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SOCIAL MOBILITY  
AND  
PERSONAL DISPLACEMENT  
Queen Charlotte between  
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MASCHA HANSEN

\* From Princess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz to Queen of England: A  
Fairy Tale? \*

*T*hink of the Crown of England and a handsome young King dropping out of the clouds into Strelitz,” Horace Walpole wrote to a correspondent in the summer of 1761, his smugness not quite

hiding a genuine sense of fairy-tale allure.<sup>1</sup> The seventeen-year-old Princess Sophie Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz's rise to the throne of England must indeed have sounded like a fairy tale come true to her contemporaries. Back home in Mecklenburg, stories and legends about this princess would continue to circulate for more than a hundred years. A nineteenth-century historian reports an alleged incident of her life which sounds suspiciously similar to the "courtship scene" in Theodor Fontane's *Effi Briest*:

It is said that at that time [June 1761] Charlotte had been playing with several young friends in the garden surrounding the castle [Mirow], when one of them, Ida von Bülow, teasingly prophesied a speedy marriage for her, and was given the reply necessitated by the secret, "Who should wish to take such a little princess as me?" At that moment a post horn was heard. "Princess, here's the man already," the friend replied, and indeed it was the Lord Harcourt.<sup>2</sup>

Lord Harcourt had, in this tale, come to deliver the king's proposal; he proposed to her—against fairy-tale fashion—not because he believed her to be beautiful,<sup>3</sup> but because she had written such a courageous letter to Frederick II,

<sup>1</sup> Walpole is quoted in Olwen Hedley, *Queen Charlotte* (Frome and London: John Murray, 1975), 35.

<sup>2</sup> Ludwig Giesebrecht, "Der Fürstenhof in Mirow während der Jahre 1708–1761," in *Schulschriften aus der Provinz Pommern* (Stettin, 1863), 12, 1–35 (here 12, 11–14) and Friedrich Winkler, "Aus der Jugendzeit der Königin Sophie Charlotte von England, Prinzessin von Mecklenburg-Strelitz," in *Die Heimat* (Rostock, 1912), VI, VI, 16, 122–123 and 17, 131–33 (here 16: 132). *Effi Briest* appeared only in 1895—perhaps Fontane had read Giesebrecht? It was not Lord Harcourt, though, who came with the proposals, but Colonel Graeme, whose first visit to Strelitz was paid in June 1761. Charlotte was not made aware of the secret until after she had freely conversed with the king's emissary (see Hedley, 13). Lord Harcourt accompanied her on her bridal voyage to Great Britain.

<sup>3</sup> Her looks were of course of importance to the king, but by no means decisive for his choice. All the early reports he received of her character stressed the fact that she was not beautiful but "amiable" and her face "rather agreeable"—a later, more independent witness similarly remarked that "to be sure, she has not a fine face, but a most agreeable countenance" (see Hedley, 11; 13; 55). For her subjects' reactions, see, for instance, the private comments of Sarah Scott on the new queen (Holger Graf, "Sarah Scott und ihre 'History of Mecklenburg' von 1762," *Vom Anfang und Ende: Mecklenburg-Strelitzer Geschichte*, ed. Karola Stark [Vorpommern, 2003], 89–104). That Charlotte, as her state portraits testify, had all the dignity—and certainly also the fertility—required of a queen, was no longer enough, though: it seems that, perhaps because of her seemingly humble origins, she should also have possessed the beauty of a fairy-tale princess to please her new subjects. Charlotte's ugliness, it is said, grew with age—and so do the accounts of her as a wicked (step)mother figure. Compare also the introduction to *Der*

remonstrating with that great king against the damage done by his soldiers' looting in Mecklenburg territory after his great victory at Torgau. This letter, published as early as September 1761 and often reprinted since, is unlikely to have been written by the young Princess, though later on Charlotte certainly felt the need to protect her *patrie* against the territorial greed of the Prussian Kings.<sup>4</sup> George III would not, in any case, have chosen a Princess inclined to meddle with politics, as he was "of all things jealous of the power of women," according to MP George Grenville.<sup>5</sup>

Even if there is no hint either in her own or her contemporaries' correspondence that she ever felt, or was considered, out of place at Court, Queen Charlotte herself is unlikely to have regarded her life as a fairy tale come true. Although as a young bride, she could not have known that she would never return to her native Germany, she must have been wondering about her future life as queen consort to George III. She had never met her future husband. She did not speak a word of English when she arrived; she had never been to England. Her mother had died less than two months before she set sail for her future home.<sup>6</sup> She arrived in England on 7 September 1761, after two harrowing weeks at sea, and was married on the night of her arrival in London. Within three weeks she was a crowned queen, within a year the mother of a crown prince. After the breathtaking speed of her courtship and

*Körper der Königin: Geschlecht und Herrschaft in der höfischen Welt seit 1500*, ed. Regina Schulte (Frankfurt/M. and New York: Campus, 2002), 9–23 (here 15–17), for a discussion of the body—and the beauty—of an early modern queen.

<sup>4</sup> See Hedley, *Queen Charlotte*, Appendix 2, 315–317, for the "forged" letter, and the correspondence between Queen Charlotte and her brother Charles II of Mecklenburg-Strelitz for her fear of a Prussian takeover (Hausarchiv des Mecklenburg-Strelitzschen Fürstenhauses mit Briefsammlung, Landeshauptarchiv in Schwerin, 4.3–2 [from now on abbreviated to Hausarchiv M–S], No. 5, 8.I.4.9, 2 August 1793).

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Hedley, 31. In her index, George Grenville is listed as "Prime Minister," so possibly his son, Sir William Wyndham Grenville, is meant instead.

<sup>6</sup> As the coronation was fixed for the 22 September 1761, the young princess could not be permitted a longer period of mourning. Even though George III did not want his fiancée to bring more than two *femmes de chambres* to the Royal household, the King tried to ease the princess's way to the throne: "how disagreeable would it not be for a young person to appear almost at her first arrival in Westminster Abbey and go through all that ceremony...indeed she ought to be above a month here before that day that she may have a little recover'd" (*Letters from George III to Lord Bute, 1756–1766*, ed. Romey Sedgwick [London: Macmillan, 1939], No 74 [June 1761], 57). However, her mother's death was a setback to his kind plans, as George complained to his tutor, Lord Bute: "Man is ever liable to checks, and disappointments, my Dearest Friend will be sensible how great mine is on this occasion...I beg my Dearest friend will consider how long we must delay my marriage for this untoward accident" (No. 79, 12 July 1761, 60).



marriage, however, the queen began to complain about the boredom inflicted by Court routines. The royal couple perpetually moved from one palace to the other, often going back and forth between Windsor and London at least once a week, but rather than finding, like the king, stimulation in such journeys, she found them unsettling and wearisome. Every once in a while, the queen's private reflections on possible and actual marriages among her acquaintances seem to point at a wistful, half-suppressed self-questioning of her own readiness to marry, a decision irrevocably shaping her destiny: "[C]est mon sort je lai fait. je le ferai encore avec un plaisir extreme & si je me trouve quelque inclination pour le contraire je me dit toujours cest un sacrifice que je fait mais ce nest pas un malheur."<sup>7</sup> The depressions Charlotte suffered from need not have been the result of her marriage or even of her move to England, but her example shows the price the women of the nobility had to pay for family alliances and dynastic moves: loneliness and homesickness. In this paper, therefore, I intend to consider not so much the advantages of Charlotte's splendid marriage, taking her from provincial Strelitz to metropolitan London, from a humble German duchy right up to the throne of Great Britain, but the costs such a social rise implied in terms of what I would like to call the personal displacement of the individual.

