

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Kevin Eugene Eubanks entitled "Family Memorials: Domestic Imagery in the Life and Death of Princess Charlotte Augusta." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

Nancy Moore Goslee
Nancy Moore Goslee, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Q. K. S. S. S.

Allen J.

Sam W. Brett

Accepted for the Council:

Lee Minkel
Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of The Graduate School

FAMILY MEMORIALS:
DOMESTIC IMAGERY IN THE LIFE AND DEATH
OF PRINCESS CHARLOTTE AUGUSTA

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Kevin Eubanks
December 1996

Copyright © 1996 by Kevin Eugene Eubanks

All rights reserved

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very grateful to Nancy M. Goslee, my dissertation director, and to the other members of my committee, Edward W. Bratton, Allen Dunn, and Owen Bradley. Their different perspectives have stimulated my thinking, and their suggestions and encouragement have been invaluable at each stage of writing. I would also like to thank the Department of English for its generous financial support.

Most of all, I wish to thank Kori. Her patience, support, and love have sustained me during my five years of graduate study at the University of Tennessee.

Abstract

This study analyzes domestic imagery associated with the life and death of Princess Charlotte Augusta, the only daughter of George IV. Such imagery served a disciplinary function by inculcating an apolitical female role centered in private affections. The introduction reads domestic discipline in the context of two other important power structures in early nineteenth-century Britain: namely, monarchical executions and the rule of law. The chapters are grouped in two parts. Part One outlines the popular image of the princess after her marriage, and especially after her death. Chapter one examines the image of Charlotte as ideal female, focusing especially on how writers negotiate between this image and contradictory information regarding the princess's character and political position. Chapter two analyzes the myth of Charlotte and Leopold as middle-class couple, showing how that myth functioned as legislation in which public sympathy was used to create a bond--beyond politics and class--between royalty and subjects. Chapter three examines the princess's funeral rites to elucidate how they reconcile private grief and public spectacle, and concludes by indicating the effect of the texts and rites on the political situation in England immediately following Charlotte's death.

Part Two, using the analysis in Part One as an interpretive framework, focuses on four specific works

occasioned by Charlotte's death: an elegy by Southey, the "Charlotte" stanzas in Byron's Childe Harold IV, an elegy by Hemans, and Shelley's Address to the People on the Death of Princess Charlotte. Each of these elegies reveals tension between the domestic myth of Princess Charlotte and the disturbing political realities in England at the time. For Southey, the sentimental anti-politics which Charlotte represents are threatened by the bloody history of British party politics. Byron's elegy reveals his ambivalence about the role of women and about aristocracy and reform. In Hemans's elegy, questions about Charlotte, gender, and politics mirror the poet's own struggles as an independent female author. Shelley's address calls into question the moral efficacy of private sentiment. Both working class rebellions and his failed marriage to Harriet reveal the limitations of sympathy as a basis for moral decisions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
Introduction: The Changing Rhetoric of Discipline	1
Part 1: The Charlotte Myth	
1. The Wife Who Would Be Queen: Negotiating Gender and Politics	36
2. "Mr. and Mrs. Cobourg": Class Obfuscation and Social Control	62
3. The Triumph of Grief: Charlotte's Funeral and After	86
Part 2: Elegies to Charlotte	
4. Princess as Placebo: Southey's Elegy	108
5. Caritas Britannia: Byron's Elegiac Stanzas	131
6. "Heiress of Empires": Hemans's Elegy	170
7. The Mask of Sympathy: Shelley's <u>Address to the People on the Death of Princess Charlotte</u>	213
References	262
Vita	271

Introduction

The Changing Rhetoric of Discipline

On October 25, 1817, Jeremiah Brandreth, Isaac Ludlam, and William Turner stood at the bar of a courtroom in Derby, convicted of levying war against the king. Acting on rumors that similar events were happening simultaneously in other parts of the kingdom, the three men had headed an armed uprising which, at its height, included 300 people. In his speech to the condemned, Lord Chief Baron Richard Richards described their intentions:

Your object was to wade through the blood of your countrymen; to extinguish the Law and Constitution of the country; and to substitute for the liberty of your fellow subjects, anarchy and the most complete ruin.¹

A few weeks later, while walking in the countryside near London on a sunny November day, the painter Benjamin Robert Haydon had a very different vision of the nation. As he neared Hampstead Church, he heard the church bells ringing. "The Church was on the Hill in a sunny mist," he writes in his diary. "The day was the most beautiful I ever saw":

On a sudden the bells ceased, with a distant sinking like Aeolian harps, and I immediately imagined the people all in at prayer, and I saw as it were a steam of

1. qtd. in Examiner, no. 514 (November 2, 1817): 692.

incense agitate the air, like the steam from a lime kiln, and ascend up in a straight line till it lost itself in the sky! My sensations were blessed and pure and heavenly! I thought of all the churches in the whole Empire sending up their steams of incense and felt elevated to where I could see the whole Empire like a map spread out before me, and I saw thousands of steams ascending like silvery smoke! And could the Great Spirit resist such repentance? Oh no!²

The urgent question in England in 1817 was how to prevent the Chief Baron's horrific vision and to realize Haydon's beatific one. Considering the unstable condition of English society at the time, the former vision was all too possible. The British economy had been unable to absorb the soldiers returning from the Napoleonic wars, leading to high unemployment. A disastrous harvest in 1816, combined with heavy war taxes, had led to famine and inflated food prices. These crises, combined with the continuing ills produced by a rapidly industrializing economy, led to widespread unrest, especially among the working classes.³ The year 1817 began with the nation still reeling from the shock of the Spa Fields riots in December 1816, in which London mobs looted

2. Benjamin Robert Haydon, Diary, ed. Willard Bissell Pope, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1960), 2:144-45.

3. Edwin Emerson and Marion Mills Miller, The Nineteenth Century and After: A History Year by Year from 1800 to the Present Time (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1906), 1:381.

shops and attempted to storm the Tower of London.⁴ In January, while riding in his carriage to open Parliament, the Prince Regent was attacked by angry mobs; it was even reported that he was shot at.⁵ In March, hundreds of disgruntled laborers gathered in Manchester and vowed to march to London and demand parliamentary reform (the so-called March of the Blanketeers).⁶ The aborted uprising at Derby, then, was but one of a frightening sequence of events.

To quell the disturbances, the government instituted repressive measures. It suspended the Habeas Corpus Act and began incarcerating without trial people suspected of seditious activities. It also instituted acts to limit public meetings and took measures to curb seditious publications.⁷ And finally, it used the most conspicuous means of control, public executions. Participants in the Spa Fields Riots were executed in London in the spring; and Brandreth, Ludlam, and Turner were publicly hanged and beheaded in Derby on November 7th.

The actual effectiveness of these various measures is not wholly clear, but the public reaction to them was overwhelmingly negative. Haydon's optimism concerning the British nation was not connected with such measures; rather, it was inspired by a wholly unrelated event. On November 6,

4. E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 634-5.

5. Emerson, 1:391.

6. E. P. Thompson, 646, 649.

7. E. P. Thompson, 639.

Princess Charlotte Augusta, the only daughter of the Prince Regent, died as a result of complications during childbirth. Haydon's vision occurred on November 19th, the day of the princess's burial, when the Hampstead Church, like churches all over England, was filled with mourners. In the reaction to Charlotte's death, Haydon saw an indication of the spirit of the English people: "The conduct of my glorious countrymen on this whole occasion makes one dilate, sensible of the value and virtue of the private character of the Princess, they felt her loss as if she had been one of their own daughters." Haydon ends his diary entry with a wish: "May moral character be ever the most estimable & the most worthy . . . enthusiasm of all my glorious countrymen."⁸ In the following chapters, I hope to show why Britons, faced with frightening social upheaval, found visions such as Haydon's--with its commingling of privacy, family structures, and personal discipline--particularly cogent. By examining works about Princess Charlotte, I also hope to show why the national mourning for her lent itself to being read in these terms.

Before turning to Charlotte, I will first turn to the three men whose deaths at Derby followed soon after hers. A look at the events surrounding the Derby executions will help contextualize my investigation by indicating how the ideology of power which had its material counterpart in public

8. Haydon, 145.

executions was gradually being replaced in Britain. The emerging structures--ideological and material--depended on strictly defined gender roles and on the separation of private and public spheres. The death of Princess Charlotte served as one important defining moment in the development of these structures.

Michel Foucault, in Discipline and Punish, provides a useful framework for analyzing this development. He contrasts two types of control, physical punishment and internalized discipline. In the former, monarch-centered structure, the maintenance of public order depends on public executions, which, according to Foucault, restore the sovereignty of the monarch, who is personally threatened by criminal activity. Executions constitute a "policy of terror" intended to show all subjects the redoubtable power of the sovereign.⁹ Foucault claims that, by the end of the eighteenth century, this type of punishment had begun to disappear in Europe. In its place, he argues, evolved strategies of discipline, a thorough "micro-management" of the bodies of individuals (101). The goal of this discipline is to create "docile bodies," bodies that are economically more productive, but politically less powerful than those under the old regime (138). Foucault sees this type of discipline as gradually infiltrating more and more levels of society throughout the

9. Michel Foucault Discipline and Punish trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage books, 1979), 49. Subsequent references to Foucault will be made parenthetically.

nineteenth century (209-210). Its ultimate goal is "the infinitely small of political power." (214).

While Foucault's paradigm is useful, to suit the purposes of my argument, it needs to be modified in several directions. The first concerns Foucault's use of texts. Because Foucault tends to emphasize the material structures of discipline, he underplays the role of texts in ideology production. His discussion of the growth of disciplinary techniques in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries overlooks the concurrent explosion of texts which promulgated the proper roles for individuals as subjects, private citizens, and family members. Especially as regards the disciplinary function of the nuclear family, the texts which present this model, instead of (or in addition to) transparently revealing an existing social structure, may have played a material role in creating it.

This position is argued by Nancy Armstrong in Desire and Domestic Fiction. She attributes the creation of domestic space, and of the gendered subjects who inhabit that space, to fictional representations of women in domestic novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to Armstrong, this process led, in turn, to the political hegemony of the middle-class, a hegemony based on ideas of morality rather than aristocratic bloodline. This political power is centered in the apparently apolitical domestic (and

hence feminine) virtues inculcated by novels.¹⁰ Armstrong adds important dimensions to Foucault by focusing on texts as ideological constructs (and constructors) and by emphasizing the disciplinary power of the domestic affections. The three chapters in Part One of my work parallel Armstrong's argument by showing analogous disciplinary structures in such "texts" as biographies, elegies, public addresses, and funeral rites. In Part One, I draw upon many sources to provide an overview of the "myth" of the Princess Charlotte. This image of the Princess (which was often at odds with reality) is a particular instance of the domestic ideology described by Armstrong.

My argument differs from both Armstrong's and Foucault's, however, in another important way. Both Armstrong and Foucault describe disciplinary structures as all-encompassing discourses. This view, however, leads to an elision of the process of discourse formation, the gradual shift in which a particular structure emerges and gains ascendancy over other structures--in the present case, the displacement of the monarchical structure by the disciplinary structure of domesticity. One result of such a shift is the co-existence of competing structures. Many of the texts I look at embody this struggle. Often, these texts create the disciplinary structure of domesticity by rewriting or erasing

10. Nancy Armstrong, Desire and Domestic Fiction (New York, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987). See especially her chapter "The Politics of Domesticating Culture, Then and Now," 1-27.

elements of the older structures. For example, the older hierarchies of class and power were rewritten in terms of private sentiment and valorized with domestic metaphors. The chapters in Part One of my argument show how texts served as sites in which emerging ideologies of gender, privacy, and discipline rose to prominence in nineteenth-century Britain. The struggle between ideologies is especially clear in the Princess Charlotte texts because the princess herself embodied both structures. As the heir apparent, she occupied a conspicuous position in monarch-centered discourse. However, as a young woman and wife, she occupied a very different position in the domestic discourse.

The chapters in Part One also illustrate that one consequence of the process of ideology formation is often the repression or limitation of the possibilities available to an individual. Charlotte provides a striking example of how the ideology of domesticity limited the possibilities available to a woman--even when that woman was the heir apparent. My study of Hemans in chapter six will also deal, to a lesser extent, with this issue. Related to the question of repression is that of the possibility of resistance to a particular discourse structure. In The Political Unconscious, Fredric Jameson criticizes such "monolithic models of cultural unity" as Foucault's and Armstrong's:

the model of the "total system" would seem slowly and inexorably to eliminate any possibility of the negative

as such, and to reintegrate the place of an oppositional or even merely "critical" practice and resistance back into the system as the latter's mere inversion.¹¹

The chapters in Part Two of my work provide examples of the "outside" of ideology. These texts, for varying reasons (some possibly unconscious on the part of the author) register resistance both to the ideology of domestic discipline and to the Princess Charlotte myth as a particular instance of that ideology. As a result, the chapters in this part focus less exclusively on Princess Charlotte. They show how the Charlotte myth intersected with the personal concerns of specific authors in such areas as party politics, gender, class, and interpersonal relationships.

By viewing at close focus the process of ideology formation, these chapters provide an important corrective for the synchronic view of ideology, as well as for Part One of my own work, which presents a synchronic view of the Charlotte myth. Foucault and Armstrong, in presenting discourse as without an outside, cannot account for the pressures brought to bear against a particular discourse by the individual texts which embody that discourse. Jameson notes both the usefulness and the limitations of synchronic models:

. . . at the level of historical abstraction at which

11. Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1981), 90-91.

such a concept is properly to be used, the lesson of the "vision" of a total system is for the short run one of the structural limits imposed on praxis rather than the latter's impossibility.¹²

Without accepting Jameson's insistence on the centrality of economic structures, we can use his argument as a corrective to theories of all-encompassing discourse. Domesticity as disciplinary structure did impose limits on individual practice (as I shall show in Part One), but within that structure was also the possibility of individual resistance to it (as I shall show in Part Two).

The Derby Executions

The uprising which led to the Derby executions was named (somewhat grandiosely) the "Pentridge Revolution." On June 8, 1817, 50 men met at South Wingfield and began marching towards Eastwood. They gathered men along the way, eventually numbering about 300.¹³ The march was led by Jeremiah Brandreth, an unemployed sock-maker who was known as the Nottingham Captain. Along the way, they commandeered arms from homes. At the home of a Mrs. Hepworth, they met with resistance; and Brandreth fired through a rear window, killing a manservant--the only casualty in the disturbance.¹⁴

12. Jameson, 91.

13. Frank Ongley Darvall, Popular Disturbances and Public Order in Regency England (1934; reprint, New York: Augustus M. Keley, 1969), 162-3.

14. Joseph Arnould, The Life of Thomas, First Lord Denman (New

When the expected general uprising did not occur, the insurgents lost confidence and began to disperse. By the time a detachment of hussars reached Eastwood, the group had dwindled to fifty men, who scattered immediately upon seeing the soldiers.¹⁵

Forty-six indictments were brought against the insurgents, though only thirty-five men were arrested. Out of these, no evidence was brought against twelve (many of whom were boys); they were acquitted. Nineteen others pleaded guilty and were sentenced to death. None of these were executed, however; in most cases, the sentence was translated to transportation. Four men pleaded not guilty and were convicted of treason. Of those four, Jeremiah Brandreth, William Turner, and Isaac Ludlam were executed at Derby on November seventh.¹⁶

In the trials for these three men, the ideologies of power co-exist in uneasy suspension. The tension is evident in the charge of treason itself. The men were convicted specifically of levying war against the king, the first such convictions in England since the Jacobite disturbances of 1745.¹⁷ This charge, by depicting the transgression of the law as an affront to the person of the sovereign, is an example

York: James Cockcroft, n.d.), 81-2.

15. Darvall, 162-3.

16. United Kingdom, Parliament, Report from the Committee of Secrecy, in British Sessional Papers, ed. Edgar L. Erickson (Feb. 27, 1818), 3:51.

17. Gentleman's Magazine 87 (1817): 462.

of the monarch-centered power structure. For early nineteenth-century Britons, this vocabulary would have been primarily associated with the Tory party. The outlines of that party first began to take shape in the support of Charles I in the Puritan Revolution, and it became a recognized party as those who backed James I in the Glorious Revolution.¹⁸ Thus, from the first, the Tories were associated with a rhetoric which located power in the person of the sovereign. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Tories were in power; and the party was known as "the King's friends."¹⁹ But one must beware of associating these vocabularies of power exclusively with a particular party. Even the Whigs, who were traditionally opposed to royal prerogative, were not averse to using the rhetoric of monarch-centered power when it suited them. During the Regency crisis of 1810-11, when Parliament was debating how much power to grant the Prince of Wales, the Whigs argued for more extensive sovereign powers, in hopes that the then-Whig Prince would place them in power.²⁰

Despite its appropriation for specific purposes, however, for the most part, by the early nineteenth century, the monarch-centered vocabulary of power was no longer pre-

18. Winston Churchill, The New World, vol. 4 of History of the English Speaking Peoples (1956; reprint, New York: Barnes and Noble, 1993), 340, 367.

19. Elie Halevy, A History of the English People in 1815 (1924; reprint, London and New York: Ark Paperbacks, 1987), 10.

20. Halevy, 13.

eminent in Britain. Often, it persisted only in vestigial form in laws written in previous centuries, laws such as those for treason. Lawrence Stone has traced this shift in the ideas concerning monarchical power. He notes that, by 1740, Hume (himself a Tory) was able to say that a reference to the Divine Right of kings would only excite laughter, a far cry from the widespread acceptance of the idea through the 1600's.²¹

Denman, in his defense of Brandreth, Turner, and Ludlam, attempted to show the discrepancy between the charge brought against them and the actual circumstances of the uprising. He argued that the unorganized, under-armed mob in Pentridge could not possibly have hoped to wage war against the king. In reply, the Chief Baron Richard Richards argued that, because the men had "compassed" using force to effect a change in government, they were guilty of high treason.²² Richards's argument seems in line with Blackstone, who states the charge of treason illustrates that the law cannot "justify any private or particular resistance for private or particular grievances."²³ Richards's argument is based on a subtle redefinition of the crime: the men are guilty, not of attacking the sovereign personally, but of seeking to

21. Lawrence Stone, Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800 (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 231.

22. Arnould, 83-4.

23. William Blackstone, Of Public Wrongs, vol. 4 of Commentaries on the Laws of England, ed. Robert Malcolm Kerr (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 78.

overturn the rule of law. Likewise, when the Attorney-General addressed the condemned men in his own words--in the speech quoted at the beginning of this introduction--he described the effects of the rebellion in similar terms: their goal was "to extinguish the Law and Constitution of the country" and to replace "the liberty of [their] fellow subjects" with "anarchy and the most complete ruin."²⁴

Here, the emphasis is not on the injured sovereign, but on the threat to the liberty of other citizens. In this vocabulary, power is depersonalized; rather than inhering in the person of the king, it inheres in rational, abstract law. This vocabulary would have had two main connotations for nineteenth-century Britons. First, it would have been associated with the Whig party, who stressed the British Constitution as a check against the unrestrained prerogative of the monarch. For them, the Glorious Revolution was a triumph of the legislative body, Parliament, against royal tyranny. Second, this vocabulary, with its implications of equality under the law and its Rousseauian connotations of the social contract, would have also implied the radical liberalism of Thomas Paine or, even worse, of the Jacobins. Therefore, this vocabulary, though appealing to many British, might have also been seen as dangerous in excess. But again, one cannot attribute this vocabulary exclusively to political liberals. As the following pages will show, it was also

24. Examiner, no. 514 (Nov 2): 692.

frequently used by post-Enlightenment Tories.

The relationship between the law-centered vocabulary and material power structures is less direct than that between the monarch-centered vocabulary and public executions. Though law-centered rhetoric was used in the Derby trials and executions (and thus juxtaposed with monarch-centered punishment), it helped promote the emerging structure of private discipline. Foucault argues that an emphasis on the contractual nature of government, which gained emphasis during the Enlightenment, tends to support methods of discipline; the criminal now offends every member of society by breaking the terms of the social contract (89-90). (Rousseau makes this point explicitly in The Social Contract.²⁵)

In addition to these two views of power--the monarch-centered and law-centered--the Derby executions show hints of a third vocabulary, that of private discipline. The Attorney-General's address to those against whom no evidence was brought sounds very different in its focus from his address to those indicted. He explains the purpose of bringing the unindicted before the court. "[S]o far from this course having any improper effect," he hopes that "it may restore them back in quietness to the bosoms of their families, who

25. Jean Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract in Collected Writings of Rousseau, ed. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, trans. Judith R. Bush, Roger D. Masters, and Christopher Kelly (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1994), 150-2.

have had for them an affection and regard":

and that being so restored, they may profit by the example which this proceeding affords them; and looking at the dangerous and frightful situation in which they have so recently been, they will become honest, sober, industrious, and religious men; and that they may, by that honesty and integrity, fill with propriety the stages of life to which it has pleased God to call them.²⁶

This speech identifies the locus of public control, not in the fearful power of the monarch or even in public consensus for reasonable laws, but rather in the private discipline of individuals. The speech appropriates for state purposes the rhetoric of Protestant work ethic--"sober, industrious, and religious." The blurring of the lines of demarcation between private discipline and state control fits what Foucault describes as a new type of law, one which is a mixture of legality and nature (304). According to Foucault, such laws are products of "the carceral," the term he uses to describe impersonal disciplinary structures.

In this modern disciplinary system, the focus shifts from the crime to the criminal, who becomes the delinquent. Because discipline focuses on the individual's traits as they match or deviate from the "norm," it depends on an elaborate system of classification, a detailed taxonomy of people (251-

26. Examiner, no. 514 (November 2): 691.

4). The unit of organization becomes the rank rather than the individual. For example, schools are divided into ranks by such traits as intelligence and character (145-9). Likewise, the military, prisons, and factories all exemplify the modern disciplinary system in their emphasis on examination and rank.

As the Attorney-General's address to those acquitted indicates, the importance of rank in disciplinary structures dovetailed neatly with strict class divisions. The private discipline of individuals, within a strictly hierarchical matrix, forestalls political dissent and even fosters an acceptance of the socio-economic status quo. The analogous hierarchies in carceral structures and class systems allows for the co-option of theological rhetoric for disciplinary purposes. The social ranks of the people (the "stages of life") have been ordained by God, and the duty of each individual is to maintain these ranks "with propriety." These social implications are common in the Princess Charlotte texts; I will deal with them at length in chapter two.

In the Attorney-General's speech, however, another vocabulary is also at work. Intertwined with private discipline is the vocabulary of domestic sentiment. The locus of discipline for the acquitted insurgents is "the bosoms of their families, who have had for them an affection and regard." (There is an unaddressed tension here between the domestic affections of the Derby insurgents and their

traitorous actions; I explore this tension in chapter seven.)

Unlike the monarch- and law-centered vocabularies, this vocabulary, because it de-personalizes and internalizes power, is implicit rather than explicit in the legal system. It is also less associated with a particular political party than the other two vocabularies. In fact, as I hope to show, part of its power lay in its ability to cross party lines. In the following chapters, I shall cite instances of the rhetoric of domestic discipline in texts across the political spectrum, from conservative (Southey and the Courier) to liberal (Byron and the Examiner). But, as I have indicated, and as I shall argue more fully in subsequent chapters, the immediate effect of the ideology of domestic discipline as promulgated in the Charlotte texts was a conservative one. The emphasis on internalized control and rigid hierarchies helped buttress the existing social structures in England.

Like the trials at Derby, the executions reveal the co-existence of differing ideologies of power. The punishment imposed was clearly a material representation of monarch-centered structures of power. Foucault notes that punishment depends on fear and external show; the body becomes the theater for the ritual of the sovereign's power. The punishment is therefore often excessive, and will even continue after the death of the accused (50-1). Accordingly, the sentence pronounced at Derby by Sir Samuel Shepherd, the Attorney-General, was that "you and each of you be taken

hence to the gaol whence you came, from whence you must be drawn on a hurdle to the place of execution, and be thence severally hanged by the neck until you are dead; your heads must then be severed from your bodies, which are to be divided into four quarters, and to be at his Majesty's disposal."²⁷ The closing of the sentence emphasizes punishment's function as the personal retribution of the sovereign; the bodies of the condemned become his personal property.

In keeping with their purpose of instilling terror in spectators, the executions were carefully staged. The performance began early in the morning, with the construction of the scaffold. A crowd gathered to watch and, by the time of the execution, numbered over 6000. Beginning at 12:15, each condemned man was made to stand on a horse-drawn hurdle and circled around the execution site. The scene, as reported in The Examiner, was appropriately melodramatic; Ludlam, while on the hurdle, "clasped his hands and raised a fervent look towards Heaven. The [other] prisoners cried out still more bitterly."²⁸ Of course, I do not mean to imply that Ludlam's actions were not sincere expressions of distress; however, the conscious staging by the organizers of the execution moved everything into the realm of performance. This performative aspect is reflected in the overdramatized

27. qtd. in Examiner, no. 514 (Nov. 2, 1817): 692.

28. Examiner, no. 515 (November 9, 1817): 716-7.

style characteristic of the reportage surrounding the event.

The climax of the event was the decapitation of the prisoners. This part of the execution served no punitive purpose, the men being already dead; rather, it was pure theater:

The bodies hung for half an hour. The platform was now raised, and saw-dust strewed over it. The bench and block were then brought up, as were two axes, two sharp knives, and a basket to receive the head.

The body [of Brandreth] was then cut down, and laid on the bench. The cap was removed from the head, and the neck having been pressed close on the block, at twenty-five minutes after one the executioner struck the blow. The head was not at once detached from the body; the blow appeared feebler to the populace than it really was, and a groan of disapprobation and horror was the consequence. The assistant, however, with one of the knives, instantly completed what had not been accomplished by the axe. The head fell in the basket, and the hangman, seizing it by the hair, held up the ghastly countenance of the Nottingham Captain to the view of the multitude. He proceeded with it to the left, to the right, and to the front of the scaffold, bearing the trunkless ball in his hand, and exclaiming at each place, "Behold the head of the traitor Jeremiah Brandreth." . . . The heads of Turner and Ludlam were

taken off and exhibited in precisely the same manner.²⁹ Every aspect of the performance had been carefully staged. Bringing up the equipment for decapitation publicly was more dramatic than already having it on the scaffold. The gesticulations of the executioner seem to have been carefully rehearsed. The planners of the execution obviously had an eye for details. The Examiner notes that the knives had matching black handles,³⁰ and the axes were copied from an antique executioner's axe housed in the Tower of London.³¹

The executions, however, also reveal a shift away from the extremes of theatrical violence. The hanging machine was used at Derby. Adopted in England in 1783, this machine had a trap door beneath the condemned to insure quicker death with less pain (Foucault, 12). The men's riding the hurdle to the gallows was another softening of the older punishment, in which, instead of on the hurdle, the accused was dragged bodily. The original sentence for treason was also much more severe: the person was hung, but cut down while still alive; and his entrails were removed and burned while he lived.³² At Derby, the punishment was lessened even further. The men at Derby were condemned to decapitation and quartering, and they were beheaded; but, on the command of the Prince Regent, the quartering was foregone (a prerogative which had been

29. Gentleman's Magazine 87 (Oct. 1817): 462.

30. Examiner, no. 515 (November 9, 1817): 717.

31. J. C. Cox, "Political History," in History of Derbyshire, ed. William Page (London: Archibald Constable and Company, 1907), 2:152.

32. Blackstone, 88.

recently granted by Statute 54 Geo. III c. 146³³). The creation and use of this new statute reflects a growing reluctance to carry out the full measure of the execution spectacle. The government even debated hiring, instead of an executioner, someone skilled at anatomy to perform the decapitation.³⁴ (In lieu of the botched job, the decision might have been a wise one.) The contrast between these two types of bodily invasion, theatrical and medical, also became an issue in the funeral of Princess Charlotte, as will be shown in chapter three.

The executions at Derby reveal that, no matter how well rehearsed, legislation by spectacle was not without dangers. In public executions, the condemned person could be difficult to control. While on the scaffold, Brandreth shouted, "God be with you all and Lord Castlereagh"; and Turner exclaimed, "THIS IS ALL OLIVER AND THE GOVERNMENT" (alluding to a government spy suspected of fomenting the Derbyshire revolt). The Chaplain was forced to step in front of them and silence them.³⁵ Ludlam had seemed the most tractable of the three; at the trial, he is reported to have wished "that the people would hereafter be submissive and obedient to the king and the laws."³⁶ However, his last moments, as recorded by the Examiner, show the possibility of a dangerous ambiguity in

33. Blackstone, 89.

34. Cox, 2:152.

35. Examiner, no. 515 (November 9, 1817): 717.

36. Examiner, no. 515 (November 9, 1817): 716.

public punishment:

Isaac Ludlam came out last, and when the rope was applied to his neck, devoutly said, "I receive this at the hand of the Lord:" then raising his voice to a louder pitch he prayed thus:--"O may my soul now tower up to glory. O may I now go where angels and saints worship thee. May I meet this great concourse of people in Heaven. O Lord, I pray for high and low, rich and poor, bond and free. May this awful dispensation of thy providence be sanctified."³⁷

Ludlam here becomes, not only a martyr, but even a Christ figure, interceding for all people. (Ludlam was purportedly a popular itinerant preacher.) The string of paired opposites in the address--high-low, rich-poor, bond-free--has radical undertones: Ludlam, a laborer and condemned criminal, presumes to intercede for all people regardless of social rank. (I will look at a very different use of such paired opposites in chapter two.) The speech even includes a transfiguration, as Ludlam predicts that his soul will "tower up to glory." Such language is far from the image of infamy which an execution is meant to create. As with the other men, the Chaplain had to intervene to stop Ludlam; the minister's prayers became so loud that they drowned out the convict's. This gallows speech may very well be apocryphal--apparently no other contemporary source besides the Examiner records it;

37. Examiner, no. 515 (November 9, 1817): 717.

nevertheless, it shows the tendency for criminals to be transformed into heroes or martyrs.

Besides the actors in the spectacle, the spectators could also cause trouble. Foucault notes that, rather than vilifying the criminal, those witnessing the execution sometimes sought vengeance on the authorities. The spectacle sometimes showed, not the power of the sovereign, but the "solidarity" of the dispossessed (63). Several months before the Derby executions, a sailor named Cashman was executed in London for participating in the Spa Fields uprising. That execution turned into a popular protest, and barricades had to be erected to protect the scaffold. E. P. Thompson quotes a report in the Courier: "As the Sheriffs advanced, the mob expressed the strongest feelings of indignation: groans and hisses burst from all quarters, and attempts were made to rush forward." Cashman encouraged the crowds with cries of "Hurra, my hearties in the cause! success! cheer up!"³⁸ At the Derby executions, mob violence seems never to have been a real danger. The only evidence of disapprobation is found in the passage quoted earlier, when the executioner's blow was deemed feeble. But the authorities were prepared for disturbances. Special constables, dragoons, and soldiers carrying javelins were stationed at the scene; when the crowds began to scatter at the display of Brandreth's head, the soldiers even drew their swords and closed in on the

38. E. P. Thompson, 606-7.

crowds.³⁹ The scene immediately grew quiet; yet, to the authorities, the threat of another mass disturbance was very real.

Like the executions themselves, the reactions to them show the difficulties of negotiating shifting structures of power. The awkward fit between the profligate theater of monarchy and the discipline of reasonable laws is evident in a letter concerning the Derby executions, written by H. C. Litchfield, the Treasury Solicitor, to John Hiley Addington, the Under-Secretary of State:

I have only now to congratulate you upon the result of these proceedings. The power, the dignity, and to use an expression of one of the prisoner's Counsel, the majesty of the law have been upheld and conspicuously displayed throughout the whole course of them.⁴⁰

Understandably, a letter addressed from one government official to another would try to place the executions in the best light. But, significantly, even here there is an unease with the rhetoric of monarchical power. The splendor of royalty has been reapplied. Whereas execution had traditionally served to uphold the "power," "dignity," and "majesty" of the monarch, here these qualities have been shifted to the law. This awkward personification, which

39. Examiner, no. 515 (Nov. 9, 1817): 717.

40. Litchfield to Addington, 25 October 1817, Letters of George IV, ed. A. Aspinall (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1938), 2:206.

appears frequently in the texts I shall examine, shows the transition between types of legislation.

Even official government documents reveal the struggle between competing power structures. The Report from the parliamentary Committee of Secrecy, presented on February 27, 1818, describes the social impact of the Derby trials. The executions of the men had the effect of "striking a terror into the most violent of those engaged in the general conspiracy [of which the Derby disturbances were thought to be a part]," whereas "the lenity shown to the deluded . . . restored quiet and subordination to the district."⁴¹ Two different ideas of control are at work here. One is based on spectacle and is intended to produce "terror" in the spectators; the second operates at the level of individuals and relies on "subordination." The final term again shows the compatibility of private discipline and the social status quo; instead of increasing personal liberty, the system fosters subordination.

The above two documents, which view the executions approvingly, are anomalous. For the most part, public reaction to the executions was strongly negative. An article in the Monthly Repository is typical:

The old sentence of our law in these cases is very disgusting, suited only to the manner of a barbarous age. A great deal of what was shocking to the feelings

41. Report from the Committee of Secrecy, 3:51.

of humanity was omitted; but still the exposure of the mangled head, after it had been severed from the body, struck a horror in the attendant multitude, more likely to produce a feeling of abhorrence of the mode of execution, than of the crime which it was intended to impress the most on their minds.⁴²

Significantly, the writer focuses his criticism specifically on the theatrical nature of the executions, on the display of the "mangled head." The use of the term "barbarous" is also significant; the word will reappear in chapter three, in the discussion of the embalming of the Princess Charlotte. In both cases, the term shows the growing tendency of writers to rewrite violent spectacles as traits of a cultural other, either a barbarous age or barbarous nations. The Monthly Repository writer discerns the gap between the rhetoric of objective law and that of violent, personalized law.

This writer was not alone in criticizing public execution; increasingly throughout Europe in the early nineteenth century, people began to question the policy of rule by terrifying example. In a satirical newspaper essay entitled "Who Thinks Abstractly," Hegel discusses public executions. The effect of such spectacles, according to Hegel, is to cause "the common populace" to think abstractly, in that they view the condemned as a criminal and nothing else. Consequently, those who investigate the accused's

42. Monthly Repository 12, no. 143 (November 1817): 694.

history are criticized for trying to excuse the criminal.⁴³ What Hegel describes is, in fact, the purpose of an execution: to make the criminal a sign of the crime. It is the breakdown of this process of abstraction--when the crowd views the criminal not as the embodiment of a crime but as an individual (or, worse, as a victim)--that executions cease to function.

An article in the Examiner devoted to the Derby executions attacks this abstracting function, the very raison d'etre of public executions: "But we are told it is example! Example! and what then? Does not a man feel who is made example of? . . . Or does the being made an example diminish the terrors of death?"⁴⁴ Ironically, as chapter one shall show, Princess Charlotte seems to have participated in counteracting the process of abstraction. My final chapter will examine how Shelley, in his Address to the People on the Death of Princess Charlotte, also attempts to counteract the process of abstraction by recontextualizing the three men executed at Derby, making of them sentimental family members rather than epitomes of crime.

The potential problems may have contributed to the decrease in the number of public executions in Great Britain from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries.

43. G. F. W. Hegel, "Who Thinks Abstractly," trans. Walter Kaufmann, in Hegel: Reinterpretation, Texts, and Commentary by Kaufmann (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), 463.

44. Examiner, no. 516 (Nov. 16, 1817): 722.

Statistics presented in the House of Commons in 1818 show the ratio of executions to arrests for capital crimes in London and Middlesex steadily dropping from 1749 to 1817 (though the number of arrests actually increased). Around the middle of the eighteenth century, the number of executions averaged around sixty percent of the number of arrests. Toward the end of the century, the percentage dropped to forty percent, and continued to decline to around thirteen percent for the years 1812-1817.⁴⁵ These figures are even more persuasive when they are read in the context of the growing number of capital offenses during this period. The number of capital crimes increased from 160 in 1760 to 223 in 1819 (Foucault, 14). This increase intensified in the first decade of the nineteenth century as Parliament passed several bills making machine breaking a capital offense (e.g. the Framebreaking Bill in 1812).⁴⁶

Despite these increases, however, the number of executions continued to decline. In cases of minor property crimes, many juries refused to bring convictions, and victims frequently did not press charges.⁴⁷ Granted, this phenomenon was not new. Blackstone quotes Montesquieu's opinion that

45. United Kingdom, Parliament, Abstract of the Number of Persons Who Were Capitally Convicted and of Those Who Were Executed in London and Middlesex from the Year 1749 to the Year 1817, in British Sessional Papers, ed. Edgar L. Erickson (June 3, 1818), 16:184-7.

46. Darvall, 339.

47. Michael Ignatieff, A Just Measure of Pain: The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850 (1978; reprint, London: Penguin Books, 1989), 169-170.

excessively severe laws have the actual effect of encouraging the public to let crimes go unpunished, thereby teaching criminals to "contemn" the laws.⁴⁸ However, this type of popular resistance to unpopular laws became more widespread in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Even Princess Charlotte may have contributed to the decrease in public executions (see chapter one).

Despite the attendant problems, the vocabulary of personal monarchical power and the public executions which realized it persisted through the nineteenth century. Perhaps least surprising is the persistence of monarch-centered rhetoric in works by conservative writers; Southey's elegy to Princess Charlotte, a historical survey of British monarchy, is one example. But the rhetoric even had its appeal to as thorough a Whig as Byron. His elegy to Charlotte shifts uneasily between condemnation and admiration of sovereigns. Nevertheless, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the vocabulary of the power of law had established its ascendancy in Britain; it is discernible, not only in works by liberal writers such as Shelley--whose speech on Charlotte is a bitter denunciation of royal prerogative--but, as already shown, in conservative writers as well.

As the nineteenth century progressed, however, the third vocabulary, that combining private discipline and domestic affection, came to be as salient as the vocabulary of law (if

48. Blackstone, 15-17.

not more so) in nineteenth-century Britain. This third vocabulary infiltrated all levels of society in texts ranging from popular poetry to government documents. The death of the Princess Charlotte, by eliciting hundreds of texts in which the princess was portrayed as a proper, domestic female, provided a focal point for the emergence of this vocabulary. Analyzing some of these texts is the purpose of the following chapters.

A brief overview of the structure of my work will be helpful. As I have already indicated, Part One, using themes common to Princess Charlotte texts in general, attempts to outline the popular image of the princess after her marriage, and especially after her death. The first chapter examines the process by which the image of Charlotte as ideal female emerged in the popular press. I focus especially on negotiations between this image and contradictory information regarding the princess's character and political position. The second chapter analyzes the myth of Charlotte and Leopold as a middle-class couple, showing how this ideology facilitated disciplinary structures by fostering a bond of public sympathy--beyond politics and class--between royalty and subjects. The third chapter focuses on the funeral rites of Princess Charlotte to examine the juxtaposition of private grief and public spectacle; it concludes with some speculations concerning the effect the texts and rites had on

the political situation in England immediately following Charlotte's death.

