his sisters, the Opposition rose to their defence, boldly questioning the lack of provision for a separate household for Charlotte, who was officially of age. But then suddenly, on 11 May 1812, their momentum was lost when Perceval was murdered by an assassin’s bullet, plunging the Tory ministry into a temporary state of anarchy. The House of Commons looked to the Prince Regent to choose an effective ministry, eventually led by Lord Liverpool as first minister, with Lord Castlereagh heading the ministerial party in the Commons, again shutting out the Whigs. With Perceval dead, and murmurs of revolt sounding throughout the countryside, royal family matters passed relatively unnoticed until the beginning of the following year.

Meanwhile, Charlotte pined away at Windsor in anticipation of the Whigs’ plan to champion Caroline at the next session of Parliament. Until that summer of 1812, Charlotte had been accustomed to frequent visits to and from her own establishment of Warwick House and her mother’s house in Blackheath. Her letters suggest that she entertained a far more intimate relationship with Caroline than with the Prince Regent, relying on correspondence with her mother for much of her news about public opinion on the controversies over royal household arrangements. Behind the scenes, however, Charlotte’s letters to her staunchly Whig confidante Mercer Elphinstone also suggest that her allegiance to the duties of her rank and her own agreement with the ideals of Christian female virtue often compromised her feelings for her mother, whose recent publicity reeked of politics and sullied the family name. She justified her own strategy of non-action as a signifier of her maturity and the dignity of her station: ‘I hope the publick and my friends will do me justice & approve of my quiet manner when I am least inclined to be so.’ This quote is indicative of her keen awareness of public affairs, the role of public opinion in charting the course of her
own life, but also that of the monarchy itself, and the need to comport herself in a way that would not alienate her father, her mother or the British people.

Caroline, however, was willing to risk public censure in order to preserve the few rights and the modest living George III had granted her as the wife of the regent and mother of the future queen. Upon the lifting of the regency restrictions, Caroline had privately written to the Prince Regent on 14 January 1812 to plead for visitation rights with her daughter, a plea to which the Prince Regent had refused to respond. The Privy Council answered Caroline’s query on his behalf, rejecting her request. Asserting the paternal rights of the Prince Regent, the Council replied that, upon reading these ‘animadversions’ upon her husband’s decisions regarding his daughter’s upbringing, they upheld his right to continue to refuse maternal visits. It was at this point that Caroline took her case to the court of public opinion. On 10 February 1813, through the efforts of the politicians and legal team supporting Caroline, the anti-government *Morning Chronicle* published the letter, and a pictorial satire entitled *Regent Valentine* was published along with the text of the letter in broadsheet format three days later, for all citizens to see. Ghostwritten by Caroline’s new champion Whig MP Henry Brougham (barrister and co-founder of the *Edinburgh Review*), that letter and the visual satire that accompanied it skilfully couched its argument in sentiments of patriotism and parental responsibilities while venturing dangerously close to sedition in its challenge to the Prince Regent’s use of his royal prerogative.

Laying out her grievances, Caroline petitioned the Prince Regent on the grounds of maternal rights, decrying her separation from Charlotte on moral and natural grounds, and comparing the teenaged princess with all young children in need of a comprehensive moral and secular education. Assuring him that her motivations for writing stood on a foundation of ‘the most powerful feelings of affection, and the deepest impression of duty towards your Royal Highness, my beloved child, and the country’, Caroline added, quite daringly, that Charlotte’s future reign would show the people a ‘new example, the liberal affection of a free and generous people, to a virtuous and constitutional monarch’. Most egregiously, in referencing the Delicate Investigation he had sponsored a decade earlier, she effectively accused him of committing perjury by proxy to destroy her reputation. The ensuing publicity around Caroline’s letter was so intense that an in camera parliamentary session was called to discuss the matter and many MPs expressed support for
Caroline and Charlotte, even while acknowledging that the Prince Regent was well within his legal rights as the head of the nation and his own family.49

The lack of a legal case did not stop the Whigs or other critical voices from making the royal marital dispute and the Prince Regent’s treatment of his daughter a matter of public interest and political gamesmanship, both in and out of the House of Commons. Between 1812–1814, the Whigs’ unrelentingly campaign against the Prince Regent was joined by a growing wave of anti-regent public sentiment. The Regent had set himself above public opinion, but his political foes had made strategic use of the analogies that could be made between national and domestic fatherhood. From an unassailably patriotic stance, they could assert the ‘natural’ rights of his wife and daughter, but also the rights of the British people to call out and condemn monarchical despotism.50 Amidst the public rehashing of the Delicate Investigation that followed upon the publication of Caroline’s letter to the Prince Regent, Charlotte stood out in sharp relief as a model of royal humility and feminine virtue, qualities perceived as lacking in her parents. Although very much in support of the Opposition’s plans to vote for her to have an establishment of her own, independent of her parents and as a gift from the people, she consciously represented herself to be neutral on the topic and to defer to her father’s will, with faith that pundits and the people would side with her as she sought to carve out her own destiny.51

Breeches for a Royal Daughter?