### ✱ Dynastic Marriages and Social Mobility ✱

The queen's life is not exactly a rags-to-riches story, despite the Mecklenburg-Strelitzian family's prolonged struggle with financial difficulties at that time.<sup>8</sup> To her, Mecklenburg-Strelitz was not as remote a little duchy as it seemed to Walpole, who, on hearing of the king's choice, quipped that "the handkerchief has been tossed a vast way; it is to a Charlotte Princess of Mecklenbourg; Lord Harcourt is to be at her father's Court [on the first of August]—if he can find it" (qtd in Hedley, 1). That the location of Mecklenburg-Strelitz

<sup>7</sup> Hausarchiv M–S, 869, 29 May 1773. I have, I hope, faithfully rendered the queen's idiosyncratic spelling, but do not always agree with Hedley's transcriptions, as far as these are given in her biography.

<sup>8</sup> The duchy would in time come to be comfortably well off. The Treaty of Vienna (1815) granted Mecklenburg-Strelitz some new territories (not Swedish Pomerania, which had been hoped for, but the towns of Reifferscheid, Kronenburg, and Schleiden south of Aachen, sold to Prussia for one million *Thaler* in 1819), and the development of the railway system brought further profits later in the century (see Rajko Lippert, *Das Großherzogliche Haus Mecklenburg-Strelitz* [Reutlingen: Suum Cuique, 1994], 40; 42; 81).

was (and is) unknown to most Englishmen and -women is not surprising, as the duchy had only come into existence in 1701 after prolonged squabbles among the possible heirs of Duke Gustav Adolphus of Mecklenburg-Güstrow.<sup>9</sup> The settlement of Hamburg eventually (re-)divided the House of Mecklenburg into that of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and Mecklenburg-Strelitz; among those who signed the treaty were Frederick IV of Denmark and George Louis of Brunswick-Lüneburg, later to become George I of England. Though Mecklenburg-Strelitz's territory was small—roughly 3000 km<sup>2</sup>—it was by no means the smallest among the many German duchies, and it had some powerful protectors from the start. Indeed, the House of Mecklenburg, of which Charlotte's family was a part, had belonged to the *crème de la crème* of the German aristocracy in the seventeenth century, when they had taken precedence over the Houses of Hesse and Württemberg, among others, in the *Reichstag*; only Brunswick-Lüneburg was yet more powerful (cf. Bei der Wieden, 124–25). In the eighteenth century, George II did not forget Mecklenburg-Strelitz, either: a rumor persisted that Frederick the Great would try to get hold of the Mecklenburg territories, would perhaps exchange them for the new Prussian province of Westphalia. Since Mecklenburg was all too close to Hanover for Prussia to swallow it, George II in a symbolic gesture made the four-year-old Prince Charles of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Charlotte's second-eldest and favorite brother, captain of a Hanoverian infantry regiment in 1745—presumably intending thus to warn off Frederick the Great.<sup>10</sup> However, he may also have felt the need to remind the Strelitzians that Great Britain—and Hanover—had more to offer than Prussia, for in the meantime, a tentative friendship had sprung up between Frederick II and Charlotte's father, Prince Charles of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, younger half-brother to the reigning duke Adolphus Frederick III, due to the proximity of Rheinsberg and Mirow.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See Gerhard Heitz, "Zwei Staaten, ein Landtag: Zur Hamburger Landesteilung von 170," *Vom Anfang und Ende*, ed. Karola Stark, 74–88; Helge Bei der Wieden, "Die Stellung des Hauses Mecklenburg im deutschen und europäischen Hochadel," *Vom Anfang und Ende*, ed. Stark, 122–37; Lippert, *Das Großherzogliche*, 1–3.

<sup>10</sup> See Bei der Wieden, "Die Stellung," 125–26. Charlotte's youngest brother, born in 1748, was named George after George II (see Hedley, 35).

<sup>11</sup> Crown Prince Frederick made fun of the *Miroquois*, as he called them, in his letters to his father, but these were intended to entertain the King with anecdotes from the remoter part of his realm and should not be taken at face value. For Mirow, see Peter Hoffmann, *Mecklenburg-Strelitz: Eine Region im Auf- und Niedergang der Geschichte* (Nienburg: Betzel, 2001), 70–71. See also Markus Köhler, "The Courts of Hanover and Strelitz," in *The Wisdom of George the Third*, ed. Jonathan Marsden (London: Royal Collection Publications, 2005), 60–83, and Lippert, *Das Großherzogliche*, 23.

Charlotte was born in Mirow in 1744 and stayed there until her father died in 1752, when her eldest brother, at just fourteen, had to be declared of age by the emperor to prevent another attempt by a reigning duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin (Christian Ludwig II) to reunite the two branches of the House of Mecklenburg by force (Lippert, 27–28). The family moved to the newly built palace of Neustrelitz, where Charlotte's mother effectively reigned until her eldest son, now Adolphus Frederick IV, had finished his studies and returned from a Grand Tour to Paris in 1761 (Lippert, 30). Charlotte's education was carefully attended to—unusually so for the daughters (and even the sons) of the German nobility at the time. Her parents had successfully braved the difficulties of finding acceptable teachers for their five surviving children (even as late as 1787, Charlotte would write to her brother that good tutors were not easily to be had in Strelitz), and brought Gottlob Burchard Genzmer (1716–1771) to Mirow in 1745, to teach both sons and daughters.<sup>12</sup> Genzmer's research interest were broad enough to encompass history as well as botany and mineralogy; his correspondence—with Winckelmann, Buchholz, Gottsched, Linné—went far beyond the borders of provincial Mecklenburg. Charlotte's lifelong interest in botany may well be due to Genzmer's early instructions. She also had a governess, a Fräulein von Selzer, and a French teacher, Frau von Pitcan, besides being included in the lessons given to her brothers (Winkler, 122). Her "profound training in theology" and her skills as an amateur musician favorably impressed the king's emissary, Colonel Graeme (Hedley, 28). Accounts of Charlotte's childhood are none too reliable, as of course stories about this fairy-tale princess quickly came to be circulated in the area, and places she had allegedly loved when a child were shown to visitors long after her death in 1818 (Winkler, 122). Young Sophie Charlotte, it is said, grew up in utmost simplicity, running wild in the local beech woods, paying regular visits to the vicar and his family who lived nearby, from time to time even lending a helping hand to the vicar's