In Part Two, using the analysis in the introduction and Part One as an interpretive framework, I will focus on four specific works occasioned by Charlotte's death: an elegy by Southey, the "Charlotte" stanzas in Canto IV of Byron's Childe Harold, an elegy by Hemans, and Shelley's Address to the People on the Death of Princess Charlotte. By using this two-part structure, I hope to resituate these four works in their historical context, thereby indicating ways they reflect commonly-held opinions about the Princess Charlotte. But this structure also allows me to refine my argument about the workings of the Charlotte myth by exploring resistances to it. Each of these four works reveals tension between the domestic myth of Princess Charlotte and the disturbing political realities in England at the time. For Southey, the sentimental anti-politics which Charlotte represents are threatened by the bloody history of British party politics. Byron's elegy reveals his ambivalence about the role of women and about aristocracy and reform. In Hemans's elegy, questions about Charlotte, gender, and politics mirror the poet's own struggles as an independent female author. Shelley's Address calls into question the moral efficacy of private sentiment; both working class-rebellions and his failed marriage to Harriet reveal the limitations of sympathy, apart from discipline, as a basis for moral

decisions.

I must emphasize at the outset that I do not intend to question the sincerity of the British nation's grief for Princess Charlotte. Nor do I claim that the texts and rites I shall examine were mere tactical documents for political control. Instead, I argue that the images of Princess Charlotte elicited by her death facilitated emerging structures of discipline. The texts and rites surrounding Charlotte are examples of what Marshall Sahlins terms "the structure of conjuncture," the way in which cultural categories are realized in a specific historical context.⁴⁹ But, in addition, these texts participated in the creation of the domestic as a cultural category.

In the tense political climate of the period, the public mourning of Charlotte was a comforting ceremony; and people therefore turned toward it. For many, the funeral rites may have functioned similarly to an experience described by Robert Huish, one of Charlotte's earliest biographers. In his hagiographic memoirs, he reports visiting the Esher church, which the Royal couple had sometimes attended:

I experienced the melancholy pleasure of sitting in the chair which her Royal Highness was accustomed to occupy; and, notwithstanding all that stoics may say, I felt a greater relief from the tear which then flowed down my

49. Marshall Sahlins, Islands of History (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), xiv.

cheek, than from all the doctrines of their austere creed, which inculcates the suppression of the nobler feelings of our nature, and would close the source of the sweetest joys which we can possibly experience.⁵⁰ Though they had perhaps nothing else in common, Huish and those who participated in the Derby uprising shared a mistrust of stoic acceptance. But, whereas the rioters confronted a sea of troubles by taking arms, Huish's reaction, as indicated in his book, was less threatening. His sentimental grief over the princess afforded a cathartic "relief." Multiply his experience millions of times, and the result is the vision Haydon had of his "glorious [peaceable] countrymen" mourning the princess as their own daughter.

50. Robert Huish, Memoirs of Her Late Royal Highness Charlotte Augusta, Princess of Wales, rev. ed. (London: Kelly, 1819), 397. All subsequent references to Huish will be cited parenthetically.

PART ONE

The Charlotte Myth

Chapter 1

The Wife Who Would Be Queen: Negotiating Gender and Politics

Whereas the government executed people in an attempt to quell popular uprisings, Princess Charlotte worked to prevent some executions. Huish writes that, whenever Charlotte found out about any female sentenced to die, "her Royal Highness set on foot an inquiry, not only into the circumstances of the case, but also into the character which the unfortunate convict bore previously to her condemnation" (486). She often intervened to gain the release of female prisoners under sentence of death at Newgate. According to Huish, Charlotte understood the "great cause of moral turpitude of the female character; that the inexperienced, unsuspecting girl yields to the snares and enticements of her seducer; and, the first barrier of virtue being overstepped, irretrievable ruin too generally follows" (486). This view of crime and its prevention is very different from that of controlling crime through the horrific spectacle of public execution. Attention shifts from the crime to the criminal; Charlotte looks at the "character" of the individual rather than the deed committed. Also, there is a continuum established between private misconduct (especially sexual misconduct) and public crimes. The most heinous crimes appear to follow ineluctably from the

loss of virginity. Each of these characteristics indicates the change to a disciplinary model of social control.

In another passage, Huish notes the weakness of the law: "the law, though armed with peculiar terrors, is evaded by artful vice, or defied by audacious infamy" (506). More effective, he says, is the ability of a ruler to "act as an example . . . through the medium of those qualities which are applicable to private life, and useful in humble stations" (505). Charlotte was peculiarly suited for this type of discipline:

Our unspotted Princess, in the lovely purity of her conjugal and maternal character, and in the splendor and pre-eminence of her constitutional throne, would, with the partner of her virtuous affections, have supplied the defect of law, and reclaimed the licentiousness of fashion. Every wife would have gazed upon her as a bright example of those duties, whose performance rewards itself and constitutes the chief blessing of society. (505-6)

Charlotte's role in counteracting the "licentiousness" of fashionable society will be examined in the next chapter. At this point, I wish to analyze Huish's juxtaposition of two constitutions. The first is constructed on law; it depends for its effectiveness on "peculiar terrors." Huish modifies the Tory vocabulary of monarchical power; here, the law is the source of the "splendor and pre-eminence" of the throne

of a constitutional monarch. In this passage, Huish echoes Litchfield's letter, quoted earlier, concerning the "majesty of the law."

Because the power of the law is still dependent on public show, it remains vulnerable. Huish therefore identifies another source of power, which has "supplied the defect" of the law: the power of domesticity. Rather than an external system of punishments, this type of power "rewards itself." Unlike the imperfect legal constitution, this power "constitutes the chief blessing of society." According to Huish, Princess Charlotte is the epitome of this new type of discipline. The equation Huish establishes is repeated often in the Charlotte literature: the princess's feminine virtue leads to domestic happiness, which in turn leads to national felicity. This moral equation is inversely related to that of the female convict, in which private indiscretion leads to public crimes. Huish's image of Charlotte is not merely (or primarily) descriptive. Rather, it is rhetorical; it argues for a type of political power based on private affections.

In this chapter, I will examine the creation of this myth of Princess Charlotte, a process involving delicate negotiations between idealized femininity and the recalcitrant details of Charlotte's personality and of her position as heir apparent. But the problem immediately arises that the only access to the princess is through texts, all of which serve a particular political function. Nevertheless,

one can reasonably assert that some texts are more accurate than others. In other words, there is probably less resemblance between the princess and a published elegy written after her death by one who had never met her than between the princess and a personal reminiscence written by an acquaintance. I will begin, then, with personal recollections of the princess. A childhood friend, George Keppel, describes the twelve-year-old princess as distinctly unfeminine:

She was an excellent actress whenever there was anything to call forth her imitative power. One of her fancies was to ape the manners of a man. On these occasions she would double her fists, and assume an attitude of defence [sic] that would have done credit to a professed pugilist.¹

He also tells of being horsewhipped by her for some minor infraction.² The Grand Duchess, sister to Tsar Alexander I of Russia, met Charlotte during a visit to England in 1813. Though she grew to like Charlotte, she found the princess's manners "so extraordinary that they take one's breath away":

I assure you I am not exaggerating. She walks up to any man, young or old, especially the older men, takes them by the hand, and shakes it with all her strength, and

1. qtd. in Alison Plowden, Caroline and Charlotte (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1989), 89.

2. qtd. in Dormer Creston, The Regent and His Daughter (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1932), 108.

she seems to have plenty to spare. When she walks, she bounces, and steps with such vigour that one does not know where to look because her clothes are so tight-fitting and do not come down below the thick of the calf, so that at every motion it seems as though she were going to show her knee. She looks like a boy, or rather a ragamuffin.³

Charlotte at seventeen still behaved with masculine forwardness. Baron Van der Duyn Van Maasdam described the eighteen-year-old princess as "un jeune garçon mutin en cotillion" ("a roughish boy in petticoats").⁴ Nor does her manner seem to have changed after her marriage. In his diary, Farington recounts a description of Charlotte entering a theatre with her consort: "she came into her Box with her arms fixed to her sides & her step was like that of Henry the Eighth."⁵

One task facing Charlotte's public memorializers, then, was how to deal with her unfeminine traits. Some writers simply ignored them, but others attempted a reconciliation. Huish, for example, does not wholly shy away from discussing Charlotte's masculine characteristics. According to him, the princess had a list of 10 rulers she wished to emulate. The list contains some decidedly un-feminine queens, including

3. qtd. in Thea Holme, Prinny's Daughter: A Biography of Princess Charlotte of Wales (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1976), 95.

4. qtd. in Holme, 142.

5. Joseph Farington, The Farington Dairy, ed. James Grieg (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1923-8), 2:76.

Zarine, queen of the Scythians, "who, after her death, had military honors paid to her on account of the political institutions which she established" and Semiramis, "obtaining by her valor for the arms of Ninus, that success of which he himself despaired" (357). But the queen in the list with the most relevance to Charlotte is Elizabeth. Huish relates an incident that occurred in the summer of 1816, during Charlotte's vacation in Weymouth. One day the royal yacht met the 74-gun man-of-war Leviathan, and Charlotte asked to tour the ship. The captain demurred because the rough seas made it improper for a woman to be in an open boat. The Princess, however, adamantly addressed the Captain:

Queen Elizabeth took great delight in her navy, and she never entertained any fear of going on board a man-of-war in an open boat, in whatever state the sea might be. . . . I am not only desirous, but determined to inspect her. (181)

As a crowning gesture, she refused to board by riding in a chair lowered over the side, but insisted on climbing the ladder like the sailors. Her boarding was the cause of some embarrassment, especially since her companion the Bishop, too old to follow her up the side, had to ride in the chair (181-2).

Some people, admits Huish, complained that the Leviathan incident was "proof of a masculine spirit, inconsistent with the delicacy of the female character, and the dignity of a

princess" (184). It did provide fodder for satirists. In a poem on the marriage of Charlotte and Leopold, Peter Pindar has Charlotte boast to Leopold about her courage: "I, that have climb'd a man-of war / As fearless as I climb'd a garret, / When bishops shrunk aghast with awe, / And British seamen cheer'd my spirit."⁶ But Huish defends the princess. The "cavilers" who deprecate the Princess, he writes, are like "those who depreciate the great luminary of heaven, because some few spots appear upon its surface" (184). When the Princess saw the ship, "All personal considerations vanished in her mind, and impelled by the noble ardour of her nature, she identified herself with the character of the sailor; and it is a character of which every British monarch has reason to be proud" (185). Huish seems to accept Charlotte as a future sovereign without recourse to gender stereotypes; her "noble ardour" is praiseworthy. But his simile works against this view. It implies that the Princess's masculinity, like a spot on the sun, is indeed a fault (though perhaps not a significant one). Huish uses here a common method for dealing with Charlotte's masculinity. While praising Charlotte's nature, he still reads that nature in a gendered framework. The justification also relies upon a split between Charlotte as female and as heir apparent. Huish specifically commends Charlotte's behavior as befitting a

6. Peter Pindar, BATTLE Royal!! a Peep Behind the Curtain, 2d ed. (London: J. Johnston, [1816]), stanza 59.

future "British Monarch," not a female teenager.

A similar tactic is discernible in Hannah More's Hints Toward Forming the Character of a Young Princess, published in 1805 when Charlotte was nine. More was perhaps the first writer to compare Charlotte and Elizabeth. (Her book may have led to Charlotte's comparing herself to Elizabeth; it was often read to the young princess.)⁷ More discusses the education necessary for a princess, whose future duty "obviously suggests the expediency of an education not only superior to but, in certain respects, distinct from, that of other women." Examples of such an education are "the well-known attainments of the unfortunate Lady Jane Grey; and still more . . . the no less splendid acquirements of Queen Elizabeth."⁸ But More is careful to stress that such an education is proper only for a future queen, not all females:

If we were to estimate Elizabeth as a private female, she would doubtless appear entitled to but little veneration. If as an instrument raised up by divine Providence to carry through the most arduous enterprises in the most difficult emergencies, we can hardly rate her too highly. . . . If we look at the woman, we shall

7. In a letter of November 16, 1812, Charlotte reports, "The Bishop [Dr. Fisher] is here & reads with me for an hour or two every day from Mrs Hanna More's 'Hints for forming the education of a Pss.'" Charlotte to Mercer Elphinstone, 12 November 1812, Letters of the Princess Charlotte, ed. A. Aspinall (London: Home and Van Thal, 1949), 38.

8. Hannah More, Hints Toward Forming the Character of a Young Princess (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1805), 1:10.

see much to blame; if at the sovereign, we shall see almost everything to admire.⁹

What is significant about this particular passage is the splitting of the role of sovereign and female into two incompatible parts; to be a proper monarch, one must become an improper female. Like Huish, More excuses the "spots" on Charlotte's femininity by recasting them as desirable characteristics for a monarch.

The tactic is most prominent in works written after Charlotte's death, when the tendency to idealize the princess was at its height. A. T. Thompson uses it to defend the princess's strength of mind:

Her understanding expanded at once into masculine strength; and her manner of thinking displayed an originality, which, if it led occasionally to eccentric sallies and deviations from the beaten track, as far as concerned the girl under preceptorial control, was likely to be productive of the most important firmness and decision of conduct in the future monarch.¹⁰

Like Huish and More, Thompson is careful to delineate proper and improper female behavior. He does not question the idea of separate gender roles, but he also does not ignore Charlotte's transgression of her role. Rather, he says that

9. More, 185.

10. Anthony Todd Thompson, The Authentic Medical Statement of the Case of Her Royal Highness the Late Princess Charlotte of Wales (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1817), 9.

her role as public figure excuses her private failures.

Thompson also alludes to an issue which was much discussed in the literature of the time, that of the Princess's intellectual accomplishments. Huish quotes the Bishop of London's judgment that Charlotte was "not only the most inquisitive, but of the most intelligent mind" (233). J. M. Bartlett is extravagant in his praise of the princess's intellect:

The very superior, and indeed almost profound attainments of Her Royal Highness were universally acknowledged. Few females possessed such talents, and still more few the number that had cultivated them with so much success. Her studies were pursued with singular assiduity, beginning (as we have been credibly informed by a recent memoir) at six in the Morning, and

continuing, with slight intermission, until Evening.¹¹ This description presents Charlotte as a model for personal discipline. But such emphasis on her learning indicates that something more is at stake. In part, the emphasis on her intelligence may have been a political move. By defending Charlotte's mental powers, writers were defending the fitness of royalty for rule. The writer of a memorial article in La Belle Assemblée insists that "the whole course of her study, whether of a religious, moral, literary, or political nature,

11. J. M. Bartlett, Tribute to the Memory of Her Royal Highness Princess Charlotte (London: L. B. Seeley, J. J. Stockdale, 1817), [17].

was such as tended to qualify her for the situation of a British sovereign."¹²

But even those writers who, on political grounds, defend Charlotte's "manly" intelligence are impelled to seek a properly feminine balance for it in the princess's character. Huish finds Charlotte superior to Elizabeth because, though both possessed "a sound and vigorous understanding, great firmness, and a lively wit," the former also had "the most genuine tenderness of heart that ever warmed a female breast." Whereas Elizabeth was "cold, suspicious, and unforgiving," Charlotte was "affectionate, generous, and confiding" (496). As a concession to gender roles, Charlotte's "firmness" must be tempered by "tenderness." The writer for La Belle Assemblée expresses a similar idea: the nation had "looked forward to a peaceable and prosperous reign, that should exhibit all the virtues, without the barbarous severities, that had marked the age and character of Elizabeth. . . ." ¹³ The contrast between a "barbarous" past and the "virtues" of the present repeats the tactic seen in criticisms of the Derby executions.

William Cooke is perhaps most explicit in the social implications of this gender balancing act. He concedes that

12. La Belle Assemblée 16 supplement (January 1818): 294. This article may have been written by Huish because most of it is repeated verbatim in Huish's book. However, it is also possible that Huish borrowed the information for his work; many of the publications about Charlotte repeat the same passages word for word.

13. La Belle Assemblée 16 supplement (January 1818): 295.

Charlotte had a "strong and independent mind":

yet she did also afford a striking example of the compatibility of a cultivated mind and uncontrolled judgment, with that purely feminine delicacy of manner, which designates the sex, and constitutes one of its peculiar excellencies. . . [S]he did not degenerate into masculine habits--a degeneracy, which not unfrequently renders unamiable, a female enriched with uncommon mental endowments.¹⁴

Like other writers, Cooke limits Charlotte's masculinity to her intellect (no mention of handshakes or boxing) and tempers it with her feminine "delicacy." He does not limit the possession of a "strong and independent mind" in females to Charlotte only. However, he notes that, "not infrequently," intelligent women "degenerate" into masculine habits. The word degenerate combines moral censure with a reassertion of natural--i.e. biological--gender characteristics (Cooke was a physician). His statements stand as a none-too-subtle warning to those in charge of female education.

All of these writers view Charlotte within the framework of carefully defined gender roles. Their depictions of Charlotte as proper female are not disinterested attempts to show her true nature, but rhetorical strategies to inculcate

14. William Cooke, An Address to British Females on the Moral Management of Pregnancy and Labour (London: E. Cox and Son, 1817), 2-3.

the proper role for women in society. The princess's deviations from this proper role are usually excused on the basis of her other role, that of heir apparent, in order to uphold the gender hierarchy. The elements of the Charlotte myth became even more difficult to balance in 1816 when, to the roles of female and heir apparent, Charlotte added that of wife.

Princess Charlotte as Wife

The myth of Charlotte as ideal wife was a powerful one, a rare point of agreement across the political spectrum. An article appearing in the conservative, pro-Ministry Courier after Charlotte's death describes the royal couple:

. . . [T]he youthful pair, in their private life, presented an image of conjugal felicity, of domestic comfort, of dignified retirement, which inspired unbounded delight; for it is so rarely the lot of greatness, that what constitutes its duty becomes also its happiness and ornament."¹⁵

This passage is quoted approvingly in the liberal Examiner. The writer for the latter paper adds that the royal couple's high rank "brought the best part of private life into the daylight without violating the real delicacy of it":

. . . this young woman is the representation of all the others--because she stood on high, in the eyes of us

15. qtd. in Examiner, no. 515 (November 9, 1817): 708.

all, embodying as it were the ideal as well as the actual images of youth, and promise, and blooming womanhood,--not only these, but the images of happy love, and wifeliness, and approaching maternity.¹⁶

Rather than emphasize Charlotte's masculine strengths, this writer emphasizes passive, feminine qualities. Flower metaphors such as the one used here ("blooming womanhood") appear frequently in the Charlotte literature. In contexts such as the above, they tend to emphasize feminine passivity--though I shall later show how Hemans and Shelley use such metaphors for very different ends (chapters 6 and 7). The rhetorical nature of the description is evident in its obscure phraseology: Charlotte embodies both "ideal as well as . . . actual images," but neither makes her a real person. The Courier and the Examiner use a tactic common in writings about the royal couple, that of emphasizing the sanctity of private life--of "dignified retirement"--while simultaneously publicizing that privacy. I will examine this tactic in more detail in succeeding chapters.

These two descriptions of the marriage are also typical in their use of the vocabulary of sentimental fiction. Writers at the time often noted proudly that Charlotte married for love. The Examiner confides, "The Princess Charlotte's marriage, unlike those of princes in general, has always been understood to have been one of her own choice"

16. Examiner, no. 515 (November 9, 1817): 705.

(705). The aside about "princes in general" is a thinly veiled allusion to the Prince Regent's unhappy arranged marriage to Caroline. Because of the Act of Settlement, the king refused to acknowledge the Prince of Wales's Catholic first wife, Maria Fitzherbert. The writer is probably also hinting at Princess Charlotte's broken engagement to the Prince of Orange. This match, which was the work of the Regent, was a political move intended to strengthen the alliance between Great Britain and the Netherlands. Charlotte demurred, however, and instead chose Prince Leopold.

Contemporary writers saw Charlotte's choice as the triumph of love over politics. The writer for La Belle Assemblée writes, "Perhaps there never was a royal match formed in which political considerations had less influence on the parties themselves, and in which the feelings of the heart were more deeply engaged."¹⁷

Though she ultimately developed a genuine attachment to Leopold, her original reasons for the choice were much less romantic. In a letter from January 1815, Charlotte insists that she is "not the least in the world in love" with Leopold, but that she has "a very good opinion of him," and "would rather marry him than any Prince for that reason."¹⁸ In fact, at the time, Charlotte was infatuated with another man, Prince Augustus of Prussia. Realizing that she could not

17. La Belle Assemblée 16 supplement (January 1818): 294.

18. Charlotte to Elphinstone, [January 1815], Charlotte Letters, 180.

marry Augustus, she saw marriage to Leopold as preferable to remaining single. A November 1814 letter explains her reasons more fully:

I should overlook everything such as liking and so forth . . . & take what I considered the next best thing, which was a good tempered man with good sence [sic], with whom I could have a reasonable hope of being less unhappy & comfortless than I have been in a single state. That man, I can repeat, is the Prince of Saxe-Cobourg. 19

Charlotte realizes that this pragmatic, unsentimental view of marriage does not coincide with the ideals promulgated by popular fiction:

This appears very odd, all of it, does it not? . . . That I should be wholly occupied & devoted as I am to one, & yet think & talk & even provide for another would appear unnatural in the highest degree were it written in a novel, & yet it is true, it is not overstrained.²⁰

Unaware of Charlotte's motivations, writers later fictionalized her relationship with Leopold. But ironically, these fictional accounts appeared more natural than what really happened--an indication of the power of domestic works to create, while seeming to reveal, private life.

This novelizing covered the span of the royal marriage,

19. Charlotte to Elphinstone, [11 November 1815], 165.

20. Charlotte to Elphinstone, [11 November 1815], 165.

from its inception to its early dissolution. Especially notable is the rewriting of Charlotte's final moments. According to Stockmar, Leopold, not having left Charlotte's room for three days, was asleep when the princess began her final decline. Stockmar had difficulty rousing the prince and making him understand that Charlotte was dying. (D. M. Stuart speculates that Stockmar had given Leopold an opiate to calm him.²¹) Whatever the reason, by the time Leopold entered Charlotte's room, she was already dead.²² In lieu of this dramatically unsatisfying deathbed scene, writers created a more sentimental one. According to La Belle Assemblée,

The Prince Leopold remained by the bed-side the whole time, endeavouring as much as possible to disguise from his suffering consort the grief and agony he felt. . . . Her Royal Highness, it is said, scarcely ever moved her eyes from the face of her beloved consort, extending her hand frequently to meet his--that hand which was in one short hour to be cold, insensible, and lifeless.²³

An elegy by George Croly describes the princess lying on her deathbed "in her beauty": "Smiles on her pale lip still, her eye unmov'd, / To its last dimness fix'd on him she lov'd. . . ." ²⁴ In these rewritings, the princess remains to

21. D. M. Stuart, Daughter of England: A New Study of Princess Charlotte of Wales and Her Family (London: MacMillan, 1951), 310.

22. Stockmar, Baron C. von, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, ed. F. Max Müller, trans. G. A. M. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1872), 1:64-66.

23. La Belle Assemblée 16 (December 1817): 235.

24. George Croly, Lines on the Death of Her Royal Highness the

the end the epitome of the perfect female and wife, beautiful even in death, her husband the focus of her final moments. According to eyewitnesses, her final utterance was the prosaic "Is there any danger?" In Huish's recounting, her final words are the wish that "the customary etiquette [for burying royalty] would at some future day be dispensed with; and that her husband, when his awful time should arrive, might be laid by her side" (527). These words are more in keeping with the princess portrayed in the media: as in her choice of husband, Charlotte in her last wish disregards questions of state and follows the dictates of her heart.

The emphasis on affection over politics in the revisions of these two events--one at the beginning and the other at the end of Charlotte's relationship with Leopold--reveals a tension between the roles of wife and public figure. Throughout her brief marriage to Leopold, Charlotte's position as heir apparent was one of the greatest obstacles to her serving as the image of "happy love and wifeliness." The future seemed to hold the awkward situation of Leopold's being at once Charlotte's subject and her lord and master. And, unlike Charlotte's personal reasons for choosing to marry Leopold, this problem was known all too well. Satirists plied the contradiction with relish. Several satires on the

Princess Charlotte (London: John Murray, 1818), reprint, Paris in 1815. Lines on the Death, The Angel of the World, Paris in 1815. Second Part, Cataline, Gems, ed. Donald H. Reiman (New York, London: Garland, 1977), stanza 4.

royal marriage were published under the pseudonym of Peter Pindar (though there appears to have been more than one writer using the name). In one poem, the princess explains the terms by which she will agree to marry Leopold:

But if I take you for my Spouse
 Things must be turn'd quite topsy-turvy.
 I am a princess, and may be
 A queen, tho' you I deign to marry;
 Therefore to govern, Mister C--,
 Is mine, by right hereditary.

She agrees to let Leopold "advise" her, but no more: ". . . as to ruling,--no such thing; / Tis I, good sir, must sway the scepter."²⁵ The phallic image is probably not accidental. Many satirists equate Charlotte's potential sovereignty with sexual domination. Leopold becomes correspondingly weak and effeminate. A common scene in poems and cartoons about the royal couple is Charlotte's putting on Leopold's pants. In BATTLE Royal!!! a Peep Behind the Curtain, Pindar describes Charlotte's decision "to reign with undisputed sway": "'My life! (she cried) I'll try the breeches!'"²⁶ Leopold acquiesces "with simpers sweet."²⁷ In another poem describing the same incident, Leopold concludes, "[t]hat pantaloons he'd

25. Peter Pindar, The Royal Marriage: or Miss Lump and Grenadier (London, J. Johnston, [1816]), stanzas 62-4. Later poems published under the same pseudonym claim that this poem was written by an impostor.

26. Peter Pindar, BATTLE Royal!!!, stanza 47.

27. Pindar, BATTLE Royal!!!, stanza 48.

better wear / And leave the breeches to her care."²⁸

Whereas more serious memorialists use Charlotte's political position to excuse her departures from proper gender roles, satirists often humorously describe the princess as a threat to the natural order. One poem describes Charlotte flipping through a Bible:

When wives, 'obey your husbands,' struck her eye,--

'Husbands, obey your wives,' was her reply;

I'll lay a guinea that the wrong translation

Has been the cause of woman's degradation.²⁹

By transgressing her divinely-sanctioned role as wife, Charlotte turns everything "topsy-turvy." With typical comic exaggeration, BATTLE Royal, shows Charlotte as inciting a general women's revolution:

. . . the women all, both short and tall,

Resolv'd to wear the breeches.

Rebellion rais'd her colours high,

To cow each cuckold varlet,

"Emancipation!" was the cry,

"Prerogative and C--e!"³⁰

This passage is typical in its mixture of sex and politics. The women are described in distinctly Jacobin terms--though, unlike the French, they are avec-culottes. And their

28. Peter Pindar, Who Wears the Breeches? The Co--gh Honey-moon (London: John Fairburn, 1816), stanza 65.

29. Peter Pindar, The Royal Honeymoon or The Frolics of Matrimony (London: J. Robinson, [1816]), 13-14.

30. Pindar, BATTLE Royal, stanzas 152-3.

political emancipation is equated with promiscuity. Behind the facetiousness lies the real contradiction that, at least for Charlotte, emancipation from her proper wifely role was her royal "prerogative."

Satirists could at least address the contradiction directly. Others, if they did not simply ignore it (as did the Courier and the Examiner) had to tread more delicately. George Croly, in his elegy on Charlotte, relates a supposedly true incident from Charlotte's wedding ceremony. For most of the ceremony, writes Croly, the princess showed surprising strength: "She blush'd not, sank not; native majesty / Was living in her voice, and form, and eye."³¹ But in the end, her soft feminine spirit wins:

Yet in that stately form a spirit strove,
As soft as ever woman gave to love;
Ev'n then it strove; the heart's high fealty
Scarce pledg'd, still on the altar's step her knee,
Her nature rush'd upon her, tears outsprung,
She rose, and round her sire her white arms flung,
And met his press, fond, deeply, silently;
Pleasure may smile, but love and joy must sigh!³²

Whether true or not, the incident illustrates the difficulties of squaring Charlotte's role as future head of state with Leopold's role as head of the family. The way

31. Croly, 14.

32. Croly, 15.

Croly reconciles the two parallels the technique writers use to reconcile Charlotte's masculine and feminine traits. Croly relates her strong characteristics to her position as heir apparent: she has "native majesty" and is "stately." But in her wedding, at the point when Leopold becomes her master, Croly writes that her "nature rush'd upon her." This "proper," feminine nature is "soft" and characterized by tears and sighs. The two sides of Charlotte's personality do not coexist peacefully. To emphasize this point, Croly twice uses the word "strove" to describe the conflict between masculine and feminine roles in the same person. Finally, however, the proper hierarchy is established; Charlotte surrenders to her emotions and Leopold becomes her "sire."

After the royal wedding, the corporation of London presented congratulatory addresses separately to Princess Charlotte and to Leopold. The differences in the two addresses are revealing. For a speech delivered to Charlotte in person, the popular rhetoric--which often bore little resemblance to reality--would obviously be inappropriate. Not surprisingly, the speech reverts to the Tory vocabulary of monarchical power. It emphasizes her position as future ruler, lauding the "splendid dignity of [her] royal birth, as presumptive heiress to the British sceptre." It praises "the great acquirements and endearing qualities and graces of [her] royal mind" and ends with the hope that "the transcendent virtues which inhabit [her] royal bosom, may

descend to grace a line of princes" who may be "a lasting glory to the country" (qtd. in Huish, 296). The mention of childbearing here seems to be less an emphasis on motherhood than on the dynastic function of perpetuating the royal line. Nor are the "virtues" to which the address alludes specifically feminine, as evidenced by the hope of their being passed on to future male heirs.

The message to Leopold, as the ruler of the house, has a slightly different emphasis. According to it, the princess has "all the graces and virtues which afford a pre-eminent example to the daughters of Britain, the acquirements of her royal mind, fitted to her high station, are equalled by the engaging female softness of her character, to bless and display domestic life" (297-8). This address displays the techniques already described for dealing with Charlotte's masculine characteristics. First, her masculinity is limited to mental accomplishments. Then, it is excused on account of Charlotte's peculiar position; it "is fitted to her high station." Finally, this masculine trait is counterbalanced by an "engaging female softness." Unlike the address to Charlotte herself, this one uses the vocabulary of domestic discipline. It stresses that the princess's purpose is to "bless and display domestic life"--to foster a happy domestic atmosphere, and to stage domestic happiness for the benefit of the state.

Faced with these various discourses--fulsome praise,

heavy-handed humor, or cautious diplomacy--one is left wondering about the reality of Charlotte and Leopold's relationship. Again, the closest we can come is to try to decrease the representational distance between text and subject. Three months before the marriage, Charlotte's grandmother the queen seems to have had misgivings about the relationship. In a February, 1816, letter to the Prince Regent, she offered suggestions for Leopold and Charlotte:

[H]e must be the head of the family and she submit to him as his wife, all will do well, & on his side, he must be carefull [sic] not to give her too great an idea of her own consequence. . . ."

She insists that, for Leopold, "steadiness in his character is the most to be wished"; and she tells the Regent to "impress that strongly upon [Leopold's] mind."³³

Apparently, however, the queen's concerns were unnecessary; Charlotte's letters indicate that Leopold quickly assumed the role of head of the family. Two months before they were married, Charlotte wrote a letter describing the ordering of their establishment. Charlotte is to be in charge of her ladies and maids. "The rest of the household," she writes, "is all in his department. I see he will be master of his own house too." She also intends to give up horseback riding, partially of her own accord, but also

33. Queen Charlotte to the Prince of Wales, 16 February 1816, George IV Letters, 2:632.

because Leopold "does not much like a ladies [sic] riding, he thinks it too violent an exercise."³⁴ Charlotte seems to have been willing to accept her position as wife. Another letter finds her ready "to be dependent on another & [to] abide by his opinions, will, & pleasure."³⁵

Acquaintances of the royal couple concur that Charlotte was a proper, submissive wife. Princess Lieven writes, "I see a great deal of the Coburgs and as a matter of fact I claim to be the most intimate friend of the Princess Charlotte. . . . Her husband is behaving very well; she is greatly attached to him, and very submissive."³⁶ The portrait painter Sir Thomas Lawrence reported that the married Charlotte had none of her youthful willfulness; and he attributed this change to Leopold's great influence over her, an influence, however, exercised "in a gentle manner."³⁷ Ultimately, Charlotte and Leopold seem to have facilitated the myth-making process by filling their proper domestic roles. Considering her own family, Charlotte was doubtlessly delighted by the "prospects of happiness, real domestic ones like other people."³⁸

But the rumors of uxoriousness must have persisted. Long after Charlotte's death, when Leopold was king of the

34. Charlotte to Mercer, 1 March 1816, Charlotte Letters, 226.

35. Charlotte to Mercer, 2 March 1816, Charlotte Letters, 227.

36. qtd. in Holme, 228.

37. Stuart, 293.

38. Charlotte to Mercer, 28 February 1816, Charlotte Letters, pg. 224.

Belgians, he wrote to his niece, Queen Victoria, concerning Charlotte:

I know that you have been told that she ordered everything in the house and liked to show that she was mistress. It was not so. On the contrary, her pride was to make me appear to my best advantage and to display respect and obedience when I least wanted it from her.³⁹

Leopold's description reveals that, even as a proper wife, Charlotte maintained her distinctive character. Showing wifely "respect and obedience" was to the princess a source of "pride." And she asserted her independence even in her submission, persisting when Leopold "least wanted it from her." As Leopold presents it, there is a hint of theatricality in Charlotte's wifeliness. The princess seems to have traded her childhood role of pugilistic male for that of a domestic female.

39. qtd in Stuart, 286.

Chapter 2

"Mr. and Mrs. Cobourg":

Class Obfuscation and Social Control

After Charlotte and Leopold were married, they moved to Claremont, a country house away from London in the small village of Esher. Huish notes with pride that, "from the very beginning of her residence at Claremont, her Royal Highness appeared in a great degree to divest herself of the exterior character of the princess, and to assume that of a private lady" (414). Others were not so pleased. In the spring of 1817, according to Huish, some people began to complain that the royal couple's secluded life was "incompatible with the exalted rank which the Princess Charlotte filled, and that the nation had not voted to her an income of 60,000 l. a year, to expend in books and flowers, and erecting gewgaws in the park." Rather, the money was intended "to enable her to maintain a degree of splendour suitable to the heiress presumptive to the crown, and to live in the midst of the people over whom she was one day destined to reign" (465). At issue here are two conflicting views of royalty and of social control. Huish does not name the speaker, but the vocabulary is that of monarchical spectacle. "Splendor" serves to highlight the "exalted rank" of royalty. And, because this theater of power depends on visibility, the heiress apparent

must "live in the midst" of the spectator-subjects.

Claremont, on the other hand, represents a very different view of royalty. Books, flowers, and "gewgaws" are symbols of the middle-class, identifying the royal couple with comfortable respectability. Both systems depend on imagery for their effectiveness. But, whereas royal spectacle is intended to awe the public and to emphasize the gap between (future) sovereign and subject, middle-class lifestyle serves as a domestic model for all families.

As the move to Claremont indicates, in Charlotte and Leopold's case, the latter view prevailed. Huish effuses, "Claremont might indeed be called the abode of connubial happiness and domestic bliss; a brighter picture of those mundane joys could not be presented to the view of the admiring philanthropist" (441). One anonymous elegist looks fondly back on the "pure felicity" of the couple, seeing it as a substitute for royal appointments: "For home was both their diadem, / And motto of their arms."¹ There is, of course, one obvious problem with using Charlotte and Leopold as an epitome of the "mundane joys" of the middle-class--their income was ten times that even of many members of the ton.² This sleight of hand concerning class was accomplished by redefining the "middle-class" in other than economic

1. qtd. in La Belle Assemblée 16 (December 1817): 227.

2. Carolly Erickson cites Louis Simond's observation that, in London in 1810, one needed an income of at least £3,000 (and preferably £6,000) to be considered a member of high society--Our Tempestuous Day (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1986), 26.

terms. In an elegy to Charlotte, an anonymous "Well-Wisher" praises middle-class life:

Blest middle state! Let grandeur take its seat,
 To strut its time in fashion and deceit,
 To thee compared, how small does grandeur seem?
 A fleeting rainbow and a miser's dream!
 Warm to our hearts the honest truth must come,
 No man is wretched who has peace at home.³

The middle class is contrasted with both upper-class "grandeur" and "wretched" poverty. However, in this formulation, belonging to the middle class is not a matter of income, but of the heart. Economic issues are rewritten in moral terms; any happily married couple can join the "bless'd" middle class. To avoid wretchedness one needs, not sufficient income, but "peace at home." The upper class is likewise defined less by its wealth than by its immorality. Consequently, by shunning the "fashion and deceit" of the rich, Charlotte and Leopold are remade as a middle-class couple. The well-wisher's choice of the word "peace" to characterize domestic bliss rather than "love" or "joy" may have disciplinary overtones: a peaceful home where all know their station will insure a peaceful nation. This disciplinary undercurrent will be explored later.

The strategy of defining the middle-class in opposition

3. An Elegy on the Death of Her Royal Highness Princess Charlotte (London: G Hayden, 1817), 11.

to the upper and lower classes may be usefully read in the context of a growing class-consciousness at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Linda Colley has argued that, after the 1780's, critics began to view landholders as a distinct group and to criticize them en masse as a parasitic class on the nation. Works such as The Extraordinary Red Book (published the year of the princess's marriage) detailed the corruption of the upper classes.⁴ Charlotte and Leopold were not beyond such criticism. Especially around the time of the Parliamentary debates concerning their establishment, political cartoons portrayed the royal couple as leeching off the nation. In one print, Britain in the person of John Bull is saddled and ridden by Charlotte and Leopold, who carry enormous money bags. As an added element of satire, Charlotte holds the reins (reigns) and whip.⁵ In a print by George Cruikshank entitled "State Physicians Bleeding John Bull to Death!!" Vanisittart, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, is bleeding John Bull. Instead of blood, guineas spurt from John's arm; the money is being caught by Leopold in a pan inscribed "60,000 per Ann." and by Charlotte in one inscribed "For Wedding Garm[ents] Diamond Trinkets and Baubles."⁶

Even writers sympathetic to the royal couple sometimes

4. Linda Colley, Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837 (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1992), 152-3.