Like her mother, Charlotte relied heavily on public opinion in achieving her own goals, and she used that support to resist her father’s decisions regarding her place of residence and her relationship with her mother, and in setting the conditions of her eventual marriage. So it was that when she learned that the Tory ministry’s friends in the press reported that she had been won over completely to her father’s side, she feared the effect on the popular mind, for she did not want to be seen as taking sides for or against one parent, or their politics.32 Reputationally, she always walked the razor’s edge between community-sanctioned notions of female non-interference and the dangerous ground of ‘petticoat influence’ or female politicality,53 and it was within these normative constraints of femininity that her strategic vision for a more modern conception of monarchy took shape.
That vision emerged in the process of negotiating the terms of her marriage. By 1813, the princess was just months away from her eighteenth birthday and ministerial plans were afoot to solidify the relationship between Great Britain and the United Netherlands, for whom Britain had gone to war against the French in 1793. To seal their political alliance, the Prince Regent had planned for some years for Charlotte to marry William, hereditary Prince of Orange, her cousin, but Charlotte’s letters show her own deep reservations. It was not that she disliked her suitor, or that she rejected the idea of an arranged dynastic marriage on principle, but she was very much opposed to the idea of living on the Continent and out of reach of her mother. Like her Whig allies in the House of Commons, she became increasingly articulate in representing her resistance to her father’s plans as a patriotic act, framing her rejection of the Prince of Orange as love of her country. Charlotte now stood firmly as the heir to the throne in the event of the deaths of her grandfather and her father. By 1814, and in the absence of positive male expressions of royal power, the idea of a queen regnant and a literal instantiation of ‘petticoat rule’ had transformed into a positive concept, given certain limits to the reach of that rule. At that particular historical moment, given the controversial reputation of both of her parents and the absence of George III, it was only Charlotte who could inspire British affection for monarchy.

As negotiations for Charlotte’s marriage continued, prints such as THE DUTCH TOY attacked the alleged paternal despotism of the Prince Regent. The young princess had been introduced by her father to the Prince of Orange a year earlier, in December of 1813, at which time she had maintained her strategy of non-committal silence, stalling for time as she considered her options. Yet a brewing father-daughter conflict that had begun behind the scenes of the royal household soon took to the streets, when political parties appropriated the impending marriage as a vehicle for their own ideological and pragmatic purposes. In keeping with tradition, the Prince Regent sought the betrothal as a matter of dynastic alliance between two nations, but also as a way to distance his daughter from her mother and the preying Whigs. Caroline worried that a marriage to the Prince of the Netherlands would take her daughter away from England for several months of the year, that the Prince of Orange’s friendship with the Prince Regent meant that Caroline would not be welcome in his court and that his surveillance of his daughter’s activities and friendships would merely continue overseas. Moreover, Charlotte was bound to abide by the strictures of
the Royal Marriage Act, which presented her with a limited range of acceptable suitors.

Ultimately, Charlotte won the battle of attrition against her father and made a marriage very much on her own terms, one that would allow her to remain on British soil and rule autonomously. As the ultimate act of defiance, her refusal of ‘the Orange’ created yet another episode in the royal family romance that invited anti-regent sentiments and the formation of a new reversionary interest in Parliament. When news reports about the negotiations began to emerge, Charlotte wrote to Mercer Elphinstone to tell her that the newspapers had learned of the alliance, and that she had begun to apprehend ‘the unanimous discontent & dissatisfaction my quitting England would create; & that for an undeniable authority it is both a plan, a trick, on object, &c. with the P[rince] and his ministers’.57 She determined by early February that the British people, and not just the Opposition, were against her leaving the country, noting,

The English never will [...] bear any child of [the] British royal family being born out of the country, wh[ich] is another additional consideration of motive. It is I am aware, as generally talked of in town as it can be at Plymouth, & not the Commonites only are against my absence.58

In the end, in a letter to the Prince of Orange dated 10 June 1814, Charlotte broke off her engagement without her father’s knowledge, stating that she could not abandon her mother or her nation to live abroad as the marriage would require.59

Ironically, just days after Charlotte’s declaration of the ‘maternal claims’ that bound her to England, Caroline declared her own intention to leave the country. Threatened with maternal abandonment and intensely aware of the displeasure her refusal would incur from her father’s quarter, Charlotte looked to Lord Grey and her uncle, the Duke of Sussex, for advice. Both men deplored the likelihood of her being sent away to Windsor to be out of the public eye, but urged her to continue with her programme of patient submission.60 As the Duke of Sussex had warned, the Prince Regent himself paid a call to Charlotte’s lodgings on 12 July to inform his daughter that her ladies would be dismissed and that she was to be sent to Windsor, once again. The princess fled the building, outraged at his decision to replace all of her private household staff with his own spies. Running out onto the street, she enlisted the
help of a hackney coachman to take her to her mother’s house. The Prince Regent sought to retrieve her through a writ of habeas corpus, but her uncle the Duke of York followed her instead to forestall legal proceedings against her, returning her to Carlton Place to face her father’s displeasure.

Anti-regent satires that echoed Charlotte’s flight flooded the public space, including one called PLEBEIAN SPIRIT OR COACHEE AND THE HEIR PRESUMPTIVE,\(^6\) depicting the purported exchange between the fugitive princess and the coachman who vowed to protect her from the her tyrannical father with ‘the last drop of his blood’. This image exemplifies the role of female political agency in its capacity to bring attention to the deviance of a particular king, all the while upholding the institution he embodies. Shortly thereafter, ‘Peter Pindar’, another anonymous critic of Old Corruption, evoked the princess’s dramatic escape in verse in a pamphlet entitled The Royal Runaway; or, the C___tte and Coachee!!, lauding Charlotte as the female embodiment of British values and of the ‘freeborn Englishman’ so often cited in radical tracts:

When female feeling spurns controul
And claims the independent soul,
Debarr’d from that, which well she might
Consider as her perfect right.
Forbade in England to be free;
The boasted land of liberty—
She, freedom’s own adopted child—
It was enough to drive her wild...
[I]n the wide streets, a fugitive
Went she, who destin’d was to give
The nation law and proudly reign
The Q____n OF B____n’s wide domain.\(^6\)

From the perspective of anti-corruption politics, Charlotte’s flagrant defiance of her father’s will was an example of the English spirit of liberty, a private enactment of the principles of parliamentary reform and a mark of strength of character for to a future queen of Britain. In language redolent with family values motifs, the Prince Regent looms large as a negative presence in the poem, in which he is rhetorically excluded from this public composed of Englishmen of good conscience and ‘natural feeling’.