<sup>12</sup> Hausarchiv M–S, 875, 6. February 1787. For the desolate state of education among the daughters of the aristocracy, see Ernst Schubert, "Adel im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert: Nordwestdeutsche Edelleute und süddeutsche Reichsritter im landesgeschichtlichen Vergleich," in *Britain and Germany Compared: Nationality, Society, and Nobility in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Joseph Canning and Hermann Wellenreuther (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2001), 194; and Irmgard Scheitler, *Gattung und Geschlecht: Reisebeschreibungen deutscher Frauen 1780–1850* (Tübingen, 1999) (Studien und Texte zur Sozialgeschichte der Literatur, Bd. 67), 65–67. Lippert, too, stresses the fact that Prince Charles (and presumably his wife) had managed to attract unusually good teachers to Mirow (27). John Watkins, by contrast, considers the duchess to have been responsible for the children's education, *Memoirs of Her Most Excellent Majesty Sophia=Charlotte, Queen of Great Britain, From authentic documents* (London, 1819), 31.

wife. According to her early German biographers, Pastor Leithäuser's vicarage was Charlotte's refuge whenever her elder siblings teased her: the close proximity of Mirow castle and the vicarage make it likely that the children did indeed visit, and while it may be doubted whether Charlotte really was allowed to assist in the household, it seems certain that the vicar himself was responsible for her religious instruction and confirmed her in 1759 (Winkler, 123). Even though her education at the provincial palaces of Mirow and Neustrelitz could not have prepared her for the exacting splendors of a Royal Court—one of the reasons why she apparently was not among the first German Protestant princesses to be considered as prospective queens of England—her formative years impressed the importance of religion and learning on her for life. They also left her with a lifelong nostalgia for her childhood home.

The "courtship," if one may call the necessary political negotiations a courtship, took less than four months. Olwen Hedley recounts the story of the king's choice in detail, listing the small number of Protestant German princesses considered as possible prospective consorts to a twenty-two-year-old king. The younger Princess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz was not high up on that list (her elder sister Christina at twenty five already too old), as the King's consultants assumed a princess raised at such a remote Court unlikely to be suitably well-bred (Hedley, 10). Only after the few candidates listed had one by one to be dropped on account of their youth, their allegedly volatile or obstinate characters, or their family histories, did the younger Princess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz seem worth a visit by the king's emissaries. Their reports were unanimously good: the princess, they said, was not beautiful but possessed a good heart, a gay temper and not inconsiderable musical talents (see Hedley, 31). The reports also praised her pliability, surely an important point with the young king. (Incidentally, though, they also instigated the long-lasting rumor that Charlotte was not interested in politics.) By 20 May, the day after Charlotte's seventeenth birthday, the king had buried his hopes of marrying Princess Caroline of Hesse-Darmstadt, ironically on account of a rumor that her father was on the verge of madness. Having received a portrait of the Princess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, he wrote somewhat wistfully to Lord Bute: "I owne 'tis not in every particular as I could wish, but yet I am resolv'd to fix here."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Sedgwick, *Letters from George III*, L 72, 55. The King himself apparently thought "a little England's air" would soon remedy any provinciality the Princess might have retained, especially if she had "very good sense," as Charlotte was reported to have (Sedgwick, L 67, 53). Less than a month before he was resolved to fix on Princess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, however, he was all for "settling this" with the Princess of Darmstadt (Sedgwick, L 68, 53).

When told to marry the King of England, the young Charlotte did not hesitate, except to consider whether the tenets of her Lutheran belief could be reconciled with those of the Church of England (Hedley, 13–14). On crossing the sea to her new life in England in late August 1761, Sophie Charlotte—shedding the “Sophie” in the process—left her old home behind for good: she never came back to Germany.<sup>14</sup> To save expenses, Charlotte traveled as a Princess of Mecklenburg (see Hedley, 35–41). Nevertheless, her journey was a triumphal demonstration of the splendours that were to await her as the future queen of England: Everywhere on the road, she was accosted by delegations reciting poems in her honor, or showering her with flowers and other presents. She traveled in a state coach heading a long procession of carriages until she reached Stade, where she embarked for England on the *Royal Charlotte* (formerly the *Royal Caroline*). The crossing was rough, to put it mildly, yet the princess, everyone agreed, “was not at all affected with the storm, but bore the sea like a truly British Queen” (quoted in Hedley, 38). Years later, Charlotte was reported to have played and sung on board ship to set an example for her ladies, whose courage was failing dismally. The official records thus make her out to have been of a most cheerfully courageous temper throughout the voyage. As none of the correspondents seem to have been with her at the time, however, these reports may safely be doubted, as they are more likely to reflect a political necessity than Princess Charlotte’s true feelings (see Hedley, 38–39). “Our future Queen is in perfect Health. Neither that, nor Her Good humour & Good spirits ever Suffer any interruption or Change,” Colonel Graeme had reported already from Neustrelitz to Lord Bute (quoted in Hedley, 32). No other accounts of her crossing to England are available, but a more likely indication of the queen’s experience of that voyage seems to be the fact that she retained a dread of the sea for the rest of her life (Hedley, 177; 198).

Whatever her spirits on that occasion, though, Charlotte would have done her utmost to conform to the behavior expected of a future queen. That these expectations were high in general but rather lower with regard

<sup>14</sup> German historians do not tire to mention at least one, if not several, visits to Hanover, but this trip seems to be a myth that evolved sometime in the nineteenth century (see, for instance, Winkler, “Aus der Jugendzeit,” 133 and Heinz Ohff, *Königin Luise von Preußen: Ein Stern in Wetterwolken* [München and Zurich: Piper, 1992], 24). The queen hoped for such a visit in the event of the king’s visiting Hanover, but he never did (see, for instance, Hausarchiv M–S, 5 March 1776; 5 February 1781). Even if she had been allowed to go without him, her constant pregnancies during the first twenty years of her marriage and the political instabilities of the later years would have effectively prevented her from venturing on such a voyage.

to the provincial princess she was supposed to be, can be inferred from the following letter by the bluestocking Elizabeth Robinson Montagu:

The sight of our brilliant Court, the salutations of our navy on her arrival, the opulent appearance of our towns, and the greatness of our capital city will astonish her. I hope her mind is more proportioned to her lot in marriage than such a situation is to her present circumstances. . . . I heartily wish she may be worthy of our young King, be pleasing in the domestic scene, and great in the publick; his good nature will impart to her a share of power and a degree of confidence, and I wish for the publick she may never abuse the one, nor misapply the other. There seems not to be a very good choice of ladies about her, there is not one who is quite fit to teach her even the forms of her publick conduct, none at all equal to advise her private, ignorant as she must be of the behavior that will be expected of her.<sup>15</sup>

The young queen must have surprised her subjects, as there are no more suspicions, let alone complaints, of rusticity or lack of breeding to be found, only a mild shaking of heads at her fondness for the theater.

### ✱ The Rewards of Marriage ✱

Charlotte's marriage was by no means an unusual affair even by eighteenth-century standards: marriages among the nobility, after all, were political affairs concerning family property and dynasty, not the happiness of the individuals contracting it. Almost all of the Hanoverian Kings, their sons, their daughters, and their spouses, bowed to the necessity of marrying as dynastic politics should demand.<sup>16</sup> On the whole, it cannot be doubted that many, if

<sup>15</sup> *Elizabeth Montagu: The Queen of the Blue-Stockings. Her Correspondence from 1720 to 1761*, ed. Emily J. Climençon, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1906), II: 251–52, July 1761.