5. Described in M. Dorothy George, ed., Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1949), 9:659-660.

6. George, Catalogue, 9:661-2.

found it difficult to justify the substantial establishment. The Reverend Thomas Beck, in an elegy to Charlotte, is curiously ambivalent:

A kingdom bent beneath its load,
 Yet pour'd abundance on thy state;
 With splendour fitted thine abode,
 And felt a pride to make thee great.⁷

Except for the first line, this quatrain is familiar Tory rhetoric. While seeming to justify the couple's establishment, however, Beck simultaneously calls attention to the incongruity between royal "splendour" and the condition of the rest of the nation. This tension increases as the poem continues:

How many deem'd that glory sure,
 (Now sunk in death's long gloomy night,)
 And, murmuring at their lot obscure,
 With envy view'd thy dazzling height!⁸

The power of royal spectacle has disappeared. Instead of pride, the "dazzling height" of Charlotte evokes "envy." It is not surprising that, confronted by the "murmuring" multitudes critical of lavish expenditure, writers began to seek other sources of power.

According to Colley, criticism against the upper-class compelled them to reinvent themselves as true Britons. They

7. Thomas Beck, An Elegy on the Lamented Death of Her Royal Highness Princess Charlotte (London: A. Maxwell, 1817), 14.

8. Beck, 15.

began emphasizing their Englishness by making tours of their homeland instead of the continental Grand Tour and by foregoing French fashions for British manufactures.⁹ In keeping with the change, Huish reports that Charlotte and Leopold forbade their household staff to wear imported clothes. Charlotte also threatened to fire anyone who bought foreign goods from street vendors (354-55). Charlotte's eulogists take pains to emphasize her British spirit. T. Duckett notes, "How often will it be said, that had she come to the government, the influence of the tender-hearted female, of the affectionate wife, and, let us add, of the genuine English-woman, would have been felt in all its operations."¹⁰

Besides emphasizing Charlotte's Britishness, writers worked to dissociate her from the upper class. La Belle Assemblée insists that Charlotte "had nothing of high or fashionable life about her": "There was no encumbering superfluity of jewels to be seen upon her person; in short, nothing which distinguished her from the common gentlewoman, in splendour of apparel." But the writer quickly qualifies the judgment. Charlotte did not offend against the "proper rule of modern dress"; she never departed so far from fashion as to give the impression "that she knew better than others, or condemned that change of taste and of new materials, by

9. Colley, 172-7.

10. T. Duckett, Tribute to the Memory of the Late Princess Charlotte (London: R. Gray, 1817), 8.

which the honest fabricator and tradesman is supported."¹¹ Charlotte is so careful to align herself with the "common gentlewoman" that, not only does she eschew royal opulence, she also avoids over-plainness. A choice of wardrobe has taken on the importance of an ethical act, one which identifies the princess with the "bless'd" middle class.

Huish likewise insists that the importance of a sovereign is not dependent on outward shows of pomp and power. The princess, he explains, having experienced first-hand the excesses of royalty, chose instead "a dignified retirement, . . . the true otium cum dignitate [leisure with honor]" (246-7). He notes proudly that the royal pair were out of debt; and he tells of a lady's walking in on the couple and finding them surrounded by ledgers. "Come in, come in," greeted the Princess, "'tis only Mr. And Mrs. Cobourg settling their weekly accounts, as all honest people should do" (420). This encomium certainly implies a criticism of the Regent's enormous personal debts. Like other writers, Huish views class as a moral choice. He writes that the royal couple's "preference of domestic life, of home, and its tranquil enjoyments would have been regarded as an argument of singular worth, in the rich and the great of private life." But Charlotte's position as public figure makes the choice even more significant: "of how much more worth,

11. La Belle Assemblée 16 (December 1817): 233.

therefore, is the argument, where it is found in a rank, which must have sacrificed so much to attain it" (442). Charlotte, by a willful act of sacrifice, is able to divest herself of her maligned social rank and to identify herself with middle-class domesticity. Huish does not dissemble his rhetorical purpose; the presentation of domestic life is explicitly an "argument." He ends this eulogy to the home with an edifying tableau: "The heiress of the greatest throne in the world might be daily seen watering the flowers in her garden at Claremont" (442). Pointedly, Huish praises Charlotte's watering her flowers, one of the specific accouterments of middle-class taste that members of Parliament had criticized her for.

As I have indicated, the myth of the royal couple was, in part, a response to growing criticism of landholders as a distinct class. But the myth also responded to changing perceptions of the poor. E. P. Thompson has chronicled the development, in the decades around the turn of the nineteenth century, of a sense of class identity among British laborers. This developing self-consciousness was accompanied by a growing uneasiness among the middle and upper classes.¹² In an essay of 1817, William Cobbett condemns the increasing tendency of the rich to view lower-income laborers as a separate class. "There has come into the heads of these people [in the upper class]," Cobbett writes, ". . . a notion

12. E. P. Thompson.

that it is proper to consider the Laboring Classes as a distinct cast. They are called now-a-days, by these gentlemen, 'the Peasantry.'" Cobbett claims that this term is new to England. Though the word literally means "Country Folks," Cobbett argues that it has pejorative connotations:

But in the sense, in which it is used in France and Flanders and Germany, it means . . . a distinct and degraded class of persons, who have no pretensions whatever to look upon themselves, in any sense, as belonging to the same society, or community, as the Gentry; but who ought always to be "kept down in their proper place."

Cobbett blames Malthus, "who considers men as mere animals," for contributing to this change: "we now frequently hear the working classes called, 'the population,' just as we call the animals upon a farm, 'the stock.'"¹³

Cobbett's ideal of a classless British past may be a fiction, but he accurately identifies the tendency to view laborers as a distinct class requiring control. Whereas the upper class was seen as profligate, the lower class was seen as lacking financial, political, and sexual restraint. Malthus's influential Essay on Population--which was published in a considerably expanded edition in 1817--reveals these attitudes towards the poor. He asserts that "the principle of population" is "a law peculiarly suited to" the

13. Cobbett's Political Register 32, no. 14 [1817]: 5-6.

human condition, a "state of discipline and trial." Because "each individual has the power of avoiding the evil consequences to himself and society resulting from the principle of population by the practice of virtue, the ways of God to man with regard to this great law of nature are completely vindicated."¹⁴ Here, the connection between individual discipline and national economy is stated explicitly, and the whole is couched in moral terms. Indeed, the implication is that any public policy which would attempt to mitigate or avoid the effects of population would be tampering with God's ordained order.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Malthus does not favor legal remedies for the problems of population. In an additional chapter on the poor laws added in 1817, he asseverates that the problems can only be solved through indoctrination--to which, however, the lower classes are resistant. He mourns their tendency to ignore "any endeavor on the part of the higher classes to inculcate the duties of prudence and economy."¹⁵ Here and elsewhere, Malthus associates class and morality. Poverty and the lack of "prudence and economy" seem inextricably linked--a strange viewpoint to be held during the height of Regency sexual and financial excesses.

In the 1817 Appendix, Malthus states explicitly the role

14. Thomas Malthus, Essay on Population, 5th ed. (London: John Murray, 1817), 3:426-7.

15. Malthus, 2:373.

the family plays in this system of discipline. He answers those critics who accuse him of condoning birth control. Concerning "the restraints prescribed by Condorcet," Malthus writes, "I should always particularly reprobate any artificial and unnatural modes of checking population, both on account of their immorality and their tendency to remove a necessary stimulus to industry." Were each family able to "limit by a wish" the number of children, "there is certainly reason to fear that the indolence of the human race would be very greatly increased. . . ." ¹⁶ Malthus's meaning is not entirely clear. He seems to be arguing that birth control is undesirable because, without it, couples have larger families and therefore have to work harder. And yet larger families lead to the "evil consequences . . . resulting from the principle of population" which Malthus wishes to avert. It is also possible to read the condemnation of birth control as stemming from a fear of unrestrained sexuality. The person who does not have to limit sex for fear of unwanted children gives in to "indolence," with disastrous consequences for the whole human race. In this reading, Malthus's cause-effect chain is similar to that described by Huish, in which the sexual promiscuity of the female leads her to greater crimes and finally to Newgate prison.

Without the luxury of birth control, however, the family becomes the ideal disciplinary structure: "It is not easy to

16. Malthus, 3:393.

conceive a more powerful encouragement to exertion and good conduct than the looking forward to marriage as a state peculiarly desirable; but only to be enjoyed in comfort, by the acquisition of habits of industry, economy, and prudence" (3, 393-4). Malthus's work typifies the tendency to construct the family as a disciplinary space, in which personal ethics replace public policy. (This conflation of public and private is aided by the dual connotations of such words as "industry" and "economy.") It is this domestic ideal that the Attorney-General had in mind when he entrusted the disaffected Derbyshire poor to the "bosoms of their families," to become "honest, sober, industrious, and religious" and to "fill with propriety" their heaven-appointed "stages of life." And it is in the context of such views concerning the lower class and the family that depictions of Charlotte and Leopold's marriage should be read. As La Belle Assemblée stresses, "order and kindly rule marked the domestic arrangement" of the royal family.

The preceding discussion has indicated that the depictions of the royal couple are political documents, but the politics is of a new kind. By centering power in images of middle-class morality rather than in government policies, these documents create a seemingly apolitical species of politics. Purkis writes, "The nation is composed of families, and if those respective families are happy, we cannot fail to be a happy nation":

Our happiness depends not upon the splendours of courts, equipages, and processions . . . nor even upon a superfluity of commerce and wealth: but upon the good order, regular discipline, peace, tranquility, harmony, and affection of families. None of these can subsist where there is a fondness for public amusements, and where home is not the chief concern, especially in the female character.¹⁷

Like the "well-wisher" quoted above, Purkis places the responsibility for a prosperous nation on individual morality (especially female morality) rather than economic welfare. Thus, questions of enfranchisement are of less concern than the "good order" and "regular discipline" of families. Purkis also stresses the connection between middle-class ideas of family affection and those of discipline, especially with regards to women. The fate of the nation depends on women's avoiding "public amusements" and centering their lives in the home. Purkis concludes by saying that, because Princess Charlotte avoided all "public amusements," her "example might have reformed the nation."¹⁸ He repeats the oft-repeated chain leading from female morality to domestic "peace" to national prosperity.

Like Malthus, many of Princess Charlotte's memorialists

17. Isaac Purkis, Reflections on the Death of Her Royal Highness Princess Charlotte (London: "printed for the author, sold by Whittemore; Cox; Ellis, Delahoy, and Liddell," 1817), 7.

18. Purkis, 10.

combine emphasis on the family as disciplinary structure with a reluctance to reform political institutions. In an elegy by James Rondeau, the poet hears a "Warning Voice--the Voice of GOD!"

It calls for Penitence and Prayer;
It cries to those, whose lives disgrace
Britain's forefathers' Christian race;
It calls for radical reform,
Not in the Senate--but at Home.--19

If each home is a locus of discipline, there will be no need for reform of the state apparatus because the family unit will be functioning as an arm of the state.

Charlotte herself contributed (perhaps unconsciously) to this disciplinary process. Her choosing a private lifestyle promoted the image of a moral pseudo-class and thus helped buttress the economic status quo. Likewise, her avoidance of public affairs helped foster the invisible moral politics. One anonymous memorialist remarks "the sweetness of temper" with which Charlotte acquiesced to her retirement from politics, an arrangement which the writer says was "prescribed as the means of avoiding the splendid intercourse to which her rank entitled her, and which might have created jealousy by the political influence to which it might lead":

She lived, therefore, in the most perfect retirement,

19. James Rondeau, Leopold's Loss: or England's Tears O'er the Urn of His Beloved Princess Charlotte (London: Hatchard, Piccadilly; and Lackingont, Allen, and Co., 1817), 15-16.

and with the scrupulous abstinence from all party. Yet such was the result of this uncomplaining submission, that the very means chosen to prevent comparison led to it, and her party became the whole people of the United Kingdom.²⁰

This writer depicts an ideal nation without party differences, united in the love of a future ruler who lives in "perfect retirement." The politics of this ideal state are anti-politics, a "scrupulous abstinence" from all public activities--which, as the writer indicates, often translates to "uncomplaining submission."

Other writers also, in praising apolitical domesticity, reveal its disciplinary character. J. M. Bartlett apostrophizes the deceased princess:

In you the torch of party seem'd extinguished--
The rancor of debate enfeebled--and,
In the contemplation of futurity,
Discord no longer dared erect its crest.²¹

This passage purports to praise the ability of domestic sentiment to end political divisiveness. Yet the metaphors of detumescence hint ominously at the consequence of politics by affect: difference of opinion is stifled. Duckett is even more explicit. He first notes that Charlotte was "an example

20. The Virtuous Life and Lamented Death of the Princess Charlotte, 2d ed. (London: G. Smeeton, 1817), 7.

21. J. M. Bartlett, Tribute to the Memory of Her Royal Highness Princess Charlotte (London: L. B. Seeley; J. J. Stockdale, 1817), 9.

to our women, upon whose deportment chiefly rests the edifice of public and private morals. . . ."22 Like so many others, Duckett conflates national prosperity and private morality; both depend on women's adopting the role of wife and mother. Duckett then claims that "a young and graceful queen would command the homage of every heart, whilst our reason would be subdued by the imposing virtues of the faithful wife and exemplary mother."<23 Gone from this new rhetoric of power are the terrors of the monarch exemplified in public executions; they have been replaced by the "imposing virtues" of domesticity. In one sense, this new species of political power is like the old one: they share an anti-rational basis. Through images of wifeliness and maternity, rational thought is "subdued." Sentiment is a political power beyond reason, and therefore beyond rational debate. Duckett's anti-rational bias is shared by many of Charlotte's elegists. Together, these works present a disciplinary structure parallel with, though not identical to, Foucault's aggressively rational one.

This new species of political power helps explain one feature common to many elegies for Charlotte: the emphasis on the whole nation's uniting in sympathy with the royal family. This rhetoric of unity functions in complicated ways. A passage from Croly's elegy will serve as a good example. He

22. Duckett, 10.

23. Duckett, 11.

describes the nation anxiously awaiting the news of Charlotte's safe delivery:

. . . the peasant, ere his limbs he laid
 On his low pallet, linger'd thro' the shade
 To hear the cannon. . . .

 Proud steps were pacing many a princely hall,
 Impatient for the courier's signal call. . . .²⁴

The structure Croly follows is typical: he stresses the unity of all classes while simultaneously distinguishing them. Though all share the same anxiety, Croly is careful to separate the "peasant" (vide Cobbett) and the nobleman. The two are placed in their proper settings and appropriately psychologized; the nobleman is "proud" and "impatient"--unseemly emotions for the peasant, whose "low pallet" serves as a transferred epithet for his humble station.

This tactic appears most often in descriptions of the nation's grief after Charlotte's death. One writer describes the crowds gathered along the roads to watch the funeral procession: "Every one, from the proudest in rank and fortune, down to the humblest in the scale of our community, was actuated by a unanimous and unadulterated feeling of public respect."²⁵ Though all may be united in grief, the "scale" of class has not been obliterated. Like Croly, this

24. Croly, 8.

25. Virtuous Life, 4.

author appropriately psychologizes the classes as proud or humble. To emphasize the separation, the author presents a list of paired opposites: "Young and old, rich and poor, high and low, combined to make up one continuous procession."²⁶ (The redundancy of the last two pairs serves merely to stress the separation.) La Belle Assemblée reports that, as the funeral procession passed through villages, "many were the tears which old, young, rich, and poor, shed, as they saw the melancholy array passing along."²⁷ In each of these passages, the trope of unifying grief does not dissolve class differences, but simultaneously elides and reifies them.

Through the elision of class differences, the metonymy of political identification with others in the same class is replaced by the metaphor of national unity through sympathy. The poem "Sincere Burst of Feeling" reveals the workings of this trope:

For sympathy the soul hath bound
 In universal woe;
 The haughty, meek, obscure, renowned,
 One face of feeling shew.²⁸

The classes remain separate and maintain their proper attitudes. But superimposed on these differences is a mask of common humanity. This "face of feeling" is that of middle-class domestic affection. The excluded middle in these paired

26. Virtuous Life, 4.

27. La Belle Assemblée 16 (December 1817): 307.

28. La Belle Assemblée 16 (December 1817): 227.

opposites has expanded to encompass both extremes, obfuscating economic differences. The combination of sympathy and the reification of class lines defuses possible unrest--the "soul" of each person is "bound" by it. The elegists were not unaware of the power of this rhetoric. The La Belle Assemblée author writes,

It is highly gratifying to observe the indications which the humblest members of the great family of Britain are now giving, that they feel an interest in common with the highest, in the happiness of their country and can sorrow for its loss. It is a feeling which should not be suffered to expire.²⁹

This passage provides an answer to Malthus, who had mourned the lower class's resistance to any upper-class attempt to "inculcate . . . prudence and economy." The death of Princess Charlotte provided a way to bridge the gap between the classes without weakening the social structure. Her death allowed writers to use her didactically as the image of prudence and domesticity while at the same time investing that image with a pathos which would elicit the sympathy of the audience.

Some writers, however, saw the dangers in the rhetoric surrounding the death of the princess. The November 16th issue of the Examiner includes a letter to the editor which uses the rhetoric of national unity, but toward a different

29. La Belle Assemblée 16 (December 1817): 311.

end:

A whole people bathed in tears.--Whig, Tory, Reformer, Trinitarian, Unitarian, Jew, Deist, Infidel, Roman Catholic, Churchman, Established Churchman, Dissenting Churchman, all parties, all sects,--hanging their heads, wringing their hands, as the head and hand of one man. . . . Is this a common wealth [sic] in which a single faction should invariably carry all before it; is this a country, in which any one denomination of religionists should be exclusively, or even very markedly, preferred to another? Could the government of such a family be too paternal?³⁰

Like the writers discussed heretofore, this one sees the death of Charlotte as eliciting a grief which crossed political boundaries. But he insists that this new-found sympathy for others argues for more political diversity, not less. He criticizes the use of family metaphors to describe the state because they lead to a naturalizing of the political status quo; the king, in asserting the same authority over his subjects as the father over his family, becomes "too paternal."

Other writers questioned the unanimity of the grief for the princess. The April 25, 1818, number of Cobbett's Weekly Political Pamphlet contains a letter from Cobbett to Henry Hunt, the radical reformer. In it, Cobbett jokingly expresses

30. Examiner, no. 516 (November 16, 1817): 757.

concern for Hunt's health because he has heard of a innkeeper in Esher who, upon hearing of Princess Charlotte's death, "was instantly taken ill, and went and laid upon his bed and DIED!" Cobbett continues:

Coupling this fact with the sight of the news-papers lined all round with black, I really began to fear, that a considerable portion of the nation were actually dead, or in a dying state, from the same cause. . . .³¹

Cobbett then contrasts this seeming universality of sentiment in Britain with the reaction in America. He tells of the attempt of the British Consul at New York to move an address of condolence to the Prince Regent. But a group of reformers, meeting separately, voted upon an address to the Princess Caroline rather than the Regent. The problem, Cobbett claims, is that the Consul forgot that "he was not here acting under the protecting awe of the Gag and the Halter and the Axe and the Quartering Knife."³² Cobbett sees the enforcement of nation-wide grief as proceeding from the same desire for political control that led to the Derby executions. He criticizes those who describe the nation's mourning Charlotte as their own daughter:

The political consequences of the death of the Princess is all that we, any of us, can have any thing to do with. We cannot have any personal feeling upon the

31. Weekly Political Register 33, no. 16 (April 25, 1818): [502].

32. Weekly Political Register 33, no. 16 (April 25, 1818): [504].

occasion. It is a young wife dead in child-birth; and this happens, in many parts of every great country, every twenty-four hours. It is nonsense, and, indeed, worse: it is vile hypocrisy to talk about personal sorrow, or personal feeling of any sort.³³

To emphasize his point, Cobbett may understate the ability of people to sympathize with the death of a popular public figure. Nevertheless, he astutely identifies the drift of such sympathy. As the word "hypocrisy" indicates, Cobbett sees the image of national grief--the "face of feeling"--as a mask for social control.

An article in the Examiner also criticizes the ministry for exploiting politically the death of the princess. The writer complains of "the indecent advantage" which the Ministerial Papers have taken of the Princess's death. The papers "thrust this sorrow between [the public's] eyes and everything else," pressing "every circumstance and possible detail of the event upon people's minds, as if the latter had no ideas or sorrows of their own."³⁴ Whereas Duckett praised reason's being "subdued" by sympathy, this writer condemns the same effect. The author then attempts to unwrite the metaphor of sympathy, to stress the real interests which link individuals. The ministerial papers demand "that people should conduct themselves 'as if some dear relative were

33. Weekly Political Register 33, no. 16 (April 25, 1818): [505].

34. Monthly Repository 12, no. 143 (November 1817): 694.

lying dead':

'As if!' Yes; here is the whole secret;--they know and feel, if they have any feelings at all, that people cannot so conduct themselves,--that it is not in the nature of things. . . . What disgusting, hypocritical cant! As if people had not hundreds of causes of grief besides this! As if there were no such things at this moment as diseases and lingering deaths, poverties, starvations, compelled crimes, widowed mournings, "insolences of office"--"spurns which patient merit of the unworthy takes," labours in vain, trampled rights, cheated beliefs, agonized wonderings, settled melancholies, secret imprisonments, horrible executions, broken hearts!³⁵

Like Cobbett, the author reads the public grief in the context of the repressive politics of the time: the "secret imprisonments" allowed by the suspension of Habeas Corpus, and the "horrible executions" of, among others, Brandreth, Ludlam, and Turner. And, like Cobbett, the author sees the disciplinary effect of that grief: it takes public attention away from more distressing social problems.

In the reactions to Princess Charlotte's death, such voices of protest are isolated exceptions in an otherwise unisonal chorus of national mourning. (Another notable exception, Shelley, will be saved for a later chapter.) The

35. Examiner, no. 516 (November 16, 1817): 721.

allusion by both Cobbett and the Examiner to public executions is telling. Discussing the princess's death, a writer in the Monthly Repository, notes, "This melancholy subject absorbed the mind too much for the fate of some wretched men at Derby, expiating the crime of high treason by their death, to produce any considerable impression."³⁶ The pacifying effect of the national mourning will be examined in more detail in the next chapter.

36. Monthly Repository 12, no. 143 (November 1817): 694.

Chapter 3

The Triumph of Grief: Charlotte's Funeral, and After

Following Charlotte's death, those who desired a memento of the princess could purchase pocket-sized memorial cards. Bordered in black, the cards bore such things as a picture of Claremont and an emblem of Leopold and Britannia weeping at the princess's cenotaph. Another card reproduced, in English translation, the Latin inscription on Charlotte's state coffin:

The Remains

Of the most Illustrious Princess Charlotte Augusta,
The only Daughter of George Augustus Frederic,
Prince of Wales,
Regent of Great Britain,
Consort of his Serene Highness Prince Leopold
George Frederic, Duke of Saxony,
Margrave of Misnia, Landgrave of Thuringia,
Prince of Coburg Saalfeld,
Marshal in His Majesty's Army,
Privy Councillor, Knight of the Noble Orders
Of the Garter and the Bath, etc.

She died on 6th of November, in the Year of our Lord 1817,

And in the 22d Year of her Age.¹

This inscription is replete with the panoply of state-- prince, duke, landgrave, marshal, knight. Ironically, the catalogue of ranks and offices is so extensive that it overwhelms the ostensible subject of the inscription. Except for her title of princess, Charlotte figures in the inscription only as a daughter and consort who died young. This memorial card provides a succinct image for Charlotte's funeral. A spectacular display of the glory of Britain's throne, the funeral had as its center a female known primarily for her roles as daughter and wife.

The funeral was indeed elaborate. The procession which led up to Windsor included six mourning carriages (three of which were empty and merely ceremonial) and 100 armed soldiers. 400 more soldiers--every other one holding a flambeau--lined the funeral route. The cortege proceeded to St. George's Chapel, the burial place of some of Britain's most notable monarchs. (Its symbolic role in Charlotte's funeral will be discussed in chapter four.) Inside the chapel, the procession included over 200 mourners, ranging from the Royal Dukes to Charlotte's Apothecary. The coffin was preceded by the princess's coronet, borne on a black velvet cushion. The coffin itself was covered by a pall adorned with the princess's coat of arms and surmounted by a

1. Bound collections of these cards can be seen in the British Library.

canopy of black velvet. Following the coffin were Prince Leopold and the Dukes of Sussex, Cumberland and Gloucester, each wearing a great mourning cloak with a train borne by two men.²

Charlotte's funeral raises a new question: how is this elaborate public spectacle reconcilable with the image of Charlotte as a private, middle-class wife? To answer that question, it will be helpful to look again at the quotation from Huish which opened chapter one. Huish writes that Charlotte's greatness as a ruler would have lain "in the lovely purity of her conjugal and maternal character, and in the splendor and pre-eminence of her constitutional throne" (505-6). Huish here follows a pattern found in other writers: he does not deny the power of royal spectacle, but he centers it in the legal concept of royalty--the "constitutional throne"--rather than the person of the monarch.

This blending of the vocabulary of royalty with the vocabulary of law provides a rationale for the splendor of the ceremony. But there is another element at work in the funeral. That element is the pathos of a daughter and wife who died young. This element corresponds to the emerging system of discipline through domesticity which I have analyzed in the preceding chapters. Without this element, the funeral would function in a way similar to public executions.

2. Authentic Particulars of the Death of Princess Charlotte, 5th ed. (London: Hone, 1817), 16-20.

But whereas executions, like other public ceremonies in the monarch-centered model, emphasize the distance between the sovereign and the subject (Foucault 48-9), this type of spectacle works to build sympathy between the royal family and the people. The funeral thus works paradoxically as a conspicuous staging of private grief.³

As I have indicated, the funereal spectacle was carefully staged. But what sets this new species of sympathetic spectacle apart from what preceded it is the care with which even public sympathy was staged. Many people at the time noted the spontaneous outpouring of grief elicited by Charlotte's death. And, no doubt, much of it was indeed spontaneous. However, the ministry did all it could to insure that the grief was general. The Deputy Earl Marshal issued an announcement which stated, "These are to give public Notice: that it is expected, that, upon the present most melancholy occasion . . ., all persons do put themselves into decent Mourning; the said Mourning to begin on Sunday next, the ninth instant."⁴ The notice from the Lord Chamberlain's office to the members of the Court is even more specific:

The Ladies to wear black bombazines, plain muslin or long lawn, crape hoods, shamoy shoes and gloves, and crape fans.--Undress, dark Norwich crape.

3. The contradiction was not new with Princess Charlotte. Linda Colley describes how, after George III became ill, monarchical spectacle was combined with a seemingly incompatible sympathy for the vulnerability of royalty--Colley, 230-6.

4. qtd. in Authentic Particulars, 15.

The Gentlemen to wear black cloth, without buttons or sleeves or pockets, plain muslin or long lawn cravats and weepers, shamoy shoes and gloves, crape hatbands, and black swords and buckles.--Undress, dark gray frocks.⁵

Many shops in London are said to have closed spontaneously. But in at least one city, Edinburgh, the magistrates issued a notice "suggesting to their fellow-citizens the propriety of closing their shops, &c." on the day of the funeral (qtd. in Huish, pg. 641). Lord Sidmouth ordered the suspension of all dramatic performances until after the funeral, and the Lords of the Treasury suspended the lottery. Such edicts moved beyond functioning as public symbols of the nation's grief, working rather to elicit such grief. The political motivations behind this theater of sympathy are the focus of Cobbett's and Hunt's criticisms.

For the undertakers, the problem lay in balancing the preparations for a public spectacle with proper respect for private grief. They were placed in the awkward position of arranging a state funeral while keeping it secret from the deceased's spouse. Huish writes that everything was arranged "so to take place that the feelings of Prince Leopold might not be harassed by the sight or knowledge of any thing that was going on" (567). On November 15th the empty state coffin travelled "in a private manner" from London to Claremont and

5. qtd. in Authentic Particulars, 15.

entered the house by a back entrance. Two men were then charged with keeping Leopold occupied and out of the way until the body could be placed in the coffin (568). Likewise, on the day of the funeral, when the hearse and mourning carriages arrived at Claremont, "care was taken that these sombre accompaniments of death should not be obtruded on the sight of Prince Leopold till the last minute, when he was to be summoned to share in the melancholy procession" (571). Even in the procession, the private grief of husband for spouse remained an invisible center of attention: the curtains on Leopold's carriage remained drawn throughout. Obviously, this carefully orchestrated privacy was no real privacy. In fact, after the Princess's death, daily bulletins were published detailing the Prince's physical and mental health (e.g. "November 8. The Prince had some sleep in the night, and is as well as can be expected this morning" [qtd. in Huish, 548]).

The most serious false step in the funeral rites reveals the uneasy transition between structures of power. According to custom, deceased members of the Royal Family were usually embalmed. Therefore, on Friday, November 7, Sir Everard Home, Sergeant Surgeon of the King, travelled to Claremont to oversee the process. The princess's heart and intestines were embalmed and placed in an urn. The body was then embalmed and enclosed in waxed wrappers.⁶

6. La Belle Assemblée 16 supplement (January 1818): 304.

Though this part of the funeral process was also kept a secret from Leopold, he eventually learned of it. An article in La Belle Assemblée describes his reaction: "When his highness was at last informed of it, he heard it with much agitation; for it is said not to have accorded with his Serene Highness's ideas of the respect and delicacy that were due to his consort" (304). The writer adds that "the practice is not only useless, where the remains are well secured in lead, but is revolting, in a manner, to decency."⁷ Huish agrees that the process is, "under all its circumstances of mangling, as well as useless indecorum, revolting to the heart" (539). A letter to the Examiner, condemning the "accursed profanation after death," asks "what apology can be devised to the paroxysm of one of the best husbands, of the memory of departed worth and loveliness? A Dieu ne plaise,--that we hear of this barbarism more!"⁸ The use of the terms "mangling" and "barbarism" links the outcry against the embalming with that against the Derby executions. In both instances, writers attempt to rewrite the theater of bodily violence as characteristic of a cultural other, whether a barbarous age, or a barbarous nation.

But the condemnation of the embalming also depends on the principle of privacy. The elegy by "A Well-Wisher to England"--the same elegy which praises the "bless'd middle-

7. La Belle Assemblée 16 supplement (January 1818): 304.

8. Examiner, no. 516 (Nov. 16, 1817): 757.

state"--condemns the embalming in such terms. The poet asks, "[W]hat avails it to embalm a frame," when that frame now bears nothing but a "splendid name":

Alas! how little can our caution do,

Except to mangle and expose it too!

Foul, savage practice, which the modest state

Of wedded secrecy must loathe and hate!

In a footnote, the author adds, "It is devoutly to be wished, that this barbarous, indecent, and unmeaning Pagan custom, which exists in no other Christian country but ours, may be discontinued, especially with regard to females."⁹ This writer also emphasizes the cultural alterity of the practice, specifically as characteristic of uncivilized ("heathen" or "savage") nations. But more importantly, the author stresses the importance of private life, the "modest state of wedded secrecy." This privacy is sacrosanct; thus, the recurrence of the description of the embalming as a "profanation." As a metonymy for privacy stands the private body of the princess, which the embalming has "exposed." The use of a female body to represent privacy is not merely coincidental. In fact, when the well-wisher hopes that the practice of embalming may be discontinued "especially with regard to females," what may appear as an afterthought is actually central to the notion of privacy. This writer sees the private as a specifically feminine space (compare Armstrong); thus embalming of females

9. An Elegy, 4.

is particularly condemned. This feminization of private space is also indicated in the description of privacy as a "modest state" of "delicacy."

Another poem, which addresses the embalming at some length, contains all of these ideas. The anonymous poet asks if, besides the loss itself, "aught of added woe" had conspired "to wound the royal husband's breast." The poem provides its own answer: "Yes--Pagan rites in Christian land. . . ." Invasion of the private body is again presented as culturally other. The embalming even takes on the connotations of sexual violation as the poet describes how "strangers, though with licens'd hand, / Profane the sacred form. . . ." The critique of the procedure then blends into a class critique:

The meanest hind by sorrow bow'd,
 Who kneels the humblest bier beside,
 At once the form he lov'd may shroud,
 And e'en from Pity's glances hide.

And must the royal dead alone,
 Distinctions that degrade, possess?
 Must England still such customs own,
 As Feeling's nicest sense oppress?

Typically, the lower class is carefully circumscribed and psychologized as "meanest" and "humblest." Yet it is the upper class which is described as possessing characteristics

which "degrade." The poverty of the lower class is not one of its significant "distinctions" because its members share with the middle class ideals of privacy (a "face of feeling"). By its spectacular display of the private body, royalty offends against this "nicest sense." The poet ends with a call for the cessation of such "heathen customs" in the future:

Bid funeral robe of costly gold,
 Or Hope, and Heaven's own beaming blue,
 With proud distinction still enfold
 Those forms which sovereigns' splendours knew.

But be that robe in future clos'd
 O'er limbs which secret rest have known,
 To mourning love alone expos'd,
 And touch'd by Love's fond grasp alone.

(qtd. in Huish 544-5)

These stanzas utilize monarch-centered vocabulary to praise the "proud distinctions" symbolized by "sovereign's splendours." But underneath those costly robes is a private body whose "secret rest" remains hidden from public view. This body, that of a daughter and consort, may be "touch'd" only by means of the domestic affections.

By analyzing these outcries against the embalming, I do not intend to imply that the sentiments which they express are not sincere. Nevertheless, the works also serve a particular rhetorical purpose. For all these works'

condemnation of "exposing" the princess's body, the real problem is not the dissection itself. This fact becomes clear when the reaction to the embalming, with its invocation of ideas of privacy, is compared with the reaction to the autopsy which the doctors in charge of preparing the body simultaneously performed. The details of this autopsy were widely reprinted and discussed. In fact, on the page preceding the poem against embalming, Huish quotes the autopsy report:

The membranes of the brain presented their natural aspect. The vessels of the pia mater were less distended with blood than was to be expected after so severe a labour. The ventricles of the brain contained very little fluid. The plexus choroides was of a pale colour, and the substance of the brain had its natural texture.

The pericardium (the region of the heart) contained two ounces of red-coloured fluid. The heart itself and the lungs were in a natural state. The stomach contained nearly three pints of liquid. The colon was distended with air. The kidneys and other abdominal viscera were in a natural state. (542)

This detailed description of the Princess's viscera was reprinted and discussed at length in works published in the months following the funeral. It is much more explicit than any of the texts which describe the embalming process. And yet no one questioned the decency or decorum of the autopsy.

The reason is that this invasion of the private body served a different function. The embalming was an overt act of sign-making, in which the body of the princess became a sign of sovereign power. In this sense, the princess's body served a function analogous that of the bodies of the men executed at Derby (though in the latter case, the bodies signified the effects of sovereign power). The autopsy, in contrast, is an act of discipline. In it, the private body becomes the object of discipline and examination, subject to the power of the norm. The writer for the Monthly Repository, whose condemnation of the Derby executions has already been discussed, writes that "[i]t may be justly doubted, whether in a Christian country, any outrage should be committed on the dead" except "when the body is applied to useful purposes for the sake of anatomy."¹⁰

This type of invasion of the body is not only justified, according to the writers of the time, but required. Huish explains that the autopsy was performed "to satisfy the anxious and tortured feelings of all those who most tenderly loved the Princess" (541-2). Jesse Foot, in his much read Letter on the Necessity of a Public Inquiry into the Cause of the Death of Her Royal Highness the Princess Charlotte and her Infant, states this view more strongly: "We are called upon as a coroner is upon an inquest, to ascertain how the particular and unfortunate visitation hath fallen so heavily

10. Monthly Repository 12, no. 143 (November 1817): 694.

upon the whole nation."¹¹ Anthony Todd Thompson, in his work, The Authentic Medical Statement of the Case of Her Royal Highness the Late Princess Charlotte of Wales, is most explicit: "That British subjects should be most eager to know every circumstance connected with the dissolution of an object so much endeared to them as PRINCESS CHARLOTTE, it is only a natural consequence of their ardent admiration of her exalted virtues."¹² When a tyrannical ruler dies, says Thompson, rarely do people inquire into the cause of death because, "the natural curiosity which attaches an interest to every thing connected with elevated rank, is forgotten in the contentment of the moment." However, when death comes to "the mighty and the good, the anxiety to pry into the most minute circumstances connected with the event . . . becomes insatiable."

According to Thompson, the public's desire "can only be satisfied by a statement of the truth; by introducing the public, as far as propriety will permit it, into the chamber of suffering royalty; and shewing there the awful impression of the hand of a Superior Power."¹³ Thompson attempts to justify the curiosity of the people by rewriting the death scene as an edifying tableaux about divine providence. However, his argument presents almost the direct opposite of

11. Jesse Foot, Letter on the Necessity of a Public Inquiry into the Cause of the Death of Her Royal Highness the Princess Charlotte and her Infant (London: J Walker, 1817), 2.

12. A. T. Thompson, 13.

13. A. T. Thompson, 6-8.

the position taken by those who opposed the embalming of the princess. Gone is any discussion of indecency, profanation, or indecorum. Here, the curiosity of the public is satisfied, and the private chamber of the married couple is opened to the public.

What these texts reveal is that the function of the rhetoric of privacy is to create a space for the (female) body which is beyond the reach of overt state politics, but not beyond the reach of discipline and ideology. In other words, it creates a simulacrum of privacy. It is fitting that Thompson's metaphorical opening of the "chamber of suffering royalty" to the public became literally true; Leopold did open Claremont to the public, making it in effect a museum of domestic bliss. A minister later published his own recollections of a tour of Claremont he made with his two daughters. He records the details of each place visited, the dining room, library, greenhouse, and stables. (The drawing room was closed to the public because, according to a servant, there were so many visitors to the house that the furniture was being damaged.¹⁴ Most affecting is the sitting room:

We seated ourselves on a sofa, and looking round the beautiful apartment upon the scene of the purest and

14. [Simon Piggoty,] The Flower of England Fading: Recollections of the Princess Charlotte, or a Tour to Claremont, in A Father's Recollections of Three Pious Young Ladies (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1831), 190.

most heart-felt pleasures of the amiable Princess, our feelings too excited by the tears of the numerous visitors; I said to my young companions, what affecting memorials are here of domestic felicity, and what a lesson do they teach us of the fragility of human happiness.¹⁵

"Domestic felicity" has been staged and carefully directed for a particular purpose, the edification of the public (especially the female public).

The final quotation links the rhetoric of public show with that of the elegies about Charlotte: the printed works serve as a complement to the domestic spectacle surrounding the death of the Princess Charlotte. In fact, one defining aspect of this spectacle is the number of works which it elicited. Articles in journals and newspapers, memorial picture cards, cheap broadsides, expensive volumes--all mourned Princess Charlotte. Their effect, however, went beyond mere eulogizing. Through this web of texts, an image of Princess Charlotte emerged, an image which was suasive, though frequently at odds with reality, and which tended towards definite political ends.

Ironically, though the executions in Derby proceeded without any public disruption, at least one notable disturbance occurred in conjunction with Charlotte's funeral.

15. Piggoty, 181.

On the day of the burial, people crowded into churches all over the nation to hear memorial services. In one church in London, the crowds became so great that the ministers grew fearful and decided to cancel the service. When an announcement to that effect was made, the people grew angry and demanded to hear the service. The Lord Mayor was called in, and he attempted to dismiss them, but to no avail. Eventually, the authorities acquiesced and the minister, who had left the church, was recalled to perform the service.