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\(^6\) Anti-regent satires that echoed Charlotte’s flight flooded the public space, including one called PLEBEIAN SPIRIT OR COACHEE AND THE HEIR PRESUMPTIVE,\(^6\) depicting the purported exchange between the fugitive princess and the coachman who vowed to protect her from the her tyrannical father with ‘the last drop of his blood’. This image exemplifies the role of female political agency in its capacity to bring attention to the deviance of a particular king, all the while upholding the institution he embodies. Shortly thereafter, ‘Peter Pindar’, another anonymous critic of Old Corruption, evoked the princess’s dramatic escape in verse in a pamphlet entitled The Royal Runaway; or, the C___tte and Coachee!!, lauding Charlotte as the female embodiment of British values and of the ‘freeborn Englishman’ so often cited in radical tracts:

When female feeling spurns controul
And claims the independent soul,
Debarr’d from that, which well she might
Consider as her perfect right.
Forbade in England to be free;
The boasted land of liberty—
She, freedom’s own adopted child—
It was enough to drive her wild...
[I]n the wide streets, a fugitive
Went she, who destin’d was to give
The nation law and proudly reign
The Q____n OF B____n’s wide domain.\(^6\)

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These and other anti-regent prints used the narrative of the persecuted daughter to associate the loyalty of common Britons to a more dignified idea of monarchy, an idea increasingly associated with a future female monarch. Though Charlotte herself reflected later on the incident as a moment of temporary madness, the political profit to her was great, in spite of the fact that the Prince Regent regained some popularity after the signing of the Treaty of Paris began the European peace process in 1814. The fact that Caroline had met with her only to inform her of her decision to leave England also mitigated Charlotte’s anger at her father, though she continued to resist his influence. Despite their best efforts to champion Charlotte as a symbol of moral reform, the Opposition at this time found it difficult to raise public opinion against the Prince Regent after peace in Europe set in and he sponsored many commemorative and celebratory spectacles to mark the end of the war.

**Royal Matrimony and Political Fecundity**

By this point, Charlotte was determined to remain on British soil, both to maintain contact with her mother and to be positioned to enact her future role as the sovereign. Though her family and the Tory government read her refusal of the Prince of Orange as disrespectful of the Prince Regent’s legitimate powers as king and father, the public embraced her decision as a sign of her identification with her subjects and the nation’s Protestant family values. As long as she adhered to the parameters of the Royal Marriage Act, Charlotte could be seen to be asserting the kind of Christian femininity and moral leadership that Hannah More had advocated in her 1805 tract on patriotic governance called ‘Hints towards Forming the Character of a Young Princess’; while More had addressed the then ten-year-old princess specifically, the book entreated all citizens, from highest to lowest, to participate in a nationwide reformation of manners. Charlotte’s refusal of the engagement in turn triggered a renewal of anti-ministerial discourse that was also couched in a language of patriotism firmly grounded in the domestic tropes of marriage and motherhood. In turn, it provided a feminine rhetoric of protest suited not only to young ladies, but also most useful for politicians and pundits asserting a different kind of power for a future monarch and a reformed monarchy.

As the projected mother of a future king and firmly resolved to rule as queen regnant, Charlotte required in a husband a minor Protestant
prince without dynastic opportunities of his own. She keenly felt the sting of articles published in the more conservative *Times* and the *Globe*, both of which were critical of her refusal of the Duke of Orange, who was about to wed a Russian princess, thus losing Britain an opportunity to cement its own ties with Netherlands. Charlotte nonetheless felt confident that her choice would be supported by the people, who continued to revile the Prince Regent for what they perceived as unjust constraints on the freedom of the ‘people’s princess’. In a letter written from Weymouth to Mercer Elphinstone, she remarks,

*I am told that the eyes of the country are now fixed entirely upon me, that I am not aware what an effect my keeping thus quietly has already produced, & that the language even in London of the best of tradespeople is such as some would have good reason to tremble at. I…was told also that I might depend upon it this could not last much longer, & that certainly something could be done when Parliament met.*

Aware of the nation’s desire for her to wed quickly and the fact that only marriage could release her from her father’s oversight, she set her sights on Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, who was recommended to her by her friend and advisor Mercer Elphinstone. To Charlotte’s advantage, the Prince Regent and most of the royal family were in public disgrace, owing to the Tory ministry’s maintenance of the artificially high price of bread and the cruel contrast of the publicity concerning the prince’s huge debts and ostentatious expenditures on updates to palace decor. Charlotte had become firm in her resolve to marry Leopold and counted it as a personal decision unburdened by family or political factions. It also suited her to be seen as a ‘publick property’, virtuously non-partisan and free from any pressure to marry the Dutch prince. Figure 1 shows a pro-Charlotte print from the era, characterizing the princess as ‘England’s Hope’, showing her standing firmly on British soil and firmly anchored to her homeland, while the Prince of Orange’s ship sails home without her.