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, Karin Feuerstein-Praßer, *Caroline von Braunschweig (1768–1821): Englands ungekrönte Königin* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2009), 33; 120–126; Sedgwick's Preface to *The Letters of George III to Lord Bute*, viii–ix; Richard G. King, "Anne of Hannover and Orange (1707–59) as patron an practitioner of the arts," in *Queenship in Britain, 1660–1837: Royal Patronage, Court Culture and Dynastic Politics*, ed. Clarissa Campbell Orr (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 162–192, here 164; and John Bullion, "Princess Augusta," in *Queenship in Britain*, ed. Campbell Orr, 207–235. Like

not most, of these arranged marriages were, by modern standards at least, unhappy. While personal feelings simply had not mattered in earlier ages, at least not where family honor and prestige were concerned, changing attitudes toward marriage in eighteenth-century society may well have embittered the lives of those who were rarely allowed a choice in the matter: the sons and daughters of the nobility (cf. Dewald, 168–70). Even among the uppermost class, however, attitudes were changing: George III, who had bowed to the dictates of his family (and those of his tutor) was shocked to find that his siblings did not intend to do so. His brothers married without seeking his approbation, while his youngest sister, who had been married to Christian VII of Denmark by him, frankly pursued happiness out of wedlock.<sup>17</sup> The Royal Marriage Act (1772) was a last desperate attempt to prevent self-willed rather than dynastic marriages, perhaps a goal the more stringently pursued because George III had sacrificed his own first love to family considerations.<sup>18</sup> In fact, the eighteenth century saw some surprising upheavals in the dynastic marriage system on the part of the daughters as well as of the sons, as the royal princes and princesses, too, were to prove.<sup>19</sup> While outright rebellion was scarce among the upper classes, once marriage had taken place, some wives as well as many husbands seem to have thought that they had a right to seek for love outside of matrimony. Any scandal on the women's part, however, could still ruin family reputations: when George III had been about to choose a wife, candidates like the princesses of Anhalt-Dessau were ruled out because their

Charlotte a generation later, Augusta did not know a word of English, and her first (and if the sources are to be trusted, she wisely professed it to be her last) plea to her future husband was that she be allowed to send for her governess. Frederick's compliance with her rather desperate wish must have endeared him to her, if nothing else did (Bullion, 213–214).

<sup>17</sup> See Stella Tillyard, *George III and His Troublesome Siblings* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> While still Prince of Wales, George III had fallen in love with the beautiful Lady Sarah Lennox, sister-in-law to Henry Fox, later Lord Holland. Even though she was a great-granddaughter of Charles II, George was not allowed to marry her: a British king could not marry one of his own subjects. Whether he would have been happier with her is doubtful, however: she had a volatile character, after all, and later on caused a scandal by leaving her first husband, Sir Charles Bunbury, for her lover, Lord William Gordon (see Hedley, *Queen Charlotte*, 4–5, and Stella Tillyard, *Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa and Sarah Lennox 1740–1832* [London: Vintage, 1994], 123–34; 258–77; 281–86). Though Tillyard's account occasionally borders on the fanciful, it shows a sympathetic view of Lady Sarah's role in the love affair. According to her, the king even awarded a pension to Lady Sarah in 1805, when she was left destitute and blind (134).

<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, Flora Fraser, *Princesses: The Six Daughters of George III* (London: Murray, 2004), 189; 231–33.

father had married an apothecary's daughter. Princess Frederica Charlotte of Brandenburg-Schwedt was struck off the list of possible candidates because her mother had had an extramarital affair (Hedley, 8). As late as 1821, Charlotte's nephews George and Charles of Mecklenburg-Strelitz agreed to a new Mecklenburg House Law which permitted only legitimate sons whose parents were of equal birth to inherit the title.<sup>20</sup> Even though Charlotte may have found love in her own marriage and hoped for suitable alliances for her daughters, she was by no means ignorant of the dangers of matrimonial scandals, or the scarcity of matrimonial happiness among the high society of Europe.<sup>21</sup>

For the women of the aristocracy, marriage usually involved a move away from the family estates, often far away into either a different region or even a foreign country. The children of the nobility grew up with the ever-present ideal of family aggrandizement—or at least of property consolidation—for the sake of the family's homeland. For most young princesses, the idea of becoming old maids would have seemed far more dreadful than the prospect of a foreign marriage (witness the bitterness of George III's daughters). However, once married, the integration of these young women into their new families often proved difficult (cf. Feuerstein-Praßer, 60). Even if they had grown up in the belief that marriage was their duty for the sake of their families, and not an option in the pursuit of personal happiness, once they were married and the marriage—as happened all too often—did not promise much in the way of emotional fulfilment, many resented their families' disposal of them, and disregarded any further claims these families might have had on them—as did Caroline Mathilda, the youngest of George III's siblings. Others, by contrast, came to feel an even stronger attachment toward their old homes—thus Princess Augusta, married to the hereditary Prince of Brunswick by her younger brother, George III, kept returning for long visits and came home for good on the death of her husband in 1806.<sup>22</sup> Many, however, eventually felt more at

<sup>20</sup> Mecklenburg-Schweriner Hausgesetz (23.06.1821), §§ 5–6, quoted in Bei der Wieden, "Die Stellung," 124.

<sup>21</sup> "[J]e voudroit plutot avoir vingt Fille dans ma Maison, que d'en etre quite a ce point," Charlotte commented on an unhappy match (Hausarchiv M–S, 870, 25 July 1775).

<sup>22</sup> For Caroline Mathilda's defiance of her family and Augusta's preference for her old home, see Tillyard, *Aristocrats*, 141; 59; and Hedley, *Queen Charlotte*, 92–93; 232–33. Princess Augusta had been married to the Duke of Brunswick to make up for the king's not having chosen a daughter of that house. Like so many young noblewomen, she was at first glad to get married, but quickly found herself disenchanted with the married state on the discovery of her husband's blatant unfaithfulness.



home in their new families and countries: Augusta of Saxe Gotha, George III's mother, for instance, quickly learned English and delighted the British crowds by freely speaking to them in their native tongue (Gerrard, 154).