The differences between this disturbance--if the word can properly be used in this instance--and such incidents as the public demonstration at Cashman's execution (cf. Introduction) are instructive. In the latter case, the disturbance is an expression of popular solidarity against the power of the king. But in the case of Charlotte's funeral, the disturbance expresses sympathy between the subjects and the royal family. And whereas the demonstration at the execution required troops to restore order, the crowds in the church were placated by a single minister armed with a funeral service. The latter incident revealed how effectively sympathy could function as a means of social motivation--more effectively than even the authorities themselves realized.

There is some evidence that the rhetoric of grief did actually have a general placating effect in the months following Charlotte's death. M. Dorothy George notes that there was a considerable lessening of social tension from the

end of 1817 through the following year. She quotes Canning's statement that "Never was such a change as from January to July," as well as Wellesley Pole's description of the period: "Peace, Prosperity, Plenty, and Capital, Confidence, and Credit." She also notes that there was a discernible drop in prints attacking the Prince Regent, and she quotes Sir Thomas Lawrence's observation that the people were "very well disposed to the Regent."¹⁶ The Examiner for December 7, 1817, quoting the Courier, praises "the ameliorated temper and disposition of the country" and notes that the Secretary of State was able to release some prisoners in the northern counties who had been charged with treason.¹⁷ Robert Southey, in a letter to Grosvenor Bedford dated December 17, 1817, writes, "As for political affairs, I have nothing to do with them now. The battle has been won. . . . At home there is an appearance of security for some time to come. . . ."¹⁸ George attributes this change in political climate to the ending of the trade depression and to the minor financial boom of 1817-1818.¹⁹ The economy did indeed improve during this period: the price of wheat dropped considerably, and both the Consols and the government revenue were much higher than before.²⁰ The

16. M. Dorothy George, English Political Caricature, 1793-1832: A Study of Opinion (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 176.

17. The Examiner, no. 519 (Dec. 7, 1817): 774.

18. Southey to Bedford, 17 December 1817, Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, ed. John Wood Warter (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1856), 3:84.

19. George, Political Caricature, 176.

20. Spencer Walpole, History of England, rev. ed. (London:

Report from the Secret Committee, writing in February 1818, also attributed the decreased unrest to an improved economy.

Doubtless, the improvement in the economy was the primary cause for the change in public temper. However, the change may also have been due, in part, to the effects of national grief for Princess Charlotte. And in fact, writers at the time related the decrease in public unrest to the mourning for the princess. The Monthly Repository writes that "the aspect of the United Kingdom, from the time that the fatal news had reached its extremities, is a satisfactory answer to all that had been urged in various speeches and publications respecting the people on the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. Melancholy as is the cause of this manifestation of the loyalty of the people of England, still it is a decisive proof. . . ."21

Duckett agrees. "The appearance which the country has presented since the death of the Princess," he writes, "gives a formal contradiction to all the hypotheses which profligate statesmen have ever laboured to establish upon the pretended corruption and ingratitude of the mass of mankind." Duckett claims that the government has used the "pretended corruption" as an excuse "to ground almost universally a system of coercion, which treated men as unworthy of lenity and confidence, and employed the lash to render them quiet":

Longmans, Green, and Co., 1890), 1:385-6.

21. Monthly Repository 12, no. 143 (November, 1817): 694.

This insolent and desolating doctrine, which knavish politicians consider the grand principle in the science of government, has been exposed in all its falsehoods and deformity, by the unaffected, almost stupefying grief, which the loss we are commemorating has universally spread.²²

Duckett's perceptive analysis shows the conflict between two methods of defusing public unrest. The first, a "system of coercion," is exemplified by the Derby executions. But this method, even if effective in cowing the populace, did not remove discontent. Much more effective, therefore, is the ideology of sentiment which the funeral rites embody. Duckett seems not to realize the connotations of his description of the machinery of grief as "stupefying," but the word is a revealing one. The spectacles and texts through which people read the death--and retroactively, the life--of the princess did have the effect of subduing, at least temporarily, the unrest which had come to a head in the disturbances in Derby.

Granted, this good will did not last very long. Even before the princess was buried, the Prince Regent was considering using the lack of an heir as an excuse to divorce his estranged wife, Princess Caroline. The "Caroline question" would later prove extremely damaging for the Regent. And the public unrest manifested by such disturbances as that in Derby would soon return, most famously in the

22. Duckett, 12.

demonstration which ended in the Peterloo Massacre. But even during these years of unrest, the image of Princess Charlotte continued to be one of hope. Writing in his diary four months after Peterloo, Benjamin Robert Haydon still retained the faith in his countrymen gained from his ecstatic vision two years earlier. He criticizes those who claim that the English people have changed for the worse:

The Character of the English people is not changed, they are the same great, loyal, affectionate, brave, pious, & moral people as ever. . . . No man with justice can affirm their character is changed who remembers their behaviour in the Princess Charlotte's death.²³

George IV discovered the enduring power of the Charlotte myth when he decided to erect a monument to her in St. James Chapel at Windsor. Through public subscription--individual contributions were not to exceed 1 shilling--the king was able to commission Matthew Coates Wyatt to sculpt a melodramatic memorial to Charlotte. The statue shows Charlotte's spirit soaring heavenward, leaving behind her supine earthly body, only the indistinct outline of which is discernible under its shroud. In the foregoing pages, I have attempted to explore the development of this figure of Charlotte as lofty, spiritualized, and feminine. To do so, I have often tried to reveal the gap between the figure and the real, imperfect princess. Ultimately, however, the modern

23. Haydon, 2:249.

reader must accept that the "real" Charlotte remains shrouded from view, seen only in faint outline through the texts by those who knew her. But the same situation faced those who survived the princess. As her memory faded, all that remained were more or less idealized images of her--images which coincided with and contributed to changing ideas about gender, family, and society. Not until twenty years after the death of Princess Charlotte--when Victoria ascended the throne in 1837--did England have to resume the task of reconciling the feminine ideal with the reality of a flesh-and-blood queen.

PART TWO

Elegies to Charlotte

Chapter 4

Princess as Placebo:

Southey's Elegies to Charlotte

This study of Princess Charlotte opened with an image of sublime horror, an image of England awash in blood, the Law and Constitution destroyed and, in their place, "anarchy and the most complete ruin." Faced with such a nightmare, the British people found in the images of Princess Charlotte comforting representations of private morality and domestic stability. The grief over her death consequently became a unifying force which transcended political dissent--hence Haydon's vision of his "glorious countrymen" united in prayer. In describing the horror aroused by the Pentridge uprising as "sublime," I do not use the term loosely; the movement from horror to elation is precisely that of the sublime. Briefly, the sublime movement is initiated when the individual is faced with a quantity or force which exceeds comprehension. At the moment of the sublime, the individual consciousness gains a sense of its own supersensible powers and moves suddenly from fear to exultation. Of course, this schematic overlooks much in what is a complex process. For my present purposes, however, this sketch will suffice.¹

1. The growth of interest in the sublime, especially in the

The fact that Southey, Byron, Hemans, and Shelley all in some way address this dynamic of the sublime shows its power. The elegies by Southey and Byron both contain passages which rehearse, at the textual level, the sublime movement outlined above. Hemans's poem bears only a trace of the same movement. Shelley, whose prose Address to the People on the Death of the Princess Charlotte bears the least similarity to the other works, also writes in the context of the myth of Charlotte and the threat of anarchy. This similarity is not unsurprising, considering that the writers share a cultural context, or what Sahlins terms a "structure of conjecture." Having examined this structure in the foregoing pages, we may now usefully resituate these specific works in their original context, however incompletely that context may have been recreated. Using the context thus to read the works will, I hope, provide new insights into them.

I hope simultaneously, however, to use these works to reread the context, to refine my analysis of the historical situation. The four works are similar, not only in their use of the Charlotte myth, but also in the profound tensions which they contain concerning the nature and function of that myth. The elegies by Southey and Byron, though in some ways conventional in their elegizing of the princess, also

eighteenth century, was concomitant with the growing interest in and exploration of private sensibility--see Samuel H. Monk's The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England (1935; reprint, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960).

rehearse the struggle between politics and domesticity which lies behind the Charlotte myth. Hemans's poem, while less conventional, evinces a similar struggle. In Shelley's address, the tension is related to its intended audience. Shelley attempts to question the uses of the Charlotte myth by making explicit the political context of national mourning. Significantly, he is the only writer to examine the relationship between Charlotte's death and the contemporaneous deaths of Brandreth, Ludlam, and Turner. Yet, as an attempt to assuage his upper- and middle-class readers, Shelley also uses the common domestic tropes for Charlotte as well as for the three Derby insurgents. In their use and simultaneous modification of the Charlotte myth, the works by each of these four authors form examples of what Sahlin describes as "the risk of the categories of reference," the risk that cultural categories will be reinterpreted--even resisted--in particular works.

Robert Southey struggled with writing an elegy to Charlotte. In the December 17, 1817, letter to Bedford--the same letter in which he speaks of the political "battle" as being won--he describes himself as reluctant to write an elegy. Yet he feels he must write because some private letters to him indicate that something on the death "is

looked for."² He explains his reluctance as stemming from his "proper dislike to such subjects";³ however, it may also have stemmed from other causes, including his reservations about the Regent and the government, and his position on the political unrest of the times. Perhaps he realized that the "appearance of security" which he praises in the letter may have lacked substance. In fact, a gap remained between the image of national unity exemplified by the mourning for Princess Charlotte and the economic and political situation of the nation. Despite his reluctance, Southey eventually wrote two elegies, each of which deals differently with this gap. In one, he simply ignores the gap and focuses on the myth alone. In the other, the tension remains unsolved and leads to a chain of sublime turns, away from political turmoil to the comfort of the myth.

In fact, by the time of the letter expressing his reluctance, Southey had already begun writing verses on Charlotte. In a letter to Walter Savage Landor, also dated December 17, Southey includes verses on Charlotte. (These seem never to have been published in Southey's lifetime, but were first published by Charles Cuthbert Southey in 1850.)⁴ In these verses, Southey emphasizes, not Charlotte's public position as heir apparent, but her private self:

2. Southey to Bedford, 26 November 1817, Selections, 3:81.

3. Southey to Bedford, 17 December 1817, Selections, 3:83.

4. Southey's verses may have been intended for the Royal Composer, Mr. Shields, to set to music as a funeral song.

'Tis not the public loss which hath imprest
 This general grief upon the multitude;
 And made its way at once to every breast,
 The old, the young, the gentle, and the rude.⁵

If people had "then thought only of the state," the grief would have been short. This private yet general grief is a unifying force, bringing together different ages and social classes. Despite his avowal of the unity of all social levels through grief, however, Southey's paired opposites maintain the class hierarchy. Moreover, the words "gentle" and "rude" add moral overtones to the class structure. Southey writes that the real cause of the grief is the thought that the Princess was

So young, and so beloved, so richly blest
 Beyond the common lot of royalty;
 The object of thy worthy choice possest,
 The many thousand souls that prayed for thee,
 Hoping in thine a nation's happiness. . . .⁶

By contrasting Charlotte to "the common lot of royalty," Southey implies criticism of other members of the royal family ("common" is a surprising word choice to describe them). The emphasis on Charlotte's marrying Leopold, her "worthy choice," highlights the failure of the Regent's

5. qtd. in Charles Cuthbert Southey, The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey (New York: Harper, 1851), 288.

6. qtd. in C. Southey, Life, 288.

arranged marriage to Caroline. Southey conflates Charlotte's personal happiness and national prosperity; the private life of the future queen, rather than her public policies, insures "a nation's happiness." Because of this emphasis on Charlotte's private life, her position as heir apparent essentially disappears from the poem:

And in thy youth, and in thy wedded bliss,
 And in thy genial bed--the cradle drest--
 Hope standing by, and joy a bidden guest.
 'Tis this that from the heart of private life
 Makes unsophisticated sorrow flow:
 We mourn thee as a daughter and a wife,
 And in our human natures feel the blow.⁷

These lines, which could describe any ideal bourgeois wife, define a politics based on private affection, on the unchanging "human natures" of all subjects. By locating the source of political loyalty in "the heart of private life," Southey naturalizes politics and places them beyond rational discussion--they become literally "unsophisticated."

Southey's official elegy is quite different. In his position as Poet Laureate, Southey was expected to write a poem of state. Considering the contradiction inherent in writing a public poem praising a princess as a private wife, the unresolved tensions in Southey's poem are not surprising.

7. qtd. in C. Southey, Life, 289.

These tensions become the catalyst for the recurring sublime movement in the poem. Twice the politics of domestic affections, represented by Charlotte, are threatened by political anarchy; but, suddenly and without transition, the myth reasserts itself. This ascendancy of the domestic, however, is tentative at best; it remains the "appearance of security."

In its original conception, Southey's elegy was to be an imitation of Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy; but the partner in the colloquy was to be Sir Thomas More rather than Philosophia. In a letter, Southey explains that he chose More because "no fitter personage could be introduced, he having taken the same view of affairs in his age as I do in mine."⁸ In another letter, Southey indicates that the colloquy format would give him more freedom than a poem written in his own voice, allowing him "to bring forward views and opinions which it might not be advisable directly to avow."⁹ In comparing himself to More, Southey may have been thinking specifically about More's criticism of Henry VIII's government; thus, the comparison would place Southey in the position of critic for the Prince Regent. If so, then his reluctance to speak in his own voice is understandable: criticism of the government would be unseemly coming from the Poet Laureate.

8. Southey to Bedford, 26 November 1817, Selections, 3:81-82.

9. Southey to Hill, 31 December 1819, Selections, 3:168.

Southey's original conception for the elegy ultimately evolved into the book Thomas More: Or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society, published in 1829. In it, Princess Charlotte remains merely as a passing reference in the Introduction.¹⁰ For his official elegy, Southey instead chose a topographical format. The poem conducts the reader on a tour of St. George's chapel at Windsor, the site of Charlotte's burial. Rather than focusing on description of the chapel, however, Southey uses the tombs of those buried there as starting points for a partial history of English monarchy. Like the colloquy format, this structure grants Southey freedom to comment on political matters--here, behind the safe mask of history. But the structure also creates tension between the bloody annals of England's royal history and the spiritualized femininity which Southey wishes to ascribe to Charlotte.

The opening stanzas of the elegy are conventional in their description of the princess. Southey describes her as a flower: "Windsor, in thy sacred shade / Is the Flower of Brunswick laid."¹¹ The second stanza is an apostrophe to those buried in Windsor:

Know ye, Spirits, who is come,

10. Robert Southey, Thomas More: Or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society (London: John Murray, 1829).

11. Robert Southey, "Funeral Song for the Princess Charlotte of Wales," in The Poetical Works of Robert Southey, 10 vols. in 5 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company; Cambridge: The Riverside Press, n.d.), 10:170. All subsequent references to this poem will use page numbers in this edition and will be cited parenthetically.

By immitigable doom
 Summoned to the untimely tomb?
 Late with youth and splendor crown'd,
 Late in beauty's vernal bloom,
 Late with love and joyaunce blest;
 Never more lamented guest
 Was in Windsor laid to rest. (170-172)

Charlotte's position as heir apparent has again been erased. Instead of the crown of state, Charlotte is crowned with youth. (Besides "crown'd," only the word "splendor" retains royal connotations). Her virtues are as passive and natural as the flower's "vernal bloom." As in his "unofficial" elegy, Southey's description of the princess serves, not to set her apart from other women, but rather to identify her with any young female blessed "with love and joyaunce."

The third stanza begins Southey's tour of the tombs in St. George's Chapel. Henry VI appears first. Southey's comparing Charlotte to a male ruler might seem an admission of her masculine qualities, except that Southey emphasizes Henry's similarities to Charlotte. Henry was a man "of saintly worth":

He, in spirit like a child,
 Meek of heart and undefiled,
 Patiently his crown resigned,
 And fixed on heaven his heavenly mind;
 Blessing, while he kissed the rod,

His Redeemer and his God.

Southey prays that, "in realms of bliss," Henry may "Greet a soul as pure as his" (172). The comparison creates tensions. First, there is the problem of Henry's failure as a ruler. Henry was politically inept and mentally deficient ("in spirit like a child" according to Southey's euphemistic description). The verses imply that, as a ruler, Charlotte, like Henry, would have been characterized by sweetness and purity rather than a strong character and would have taken no interest in questions of state. But the comparison points up the incompatibility between this spiritualized image and the exigencies of public policy. Whereas Southey's other poem located the source of national prosperity in Charlotte's private virtues, the example of Henry argues against that view.

The comparison also creates gender tensions. Like the many satires showing Charlotte lording over a uxorious Leopold, Henry's story contains a role reversal. While Henry was prisoner in the Tower of London, his wife, Margaret of Anjou, was out leading soldiers in the War of the Roses. In fact, the parallel between Charlotte and Henry was not original with Southey. In 1816, a drama was performed at Drury Lane entitled The Count of Anjou. The play, based on the story of Henry and Margaret, was a veiled satire of Charlotte and her "petticoat dominion." Southey may or may not have been responding directly to such satires. But

significantly, he compares Charlotte to the feminized male rather than the masculinized female. Southey simply ignores Charlotte's strong personality. And unlike other writers who at least admit her "masculine" mind, Southey creates an image of Charlotte as wholly feminine.

The tension continues in the next stanza. Here, Southey describes Edward IV, Henry's "bold dethroner" (172). Henry's weakness as a ruler, only indirectly stated in the previous stanza, here becomes explicit. Tension also exists between the desolation caused by the Wars of the Roses and by the Hundred Years War and the issue of legitimate succession. In his public position, Southey would naturally be sensitive to questions of legitimacy. Thus, Southey awkwardly tries to balance both sides. Edward's battles for the throne are a "dreadful debt," which he inherited from "his injured lineage":

Ill-starred prince! whose martial merit

His own England long might rue.

Mournful was that Edward's fame,

Won in fields contested well,

While he sought his rightful claim. (172)

Southey praises Edward's prowess and admits his claim to the throne, but he also acknowledges the destruction caused by the war. Southey describes the battle of Towton's Field, during which the Wharfe river "ran red" from the "carnage and ill-spilt blood / That forty thousand lives could yield"

(173). This battle, according to Southey, was bloodier than any battle in the Hundred Years' War. To emphasize the point, Southey presents a long list of the campaigns of the Hundred Years' War. At this point, the tensions which have been building in the poem reach a crisis:

Cressy was to this but sport,
 Poictiers but a pageant vain;
 And the victory of Spain
 Seemed a strife for pastime meant,
 And the work of Agincourt
 Only like a tournament:
 Half the blood which there was spent
 Had sufficed again to gain
 Anjou and ill-yielded Maine,
 Normandy and Aquitaine;
 And Our Lady's ancient towers,
 Maugre all the Valois' powers,
 Had a second time been ours.--
 A gentle daughter of thy line,
 Edward, lays her dust with thine. (173)

In this martial catalogue, the balance Southey has tried to maintain breaks down; and the bloody annals of British monarchy pour forth, threatening to engulf the poem's ostensible subject and revealing the seeming powerlessness of apolitical domesticity against anarchy. The grammar of the lines re-enacts the sublime movement: the catalogue of

battles comes in one long compound sentence. The lines describe the battles of the Hundred Years War, but they are a displaced description of the wars fought by the houses of Lancaster and York--Southey is asserting that the latter were even more horrific than the former. This displacement will again become an issue in the stanza on the Napoleonic Wars.

The fact that this stanza is dealing with, not only the fourteenth century, but also Southey's own time, is revealed in an article Southey published in the Quarterly a few months previous to this poem. There, he argues that the Wars between the Lancasters and Yorks "were of the same character as contested elections in the present day": "men were engaged on either side from party-feeling. . . ."12

In the face of such bloody "party-feeling," Charlotte's rule of apolitical domesticity seems powerless. But, in an abrupt shift indicated only by a dash, Southey wrenches the poem back to his original subject in the closing couplet. This shift is the sublime move: threatened by annihilation, the spirit reasserts its ascendancy. Southey uses the image of "gentle" Charlotte to transcend the sublime prospect of incomprehensible bloodshed.

The solution, however, seems tenuous, as is indicated by the next stanza. Here, Southey describes Edward's wife,

12. Robert Southey, "On the Rise and Progress of Popular Disaffection," in Essays, Moral and Political (London: John Murray, 1832), 2:43-44.

Elizabeth Woodville. She serves as a negative image of Princess Charlotte's virtues. Southey calls her a "fatal daughter, fatal mother." Her marriage led to her father's preferment, which aroused the jealousy of the nobility and led to his execution. And her sons were the infamous "princes in the tower," purportedly murdered at the behest of Richard III. Elizabeth's lesson to Charlotte is that

"Early death is happiness;
And favored in their lot are they
Who are not left to learn below,
That length of life is length of woe." (174)

Whereas in his other elegy, Southey had equated the nation's happiness with Charlotte's domestic happiness, here the political situation around Elizabeth destroys her domestic happiness. The image of Charlotte, which has reasserted itself, is again under question.

With the following stanza, Southey turns to another figure from the past whom he sees as similar to Charlotte, Jane Seymour. In heaven, she will greet Charlotte "with a greeting / Such as sisters use at meeting" (174). Like Henry VI, Seymour is a kindred spirit to the princess: "Like in loveliness were ye" (174). The two women also shared a "like lamented doom"--death in childbirth. Now, both of them have become "spirits blest": "Fellow angels shall ye be / In the angelic company" (174). With this stanza, Southey returns to the simple, elegiac tone of the opening stanzas of the poem.

He again presents the myth of the ethereal female whose outstanding character trait is her "loveliness."

But immediately, the myth is threatened. In the subsequent stanza, Southey turns to Henry VIII, whose grave is next to Jane Seymour's. This stanza bears the clearest trace of Southey's original conception for his elegy. And it displays most strongly the political tensions of Southey's own day which the poem sublimates into the distant past. Southey opens the stanza by presenting Henry as a foil to Charlotte: "Not with his tyrannic spirit, / Shall our Charlotte's soul inherit" (174). The description of the Princess as "our Charlotte" implies a familiarity on the part of the British people appropriate to the daughter of the nation. But the tension between the bloody politics of Henry and Charlotte's otherworldliness remains. As in the stanza on Edward IV, Southey is led into a bloody chronicle, this time, the people executed by Henry. Again, the catalogue overtakes the poem:

by Fisher's hoary head;
By More, the learnèd and the good;
By Katharine's wrongs and Boleyn's blood;
By the life so basely shed
Of the pride of Norfolk's line;
By the axe so often red;
By the fire with martyrs fed,--
Hateful Henry, not with thee

May her happy spirit be! (174-5)

Again, the syntax of the lines re-enacts the sublime movement: a catalogue of bloodshed (this time a list of prepositional phrases) suddenly shifts--again with only a dash as a transition--to a focus on Charlotte's spirituality.

Numerous sublimated political issues are at work in this stanza. One is the issue of the Prince Regent's desire for a divorce from Princess Caroline, a hotly contended subject at the time. As Poet Laureate, Southey doubtless did not feel he had the freedom to criticize the Regent publicly. But, in a private letter written shortly after Charlotte's death, he writes, "It will not surprise me if we should hear ere long of a divorce, in which case obsolete laws will be more talked of than they are in the abominable case of Thornton's."¹³

(Thornton was a man who, when charged with murder, revived the ancient law of "appeal by battle" to attempt to prove his innocence by hand-to-hand combat with his accuser. The accuser declined the challenge, and Thornton was released.) The threat of the Regent's divorce may have even reminded Southey of Henry VIII's divorce, thus giving him the idea of a colloquy with Thomas More. In any case, readers in Southey's day could hardly have missed the parallel between Henry and the Regent.

The issue of the divorce, however, is not the only

13. Southey to Wynn, 20 November 1817, Selections, 3:79-80.

sublimated political issue at work here. Southey's article in the Quarterly can again shed some light. There, Southey traces the issues of his day--the Catholic Question and the call for radical reform--to the religious dissensions during Henry VIII's reign. According to Southey, republican sentiments emerged among the Puritans because of their system of popular church government.¹⁴ The struggles which began at that time, writes Southey, were quite powerful, producing "a long train of consequences, which are acting at this hour, and the end of which no human foresight can discern."¹⁵ This endless political strife threatens to destroy the comforting myth of a nation united by apolitical domesticity.

In addition, Southey specifically mentions the wrongs done by Henry, and this fact indicates his dissatisfaction with the government of his day--though the dissatisfaction is again sublimated into history. Many of Southey's letters of 1817 express his exasperation with the inept Ministry. Writing in February, Southey complains, "Government are acting like themselves. Could I say anything more severe?"¹⁶ Two months later, he describes the state of the nation. Though "the present ulcers will heal," he fears that "the disease will continue in the system":

We shall go on upon a system of expedients, living, as

14. Southey, "Rise and Progress," 44-46.

15. Southey, "Rise and Progress," 45.

16. Southey to Bedford, 15 February 1817, C. Southey, Life, 4:239.

it were, from hand to mouth; to-day with the bug-bear of ruin before our eyes, to-morrow in a hey-day of prosperity; the evil may be indefinitely delayed, but sooner or later come it must, unless adequate remedies be applied, and for these the present race of statesmen want either courage or the power, or both.¹⁷

Southey was opposed to many of the measures taken by the government to alleviate the problems. Apropos his elegy, Southey was opposed to the policy of executing political agitators. Significantly, Southey's condemnation of Henry VIII focuses on the many executions ordered by the king. Discussing those captured during the Spa Fields riots of December, 1816, Southey discusses the most appropriate punishment:

I would not hang them, especially--; it will make him [sic] an object of compassion; and nothing is so impolitic as to excite that feeling in behalf of the enemies of Government.¹⁸

Southey's analysis shows both the danger of social control through public theater and the reason that the death of the princess had such a conciliating effect on the populace--it made the Royal family an "object of compassion." (As shall be seen, exciting compassion on behalf of the victims of public

17. Southey to Bedford, 17 April 1817, Selections, 3:71. See also Southey to Townsend, 16 February 1817, C. Southey, Life, 4:244; and Southey to Wynn, 23 February 1817, Selections, 3:61.

18. Southey to Bedford, 20 January 1817, Selections, 3:51-2.

execution is what Shelley attempts to do in his Address.) Instead of execution, Southey favored transportation for political crimes. In the Quarterly article, he even argues that, had the Puritans been encouraged rather than impeded in their immigration to America, civil war might have been averted.¹⁹

Of course, as the above letter reveals, Southey was against specific government policies rather than against the government itself. In another letter, he admits, "But they [government] must be supported: the choice is between them and Revolution."²⁰ Despite his early radicalism, by 1817 Southey argued, in most situations, for positions similar to those of the Tory government. The important point is that the political tensions and uncertainties which Southey saw in the age of Henry VIII he also found in his own time. Both in history and in his own day, he saw bloodshed and faction, anarchy opposed to tyranny. Realizing the ineffectiveness of public punishment for social control, Southey turns away from the horrifying vision to the myth of domestic and spiritual happiness exemplified by Princess Charlotte. This turn constitutes the sublime move at the close of the stanza.

But, like that which moves away from the bloodshed of Edward IV, this sublime move is tenuous. The following stanza, on Charles I, indicates its fragility. The immediate

19. Southey, "Rise and Progress," 48.

20. Southey to Wynn, 23 February 1817, Selections, 3:61.

connection between Henry and Charles is that they are buried next to each other in St. James Chapel. However, as his Quarterly article reveals, Southey also saw a political connection between them, one which indicated the endurance of political dissent. As has already been indicated, Southey interpreted the civil war which ended in the beheading of Charles I as a continuation of the political and religious battles which began during the reign of Henry VIII.

Therefore, the sublime move at the end of the previous stanza is shown immediately to be illusory; the struggles continue.

Moreover, the stanza refers to the opening of Charles I's coffin by the Regent in 1813, which leads Southey into a comparison between the civil war and the Napoleonic wars. Southey imagines the "portentous eye" of "that murder'd Monarch" warning the nation that "A plague, of bloodier, baser birth / Than that beneath whose rage he bled, / Was loose upon our guilty earth" (175). With this stanza, Southey brings the chain of political unrest, which began almost 300 years earlier, to his present day. In fact, in his Quarterly article, Southey claims a direct line of influence from the religious struggles in Charles I's reign to the French Revolution. The "spirit of insubordination" which characterized the civil war eventually led to the rebellion in America. And "as an influenza beginning in Tartary travels from China throughout the whole inhabited part of the old

continent," so rebellion spread to France.²¹ The disease metaphor here is significant--and rich in irony. According to Southey's own history, the plague which infected France had its start in his own country. (That fact may explain some of the guilt revealed in Southey's description of Europe as "our guilty earth.") The disease metaphor also appears in the letter of April, 1817, which has already been quoted. This letter underscores the tenacity of political unrest. Despite the appearance of health, Southey fears that "disease will continue in the system."

Finally, in the penultimate stanza of the elegy, Southey returns to his ostensible subject, the princess. He imagines her in heaven, bringing to departed royalty "tidings of old England's weal":

Of a righteous war pursued,
 Long, through evil and through good,
 With unshaken fortitude;
 Of peace, in battle twice achieved;
 Of her fiercest foe subdued,
 And Europe from the yoke relieved,
 Upon that Brabantine plain!
 Such the proud, the virtuous story,
 Such the great, the endless glory,
 Of her father's splendid reign! (176)

21. Southey, "Rise and Progress," 68-75.

Coming after Southey's long lists of the bloodshed associated with English monarchy, the celebration of martial glory in these lines seems strained. An allusion to Edward the "Black Prince," in the lines immediately following the above passage, highlight the contrast in tone:

He who wore the sable mail,
 Might, at this heroic tale,
 Wish himself on earth again. (176)

Because Edward was leader of the English forces in several battles of the Hundred Years War, Southey's introducing him in the stanza discussing the Napoleonic Wars invites comparison with the earlier stanza. In the lines on the earlier war, the tone is ambiguous; Southey emphasizes the horrific bloodshed and compares it to another war (The Wars of the Roses) fought out of "party-spirit." But the later passage is purely positive; mention of bloodshed is conspicuously absent in the description of this "righteous war." Southey may have hoped that closing the poem with a patriotic paeon to England's victory at Waterloo might relieve the tensions which had been haunting the poem throughout. The popularity of Waterloo also allows Southey an opportunity to praise the Prince Regent's "splendid reign"--a reign which the rest of the poem has indirectly criticized.

But a final irony remains. Southey puts this rousing glorification of England's martial might in Charlotte's mouth--the image of spiritualized femininity which,

throughout the poem, has represented everything opposite to the values praised here. The incompatibility between the image of Charlotte as pure female and her role as patriotic messenger is made clear by the abrupt shift in tone from the above lines to the closing quatrain of the poem:

One who reverently for thee
 Raised the strain of bridal verse,
 Flower of Brunswick! mournfully
 Lays a garland on thy hearse. (176)

Here is Southey's final attempt to uphold the Charlotte myth. He emphasizes her role as wife and reverts to the flower metaphor so common in the elegies. Southey's failure to sustain this myth throughout the poem is more than a failure in style; it indicates his uneasiness with the political purposes which the myth served. To Southey's credit, he did not unquestioningly accept the sentimental view of politics fostered by the Charlotte myth. He was at least too honest to ignore the deep-seated problems in his society, however misdirected may have been his proposals for reform. In its sublime turns, Southey's elegy illustrates the power of the Charlotte myth to forestall political dissent. But the movement of the poem as a whole also shows the persistence of political unrest. At the textual level, the poem anticipates both the "appearance of security" which prevailed during most of 1818, and the ultimate failure of that appearance to prevent the upheavals of 1819.

Chapter 5

Caritas Britannia: Byron's Elegiac Stanzas

On December 3, 1817, Byron wrote from Venice describing the "shock" that the news of Charlotte's death had produced even there. Though expressing genuine regret at the tragedy, Byron undercuts his own seriousness by mentioning "Signor Travis, a rich Jew Merchant" of Venice who "complains grievously of the length of British Mourning" because it "has countermanded all the Silks which he was on the point of transmitting, for a year to come."¹ Byron then speculates about the effects the death will produce back in England. Like Southey, Byron expects the Regent to divorce and remarry and predicts that "Mr. Southey will write an elegy now--and an ode then."² Byron further predicts that the Quarterly will write against the press, that the Edinburgh will have "an article half and half"--in favor of both reform and divorce, and that "the British will give you Dr. Chalmers' funeral sermon much commended--with a place in the Stars for deceased Royalty--and the Morning Post will have already yelled forth its 'Syllables of dolour.'"³

Byron's prognostications are inaccurate on several

1. George Gordon, Lord Byron, Letters and Journals, ed. Leslie Marchand (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1973-82), 5:276.

2. Byron, Letters and Journals, 5:277.

3. Byron, Letters and Journals, 5:277.

counts. Here as elsewhere, he is unfair in his treatment of Southey, who was reluctant to write a funeral elegy and, at least privately, was opposed to the Regent's divorce. Byron also underestimates the power of domestic mythology to squelch political analysis: neither the conservative Quarterly nor the liberal Edinburgh moved beyond pious sentiments in their discussions of Charlotte's death. Ironically, however, in attempting to divine the poetic response to Charlotte's death, Byron prefigures his own elegy. (Rather than write a separate elegy for the Princess, Byron added six elegaic stanzas to the end of the essentially completed fourth canto of Childe Harold.) Often conventional in its presentation of the princess's death, Byron's elegy bears a similarity to his descriptions of Dr. Chalmers's ode and of the Posts's "Syllables of dolour." The elegy also strongly resembles Southey's in that it reflects the struggle between divisive politics and the apolitical myth of Princess Charlotte. In Byron's case, the struggle relates to his ambivalent attitudes toward aristocracy and reform and toward woman's role in society.

Byron and Southey do differ in the degree to which they depoliticize Charlotte. In Southey's poem, the analysis of British politics is almost wholly sublimated into the distant past; and when the politics of the present do appear, as references to the Napoleonic wars, the verses have the strained sound of official poetry. Byron is somewhat more

open to the consideration of Charlotte as a political figure. Nevertheless, he, like Southey, is greatly attracted to the apolitical feminine ideal. In the stanzas of Canto IV preceding the elegiac stanzas, Byron struggles to embody this ideal, producing two incompatible versions of apolitical femininity. When he turns to Princess Charlotte, the tension intensifies, leading, as in Southey's elegy, to a sublime movement in which the image of Charlotte provides a way out of difficult speculations.

For Byron, these speculations involve the threat that the ideal domestic order can be (or always already is) contaminated by the market order. His discussion of Signor Travis and the silk market is revealing. In The Wealth of Nations, Adam Smith uses precisely the example of public mourning to illustrate the gap between natural and market price. There he notes that a public mourning will always raise the price of black cloth. Because stocks are never sufficient on such occasions, demand will exceed supply.⁴ Smith describes the result: "A competition will immediately begin among [the consumers], and the market price will rise more or less above the natural price, according as either the greatness of the deficiency, or the wealth and wanton luxury of the competitors, happen to animate more or less the

4. Adam Smith, Wealth of Nations, vol. 2 of The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith, eds. R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) 1:76.

eagerness of the competition."⁵ In Byron's elegiac stanzas, questions of fashion, of "wanton luxury," and of the uncertain relationship between value and price will continue to haunt his search for a feminine ideal through which to eulogize Princess Charlotte.⁶

In Canto Four of Childe Harold, the two sides of the sublime movement outlined in the previous chapter--that of "anarchy and the most complete ruin" and that of salvation through domesticity--are embodied in two versions of the feminine ideal. One version presents the feminine ideal as eternal sexual object. An allusion to the ancient Roman king Numa leads Byron into a digression on Egeria, a nymph said to have been political and religious counselor to the king. Byron interprets the myth psychologically. He views Egeria as the image of perfected human passion, the "sweet creation of some heart / Which found no mortal resting-place so fair / As thine ideal breast!"⁷ But from the beginning, Byron questions this ideal. He speculates on the origin of the Egeria myth in the "nympholepsy of some fond despair." Nympholepsy refers to the frenzy that the ancients blamed on the influence of

5. Smith, 1:73-4.

6. I am indebted to Jerome Christensen's Byron's Strength for the idea of reading Byron's poetry through a matrix combining psychology and capitalism--Byron's Strength: Romantic Writing and Commercial Society (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993).

7. George Gordon, Lord Byron, Childe Harold IV, in The Complete Poetical Works, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), vol. 2, stanza 115, lines 1027-9. All subsequent references to this poem will use stanza and line numbers in this edition and will be cited parenthetically.

nymphs. (In Byron's first draft, the vision is described as a "lovely madness."⁸) For Byron, the literary commonplace equating lovers and madmen assumes a darker urgency.

Imagining the "immortal transports" of Egeria and her mortal lover (119.1066), Byron wonders if she was able to "impart / The purity of heaven to earthly joys" (119.1067-8); and the question leads Byron to consider the contrast between heavenly love and earthly passion. Earthly passion, according to Byron, always follows a self-destructive trajectory; it invariably ends in the "dull satiety which all destroys" (119.1070). For passion to be eternal, one would have to "root from out the soul the deadly weed which cloyes" (119.1071). The word "cloyes" succinctly describes Byron's understanding of the nature of human passion. His placing the cloying weed in the soul implies that the structure of desire itself, rather than the object of desire, is at fault. It is the nature of human passion to drive the individual to glut upon the object of desire, and then to destroy the pleasure of that desire through its excess.

Byron's analysis of unbounded desire recalls Smith's discussion of the "wanton luxury" of consumers driving the silk market. In fact, economists going back to Aristotle have identified such desire as one of the basic market forces. In the Politics, Aristotle discusses what he considers unnatural

8. Byron, Childe Harold IV, pg. 162.

wealth-getting. He contrasts this type of acquisition from true economics. (The latter term refers specifically to household management.) The former is characterized by insatiability: "in this art of money-making there is no limit of the end, which is wealth of the spurious kind."⁹ This insatiability causes people to exhaust every resource in the search to satisfy desire:

For, as their enjoyment is in excess, they seek an art which produces the excess of enjoyment; and, if they are not able to supply their pleasures by the art of money-making, they try other arts, using in turn every faculty in a manner contrary to nature. . . .¹⁰

The cycle of consumption and desire is the same in Byron. For, though the soul contains "the deadly weed which cloyes," desire always returns, driving the individual to seek new sources of satisfaction.

In subsequent stanzas, Byron continues to develop the weed as image of inordinate desire. As Passion flies over the "world's wilderness," she leaves in her path

weeds of dark luxuriance, tares of haste,
Rank at the core, though tempting to the eyes,
Flowers whose wild odours breathe but agonies. . . .

(120.1074-6)

9. Aristotle, The Politics, trans. B. Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), 17.

10. Aristotle, 18.

The phrase "tares of haste" indicates the loss of self-control caused by passion. These tares are "tempting to the eye," but useless, serving only to fuel the "wanton luxury" of Smith's profligate consumer; thus they are a "dark luxuriance." The contrast between an attractive outside and a "rank" inside also points out the uncertain relationship between packaging and value and raises the unsettling possibility of counterfeiting. This possibility will lead to problems for Byron's elegy to Charlotte.