Despite Charlotte’s private expressions of her desire to live a life of domestic royal quietude, satirists soon took up the impending marriage with Leopold, deftly deploying the isomorphic discourses of national and domestic economy to comment on the spectre of ‘petticoat rule’. From the first news of the engagement, a torrent of satires represented Leopold as a penniless foreigner with little to offer but youth, religion
England’s Hope. Her Royal Highness Princess Charlotte of Wales & of Saxe Coburg Saalfeld © The Trustees of the British Museum
and virility. Caricatures of the young prince usually featured him as possessed of an enormous ‘German sausage’, his only material offering to Charlotte, which lent the prints an air of bawdy humour that had been absent from the more modest prints of her youth. One of the prints, Hercules and Omphale, or Modern Mythology,72 cited Queen Anne’s rule as the model for Charlotte’s future reign, a reference to how Anne had ruled autonomously, despite her marriage to George of Denmark.73 Many of these ‘courtship’ prints represented Charlotte as the Spirit of England, rejecting the notion that any foreign prince could expect to usurp royal power simply through marriage to England’s future queen, for had she not remained consistent in her support for her mother, and by extension, for constitutional Whig principles? At virtually the same time Charlotte expressed her wish to marry out of friendship rather than passion, the Opposition financed a print entitled Taming a Shrew. Or Petruchio’s Patent Family Bedstead.74 Here, the marriage bed is refigured as a pillory for the rape and punishment of wives who dare to wear the breeches and who fail to ‘Love, Honour and OBEY’. The ingenious invention has been sanctioned by ‘the King’s Patent’, serving as a warning to overly bold wives who would thwart their husband’s natural authority. Charlotte’s bold appropriation of Leopold’s breeches, representing the subordination of the foreigner Leopold’s manhood to Charlotte’s feminine authority, portends her impending usurpation of domestic and national power, as well as the dissonance between the notion of female kingship and the legal and social norm that women should submit to the rule of their husband. For her own part, Charlotte did her best to diminish the visible signs of her superior rank, wholeheartedly accepting the arrangements put together by her father and his advisors, as well as the stricture that she be ‘married as the Prince of Wales’ daughter and not as the heiress presumptive to the Crown’.75 As one of her cost-cutting measures meant to assuage the anger of over-taxed Britons and any disapproval of her higher rank, she agreed to give up riding – ‘he does not much like ladies riding’ – and to pass over to Leopold control of her horses, grooms and riding master. Although progressive ideas of companionate marriage and civic motherhood supported Caroline’s case against the Prince Regent, there remained the prevailing public acceptance of the overall ‘natural fact’ of male dominion and a wife’s deference to a husband’s authority. For Charlotte, the right to the ‘breeches’ of Europe did not translate to her wearing them at home, where she was pleased to bow to her husband’s (and likely her own) views on appropriate wifely comportment.
Though Charlotte’s relationship with the Opposition remained intact, her apparent political capitulation to Leopold’s non-partisan position did make her vulnerable on the issue of the monarchy’s cost to taxpayers. Therefore, she could not entirely avoid their rhetorical slings and arrows in the April debate over her establishment bill, though this was due in part to the extreme pressure for economic reforms and concerns about using the public money to support the royal couple’s new household, not a repudiation of Charlotte herself as a symbol of reform. Despite these critical voices, on 2 May 1816, the day of the wedding, the streets along the route of Leopold’s procession to Carlton House overflowed with onlookers anxious for a taste of royal spectacle that would provide temporary respite from the post-war economic depression. By August, the royal newlyweds were able to take up residence at Claremont House, where Charlotte transformed herself into Mrs Coburg, yielding to Leopold’s beneficent household government with what Plowden has called ‘almost embarrassing docility’.76 Having fulfilled the requirements of the Royal Marriage Act, her relationship with her family improved substantially and she and Leopold attended family gatherings without incident. Her health proved volatile as usual, but following a second miscarriage in December 1816, a viable and very royal pregnancy was at last announced at the end of April of the following year.

England’s Hopes Dashed

Charlotte went into labour on 3 November 1817 at 7.00 p.m. at Claremont, far from the interference of the court. Prince Leopold was the only family member present, though her letters suggest she would have had her mother there with her, if possible.77 Following fifty hours of strenuous labour, she gave birth to a stillborn male child and died two hours later of complications. All accounts of her death suggest a spontaneous and widespread mourning among all classes of the London population, and then throughout the nation as the news spread.78 Of interest here is how the reportage contextualized the tragedy within the social and political distress of the times and the proper role of monarchy in times of national suffering, The Prince Regent’s popularity had plummeted since the start of 1817, when, during his procession to Parliament, some members of the crowd had stoned his carriage out of disgust for the platitudes he spouted in his annual speech on the state of the nation, particularly given the widespread economic recession and
the rise of government crackdowns on popular protest. It was within this atmosphere of mounting austerity and oppression (and widespread ill feeling towards her father) that the nation received news of the death of the ‘people’s princess’.

The spectacle of the funeral focused public attention on the tragedy, but also on the monarchy and its relationship to the state of the nation. Churches throughout England resounded with sermons that addressed the loss of Charlotte and her son, the future heir. In terms of press coverage, idealized accounts of the royal couple’s romance repeatedly appeared in the condolences and eulogies that flooded the newspapers and bookshops and resonated with middle-class moral reform rhetoric on marriage as a sacred bond entailing rights and responsibilities for both man and wife. One published sermon was exemplary in this regard, arguing that the nation needed to Christianize its people, not through tyranny (a direct criticism of the Prince Regent and the Tory government), but through gentle ministration that aligned loyalty with love.79 So long as members of the royal family conducted themselves according to the domestic ideal, the author foresaw a positive role for monarchy in the rebuilding of national virtue and the cessation of social unrest. Similarly, in their editorials on the tragedy, almost all of the newspapers underlined how a royal family that ordinary Britons could relate to and look up to could be an engine for forging renewed loyalty to the Crown.80 So too did other commentators use the death of Charlotte, and the example she and Leopold had begun to set in life, to champion a reformed, domesticated and more humane model of monarchical rule, one that stood in silent but stark contrast to the despotic regency. Eulogies from clerics and atheists alike compared Charlotte to Elizabeth I,81 Queen Mary,82 Princess Sophia Dorothea83 and Queen Anne,84 projecting their best qualities onto the future queen of England, who had been cut down before her reign began. The Princess’s death also opened space for the female commentary on the state of the nation. In one anonymous essay entitled ‘Letter to a friend in Ireland’, ‘A Lady’ noted that the union of these virtuous young people, and the forbearance they had shown in the negotiations of their incomes, had led her to believe that ‘there was every reason to hope it might bring something, better even than mere decency, back again into estimation’ – she only hoped that the tragedy made its impact felt on her ‘corrupt generation’.85 Like many engraved portraits memorializing the late Princess, a posthumous visual homage to Charlotte (Fig. 2) foregrounded her fealty to her husband and her stillborn son and
understated her role in the succession, metaphorically cementing the idea of a more deferential, maternal role for the monarchy in discussions of the role that monarchs of either sex should play in the nation’s affairs.86