What, then, were the benefits of the dynastic matrimonial gamble? The Mecklenburg-Strelitz family again provides an illuminating example. Politically, their profit was marginal. Charlotte confided to her eldest son that the "king from the beginning of my coming to England . . . desired me to keep every Place in my Family, as near to the Rank in which I found it."<sup>23</sup> Yet her marriage meant promotion for Prince Charles in the Hanoverian Army, and an annual pension of 2000 *Thaler* both for him and his brother Ernest. George III also contributed an annual £2,000 for the upkeep of the reigning duke who received additional sums on various occasions (Bei der Wieden, 127; Hedley, 110). Nevertheless, Queen Charlotte was continually harassed for money by her brothers, the Duke as well as Charles, Ernest, and George had massive debts. Besides financially supporting them, however, she was also able to keep Charles informed of all the events and decisions likely to affect Hanoverian or Strelitzian politics, even occasionally giving advice that did not accord with the King's wishes.<sup>24</sup> Although the duchy of Mecklenburg-Strelitz would not yield any substantial revenues to the reigning dukes during the queen's lifetime, its prestige was certainly enhanced. Quite apart from promotions and pensions, among the "net results" of Charlotte's marriage may be counted a King of Great Britain and a King of Prussia, two more queens and one crown princess among Charlotte's nieces and great-nieces, as well as a royal daughter of England and one of Russia who married into the Mecklenburg-Strelitz family within the two generations following that of Duke Charles, who became grand duke after the treaty of Vienna in 1815.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> RA Geo 36372, Queen Charlotte to the Prince of Wales, 10 June 1788. Grateful acknowledgments are due to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for the gracious permission to use material from the Royal Archives.

<sup>24</sup> See, for instance, Hausarchiv M–S, 21 February 1783: She advises her brother not to ask for the king's permission to remarry (his sister-in-law): the king, Charlotte is sure, would not approve and thus had better not be asked.

<sup>25</sup> Two of Charles's daughters, Louise and Frederica (Charlotte's nieces), married the Crown Prince of Prussia and his brother respectively. Frederica's third husband was Charlotte's son Ernest, Duke of Cumberland, who would become king of Hanover on the death of his brother William IV. In the next generation, the children of Charlotte's nephew George married into the English, Danish, and Russian royal families (Bei der Wieden, "Die Stellung," 122; Lippert, *Das Großherzogliche*, 39 and *Stammtafel* [Appendix]). Since connections to the Hohenzollerns had existed already before Charlotte's marriage, Louis's fortune may not exactly count as a net result—presumably, however, her aunt's title had a considerable impact on the matrimonial

✱ Personal Displacement: The Price to Pay ✱

Fairy tales wisely end with the wedding day. Charlotte's marriage, however, would last until her death in 1818. The remaining evidence suggests, though, that George III and Charlotte were for the most part very well suited as to character and inclinations, and at least the early records of their marriage stress their happy relations. Too little credit is often given to Frances Burney, the queen's Keeper of the Robes from 1786–91, who describes the life of the Royal family in terms of loving domesticity even after twenty-five years of marriage. Whatever the late years of that marriage were to bring, the early years do indeed suggest that this couple was contentedly, even lovingly united. Some three days after his marriage, George III wrote to Charlotte's eldest brother Adolphus Frederick, the reigning duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz:

Mon Cher Cousin et Beau Frere le plus Heureux Mortel du Monde Vous ecrit, qui depuis Mardi possede Un Tresor inestimable, J'ai asteur tout ce que Je puis Souhaiter, car Jai tout ce qu'il y a de plus charmant et parfait au Monde; mon egard pour la Maison de Strelitz a toujours été très grand mais asteur mon attachement est encore plus fort car le Caractere de Ma chere Epouse me convain[s] que toute la Famille est très aimable.<sup>26</sup>

Even though this letter is probably only a conventionally polite message to be expected from a newlywed to the head of his wife's family, and the King presumably exaggerated his regard for the House of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, he must have appreciated the fact that his in-laws were troublesome only when it came to financial matters. He had chosen well in picking a humble court grateful for the alliance (cf. Hedley, 31). "Trésor" is, after all, a suggestive term if considered in its various connotations: George III's honor was safe with Charlotte, as was the succession, and if her financial affairs were never in good order, she did not run into massive debts, either.<sup>27</sup> Though George is unlikely ever to have been madly in love

desirability of her nieces. As a reigning duke and father of the queen of Prussia, Charles has received some scholarly attention, too. For his enlightened reign, cramped by financial difficulties, see, for instance, Peter Maubach, "Zur Regierungspolitik des Herzogs Carl Ludwig Friedrich von Mecklenburg-Strelitz, 1794–1816," *Vom Anfang und Ende*, ed. Stark, 105–121.

<sup>26</sup> Hausarchiv M–S, No. 8, 11 September 1761.

<sup>27</sup> George III would repeat that very words some forty years later when a marriage of one of his own daughters to the young Prince George of Mecklenburg-Strelitz might have been

with his wife, shortly before the birth of their first child he confessed to Lord Bute that "the loss of Her I now have would break my Heart" (quoted in Hedley, 71).

Violent passion, in any case, was not an eighteenth-century ideal—or not until some of the more sentimental novels had made it so. Enlightened religion, however, demanded that there should be love in marriage: the woman, after all, vowed at the altar to love, honor, and obey, to the concern of such heroines as Richardson's *Clarissa*.<sup>28</sup> Reading novels, young women of the nobility would have dreamt of love matches as well as their middle-class counterparts: it would thus not be surprising if the queen indeed anxiously supervised her daughters' reading matters (Fraser, 143). Charlotte's marriage, if not always resembling the comfortable fire Samuel Richardson had envisaged as the ideal,<sup>29</sup> was in many ways an enlightened union, both partners firmly believing in doing their duty, but also agreeing that to love each other and their children was part of that duty. The queen's few surviving letters to her husband are replete with scenes and expressions of domestic love, addressing both the children's "dear Papa" and, somewhat incongruously, "your majesty," the king. A typical example runs:

I [can]not refuse myself the agreeable occupation of beginning to scribble by way of conversing with him who takes up the greatest Part of my thoughts . . . Mary is very anxious to see Your majesty, she desired me to call *dear Papa* but after telling her that could not be, she desired to be lifted up, and she called for at least half an hour, "*Papa coming now Papa comes* but seeing she was disappointed by not receiving an answer I desired her to tell me what I should say to the King in case I should write and she answered "*Minny say goody Papa poor Papa*."<sup>30</sup>

arranged: Ma très chère Reine, Après avoir eu le bonheur de posséder un tel trésor venant de Strelitz, il m'est impossible d'hésiter un moment, si mes filles sont disposées à se marier, de déclarer que je voudrais les voir liées avec cette maison, plutôt qu'avec aucune autre en Allemagne." Significantly, he added: "Mais je ne saurois cacher, que je n'ai jamais désiré de voir marier aucune d'elles; je suis heureux dans leur compagnie & ne souhaite point de m'en séparer." (This is a copy of the King's letter sent by Charlotte to her brother Charles, Hausarchiv M-S, No. 5, 8.I.4.15, April 1805.)

<sup>28</sup> See Dewald, *The European Nobility*, 170, and Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Penguin, abridged edition 1979), 127-35.

<sup>29</sup> *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ed. Anna Laetitia Barbauld, 6 vols. (London 1804), III: 188, R. to Miss Mulso, 3 September 1751.

<sup>30</sup> RA Geo 36348-50, 24 April 1778.