The following stanza reverses the imagery of beauty and veiling. The poet desires to see love in its unveiled purity, but realizes that such a desire is hopeless: ". . . But never yet hath seen, nor e'er shall see / The naked eye, thy form, as it should be" (121.1084-5). The poet desires to see the hidden beauty of the "unseen seraph" Love--in other words, to know true value without deceptive packaging or counterfeiting. No sooner does the poet express this wish, however, than he rejects the image of love's naked beauty as a fantasy created by the one searching: "The mind hath made thee, as it peopled heaven, / Even with its own desiring phantasy. . ." (121.1086-7). All earthly loves are described as false, wearing only the costume of true beauty:

. . . charm by charm unwinds
Which robed our idols, and we see too sure
Nor worth nor beauty dwell from out the mind's
Ideal of such; yet still it binds

The fatal spell, and still it draws us on,
 Reaping the whirlwind from the oft-sown winds;
 The stubborn heart, its alchemy begun,
 Seems ever near the prize,--wealthiest when undone.

(123.1100-07)

The unveiled beauties of the "unseen seraph" Love are merely fantasies. Passion consists of projecting the image of perfection on imperfect objects of desire. The idea of packaging becomes crucial here: all love objects are counterfeits, seeming luxuries without any real value. The individual creates the object of desire; and the desire focused in that image grows so all-consuming that, glutted, the individual discovers the rankness at its core. But desire always returns, and its alchemy turns dross to gold.

Aristotle employs similar imagery. According to him, retail is the epitome of unnatural wealth-getting. And retail arose, he claims, when men began to mint coins rather than barter for goods. Unlike bartered necessities, money is "is a mere sham":

a thing not natural, but conventional only, which would have no value or use for any of the purposes of daily life if another commodity were substituted by the users. And, indeed, he who is rich in coin may often be in want of necessary food. But how can that be wealth of which a man may have a great abundance and yet perish with hunger, like Midas in the fable, whose insatiable prayer

turned everything that was set before him into gold?"¹¹
 For Byron too, the "insatiable prayer" of desire creates gold everywhere, but nowhere finds lasting satisfaction; thus, the desiring subject is "wealthiest when undone."

The structure of desire increasing its own stores repeats at a psychological level the structure of compound interest. Byron's ambivalence about such a structure is not surprising, considering that, though he was financially dependent on the public funds, he shared the aristocracy's prejudices against business. These prejudices extend back to Aristotle. To him, the "most hated sort" of wealth-getting is usury:

For money was intended to be used in exchange, but not to increase at interest. And this term usury, which means the birth of money from money, is applied to the breeding of money because the offspring resembles the parent. Wherefore of all modes of making money this is the most unnatural."¹²

But Byron goes further than Aristotle: usury for Byron is the epitome of all human desire. It produces its own excess, but it is ultimately sterile. Opposed to the useful basis of society--those who work the land for food--it is like "reaping the whirlwind from the oft-sown winds."

The following stanza of Byron's poem makes explicit the

11. Aristotle, 17.

12. Aristotle, 19.

connection, found in Aristotle, between sexual desire and other passions:

Love, fame, ambition, avarice--'t is the same,
Each idle, and all ill, and none the worst--
For all are meteors with a different name. . . .

(124.1113-5)

The meteor is often used by Byron as an image of deceptive earthly desire. Whereas Aristotle views the passions as morally neutral (though liable to contamination by the unnatural desire for wealth), Byron views all earthly desires as already compromised. Sexual, political, and economic desire share the same structure: they drive the individual to excess, produce disgust at that very excess, but ultimately return, propelling the individual towards some new object of desire. Faced with the perfidy of earthly desires, Byron ends his reflections by assuming a stoic stance:

Yet let us ponder boldly; 't is a base
Abandonment of reason to resign
Our right of thought, our last and only place
Of refuge--this, at least, shall still be mine.

(127.1135-8)

Through rationality, the individual regains self-control. To "ponder boldly" is thus a manly act of self-defense against debilitating passion.

In the Egeria stanzas, Byron creates an ideal which ensures its own destruction--a situation caused by his

limited definition of the word "love." Significantly, Byron has eliminated from the Numa-Egeria myth its most prominent element, Egeria's role as political and religious counselor to the Roman king. In Byron, Egeria is merely an object of desire, there to attract the mortal lover. There is no mention of mind, conversation, or companionship, only the pleasure of sexuality. By objectifying Egeria--and thus eliminating the intersubjectivity of desire--Byron restricts himself to an equating of desire and consumption. As a result, the only ideal possible in the Egeria model is an impossible one: sexual desire without "dull satiety."

Granted, this objectification may be attributable, at least in part, to the fact that Byron is dealing with a poetical abstraction rather than a "flesh-and-blood" character, much less a real person. Moreover, one must always be cautious when extrapolating from poetry to the attitudes of the poet (especially with as protean a poet as Byron). But it is perhaps significant that Trelawny describes Byron's attitude towards women in similar terms: "he treated woman as things devoid of soul or sense; he would not eat, pray, walk, nor talk with them."¹³ Of course, one must also be cautious when reading Trelawny's notoriously prejudicial account of Byron. I shall later argue, however, that, in his dealings with his daughter Allegra, Byron revealed attitudes towards

13. E. J. Trelawny, The Last Days of Shelley and Byron, ed. J. E. Morpurgo (New York: the Philosophical Library, 1952), 46.

women like those I have been discussing.

The so-called "Caritas Romana" stanzas of Childe Harold IV, by defining the feminine ideal as self-sacrificing, maternal nurture, offer an alternative ideal to that of endless sexual passion. In the gloom of an underground prison, the poet imagines two spectres appearing: an old man and "a female young and fair, / Fresh as a nursing mother" (148.1329-30). The poet's attention focuses on the young woman's "unmantled neck, and bosom white and bare" (148.1332). Nothing else about the woman is mentioned. Throughout these stanzas, the breast becomes a synecdoche for the female as selfless nurturer. Whereas, in the Egeria stanzas, the woman robed in deceiving charms was the embodiment of earth's false passions, here the naked female figure becomes the representative for female perfection--but maternal, rather than sexual, perfection. In fact, in the Caritas Romana stanzas, Byron never uses the word love, apparently reserving that word for sexual passion.

Byron expatiates on the milk of the young woman, calling it "Great Nature's Nile" (150.1348). While passion's stream only propagates rank weeds, this river provides sustenance for humanity. What Byron describes here corresponds to Aristotle's definition of economics, or domestic management. Economics is concerned with such things as are "necessary to

life, and useful for the community of the family or state."¹⁴ Unlike unnatural wealth-getting, which is based on the breeding of money, economics is a natural art. The household manager's task is "to order the things which nature supplies."¹⁵ These materials are "the elements of true riches." And the desire for them, unlike that for money, is limited: "the amount of property which is needed for a good life is not unlimited."¹⁶ The image of the *Caritas Romana* female provides an antidote for the endless, enslaving passions of the *Egeria* stanzas. Here, the young female provides nature's "true riches," satisfying the male's need for a "good life."

Byron, however, foregoes the language of public commerce in the *Caritas Romana* stanzas. Instead, he uses quasi-religious language which depicts the nursing female in terms reminiscent of the Madonna (an association which will become important later on). In contrast to the inconstant earthly lovers, the nursing woman is holy and pure. Her milk is a "deep pure fountain" (149.1333), and she feeds her father out of "holy feeling." (150.1347). Byron emphasizes her "story's purity" and calls her "holiest nurse" (151.1356). Referring to her milk, Byron asserts that "Heaven's realm holds no such tide" (150.1350). In the *Egeria* stanzas, Byron contrasted the

14. Aristotle, 14.

15. Aristotle, 19.

16. Aristotle, 14.

falsehood of earthly love with the unseen, heavenly ideal of Love. Here, however, the self-sacrificing, nurturing love of the woman surpasses even heaven. The purity of the female is, in fact, the source of her value. Whereas earthly love is priced by its outward appearance--its packaging--and is therefore liable to counterfeit, the pure, unmantled breast of the nursing woman is the genuine article.

Despite the contrasts between the Egeria and Caritas Romana passages, they are similar in that neither presents the female as companion or interlocutor. The female is the provider of satisfaction to the male, whether sexual or maternal. In the male-centered economy of the Egeria stanzas, females are goods. In the economy of the Caritas Romana stanzas (also male-centered), the female occupies a vague position between means of production (Great Nature's Nile), and (re)producer in her own right (holiest nurse). Aristotle evinces a similar vagueness in the Politics. As a free-born citizen whose "inequality is permanent,"¹⁷ the female's status is between servant as property and master as consumer.

The two ideals of femininity are also similar in that each is conspicuously apolitical. Byron's erasing of Egeria's political role has already been discussed. He may have done the same in the Caritas stanzas if, as Caroline Franklin asserts, he drew inspiration from Arthur Murphy's popular

17. Aristotle, 22.

drama The Grecian Daughter.¹⁸ There, the female is the daughter of a monarch who has been imprisoned by a usurper. The tyrant discovers the daughter's secret nursing and is about to kill the monarch, but is stabbed by the daughter. Byron omits the context; and, even more importantly, omits any mention of the daughter's political assassination. In Byron's version, the daughter remains eternally in the position of nurturer to the male. Peter Manning has written that Byron desired both nurturing and autonomy and that his depictions of women are consequently often hostile, combining a desire for nurture with a fear of the stifling of freedom.¹⁹ The image of the female in the *Caritas Romana* stanzas, by denying any political role to the woman, solves this dilemma. The woman has no influence over the man and serves merely to supply his emotional and physical needs.

The feminine ideal in the *Egeria* stanzas is presented as unrealizable and deceptive. The *Caritas Romana* stanzas carry no such overt self-critique; they may be Byron's least problematized celebration of femininity. One single line, however, opens a fissure in this ideal image. Byron describes a young wife, "Blest into mother," nursing her child. And he imagines her joy as she watches her child:

from out its cradled nook

18. Caroline Franklin, Byron's Heroines (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford UP, 1992), 172.

19. Peter J. Manning, Byron and His Fictions (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1978), 42.

She sees her little bud put forth its leaves--

What may the fruit be yet?--I know not, Cain was Eve's.

(149.1339-41)

The botanical imagery recalls that of the Egeria stanzas. The bud, though beautiful in its infancy, can still produce evil fruit--just as the flowers produced by passion, though lovely, are "Rank at the core." The line questions the role of woman as moral influence. Despite all her nurturing, the mother has no control over the moral development of her child. Franklin notes that, especially in his later works, Byron frequently attacked the notion of female as moral influence--most powerfully in the satire on the self-righteous Inez in Canto I of Don Juan.²⁰ Though the question is merely hinted at this point, it affects how one later reads Byron's depiction of Charlotte as mother of a future sovereign. Here the satire is only a trace; the focus of the stanzas is the self-sacrifice of the female. But in a way, this powerlessness as moral influence is actually in keeping with Byron's ideal female. Deprived of such influence, the woman is merely a source of sustenance, a cipher in all public equations. Like her apoliticism, the female's moral impotence renders her less threatening, closer to a means of production than to a producer in her own right. In the Charlotte stanzas, however, this seemingly non-threatening

20. Franklin, 121.

impotence becomes a threat to the stability of the domestic ideal.

The rhetoric of the *Caritas Romana* stanzas informs Byron's elegiac stanzas to Princess Charlotte. However, from its opening stanza, the elegy contains tension between this image of private virtue and Charlotte's public role as heir apparent. The progressive growth of this tension is indicated by the increasing contagion of the *Caritas Romana* rhetoric by vocabulary from the *Egeria* stanzas. Byron first describes Charlotte as a "shadow" in "Destruction's mass":

The gulf is thick with phantoms, but the chief
Seems royal still, though with her head discrown'd;
And pale, but lovely, with maternal grief
She clasps a babe to whom her breast yields no relief.
(167.1500-03)

More than in Southey's elegies, Charlotte here retains traces of her "royal" nature. Much stronger, however, is the image of her as a "pale, but lovely" mother, eternally nursing her infant. The tableau recalls the ever-nursing spectre of the *Caritas Romana* stanzas (though, in Charlotte's case, the breast offers no sustenance). Similar conflicts of imagery occur throughout the poem. In one stanza, Byron calls Charlotte "majestic" and the "Scion of chiefs and monarchs" (168.1504), but soon after describes her as the "fair-hair'd Daughter of the Isles" (170.1524)--dropping the regal-sounding (and genderless) "scion" and emphasizing, not her

royal lineage, but the sentimental fatherliness of the whole nation.

In comparison with Southey's elegy, Byron's description of the nation's grief has more overt political implications:

Those who weep not for kings shall weep for thee,
 And Freedom's heart, grown heavy, cease to hoard
 Her many griefs for ONE; for she had pour'd
 Her orisons for thee, and o'er thy head
 Beheld her Iris. (169.1515-19)

Personifying the grieving nation as Freedom associates grief with the political oppression of the day. Byron may be alluding to the princess's Whig leanings; thus, she would represent the hope of political freedom, symbolized by the rainbow. In fact, Byron has already imbued the rainbow with political implications earlier in Canto IV. Byron is discussing the destruction wrought by Napoleon:

for this the tears
 And blood of earth flow on as they have flow'd,
 An universal deluge, which appears
 Without an ark for wretched man's abode,
 And ebbs but to reflow!--Renew thy rainbow, God!
 (92.824-8)

The bloody deluge recalls the Attorney General's image of the Derbyshire insurgents wading through the blood of their countrymen and Southey's image of the Wharfe "red with slaughter." By associating Charlotte with the rainbow, Byron,

like other elegists, presents her as a solution to ceaseless bloodshed--thus anticipating the final sublime turn of his elegy.

Though Byron sees the problem in specifically political terms, the nature of the solution Charlotte would offer remains unclear. Byron's revisions of this passage indicate a de-emphasis on Charlotte's offering an overtly political solution. The manuscript of the above lines emphasizes Charlotte's public role more strongly: Freedom "had pour'd / Her prayer for thee and in thy coming power / Beheld her Iris."²¹ Significantly, this, Byron's only use of the word "power" to describe Princess Charlotte, was deleted from the poem. Even though Byron may be more willing than Southey to see Charlotte as a public figure, for the most part, the role he ascribes to her is distinctly apolitical.

Byron had described this role for the princess as early as 1812, in the notorious "Lines to a Lady Weeping." This brief poem was based on an actual incident which occurred during a dinner party at Carlton House. One of the guests was Lord Lauderdale, an extreme Whig. At some point during the dinner, the Regent expressed his disappointment in the Whig Lords Grenville's and Grey's recent refusals to join a coalition government. Lauderdale responded by passionately defending the lords; and Princess Charlotte, upon hearing the

21. Byron, Childe Harold IV, pg. 181.

exchange, burst into tears. Byron's poem focuses on her weeping:

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!²²

As in the *Caritas Romana* stanzas, the bodily fluids of the female are described as having fructifying virtue. Rather than as a Madonna, Charlotte here functions as a modern weeping Magdalene, whose virtuous sympathy will one day be repaid with the love of her subjects. Unlike the *Caritas Romana* female, Charlotte seems able to effect moral improvement. But Byron remains doubtful about such a role for women; his verse is phrased in the subjunctive. Whatever influence Charlotte does have is through passive feminine sentiment, not through active involvement in public policy.

The elegiac stanzas in Childe Harold maintain the focus on Charlotte's feminine heart. Byron mourns that with her "fled / The present happiness and promised joy / Which fill'd

22. Byron, "Lines to a Lady Weeping," in The Complete Poetical Works, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 3:10.

the imperial isles so full it seem'd to cloy" (168.1510-11). Like Southey, Byron directly associates Charlotte's private "happiness" with the future "joy" of the entire nation. But the final word of the stanza questions that association. The word cloy has already appeared in the stanzas on Egeria, where it referred to the human curse of satiety, of the inability of any earthly joy to satisfy forever. Byron may have chosen the word after having seen the maudlin excesses of the newspapers after Charlotte's death. Whatever the reason, Byron seems simultaneously to aver and to question the possibility of private happiness as producing national prosperity. The word cloy implies that even the popularity of the princess may be subject to the whim of fashion.

Besides sentiment, the only political role Byron assigns to Charlotte in the elegy is that of ensuring the royal succession. He mourns, "How we did entrust futurity to her!"--a reference, as the succeeding lines make clear, to her role as mother:

and, though it must
 Darken above our bones, yet fondly deem'd
 Our children should obey her child, and bless'd
 Her and her hoped-for seed, whose promise seem'd
 Like stars to shepherd's eyes--'t was but a meteor
 beamed. (170.1526-30)

In these lines, the focus of hope shifts from Charlotte to

her child. The biblical trope presents him as the savior of the nation; consequently, Charlotte assumes the position of the Virgin Mary. This image of Charlotte as Madonna is not uncommon in the elegies to her, many of which portray her as virginal (though without the miraculous explanation provided for Mary). The emphasis on the princess's personal purity is not surprising since it ensures the legitimacy of the royal succession. But, as in the *Caritas Romana* stanzas, Charlotte's role as mother places her in an ambiguous position between means of production and producer in her own right. The Virgin Mary allusion reflects that confusion: the Madonna was revered for her role as mother and for her purity; but her image also came to occupy a position of power, especially in the Catholic Church.

During the period of composition of these lines, the overlap of these issues with Catholicism had a direct relevance in Byron's life. Some months before writing his elegy to Charlotte, Byron decided to place his natural daughter Allegra in a convent, as he put it, "to become a good Catholic--& (it may be) a Nun."²³ In a letter, he explains that, because he sees nothing but "eternal war & alienation" where his legitimate daughter is concerned, "it may be well to have something to repose a hope upon":

I must love something in my old age--& probably

23. Byron to Augusta Leigh, May 27 1817, Letters and Journals, 3:228.

circumstances will render this poor little creature a greater (& perhaps my only) comfort than any offspring from that misguided & artificial woman--who bears and disgraces my name.²⁴

In this description, the future role of Allegra is similar to that of the young daughter in the Caritas Romana stanzas: she will be Byron's source of comfort in his old age. Allegra provides an alternative to the "eternal war" born of the passion for an "artificial woman." Though his daughter was denied the purity of a legitimate pedigree, Byron attempted to ensure her spiritual purity by means of a strict Catholic upbringing. Unfortunately, his plan ended tragically with Allegra's death in the convent.

Byron ends the stanza describing Charlotte's "hoped-for seed" as savior on a note of disillusionment: "'t was but a meteor beamed." By ending with the meteor metaphor, Byron calls into question the sentiments expressed in the immediately preceding lines. Like the word cloy, the word meteor has already appeared in the Egeria stanzas. There, it expresses the falsehood of all human passions--"love, fame, ambition, avarice." Though Byron asserts that Charlotte's role as mother of a future heir offered hope, the image implies that, even had the child lived to rule, the hope might have been false. The botanical metaphor indicates the

24. Byron to Augusta Leigh, May 27 1817, Letters and Journals, 3:228.

reason. Like the rainbow, Byron has used the seed earlier in the poem as an image of political hope. Byron apostrophizes Freedom:

Thy tree hath lost its blossoms, and the rind,
 Chopp'd by the axe, looks rough and little worth,
 But the sap lasts,--and still the seed we find
 Sown deep, even in the bosom of the North;
 So shall a better spring less bitter fruit bring forth.
 (98.878-82)

The "bitter fruit" in the final line of this stanza calls forth a chain of associations which undermines hope. It recalls the "tares" and "rank weeds" in the *Egeria* stanzas. Even more damaging, it recalls Byron's comparing an infant to a blossom in the *Caritas Romana* stanzas. There, Byron notes that bad fruit can come from a beautiful blossom, implying that mothers have little control over the moral characteristics of their children. In the elegiac stanzas, the botanical metaphor not only questions what kind of heir Charlotte's son would have been; it also further weakens Charlotte's role. Like the mother in the *Caritas Romana* stanzas, she becomes merely a means of production, unable to mould the morals of her own child, who could have been a savior or another Cain.

In the subsequent stanza, the tensions which have been building in the elegy thus far, between the image of Charlotte as pure mother and as public figure, reach a

climax. The crisis occurs when Byron begins to consider what would have happened if Charlotte had actually come to rule--if the embodiment of private domestic affections had entered the world of ambition and avarice. She might have known

The fickle reek of popular breath, the tongue
Of hollow counsel, the false oracle,
Which from the birth of monarchy hath rung
Its knell in princely ears till the o'er-strung
Nations have arm'd in madness, the strange fate
Which tumbles mightiest sovereigns, and hath flung
Against their blind omnipotence a weight
Within the opposing scale which crushes soon or
late. . . . (171.1531-39)

In these lines, the myth of Charlotte as embodiment of *Caritas Britannia* collides with the destructive passions of public life--passions whose dangers have been explored in the *Egeria* stanzas. Stylistically, this passage is similar to the "sublime" passages in Southey's elegy. Byron alludes to the problems of royalty (though the specific referents remain vague) in a sudden flood of speculation which rushes through the stanza in an extended subject clause.²⁵

The mention of "the fickle reek of popular breath" is

25. This vagueness may, in fact, have been a conscious political tactic by Byron. Malcolm Kelsall, in *Byron's Politics*, argues that the Whigs, unable to effect any change in society and faced with diminishing popular support, turned to vague vocabularies in hopes of maintaining support without alienating the public. *Byron's Politics* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Nobles Books; Brighton, East Sussex: Harvester Press, 1987), 72-3.

especially threatening to the Charlotte myth. The phrase captures the vagaries of public opinion during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, when the hero of one moment could become the reviled criminal of the next. On a different level, the line serves as an indictment of Byron's own vacillations about the Prince Regent. Byron at times hated and admired the Prince Regent--often, both at the same time. Shortly after writing the "Lines to a Lady Weeping" discussed above, which bitterly criticize the Regent, Byron was presented to him at a party. The poet was so impressed by the Regent's manners and knowledge of literature that he even considered attending a royal levee, powdered wig and all.²⁶ In both readings of the phrase, the cycle of idolizing and demonizing traces the same arc as the cycle of glutting and disgust outlined in the Egeria stanzas. Applied to Princess Charlotte, the line exposes the gap between private value and public price. Charlotte's purity and her virtuous affections should be items the value of which is not subject to fluctuation. But in the "fickle" market of popularity, everything is variable. Even the Charlotte myth could cloy.

The flood of speculation concerning Charlotte's future even spills from the poem proper into a footnote which, like Southey's elegy, relates the tragic history of sovereignty: "Mary died on the scaffold; Elizabeth of a broken heart;

26. The story comes from R. C. Dallas's Recollections of the Life of Lord Byron (London: Charles Knight, 1824), 233-35.

Charles V, a hermit; Louis XIV, a bankrupt in means and glory; Cromwell of anxiety; and, 'the greatest is behind,' Napoleon lives a prisoner. To these sovereigns a long but superfluous list might be added the names equally illustrious and unhappy."²⁷ In their demises, these sovereigns show the sad end of passion in its various forms, lust (Elizabeth), avarice (Louis XIV), and ambition (Napoleon). In its mixing of male and female, Protestants and Catholics, sovereigns and usurpers, the catalogue reflects the chaos of political history.

One might first note that the list shows Byron's ambivalence about the role of women. Because it includes two strong, intelligent (albeit murderous) female monarchs, the list seems to indicate that Byron is more willing than Southey to consider Charlotte as a political figure. Significantly, however, these female rulers are kept out of the poem proper--just as Byron deleted the line which places public hope in Charlotte's monarchical power.

The focus on the struggle between Protestants and Catholics lends tension to both Byron's and Southey's elegies. All the people in Byron's list were involved in struggles between Catholics and Protestants: Elizabeth and Mary fought against each other; Charles V presided over the Diet of Worms which condemned Luther and led attacks against

27. Byron, Childe Harold IV, pg. 260.

Lutheran princes; Louis XIV instigated the persecutions of French Protestants which led to mass immigration of Huguenots; Cromwell fought against the Irish Catholics; Napoleon struggled against (while simultaneously courting the favor of) the Pope. As Southey argued in his Quarterly article, such historical religious struggles led directly to the political turmoil of his and Byron's day. Byron himself was directly involved in those struggles, having spoken in the House of Lords in favor of Catholic emancipation. But for Byron, the Catholic question also seems to have had personal relevance as a matter of faith. Marjarum and others have noted his affinities for Catholicism.²⁸ These affinities culminated in his plans for Allegra.

The final two names in the footnote, Cromwell and Napoleon, reflect Byron's ambivalence about political revolution. Both figures appear earlier in Canto Four. Byron compares Cromwell to Sylla, a Roman who set himself up as dictator (the parallel with Napoleon is unmistakable). Whereas Sylla was "the first of victors," Cromwell was the "sagest of usurpers":

he

Too swept off senates while he hewed the throne
Down to a block--immortal rebel! See
What crimes it costs to be a moment free

28. Edward Marjarum, Byron as Skeptic and Believer (1932; reprint, New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), 73-82.

And famous through all ages! but beneath
 His fate the moral lurks of destiny;
 His day of double victory and death
 Beheld him win two realms, and, happier, yield his
 breath. (85.758-65)

Unlike Cromwell, Princess Charlotte was fortunate to have died young and free of such destructive passions. Ironically, Byron's sentiment here is the same as that of Southey, for whom Elizabeth Woodville exemplified the moral "that length of life is length of woe." In their elegies, both Byron and Southey focus on the political struggles of the English civil wars. Though they share an ambivalence about such bloody party politics, Byron is more forthright in expressing his ambivalence. Not surprisingly, Southey, with his stronger Tory sympathies and his position as official poet of the Georgian monarchy, presents Charles I as an innocent victim of a political plague.

Byron's treatment of Cromwell not only shows the danger of the drive for political power; it also reveals Byron's ambivalence towards class and political power. Instead of "immortal rebel," Byron's first draft describes Cromwell as an "immortal Villain."²⁹ The original choice shows that class considerations play a role in Byron's misgivings about the sort of revolution Cromwell represents. (Byron may have

29. Byron, Childe Harold IV, pg. 152.

changed the word since Cromwell was actually a member of the gentry, if not of the nobility.) Malcolm Kelsall puts Byron's doubts in the context of Whig politics. The Whigs saw themselves in the role of protecting the balance between the extremes of Crown and the people.³⁰ Byron shares the Whig mistrust of both tyranny and anarchy. In an 1813 journal entry, Byron writes in praise of a republic:

A republic!--look in the history of the Earth--Rome, Greece, Venice, France, Holland, America, our short (eheu!) Commonwealth, and compare it with what they did under masters. . . . To be the first man--not the Dictator--not the Sylla, but the Washington or the Aristides--the leader in talent and truth--is next to the Divinity!³¹

However, even this seemingly straightforward praise of republics reveals an unease, with republics in general and Cromwell specifically. The sarcastic "eheu" undercuts the nobility of the British Commonwealth. In addition, because Byron contrasts Sylla negatively with true leaders such as Washington, the comparison between Sylla and Cromwell in Childe Harold redounds to Cromwell's detriment.

For the most part, while Byron might in some ways favor the idea of a republic, he was usually vehemently opposed to those who would try to make it a reality in England. These

30. Kelsall, 9.

31. Journal entry, 3 November 1813, Letters and Journals, 3:218.

objections were primarily class-based. In an 1819 letter to Augusta Leigh, he writes, "I am not democrat enough to like a tyranny of blackguards--such fellows as Bristol [Henry] Hunt--are a choice of evils with Castlereagh--except that a Gentleman scoundrel is always preferable to a vulgar one."³² The term blackguard is a favorite of Byron to describe the radical reformers. Its mingling of class and moral connotations (the word originally referred to a kitchen servant) gives it similarities to the word villain. An 1819 letter to Hobhouse makes explicit Byron's mixture of republican ideals and aristocratic prejudice. He asks Hobhouse, "What have you to do with those blackguard Reformers? who made you defy & leave the Whigs. . . ." He then confesses, "I am and always have been for reform always--but not for the reformers--I saw enough of them at the Hampden Club--Burdett is the only one of them in whose company a Gentleman would be seen unless at a Public meeting--or in a Public house. . . ."³³ The problem is not unlike that of Byron's attitude towards women. In both cases, Byron's ideals are in tension with what he sees as reality.

It is telling that Byron ends his list of illustrious but unhappy rulers with Napoleon because the emperor is not only a prominent example of dangerous political passions, but

32. Byron to Augusta Leigh, 15 October 1819, Letters and Journals, 6:229.

33. Byron to Hobhouse, 26 June 1819, Letters and Journals, 6:166.

also one which had personal significance for Byron. Of course, Byron's attitude toward Napoleon could fill a study in itself and has been much written upon. I will confine myself here to Napoleon as a representative of the tensions I have thus far been analyzing.³⁴ As with the age of Cromwell and Charles I, Byron's and Southey's elegies share a focus on the Napoleonic struggles, but on opposite sides. As before, Byron is much more forthright in expressing his ambivalence. Southey's elegy is least attractive in the nationalistic bombast of its Napoleonic Wars stanzas. In contrast, even Byron's brief mention of Napoleon in the footnote indicates his mixed feelings. He introduces the emperor with the phrase "the greatest is behind," a quotation from Macbeth, a fitting allusion in Byron's analysis of the dangers of inordinate desire. The phrase itself can have two opposite meanings. As spoken by Macbeth when he realizes that the witches' prediction that he will be king will come true, it means "the greatest is yet to come." Ironically, however, it also means that the greatest is already over because, from this point on, Macbeth's fortunes fall. The ambiguity which hinges on the meaning of "behind" succinctly expresses the self-delusion of human passion. Under the "fatal spell," the desiring subject "seems ever near the prize,--wealthiest when undone." From this single word, the circles of doubt widen to

34. Byron's well-known description of Napoleon in Childe Harold III also supports the present reading (see especially stanzas 112-114).

include Macbeth, Napoleon, and ultimately the Princess Charlotte. For her as for Macbeth and Napoleon, sovereignty might have been bloody and tragic.

The stanzas in Childe Harold IV dealing directly with Napoleon stand near those on Cromwell. Rather than name Napoleon, Byron refers to him as "one vain man" who was "vanquish'd by himself" (89.800-01). Napoleon "was strangely fram'd":

With but one weakest weakness--vanity,
Coquettish in ambition--still he aim'd--
At what? can he avouch--or answer what he claim'd?
(91.816-19)

The word vanity not only describes Napoleon himself, but, in its literal meaning as "empty," describes the idol which consumed him: a seductive robe covering an illusion. Napoleon cannot avouch what he aimed for because, like all passions, the source was in himself. Byron originally wrote that "his lusting is unnamed."³⁵ The words "lusting" and "coquettish," with their sexual connotations, emphasize the close ties connecting "Love, fame, ambition." The fragility of the walls separating Byron as persona, Childe Harold as text, and Napoleon as poetic subject is evidenced by Byron's contemporaries' reading Childe Harold as veiled autobiography and (at least in one case) as a veiled biography of

35. Byron, Childe Harold IV, pg. 154.

Napoleon.³⁶

The reference to Napoleon in the footnote of the Princess Charlotte stanzas culminates a chain of difficult speculations about human psychology, public policy, economics, and class and gender roles--a convoluted chain whose origin was the possibility of Charlotte's acceding to the throne of England. Faced with such unresolvable tensions, Byron, like Southey, suddenly cuts short the train of thought and turns to the comforting myth of Charlotte:

These might have been her destiny; but no,
Our hearts deny it: and so young, so fair,
Good without effort, great without a foe;

But now a bride and mother--and now there! (172.1540-43)

The contrast between this passage and the final verses of the Egeria stanzas are instructive. In the latter, the poet closes his analysis of destructive passion by asserting his right to "ponder boldly." Conversely, in the Charlotte passage, the poet suddenly rejects speculation and embraces unreasoning sentiment--the people's (and the poet's) "hearts deny it." In the post-sublime verses, Charlotte is a "bride and mother" rather than a future sovereign. Like Southey, Byron accompanies this erasure of Charlotte's public role

36. In April 1817, Byron wrote a letter to a newspaper editor disputing an article (purportedly a translation from a German newspaper) which claimed that Napoleon was the protagonist of Childe Harold III--Byron to the editor of a Venice newspaper, [April? 1817], Letters and Journals, 5:201-02.

with an emphasis on her private, passive virtues; she is good "without effort." The description echoes Byron's claim, made to Lady Blessington, that "women only know evil from having experienced it through men."³⁷ It also re-emphasizes women's lack of a moral role. Though they may be moral themselves, they cannot inculcate morality in others. Such influence (whether good or bad) is the prerogative of men.

Having carefully eliminated any possible threat to the domestic myth, Byron can describe Charlotte as "without a foe." He originally wrote "for none save flatters--without foe,"³⁸ indicating a lingering fear that the fulsome flattery of the princess could cause the public to "cloy" on her memory. Byron's suppression of this line seems to indicate a conscious tactic, an attempt to ignore the questions which have dogged his elegy. This self-consciousness moves Byron's elegy toward a sort of "false" sublime, an attempt to manufacture sublime elation.

Byron's eschewing speculation for comforting sentiment, common to many Charlotte elegies, is accompanied by a typical emphasis on national unity:

How many ties did that stern moment tear!
In thy Sire's to his humblest subject's breast
Is link'd the electric chain of that despair. (172.1541-

37. Marguerite, Countess of Blessington, Conversations of Lord Byron, ed. Ernest J. Lovell (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton UP, 1969), 196.

38. Byron, Childe Harold IV, pg. 182.

6)

All people, from the Regent to the "humblest," are united by grief; but Byron, like most elegists, is careful to keep the classes grammatically separate. Byron describes grief as a natural force, like electricity, and therefore beyond analysis. Connected by this "chain," Byron is able even to identify with the Regent. The term "electric chain" has appeared earlier in Childe Harold IV. There, Byron refers to sudden memories of grief which arise unbidden. Trivial things such as music or a flower can call forth a memory, "Striking the electric chain wherewith we are darkly bound" (23.207). Whereas in the elegiac stanzas, the chain is an image of social unity, binding prince to pauper, here the chain is an image of enslavement. The recurrence of the image hints at Byron's awareness that his elegiac verses are somehow "darkly bound" by their own imagery. Of course, I do not deny the sincerity of Byron's sympathy for the Prince Regent; in tragic situations, one can often feel genuine sympathy even for political opponents. Yet the contrast is unmistakable between the tortured doubts before and the strained confidence after the sublime turn. As I have already argued, this same turn, enacted at the level of public opinion in England, helped to reinforce the political status quo following the Princess's death.

In March 1818, after Hobhouse had already carried the completed manuscript of Childe Harold to England, Byron sent

two stanzas for insertion into the poem. The first, one of the most famous in the poem, expresses the poet's wish for an idyllic existence:

Oh! that the Desart were my dwelling place,
 With one fair Spirit for my minister,
 That I might all forget the human race,
 And, hating no one, love only Her!
 Ye Elements!--in whose ennobling stir
 I feel myself exalted--Can ye not
 Accord me such a being? Do I err
 In deeming such inhabit many a spot?
 Though with them to converse can rarely be our lot.

(177.1585-93)

Because it describes the ideal spirit as a "minister" to the male rather than the object of his sexual desires, this stanza is closer in spirit to the Caritas Romana stanzas than to the Egeria ones. Byron's tableau presents Aristotle's economic ideal in its purest form: a natural, limited domestic economy with the male at its center. Not surprisingly in such a scenario, the poet writes, "I feel myself exalted." Byron manages here to avoid the recurring doubts of the earlier passages. By removing the female minister from society, he erases any nagging questions about her role in society. She is also a spirit, not the troubling flesh-and-blood female that Byron tried to assimilate to the ideal in the Princess Charlotte stanzas (or in the life of

Allegra). Consequently, the poet is able to maintain the hope that such ideal females really exist, though they may be rare. The lasting attraction to Byron of this idealized desert ministrant is shown in her reappearance as Haidee in Don Juan and Nehua in The Island.³⁹

Expressed at the level of the ideal, Byron is able to reassert his faith in the myth of the female as domestic angel without confronting the gap between the myth and actual women. Byron's final word on Princess Charlotte herself, however, is quite different in tone. In 1823, Byron looked back on the changes that had taken place since Charlotte died. In the final stanzas of Don Juan Canto eleven, Byron included a long, half-nostalgic, half-facetious ubi sunt:

Where is Napoleon the Grand? God knows:

Where little Castlereagh? The devil can tell:

Where Grattan, Curran, Sheridan, all those

Who bound the bar or senate in their spell?

Where is the unhappy Queen, with all her woes?

And where the Daughter, whom the Isles loved well?

Where are those martyr'd saints the Five per Cents?

And where--oh, where the devil are the rents?⁴⁰

39. As Franklin notes, Nehua, perhaps the least problematical female representation in all of Byron's canon, is just such a woman, isolated from all society (97-8). The same is true for Haidee, though, when she attempts to establish a government with herself as head, the Paradise degenerates into sensuality and "dark luxuriance" (134-5).

40. George Gordon, Lord Byron, Don Juan, in The Complete Poetical Works, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), vol. 6, stanza 76.

Satire has replaced the sublime as Byron's means of dealing with the incommensurability of the ideal and the real. The poet again locates Charlotte in the midst of chaotic human passions, with their meteoric ascensions and declines. But these passions are now seen from the perspective, not of wide-eyed passion or dull-eyed satiety, but of clear-eyed experience. Gone are the "spells" of love (Charlotte), fame (Castlereagh), ambition (Napoleon), and avarice (the funds and rents). The world-weary narrator of Don Juan views these idols with equanimity, even ironic humor: the "Five per Cents," rather than Princess Charlotte, are the "martyr'd saints." The narrator of 1823 is thus able to do what the poet of 1817 could not: he is able to "ponder boldly" the myth of Princess Charlotte, to see it in the context of those other beautiful idols which cast over the "stubborn heart" their "fatal spell."

Chapter 6

"Heiress of Empires": Hemans's Elegy

As a way to begin talking about the particular character of Hemans's elegy, I will look at a moment in the poem that might be described as an averted sublime. The penultimate stanza of the elegy, on the surface, bears a close resemblance to the penultimate stanza of Byron's elegiac stanzas. Like Byron (and Southey), Hemans asserts that Charlotte was fortunate to die young. And like Byron, Hemans begins to speculate on what might have happened had Charlotte lived longer:

Ours is that loss--and thou wert blest to die!
 Thou mightst have lived to dark and evil years,
 To mourn thy people changed, thy skies o'ercast;
 But thy spring-morn was all undimmed by tears,
 And thou wert loved and cherished to the last!
 And thy young name, n'er breathed in ruder tone,
 Thus dying, thou hast left to love and grief alone.¹

Hemans's idealizing of Charlotte additionally relates these lines to passages in Byron and Southey. Like the other two poets, Hemans ignores gaps between the Charlotte myth and

1. Felicia Hemans, "Stanzas on the Death of Princess Charlotte," The Poems of Felicia Hemans (London: William P. Nimmo, 1875), stanza 19. All subsequent references to Hemans's elegy will refer to stanza numbers in this edition and will be cited parenthetically.

reality: as I have shown in Part One, Charlotte's name and image often appeared in "ruder" satires and political cartoons. But Hemans's lines differ significantly from the parallel ones in Byron's elegy. In the latter, the image of Charlotte as domestic and apolitical is threatened when Byron imagines her as the actual ruler of the nation. His speculations about what might have happened lead to a breathless catalogue of political desires and tragedies, the flow of which is only stemmed by a sublime reassertion of Charlotte as domestic ideal. Hemans presents no such catalogue; she devotes a mere two lines to speculating on Charlotte's future.