Fig. 2. In commemoration of her late Royal Highness the Princess Charlotte of Wales and Saxe Coburg. © The Trustees of the British Museum
With the death of Charlotte, there also died – for a time at least – ‘England’s hope’ for a royal family and a monarchy that upheld the Briton’s institutions of Protestant family values, the rule of law and limited royal power. Following Charlotte’s death, her father’s coronation celebrations in 1820 and a period of economic prosperity put Britons in a better mood about the costs of the Civil List. Nonetheless, the British public increasingly expected its monarchy to take a less agentic role and to accept a more ritualized and metaphorically ‘wifely’ position in relation to Parliament, serving the people as a ‘motherly’ institution whose role was to model the values of the nation to its ‘children’, the British people.

Charlotte’s untimely death served as catalyzing moment in a much longer debate over the legitimacy and role of the monarchy. There is little doubt that Charlotte was well schooled in politics and desirous of bringing modern kingship values to her future role as queen, and that she was strategic in offering the people a vision of monarchical rule they could support. In doing so, she contributed to a feminization of the institution of monarchy itself, in which the role and representation of monarchy shifted from its gendered associations with masculine power to the more feminine qualities of political deference and national service. While it may, in hindsight, seem to be a natural evolution of Whig principles of constitutional monarchy, Charlotte’s reimagined monarchy should be seen as a considered, creative response to growing demands for a more democratic political process. Charlotte and Leopold’s marriage and their programme for a service-minded and politically neutral monarchy functioned as an example for the domestication of all ranks, fixing the foundations of loyalty and economic recovery in orderly family life. This strategic repositioning of monarchy in relation to an increasingly empowered Cabinet and a more dominant House of Commons presented a model of sovereign power that was subdued and even tamed, but due to its embodiment of the royal prerogative, still essential to British governance.

Clarissa Campbell Orr has convincingly demonstrated that the roots of this feminized model of British constitutional monarchy took hold in the Regency period, and the analysis provided here aligns with her argument. Here, I have sought to build on her analysis by also demonstrating that Charlotte’s strategic vision for a Whig model of monarchy actively contributed to the preservation of the institution as its executive power devolved. This transformation of the place of monarchy in the British constitution and national imaginary is not only due to the fact of Charlotte’s female body or her feminine discourse
style, nor simply the congruity of a female monarch with a humbler, service-oriented model of kingship. The other salient factors in this reimagining of monarchy were her political convictions and her reading of public opinion about despotic royal authority. While Charlotte died before she and Leopold could enact her modernized vision of a monarchy above politics, her strategic vision for a new kind of kingship would be developed by William IV and Queen Adelaide88 and then fully realized by the young Queen Victoria. It would be Victoria’s reign that cemented an image of the monarchy as a fully politically domesticated institution retaining only the largely symbolic power of royal assent, but strengthened in its function as a core national icon and an irreplaceable metonym for the nation.89

Notes


11 Lady Jersey and the prince’s drinking companions also accompanied them on their honeymoon at Brighton. Worse still, convincing Parliament to grant him funds sufficient for paying off his debts proved to be more difficult than he had anticipated, and Pitt’s government nearly fell during the negotiations for the prince’s marriage settlement. Christopher Hibbert, *George IV, Prince of Wales, 1762-1811* (London: Longman, 1972), pp. 142–167.

12 Flora Fraser, *The Unruly Queen: The Life of Queen Caroline* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).


14 Hibbert, *George IV*, pp. 218–219. The evidence given by the Lady Douglas conflicted with that of the servants with the greatest proximity to Caroline’s private activities, and who saw no evidence of a concealed pregnancy or birth while in the princess’ employ. Caroline explained the presence of the child in question, the young William Austin, as a charitable act on her part to ease the financial duress of a poor local family. Although there was no concrete proof
to find her guilty of adultery, many people believed that she had seduced, among others, George Canning, Walter Scott and the duke of Cumberland (her husband’s brother) himself. Many visitors to Blackheath regretted her ‘low’ behaviour, her constant flaunting of her body and her dirty jokes, but this in itself did not constitute grounds for a divorce or a trial, despite Lord Thurlow’s recommendation that the king initiate an Act of Parliament to dissolve the marriage. For an exhaustive account of the charges, the evidence and the decision of the commission, see *The Book, or Proceedings and Correspondence upon the Subject of the Inquiry into the Conduct of the Prince of Wales* (London: suppressed in 1807, reprinted by R. Edwards in 1813).


16 Colley, ‘The Apotheosis of George III’.


18 Scott argued that ‘the link between gender and class is conceptual: it is a link every bit as material as the link between productive forces and the relations of production’. Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, revised ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 36. For an exemplar of British historiography in this vein, see Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).


Between 1780–1830, Britons experienced exponential population growth and literacy rates, rapid urbanization and growth of a consumer society that included the expansion of a vibrant commercial culture even as oral sites of protest (theatre, streets, pubs) still persisted. See Martin Conboy, The Press and Popular Culture (London: Sage, 2002).