Significantly, one of Charlotte's portraits shows her with Locke's *Thoughts Concerning Education* lying next to her. George III and Charlotte may not have succeeded in making either their sons or their daughters happy—but, like most modern parents, they did try to consider their children's needs as well as their duties.<sup>31</sup>

Yet was Charlotte herself ever really happy as queen of Great Britain? Did she ever feel like a British queen, was she ever accepted as such, or did she remain a foreigner, an alien for the rest of her life?<sup>32</sup> The second half of this paper will focus on Charlotte's correspondence with her brother Charles.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, on reading Charlotte's "German" correspondence, one is tempted to think her interests were exclusively directed towards her old home country. However, as Campbell Orr warns: "It is impossible to measure the proportion of her total correspondence dealing with her German relatives and connections in relation to the letters she must have written to English figures, and thereby 'quantify' her English identity in relation to her German one."<sup>34</sup> Mecklenburg, in any case, remained "Notre Chere Patrie," and her brother's family occasionally turned into "ma Famille."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> The portrait is by Allan Ramsay, *Queen Charlotte with her two eldest sons*, c. 1764 (see Michael Levey, *A Royal Subject: Portraits of Queen Charlotte* [London: The National Gallery, 1977], 7; 10). The idea that Queen Charlotte did not feel love for any one of her children except her firstborn (see, for instance, Levey, 5, and Fraser, 5) presumably derives from the fact that her few surviving letters to her children are either factual updates or stern admonitions. The queen, however, could not write like other parents: her letters were liable to be read by more eyes than those of her children. While she is also remarkably silent about her children in her letters to her brother Charles, the very few letters she wrote to her Keeper of the Robes, Juliana Elizabeth Schwellenberg, are replete with loving comments on her children—especially young Adolphus, whom his mother considered to be "as beautiful as an Angel" (Hausarchiv M-S, 993, 4, 31 January 1775).

<sup>32</sup> See also Schulte for a discussion of the problematic status foreign-born queens, perceived as strangers by their subjects, often had to cope with in their new countries (7).

<sup>33</sup> Charlotte kept in touch with all her brothers and her sister throughout their lives, surviving them all. Indeed, among the aristocracy, relations between siblings seem to have been as strong or even stronger, and perhaps healthier, than those to mothers or fathers. Frederick II relied on his sister Wilhelmine of Bayreuth, while George III, according to his mother Augusta, at the age of fourteen loved no one but his brother Edward (Sedgwick, ix). In her study of George III and his siblings, Stella Tillyard points out that biography "tends to be a vertical genre, going from parents to children," ignoring the "profound influence [siblings] can have on one another's lives" (8).

<sup>34</sup> Clarissa Campbell Orr, "Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Queen of Great Britain and Electress of Hanover: Northern Dynasties and the Northern Republic of Letters," in *Queenship in Europe, 1660–1815: The Role of the Consort*, ed. Clarissa Campbell Orr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 368–402: 373.

<sup>35</sup> See Hausarchiv M-S, No. 5, 19 June 1794 and 2 August 1813.

“Dieu veuille diriger les Coeurs des Souverains pour qui previennent autant qu’il est dans leur pouvoir que Notre chere Patrie ne soit point infectée des horreurs François,” she told Charles in 1792.<sup>36</sup> A year later, on the marriage of her nieces to Prussian princes, the old rumor that Prussia would propose to exchange some other territories for those of Mecklenburg resurfaced in England, and Charlotte was stunned into a patriotism that sounds like a threat even to her beloved brother, whom some believed to have acceded to “that proposition”:

Je Vous avoue que je suis si attachée a ma Patrie qu’en cas que cette Proposition se fera, ou qu’on pensoit peut de se saisir des Duchés par les Armes que je ne cesserais d’implorer le Secours du Roi, & ce qui plus est com[m]e toutes les Princes de l’Empire doivent Naturellement s’attendre a un Sort Pareille Je suis sure quils s’y opposeront de toute leur forces.<sup>37</sup>

Yet Charlotte’s correspondence with her brother also proves that she suffered from frequent bouts of depression and homesickness. Her first years at Court had seen frequent concerts, theatre visits, and even balls, but Court life became less and less pleasure-filled as the years advanced. The retreat from public life was, at first at least, not to Charlotte’s liking, even if after the scandal involving the Prince of Wales and his wife she preferred to shield her life from prying—and all too often censoring—eyes. She spent more and more time immersed in books and botany and sought the comforts offered by religion.<sup>38</sup> The few diaries that have survived suggests that she spent several hours per day deep in her studies, and employed a reader for the two hours a day she needed to get dressed.<sup>39</sup> The books she actually read or had read out are not mentioned, but the auction catalogue of the sale of her library and other possessions half a year after her death reveals a lot about her taste. Over twenty-three days, 4515 works were sold for altogether

<sup>36</sup> Hausarchiv M–S, 876, 19 June 1792.

<sup>37</sup> Hausarchiv M–S, 8.I.4.3., 2 August 1793.

<sup>38</sup> Charlotte’s botanical interests are discussed in Clarissa Campbell Orr, “Queen Charlotte: ‘Scientific Queen,’” in *Queenship in Britain*, ed. Campbell Orr (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2002), 236–66, 250ff.; see also Hedley, *Queen Charlotte*, 48, 113, 137ff. and 179ff., as well as Ann B. Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 35–37.

<sup>39</sup> The surviving diaries date from 1789 and 1794 (Royal Archives, GEO/ADD43/1–3).

£4540.<sup>40</sup> Apart from over fifty bibles, the oldest dating back to 1583, and almost eight-hundred theological works, her library consisted mostly of German, French, and English literary works, from essays and plays to downright scandalous novels such as *The Sylph* (1779) and *Vathek* (1786). Wieland was perhaps her favorite German writer, she also owned collections of most well-known German writers, especially playwrights (Kotzebue and Schröder as well as Goethe and Schiller). Her translations from Greek and Roman classics included Ovid's *Art of Love*, but she also owned contemporary works on education, philosophy and history. She was clearly interested in women's role in society, owning Brandes's *Betrachtungen über das weibliche Geschlecht* (1802) and C. F. Pockels' *Versuch einer Charakteristik des weiblichen Geschlechts* (1797), the works of Sophie de la Roche (which may have been a present by the author) and those of Mme de Genlis, Sarah Trimmer, Hannah More and the bluestockings Elizabeth Carter and Anna Seward. Again, her shelves also contained the more scandalous Mme de Staël's *De l'Allemagne* and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Embassy Letters*. Her habit of sending servants to buy books from the London bookstalls point to a bookworm, even if an appalled Thomas Babington Macaulay, reading about it in Burney's lair *Diaries and Letters*, years later accused her of miserliness.<sup>41</sup>

Queen Charlotte, as Clarissa Campbell Orr has recently proved, had strong ties to some of the more enlightened of her age, and even to the bluestockings, whose ideals of polite and rational conversation she shared with-out, to her lasting regret, being able to participate in similar circles.<sup>42</sup> She believed in the supremacy of reason and the importance of rational occupations, as her letters to her brother amply demonstrate. In marked contrast to the community envisioned in the "rational or enlightened domesticity" treasured by the intellectual women described by Irene Brown, all friendships were frowned upon at Court.<sup>43</sup> George III had warned his young wife not to

<sup>40</sup> *A Catalogue of the Genuine Library, Prints, and Books of Prints, of An Illustrious Personage, Lately Deceased which will be Sold by Auction, On Wednesday the 9<sup>th</sup> of June, 1819, and the following Days, by Mr. Christie, at his rooms in Pall-Mall, 1819.* Only two copies of this catalog now remain; the one in the British Library contains merely books and prints, the other, owned by the Royal Archives, lists all her possessions that were for sale.