The greatest difference between Hemans's elegy and Byron's and Southey's is one of tone. Whereas the other two elegies are characterized by the modulation of dread into sublime affirmation, Hemans's elegy is pervaded by a sense of guilt. Such guilt is hinted at in the stanza quoted above: the darkness of Charlotte's imagined future seems to be the fault of the nation. But the guilt is most clearly revealed elsewhere, in the tropes Hemans uses to describe Charlotte's death. Hemans begins by describing the death as an amoral, impersonal "storm" which has killed "England's royal flower" (1). In the next stanza, death is personified as a "spoiler" (2). In the third, it becomes the "Angel of Death" (3)--a metonym for divine judgment. The allusion to the death of the first-born of Egypt adds a first hint of guilt. Hemans next

describes death as an "inscrutable decree" (7), again placing death metonymically as divinely ordained. Finally, she ascribes the death to the "Chastener's hand" (10). Here, the cause and effect chain leading to the death of the princess is most explicit: the death is a providential chastening of a guilty nation.

In fact, though I have not addressed it directly yet, a trace of guilt has been present all along in the sublime movement I have been analyzing. Haydon, whose beatific vision of his "glorious countrymen" joining in prayer has formed the paradigm for my study of the Charlotte myth, closes that vision by asking, "And could the Great Spirit resist such repentance? Oh no!" The sublime movement is closely associated with guilt (especially in the pre-affirmation stage); but, in most cases, the guilt remains unconscious. Hemans, on the other hand, thematizes it. This process of thematization situates Hemans's work within the elegy tradition as analyzed by Peter M. Sacks. He notes that guilt is a frequent feature in elegies, though individual poems may differ in how they explain that guilt. Often, it is expressed as personal responsibility for the death of the elegy's subject--Why did I not save her?²

The elegies to Charlotte by Hemans and others seem to repeat, on a public level, the process that Sacks describes:

2. Peter M. Sacks, The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 22.

the nation blames itself for the death of the princess. Or, often, one part of the nation blames another. Sacks also notes that the guilt of the elegist is often projected onto another figure: Why did I not save her? becomes Why did you not save her? Such projection is common in the elegies to Charlotte. The particular crime which is claimed to have resulted in the death of the princess varies according to the political leanings of the elegist. More conservative writers blamed it on political unrest, especially among the lower classes. Thus, C. M. Sutton, attending services on the Sunday after the princess's death, heard a preacher "surmise that this [the death] was a visitation upon a guilty nation, for not having been sufficiently thankful for the peace of Europe, and illustrating this by allusion to the treasonable conspiracies, and the trials at Derby and elsewhere."³

In Hemans's case, the cause of guilt is less clear. Considering her political sympathies, it would not be surprising if the conservative interpretation influenced her (and I shall show that it did). But other factors also seem to be at work. To identify why Hemans's celebration of the Charlotte ideal is particularly guilt-ridden, I will focus on two "subjection scenes" in the elegy. These scenes take the place in Hemans's elegy of the scenes of sublimity in Southey's and Byron's elegies. But whereas the sublime scenes

3. qtd. in Charles Abbot, Lord Colchester, Diary and Correspondence of Lord Colchester (London: John Murray, 1861), 3:27.

end in affirmation, the subjection scenes in Hemans's poem end in the abasement of the subject. Each scene is the focal point for unresolved tensions in the elegy: the first scene concerns issues of gender, the second, politics. Using these two scenes as starting points, I will explore how gender and political tensions associated with Princess Charlotte mirror tensions in Hemans's own experience.

The first scene occurs mid-way through the tropological development of death which I have outlined above:

Now hath one moment darken'd future years,
 And changed the track of ages yet to be!--
 Yet, mortal! 'midst the bitterness of tears,
 Kneel, and adore th' inscrutable decree!
 Oh! while the clear perspective smiled in light,
 Wisdom should then have temper'd hope's excess,
 And, lost One! when we saw thy lot so bright,
 We might have trembled at its loveliness,
 Joy is no earthly flower--nor framed to bear,
 In its exotic bloom, life's cold, ungenial air. (7)

The coincidence of causality with an ambiguous concept of death may indicate that the cause-effect chain has not been fully conceptualized. The poet senses a cause for the death--rather than chance, it was the result of a divine "decree"; yet the precise nature of the cause remains "inscrutable." Somehow, Charlotte's life itself seems to have guaranteed her death. Something about her "lot so bright" unfitted her for

"life's cold, ungenial air." To understand the guilt surrounding Charlotte's death, then, one must understand how Hemans read Charlotte's life.

The epigraph to the elegy provides an indication. Hemans quotes from Bossuet's Funeral Oration on Henriette-Anne of England. Henriette, who, like Charlotte, died young, was the daughter of Charles I of England and was the sister-in-law of Louis XIV. In the passage Hemans has selected, Bossuet refers to the "glory" of the princess's history. Earlier in the oration, he discusses Henriette's most notable achievement, her role in the secret negotiations between Charles II and Louis which led to the Treaty of Dover (1670). The treaty provided money for Charles in exchange for a British alliance with France against Holland.⁴ Bossuet emphasizes her intelligence and her tact in matters of state.⁵ Hemans's epigraph, then, immediately established a parallel between Charlotte and an earlier, powerful princess, one active in the supposedly masculine area of politics.

Consistent with Bossuet's elegy, Hemans portrays Charlotte with a combination of conventionally masculine and feminine characteristics. At times, her depiction of Charlotte mirrors the popular image. She uses the ubiquitous

4. Winston Churchill, The New World, vol. 4 of History of the English Speaking Peoples (1956; reprint, New York: Barnes and Noble, 1993), 352-3.

5. Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, "Oraison Funèbre de Henriette-Anne d'Angleterre," in Oraisons Funèbres; Panégyriques, ed. Bernard Velat (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1950), 103-4.

flower metaphor: "England's Royal Flower is broken by the blast" (1). But, compared to Byron and Southey, Hemans is less reluctant to address Charlotte's "masculine" traits. She describes Charlotte using a combination of passive and active virtues: "So loved, so blest, is that young spirit fled, / Whose bright aspirings promised years of fame" (1). The first of these two lines, with its spiritualizing of the princess, could have been written by Southey; the second is distinctly Hemans. Whereas Southey writes that the nation would be happy because of the moral influence of Charlotte's private happiness, Hemans's use of the words "aspirings" and "fame" describe Charlotte as actively seeking a public role. The succeeding stanzas continue to link active and passive traits:

And she is gone!--the royal and the young!
 In soul commanding and in heart benign;
 Who from a race of kings and heroes sprung,
 Glowed with a spirit as lofty as her line. (3)

The second line echoes other writers who balance Charlotte's masculine mind with her feminine softness, but the difference in Hemans's account is significant. Instead of in the mind, Hemans locates Charlotte's masculine strength in the soul. In fact, the connotations of heart and soul seem almost the same. Hemans eschews hierarchy, placing the princess's "commanding" and "benign" characteristics on the same level. Charlotte's heart, moreover, is "benign," a word less

exclusively associated with femininity than, for example, "tender." (One can more easily imagine a writer describing a king as benign than as tender-hearted.) These lines also reveal Hemans's willingness to depict Charlotte as potential ruler. Instead of using Charlotte's royal lineage as a foil to emphasize her own ethereal nature, as Southey does, Hemans emphasizes Charlotte's bloodline of "kings and heroes." The stanza ends with a couplet which again combines traditional feminine and masculine virtues: "The ardent heart, the towering mind are fled, / Yet shall undying love still linger with the dead" (3). This couplet again plays on the mind-heart split so common in the Charlotte elegies. But, as before, the heart is not tender. This time, it is "ardent," a more forceful adjective which Hemans later uses to describe the (presumably male) "Patriots" of England.

The next stanza returns to the flower image: "many a cherish'd flower, ere now, hath been / Cropt ere its leaves were breathed upon by time" (4). However, Hemans broadens the metaphor beyond fair young females to include "heroes in their noon of pride" and "soaring genius" (4). Hemans has already associated both of these types with Charlotte: the heroes recall Charlotte's own "heritage of heroes and kings," and "soaring genius" parallels Charlotte's own "towering mind" and "bright aspirings." Hemans describes the nation watching Charlotte, "While that young mind developed all its power, and rose to energies of loftiest thought" (5). Again,

Hemans uses metaphors of altitude ("towering," "loftiest") to describe Charlotte; and she places the princess firmly in the center of nationalist aspirations: "On her was fixed the patriot's ardent eye" (5).

Even in passages which appear to be conventional praises of Charlotte's feminine nature, Hemans often, with merely a word or two, rewrites the conventions:

All smiled round thee--youth, and love, and praise,
Hearts all devotion and all truth were thine!
On thee was riveted a nation's gaze,
As on some radiant and unsullied shrine.

Heiress of Empires! (7)

Except for the last, these lines fit the typical approach to the Princess's death; they emphasize her youth and private affections. The description of Charlotte as a "radiant and unsullied shrine" echoes Southey's spiritualizing and Byron's virginalizing of the princess. But suddenly, with the epithet "Heiress of Empires," Hemans calls forth a very different chain of associations. This phrase, combining notions of female power and of imperialist politics, provides a succinct statement of the issues at work in Hemans's elegy.

The depiction of Charlotte as embodying both masculine and feminine characteristics places the princess in a series of "masculine" females extending the length of Hemans's literary career. Up to the writing of this elegy, Hemans had portrayed this type of female in wholly positive terms. The

character may be seen in Hemans's personifications of Liberty as a female warrior leading patriots to battle in such poems as England and Spain and "War and Peace." Charlotte, as the focus of the "patriot's ardent eye," seems a living embodiment of these personifications. The type also appears in the guise of stern female warriors from history, such as the Suliote women who killed their children rather than allow them to become slaves (in Modern Greece, 1817).

Hemans's blending of masculine and feminine characteristics in her portrayal of Charlotte helps explain the attenuation of the sublime move in her elegy. In section one of this work, I have shown the difficulties writers had reconciling the contradiction between Charlotte as wife and as heir apparent. Often, they either exempted her, by virtue of her royal position, from the proper female role, or they used her marriage to reassert the proper gender hierarchy. In those elegies which are unable to negotiate this contradiction--elegies such as Byron's and Southey's--it can lead to a sublime renunciation of political questions and a focus on gender propriety alone. In contrast, Charlotte's two roles do not seem incompatible to Hemans; she is able, for the most part, to set Charlotte's masculine and feminine characteristics side by side without feeling the need to subordinate the former to the latter. (The ending of Hemans's elegy is an important exception which will be discussed later.)

As I have already indicated, however, there is tension in Hemans's elegy, though it expresses itself as guilt rather than sublimity. The difference in reaction has to do with the cause of the tension. Whereas in other elegies, tension resides in the incompatibility between Charlotte's masculine and feminine characteristics--or between the public and private spheres corresponding to those characteristics--in Hemans's elegy, the tension seems to reside in the incompatibility between Charlotte's nature and existing social structures. The princess's character was an "exotic bloom" which could not survive in the "cold, ungenial air" of her society. Hemans claim that Charlotte's "young name" was "n'er breathed in ruder tone" seems disingenuous; Hemans must have heard of the many poems and cartoons satirizing Charlotte's masculinity. While asserting (the facts to the contrary) that Charlotte was spared criticism for her nature, Hemans admits that that nature was not suited to its milieu.

But why does the perceived tension between Charlotte's nature and society take the form of guilt? Again, Sacks's notion of guilt projection seems appropriate here. Whatever Hemans may have thought about Charlotte as a real person, the princess is also a character in a Hemans poem. And Hemans may have increasingly felt the incompatibility between the type of strong female character she often portrayed and the standards for acceptable female behavior. Though I do not have space to develop at length the argument here, a change

in the nature of Hemans's female characters can be seen to date from the years immediately following Hemans's elegy. At the time of the elegy, the tension remained to some degree unconscious ("inscrutable"), but in later years, as reviewers attempted to prescribe acceptable gender roles for Hemans's poetry, her female characters became either more submissive or deeply conflicted and guilt-ridden. Excellent late examples are the mother in the "The Indian City," who comes to rue the destruction caused by her war of vengeance, and "The Bride of the Greek Isle," who, after setting fire to the ship which carries herself and her captor, contritely bows down to her mother and begs forgiveness.⁶

We have come closer to understanding what lies behind the guilt in Hemans's elegy. But the vehemence of the subjection scene--in which the subject, "'midst the bitterness of tears," must not only "kneel," but also "adore" the subjection--seems to exceed the work of mourning. The elegy moves beyond grief to melancholy. According to Freud, the melancholic subject shares many characteristics with the grieving subject, with one important addition: self-reproach. The melancholic subject "reproaches himself, vilifies himself, and expects to be cast out and chastised."⁷ Yet the

6. Felicia Hemans, "The Indian City," "The Bride of the Greek Isle," in Records of Woman (Edinburgh: William Blackwood; London: T. Cadell, 1828; reprint, New York, London: Garland, 1978), 21-34; 83-96.

7. Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in General Psychological Theory, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Collier Books, 1963), 167.

death of a public figure whom Hemans had never met would seem insufficient to elicit such a reaction. Freud notes that ambivalence concerning relationships often lies at the root of melancholy:

The occasions giving rise to melancholia for the most part extend beyond the clear case of a loss by death, and include all those situations of being wounded, hurt, neglected, out of favour, or disappointed, which can import opposite feelings of love and hate into the relationship or reinforce an already existing ambivalence.

These ambivalent feelings towards the love object, according to Freud, are subsequently transferred to the self: recrimination against the other becomes self-chastisement.⁸ For Hemans, writing her elegy in the closing days of 1817, Freud's description seems germane. By this point, Hemans was essentially, though not technically, in the final months of her five-year marriage to Captain Hemans. She and her husband never actually divorced; but by 1818 he had moved to Italy, and they never met again. Hemans's sister, Harriet Owen, in her memoir of Hemans, admits that, though practical considerations played a part in the separation, other issues were involved. What these issues were, Owen does not say; she merely hints darkly at "painful" circumstances.⁹ Any

8. Freud, 172.

9. qtd. in Anne K. Mellor, Romanticism and Gender (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 133.

discussion of the causes of the separation must remain speculation. Nevertheless, the preceding discussion of Hemans, Charlotte, and gender roles indicates a direction for speculation. It seems especially appropriate, considering the circumstances of the elegy's composition, to consider Hemans's presentation of the marriage between Charlotte and Leopold.

Hemans addresses Charlotte: "Child of propitious stars! for thee alone, / The course of love ran smooth" (19). The line appears to imply that, for Hemans, love did not run smoothly. Hemans devotes five stanzas to sympathetic description of Leopold's grief--grief magnified by the perfection of his and Charlotte's brief marriage. Unlike most writers, who emphasize Leopold's role as head of the house and Charlotte's role as submissive wife, Hemans portrays them as equal partners. Hemans describes Leopold:

And he, the chosen of thy youthful breast,
Whose soul with thine had mingled every thought,
He, with thine early, fond affections blest,
Lord of a mind with all things lovely fraught. . . .

(15)

Hemans assigns to Charlotte the typically masculine role of instigator in the relationship; her choosing Leopold sounds like an act of royal prerogative. The two are intellectual equals who have "mingled every thought." (One might compare Byron's descriptions of male-female relationships in the

Egeria and Caritas Romana passages of Childe Harold IV.) Leopold, like Charlotte, combines masculine and feminine characteristics. He is "Lord" of a mind, but that mind is described as "lovely." Hemans also uses flower imagery to describe Leopold: Charlotte's death has blighted his youthful spirit like a "flower . . . o'erwhelmed by winter snow" (18).

In describing Charlotte's ideal marriage to Leopold, there may be more than a little wish-fulfillment on Hemans's part. Writers who speculate on Hemans's own marriage relationship often conclude that she and Captain Hemans did not share the royal couple's compatibility. Anne Mellor quotes Rose Lawrence, a friend of Hemans's later life, who attributes the separation to an "utter incompatibility of habits and feelings."¹⁰ Peter Trinder quotes another acquaintance of Hemans's later life, Mary Howitt, who wrote in her journal, "I have just received a letter from Mrs. Hemans. She congratulates me, I can fancy, with a mournful reference to herself, in possessing in a husband a kindred spirit and friend."¹¹ These descriptions of Hemans's marriage present a telling contrast to the idealized marriage and friendship of Charlotte and Leopold.

Implied in many nineteenth-century speculations on Hemans's marriage is a criticism of the poet's unfeminine

10. Anne Mellor, Romanticism and Gender (New York, London: Routledge, 1993), 134.

11. Peter Trinder, Felicia Hemans (University of Wales Press, 1984), 38-9.

nature. Mrs. Elwood, a friend of Hemans's last years, surmises that Hemans was ill-suited to married life. The poet, she writes, was occupied by her "desultory" studies at all times, including "hours usually devoted to domestic claims."¹² The most famous description is Wordsworth's. He felt that "her education had been most unfortunate": "She was totally ignorant of housewifery, and could have as easily have managed the spear of Minerva as her needle." When Hemans visited the Wordsworths in 1830, William, in an attempt to correct her "deficiencies," "directed her attention to household economy." He discoursed to her on some scales he had bought as a wedding gift for a young female and "pointed out their utility (for her especial benefit)."¹³ Even in 1817, Hemans may have felt the intimations of such disapprobation. Therefore, her ambivalence about her marriage may have taken the form of guilt. In the elegy to Charlotte, this guilt dovetails with the grieving structure typical of the genre. True to the Freudian work of melancholy, Hemans's poem translates the loss of the loved one into self-chastisement. This process helps explain the vague nature of the guilt in the subjection scene--why it remains an "inscrutable decree." According to Freud, the work of melancholy is carried out in the unconscious: one senses that "a loss . . . has been

12. Mrs. Elwood, Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England (London: Henry Colburn, 1843), 2:233.

13. William Wordsworth, notes dictated to Isabella Fenwick, qtd. in Poetical Works, ed. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), 461.

experienced, but one cannot see clearly what has been lost."¹⁴

Whereas the first subjection scene concerns questions of gender, the second has political implications. This scene occurs simultaneously with the full tropological development of death--the point at which death becomes identified as the "Chastener," the personal effector of divine retribution. This fact may indicate that Hemans is more conscious of the cause-effect relationship between sin and guilt in this instance. Or it may indicate a more conscious acceptance of guilt in this instance. In the gender case, Hemans may feel more sinned against than sinning. Here, she may feel that guilt is more merited. (I do not want to overstate my case, however; Hemans remains deeply ambivalent about politics throughout her career, just as she does about woman's role.) Hemans writes, "The Chastener's hand is on us." She insists that the people's grief should not blind them to their good fortune during the Napoleonic Wars. Britain "may weep, / But not repine" (10). Hemans describes a personified War wreaking havoc across Europe, while England, "that regal daughter of the main, / Smiled, in serene defiance of his wrath" (10):

Her voice hath been th' awakener--and her name,
The gathering-word of nations--in her might
And all the awful beauty of her fame,
Apart she dwelt, in solitary light.
High on her cliffs, alone and firm she stood,

14. Freud, 166.

Fixing the torch upon her beacon-tower;
 That torch, whose flame, far streaming o'er the flood,
 Hath guided Europe through her darkest hour!--
 Away, vain dreams of glory! in the dust

Be humbled, ocean-queen! and own thy sentence just! (11)

This stanza functions in the opposite way from the sublime movements in Southey and Byron. In those elegies, an onrush of horror (bloodshed, bitter party strife) is suddenly interrupted (often by a dash) by an assertion of spiritualized domesticity. In contrast, the unqualified exaltation of Hemans's lines is interrupted (also with a dash) by an act of contrition. To some extent, gender may again play a part in this scene of guilty submission. The personification of England as a female warrior recalls Hemans's earlier women warriors. In addition, Hemans makes a definite connection between Charlotte and England: England is the "regal daughter of the main." Therefore, the gender-based guilt of the previous scene may reflect on this description of England. But guilt may be reflected in both directions. Guilt about gender roles and society may color the present scene. And a political guilt may, in turn, color the previous scene. The interpenetration of these two types of guilt seems evidenced in the description of Charlotte as "Heiress of Empires." Whereas the previous scene emphasized the Heiress--Charlotte as powerful and commanding--the present scene seems to relate to questions of empire.

Again, the epigraph from Bossuet sets the context for this issue. Henriette-Anne's political role in the negotiations between Charles II and Louis XIV would have raised complex political issues for Hemans's audience. It was during Charles II's reign that the terms Whig and Tory were first used. The Whigs supported the Exclusion Act to prevent Charles's Catholic brother, James, from succeeding to the throne. The Tories supported the king and legitimate succession. Bossuet is also sympathetic to Charles II; therefore, by quoting his elegy, Hemans seems to align herself with the loyalist, Tory cause. And, as shall be shown, Hemans's ideas do often seem closer to Tory politics than to Whig. But the Bossuet elegy raises uneasy questions about empire. The result of the treaty which Henriette-Anne helped negotiate was that England and France declared war against Holland. The war was fought for complicated, and rarely noble, reasons of territory and control of colonial trade. Even before Hemans begins the elegy proper, her epigraph has raised difficult questions about gender roles and imperial politics.

To define Hemans's position--and thus to identify the source of the guilt which inheres in the second contrition scene--it will be helpful to trace her ideas regarding empire from her early poems up to the time of the elegy. Hemans's youthful poetry reflects the position of a Tory patriot. Her unqualified support of the war against Napoleon separates her

from the extreme Whigs, who were in favor of peace negotiations with Napoleon. In her early war poems, England is the faultless victor, Napoleon evil incarnate. These poems were inspired by Hemans's two brothers' fighting with the British forces in the Peninsular Campaign. Owen recalls that, at the time, Hemans's mind "was filled with glorious visions of British valour and Spanish patriotism":

In her ardent view, the days of chivalry seemed to be restored, and the very names which were of daily occurrence in the despatches, were involuntarily associated with the deeds of Roland and his Paladins, or of her own especial hero, "The Cid Ruy Diaz," the Campeador.¹⁵

This description provides important clues for understanding the fourteen-year-old Hemans's political leanings. The emphasis on "chivalry," for example, would tend to associate Hemans with Tory loyalty to the monarch rather than with Opposition criticism. (The praise of chivalry was one of the traits which indicated Burke's realignment from Whig to Tory.) In England and Spain (1808), Hemans notes that the Spanish are not fighting "to secure dominion's boundless reign": "No, brave Castilians! your's [sic] a nobler end, / Your land, your laws, your monarch to defend!"¹⁶ Hemans

15. qtd. in Hemans, Poems, 4.

16. Felicia Hemans, England and Spain: Or, Valour and Patriotism (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1808; reprint, New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1978), 10.

combines nationalism with chivalrous loyalty to the monarch. (The inclusion of "laws" between the nation and the monarch indicates the adoption, even by conservatives, of law-centered vocabulary--a phenomenon I examine in the Introduction.) Hemans's poem includes an apostrophe to the "Genius of Chivalry," who, Hemans insists, still lives in the present: "Yet, though thy transient pageantries are gone, . . . thy noble train, / Thy firm, exalted virtues yet remain."¹⁷ This love of chivalry is shown in her frequently returning to the subjects of chivalry throughout her life. She was fascinated, for example, by the Crusades, writing "The Crusaders' War Song" early in life, De Chatillon, or The Crusades around 1823, and "The Crusader's Return" around 1826.

The poem England and Spain (1808) is unambiguous in its presentation of virtuous English and Spanish freedom fighters and of the evil French. Hemans scours history for examples of British victories against the French. In a stanza referring to the Hundred Years War, Hemans praises "Edward's bright heroic deeds" in the battle of Cressy and the "valour proud" of Henry V, who subdued the "lofty crested plume of Gallia" at Agincourt.¹⁸ The simplicity of Hemans's political alignments becomes clear when this passage is contrasted with Southey's convoluted description of Edward and Cressy in his

17. Hemans, England and Spain, 15.

18. Hemans, England and Spain, 7.

Charlotte elegy. The Hemans example also hints at the problems of empire--problems which will later become significant. As Hemans emphasizes, England and Spain are fighting for Spain's national self-determination, not "dominion's boundless reign." Yet the Hundred Years War was fought for less idealistic reasons of territorial and dynastic ambition. Likewise, Hemans's emphasis on the difference between wars of conquest and of national defense render problematic her praise, in the same poem, of the "sublime Columbus," whose New World expedition is compared to Israel's conquering of Canaan.¹⁹

Hemans's Tory leanings are also shown in the sympathy she shows for the Bourbons, who lived for a brief while in England. She imagines Britannia victoriously leading the royal family back to France:

And as the blazing pillar led the host
Of faithful Israel o'er the desert coast,
So may Britannia guide the noble band
O'er the wild ocean to their native land.²⁰

Firm in their support of "legitimacy"--the Bourbons become the Chosen Ones--these lines, in their equating Britannia with the instrument of God, reveal a haughty patriotism. This attitude is even more explicit in another passage. Hemans describes "Albion":

19. Hemans, England and Spain, 19.

20. Hemans, England and Spain, 8-9.

Supreme in glory, and of spotless name:
 And, as the pyramid indignant rears
 Its awful head, and mocks the waste of years;
 See her secure in pride of virtue tower,

While prostrate nations kiss the rod of power!²¹

These lines are strikingly similar to those describing the "Ocean-Queen" in Hemans's elegy to Charlotte. Both personify England as a powerful, female military ruler. Both use metaphors of elevation to show England's moral superiority over other nations. The difference in their endings, however, is telling. In the earlier verses, the "prostrate nations" kneel before England. In contrast, in the elegy, England herself kneels in the dust before the "Chastener." What intervening circumstances have led to the change?

Hemans seems to have begun to see the contradictions in her enthusiasm for liberty and for conquest. The next volume Hemans published, The Domestic Affections (1812), contains a long poem entitled "War and Peace." Here, the praise of Columbus's conquest is replaced by condemnation of "fierce Cortez," who "Taught the pure streams with crimson stains to flow, / Made the rich vales a wilderness of woe."²² Likewise, Hemans describes Pisaro, who "ravag'd" Peru: "Dark--savage--fierce--to faith, to mercy--cold."²³

21. Hemans, England and Spain, 7-8.

22. Felicia Hemans, "War and Peace," in The Domestic Affections and Other Poems (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1812; reprint, New York, London: Garland, 1978), 110.

23. Hemans, "War and Peace," 111.

Part of the change may also be attributable to Hemans's more immediate knowledge of the realities of war. The 1812 volume contains, in addition to "War and Peace," a poem entitled "To my Younger Brother. On his Return from Spain, after the fatal Retreat under Sir John Moore and the battle of Corunna." Hemans refers to one of the low points in the Peninsular Campaign. Far outnumbered by the French troops, Moore, rather than leading his men to die a glorious and certain death, took the much more prudent step of retreating 150 miles to the coast at Corunna, with the French in close pursuit. Moore lost 4,000 men on the eighteen-day retreat, mostly from hunger and cold. The retreat turned the British troops into terrified mobs. It was reported that, in two cases, the troops came upon villages with large stores of wine. The men fell upon the wine and drank themselves into frenzies and stupors. Eventually, the troops made it to the coast, where they fought against the French (Moore was killed in the battle) until British transport ships arrived to evacuate them.²⁴

Hemans was able to find some glory in this story. In "War and Peace," Hemans praises Moore, the "Illustrious Leader" whose "bright sun in fame, in victory set."²⁵ The poem to her brother, however, is very different in tone. The opening stanza signals the change:

24. Leonard Cooper, The Age of Wellington (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1963), 148-9.

25. Hemans, "War and Peace," 100-01.

Tho' dark are the prospects and heavy the hours,
 Tho' life is a desert, and cheerless the way;
 Yet still shall affection adorn it with flow'rs,
 Whose fragrance shall never decay!²⁶

Hemans describes the "scenes of destruction" and "perils unblest" of the Peninsular Campaign.²⁷ Though she still praises the "heroes of Albion,"²⁸ the ending of her poem expresses a feeling of disillusionment:

And oh! when the dreams, the enchantments of youth,
 Bright and transient, have fled, like the rainbow,
 away;
 My affection for thee, still unfading in truth,
 Shall never, oh! never decay!²⁹

The exact nature of the "dreams" and "enchantments" remain unclear; however, judging from the tone of the poem as a whole, Hemans's dreams of martial glory seem to have suffered from an encounter with the reality of war.

Significantly, Captain Hemans also took part in the Corunna retreat, as well as in the ill-fated Walcheren expedition. In July 1809, 40,000 British troops landed on Walcheren island, the first leg in what was ultimately an unsuccessful assault on Antwerp. Illness broke out among the

26. Felicia Hemans, "To My Younger Brother," in The Domestic Affections and Other Poems (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1812; reprint, New York, London: Garland, 1978), 50.

27. Hemans, "To My Younger Brother," 51.

28. Hemans, "To My Younger Brother," 51.

29. Hemans, "To My Younger Brother," 52.

troops; and, by the time of re-embarkation, 4,066 men were dead and 11,000 sick with "Walcheren fever."³⁰ Like Corunna, Walcheren would serve a blow to any attempt to glorify war. Additionally, Captain Hemans was among those who contracted the fever, and one of the reasons given for his going to Italy was to improve his health. Thus, Hemans's disillusionment with war may have extended to her soldier husband--again connecting her political with her personal ambivalence.

Hemans's disillusionment with the glory of war is evident in another poem, written a few years after the poem to her brother. "To the Memory of General Sir Edward Pakenham" is an elegy to the officer who led the fatal assault on Andrew Johnson's troops in the Battle of New Orleans. Hemans apostrophizes the general: "Oh, who could deem thy star should set / So darkly and so soon!" The contrast to Moore's "bright sun" setting in "Victory" is telling. Of course, part of the difference is that Moore died in a victorious war, whereas Pakenham died in vain--a peace treaty having already been signed before the battle took place. Hemans does say that the battlefields of Spain would have been a more fitting "deathbed" for the general. But the difference for Hemans between the war against Napoleon and the War of 1812 seems to go deeper. She would not have

30. Michael Glover, The Napoleonic Wars, an Illustrated History 1792-1815 (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1978), 140-41.

mourned, Hemans writes, had Pakenham "but fallen in nobler strife." The problem does not seem to be that Pakenham lost; after all, one can be noble even in defeat. Rather, in contrast to her idealized view of the Peninsular War, Hemans here seems to realize the complex--and often ignoble--causes which led to the war with America. In many ways, the war was fought to see which nation would establish "dominion's boundless reign" in North America. Therefore, it was not so very different than Napoleon's territorial conquests in Europe. The ending of the brief elegy indicates Hemans's uneasiness:

And many a tale of triumph won

Shall breath that name in Memory's ear,

And long may England mourn a son

Without reproach or fear!

Hemans's attempt to return to military panegyric is undercut by the final italicized line, indicating a change from the earlier, unexamined praise of British warriors. The poet seems to realize that, in some cases, Britain's military exploits may merit "reproach."

Around the time of the Pakenham elegy, Hemans produced her first major literary success, The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy (1816). The poem celebrates the return of the Vatican art treasures that had been stolen by Napoleon. This subject placed Hemans in comfortable territory, with a familiar villain. The next year, Hemans

wrote Modern Greece. One of Hemans's foci in this poem is the bringing of the Parthenon marbles to England by Lord Elgin. Hemans praises the act because it has saved the marbles from ruin and has provided England with models of artistic excellence. Her position on this controversial issue again aligns her with the Tories. (Byron's poem on the same subject, "The Curse of Minerva," expresses the opposite political point of view.) But Hemans seems unaware of the irony of her position: having just written a poem condemning the pillaging of art by France, she writes one praising a not dissimilar act by England. The poem does, however, reveal a sense of England different from that in previous works. Whereas five years earlier, she praised England as "Supreme in glory, and of spotless name," and described the "prostrate nations" kissing her "rod of power," now Hemans looks into the future and imagines England sharing the fate of fallen Greece: "So, should dark ages o'er thy glory sweep, Should thine e'er be as now the Grecian plains. . ." (). England is no longer invincible. In fact, Hemans sees evidence of the nation's vulnerability in her own day. At one point, she draws a comparison between Greece's fallen condition and that of "some sovereign spirit, hurl'd / By Fate's rude tempest from its radiant sphere": "Oh! hast thou watch'd the awful wreck of mind / That weareth still a glory in decay?" The allusion to George III is unmistakable, and it highlights the fact that England, like any other nation, is not

unassailable. In such passages, Hemans has tempered her unconsidered praise of England's imperial might.

Hemans's doubts, stemming from her personal experiences with the realities of war, inform the elegy to Charlotte. The depiction of Charlotte as the cynosure of British patriotism leads Hemans to a favorite image, Britain as a powerful, conquering female. But her growing knowledge of the darker side of nationalism seems to undermine the kind of naive paeon that characterizes the earlier poetry. Thus the verses end with an act of national contrition. The consideration of this second subjection scene again raises the question, why do political tensions in Hemans's poem take the form of guilt? The answer may be, in part, a matter of individual temperament. Hemans's writings as a whole seem to indicate more of a tendency to question her own motives and opinions than is evident in Southey or Byron. Especially as regards political questions, guilt may indicate self-awareness on Hemans's part of her collusion in unexamined patriotism--both through her poetry and through her involvement with her soldier brothers and husband. Throughout her adult life, Hemans continued to be both attracted to and troubled by militant patriotism. Her position can be compared with Southey's, whose sense of the contradictions in his political positions seems to have remained at the level of the unconscious; hence, the political tensions at work in his elegy take the form of a sublime turn, a less conscious

structure.

Hemans's doubts do not indicate a definite turn away from political conservatism; they do, however, indicate a shift in her mode of conservatism. In the elegy to Charlotte, the poet's conservatism is evident less in aggressive nationalism than in the political workings of her domestic rhetoric. Like many writers previously discussed, Hemans uses the domestic affections to buttress the political status quo. She elicits the reader's sympathy for the king in a pathos-filled stanza, describing him as mercifully spared from understanding the loss of his beloved granddaughter. Such admissions of royal frailty and common humanity paradoxically had the effect of strengthening the position of the royal family by building sympathy between them and the people. Hemans stresses that sympathetic bond, writing that the nation feels as if "the avenging one" had visited every house (11). Her only mention of the Regent in the poem operates similarly: "With a father's hopes, a nation's fled" (14). As in Southey's elegy, the hopes Hemans describes here seem to be less political than personal.

The emphasis on private affections is evident in the description of Charlotte's funeral. Hemans describes the procession's "solemn train," but her primary emphasis lies elsewhere. The elegy follows the funeral train into St. George's chapel:

There pall, and canopy, and sacred strain,

And all around the stamp of woe may bear;
 But grief, to whose full heart those forms are vain--
 Grief unexpressed, unsoothed by them--is there. (13)

The public rites are merely external signs; the true grief is private, "unexpressed, unsoothed." The contrast Hemans draws between genuine grief and the mere "stamp" of it is significant. In the old order of discipline, royal spectacle represented the redoubtable power of the sovereign. Here, this outward pomp is merely "vain." The real center of this spectacle lies in private domestic sentiment, the "full heart" of the grieving husband. (The issue of grief as outer sign or inner emotion is central to Shelley's Address, as my next chapter will show.) In passages such as the above, Hemans moves away from the vocabulary of monarchical power. Her emphasis on domestic privacy and sympathy signals the emergence of a new type of power, one which reached its apex in the Victorian period. And, though Hemans died two years before Victoria's ascension, her poems were memorized and recited by school children and sung in middle-class drawing rooms throughout the period. Posthumously, she became the spokesperson for Victorian domesticity.

The vocabulary of domestic affection comes so to color the elegy that, by the end, the image of Charlotte has begun to assume that of most elegies. The princess loses her masculine characteristics, and becomes more spiritualized. The closing stanza, which pictures Charlotte in heaven,

completes the transformation:

Daughter of Kings! from that high sphere look down,
 Where still in hope, affection's thoughts may rise,
 Where dimly shines to thee that mortal crown,
 Which earth display'd to claim thee from the skies.
 Look down! and if thy spirit yet retain
 Memory of aught that once was fondly dear,
 Soothe, though unseen, the hearts that mourn in vain,
 And, in their hours of loneliness--be near!
 Blest was thy lot e'en here--and one faint sigh,
 Oh! tell those, hearts, hath made that bliss eternity!

(21)

The stanza begins with an appellation of power--Daughter of Kings--which associates Charlotte with royalty. But the remainder of the stanza moves in another direction. Charlotte becomes a ministering spirit of the affections--literally, the angel in the house--whose task is to "soothe" her family's "hearts." Images of power are replaced with those of feminine weakness: Charlotte dies with "one faint sigh." This stanza immediately follows the one with which this chapter began. In that previous stanza--coinciding (though in truncated form) with the sublime movement in other elegies--Hemans imagines Charlotte living "to dark and evil years," finding her "people changed." The idea of faithlessness and rejection by the public seems to haunt the final stanza. The image of Charlotte as household angel reads like an attempt

to forestall (or to respond to) harsh public reaction by reforming Charlotte in the popular mold.

The closing stanza of the elegy, however, is not Hemans's final word on Charlotte. Like Byron, Hemans returned some years later to the princess as a poetic subject. In 1820, Hemans published a long poem entitled The Sceptic. The later work is notably less ridden with guilt--only traces remain. The difference can be seen by comparing Hemans's handling here of the themes in the two subjection scenes of the elegy: gender and politics. Hemans asks the "Cold Sophist" what, apart from faith, can soothe those who have lost a loved one:

Should we not wither at the Chastener's look,
Should we not sink beneath our God's rebuke,
When o'er our heads the desolating blast,
Fraught with inscrutable decrees, hath past,
And the stern power who seeks the noblest prey
Hath call'd our fairest and our best away?³¹

The vocabulary of these lines--"Chastener," "desolating blast," "inscrutable decree"--clearly recalls the elegy to Charlotte. And the present lines still evince some uncertainty about Charlotte's fate; it remains "inscrutable." But the tone has changed since the elegy. Through faith, the rhetorical question implies, the nation (and the poet) can

31. Felicia Hemans, The Sceptic (London: John Murray, 1820; reprint, New York, London: Garland, 1978), page 30.

meet the "Chastener" without withering or sinking. Absent is the melancholic self-abasement of the elegy.

Princess Charlotte herself is the representative of strength through faith. Hemans presents Charlotte's final hour much differently this time. In the earlier poem, Charlotte dies speechlessly, with only a "faint sigh." Here, Hemans focuses on the moment when Charlotte heard the news that her child had been stillborn. The poet quotes the words Charlotte was reported to have said: "It is the will of God" (32). The princess's strength at this moment, says Hemans, is a lesson to others: "But thou didst teach us. Thou to every heart / Faith's lofty lesson didst thyself impart!" (31) Consequently, the poet is also able to accept the tragedy: "Who shall arraign th' Eternal dark decree / If not one murmur escaped from thee?" (32) The change of tone in the later poem indicates that the work of melancholy has been accomplished. Even though the exact cause of grief may remain "dark," the poet possesses the strength to accept it.

An article Hemans wrote about the same time as The Sceptic puts in a more personal context the image of woman bravely facing adversity. The article deals with Alfieri's Alcestis. The theme of the drama, Hemans writes, "must find its echo in every heart which has known the power of domestic ties, or felt the bitterness of their dissolution." But she hastens to add that, despite the play's focus on domesticity, "the interest of the piece . . . is not for a moment allowed

to languish; nor does the conjugal affection . . . ever degenerate into the pastoral insipidity of Metastasio."³² Hemans's ideal of domesticity without "insipidity" is quite different from that presented in the writers examined heretofore. Also different is the embodiment of the ideal female which Hemans finds in Alfieri's drama:

The character of Alcestis herself, with all its lofty fortitude, heroic affection, and subdued anguish, powerfully recalls to our imagination the calm and tempered majesty distinguishing the masterpieces of Greek sculpture. . . . The union of dignity and affliction impressing more than earthly grandeur on the countenance of Niobe, would be, perhaps, the best illustration of this analogy.³³

Hemans again uses altitudinal metaphors ("lofty") and a masculine vocabulary ("fortitude," "heroic") to describe a female character. She also describes another method of dealing with grief: instead of self-abasement, the subject "subdues" grief itself. The character of Alcestis may have been attractive to Hemans for the image of sacrifice it portrays. Whereas Princess Charlotte, according to some, was a passive sacrifice for the nation's sins, Alcestis chooses to give her life so that her husband may live. The parallel with Christ will be examined later.

32. Poems, 121.

33. Poems, 121.

Despite the image of female strength Hemans presents in this article, a trace of guilt may remain in the allusion to Niobe. Niobe brought her fate upon herself through her hubris: she had boasted of her superior fecundity to the Titan Leto. Hemans doubtless continued to sense that others blamed her for the failure of her marriage. In a letter to Murray regarding the publication of The Sceptic, Hemans writes, "I wish to be Mrs. Hemans on the title page."³⁴ The request may be an attempt to defuse criticism, to emphasize her "proper" role as wife. But in the article, as in The Sceptic, much stronger than any impression of guilt is that of personal fortitude. The characters of Niobe and Charlotte represent for Hemans the ability to meet the "Chastener's hand" without "withering."

In The Sceptic, as she did in the elegy, Hemans imagines Charlotte's becoming a ministering spirit after her death. But the tone is again subtly different in the later work:

Still may thy memory bloom our vales among,
 Hallow'd by freedom and enshrined in song!
 Still may thy pure, majestic spirit dwell
 Bright on the isles which loved thy name so well,
 E'en as an angel, with presiding care,
 To wake and guard thine own high virtues there. (33)

These lines show the same blending of masculine and feminine that characterizes Hemans's elegy in its least guilty

34. Hemans to Murray, 18 December 1819, John Murray Archives.

moments. Charlotte's memory is described as a flower blooming in England's vales, but it also has explicit political associations: it is "Hallow'd by freedom." As a spirit, Charlotte is "pure," but also "majestic"; and she exercises "presiding care"--combining masculine authority with feminine nurturing. And rather than merely soothing lonely hearts, Charlotte exhorts and protects the nation's "high virtues." This phrase recalls the altitudinal metaphors of the elegy and combines, in the single word "virtues," feminine goodness and manly strength. Hemans is able to recover the breadth of character with which she portrayed Charlotte in the elegy, without the guilt which accrued around the character before.

The Sceptic also evinces a renewed faith in the moral strength of England. Hemans turns away from those conflicts which vexed her earlier poems--conflicts about domination and empire--to that which she feels confident about--the war against Napoleon. She recalls when "storm-presaging skies" had roused "the watchers of the land to rise, / To set the sign of fire on every height. . ." (33). As Hemans's note explains, the "sign of fire" is an allusion to Jeremiah 6:1. There, the sign of fire is a military signal that Judah uses to warn of foreign invasion. Like the Niobe allusion, this one may retain a trace of Hemans's guilt: the invaders were sent by God to punish Judah's sins. For the most part, however, Hemans avoids the guilt of British imperialism in this poem by returning to a favorite theme, a nation's battle

for liberty against foreign invasion. By focusing on a man that was to her a clear villain, Napoleon, and by focusing on Britain's self-defense, Hemans can recapture her martial enthusiasm. But the difficulty of maintaining this delicate balance soon becomes apparent. Hemans redefines the Old Testament "sign of fire":

And o'er the mountains rear, with patriot might,
 Prepar'd, if summon'd, in its cause to die,
 The banner of our faith, the Cross of victory!
 By this hath England conquer'd--field and flood
 Have own'd her sovereignty. . . . (33)

The reference to the cross as a "banner of Victory" calls forth associations with the Crusades, those wars mingling religion and conquest which fascinated Hemans. Imperialistic overtones have begun to creep back into Hemans's verse. England no longer merely defends, but "conquers," establishing "sovereignty" over land and sea.

The stanza continues with a description of England which is similar in many respects to that which described the "daughter of the main" in the elegy and that which depicted England wielding her "rod of power" in England and Spain:

. . . alone she stood,
 When chains o'er all the sceptred earth were thrown,
 In high and holy singleness, alone,
 But mighty, in her God--and shall she now

Forget before th' Omnipotent to bow?
 From the bright fountain of her glory turn,
 Or bid strange fire upon his altars burn?
 No! sever'd land, midst rocks and billows rude,
 Throned in the majesty of solitude,
 Still in the deep asylum of thy breast
 Shall the pure elements of greatness rest,
 Virtue and faith, the tutelary powers,

Thy hearths that hallow, and defend thy towers! (33-4)

Whereas in the elegy, this description of England as a lofty powerful female was rejected as a "vain dream of glory" and was interrupted by an act of abasement, here Hemans confidently affirms the nation's faith. The final line, connecting "hearth" and "towers," is a typical Hemansian mingling of feminine domestic and masculine military spheres. Though she again seeks to limit her praise of martial glory to England's self-defense ("defend thy towers"), the ease with which she slips into the vocabulary of crusading conquerors shows her attraction to nationalism cloaked in religious language.

Not surprisingly, Hemans's conservatism remains strong in The Sceptic. As in the elegy, Hemans expresses this conservatism through her use of domesticity to support existing social conditions. In the later poem, this project takes on specific class overtones. The final stanza presents an idyllic rural scene:

Still, where thy hamlet vales, O chosen isle!
 In the soft beauty of their verdure smile,
 Where yew and elm o'ershade the lowly fanes
 That guard the peasant's records and remains,
 May the blest echoes of the Sabbath-bell
 Sweet on the quiet of the woodlands swell,
 And from each cottage-dwelling of thy glades,
 When starlight glimmers through the deepening shades,
 Devotion's voice in choral hymns arise,
 And bear the land's warm incense to the skies. (34-5)

This scene, for all its arcadian attractiveness, has political overtones. Hemans sets the scene among the "lowly fanes" and "cottage-dwellings" of the "peasants." As I have argued in section one, talk of domestic virtues and religious submission was often used to inculcate acceptance of one's social position. This tendency may not be unrelated to Hemans's poem. In a letter to Gifford, Hemans explains that The Sceptic is "meant as a picture of the dangers resulting to public and private virtue and happiness from the doctrines of Infidelity."³⁵ A review in the Quarterly sees a class message in the poem; it praises Hemans's "laudable indignation at the doctrines disseminated with industry, principally (but by no means exclusively, as has been falsely supposed) among the lower orders."³⁶ Considering the context

35. Hemans to Gifford, 17 November 1819, John Murray Archives.

36. qtd. in Poems, 114.

of the poem's composition--Hemans's writing in St. Asaph in 1819--one is tempted to see behind her portrayal of contented, peaceable peasants the threat of those disgruntled members of the "lower orders" who, just a few months earlier and 60 miles away, had congregated in frightening numbers at St. Peters field. In fact, the final verses quoted above bear a striking resemblance to Haydon's vision of his fellow citizens united in prayer--that vision which gave Haydon faith, even following Peterloo, that the British were "loyal, affectionate, brave, pious."

But I do not wish to leave as a final impression Hemans's political and class prejudices. To do so would be to obscure a great strength of The Sceptic specifically, and of Hemans's poetry in general: an exceeding of the gender boundaries of conventional domestic poetry. Whereas, in the elegy, Hemans's conservative political use of domesticity led to a diminishment in the image of Charlotte as woman, here Hemans continues to celebrate female strength. The closing scene of this poem presents a sharp contrast to the image of sighing, ethereal femininity which closed the elegy:

There may the mother, as with anxious joy
 To heaven her lessons consecrate her boy,
 Teach his young accent still the immortal lays
 Of Zion's bards, in inspiration's days,
 When angels, whispering through the cedar shade,
 Prophetic tones to Judah's harp convey'd. . . . (35)

Though Hemans's religious impulses may tend to support conservative political positions, she also sees Christianity as a source of equality and freedom. The mother assumes a place of importance among the Church Fathers, even taking on the priestly role of "consecrating" her child. She also continues the traditions of "Zion's bards." The bard is an important character throughout Hemans's poetry, representing power and independence. In a letter written around this same time, Hemans quotes approvingly the title of the ancient British bards: "Those who are free throughout the world."³⁷

In the final lines of the poem, Hemans moves beyond celebrating female strength to extoll love and sacrifice in both genders:

And as, her soul all glistening in her eyes,
 She bids the prayer of infancy arise,
 Tell of his name who left his throne on high,
 Earth's lowliest lot to bear and sanctify,
 His love divine, by keenest anguish tried,
 And fondly say--"My child, for thee He died!"³⁸

Hemans's image of Christ is one which combines humility and power. Instead of melancholy self-abasement, here is humility "sanctified." Whereas Hemans's contemporaries might have interpreted Alcestis as representing proper feminine self-sacrifice, the poet uses Christ's example to explode such

37. qtd. in Chorley, 1:101.

38. Hemans, The Sceptic, 35.

gender boundaries. Significantly, the mother is teaching this lesson to a male child--the scene would read much differently if the mother were teaching the same lesson of humble submission to a daughter. In The Sceptic, Hemans insists that love able to withstand "exceeding anguish," and the self-sacrifice prompted by such love, are not the exclusive qualities of any gender.

Chapter 7

The Mask of Sympathy: Shelley's Address to the People on the Death of Princess Charlotte

This study of Princess Charlotte opened with two tableaux: the British nation awash in blood spilled by the rebellious working classes, and the same nation united in prayerful mourning for Princess Charlotte. In subsequent chapters, I structured my argument around these tableaux and their implications, setting monarchical discipline (represented by the Derbyshire executions) against an emergent ideology combining domestic affection and private discipline (represented by the mythology of Princess Charlotte). Since the idea for juxtaposing these two events was first suggested to me by Shelley's Address to the People on the Death of Princess Charlotte, an analysis of that work will provide a fitting conclusion to the present study.

The difference between Shelley's Address and the elegies already studied is clear even on the title page. At the top of the page is printed in large letters, "We pity the plumage, but forget the dying bird," a quotation from Thomas Paine's Rights of Man.¹ For those familiar with Paine's work,

1. Percy Bysshe Shelley, An Address to the People on the Death of the Princess Charlotte, in The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed.

the meaning of the epigraph would have been obvious. It is a critique of Edmund Burke's reaction, expressed in his Reflections on the Revolution in France, to the executions of French royalty:

Not one glance of compassion, not one commiserating reflection . . . has he [Burke] bestowed on those who lingered out the most wretched of lives . . . in the most miserable of prisons. . . . He is not affected by the reality of distress touching upon his heart, but by the showy resemblance of it striking his imagination. He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird.²

The criticism is appropriate for many of the elegies to Princess Charlotte, which use a "showy resemblance" of domestic bliss cut short to obfuscate the political realities of the Princess's life and of her society. Shelley's critical stance sets his Address apart from the elegies by Southey, Byron, and Hemans (and, indeed, from all the Charlotte elegies I have studied.) The implications of the epigraph, however, will come to haunt Shelley himself. The gap between outer appearance (plumage) and inner reality (dying bird) will become a sticking point in Shelley's argument, as will the danger of misplaced sympathy. Shelley has changed Paine's second-person pronoun to the first person plural, thus

E. B. Murray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 1:229. Subsequent references to Shelley's works, unless otherwise noted, will use page numbers in this edition and will be cited parenthetically.

2. Thomas Paine, The Rights of Man, in Collected Writings (New York: Library of America, 1995), 448.

implicating himself--probably unintentionally--in the charge of misdirected sympathy.

Shelley's title, "An Address to the People on the Death of the Princess Charlotte," hints at another recurring problem in Shelley's pamphlet. This problem centers on what Shelley intends by the designation "the People." At first, one might say that Shelley means the masses, those poor laborers to whom he presented his "Address to the Irish People." Stephen C. Behrendt, in his excellent study of Shelley's audiences, assumes that this is indeed the intended audience of the pamphlet.³ Shelley does often define "the people" in this sense. Writing to Byron in September, 1816, Shelley describes the bad harvest in England and adds, "Most earnestly do I hope that despair will not drive the people to premature and useless struggle."⁴ Two months later, Shelley notes that "the tumultuous state of England" presents "a most threatening aspect," but that "the people appear steady and calm."⁵ In these letters, "the people" refers clearly to the working classes. (Shelley's attitude toward armed rebellion by the working classes will be important later.)

The Address, however, seems to deny a working-class audience. Its style is much more sophisticated than that of

3. Stephen C. Behrendt, Shelley and His Audiences (Lincoln, Neb. and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 33-38.

4. Shelley to Byron, 11 September 1816, The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck (New York and London: Ernest Benn, 1965), 9:197.

5. Shelley to Byron, 20 November 1816, Complete Works, 9:204.

Shelley's other "popular" works: it is replete with literary allusions and foreign phrases. This discrepancy leads E. B. Murray to posit a middle-and upper-class audience.⁶ A letter to Ollier written shortly after the pamphlet indicates a similar shift. Shelley condemns Ollier's reluctance to publish Laon and Cythna:

The people who visit your shop, and the wretched bigot who gave his worthless custom to some other bookseller, are not the public. The public respect talent; and a large portion of them are already undeceived with regard to the prejudices which my book attacks.⁷

This letter and Shelley's Address both reveal an uncertainty concerning audience. In them, "the people" and "the public" do not seem necessarily (or even primarily) to refer to actual readers. Rather, Shelley is defining his own audience; those enlightened persons who respect talent are, by definition, "the public." In defining his own audience, however, Shelley runs the risk of preaching to the converted, or even worse, of creating such an idealized audience that, Cassandra-like, he preaches to no one. Questions of the relations among Shelley's argument and class and audience will figure prominently in the Address.

Shelley signed his pamphlet as the "Hermit of Marlow." He probably did so to avoid the prejudice of readers and

6. Shelley, Prose Works, 455.

7. Shelley to Ollier 11 December 1817, Complete Works, 9:263.

critics who were familiar with his infamous Queen Mab and with the recently settled custody suit in which the poem played a prominent part. But the connotations of the word hermit are also important to the Address. The word implies a withdrawal from active affairs which seems applicable to Shelley's situation. In 1816-1817, Shelley did undergo a change in his sense of mission. He began to focus less on immediate popular reform and more on the transformation of ways of thought.⁸ Shelley's shifting definitions of "public" and "people" may reflect this change. The word hermit also carries connotations of self-discipline. Discipline has been an important issue throughout my discussion of the Princess Charlotte myth; it will become crucial for Shelley as well. Finally, the economic connotations of hermit are germane. As a person who did no actual labor, a hermit occupied a vague economic position. Some were economically independent. However, others were also dependent on charity--a fact indicated by a secondary meaning of hermit as vagabond or mendicant. Shelley's self-appellation, like his title and epigraph, indicates not only the general direction of his argument but also some of its potential difficulties.

The opening sentences of the Address present Charlotte's death with surprising bluntness:

The Princess Charlotte is dead. She no longer moves, nor

8. Newman I. White, Shelley (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940), 1:513.

thinks, nor feels. She is as inanimate as the clay with which she is about to mingle. It is a dreadful thing to know that she is a putrid corpse, who but a few days since was full of life and hope; a woman young, innocent, and beautiful, snatched from the bosom of domestic peace, and leaving that single vacancy which none can die and leave not. (231)

Shelley's de-metaphorizing is striking: instead of a blasted flower, the Princess is a "putrid corpse." Yet equally surprising is Shelley's sudden shift in tone to a typically sentimental description of the princess. Like Southey and many other elegists, Shelley does not see Charlotte's mental powers, but only the passive traits of youth, innocence, and beauty. He seems also to use private affections to arouse sympathy for the Princess, who has been "snatched from the bosom of domestic peace." This description would have appealed to the middle-class readers of sentimental poetry and fiction which composed the audience for most Charlotte elegies. From its beginning, Shelley's Address manifests an ambivalence about the uses of domesticity and sympathy.⁹

In section II, Shelley begins to shift the focus of sympathy away from Charlotte. He presents a sentimental death scene: a man sits by the bed of his wife, anxiously watching

9. Shelley critics have tended to focus on the rhetorical and political aspects of the Address and have therefore overlooked the important issue of sentiment. They have also overlooked the parallels between the Address and Shelley's personal situation in 1817.

the doctor's face for any sign of the wife's condition. The scene recalls the melodramatic rewritings of Charlotte's deathbed scene (see chapter one). But Shelley emphasizes that such domestic tragedies occur in the lower classes as well: "Thus much the death of the Princess Charlotte has in common with the death of thousands" (231). Shelley's tactic here, in one sense, is the same as that of the writers I have discussed previously, who use the domestic affections as a mask of unity crossing class lines (see especially chapter three). Shelley's goal, however, is different. He seeks to foster among the middle and upper classes sympathetic identification with the lower, whereas most other writers seek the opposite. The association of sympathy with images of masking--already intimated in Shelley's Address by the epigraph's vesture imagery--will continue to be important.

But juxtaposed with this sentimentalizing of the poor is another argument, one concerning economic injustice. Shelley puts his melodramatic descriptions in a class context, using the sympathy of domestic affections to arouse the reader to the economic plight of the masses, who suffer and die just as the Princess did:

Yet thousands of the poorest poor, whose misery is
 aggravated by what cannot be spoken now, suffer this.
 And have they no affections? Do not their hearts beat in
 their bosoms, and the tears gush from their eyes? Are
 they not human flesh and blood? Yet none weep for them--

none mourn for them--none when their coffins are carried to the grave (if indeed the parish furnishes a coffin for all) turn aside and moralize upon the sadness they have left behind. (213-2)

Throughout this passage, Shelley emphasizes economic factors. The misery of the poor is not merely private, but is aggravated by outside factors. In contrast to the lavish funeral rites for the princess, the poor have coffins only through charity (if at all). In these sentences, Shelley's use of the cultural categories of domesticity is an excellent example of what Marshall Sahlins calls the "subjective risk of categories of reference," the conscious redetermination of cultural concepts by individuals using them.¹⁰ This redetermination, however, is not consistent throughout Shelley's pamphlet. The seemingly rhetorical question concerning the poor, "And have they no affections?"--clearly answered in the affirmative in this section by Shelley's sentimental description--will take on increasing urgency as the argument progresses, ultimately becoming an earnest question about the nature of society and sympathy.

In the midst of these scenes of domestic tragedy, among the deaths of those wives and mothers whose lives are a "chain of happiness and union," is a single sentence: "Some have perished in penury or shame, and their orphan baby has

10. Marshall Sahlins, Islands of History (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 149-150.

survived, a prey to the scorn and neglect of strangers" (231). This sentence presents something different from the surrounding images of happy domesticity cut short by death. The use of the conjunction "or" rather than "and" implies that, in some cases, the shame of the dead mother is not caused by poverty; the connotations of the word "shame" would seem rather to indicate prostitution or adultery. One would perhaps not be unjustified in reading this description in the context of the death, the previous year, of Shelley's estranged wife Harriet--whom Shelley accused of both prostitution and adultery. The circumstances of her suicide had been kept painfully alive for Shelley throughout 1817 by the Chancery suit for custody of his children. Only a few months before Shelley's writing of the pamphlet, he found out that his children would be denied him, leaving them essentially orphaned and vulnerable to the "scorn and neglect of strangers." I do not deny that any allusion to Harriet in this passage is only the merest hint and may be unconscious on Shelley's part. Yet I hope to show that this personal domestic crisis adds urgency to Shelley's analysis of sympathy.

The next two sections, III and IV, are crucial steps in Shelley's argument. In them, he attempts to justify his criticism of the public mourning for Princess Charlotte by redefining the origins and purpose of public mourning. But, as Esther Schor has noted, Shelley's argument reveals an

ambivalence about the relationship between public mourning rites and private grief.¹¹ The ambivalence is clear in the juxtaposition of two sentences which present two differing accounts of mourning:

Men do well to mourn for the dead: it proves that we love something beside ourselves; and he must have a hard heart who can see his friend depart to rottenness and dust, and speed him without emotion on his voyage to "that bourne whence no traveller returns." To lament for those who have benefited the state, is a habit of piety yet more favourable to the cultivation of our best affections. (232)

The first sentence defines mourning as an internal state, an emotion symbolized by external signs. This type of grief is evidence of human sympathy, the ability to "love something beside ourselves." For Shelley, such sympathy is the basis of human morality. In A Defence of Poetry, he identifies the "great secret of morals" as "Love, or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own."¹² This capacity for love and sympathy is closely allied with the imagination; and as such, it is beyond the control of

11. Esther H. Schor, "A Nation's Sorrow. A People's Tears: the Politics of Mourning Princess Charlotte," in Burying the Dead: the British Culture of Mourning from the Enlightenment to Victoria (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994), 205-207.

12. Percy Bysshe Shelley, A Defence of Poetry, in Shelley's Poetry and Prose, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: Norton, 1977), 487.

reason or will. The resistance of imaginative sympathy to all control is a constant theme in Shelley's writings, dating as far back as his declaration, in the notes to Queen Mab, that "Love is free."¹³ The attempt to separate sympathy from self-discipline sets Shelley's work apart from the other writers I have examined, whose ideology often combines domestic affections with private discipline. The attempt to separate sympathy and discipline, as I hope to show, creates problems for Shelley's argument.¹⁴

The second sentence in the above quotation presents a very different picture of mourning than the first. The difference is indicated by Shelley's substitution of the word lament for mourn. The former has stronger connotations of external expression (derived from Latin lamentor, to weep or wail). Subsequent sentences provide an example of this kind of mourning. When Milton died, Shelley writes, "it had been well that the universal nation had been clothed in solemn black" (232). In this second definition, mourning is a sign--literally vesture, again recalling Paine's image. But the relationship of sign to signified is complicated. Lamenting for public figures is a "habit of piety," a phrase combining connotations of self-discipline and mental state. This

13. Shelley, Complete Works, 1:141.

14. Shelley's problematic theory of moral sympathy may have been influenced by his reading of Hume. John Mullan finds similar difficulties in Hume's attempts to establish sympathy as the foundation of society--"Sympathy and the Production of Society," in Sentiment and Sociability: the Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988). 18-56.

lamentation is not an effect of sympathy; rather, it is a contributing cause--it "cultivate[s]" a person's "best affections." The relationship between appearance and essence now is reversed: the mourning dress elicits rather than expresses sympathy. Public mourning, according to Shelley, "helps to maintain that connexion between one man and another, and all men considered as a whole, which is the bond of social life" (232).

Shelley's attempt to negotiate between private mourning as emotion and public lamentation as rite leads to complications for his theory of moral sympathy. Shelley admits that "we cannot truly grieve for every one who dies beyond the circle of those especially dear to us." The assertion fits with the formulation of sympathy as spontaneous emotion, beyond the power of will. But Shelley is then left without the larger circles of sympathy which are so important to his scheme of society. So he quickly adds a qualification: "yet in the extinction of the objects of public love and admiration, and gratitude, there is something, if we enjoy a liberal mind, which has departed from within that circle." The qualification, however, redefines public mourning, not as a habit of piety which "cultivates the affections," but as the outward expression of a private grief for public figures. The clause "if we enjoy a liberal mind" further qualifies Shelley's assertion; this type of broad sympathy is not characteristic of all men. Yet

the very thing Shelley criticizes in his Address is that too many people have such "liberal" sentiment for public figures. As the elegies to Charlotte continually emphasize, the death of the princess affected the British people like the death of a family member.

At the close of section III, Shelley broadens the class of subjects worthy of public mourning; all people should mourn, not only the deaths of great persons, but also "the rule of foreign or domestic tyrants, the abuse of public faith, the wresting of old and venerable laws to the murder of the innocent, the established insecurity of all those, the flower of the nation, who cherish an unconquerable enthusiasm for the public good" (232). Shelley, like Hemans, redefines the poetical commonplace which describes Charlotte as "the flower of the nation"; but Shelley specifically politicizes it by applying it to those who strive for "public good." In his list of political abuses, Shelley is describing the situation of Brandreth, Ludlam, and Turner; however, at this early point in his argument, he purposefully remains non-specific. He does begin to focus his argument by referring to the trials of Horne Tooke and Thomas Hardy, who, like the Derby insurgents, were accused of treason. If Tooke and Hardy had been convicted, Shelley writes, "it had been good that there had been not only the sorrow and the indignation which would have filled all hearts, but the external symbols of grief" (232). Again, Shelley defines public mourning as the

"external symbols" of spontaneous private grief. But here, Shelley does not limit the sympathy only to those possessed of a "liberal mind"; he confidently asserts that "sorrow and . . . indignation . . . would have [not "might have"] filled all hearts" (emphasis added).

The next section of the Address, section IV, is only two sentences long; but it is vital to Shelley's argument because, in it, he attempts to put forth the conditions for appropriate public mourning. The first sentence encapsulates the problems Shelley has had in defining the relationship between public lamentation and private grief:

But this appeal to the feelings of men should not be made lightly, or in any manner that tends to waste, on inadequate objects, those fertilising streams of sympathy which a public mourning should be the occasion of pouring forth. (233)

Public mourning is both a "pouring forth," an expression of private sentiment, and an "appeal to the feelings," a means of eliciting private sentiment. Shelley also makes explicit the critique of sympathy which has been implicit in his pamphlet since the epigraph: because it is not subject to reason or will, sympathy can be misdirected. The notion of sympathy as expenditure, susceptible to being "wasted," seems to contradict the idea expressed in the previous section, in which sympathy is self-generating. The idea of sympathy as expenditure will become important in section VIII, when

Shelley turns to economic matters.

In light of the dangers of sympathy, Shelley tries to identify when public mourning is appropriate:

This solemnity should be used only to express a wide and intelligible calamity, and one which is felt to be such by those who feel for their country and for mankind; its character ought to be universal, not particular. (233)

The attempt to discover a basis for sympathy, however, raises additional problems because the basis itself is one of sympathy. An object is appropriate when it "is felt" to be appropriate, but only by those "who feel" for humanity. Rather than establish a basis, then, Shelley describes recursive levels of sympathy. His attempt to define proper public mourning also includes redefining "the public." Proper mourning is that which is felt by those people of a "liberal mind" to whom Shelley refers in his letter to Ollier. Thus, at this crucial point, Shelley has established sympathy as the basis of morality. But, because he defines sympathy (and the related characteristics of love and imagination) as beyond the control of will or reason, he must account for the dangers of misdirection. Consequently, he tries to find a justifiable basis in the sympathy of a narrowly defined public.

In the next two sections of Shelley's pamphlet, V and VI, notwithstanding the difficulties he has encountered in defining mourning and sympathy, Shelley attempts to redirect

public sympathy away from Princess Charlotte to the three men executed at Derby. Section V attempts to lessen sympathy for the princess by using two not wholly compatible tactics: first, by giving a new valence to the popular image of the princess; second, by applying to her the typical critique of royalty. For the first tactic, Shelley reverts to the popular description he has already used in section I; he describes Charlotte as possessing only private, feminine traits: "If beauty, youth, innocence, amiable manners, and exercise of the domestic virtues could alone justify public sorrow when they are extinguished for ever, this interesting Lady would well deserve that exhibition." But, in contrast to most other elegists, for whom Charlotte's domestic virtues justify the nation's grief, Shelley claims that the private nature of Charlotte's virtues makes public mourning inappropriate. She deserves public mourning no more than the "thousands of others equally distinguished as she" (233).

At the same time that Shelley praises Charlotte for her private virtues, however, he criticizes her for sharing the faults of royalty. "She was born a princess," Shelley writes, "and those who are destined to rule mankind are dispensed with acquiring that wisdom and that experience which is necessary even to rule themselves" (233). Shelley revives the comparison, made as early as 1805 in Hannah More's Hints, of Charlotte with Jane Grey and Queen Elizabeth. For Shelley, however, the latter two are superior: "She was not like Lady

Jane Grey, or Queen Elizabeth, a woman of profound and various learning" (233). According to E. B. Murray, Shelley was probably influenced in his view of Charlotte's knowledge by other liberal writers.¹⁵ As I have indicated in chapter one, the discussion of Charlotte's intelligence was often a veiled argument about her fitness to rule.

Shelley's reference to the inability of royalty "even to rule themselves" adds a new element to his argument, that of self-discipline (an element perhaps hinted at in his self-title "Hermit"). Shelley's ironic statement about royalty expresses succinctly the difference between monarchical rule and private discipline which has been one of the primary foci of my preceding chapters. But in contrast to other writers, who use Charlotte as a model of domestic discipline through which to criticize the excesses of royalty, Shelley includes her in his condemnation. At this point in the pamphlet, Shelley does not address the obvious problem of reconciling discipline with his theory of spontaneous, unrestricted sympathy as the basis of morality--a problem that will become critical in subsequent sections.

In section VI, Shelley, having lessened the sympathy for Charlotte, attempts to build it for Brandreth, Ludlam, and Turner. However, if Shelley is to build sympathy for these men, he must counteract the abstracting effect of public

15. Shelley, Prose Works, 452-3.

executions. This effect is described by Hegel in his newspaper essay "Who Thinks Abstractly," which I discussed in my introduction. According to Hegel, those watching an execution often abstract the person being executed, making him or her merely a representation of the crime. To overcome this effect and to build sympathy for Brandreth, Ludlam, and Turner, Shelley uses the rhetoric of domestic affection. The three men, Shelley insists, also "had domestic affections, and were remarkable for the exercise of private virtues." He stresses their domesticity by contrasting them with the royal family. The men "had sons, and brothers, and sisters, and fathers, who loved them, it should seem, more than the Princess Charlotte could be loved by those whom the regulations of her rank had held in perpetual estrangement from her" (233-4)--a not-so-veiled reference to the strained relationship between Charlotte and her parents and to Charlotte's lack of siblings due to her parents' separation. Shelley also presents melodramatically the sufferings of the families of the executed men, focusing on Turner's brother, who "fell into a fit" at the execution. Curiously, Shelley's descriptions of the domestic happiness of the men do not include mothers or wives. The reason for this omission is not clear; but, in light of Shelley's own domestic situation, he may be attempting to present an image of domestic happiness in which the wife-mother is not necessary.

Again, the reference to Shelley's own domestic situation

is only the slightest hint--if it is present at all. But a literary allusion in this section seems to support such a reading. Refusing to speculate on what became of the executed men after death, Shelley appends in a footnote a quotation from Cymbeline: "Your death has eyes in his head--mine is not painted so" (234). Cymbeline was staged in London in 1817; so, beyond the appropriateness of the line itself, many of Shelley's readers could have drawn parallels between the dramatic situation of Shakespeare's play and the events at Derby. The line is spoken by Posthumus, who has been wrongly imprisoned and is awaiting execution (though he is ultimately freed). In addition, those familiar with Shelley's estrangement from Harriet could not have failed to notice another parallel. Posthumus, like Shelley, is a "worthy gentleman" with money problems (which will become important later in the Address). And Posthumus's wife, Imogen, believing that her husband has committed adultery, attempts to kill herself. The Shakespeare quotation strengthens the links between Shelley's public purpose and his private crisis. The primary object of Shelley's criticism in the Address is what he sees as the misdirected sympathy of the public for Princess Charlotte. But this public purpose parallels the personal crisis of Shelley's relationship with Harriet. In the degeneration of that relationship, Shelley was made profoundly aware of the uneasy relationship between sympathy, morality, and the will. He discovered the tragic

consequences that could result when his own spontaneous "streams of sympathy" flowed toward what he came to consider an "inadequate object."

Shelley closes section VI by contrasting the emotions elicited by the death of Charlotte and those elicited by the Derby executions. In a case such as Charlotte's, which was a natural death, "grief and agony" are proper; "such sorrow improves the heart" (234). But from executions, not grief but "revenge, and hatred, and a long train of executions, and assassinations, and proscriptions is perpetuated to remotest time" (234). The contrast is the opposite of that made by Shelley in section IV. There, grief for Charlotte "tends to waste" the "fertilising streams of sympathy" on "inadequate objects," whereas deaths such as those at Derby are appropriate objects of mourning. Here, Charlotte's death produces salutary sympathy, but the Derby executions produce destructive passions. Shelley is still ambivalent about the public function of private sympathy.

Shelley's description of the effects of public executions echoes Paine's in The Rights of Man. Paine is again criticizing Burke, who condemns the barbarous executions by the French mob. Paine counters that the masses learn cruelty from the state. He notes that the specific act Burke condemns, placing heads on pikes, has been used by the English government. Thus, state executions often have the opposite effect than that of deterring crime:

The effect of those cruel spectacles exhibited to the populace, is to destroy tenderness, or excite revenge; and by the base and false idea of governing men by terror, instead of reason, they become precedents.¹⁶

Paine insists that the people "teach governments humanity. It is their [the government's] sanguinary punishments which corrupt mankind."¹⁷ Paine's statements raise a new problem for Shelley's theory of moral sympathy. Executions and other acts of government tyranny have the tendency to "destroy" sympathy (or "tenderness"). This danger has already been lurking in Shelley's definition of mourning. His description of public mourning rites as "favourable to the cultivation of our best affections" implies the opposite possibility: that corrupt social structures will corrupt the affections. Shelley admits this possibility in his Preface to Laon and Cythna, also written in 1817. One of "the consequences of legitimate despotism," Shelley asserts, is "an utter extinction of the domestic affections."¹⁸ Thus, Shelley finds himself on the horns of a dilemma: either sympathy is spontaneous, and thus not subject to other influences--in which case it can be misdirected towards "unworthy" objects; or sympathy is fostered by external forces, in which case it can be destroyed by corrupt social structures. The latter

16. Paine, 454.

17. Paine, 454.

18. Percy Bysshe Shelley, Preface, Laon and Cythna, in Complete Works, 1:240. In this Preface, Shelley also re-emphasizes that "Love . . . is the sole law which should govern the moral world" (247).

possibility poses an immediate threat to Shelley's attempt to elicit sympathy for Brandreth, Ludlam, and Turner. Paine writes, "It is over the lowest class of mankind that government by terror is intended to operate, and it is there that it operates to worst effect."¹⁹ Faced with the social abjection of the Derby insurgents, how can Shelley insist that "they too had domestic affections"? And if they did possess these sympathies, how is Shelley to account for their bloody attempts at open rebellion--which Shelley describes as tending "to promote that anarchy which is . . . the enemy of freedom" (231)? The question "And have they no affections?" is no longer rhetorical.

The next section of Shelley's Address, section VII, attempts to solve the dilemma by shifting blame away from the Derby insurgents. Shelley hastens to reassure his readers that the men were wrongdoers and that, therefore, "some restraint ought indeed to be imposed" on them (235). But Shelley denies their primary agency as rebels. They are not wrongdoers per se; rather, "[t]hey are instruments of evil" (235). Consequently, Shelley must discover the "hands that wielded them" (235). This tactic, while it allows Shelley to shift blame away from the insurgents, presents a new difficulty. One of Shelley's aims in the Address is to build sympathy for the insurgents by countering the abstracting

19. Paine, 454.

function of public execution. But his description of them as helpless "instruments" works against this aim. In the following sections, Shelley creates a convoluted, contradictory chain of blame as he attempts to defend the validity of sympathy as a moral basis while accounting for the bloodshed in Derby, both anarchic and tyrannical. This process of assigning blame mirrors, on the level of public discourse, Shelley's more private attempt to create a chain of blame which can account for the failure of sympathy in his first marriage.

The first sentence of section VIII seems to establish clear blame for the unrest in Britain: "Kings and their ministers have in every age been distinguished from other men by a thirst for expenditure and bloodshed" (235). (Later, Shelley conveniently blames England's war against France on the bloodlust of the King, conveniently ignoring the enormous popular support for the war.) He also begins to shift blame from failures of moral sympathy to economic greed. The top of the chain seems to be the king, who effects his schemes through his "ministers." But, as Shelley begins to recount the history of the national debt, this picture of blame changes:

The government which the imperfect constitution of our representative assembly threw into the hands of a few aristocrats, improved the method of anticipating the

taxes by loans, invented by the ministers of William III, until an enormous debt had been created. (235)

Now blame has shifted. The ministers themselves, rather than the king, originated the system of debt. But the true power does not really lie with the ministers; rather, it rests in the hands of "a few aristocrats." Now the chain of blame leads to the aristocracy. This accusation is even clearer in Shelley's Philosophical View of Reform, written two years after the Address. There, Shelley asserts that, after the Glorious Revolution, the nobility "made the Crown the mask & pretence of their own authority." At this time began the "despotism" of the aristocratic "oligarchy," which, "under colour of administering the executive power lodged in the King, represented in truth the interests of the rich."²⁰

Ultimately, however, the burden of blame in the Address does not rest on the aristocracy. Shelley reserves his strongest criticism for what he designates a new aristocracy, one whose wealth comes from "gambling in the funds, or by subserviency to government, or some other villainous trade" (235-36). In A Philosophical View, he calls them "an aristocracy of attornies [sic] & excisemen, & directors, & government pensioners, usurers, stock jobbers, country bankers. . ."²¹ While Shelley has shifted the agent of blame,

20. Percy Bysshe Shelley, A Philosophical View of Reform, in Shelley and His Circle, ed. Donald H. Reiman (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1973), 6:1002.

21. Shelley, Philosophical View, 6:1016.

the motive remains the same as that ascribed to the king and his ministers: excessive desire for economic gain. Shelley is careful to distinguish the new aristocracy from the old:

They are not like the old aristocracy men of pride and honour, sans peur et sans tache, but petty piddling slaves. . . . They are not the 'Corinthian capital of polished society,' but the petty and creeping weeds which deface the rich tracery of its sculpture. (236)

Shelley must have been aware that, in distinguishing two aristocracies, he was oversimplifying. After all, one of his friends, Byron, was a titled nobleman who also had money invested in the funds. Another of his friends, and one of the most faithful, was Horace Smith, a "stock jobber" who also wrote poetry.

Why then did Shelley create this largely artificial distinction? His reluctance to blame the aristocracy for the nation's problems may have to do with his intended audience. If Shelley was writing to a middle-class audience, he had to walk a thin line. He could criticize the profligacy of the upper classes, who, as I have shown in chapter two, were popular targets. But he could not wholly condemn the upper classes, since many in the middle class aspired to join their ranks, and since the middle classes felt more solidarity with the upper classes than with the lower. Shelley understandably takes a moderate position. He does not call for the dissolution of social distinctions; rather, he claims that

financial injustice tends to "endanger the very foundations of all that is valuable in social order, and to provoke that anarchy which is at once the enemy of freedom" (236). He even seems to favor the support of some groups with public funds. In the past, the laborer only supported "the army and the pensioners, and the royal family, and the landholders." Shelley calls this support "a hard necessity to which it was well that he [the laborer] should submit" (236).

A concern for audience might account, in part, for Shelley's moderation and his reluctance to condemn the aristocracy outright. But it does not explain his creation and condemnation of the stock-jobber aristocracy. In fact, the tactic would tend to alienate a middle-class audience, many of whom would have had money in the funds. Shelley's virulence is so strong that it has led Michael Scrivener to describe the Address as "the most aristocratically antibourgeois" of Shelley's writings.²² Perhaps it was easier for Shelley to blame the fundholders as creditors than the aristocracy as debtors. For Shelley in November 1817, debt would have been an especially sensitive issue. Shelley was having extreme financial difficulties at the time; he had even been briefly imprisoned the previous month for debt.²³ Some of Shelley's attempts to gain money were uncomfortably

22. Michael Scrivener, Radical Shelley (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982), 136.

23. White, 540-542.

close to the very transactions for which he condemns the aristocratic government. As Shelley's financial situation became more desperate, he often resorted to post-obits-- borrowing money on the prospects of future income after the death of his father. But this kind of transaction is, on a personal level, the same as the government's borrowing money in anticipation of taxes, which Shelley identifies as the origin of the national debt, and hence of the nation's distresses.

In a pamphlet written earlier in 1817, A Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote, Shelley is evasive about his personal debt. He writes confidently, "I have an income of a thousand a year on which I support my wife and children in decent comfort and from which I satisfy certain large claims of general justice" (174). Shelley simplifies his domestic situation here by eliminating one mate and one set of children. (Shelley voluntarily gave Harriet two hundred out of his thousand pounds a year.) Shelley also neglects to mention that his income was not sufficient to support his various claims. Unlike others in the aristocracy, however, Shelley's debt was not primarily a matter of extravagance; indeed, much of Shelley's money really went to "general claims of justice," which included generous charity and the support of William Godwin and Leigh Hunt, among others.²⁴ But

24. White, 541.

the noble source of Shelley's debt just exacerbates the situation. If most of his debt was a result of sympathy and a desire to help others, then that debt is palpable evidence of the insufficiency of sympathy alone as the foundation of moral decisions. This problem helps explain Shelley's strange description, in section IV of the Address, of sympathy as a "stream" which, instead of being self-replenishing, could be "wasted," consumed irrevocably.

Unlike Byron, who had a considerable income from his writings, Shelley was almost exclusively dependent on his aristocratic privileges for his livelihood. This fact, as much as his awareness of audience, could account for his insisting that the public support of "landholders . . . is a hard necessity to which it was well that [the laborer] should submit." But for a man of Shelley's acute moral sensibilities, this dependence on a class structure to which he objected must have been a "hard necessity." The attempt to justify this situation may account for Shelley's defense of the values of the nobility. His condemnation of the stock-jobber aristocracy contains such a defense in negative form. The national debt gives the new aristocracy "the liberty of living in luxury and idleness":

And it does not give them this because they are more wise and meritorious than the rest, or because their leisure is spent in schemes of public good, or in those exercises of the intellect and the imagination, whose

creations ennoble or adorn a country. (235)

The self-justification of this passage is clear: Shelley can only defend his own "idleness" (at least his own abstention from manual labor) by seeing himself as serving a useful function. Yet this passage also reveals doubts about the purpose and value of imaginative efforts. Shelley cannot say for certain whether his efforts essentially change ("ennoble") his society or merely superficially "adorn" it. This ambivalence concerning the value of imagination and its expression as sympathy has been a constant (though implicit) theme in Shelley's Address. It is implied by Shelley's frequent use of vesture imagery to describe sympathy, from the epigraph's distinction between the plumage and the dying bird to the confusion between mourning as inner grief or as outer expression (the nation "clothed in solemn black"). The same ambivalence appears in Shelley's description of the aristocracy as the "Corinthian capital of polished society." In architecture, a capital occupies an ambiguous position architecturally between a means of support and an ornament. Likewise, the values of the aristocracy (or of Shelley as an aristocrat) may be either the foundation of national values, or mere decoration.

Shelley's description of the aristocracy as "sans peur et sans tache" (without fear and without stain) adds other, more personal overtones. The denial of moral stain anticipates the well-known passage in A Defence of Poetry,

where the image is applied, not to aristocrats, but poets. Shelley is vindicating the poets of the past (and, by implication, the poets of the present):

Their errors have been weighed and found to have been dust in the balance; if their sins "were as scarlet, they are now white as snow"; they have been washed in the blood of the mediator and the redeemer Time.²⁵

Again, Shelley's self-justification is clear. Interestingly, he does not deny the poets' faults, but rather recasts them as minor compared to the greatness of the poets' works. When he moves to the sins of contemporary poets, the defense becomes more obscure:

Observe in what a ludicrous chaos the imputations of real or fictitious crime have been confused in the contemporary calumnies against poetry and poets; consider how little is, as it appears--or appears, as it is; look to your own motives, and judge not, lest ye be judged.²⁶

The first sentence seems to admit the truth of at least some of the charges against contemporary poets. The second relies on a concept by now familiar, the gap between appearance and reality (here, the gap is emphasized by Shelley's redundancy). The admonition that others "judge not" also appears in a letter of Shelley's written around the same time

25. Reiman, 506.

26. Reiman, 506.

as the Defence. There, Shelley criticizes Southey for not "refraining from 'judging that you be not judged.'" This time, the crime is specified: Southey has judged Shelley for the death of Harriet. In reply, Shelley hints at, but does not elaborate upon, a chain of cause and effect for Harriet's death which excludes himself:

I am innocent of ill, either done or intended; the consequences you allude to flowed in no respect from me. If you were my friend I could tell you a history that would make you open your eyes; but I shall certainly never make the public my familiar confidant.²⁷

The final sentence emphasizes the distance between Shelley and "the public," a distance implied by his description of himself in the Address as a hermit. (There may also be a hint of criticism for Byron's tell-all poetry.) I must emphasize that I do not question Shelley's honesty here; he doubtless did not intentionally harm Harriet. But his honesty only intensifies the problem. How can sympathy--most clearly represented by the domestic affections--function as the basis of morality if it is subject to a caprice which can be so pernicious (even if "innocent") as to cause the death of another?

In a letter written to Mary four years earlier, shortly after Harriet died, Shelley details what he sees as the chain

27. Shelley to Southey, 17 August 1820, Complete Works, 10:204.

of blame leading to her death:

It seems that this poor woman--the most innocent of her abhorred and unnatural family--was driven from her father's house, and descended the steps of prostitution until she lived with a groom of the name of Smith, who deserting her, she killed herself.--There can be no question that the beastly viper her sister, unable to gain profit from her connexion with me--has secured to herself the fortune of the old man--who is now dying--by the murder of this poor creature.²⁸

Again, the sequence of cause and effect is not at all clear. Shelley blames Harriet's death on a Mr. Smith. Significantly, he does not deny that abandonment led to her death; he merely shifts the agency of abandonment away from himself--the fictitious-sounding name highlights the strategy. Considering Shelley's ambivalent attitude towards the lower classes, it is perhaps not coincidental that the blame has shifted to a servant. But Shelley also blames Harriet's death on her sister Eliza's desire for their father's inheritance. As in his chain of cause and effect leading to the Derby uprising, Shelley here shifts blame away from the shortcomings of domestic sympathies to economic greed. Thus, during the year 1817, Shelley was working with two parallel and interconnected chains of blame, one public, the other

28. Shelley to Mary Godwin, 16 December 1816, Complete Works, 9:212.

personal. Both deal with inadequacies of sympathy as moral basis--sympathy for the Derbyshire insurgents or the "domestic affections" of the insurgents themselves, Shelley's love for Harriet. Shelley is careful to erase himself from both chains, as aristocratic debtor in one and as unfaithful husband in the other.

In section IX of the Address, Shelley attempts to forge the final link of the chain of events--however tenuous--which can account for the insurrection in Derbyshire. The failure of this final link shows the weakness of the whole chain, and, at the same time, reveals the weakness of the chain of blame in Shelley's private crisis. In a final effort to shift responsibility away from the insurgents themselves, Shelley uses the spy Oliver as secret agent to replace the moral agency of the laborers themselves. The degree of guilt Oliver shared in the uprising is even today a matter of debate;²⁹ but, for Shelley, he provides another means of shifting blame away from questions of sympathy to those of desire for economic gain. Like the king, the stockjobbers, and Harriet's sister, Oliver and his fellow spies are motivated by "the

29. P. M. S. Dawson finds the stories merely rumors [The Unacknowledged Legislator: Shelley and Politics (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford UP, 1980), 176-7]. But E. P. Thompson believed the stories of entrapment, and he discusses Oliver's role in the uprising at length [Making of the English Working Class, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 649-666]. Frank O. Darvall agrees, surmising that Oliver overstepped his role as informant and became an agitator, thereby insuring the continued need for his own services [Popular Disturbances and Public Order in Regency England, (New York: A. M. Kelley, 1969), 278-9)].

great revenues . . . earned by a life of villainy" (237).

Nevertheless, Shelley still must account for the ability of a spy to persuade the laborers to revolt. Shelley notes that the conditions were ripe for rebellion in the industrial districts of the country: "discontent and disaffection had prevailed for many years; this was the consequence of that system of double aristocracy produced by the causes before mentioned" (236). As a result of this system, the laborers, "the helots of luxury," are left

famished, without affections, without health, without leisure or opportunity for such instruction as might counteract those habits of turbulence and dissipation, produced by the precariousness and insecurity of poverty. (236)

Again, Shelley faces the problem of accounting for sympathy. For the first time in the Address, Shelley addresses the possibility (discussed by Paine and by Shelley himself in the Laon and Cythna Preface) that tyrannical social structures leave the poor "without affections." He thus contradicts his earlier answer to the supposedly rhetorical question "And have they no affections?" If these men are without human sympathies, how can Shelley build sympathy for them in his audience? More importantly, if sympathy, rather than being a spontaneous outpouring of every human heart, is a "habit of piety," how can Shelley--or any other reformer--hope to cultivate that habit in the face of the more deeply

entrenched "habits of turbulence and dissipation"?

Shelley faces yet an even greater obstacle in linking the national debt, and its semi-fictitious stock-jobber aristocracy, with the Derby insurrection. In fact, for many of the participants in the uprising, a very different cause was operating. Thirteen of the thirty-five arraigned in Derby were framework-knitters--including Brandreth, the leader of the uprising.³⁰ In prison, Brandreth is reported to have said, "I need not care whether I live or die, for there are no 'Derbyshire ribs' now."³¹ Derbyshire ribs were a type of ribbed hosiery manufactured only in that county. They had been quite popular in the late eighteenth-century; but apparently, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, they had fallen out of fashion.³² It is likely that many of the other knitters who participated in the uprising had likewise been put out of a job because of this change in fashion. In a very real sense, then, vesture--a theme which haunts Shelley throughout the Address--plays a crucial role in the sequence of causes leading to the Derby uprising.

It cannot be stated for certain that Shelley was aware of Brandreth's story; he seems to have derived most of his information on the uprising from Hunt, and Hunt does not

30. E. P. Thompson, 667.

31. Joseph Arnould, Life of Thomas, First Lord Denman (New York: James Cockcroft and Co, n.d.), 1:88.

32. J. H. Lander, "Hosiery," in The Victoria History of Derbyshire, ed. William Page (London: Archibald Constable and Co, 1907), 2:367-68.

recount the story in his Examiner articles on the Derby uprising. But Shelley was at least aware of the type of economic mechanism at work in Derbyshire. While in Marlow, Shelley frequently visited the impoverished lace workers, whose jobs were likewise subject to the fluctuations of fashion.³³ The mechanism is damaging to Shelley's chain of blame because it places responsibility for the conditions of at least some of the laborers, not on the extraordinary greed of the fundholders or the king, but on the seemingly innocuous caprice of middle-class fashion.

Around the time of his writing the Address, Shelley was thinking specifically about the relationship between sympathy and economics. In a fragment on marriage, most likely written late in 1817, Shelley posits a similar origin for laws regulating marriage and those regulating property.³⁴ He speculates that early humans, "like other animals used promiscuous concubinage":

No moral affections arose from the indulgence of a physical impulse, nor did the relations of parent and child endure longer than is essential for the preservation of the latter. The circumstance of pleasure being attached to the fulfillment of the sexual functions rendered that which was the object of their exercise a possession analogous in value to those

33. White, 517.

34. See Shelley, Prose Works, 478, for the dating of the fragment.

articles of luxury or necessity which maintain or
delight the existence of a savage. (276)

The sexual impulse, rather than being an expression of "moral affections," is similar to that for luxury goods. In other words, the choice of mate would be of a kind with the choice of stockings. (As I have shown in chapter six, Byron makes a similar argument in Childe Harold IV, claiming that "Love, fame, ambition, avarice" all share the same structure.)

Shelley further speculates that marriage laws arose from "the same dread of insecurity" that gave rise to the laws regulating property. Though Shelley never finished this fragment, the drift of the argument seems to be that restrictive marriage laws, like those regulating property, should not be necessary in civilized society. Such laws actually obscure the true meaning of right and wrong. Something which is a crime (that is, against the law) may not be morally wrong: "The origin of law was the origin of crime, altho' the ideas of right and wrong must have subsisted from the moment that one human being could sympathise in the pains and pleasure of another" (275).

In this fragment, Shelley has created two originary narratives, one to account for the origin of law, the other for the origin of right and wrong. But these two narratives depend on two incompatible definitions of love. In the first--which could be called the Byronic model--love arises from sexual desire, which, like the related desire for

possessions, is capricious. But in the second, or Shelleyan model, love and sympathy are the natural consequence of one person's sensitivity to another. Shelley never reconciles these two stories; missing from his argument is the transition from sexual relations as capricious lust to sympathy as moral interaction.

In fact, Shelley insists that the caprice of the sexual connection, and of love as its emotional counterpart, is basic and right. In the notes to Queen Mab, he writes that it would be absurd to attempt to control friendships by law; even more absurd, therefore, is the attempt to regulate love, which is "more vehement and capricious, more dependent on those delicate peculiarities of imagination, and less capable of deduction to the ostensible merits of the object." Shelley complains that "Law pretends to govern the indisciplinable wanderings of passion"; by "appeals to the will," it attempts "to subdue the involuntary affections of our nature."³⁵ In his Address, Shelley condemns royalty because they lack the discipline to "rule themselves," but his theory of moral sympathy places at the basis of human society a force which is explicitly "indisciplinable." In other words, even in its most idealized form, Shelley's concept of sympathy does not differ essentially from his descriptions of primitive sexual caprice, which in turn does not differ from the desire for

35. Shelley, Complete Works, 1:141.

property or luxuries. Thus, Shelley's careful attempts, in his public and private chains of blame, to shift blame away from failures of sympathy to lust for economic gain, are really only matters of terminology; sympathy and greed share the same structure--perhaps even the same origin.

Shelley became acutely aware of the risks of his concept of sympathy when he met and fell in love with Mary in 1814. Thomas Love Peacock remembers Shelley at this time as in the grip of a "sudden, violent, irresistible, uncontrollable passion." Tellingly, Peacock describes Shelley's mind as "suffering, like a little kingdom, the nature of an insurrection."³⁶ Peacock's paraphrase from Julius Caesar may impute blame to Shelley since, in the original, the line describes one's mental state before "the acting of a dreadful thing" and refers specifically to murder. Like royalty, Shelley seems unable to rule himself. In a letter to Hogg written at the time, Shelley describes his own feelings:

I speedily conceived an ardent passion to possess this inestimable treasure. In my own mind this feeling assumed a variety of shapes. I disguised from myself the true nature of affection. I endeavored also to conceal it from Mary: but without success. I was vacillating [sic] & infirm of purpose: I shuddered to transgress a real duty, & could not in this instance perceive the

36. Thomas Love Peacock, Memoirs of Shelley and Other Essays and Reviews, ed. Howard Mills, (New York: New York UP, 1970), 54.

boundaries by which virtue was separated from madness, where self devotion becomes the very prodigality of idiotism. Her understanding was made clear by a spirit that sees into the truth of things, & affections preserved pure & sacred from the corrupting contamination of vulgar superstitions. No expressions can convey the remotest conception of the manner in which she dispelled my delusions.³⁷

Shelley's speculations in the marriage fragment concerning the nature of sexual attraction give added meaning to the metaphor of Mary as a "treasure" he desires to "possess"; they also highlight the economic connotations of the word "prodigality." Under the sway of "indisciplinable" sympathy, Shelley has trouble separating "virtue and madness."

How, then, can Shelley justify his actions and rescue sympathy from the imputations of madness and "idiotism"? He uses a familiar tactic--the gap between surface and essence. Shelley claims that, in trying to discipline his love for Mary, he has "disguised . . . the true nature of affection." His sense of responsibility to Harriet is not a "real duty," but rather one of the "delusions" dispelled by Mary. The word "delusion" also appears in the Charlotte pamphlet. There, Shelley refers to the whole system of national finance,

37. Shelley to T. J. Hogg, 14 October 1814, Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. Frederick Jones (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 1:403.

including the debt, paper money, and the sinking fund, as a "delusion" which, when it fails, will produce "misery and confusion through all classes of society" (238). In the letter and the pamphlet, Shelley sees the delusions of repressive social forms--restrictive marriage customs and unjust economic systems--as masks hiding the reality of private and social sympathy. But in the letter, as elsewhere, Shelley's separation of surface and essence begins immediately to collapse. In contrast to Mary's affections, which have remained "pure & sacred," Shelley's have been tainted by the "corrupting contamination of vulgar superstitions." The corruption (and even destruction) of the domestic affections by social structures--a threat which applies to the poor in the Address--Shelley here relates to himself. Once again, he is forced to admit the possibility of the surface contaminating the essence.

Not surprisingly, Shelley's theory of moral sympathy, which presents the affections as susceptible to corrupting influences but beyond the control of the will, created problems for the poet in his Chancery suit over custody of his children by Harriet. In his written defense, he attempts to defend his theory of domestic affections. He assures his audience, "[M]y motives of preference towards her [his second wife] arose from no light or frivolous attachment, but such as in their [society's] sense of the word, as well as in mine, I wish to express by the word 'wife'" (167). Shelley

closes by insisting that his feelings for Mary are "sincere," and that they are the consequence, not of his own "peculiar tenets," but rather "of the common affections of human nature." Again, one need not question Shelley's honesty; his feelings for Mary were doubtless "sincere," and he correctly identifies those feelings as the "common affections of human nature." But as with his well-intentioned debt, the innocence of his motives merely highlights the weakness of sympathy as moral basis.

In his Address on Charlotte's death, Shelley's attempts to deal with multiple interconnected issues--sympathy and discipline, public and private, expenditure and debt, surface and essence--have led him into tortuous arguments. It is not surprising, therefore, that the final section of the Address, the peroration, is equally tortuous. Shelley begins by exhorting the British nation to mourn:

Mourn then People of England. Clothe yourselves in solemn black. Let the bells be tolled. Think of mortality and change. Shroud yourselves in solitude and the gloom of scared sorrow. Spare no symbol of universal grief. Weep--mourn--lament. Fill the great City--fill the boundless fields, with lamentation and the echo of groans.

Each of these sentences is phrased as an imperative. Notwithstanding his own definition of sympathy as beyond control, Shelley attempts to direct the sympathies of the

nation. Images of vesture return. But now they not only refer to outer garments worn by mourners; they even co-opt the affections--"the gloom of sacred sorrow" is itself a "[s]hroud." The inner essence, the sympathetic basis Shelley has tried to discover, seems to be receding as the passage continues. By the end, the nation's reaction is no longer inward sorrow, nor even the outward groans expressing that sorrow; it is merely "the echo of groans."

The inversion of the vesture metaphor represents the final threat to Shelley's theory of sympathy--the threat that sympathy itself is merely a superficial disguise. This possibility provides an answer to the enigma in Shelley's fragment on marriage. There, Shelley is unable to account for the transition from primitive lust (sexual and economical) to civilized sympathy. But what if sympathy is merely a dress, a veneer of civilization imposed on those lusts? Shelley deals with this very problem in A Defence of Poetry (which might also be called a Defence of Imagination, or a Defence of a Poet). Shelley defines the "poetical faculty," or imagination:

It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought: it is that from which all spring, and that which adorns all. . . .³⁸

This description reveals the same confusion of essence and

38. Reiman, 503.

surface which characterizes Shelley's Address. Do all systems of thought "spring" from imagination, or does the imagination merely "adorn" human thought? As Shelley continues, he drops the former possibility:

It is the perfect and consummate surface and bloom of all things; it is as the odour and the colour of the rose to the texture of the elements which compose it, as the form and the splendour of unfaded beauty to the secrets of anatomy and corruption.³⁹

Now imagination is purely surface appearance. The final image in this passage recalls the opening of the Address, with its jarring contrast between Charlotte as "putrid corpse" and as a "woman young, innocent, and beautiful." (The rose metaphor also recalls the frequent use of flower imagery in the Charlotte elegies.) The corpse image also recalls a similar one used by Shelley in the 1814 letter to Hogg (quoted above) in which he justifies his feelings for Mary. He describes his "rash & heartless union" with Harriet: "I felt as if a dead & a living body had been linked together in loathsome & horrible communion."⁴⁰ In all three passages, imaginative sympathy is a covering which, once removed, reveals "the secrets of anatomy and corruption." In the Defence, Shelley states the idea even more directly. Criticizing the historical degeneration of drama, Shelley writes that such

39. Reiman, 503.

40. Jones, 1:402.

works as Addison's Cato "affect sentiment and passion: which, divested of imagination, are other names for caprice and appetite."⁴¹ In the context of Shelley's difficulties in dealing with the nature of imagination, the word "divested" assumes deeper meaning than perhaps even Shelley intended.

Shelley has opened the peroration of his funeral Address by commanding the British people to mourn. However, the unraveling of his theory of moral sympathy has left him with no subject worthy of mourning. Princess Charlotte's only virtues were her domestic sympathies; yet now those sympathies seem suspiciously like cover for the "putrid corpse" of "caprice and appetite." Shelley has attempted to build sympathy for Brandreth, Ludlam, and Turner by describing their domestic affections. But Shelley's own argument, with its problematizing of sympathy (domestic and otherwise) undermines this attempt. Also, to account for the bloodshed and rebellion of the laborers, Shelley has been forced to divest them of sympathy, to present them as mere "instruments" that are "without affections." Finally, in the background of both of these problems is Shelley's refusal to mourn for Harriet, since a "pouring forth" of sympathy for her would entail an admission of guilt--not of malicious mistreatment, but of the harmful tendencies of "indisciplinable" sympathy.

41. Reiman, 491.

As the object of mourning, then, Shelley turns away from these actual people who have died. He describes what at first appears to be the death of the Princess Charlotte:

A beautiful Princess is dead:--she who should have been the Queen of her beloved nation, and whose posterity should have ruled it for ever. She loved the domestic affections, and cherished arts which adorn, and valour which defends. She was amiable and would have become wise, but she was young, and in the flower of youth the despoiler came. (239).

Shelley's description of the imaginative arts as things that "adorn," like the similar use of the word in the Defence, reveals an uneasiness about the centrality of imagination. For the most part, however, Shelley is using here the rhetoric of middle-class domestic affections, including the flower metaphor, to elicit reader sympathy. But, in a brilliant turn, Shelley names the referent of these lines: "LIBERTY is dead. Slave! I charge thee disturb not the depth and solemnity of our grief by any meaner sorrow" (239). Shelley's intended meaning is clear: his middle-class audience have become slaves to their domestic ideologies. Their mourning rites are comforting, but they hide the real causes of political misery.

The brilliance of Shelley's rhetorical turn, however, cannot wholly silence the questions that have dogged his argument from its beginning. In fact, Shelley's use of

personified Liberty bears some similarities to what Paine criticizes in Burke:

Accustomed to kiss the aristocratical hand that hath purloined him from himself, he degenerates into a composition of art, and the genuine soul of nature forsakes him. His hero or his heroine must be a tragedy-victim expiring in show, and not the real prisoner of misery, sinking into death in the silence of a dungeon.⁴²

To apply this quotation to Shelley in any broad sense would be patently unfair: Shelley manifested throughout his life an earnest desire to alleviate the sufferings of the disadvantaged. And his Address, unlike any other elegy I have examined, treats the death of three poor laborers with the same respect that it treats the death of the heir apparent. Still, Shelley himself was not free from aristocratic prejudices, and they probably account for some of his hatred of middle-class pieties and for his lingering ambivalence towards the poor. In the Address, these prejudices exacerbate the tension stemming from Shelley's inability to reconcile humanity's "best affections" with the labyrinthine casuistry of social morality. Ultimately, this tensions leads Shelley to a spiritualizing move not unlike that in Southey's, Byron's, and Hemans's elegies: he moves away from actual

42. Paine, 448.

people and towards something more tidy, Liberty as personification. Gone also from the peroration are the convoluted chains of blame that have occupied Shelley. He reminds his readers that Charlotte's death was an act of God, whereas "man has murdered Liberty" (239). The responsibility for the Derby rebellion and its repercussions is simply laid on the convenient abstraction "man" (perhaps named Mr. Smith). Shelley's faith in sympathy now reaches its lowest ebb. Liberty's death elicits not "the fertilising streams of sympathy," but "the sympathy of an universal blast and curse" (239).

Shelley ends the Address, however, more hopefully. In an apocalyptic vision which anticipates the one in "England in 1819," Shelley imagines the resurrection of Liberty:

Let us follow the corpse of British Liberty slowly and reverentially to its tomb: and if some glorious Phantom should appear, and make its throne of broken swords and sceptres and royal crowns trampled in the dust, let us say that the Spirit of Liberty has arisen from its grave and left all that was gross and mortal there, and kneel down and worship it as our Queen. (239).

By a final heroic act of the imagination, Shelley conquers the threatening "secrets of anatomy and corruption" and pictures forth Liberty in "the form and the splendor of unfaded beauty." One cannot but admire Shelley's optimism, his ability to hope for liberty's rebirth even amidst the

political repression of England in 1817. One only wishes that this final image of Liberty were less rarified, more vitally connected to actual people--stock jobbers and laborers, husbands and wives--no matter how "gross and mortal."

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

- Aristotle. The Politics. Translated by B. Jowett. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885.
- Armstrong, Nancy. Desire and Domestic Fiction. New York, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987.
- Arnould, Joseph. The Life of Thomas, First Lord Denman. New York: James Cockcroft, N.d.
- Augusta, Princess Charlotte. Letters of the Princess Charlotte. Edited by A. Aspinall. London: Home and Van Thal, 1949.
- Authentic Particulars of the Death of Princess Charlotte. 5th ed. London: Hone, 1817.
- Bartlett, J. M. Tribute to the Memory of Her Royal Highness Princess Charlotte. London: L. B. Seeley; J. J. Stockdale, 1817.
- Beck, Thomas. An Elegy on the Lamented Death of Her Royal Highness Princess Charlotte. London: A. Maxwell, 1817.
- Stephen C. Behrendt, Shelley and His Audiences (Lincoln, Neb. and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989)
- Blackstone, William. Of Public Wrongs. Vol. 4 of Commentaries on the Laws of England. Edited by Robert Malcolm Kerr. Boston: Beacon Press, 1962.
- Blessington, Marguerite, Countess of. Conversations of Lord Byron. Edited by Ernest J. Lovell. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton UP, 1969.
- Bossuet, Jacques-Bénigne. "Oraison Funèbre de Henriette-Anne d'Angleterre." In Oraisons Funèbres; Panégyriques, edited by Bernard Velat. Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1950.
- Byron, George Gordon, Lord. The Complete Poetical Works. Edited by Jerome J. McGann. 7 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981-6.
- Chorley, Henry. Memorials of Mrs. Hemans. 2nd ed. 2 vols. London: Saunders and Otley, 1837.

Christensen, Jerome. Byron's Strength: Romantic Writing and Commercial Society. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993.

Colchester, Charles Abbot, Lord. Diary and Correspondence of Lord Colchester. 3 vols. London: John Murray, 1861.

Churchill, Winston. The New World. Vol. 4 of History of the English Speaking Peoples. 1956. Reprint. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1993.

Cobbett, William. Cobbett's Political Register 32, no. 14 (1817).

Cobbett, William. Weekly Political Register 33, no. 16 (April 25, 1818).

Colley, Linda. Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1992.

Cooke, William. An Address to British Females on the Moral Management of Pregnancy and Labour. London: E. Cox and Son, 1817.

Cooper, Leonard. The Age of Wellington. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1963.

J. C. Cox. "Political History." In History of Derbyshire, edited by William Page. 2 vols. London: Archibald Constable and Company, 1907.

Croly, George. Lines on the Death of Her Royal Highness the Princess Charlotte. London: John Murray, 1818. Reprint. New York, London: Garland, 1977.

Creston, Dormer. The Regent and His Daughter. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1932.

Dallas, R.C. Recollections of the Life of Lord Byron. London: Charles Knight, 1824.

Darvall, Frank Ongley. Popular Disturbances and Public Order in Regency England. 1934. Reprint. New York: Augustus M. Keley, 1969.

Dawson, P. M. S. The Unacknowledged Legislator: Shelley and Politics. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford UP, 1980.

Duckett, T. Tribute to the Memory of the Late Princess

Charlotte. London: R. Gray, 1817.

An Elegy on the Death of Her Royal Highness Princess Charlotte. London: G Hayden, 1817.

Elwood, Mrs. Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England. 2 vols. London: Henry Colburn, 1843.

Emerson, Edwin, and Marion Mills Miller. The Nineteenth Century and After: A History Year by Year from 1800 to the Present Time. New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1906.

Examiner, nos. 514, 515, 516 (November 2, 9, 16, 1817).

Farington, Joseph. The Farington Diary. Edited by James Grieg. London: Hutchinson and Co., 1923-8.

Foot, Jesse. Letter on the Necessity of a Public Inquiry into the Cause of the Death of Her Royal Highness the Princess Charlotte and her Infant. London: J Walker, 1817.

Foucault, Michel. Discipline and Punish. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage books, 1979.

Franklin, Caroline. Byron's Heroines. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford UP, 1992.

Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholia." In General Psychological Theory, edited by Philip Rieff. New York: Collier Books, 1963.

Gentleman's Magazine 87 (1817).

George IV. Letters of George IV. Edited by A. Aspinall. 3 vols. Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge UP, 1938.

George, M. Dorothy. English Political Caricature, 1793-1832: A Study of Opinion. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959.

George, M. Dorothy, ed. Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires. 11 vols. London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1949.

Glover, Michael. The Napoleonic Wars, an Illustrated History 1792-1815. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1978.

Halevy, Elie. A History of the English People in 1815. 1924. Reprint. London and New York: Ark Paperbacks, 1987.

Haydon, Benjamin Robert. Diary. Edited by Willard Bissell Pope. 2 vols. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1960.

Hegel, G. F. W. "Who Thinks Abstractly." Translated by Walter Kaufmann. In Hegel: Reinterpretation, Texts, and Commentary, by Kaufmann. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965.

Hemans, Felicia. The Domestic Affections and Other Poems. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1812. Reprint. New York, London: Garland, 1978.

----- . England and Spain: Or, Valour and Patriotism. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1808. Reprint. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1978.

----- . The Poems of Felicia Hemans. London: William P. Nimmo, 1875.

----- . Records of Woman. Edinburgh: William Blackwood; London: T. Cadell, 1828. Reprint. New York, London: Garland, 1978.

----- . The Sceptic. London: John Murray, 1820. Reprint. New York, London: Garland, 1978.

Holme, Thea. Prinny's Daughter: A Biography of Princess Charlotte of Wales. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1976.

Huish, Robert. Memoirs of Her Late Royal Highness Charlotte Augusta, Princess of Wales. Rev. ed. London: Kelly, 1819.

Ignatieff, Michael. A Just Measure of Pain: The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850. 1978. Reprint. London: Penguin Books, 1989.

Jameson, Fredric. The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1981.

John Murray Archives. John Murray, Publishers, London.

Kelsall, Malcolm. Byron's Politics. Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Nobles Books; Brighton, East Sussex: Harvester Press, 1987.

La Belle Assemblée 16 supplement (January 1818).

Lander, J. H. "Hosiery." In The Victoria History of Derbyshire, edited by William Page. London: Archibald Constable and Co, 1907.

Malthus, Thomas. Essay on Population. 5th ed. 3 vols. London: John Murray, 1817.

Manning, Peter J. Byron and His Fictions. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1978.

Mellor, Anne. Romanticism and Gender. New York, London: Routledge, 1993.

Monk, Samuel H. The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England. 1935. Reprint. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960.

Monthly Repository 12, no. 143 (November 1817).

More, Hannah. Hints Toward Forming the Character of a Young Princess. 2 vols. London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1805.

Mullan, John. "Sympathy and the Production of Society." In Sentiment and Sociability: the Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

Paine, Thomas. The Rights of Man. In Collected Writings. New York: Library of America, 1995.

Peacock, Thomas Love. Memoirs of Shelley and Other Essays and Reviews. Edited by Howard Mills. New York: New York UP, 1970.

[Piggoty, Simon.] The Flower of England Fading: Recollections of the Princess Charlotte, or a Tour to Claremont. In A Father's Recollections of Three Pious Young Ladies. London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1831.

Pindar, Peter. BATTLE Royal!! a Peep Behind the Curtain. 2d. ed. London: J. Johnston, [1816].

----- . The Royal Honeymoon or The Frolics of Matrimony. London: J. Robinson, [1816].

----- . The Royal Marriage: or Miss Lump and Grenadier. London, J. Johnston, [1816].

----- . Who Wears the Breeches? The Co--gh Honey-moon. London: John Fairburn, 1816.

Plowden, Alison. Caroline and Charlotte. London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1989.

Purkis, Isaac. Reflections on the Death of Her Royal Highness

Princess Charlotte. London: "printed for the author, sold by Whittemore; Cox; Ellis, Delahoy, and Liddell," 1817.

Rondeau, James. Leopold's Loss: or England's Tears O'er the Urn of His Beloved Princess Charlotte. London: Hatchard, Piccadilly; and Lackingont, Allen, and Co., 1817.

Rousseau, Jean Jacques. The Social Contract. In Collected Writings of Rousseau, edited by Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly. Translated by Judith R. Bush, Roger D. Masters, and Christopher Kelly. Hanover, N. H.: University Press of New England, 1994.

Sacks, Peter M. The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.

Sahlins, Marshall. Islands of History. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

Schor, Esther H. "A Nation's Sorrow. A People's Tears: the Politics of Mourning Princess Charlotte." In Burying the Dead: the British Culture of Mourning from the Enlightenment to Victoria. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994.

Scrivener, Michael. Radical Shelley. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Edited by Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck. 10 vols. New York and London: Ernest Benn, 1965.

----. Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Edited by Frederick Jones. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964.

----. A Philosophical View of Reform. In Shelley and His Circle, edited by Donald H. Reiman. Vol. 6. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1973

----. The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Edited by E. B. Murray. Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

----. Shelley's Poetry and Prose. Edited by Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers. New York: Norton, 1977.

Smith, Adam. Wealth of Nations. Vol. 2 of The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith. Edited by R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.

Southey, Charles Cuthbert. The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey. New York: Harper, 1851.

Southey, Robert. "On the Rise and Progress of Popular Disaffection." In Essays, Moral and Political. London: John Murray, 1832.

----. The Poetical Works of Robert Southey. 10 vols. in 5. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company; Cambridge: The Riverside Press, N.d.

----. Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey. Edited by John Wood Warter. 4 vols. London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1856.

----. Thomas More: Or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society. 2 vols. London: John Murray, 1829.

Stockmar, Baron C. von. Denkwürdigkeiten aus den Papieren des Freiherrn Christian Friedrich v. Stockmar. Edited by Ernst Freiherr v. Stockmar. 2 vols. Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg u. Sohn, 1872.

----. Memoirs of Baron Stockmar. Edited by F. Max Müller. Translated by G. A. M. 2 vols. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1872.

Stone, Lawrence. Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

Stuart, D. M. Daughter of England: A New Study of Princess Charlotte of Wales and Her Family. London: MacMillan, 1951.

Thompson, Anthony Todd. The Authentic Medical Statement of the Case of Her Royal Highness the Late Princess Charlotte of Wales. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1817.

Thompson, E. P. The Making of the English Working Class. New York: Pantheon Books, 1964.

Trelawny, E. J. The Last Days of Shelley and Byron. Edited by J. E. Morpurgo. New York: the Philosophical Library, 1952.

Trinder, Peter. Felicia Hemans. University of Wales Press, 1984.

United Kingdom. Parliament. Abstract of the Number of Persons Who Were Capitally Convicted and of Those Who Were Executed in London and Middlesex from the Year 1749 to the Year 1817.

In British Sessional Papers, edited by Edgar L. Erickson. Vol. 16. June 3, 1818.

United Kingdom. Parliament. Report from the Committee of Secrecy. In British Sessional Papers, edited by Edgar L. Erickson. Vol. 3. February 27, 1818.

The Virtuous Life and Lamented Death of the Princess Charlotte. 2d ed. London: G. Smeeton, 1817.

Walpole, Spencer. History of England. Rev. ed. 6 vols. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1890.

White, Newman I. Shelley. 2 vols. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940.

Wordsworth, William. Poetical Works. Edited by E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947.

VITA

Kevin Eubanks was born in Cleburne, Texas on October 22, 1963. He attended school in the Cleburne public school system, graduating from Cleburne High School in May 1982. In May 1987, he graduated from Baylor University with a Bachelor of Arts in English and Computer Science. In May 1989, he received a Master of Arts degree in English from Baylor. After teaching English for two years at Baiko Women's College in Shimonoseki, Japan, he enrolled in the doctoral program at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He received a Ph.D. in English in December, 1996.