For example, Marilyn Morris’s study of newspaper coverage of George III in the 1790s shows that while newly created ministerial papers applauded royal displays of grandeur and Briton’s emotional attachment to the throne as evidence of Britain’s superiority over the French system of hypocritical adulation, Opposition papers interpreted that loyalism as justification for the removal of Pitt’s legal suppression of reform societies. Marilyn Morris, ‘Representations of Royalty in the London Daily Press’.

Conboy, The Press and Popular Culture.

Carretta, George III and the Satirists; Colley, ‘The Apotheosis of George III’.


Anna Clark, Scandal. In her biography of Caroline and Charlotte, Alison Plowden states that while Caroline was regularly mobbed by congratulatory crowds whenever she appeared in public, ‘ladies of rank began to burn their newspapers so that the servants might not read such improprieties’. Plowden, Caroline and Charlotte, p. 120.

Wilson’s research showed that historians must also consider the extra-journalistic means of political communication in this period. See Wilson, Sense of the People. Carretta also identifies a similar chronology of graphic criticism over the second decade of George III’s reign. Carretta, George III and the Satirists, pp. 99–153.

Marcus Wood, Radical Satire and Print Culture: 1790-1822 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 57. This point is confirmed in my own readings of the images from this period, though there may be a variety of other ways of categorizing themes and objects of investigation. Carretta also identifies a similar chronology of graphic criticism over the second decade of George III’s reign. Carretta, George III and the Satirists, pp. 99–153.

Upon learning he would not be given full powers, the Prince Regent and his seven brothers went to the House of Lords to argue that it was
unconstitutional to in any way constrain the king’s authority, and when the
king was disabled in his thinking, to restrict the authority of his proxy, the
regent. Perceval explained in turn that, according to English law, the king
was sovereign in ‘infancy, in age, in decrepitude’. As such, the Privy Council
had no right to declare the king incompetent, and furthermore, was bound
to continue to act as if the king were fully present at its head. *Parl. Deb.*, vol.
1831), pp. 9–10.

40 In a letter to Mercer Elphinstone sent early in the trial regency, Princess
Charlotte related that she had heard ‘on the best authority’, that the
Prince Regent had already assured Perceval that no great changes would
be made. Lord Holland had stated that any Whig who would go into the
administration alone would necessarily forfeit his identification with that
party. She further related that ‘All the Opposition will be in town for the
7th [opening of Parliament] but they don’t mean to do anything, but to be
perfectly quiet, and bye & bye to see what they will do & what their plans are;
in short, to give them plenty of rope to hang themselves with’. *Letters of the
Princess Charlotte*, 2 January 1811, p. 21.

41 Fraser, *The Unruly Queen*, p. 224.

42 This first verse appearing anonymously in the *Morning Chronicle*, 7 March
1812, under the title ‘A Sympathetic Address to a Young Lady’ and then
again in 1814 as an addendum to his *The Corsair*, a series of poems about
young women imprisoned by pirates. He explicitly included the poem to
revive negative press about the Prince Regent and reinforce Charlotte’s
position as a loyal Whig and a supporter of democratic reform. *Catalogue of
Political and Personal Satires*, vol. 9, p. 98. Charlotte confirmed details of the
scene to Mercer Elphinstone. See *Letters of the Princess Charlotte*, from Lower
Lodge, 28 October 1812, p. 35.

43 *Parl. Deb.*, vol. 22, 12 April 1812, pp. 124–146.

44 As Charlotte explained to her friend, ‘In the papers you have seen, & of
course heard, the unpleasant circumstances relating to the P[rincess
Caroline] coming here. All I can say is that feeling her claim is just, she
will pursue it till she gains her point. How long I am doomed to remain
in this infernal dwelling I am perfectly ignorant. I am resolved not to ask,
to let them go on till Parliament meets’. Charlotte also assured her that
her politics remained firmly liberal, despite her sequestration. *Letters of the
Princess Charlotte*, from Lower Lodge, 24 August 1812.

45 Arthur Aspinall, ed., *Letters of the Princess Charlotte* (London: Home and Van
Thal, 1949), 31 December 1811, p. 19. A good Whig devoted to progressive
values of individual liberty, Charlotte expressed concerns about her father’s
reputation: ‘The Prince, I have good reason to believe, is quite governed by his mother & the Manchester Square folks [the Tory-aligned Hertfords, Lady Hertford being the Regent’s most recent mistress] […] The print shops are full of scurrilous caricatures & infamous things relative to the Prince’s conduct in different branches’. Letters of the Princess Charlotte, 10 January 1811, p. 23.

46 In another letter to Mercer Elphinstone, Charlotte worried about the motives of both of her parents: ‘I would willingly endure to gain influence of the PR, were I not Too much aware of the motives & cause of his manner towards me […]', and as to her mother’s letter: ‘I think she was not aware of the importance of the step taken in its publication…It appears not as if the [letter] was for the royal person herself, but as if it was to fortify some private view or pique of [Brougham]’s. Letters of the Princess Charlotte, from Warwick House, 20 February 1813, p. 57.

47 Huish, Memoirs of George IV, p. 159. The Privy Council met on 19 February and delivered their decision to Caroline on 27 February. The Regent required his council, which consisted of over forty ministers, to pour over all relevant documents in order to rewrite their original answer in more forceful, less polite language. Letters of the Princess Charlotte, p. 57.

48 BMC 12029, [Cruickshank], pub. by J. Fairburn, 1 April 1813.


50 Huish, Memoirs of George IV, pp. 193–196. Citing the Regent as a prince in whom the ‘real British character was entirely absent’, Huish asserts that it was the Regent’s love of luxury, his political inconsistency and his aristocratic snobbery that set the people against him, despite the substantial military and diplomatic achievements of his reign. While Huish has been criticized for his partisan historiography, Charlotte herself was aware of such public sentiment. In a letter sent to Mercer Elphinstone in August of 1813, she suggests that the royal family was aware of the Prince Regent’s extreme unpopularity: ‘[Lord Yarmouth, son of Lady Hertford] almost confessed that he was afraid about the P[rinces]’s extraordinary unpopularity.’ Letters of Princess Charlotte, from Windsor, 18 August 1813, p. 62.