<sup>41</sup> *The Diary and Letters of Mme D'Arblay, 1778–1840*, ed. Charlotte Barrett, 6 vols. (London, 1843), II: 340, and Macaulay, *Critical and Historical Essays Contributed to the Edinburgh Review*, 2 vols. (London, New York and Bombay, 1903), 651.

<sup>42</sup> See Campbell Orr, *Queenship in Britain*, 236–266, and "Queen Charlotte and her Circle," in *The Wisdom of George the Third*, ed. Jonathan Marsden, 163–178.

<sup>43</sup> See Irene Brown, "Domesticity, Feminism, and Friendship: Female Aristocratic Culture and Marriage in England, 1660–1760," *Journal of Family History* 7:4 (1982): 406–24.

make confidantes of the few ladies surrounding her, mostly for political reasons (Campbell Orr 2002, 240). The queen's only friend among the ladies at Court seems to have been Lady Harcourt, though little is known about their friendship. Although Charlotte supported the ideals of her time prescribing domesticity for women, her retired life depressed her with the unrelenting solitude experienced only by those unable to confide in anyone they meet: "Enfin mon Frere je manque la chose la plus necessaire pour vivre dans ce monde. cest cette gaité que Vous m'avez connue autre foi. je trouve que la vie solitaire & retirée que je mene nest point fait pour moi."<sup>44</sup> She claimed to dislike the superficiality of aristocratic life, but nevertheless felt excluded from its festivities:

Comme les Fetes ont comencé tout le Monde est courue a la Campagne les Etranger même en font partie car les Amusements de Londres ne pouvant se soutenir sans la Noblesse il ont resource a la Ville de Bath laquelle doit etre remplie comme un oeuf on y Dance & y rencontre beaucoup de Scandal. voila les occupations raisonnable de Notre jeunesse & viellesse pour moi je continue ma vie solitaire cela s'augmente encore.<sup>45</sup>

Her only chance of obtaining rational conversation was to take interesting men and women into her service, for instance as readers (cf. Campbell Orr 2002, 244). Even if Frances Burney bitterly resented the honour of being appointed Keeper of the Robes, the queen clearly—but for quite a while mistakenly—hoped to find a talkative counterpart in her.<sup>46</sup> Personally, I doubt that Charlotte wished to support indigent authors by such appointments, it seems more likely to me that she hoped to gain access, however vicariously, to intellectual circles. Burney was not the first associate of the bluestockings to be employed: in 1777, the queen had chosen Mary Hamilton, who was linked to similar circles, even if her family was of better social standing.<sup>47</sup> The queen's readers, Mme. La Fite and Jean André de Luc, both had connections to well-known representatives of the European

<sup>44</sup> Hausarchiv M–S, 869, 23 May 1773.

<sup>45</sup> Hausarchiv M–S, 871, 29 December 1775.

<sup>46</sup> For Burney's resentment, see Joyce Hemlow, *The History of Fanny Burney* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 194–96.

<sup>47</sup> See *Mary Hamilton at Court and at Home: From Letters and Diaries, 1756 to 1816*, ed. Elizabeth and Florence Anson (London, 1925), 50–51; 165–66.

enlightenment.<sup>48</sup> De Luc's publications are more or less forgotten now, but in his own day, they were quickly translated into German and discussed by such eminent recipients as Immanuel Kant.<sup>49</sup>

As a queen, Charlotte ironically had fewer liberties than her subjects. She could not travel abroad, as any visit would have meant an act of state. In fact, she never left Great Britain again. She did not even have the liberty to invite people for a friendly chat and a coffee. In her presence, men invariably had to stand, an attitude preventing intimate conversation.<sup>50</sup> As her letters to her brother show, Charlotte deplored these constraints, envying his freedom:

<sup>48</sup> See Campbell Orr, "Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz," 385–86 and 2005, 167–368. La Fite published translations of Münter, Gellert and Lavater as well as her own considerations on education. Concerning de Luc, Charlotte wrote to her brother: "[J]e vient d'engager un de ses Messieurs nommé *de Luc* comme Lecteur, cet un Homme qui s'est fait connoître par plusieurs Ouvrage sur la Phisique & dont le journal Encyclopedie a fait mention plusieurs foi. il est Philosophe comme il faut car la religion ne le rebute point & toute ses recherches sont remplies d'admiration pour l'Etre suprême." Hausarchiv M–S 869, 29 June 1774. On de Luc, see also Campbell Orr, "Queen Charlotte: 'Scientific Queen,'" 247–49.

<sup>49</sup> See Immanuel Kant, *Die gesammelten Schriften*, ed. Reinhard Brandt and Werner Stark (Berlin, 1997), XXV: 1345. Mme de Genlis considered his works to be well-received, see Félicité de Genlis: *Mémoires inédits de Madame la Comtesse de Genlis sur le dixhuitième siècle et la Révolution Française, depuis 1756 jusqu'à nos jours*. Paris, 1825, 336. She also reported that as the queen's reader, de Luc had to spend three or four hours a day reading to the queen, standing all the while: "Jamais nos princes n'ont donné l'exemple de cet étrange oubli de la bonté et de l'humanité" (337). Apart from this strange whim, Mme de Genlis considered the queen to be "également obligeante et spirituelle" (340).

<sup>50</sup> Among the visitors who had to stand while talking to the queen was Georg Christoph Lichtenberg: "Gestern Morgen habe ich, ehe der König kam, auf anderthalb Stunden mich mit der Königin allein besprochen. Sie sitzt vor dem Caminfeuer und ich stehe dabey" (Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Ulrich Joost and Albrecht Schöne. München, 1983, I: 500, L 271 to Christiane Dieterich, 24 January 1775). The remainder of the letter is a glowing testimony to the queen's conversational powers: "Ich spreche nicht als Unterthan, sondern blos als Passagier und Weltbürger, wenn ich sage: Mehr Menschenfreundlichkeit und Gefälligkeit, mehr Richtigkeit im Ausdruck und Verstand und Anmuth in allem was sie sagt, nicht allein ohne Stolz, sondern auch selbst ohne den mindesten Anschein, als wenn Sie sich vielleicht mit Fleiß herabließe, und dieses mit einem so liebeichen Wesen in den Mienen und dem gantzen Betragen, habe ich noch nie, ich will nicht sagen in einer Fürstin, sondern überhaupt noch nicht so beysammen gesehen als in unserer Königin." An English translation is given in Campbell Orr, "Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz," 387. Charlotte, as Campbell Orr also points out, ordered Lichtenberg to send her German books via Dieterich, and to take out a subscription for the "Göttingische Zeitung" for her (see Lichtenberg, *Briefwechsel*, I: 265, 30 October 1774 and I: 276, to Johann Christian Dieterich, 31 March 1775).