51 ‘An Establishment […] (however agreeable it might be to me, as I do not deny it would) I likewise keep clear of; for as the publick both talk and feel about my confinement & the treatment of the P[rincess Caroline], it is far better that I should leave it to their voice, as a decided rebellion to the P[rinces]

52 ‘I am resolved never to be against the P[rincess Caroline] [...] I know not how to show the line I decidedly take, being silent, you see they [the ministry] set these things about, wh[ich] none but the individuals know to be true or false. It is these reports that reach the ears of the people & which they believe’. *Letters of the Princess Charlotte*, to Mercer Elphinstone, 16 February 1813, p. 54.

53 Taken from comments by Montesquieu, the term ‘petticoat influence’ refers to the notion that women should not participate in politics due to how female influence corrupted court politics, with men needing to curry their favour to advance their careers. Radicals adopted the motif to attack the Prince Regent’s court, which was dominated by powerful mistresses and female courtiers. See Clark, *Scandal*, p. 8.

54 Some of the images from this year verge on sedition. In 1813, the tombs of Henry XVIII and Charles II were opened. The press took the opportunity to make analogies between the Regent’s relationship to his predecessors and the two former royal Houses of Tudor and Stuart. In *A SEPULCHRAL ENQUIRY INTO ENGLISH HISTORY*, caricatured images of the mummified sovereigns signify regicide and tyranny, respectively. During the debate in the House of Commons on 16 March 1813, Samuel Whitbread also raised the Tudor analogy when he likened the request of the Princess of Wales to have her case tried in a court of law to that of Anne Boleyn, who requested of her husband only that he prove her guilty or admit her innocence. *BMC* 12056, [G. Cruikshank], pub. by W. N. Jones, 1 June 1813. *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires*, vol. 9, p. 249.

55 Throughout the summer of 1813, she had resisted attempts by various members of the royal family and their retainers to win her over to the idea of an alliance with the House of Orange, stating instead her preference for the Duke of Gloucester. Later, her letters to Mercer Elphinstone suggested that, to her own surprise, ‘the Orange’ possessed qualities that might make him a desirable husband. Plowden, *Caroline and Charlotte*, pp. 125–126.

56 Huish, *Memoirs of George IV*, pp. 182–183. Huish notes that when pressed by Princess Charlotte as to what line of conduct he expected her to conform in regard to her mother, the Prince of Orange regretted that he would not be able to receive Caroline in his own kingdom, although mother and daughter would be allowed occasional visits.

58 *Letters of the Princess Charlotte*, from Earl Grey to Charlotte, 7 February 1814, pp. 109–111; to Mercer Elphinstone, London, 8 February 1814, p. 113. In the latter letter, she adds that Lords Holland and Erskine very much desired her to reconsider the marriage, at least to the point of having an article determining her primary place of residence added to the marriage contract.


60 *Letters of the Princess Charlotte*, from Earl Grey to Charlotte, 6 July 1814, p. 122. Similar sentiments were expressed by the Duke of Sussex in a letter dated 6 July 1814: ‘[T]here is but one melancholy remedy left, which is *to yield completely*’, p. 121.

61 BMC 12292, [Williams], pub. by T. Tegg, 25 July 1814. The scene takes place in the central moment of the narrative, when the princess arrived at Connaught house to take refuge with her mother. This situates her between the maternal domestic space and the public space of the streets, home to the loyal subjects from whom she has been hidden for most of her life. A servant gazes out of the window in astonishment while a messenger hastily departs on horseback. The tattered cover of the coach and the coachman’s dress signify his status as a commoner who removes his hat in a gesture of respect. Their verbal exchange, in which the coachman swears to protect her ‘to the last drop of [his] blood!’, reiterates a text that had been circulating in the newspapers and public prints in regard to the incident. See *Examiner*, 17 July 1814.

62 Peter Pindar, *The Royal Runaway; or, the C_____tte and Coachee!!* (London: John Fairburn, 1814), pp. 18–21.


64 Hannah More, *Hints towards Forming the Character of a Young Princess* (London: T. Cadell and Davies, 1805). For a thorough assessment that contextualizes More’s revolutionary project of national moral reform within a larger movement of social- and political-reform-minded female writers, see Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation*.

65 Charlotte expressed deep concern regarding an article that described her future duties and obligations as queen consort. See ‘Constitutional Character of the Queen Consort’, *Edinburgh Review*, September 1814, pp. 440–468.


68 *Letters of Princess Charlotte*, 8 November 1814, p. 163.
Huish, Memoirs of George IV, pp. 216–225. The Corn Laws, which prohibited the importation of cheap grain, protected the financial interests of landowners at the expense of commoners. The newspapers regularly reported on the cost of items used in the redecoration of the royal palaces and grounds upon the visit of the foreign princes. The early months of 1815 were notable for a marked increase in public demonstrations in which the public opprobrium for the regent could not be ignored.

Letters of the Princess Charlotte, to Mercer Elphinstone, 23 January 1815, p. 186. It should be noted that when pressure on Charlotte to marry the Dutch prince waned, the Prince Regent began to come around to accepting Prince Leopold as a suitable match for his daughter.

Letters of the Princess Charlotte, to Mercer Elphinstone from Brighton, 26 February 1816.

Plowden, Caroline and Charlotte, p. 199.