[J]e veut bien Vous quereller Mon Frere de ce que Vous navez point poussée Votre route jusqu'a Geneve a ton jamais fait telle chose... ces Amusements innocents exempts de la Critique éloignée des Bruits d'une grande Cour, Maitre de Vous même, ne craignant que de faire le mal sont des delices que je ne connoitrai pas sitot.<sup>51</sup>

A remarkable instance of her frankness with Charles, as well as of the restraint she must habitually have put upon herself, is a letter, a *cri de coeur* rather, written in 1773, some twelve years after her move to England:

toute les foi que l'Été saproche mon Ame & mon coeur se remplit d'un mecontentement qui ne s'exprime point par la plume, seule comme je suis obligé d'y etre, fort & bien sincerement attachée comme je le suis a ceux qui sont Absent, privé des innocents q'une bonne & agréable société peut procuré, courir dans les jardins sans y trouver quelque gaieté de coeur, voici mon Frere mes preparacions pour la Campagne. parmie ce nombre de desagement il n'y a que l'occupation de Vous ecrire qui m'amuse.<sup>52</sup>

The same regrets would reverberate through her letters to Charles for the next four decades. She did not always enjoy her often amazingly rural life ("notre vie est tout a fait campagnarde"), she felt lonely and she missed the pleasures of congenial society. Occasionally, she sounds almost rebellious, but every such thought had to be stifled immediately: "Helas c'ette [sic] gayeté innocente, et riante, m'est tout interdit, mais qu'est ce qui ne m'est point interdit? tout, je n'en parlerai plus car il y a des Cordes qu'on n'ose pas touché."<sup>53</sup> She equally disliked the rigorously formal state events, their holiday resort Weymouth bored her, and so did her children's company. Doing her duty, however, remained an important obligation, and the stern duties required by religion paradoxically often turned out to be her staunchest comforts.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Hausarchiv M-S, 870, Nr. 11, 18. April 175. Compare also the letter dated 30 June 1772 (868).

<sup>52</sup> Hausarchiv M-S, 869, 23 May 1773. This letter ends on an equally sad but prudent note, and highlights the restraint the queen felt obliged to exercise: "chere Frere peut etre que j'ai dit trop & que j'ai passé les bornes de la prudence, mais je Vous de le regardé comme venant d'un coeure trop überkommen. qui se decharge dans les mains d'un Frere dont je me promets toute discretion Possible. par grace brulez ceci si Vous m'aimez."

<sup>53</sup> Hausarchiv M-S, 17 December 1784.

<sup>54</sup> "Je regrette de jour en jour plus Considerablement de n'avoir point d'autre Société que seulement mes Enfants, car comme Nous jouissons également de tout la Conversation ne

Of course these letters are only a part of the truth, perhaps merely a small piece of the whole mosaic of her life. Any interpretation based on her correspondence with a single person is likely to generalise and distort the overall picture. However, her letters home, if one may style them so, reveal a perpetual longing for her childhood associates, and childhood associations; a longing that would only grow stronger with time. Considering the mounting troubles Charlotte had to face in England, it would not be surprising if her early life and values, free from the taints of reality, in time took on the form of a happy dream. Charlotte herself may ironically have turned her maidenhood into the fairy-tale part of her life. She would have loved to see one of her daughters marry into her brother's family and into "the House in which she herself had been so happy" (though only Princess Amelia would have been of an age suitable to that of her nephew George).<sup>55</sup> There would, however, eventually be a rude awakening. When at long last a union between Charlotte's son Ernest and her niece Frederica took place, the mores and manners of her nephews and nieces, whom she had been inclined to idealize, seem to have destroyed her belief in a family worth every sacrifice.<sup>56</sup> Clinging to the strict etiquette of the English Court, the aging queen refused to receive her new daughter-in-law, who had compromised herself in the eyes of the world, even if Charlotte privately sanctioned the marriage. In the eyes of her own children

peut être Animée, & notre vie est trop unie et trop bien trop retiré pour Nous faire connoître le Monde" (Hausarchiv M-S, 1 July 1783). On Weymouth, see, for instance, 8.I.4.11., 15 August 1794: "Jespere que les Amusements de Pymont sont en plus Grand Nombre que ceux de Weymouth ou Nous Nous trouvons en ce moment ci." On the comforts of religion, Charlotte wrote often. A typical example runs: "Quand on fait son devoir on fait bien, cest une Consolation & la certitude que les actions les plus <secrettes> sibien que les Publics sont jugé & connue par un Dieu juste nous fait souffrir avec patience les desagremens auquel nous sont assujette par les vicissitude des temps. & Elle nous soutien & nous encourage contre les plus grandes malheurs" (870, 22 August 1775).

<sup>55</sup> Hausarchiv M-S, No. 5, 29 May 1805: "Surtout quand je me represente une de mes Filles dans cette Maison où j'étois si heureuse."

<sup>56</sup> Accounts of Charlotte's final quarrel with her brother's family are given in Hedley, *Queen Charlotte*, 270–77, and Campbell Orr 2004, 394–395. Her idealization of her brother's family is everywhere apparent in her letters. On her niece Frederica's widowhood, for instance, she comments: "pour tout autre Jeune Veuve, Jolie, engageante & Aimable, je Tremblerai mais pour celle ci je ne crain rien, car ses Principes sont telles qu'Elle se conduira Prudemment en toute Occasion" (Hausarchiv M-S, 8.I.4.9., 19 January 1797). Frederica equally blamed the queen and her eldest daughter, by then queen of Wurtemberg, for having poisoned all family relationships. A vitriolic letter to her brother George speaks of Charlotte's cold blooded readiness to make brother, son, and daughter-in-law unhappy, and the queen of Wurtemberg's "infamies" as being only too likely in the daughter of such a mother (quoted in Frank Selge, "Lebenswege und Schicksale der Kinder Karls II," *Vom Anfang und Ende*, ed. Stark, 153).

as well as her brother's family, she had turned into the wicked stepmother.<sup>57</sup> The resulting quarrel with her brother shattered both (Charles came close to a heart attack and died a year later). Presumably Charlotte was the more shocked by the emancipatory resistance and self-assertion of her nephews and nieces because she had imagined them to be so very loving and amiable in the first place, having long envied her brother for the "universal regard" his children seemed to excite.<sup>58</sup> When the rupture came, Charlotte had been away from her old home for almost half a century, and her memories were out of date. Life at Windsor Castle, it seems, though not exactly a fairy-tale castle, had cast its spell over her, too. In Mecklenburg, the "one constitutional law," Fritz Reuter declared in the nineteenth century, is "everything remains as it always was." However, for once, things had changed—not the least because of Charlotte's own social rise.

<sup>57</sup> For her own children's complaints about her bad temper, see, for instance, a letter written by Prince Adolphus to his eldest brother (*The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales*, ed. A. Aspinall, 8 vols. [London: Cassell, 1963–71], II: 467, L 872, 15 October 1794): "What can possess her to be so odd, & why make her life so wretched when she could have it just the reverse?"

<sup>58</sup> Hausarchiv M–S, No. 9, 19 January 1797.