In a letter to Caroline written a month before her confinement, Charlotte confided, ‘But oh my mother! when my timid imagination revolves upon the uncertainty which veils my futurity— […] Why am I debarded from the soothing voice of maternal affection?’ Claremont, 10 October 1817. Copy of original included in Aspinall, Correspondence of George IV, vol. 1, pp. 694–695. A she began labour, Charlotte was attended by her physician, Dr Baillie, and two prominent accoucheurs, Dr Richard Croft and Dr John Sims, three nursing women and fourteen ministers, all of whom been advised to retire to bed before the princess’ final convulsions began. For a painstakingly researched account of the lying-in, the stillbirth and Princess Charlotte’s death of the Princess Charlotte, see Franco Crainz, An Obstetric Tragedy: The Case of Her Royal Highness the Princess Charlotte Augusta (London: William Heinemann Medical Books, 1977).
78 See for instance, a letter sent on 24 December 1817 from Doctor Baillie to Caroline: ‘I have never witnessed so distressing a scene, which has not only deprived You of an only Child, but has spread universal sorrow over this Nation. — Princess Charlotte and Prince Leopold were beloved in their neighbourhood, and respected by the whole Nation, which looked forward to Prosperity and Happiness under their rule’. Crainz, Obstetric Tragedy, p. 40.

79 Thomas Chalmers, D.D. (Minister of the Tron Church), Sermon Delivered in the Tron Church, Glasgow, on Wednesday, Nov. 19th, 1817, the Day of the Funeral of Her Royal Highness the Princess Charlotte of Wales, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: John Smith, 1817).—10805.d.23.1., p. 12.

80 A report of the public meeting of the distressed corporations of Salford and Manchester, sites of many disturbances and political agitation observed that ‘[…] [t]he expression of sympathy was both amiable and manly; and sympathy for the Royal sufferers, so severely smarting […] sat visibly and clearly defined on every countenance, giving the best proof that the House of Brunswick has still much, very much interest in the hearts of Englishmen’. Ashton’s Exchange Herald, 18 November 1817. A later edition of the report regretted that not all of the outlying towns had joined in the national sentiment: ‘Except in one or two disgraceful and solitary instances of the day being passed over in silence, and for which we hope the respective ministers most heartily repent, the day was spent in unison with the feelings that predominated here […] To enumerate all the places where the inhabitants felt like men, and acted like Christians, on the day when “England’s golden hope” was buried in the silent tomb, we must use the whole Gazetteer of England’.

81 See, for instance, the commentary of the Manchester editors of Ashton’s Exchange Herald for the 11 November 1817 issue: ‘Not only had England’s embryo hope perished in his birth, but with him the parent stock, his youthful and beloved royal mother, to whom, calculating on the probable and natural contingencies, we had looked up to as our future Queen, so purely English in all her propensities, and so truly attached to the Constitution of her country, that a rival to the glorious reign of Queen Elizabeth, was anticipated in that of Charlotte’.

82 The Baptist minister Joseph Ivimey agreed that, though the Princess Charlotte had exhibited the manly fortitude of Elizabeth, ‘Elizabeth was cold, suspicious, unforgiving; Charlotte Augusta was affectionate, generous, confiding […] I apprehend she more nearly resembled […] [Queen] Mary […] the virtuous and amiable consort of William III. There was a similarity in their affectionate and conjugal tenderness, and in their disposition to make
others happy; they both died young: and were both universally lamented'.
Joseph Ivimey, *Reasons why the Protestant Dissenters in Particular Lament the
Death of Her Royal Highness The Princess Charlotte Augusta...* A Sermon Preached
at the Baptist Meeting, Eagle Street, London, on Wednesday, Nov. 19, 1817. 2nd. ed.

83 John A.M. Evans, *A Tribute of Respect to the Beloved Memory of the Princess
Charlotte of Wales, Consort of His Serene Highness Prince Saxe Coburg; Who Died at
Claremont, November 6, 1817, in the 22d Year of her Age...* with An Appendix on the
Original Accession of the Hanoverian Family. (London: Whittingham [Printer]
and Sherwood and Wiche [Sellers], 1817), p. 30. According to the Whiggish
Evans’s chief source, Addison’s *Freeholder* no. 30, the personal character
of the Electress of Hanover was distinguished by ‘wit and talents’ united
with ‘wisdom and piety’. Evans also described at length the education of
the princess, which he argued had been envisioned within the framework
set out by Hannah More in her *Hints toward Forming the Character of a Young
Princess*, towards the goal of producing ‘A SOVEREIGN DOING JUSTLY,
LOVING MERCY, AND WALKING HUMBLY WITH GOD’. Quoted in
Evans, *Tribute*, p. 27.

84 Hannah More interpreted Queen Anne’s inability to produce an heir as a
sign that ‘Providence [had deemed her] too central a branch of the Stuart
family, to be entrusted with the newly-renovated constitution’. Just as the
Electress Sophia had through her body created a new dynasty founded
on a firm defence of the Protestant faith and the emancipation of Britons
from the ‘yoke of slavery’, so too would Charlotte, the last of the Brunswick
line, recreate the monarchy as a symbol of the further emancipation of the
British people tempered by the civilizing influence of religion. Quoted in
Evans, *Tribute*, p. 27.

85 A Lady. *Thoughts on our National Calamity* (London: F. C. & J. Rivington,
1817).

86 BMC 1878,0713.193, [T. Illman, after Peter Henderson], pub. by G. Rowney
and Co. (1818).

87 Orr, ‘Feminisation of the Monarchy 1790-1810’.

88 Queen Adelaide was an active promoter of royal philanthropic work,
further changing the way citizens thought about the role of the monarchy
and members of the royal family. See Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*.

News” and the Invention of Tradition’, *Victorian Periodicals Review* 27, no. 1
Notably, it was Charlotte’s widower Prince Leopold, invested as the King of
Belgium in 1831, who would go on to advise his niece the young Victoria and introduce her to her his nephew (and her future royal consort) Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha.