Northumbria University

Department of Humanities

Honours Dissertation

Experience, Subversion and Conformity: The Royal Court 1760-1815

by

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BA Hons History and American Studies

Date 07/05/2025

Word Count 11,704

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

BA Hons History and American Studies

Table of Contents

Introduction

Some of the greatest tests for Hanoverian nobility occurred in the ballroom. In these contexts, mistakes of nobles often led to horror and public shame. In June 1767, Lady Bridget Lane lost her shoe to widespread mockery. Though George III, seeing the incident, launched into a dramatic story on the founding of the Order of the Garter, to divert attention from the wardrobe malfunction proved extremely difficult.[1] Even against royal diversions, humiliation against the noblewoman ultimately won out. Dance culture was strong to a somewhat unique degree in Hanoverian England, and an effective entertainment from royalty. These gatherings, in turn, were found beneficial in its promise for strength of royal influence.

This dissertation will argue the prominent social role of balls and other dance gatherings largely ensured the prominence of the Hanoverian royal dynasty. As a realm of soft power, these cultural forms proved an especially useful tool. In times of political challenge, dance played an important role in maintaining ultimate monarchical strength. The unique appeal of royal dance even spread into groups looking to challenge the overall system, including the Whigs with support of the Prince of Wales. Ultimately, many elite groups relied on attractive features of dance to build their own popularity.

[1] Hillary Burlock, "Tumbling into the Lap of Majesty: Minuets at the Court of George III", *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2021-06), p. 216.

Through the course of this paper, secondary literature is rather focused. Until the turn of the 21st century, limited research was done on the cultural aspects of Hanoverian rule. Researchers like Hillary Burlock, from the early 21st century, became major contributors to the field. In the example of Burlock, there is the suggestion that traditions surrounding dance helped to keep external interest in the royal court alive.[2] Its wider political role is also explored in some recent literature. For instance, Amanda Foreman describes how noble women were able to play an active political role through these aspects of court culture. The Duchess of Devonshire Georgiana Cavendish, for instance, was able to experiment with social boundaries to a large extent.[3] In many cases, however, there has been limited focus on the role of dance as its own political and social tool. This dissertation will attempt to navigate practical applications of this culture over later parts of the Georgian period.

In this dissertation, cultural patronage also represents a monarchical attempt to form a continuing influence through perceived hardship. This system of rewards would help form a grounding for dance culture. Parts of secondary literature, in this way, have provided valuable political context. Linda Colley describes how the earlier Revolution Settlement of 1689 limited royal power in terms of internal affairs.[4] By the point of Hanoverian rule in question, these limits had long been a part of royal rule. Opportunities for cultural influence however, were prevalent, especially in the rapidly growing West End area. The wider Enlightenment led to cultural connections that

[2] Hillary Burlock, "'Tumbling into the Lap of Majesty': Minuets at the Court of George III", *Journal for Eighteenth-Century* Studies, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2021-06), p. 207.
[3] Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: Flamingo, 1999), pp. 404-405.
[4] Linda Colley, "The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British nation 1760-1820", *Past and Present*, Vol. 102, No. 1 (1984-02), pp. 96-96.

George III was able to take advantage of in various ways, including science and music.[5] Ways this power had been exercised will be investigated through the following chapters.

Due to a strong social and cultural focus in this dissertation, primary sources have a largely qualitative purpose. Observation both inside and outside of the royal court structure were key in the research involved. Memoirs, including that of Frances Burney, worked to provide a personal perspective and some emotional response to events. Letters between court members also helped to support these pieces of evidence. In terms of external perspectives, contemporary portraits and newspaper articles were both greatly helpful. The specific nature of this topic leads to a select number of sources being examined in great detail, allowing for a thorough analysis of these personal perspectives.

The first chapter of this dissertation will focus upon the communication structure that surrounded dance. Gatherings of this kind could help to define the societal place of the British nobility, particularly for younger groups. Jeroen Duindam describes the mutually productive relationships involved. Still building their reputations, elite individuals in many cases relied upon close cultural connections with the English monarchy. The king, in addition, was in an active search for close allies. Security measures were one reason. In the event that rulers were vulnerable, for example in sickness, trusted members of the nobility might very likely be turned to.[6] As a result, to maintain monarchical stability, to have reliable advisors and domestic allies was vital. Female members of the gentry would also be assessed in terms of reliability in the household. A more geographically-

[5] David Watkin, *The Architect King: George III and the Culture of the Enlightenment* (London: Royal Collection, c2004).
[6] Jeroen Duindam, "The Court as a Meeting Point: Cohesion, Competition, Control", from *Prince, Pen and Sword: Eurasian Perspectives*, Vol. 15, 2018, p. 35.

focused nobility, in the West End of London, generally meant almost everyone would be held to account for their appearance. This sense of self-awareness would develop what Peter Atkins called a "container of frighteningly concentrated power".[7] Dance created a tense and competitive environment that played a major role in perception of the elite classes.

The second chapter will explore how dance could be used as a political tool, particularly within the monarchy. These events would aid forms of subversion while still maintaining some attractive features connected to royalty. During political challenges of the late Georgian period, particularly during events like the 1788-1798 Regency Crisis, ballrooms in the West End would be used in formation of political alliances.[8] The Prince of Wales, as will be explored, played a major role in these developments. As gatherings surrounding dance took place within Whig sections of the noble classes, new individuals may find themselves in leading roles. Wives, in particular, were able to play a more active role. The Duchess of Devonshire, and her perceived rebellious spirit, led utilisation of dance culture culturally separate from the wider monarchy. These events would, instead, be used to suggest the perceived openness of the Whig Party, and allow other political figures to be involved.[9] Changes in this regard would suggest continuing attractions to dance, as a useful strategy, even when the political state of the monarchy was in challenge.

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[7] Hannah Grieg, *The Beau Monde: Fashionable Society in Georgian London*, First Edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 10.
[8] Hillary Burlock, "Party Politics: Dancing in London's West End", 1780-9", *The London Journal,* Vol. 47, No. 2 (2022), p. 182.
[9] Elaine Chalus, "Elite Women, Social Politics, and the Political World of Late Eighteenth-Century England", *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (2000), p. 687.

The final chapter of the dissertation will focus on how Hanoverian royals used dance in response to diplomatic events. In times of difficulty, these well-organised events can inspire traditional conformity. During the late 18th century and early 19th century, many royal challenges occurred. In examples like the French Revolution, however, dance events worked both as diversions and a show of confidence for the future.[10] When monarchs needed to show their willingness to conform to custom, the collective nature of dance was an attractive option. On a dynastic level, these events also tended to show ongoing cultural unity. Queen Charlotte, through her cultural patronage that included music, was able to make her contribution as Queen Consort to the British monarch more evident.[11] The roles of the King and Queen would appear to complement one another well, contributing to a strong cultural memory of the Hanoverian monarchy.

Chapter 1 – The Court Experience

Opportunities to bring together these influential groups were a regular occurrence. During the early modern period, various types of entertainment were used to mark political events. In terms of celebration, dance was common to arrange, perhaps even expected of the monarch. "Birthday balls" were known as recurring events with many creative benefits. Some precedent existed, for royals to follow in this respect. For instance, on the celebrations of Queen Anne's birthday on 6 February 1707, the Act of

[10] Marilyn Morris, *The British Monarchy and the French Revolution* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 163.
[11] Hannah Smith, "The Idea of a Protestant Monarchy in Britain 1714-1760", *Past & Present*, No. 185 (2004), p. 101.

Union with Scotland was also being promoted. Anne led a dance process where a figure-of-eight formation had been used, which required two people to cooperate.[12] These greater celebrations were clear opportunities for more extravagance and general excitement. These visual demonstrations of power can also help to cement the idea of royal cultural influence. Left open to interpretation and even with a sense of mystery, dance strengthened perceived authority.[13] During the Georgian period, as described by Hillary Burlock, these royal birthday balls were known to be a prime opportunity to connect with members of the *bon ton* and impress royal circles.[14] More exposure typically means greater opportunity for social advancement of nobility or the royal courts. As a result, there were great amounts of social pressure to remain composed at these events, as any mistake would be likely remembered also.

Balls were regular events of great visibility for court members, where many individuals were held accountable. Organisation within these events were often designed to highlight these aims. An engraving by Daniel Dodd in 1786, showing a Birthday Ball for the king, shows structured exposure of nobles in the context of dance events. Arranged into rows, nobles were positioned orderly, often facing one another.[15] Constant reminders existed, both during these events and in contemporary media, regarding the risk involved. Under these circumstances, behaviour of individual nobles are likely to be assessed by one another. Furthermore, in the early modern period composure in dance

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[12] Erin Griffey, *Early Modern Court Culture* (London: Routledge, 2021), p. 310.
[13] Ronald G. Asch, "Monarchy in Western and Central Europe", in H.M. Scott (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350-1750, Volume 2: Cultures and* Power (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) p. 376.
[14] Hillary Burlock, "'Tumbling into the Lap of Majesty': Minuets at the Court of George III'", *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2021), p. 206.
[15] Daniel Dodd (after), *Ball at St.James's on Her Majesty's Birth Night*, 1786, Royal Collection Trust (RCIN 750529), [available at: https://www.rct.uk/collection/750529/ball-at-st-jamess-on-her-majestys-birth-night-1786, accessed on 31/01/2025].

had much wider reputational implications. As described by Ulinka Rublack, perceived bodily health was tied to social experience as a form of "emotional exchange".[16] Social assessment worked as a common occurrence, in these contexts. Even without great amounts of spoken conversation, conclusions could still be drawn on nobility predominantly through dance.

A sense of hierarchy is also shown in Dodd's engraving, maintaining an expected idea of ambition for those involved. Separated by a partition, the king and queen sit in the centre.[17] Though each noble is demonstrated to be involved, there is often the perceived possibility of becoming closer in position to the reigning monarchs. Fabian Persson describes how a common function of strong monarchy tends to be the use of barriers or walls to separate based upon royal favour.[18] These structures serve as a reminder, for nobles, of the central ongoing control of the king and queen. In turn, a spirit for progression is still encouraged to members of the nobility invited to dance events.

Even some prominent royals were not safe from the social tests of these grand events. In fact, to lead by example was a necessary skill. As an art form, some degree of existing skill in dance helped individuals. Some did naturally struggle, notably second-eldest Hanoverian Princess Augusta, said to be concerned regarding public humiliation.[19] Higher status in society drew wider attention and led to accountability. Practice was

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[16] Ulinka Rublack, "Fluxes: the Early Modern Body and the Emotions", *History Workshop Journal,* Vol. 53, No. 1 (2002), p. 14.
[17] Daniel Dodd (after), *Ball at St.James's on Her Majesty's Birth Night*, 1786, Royal Collection Trust (RCIN 750529), [available at: https://www.rct.uk/collection/750529/ball-at-st-jamess-on-her-majestys-birth-night-1786, accessed on 31/01/2025].
[18] Fabian Persson, "Public Displays of Affection: Creating Spheres of Apparent Royal Intimacy in Public", from Dustin M. Neighbors, Lars Cyril Nørgaard, Elena Woodacre (ed.), *Notions of Privacy at Early Modern European Courts: Reassessing the Public and Private* Divide, pp. 144-145.
[19] Hillary Burlock, "'Tumbling into the Lap of Majesty': Minuets at the Court of George III", *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2021), p. 218.

required to learn, and perhaps impress. The nature of dancing, more generally, was a strong indicator of social skill, and perhaps even a degree of legitimacy. Skiles Howard, for instance, described how "Popular and courtly dancing embodied the fundamental social distinction between those who worked with their hands and those who did not."[20] Especially in the early modern period, to be noble often involved an expected proficiency in presentation. Public image mattered most, and birthday balls may be unique periods of assessment for much of the higher classes. There was pressure on the monarchy, furthermore, to maintain a sense of control. George III was likely aware of the importance of perceived monarchical control. In part, this was due to a lessened amount of avenues for political dominance. After events of the 17th century, royals faced a general decline of written power in these terms.[21] Great amounts of effort toward cultural dominance, in turn, was driven by royal nostalgia and more general pride.

By court rules, particular dances were deemed more essential for advancement. The "minuet" was known to be especially difficult. Complex rhythm patterns were a great concern. Dancing master Gennaro Magri, for instance, described how to learn the dance even at a basic level could take up to a year.[22] Though many would have been likely to struggle, individuals with hopes for progression faced particular expectation to learn these complex formations. Nobles determined to attempt it needed to apply to the Lord Chamberlain for tickets. Furthermore, only after a performance of the minuet could even a country dance then be performed.[23] The amount of concentration that

[20] Skiles Howard, *The Politics of Courtly Dancing in Early Modern England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), p. 8.
[21] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837: With a New Preface by the Author* (London: Pimlico, 2003), p. 207.
[22] Hillary Burlock, "'Tumbling into the Lap of Majesty': Minuets at the Court of George III", *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2021), p.212.
[23] Ibid, p. 213.

required application to prove oneself through this dance was likely a high-pressured experience in the lives of many nobles. In essence, it was perceived to be a clear passage into society. It was often only after this point that more creative freedom could be possible, signifying a new prestige.

The importance of these events grew to also be highlighted by dancing masters. Even the smallest gestures, it was emphasised, could have a notable impact. For instance, movements such as "giving hands" and "making a bow/curtsey" were perceived to indicate poise and health respectively.[24] Dance in the early modern period often took steady focus to an almost tiring degree. Kellom Tomlinson dedicated considerable effort in his 1724 manual *The Art of Dancing* to debate on the specific subject of whether a noble man should take his hat off at the end of the dance, as a symbol of respect. Tomlinson was cautious in giving his opinion at all, in this particular case:

> *As for the taking off or keeping on the hat I shall not take upon me to determine, leaving it to every one's chouse to act as they think most agreeable; since it entirely depends upon fashion and fancy; but, as I have a right as well as other humbly to offer my thoughts on this point, I shall declare in favour of the former, in that it has the appearance of much more compliance and air than keeping the hat upon the head, which in my humble opinion seems more flat and disrespectful…*[25]

As may be apparent, these customs surrounding ballroom etiquette contribute much to a dancer's reputation. As they study and assess, dancing masters help to define the wider implications of even brief gestures. Karen Harvey describes how dance held a central role to showing male bearing and general strength of the body.[26] Assessment

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[24] Jennifer Thorp, "'Borrowed Grandeur and Affected Grace': Perceptions of the Dancing Master in Early Eighteenth-Century England", *Music in Art*, Vol. 36, No. 1-2 (2011), p. 22.
[25] Kellom Tomlinson, *The Art of Dancing…*, (London), (Image), taken from the Library of Congress, (accessed 30th November 2024), https://www.loc.gov/item/20010870/.
[26] Karen Harvey, "Men of Parts: Masculine Embodiment and the Male Leg in Eighteenth-Century England", *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (2015), p. 806.

regarding these movements, in turn, played a prominent role in perception of members of the nobility. Widely distributed dancing manuals, like Tomlinson's example, often aimed to set out codes of social literacy among early modern elites.[27] It was essential for nobles to remain educated on the subject to help preserve their own reputations.

Younger members of the noble classes, in potential, grew to understand the social role of dance. If needed, many even would seek an education on the subject. A generational divide can be apparent, in this respect. Though parents would have rarely taught male offspring how to dance, these individuals would turn to dancing manuals and become self-taught.[28] A degree of active effort and independence from their families shows a particular effort in this respect. Ideas regarding polite masculinity were in some shift around this period. Integrity and self-control were emphasised, in addition to skilful interaction with women at noble events.[29] Standards regarding manners played a role in these changes. Michéle Coheh notes the development of ideas regarding male behaviour which involved revival of elements of medieval chivalry. These changes were influenced by wider ideas of social progress connected to the Enlightenment.[30] Priorities of the noble youth, in this regard, would highlight importance of dance in the wider social structure.

Systems of patronage were fostered by Hanoverian monarchs to help maintain the court culture surrounding dance. Even for people already heavily involved with the monarch,

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[27] Skiles Howard, *The Politics of Courtly Dancing in Early Modern England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), p. 21.
[28] Simon D. I. Fleming, "The Gender of Subscribers to Eighteenth-Century Music Publications", *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, Vol., 50, (2019), p. 121.
[29] Karen Harvey, "The History of Masculinity, circa 1650-1800", *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2005), pp. 301-302.
[30] Michéle Cohen, "'Manners' Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750-1830", *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2005), pp. 315-325.

the possibility of further cultural favourability often helped incentivise communication. This ambition, in many ways, came to be useful for the monarch. Especially in a constitutional monarchy, interaction between royalty and government was crucial.[31] Members of the nobility, some of which commonly moved between both, often desired reliable communications with the King and Queen. Cultural exchanges can be useful for stable working relationships within royal circles. As described by Jeroen Duindam, "The distribution of honours, reward – and punishments – affected strongly the central and intermediary elites who formed the backbone of power everywhere."[32] However, favour might need to be spread widely, meaning there were significant dangers attached for the monarch. The possibility of giving away too much power was always a danger in terms of security.[33] Competition for connections were intense in the royal court, where events like royal balls often played a role.

In the context of the Enlightenment, through the Hanoverian period, a growing trend developed in these systems of patronage. Monarchs and courtiers, rather than strictly prioritising high nobility as typical, might also build relationships with individuals thought talented in the arts. In turn, the monarch could help support cultural progress according to their own prioritisies.[34] George III often proved to be generous in the way he prioritised these groups. Patronage was a preferred method of the king for building close relationships. By the 1790s, he had come to give away around £14,000 for the arts and

[31] Jeroen Duindam, "Royal Courts", in Hamish Scott (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 469.
[32] Jeroen Duindam, "The Court as a Meeting Point: Cohesion, Competition, Control", from *Prince, Pen and Sword: Eurasian Perspectives*, Vol. 15, (Brill: 2018), p. 122.
[33] Jeroen Duindam, "Royal Courts", in Hamish Scott (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 466.
[34] Erin Griffey, *Early Modern Court Culture* (Londo: Routledge , 2021), p. 24.

sciences.[35] Notably, George gave the daughter of music historian Charles Burney, Frances, a position in court as a reward for his scholarship.[36] George, in giving these generous rewards, was able to craft a widespread statement. He cared greatly for emphasising morality above politics and seemingly aimed to present himself as a patriot for Britain.[37] As a result, he made great efforts to build close relationships in contribution to the wider Enlightenment.

These decisive promotions to royal circles may have excited its recipients, but in time the risk they came with was realised. Frances Burney, as an individual, struggled with the pace and exposure birthday balls came with. In particular, an initial rush to see the monarch created a high-pressure environment. For instance, she wrote in mid-January 1787 "We had still some time to stand upon the stairs, before the opening of the Doors. We joined Mrs Fielding and her Daughters, & all entered together: but the crowd parted us; - they all ran on, & got in as they could, & I remained alone by the door!"[38] Burney, being in an advantageous position relatively quickly, sometimes struggled to adjust. Royal events like this ball, while parliament was active, had often been designed around the monarch specifically. Strict timings, for instance, helped to build a sense of urgency. Demand was then especially high. Though the doors to St. James might open around 8pm, attendants and the gentry might be at the stairwell two hours in advance to find an ideal location.[39] As long as the monarch was present at these events, they became

[35] David Watkin, *The Architect King: George III and the Culture of the Enlightenment* (London: Royal Collection, 2004).
[36] Clarissa Campbell Orr, *Mrs Delany: A Life* (Yale University Press, 2019), p. 336.
[37] Jeremy Black, *The Hanoverians: The History of a Dynasty* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004), pp. 115-116.
[38] Stewart Cooke (ed.), *The Court Journals and Letters of Frances Burney* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011), p. 30.
[39] Hillary Burlock, "'Tumbling into the Lap of Majesty': Minuets at the Court of George III", *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2021), p. 211.

products of high energy and perhaps stress. For much of the nobility, moreover, society events were often too geographically convenient to seem escapable. By the Georgian period, many had moved into newly-developed neighbourhoods surrounding the Palace (including Westminster and Mayfair).[40] Such a closely linked society had, in general, come to involve great amounts of expectation for individual members of the elite.

The competition for patronage proved to be intense, though Burney was seen to be quite successful more generally. Beyond helpful connections on the part of the new noble, there was also a seemingly fortunate sense of friendship between herself and the queen. Fellow noble, Mary Delaney, liked to emphasise the royal attention her close friend had captured. In July 1786, not long after Burney had joined the court, Delaney wrote "I had the honour and the joy of an hours visit yesterday morning from our dear and excellent Queen. You could not be more delighted with Her smiles than she was with your perfect propriety."[41] Seemingly, the young noble had struck a certain sense of luck in her integration. A defining feature of success in Georgian court, for those involved, usually involved a sense of morality and honour. If the highest sections of London society appear to agree on the talent of an individual, their place might rapidly develop. A sense of excitement may also have come from these changes, in Burney's case, considering her different style of upbringing. Notably, her origins as a historian's daughter meant much of her training involved reading and writing.[42] The efforts of

[40] Ibid, "Party Politics: Dancing in London's West End, 1780-9", *The London Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (2022), p. 183.
[41] Mary Delany Letters to Fanny Burney (Windsor, 2 July 1786), James Marshall and Marie-Louisa Osborn Collection, (Yale University: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library), from Alan Kerhervé, "Memoirs of the Court of George III. Volume 2. Mary Delany (1700-1788) and the Court of George III" (Pickering Chatto, 2015).
[42] Kate Chisholm, "The Burney Family" (p.5), from Peter Sabor (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 5.

George III and Charlotte, to bring together different areas of culture under their system of patronage, contributed to diversity of court members, and experience of events in turn.

Burney generally found royal balls a frustrating experience. She would often explore these personal emotions in her writings. In fact, she grew to become a notable author of satire on the subject. As described by Margaret Anne Doody, Burney chose to highlight her perspective of superficial society events and social networks.[43] Though she did feel some respect for the organised structure of a ball, Burney also suggests a feeling of pressure in almost constant surveillance. In a 1782 example *Cecilia*, a sense of exhaustion is explored:

> *Why we danced till three in the morning. We began with Cotillions, and finished with country dances. It was the most elegant thing you ever saw in your life; every thing quite in a style. I was so monstrously fatigued, I could hardly get through the last dance. I really thought I should have dropt down dead. Only conceive dancing five hours in such a monstrous crowd! I assure you when I got home my feet were all blisters. You have no idea how they smarted.*[44]

Processes of inner panic suggest another tone to the visually appealing nature of large society events. Many people, though they know how to participate, also feel the concern that any mistake could cost them greatly. A volatile relationship between opportunity and risk created an extremely tense environment. More widely, the book *Cecilia* deeply explores the perceived exploitation of its protagonist. Though wealthy and aware of her own success, there was also a darker side to her efforts. Always under high pressure,

[43] Margaret Anne Doody "Burney and Politics" (p. 7), and Jane Spencer "Evelina and Cecilia" (p.4), in Peter Sabor (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[44] Frances Burney author, Peter Sabor and Margaret Anne Doody (ed.), *Cecilia: or Memoirs of an Heiress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 285.

she often felt uneasy and even isolated.[45] Under the close eye of the monarchy, strict standards of perfection were emphasised. In the long hours that a royal ball would mean, as a result, any social change can be rapidly magnified.

Chapter 2 – Dance and Royal Subversion

The structure of dance was intended to be exclusive. Importantly, the head of the monarchy was to be in their sphere of control. This is why, as described by Hillary Bucklock, it was expected for all dancers to show their allegiance in some way.[46] Monarchical demands of the court, in many ways, were in shift around this period. The early reign of George III involved a turning point in the use of iconography in the royal court, as a political structure.[47] By this point in the Georgian monarchy, the nature of organised balls were perceived to be somewhat secure. George III frequently highlighted his efforts of utilising dance in a more focused manner than his predecessors.[48] This chapter will go on to describe how some of these efforts appeared to be compromised by his son and heir.

The king designed a system where, it was intended, that only the most loyal elite would be able to experience these gatherings. A multi-step process was required for those

[45] Justice Crump (ed), Frances Burney, *A Known Scribbler: Frances Burney on Literary Life* (United States: Broadview Press, 2002), pp. 17-18.
[46] Hillary Burlock, "Tumbling into the Lap of Majesty: Minuets at the Court of George III", *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2021), p. 212.
[47] Hannah Smith, *Georgian Monarchy: Politics and Culture, 1714-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 242-243.
[48] Ibid, p.220.

wanting a chance to impress enough to even reach the floor. A notice from the *London Gazette* in 1793 exemplifies these efforts:

> *To prevent the inconveniences which have arisen from the space before Their Majesties, which is allotted for Minuet Dancing, being exceedingly crowded, it is requested that those Ladies who mean to dance will send for Dancers' Tickets, and sit in those places, as the seats have been found too few to accommodate the Dancers.*[49]

The monarchical institution, as suggested in this source, showed continual efforts to reform the system surrounding balls. At this point, a multi-step process had been implemented to ensure organisation. The term "inconveniences", in particular, suggests a general dissatisfaction from George III. Changes of this kind highlight certain elements of courtly dance, notably the sense of order among the higher classes.[50] It was perhaps clear, to many at the time, that the monarchy was focused on keeping strict control at the time. The king, himself, was strong in these cultural standards. His standards for strict organisation in the royal court linked to his other Angelican commitments and strong leadership of the Church of England.[51] The nature of dance culture then carries many wider implications for the reign more generally.

Through the late 18th century, there were still certain internal challenges to the artistic influence of George III. Through political change including the 1784 Westminster election and the Regency Crisis of 1788-1798, the Prince of Wales was using West End ballrooms to make political statements. As described by Hillary Burlock, these events

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[49] "From the *London Gaz-ette*, Tuesday Jan 8, Whitehall Jan 5", *The Observer* (1791-1900), 13 Jan 1793, Page 4, https://www.proquest.com/hnpguardianobserver/historical-newspapers/form-london-gaze-tte/docview/473722202/sem-2?accountid=12860.

[50] Skiles Howard, *The Politics of Courtly Dancing in Early Modern England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), p. 1.

[51] Jeremy Black, *The Hanoverians: The History of a Dynasty* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004), p. 146.

helped certain elite families forge and maintain their own political alliances.[52] The Prince showed skill in being able to divert attention. At many points, he would develop challenges to the strict courtroom formation his father had built. The future George IV often entertained extravagantly, a sharp contrast to methods of the King. Likewise, he was known to give expensive gifts to friends and lovers.[53] Prince George represented exciting changes for much of the nobility, a hope which he built his own network surrounding. Despite a strict education, the royal heir commonly took opportunities to personally rebel. Significantly, he then stood out as part of the contemporary Hanoverian dynasty.[54]

George IV's political connections were central to this developing network. In terms of noble power, change had been occurring in the 1780s, as the followers of Charles James Fox and William Pitt the Younger further split. Whiggish events gathered attention, as the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Devonshire hosted balls and soirées on behalf of Fox.[55] The nature of running events like these were a clear demonstration of good faith. In contrast, Fox and the King felt a mutual dislike on a personal level. The former's father, Lord Holland, saw the king as having halted his political career to instead promote Pitt in the House of Lords.[56] Emotional differences would be reflected in many of these social occasions, in turn.

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[52] Hillary Burlock, "Party Politics: Dancing in London's West End", 1780-9", *The London Journal,* Vol. 47, No. 2 (2022), p. 182.
[53] Marilyn Morris, "Princely Debt, Public Credit, and Commercial Values in Late Georgian Britain", *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (2004), p. 342.
[54] Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: Flamingo, 1999), p. 79.
[55] Hillary Burlock, "Party Politics: Dancing in London's West End, 1780-9", *The London Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (2022) pp. 185-186.
[56] John Brooke, *King George III* (London: Constable, 1972), pp. 224-225.

This political group was also apparently diverse in its operation, as women among the inner circle of Devonshire House were often known to be strident Whigs.[57] In becoming publicly involved, the Prince of Wales appeared to choose rebellion against his father and king. George III was already known to have a strong working relationship with Pitt.[58] The latter politician, in addition, had a focused social circle. Widely thought to be less charismatic, Pitt chose to have a close professional relationship with the king to ensure his own progression.[59] Political and personal family rifts did increase divisions, both within parliamentary politics and the monarchy itself.

In terms of political campaigning, electoral balls had been a useful way to build moral bonds within a political party. While the election year of 1774 involved a number of events, family members including the Duchess of Devonshire seemed to put great thought into most. In one instance, writing to her mother, detailed what she had accomplished:

> *Here we are my dearest Mama, and I take the first opportunity of writing you an account of my yesterday's ball. Just after I dispactch'd my paquet to you I din'd and set out for Derby. I went to Mrs. Gisburne's, and as soon as I was drest to the ball. (I was drest in a demi-saison silk, very like one I brought from abroad and wore at Bath, pink trimm'd with gause and green ribbon.) We met F. (Lord Frederick Cavendish) on the stairs extremely drunk, and I stood up with young Mr Coke for almost ten minutes in the middle of the room before they could wake the musick to play a minuet, and when they did play they call of them play'd different parts. I danced country dances with Mr. Coke, but as nobody was refus'd at the door the ballroom was quite full of the daughters and wives of all the voters, in check'd aprons &c. Mr Coke, the father, is gone to be chose for*

[57] Chris Price, "'Pictorially Speaking, so Ludicrous": George IV on the Dance Floor", *Music in Art*, Vol. 43, No. 1-2 (2018), p. 137.
[58] Amelia Rauser, "The Butcher-Kissing Duchess of Devonshire: Between Caricature and Allegory in 1784", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2002), p. 25.
[59] Eric J. Evans, *William Pitt the Younger* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 35.

Norfolk, and, it is said, he intends upon the meeting of Parliament, when he must make his option between Norfolk and Derby, to give up Derby...[60]

For the Opposition to run these dances, a common strategy was for family members to lead. As described by Amanda Foreman, peers could not personally campaign regarding parliamentary elections. In this specific instance, the Cavendishes were focused upon electoral interests in Derbyshire. The ball turned out to be successful at a cost of £554, compared to an average campaign cost of £5000.[61] Events of this type were, in general, known to be both cheap and effective. The Duchess also used her existing influence to ensure that the environment was as inviting as possible. Lady Mary Coke described her impression that any male personality that arrived from abroad could be invited.[62] The public nature of Georgiana Cavendish, in addition, provided an intriguing element of unpredictability. Known to be a gambler, she often had ways to disrupt both the domestic and political spheres.[63] The Duchess, as a result, had some success in building social networks surrounding the Opposition.

As reference in the extract, checkered aprons and country dances were also used in these events. Georgiana perhaps meant to create an inviting climate for people to enjoy extravagance linked with the Oppositional movement.[64] A wide variety of choices in fashion had been an important part of these efforts. The Duchess personally was known

[60] Letter from the Duchess to her mother, 9th October 1774, found in Earl of Bessborough (ed.), *Georgiana: Extracts from the Correspondence of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, First Edition (John Murray: First Edition, 1 Jan 1955), p. 16.
[61] Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: Harper Collins, 1998), p. 29.
[62] Elaine Chalus, "Elite Women, Social Politics, and the Political World of Late Eighteenth-Century England", *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (2000), p. 687.
[63] Phyllis Deutsch, "Moral Trespass in Georgian London: Gaming, Gender, and Electoral Politics in the Age of George III", *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (1996), p. 651.
[64] Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: Harper Collins, 1998), p. 174.

for her inventive use of fashion, for example wearing an ostrich plume in her hair.[65] Culturally, she aided the continuation of change within certain Whig groups. The "Devonshire House Circle", surrounding the Duke and Duchess, prided themselves on collective ambition. Amanda Foreman describes that "Women aspired to be political hostesses of note, men arbiters of taste."[66] Cultural change, in areas of dance, sometimes led to challenge of monarchical control.

A well-known development, in the Devonshire House Circle, was determination of the prince to highlight his own social skills. Sometimes he seemed to consider dance events as opportunities to personally challenge the King and Queen. Diplomat James Hare wrote to Georgiana, in 1790, on one of these occurrences:

> *The prince had a most splendid Levee yesterday. Everybody that ever puts a dress coat on went to it, of all ages and all Parties. It was announced in the Gazette for two o'clock, but the Prince kept up his character for want of punctuality, and kept a vast crowd waiting in a very cold room above an hour before he admitted them. As patience and waiting are essential compliments at his Court, this was perhaps done by design. He was very civil to the Queen's friends with a view, I conclude, of marking the difference between his manners and hers.*[67]

Evidently, within this group, to challenge monarchical culture had become more socially acceptable. An idea of social and political change started to encourage more vocal ambitions for progress. As the prince showed himself to be unphased and even encouraging of rumours, the social circle surrounding him continued to behave

[65] Amelia Rauser, "The Butcher-Kissing Duchess of Devonshire: Between Caricature and Allegory in 1784), *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2002), p. 30.
[66] Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: Harper Collins, 1998), p. 45.

[67] Letter from James Hare to the Duchess, February 9 1790, found in Earl of Bessborough (ed.), *Georgiana: Extracts from the Correspondence of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, First Edition (John Murray: First Edition, 1 Jan 1955), p. 167.

extravagantly.[68] In turn, aided through different styles of dance gatherings, cultural rebellion against the monarchy would progress.

The Prince of Wales showed enjoyment in rebellion against his parents at other notable times. Among his January 1781 presentation to Society, he ignored custom and only continued to dance with Georgiana.[69] On a public level, rules the monarchy had put effort into maintaining were being challenged by the heir. The well-known process had been that one man would try to dance with many women, allowing opportunity to show their skill in the *minuet*.[70] George III also showed effort to prevent this beforehand, though evidently these attempts backfire. When his heir turned eighteen, for instance, the king had strict standards on who he would associate with. Georgiana described, herself, that "no opposition person was invited" into the monarch's inner circle.[71] On some level, evident willingness of the Prince of Wales to rebel became an embarrassment on the monarchical structure.

Interest and debate surrounding politics was widespread during the London season. Information was often spread like gossip. Furthermore, when sections of news involved the monarchy, more engagement may develop. For instance, during the Regency Crisis, word that the prince had been voted out of the Queen's Council may even distract elite groups from a theatre performance.[72] As quickly developing stories in the busy city of London, nobles took advantage of any controversy. Events were often held to draw

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[68] Betty Rizzo, *Companions without Vows: Relationships Among Eighteenth-Century British Women* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), pp. 257-258.
[69] Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: Harper Collins, 1998), pp. 85-86.
[70] Hillary Burlock, "'Tumbling into the Lap of Majesty': Minuets at the Court of George III", *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2021), p. 219.
[71] Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana: Duchess of Devonshire* (United States: Random House, 1999), p. 79.
[72] Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life, c. 1754-1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 80.

attention to emerging figures in politics. “Election balls” were a prominent example, for instance by Mrs. Crewe on 18 May 1874. Many of these occasions were useful for attracting attention of the press, on this example Mr. Stepney who ran Oppositional London club Brooks’s.[73] The close-knit community of elite London society contributed to an active effort to learn and reshape the political scene. Some of these developments would lead into changing perceptions of the monarchy.

Many successful public events also were held, by the prince of Wales, to celebrate electoral wins. Many occasions of this kind, to an extent, aimed to be informal. A degree of extravagance from the prince’s involvement, however, was emphasised. An example is a May 1874 public breakfast at Carlton House:

> *The Prince of Wales on Friday gave a public breakfast on the occasion of Mr Fox’s triumph in Westminster. About 600 of the most distinguished persons in the kingdom assembled in his beautiful gardens about two o’clock. The preparations on the occasion were full of taste and magnificence. Covers were laid under nine extension marquesses for 250 persons, and the entertainment consisted of the finest fruits of the season, confectionaries, ices, creams, and emblematical designs, ornamented with mottoes and other devices, in honour of the triumph which they were to celebrate.*[74]

The nature of these events suggested a concerted effort, on the part of the prince, to divert attention from the monarchy. A key feature was extravagance to an especially high degree. For instance, the venue of this celebration, Carlton House, by the 19th century would become a significant expense.[75] The prince seemed to focus his attention

[73] Hillary Burlock, “Party Politics: Dancing in London’s West End, 1780-9”, *The London Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (2022), p. 189.
[74] “News.” *London Chronicle*, May 18, 1874 – May 20, 1784. *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000581278/GDCS?u=unn&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=c8bd084c. Accessed 5th February 2025.
[75] Marilyn Morris, “Princely Deny, Public Credit, and Commercial Values in Late Georgian Britain”, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (2004), p. 342.

on political figures, rather than specifically the king as perhaps expected. He was using the prestige of the monarchy for slightly different societal groups, compromising the initial monarchical intention.

These gatherings also provided opportunities for further Whig advancement, challenging the monarchy on another level. These celebrations showed some confidence in the new direction of politics. The press also noted some notable names gathering, hinting at further change. The *London Chronicle*, for instance, noted that "The Political Party, Lord North, Mr. Fox, Colonel North, Colonel Fitzpatrick, Mr. Byng, and others, retired under another groupe of trees to talk of the politics of the day; and the Dowager Ladies and Gentlemen occupied themselves in the admiration of the graces, which the scene afforded."[76] The prince, as a result, further seemed to be linking himself to an open discussion of politics. After the American War of Independence of 1775-1783, the Fox-North Coalition aimed for political and economic reform.[77] Active choices of this regard somewhat challenge the idea of the royal family as a unified entity. By 1780, the King already was showing great concern that the prince had been discrediting the monarchy in the nature of his circle of friends.[78] Anxiety over the position of the monarchy, and the contribution of these organised events, would increase over time.

The prince seemed to represent a group that was openly dissatisfied with the current political structure. George had his own reasons to allow these links. A prominent reason is how the possibility of political change might benefit his financial position and then his

[76] "News." *London Chronicle*, May 18, 1874 – May 20, 1784. *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000581278/GDCS?u=unn&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=c8bd084c. Accessed 5th February 2025.
[77] John Brooke, *King George III* (London: Constable, 1972), pp. 236-237.
[78] Ibid, p. 246.

lifestyle.[79] His investment in these gatherings could therefore be seen as a form of personal security, rather than that of the wider monarchy. Most people involved in the Whig movement named in the *London Chronicle* article, furthermore, were in some form of debt also.[80] The prince was creating his own political network separate from the royal family. Dance, as a culture, was used with some monarchical aspects but with different political motives. Widespread excitement from these gatherings would form an atmosphere where people were easily able to form connections and foster further progression.

Chapter 3 – Conforming with Europe

While there were strong attempts to maintain continuity in dance culture, connections across the continent demanded adaptation. To conform to changing demands of the monarchy, the royal family needed to affirm their authority. Balls, as a public demonstration of the social structure, were helpful to emphasise greater control. This chapter will first explore how war and revolution throughout the Continent both induced new conformity within royal and noble circles. In addition, dynastic connections would lead to widespread cultural changes. The role of Charlotte, as Queen Consort, will be explored to demonstrate these ideas. As politics changed across the continent, the

[79] Ibid, p. 247.
[80] Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: Harper Collins, 1998), p. 190.

monarchy used these public gatherings to both show receptiveness to the population and determination to survive.

The Hanoverian monarchy often adapted court functions from 17th Century French courts. These customs would help to ensure a strict hierarchy with the idea of a strong monarch. The nature of dance gatherings, focused on art and music, originated from the 1660s court of Louis XIV.[81] In this way, royal entertainment structures of George III were a way to look back to a time of powerful monarchies throughout Europe. Structures of power defined in this way also were known to permeate the French example and ensure continuity. Court ceremonies of the *lever* and *coucher* are both prominent examples.[82] The Hanoverian monarchy, however, still prioritised morality and, to an extent, adapting to changes of political climates. The outbreak of the French Revolution highlighted these moral aspects, though also encouraged extravagance. Loyalty increased within England for their monarchy specifically, and many looked to defend the institution.[83] The monarchy adapted further as a symbol of patriotism in Britain.

Changes of public mood in Britain encouraged a more elaborate monarchical style. In response to French and American Revolutions of the 1780s, moral ideas became more conservative in defence of the traditional institution.[84] The degree of change, that appeared to be happening in Europe, did concern many. Public celebrations like dance, as a result, would go on to take a more prominent focus. As described by Marilyn Morris,

[81] Hillary Burlock, "'Tumbling into the Lap of Majesty': Minuets at the Court of George III'", *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2021), p. 205.
[82] T.C.W Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe, 1660-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 31.
[83] Marilyn Morris, *The British Monarchy and the French Revolution* (Yale University Press: 1998), p. 161.
[84] Linda Colley, "The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820", *Past & Present,* No. 102 (1984), p. 111.

royal ceremonies worked both as distractions from the past and signalling of hope for the future.[85] In a time of such social and political change in London, these concerns were paramount to many. George III, as a public figure, gave a sense of ideological security for much of the growing middle class. Actions were specifically taken, on the part of the monarchy, to foster this. In 1787, for instance, the king issued a proclamation meant to promote piety and virtue, in addition to punishment of immorality. [86] This decisive turn shows how the monarchy felt compelled to take a stronger stance against potential uproar.

A crucial factor, for monarchical security, at this point was said to be adaptability. European politics had undoubtedly been shifting, and the institution needed to remain strong through these changes. Among the rise of "pseudo-Jacobins" through the late 1700s, widespread ideas developed that it was necessary for the Crown to show its sense of duty as a leading political force.[87] Entertainments including dance were seen to emphasise monarchical luxury and power. As described by Jeroen Duindam, enjoyment of these rituals were a powerful tool for strengthening of diplomatic bonds.[88] The monarchy often seemed to recognise these strengths. For these reasons, great attention was also paid to fashion at dance events. George III himself held separate social occasions for the purpose that individuals would see dress outside of the main

[85] Marilyn Morris, *The British Monarchy and the French Revolution* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 163.
[86] Ibid, p. 142.
[87] John Brooke, *King George III* (London: Constable, 1972), p. 361.
[88] Jeroen Duindam, "Royal Courts" (p. 445.) in H.M. Scott, *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European European History, 1350-1750: Volume 2: Cultures and Power* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 440-477.

event itself.[89] Beyond dance itself, most details of these events played a role in presenting an image of general monarchical health.

By the late 1780s, resources dedicated to fashion choice during balls was also on the rise. The royal family, by this point, were sometimes known to make more extravagant choices. This is despite internal crises going on at this point that might impact perceived stability. A month before this event, in April, the king in reality was said to be recovering from a development of illness. This development also ended the regency crisis occurring at the time.[90] When the king was physically capable enough, events surrounding dance would be used to draw attention again. An example is on a 13 June 1789 celebration. On an article from the *Bristol Journal* reporting on the event, Queen Charlotte's dress is described in great detail:

> *Her Majesty's dress was one of the most superb ever seen at Court. It was a lilac ground, covered with crape, embroidered with green, and flounced with five rows of beautiful deep lace. The pockets were laced all over, and ornamented with large diamond bows, to each of which there was a chain of brilliants ornamenting the whole length; about thirty large diamond buttons and tassels were fastened on the petticoat. Her Majesty's head-dress was of blond-lace, with two small feathers in it, and profusely ornamented with diamonds. The stomacher was wholly of brilliants.*[91]

Evidently, the monarchy, as an institution, were making great effort to ensure that they were remembered by others involved in the celebration. The lace, in particular, made a statement regarding exclusivity. During the King's reign, lace was in short supply.

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[89] Hannah Smith, "The Court in England, 1714-1769: A Declining Political Institution?", *History (London)*, 2005-01, Vol. 90, No. 297, p. 36.
[90] John Brooke, *King George III* (London: Constable, 1972), p. 335.
[91] "News." *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 13 June 1789. *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000332940/GDCS?u=unn&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=995ce8be. Accessed 7 Mar. 2025.

Legislation implemented to stop importation was a main reason for this development.[92] The royal couple showed some shift in attitude based on their extravagance. Ordinarily, as described by Marilyn Morris, the king would lead a court intended to stimulate industry and lead fashion trends. However, overall spending had historically been minimal because of dedication of the King and Queen to Protestant values and opposition to certain forms of materialism.[93] Though attitudes of the royals may not have changed entirely, some elements of their roles may have been highlighted at the expense of perhaps more personal aspects.

The royal family, during this specific event, also made a clear effort to show a unified spirit. Particularly after political divisions of the previous few years, this would be of priority. As before, a birthday ball was often used to show continuity and overall strength. The reporter involved in this specific article also made a clear effort to suggest a new revival:

> *The representation of the Prince's conduct at the Birth-night ball, as given in some of the papers, is evidently meant to prejudice him in the opinion of the public. It is a vile fabrication from beginning to end, nor is it possible that it should be credited of the prince, who is so distinguished for elegant manners, and every decorous quality of the accomplished gentleman. However, he may be misled in his political sentiments, he would not surely permit them to betray him into a marked insult to the Queen, and an outrage against every rule of decency and decorum.*[94]

Bonds between the royal family, at least on a public level, seemed to grow stronger. There were a few indicators of change during this period. For instance, financial

[92] Mary Frances Gormally, "Lace in Fashion", *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (2017), p. 471.
[93] Marilyn Morris, "Princely Debt, Public Credit, and Commercial Values in Late Georgian Britain", *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (2004), p. 352.
[94] "News." *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 13 June 1789. *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Newspapers Collection*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000332940/GDCS?u=unn&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=995ce8be. Accessed 7 Mar. 2025.

relations between the king and his heir were appearing to settle.[95] It seemed that events surrounding the French Revolution provoked public easing of tensions within the family. This birthday ball, specifically, had shown notable changes from the prince. His demonstration of "elegant manners" may have been especially striking. By this point, as suggested by Chris Price, he already had a strong reputation of impulsive behaviour and overindulgence.[96] Balls like this, after such an ideologically powerful event, seemed to mark another notable point in George III's reign.

Other developments across the continent prompted traditional noble involvement. The Napoleonic Wars, between 1803 and 1815, led to widespread concern. On a new basis, revolutionary thought was linked with weapons like bayonets.[97] An impending threat seemed to face the elite class, as a result. Integration of the military with the elite class, as they fought this new threat, became increasingly common into the early 19th century. Commissioned officers, it was known, could use their uniforms however they liked.[98] Use of these status symbols may even, with noble acceptance, allow them to rise through the social hierarchy. Opportunities to court women from wealthy families were a common theme through these celebrations.[99] The traditional nature of these gatherings, though with military integration, suggest an active attempt from the nobility to cement themselves in a changing Europe.

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[95] John Brooke, *King George III* (London: Constable, 1972), p. 347.
[96] Chris Price, "'Pictorially Speaking, so Ludicrous': George IV on the Dance Floor", *Music in Art*, Vol. 43, No. 1-2 (2018), p. 60.
[97] Bruno Colson and Alexander Mikaberdze (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Napoleonic Wars*, Volume 2, *Fighting the Napoleonic Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), p. 1.
[98] Matthew McCormack, *Embodying the Militia in Georgian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 136.
[99] Matthew McCormack, "Dance and Drill: Polite Accomplishments and Military Masculinities in Georgian Britain", *Cultural and Society History*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2011-09), p. 323.

Ideas of masculinity through the early 19th century were increasingly based upon traditional concepts of morality. As described by Michéle Cohen, strong marks of a gentleman included a sense of loyalty along with defence of the weak and oppressed in society.[100] It was then concluded by some, as a result, that social integration was necessary during wartime if greater order was to be kept. An example that will be explored is how Arthur Wellesley, the First Duke of Wellington, made the choice to attend an 1815 ball by the Duchess of Richmond for reasons including morale-building and perceived duty.[101] Even as the Napoleonic War continued, the public role of the wider nobility remained strong.

The structure of a ball seemed fast-paced and often with a clear purpose. As a result, it was an attractive option for some elements of the officer class. The Duke of Wellington, for instance, preferred higher-energy dance gatherings as opposed to formal dinners.[102] On a public level, connections between the higher elite and military progress remained strong. George III famously showed a strong spirit during the war with France. In turn, these efforts also helped strengthen the overall influence of the British monarchy in certain ways.[103] As a result, involvement of the military in dance gatherings seemed to work well for many in power at this point.

The 1870s portrait, *The Duchess of Richmond's Ball*, by English painter Alexander Hillingford portrays how this integration was put into action. Both military and nobility

[100] Michéle Cohen, "'Manners' Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750-1830", *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2005), p. 326.
[101] Elizabeth Longford, *Wellington: The Years of the Sword* (New York: Smithmark, 1996), p. 417.
[102] Godfrey Davies, "Wellington the Man", *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 30, No. 123 (1952), p. 102.
[103] Jeremy Black, *The Hanoverians: The History of a Dynasty* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004), p. 145.

interact among the background of a stately room, flags hung in the corner to indicate patriotism.[104] High detailing and bright colours seemed to portray a majestic scene, as a result. This particular gathering, retrospectively, was thought to represent a last celebration before the famous Battle of Quatre Bras on the 16 June 1815. The Duchess of Richmond, as the wife of a British Minister, did aim for a show of confidence against pro-French sections of her city.[105] The perceived beauty of this celebration may make it an attractive option for artistic reflection. There were, however, some undertones of unease as the ball progressed. Close integration had its problems for morale, and rumours were spread that did cause some nervousness regarding the war.[106] The environment of this ball, however, still appears largely orderly, particularly with long-term British victory of the war taken into account.

In this portrait, there is also suggested to be little unease regarding military presence. The officers sit, or stand, with a relaxed posture and their swords clearly positioned within their sheaths.[107] To some extent, this implies preparation for battle, as this event was still during wartime. Some military activity even took place within the event, as officers would be able to distribute orders.[108] In this respect, this event and many others surrounding dance proved to integrate well with the military experience more generally.

Dynastic connections of the Hanoverians also held an important role in dance culture and other forms of the arts. Charlotte, notably, was known to depend on the arts as

[104] Robert Alexander Hillingford, *The Duchess of Richmond's Ball* (1870s), available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duchess_of_Richmond%27s_ball.
[105] Corrigan Gordon, *Wellington: A Military Life* (London; New York: Hambledon and London, 2006), p. 299.
[106] Elizabeth Longford, *Wellington, The Years of the Sword* (New York: Smithmark, 1996), pp. 417-418.
[107] Robert Alexander Hillingford, *The Duchess of Richmond's Ball* (1870s), available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duchess_of_Richmond%27s_ball.
[108] Elizabeth Longford, *Wellington: The Years of the Sword* (New York: Smithmark, 1996), pp. 416-417.

Queen Consort. The idea, in part, had come from her family line. As described by Clarissa Campbell Orr, Charlotte's family was known for strong musical and literary links. Her brother, Charles of Mecklenburg Strelitz, married into the Darmstadt Court. This particular grouping lived near the imperial city of Frankfurt, where famous writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe had been born.[109] Seemingly, the Queen grew up in a climate where strong connections to high culture were commonplace. Additionally, she took an active role in maintaining these connections when in Britain. Notably, Charlotte led fostering of close relations between her husband, George III, and Charles.[110] Since her marriage to King George, in the early 1760s, Charlotte played a vital role in encouraging features of the Enlightenment in Britain.

Queen Charlotte worked to integrate her family, both within and outside of Britain, into the culture of the land she married into. A portrait by Johan Joseph Zoffany, c. 1771-2, will be used to demonstrate these developments. Her family, including Charles, elder brother Prince Ernest of Hanover, and her children, were all positioned together against a bucolic setting.[111] Seemingly, there was an aim to give a unified family spirit comfortable with moral cultural forms of Britain. Charlotte had, after all, often shown an effort to create a moral outlook as monarch.[112] In this way, herself and her husband worked as a team. However, in her family connections portrayed in this portrait, she was also emphasising her unique role as Queen. Charlotte was known to present herself as

[109] Clarissa Campbell Orr, *Queenship in Europe, 1660-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 379.
[110] Ibid, pp. 393-394.
[111] Johan Joseph Zoffany, *Queen Charlotte (1744-1818) with Members of her Family*, c.1771-2, Royal Collection Trust (RCIN 401004), available at: https://www.rct.uk/collection/401004/queen-charlotte-1744-1818-with-members-of-her-family.
[112] Andreas Gestrich, Michael Schaich (eds.), *The Hanoverian Succession: Dynastic Politics and Monarchical Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 14.

a loyal wife and mother, presenting a moral guidance for her subjects in turn.[113] As a result, her impact on the British monarchy more generally appeared distinctive.

A prominent role, for Charlotte as Queen, was use of her time and relative freedom to contribute to Enlightenment culture. She was known to emphasise the importance of these efforts in her writings home. For instance, she described to Charles in some depth regarding time with her family in the gardens at Frogmore House.[114] In this way, her role in the monarchy appeared somewhat private yet still extremely valuable. Contextually, this was following the political route the English monarchy had been taking. Simon Schama describes how, unlike methods of their French counterparts, a growing trend among visual arts of royalty in Britain involved more private domestic scenes.[115] In this way, representation of the British royalty might have resonated more with the wider population. In fact, it is suggested that the apparent inability of the French monarchy to adopt a less extravagant image might have contributed to pre-revolutionary sentiment.[116] In this way, the widely recognisable scene of English nature may help to connect with the wider population.

Dynastic continuation was also highlighted in this portrait, which would also continue changes in the arts. In this source, the children are dressed rather brightly and take a central role.[117] On one level, this choice helps to assert the perceived success of Queen

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[113] Hannah Smith, "The Idea of a Protestant Monarchy in Britain 1714-1760", *Past & Present*, No. 185 (2004), p. 101.
[114] Clarissa Campbell Orr, "Marriage in a Global Context: Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland", in Helen Watanable-O'Kelly; Adam Morton, *Queens Consort, Cultural Transfer and European Politics, c. 1500-1800*, 1ST Edition (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 126.
[115] Simon Schama, "The Domestication of Majesty: Royal Family Portraiture, 1500-1800", *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 17, No. 1(1986), pp. 173-174.
[116] Ibid, pp. 176-177.
[117] Johan Joseph Zoffany, *Queen Charlotte (1744-1818) with Members of her Family*, c.1771-2, Royal Collection Trust (RCIN 401004), available at: https://www.rct.uk/collection/401004/queen-charlotte-1744-1818-with-members-of-her-family.

Charlotte in undertaking her roles as Queen Consort. The birth of these children, however, mark a shift in her reign from idealism to experience and being prepared to take action.[118] In still conforming to perception of her role, she would gain perceived power. In turn, Charlotte would appear more prepared to lead cultural change as monarch. Zoffany, in particular, often recognised the importance of these children in her cultural influence. The artist had a history of painting the children in unique dress to emphasise both dynastic legitimacy and general morality of the family.[119] Charlotte's general success in establishing her place as English queen consort had a strong influence in her ability to lead cultural policy.

Queen Charlotte's connections from her homeland also contributed to her particular standards for culture. Among reaching England and establishing her rule, she saw opportunities for change. For instance, while Goethe served in court at Weimar and his father owned a large library, Charlotte was surprised by Frances Burney's much lower ownership of books in contrast.[120] The queen had some success in bringing new perspectives to the monarchy. Zoffany's portrait, in many ways, is a product of her work in the arts. Charlotte was one of Johan Zoffany's most significant patrons, as part of efforts to promote an Enlightened monarchy.[121] In her process of conforming to British culture, Charlotte also had a unique influence in the arts. After all, a common occurrence was for women marrying into other royal families to keep cultural

[118] Clarissa Campbell Orr, "Marriage in a Global Context: Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland", in Helen Watanabe O'Kelly, Adam Morton (eds.), *Queens Consort, Cultural Transfer and European Politics, c. 1500-1800*, 1st Edition (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 118-119.
[119] Ibid, p. 119.
[120] Elizabeth Powers, "In Their Father's Library: Books Furnish Not Only a Room, but Also a Tradition", *Arion (*Boston), Vol. 28, No. 1 (2020), p. 116.
[121] Mary Webster, *Johan Zoffany, 1733-1810* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1976), p. 8.

connections from home.[122] Her role in the development of patronage is then distinctly important, as a result.

Overall, social structures during the Georgian period required a balance. To have a continuing relevance to the needs of the population, the monarchy needed to adapt their culture to conform to a changing political system. Both in terms of internal and external politics, good relations needed to be preserved. Dance, as a system, showed confidence and made clear its cultural shifts in response to a shifting European climate. The monarchical place, in turn, would be preserved through political instability. Dynastic links across the continent would also be emphasised and defended.

Conclusion

Overall, events surrounding dance played a central role in experience surrounding the Hanoverian royal court. An ongoing strength was highlighted, even among political adversity. Largely, they provided outlet for structured communication. As suggested by Hillary Burlock, "From the royal family to the nobility, gentry and the middling sort, dancing was key to socialisation, contributing to establishing personal identity and reputation."[123] Organised dance was seen as a traditionally royal activity, which allowed for an ongoing sense of uniqueness. These events also blended well into the workings of the Enlightenment elsewhere in Europe. Patronage including dance, and music, would

[122] Erin Griffey, *Early Modern Court Culture* (London: Routledge, 2021), p. 26.
[123] Hillary Burlock, "'Tumbling into the Lap of Majesty': Minuets at the Court of George III", *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2021-06), p. 207.

play a central role in English cultural progression. Royalty were able to keep a sense of control over their reputation. Arguably, its survival as an institution was then ensured in the long term.

Regularly scheduled dancing activities provided a strict court structure that nobles were able to work through. Over time, motivation was provided for a greater sense of loyalty and respect. Monarchical security in reputation was then supported in the long term. Ambition for perceived success spread across gendered lines, ensuring strengthened connections surrounding the royal court. Perceived risk and potential for success meant a strong focus ground for work thought to be uniquely royal. An environment was created of immense high-pressure, though the King and Queen Consort were both able to maintain a well-known composure within the palace through much of their reigns.

Even among elite subversion toward the monarchy in terms of its wider structure, dance was recognised as a useful tool. In this way, it still proved to be adaptable and effective. Similarly, organised events appeared to be socially inviting. Whig women were able to develop their own power, in some contrast with the more traditional royal system. All the while, the roots of dance structures were relied upon. The involvement of the Prince of Wales aided these elite groups in building their own cultural systems for political gain. The use of luxurious venues like Carlton House also would add to the appeal. Connections and expense dedicated to these events ensured noble success in terms of these events.

The royal family were also able to use attractions of dance to adapt to changes in Europe. As it did not strictly rely on political power, these events are reliable in terms of

gathering support. Elaborate events, visually appealing, still often maintained middle-class support. Possible increased cost might have to be applied, even perhaps against personal beliefs of the monarchy. Among instability, the charm seemed to continue. Even when the king himself was ill, as a result, these events continued in any manner possible through the period. In many ways, dance was relied upon as a constant. The importance of these events were also understood by military figures, in particular examples like the Duke of Wellington. During times of peace and war, prominent members of the nobility are able to hold their events to maintain a sense of uniqueness. In turn, a tightly linked structure would continue to exist surrounding the British monarchy. Members of the royal family, such as Charlotte, are also able to use this cultural strength as a promoting factor for dynastic influence.

It is possible, that in the future, historical literature could look at more activity surrounding the wider elite in cultural terms. Women, in particular, had opportunities to take action which are often overlooked. Amanda Foreman describes how women like Georgiana "had access to real political power and encountered men who were willing for her to use it".[124] To an extent, noblemen may have even relied on their families to maintain their cultural influence. Additionally, the attractiveness of dance highlights the distinctive presence of the monarchy after 1600s political reforms. The monarchy, then, became often a cultural figurehead though still with powerful influence. Ongoing prestige could not be denied. As an art form, dance remained an old yet effective response to challenge. Widespread emotional dependence on these events ultimately supported monarchical reputation in various ways. It is possible that the nature of these

[124] Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: Flamingo, 1999), p. 404.

mindsets can be developed in future research. The system of dance, however, can ultimately be said to have a distinctive political role. Far from only a distraction, the practical use of royal balls seem evident.

Appendix

Figure 1 - Daniel Dodd (after), *Ball at St.James's on Her Majesty's Birth Night*, 1786, Royal Collection Trust (RCIN 750529), [available at: https://www.rct.uk/collection/750529/ball-at-st-jamess-on-her-majestys-birth-night-1786, accessed on 31/01/2025].

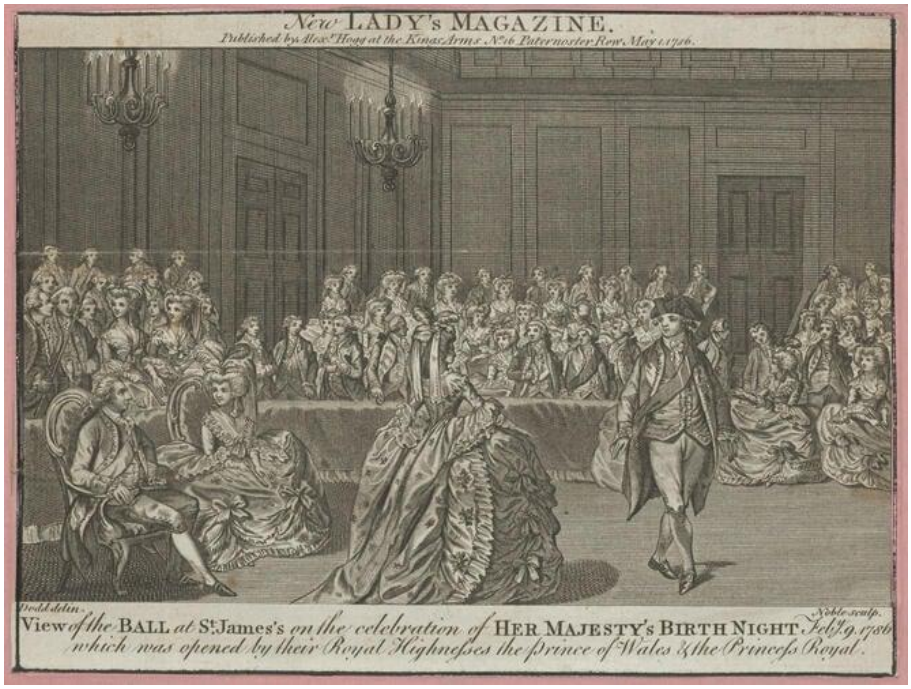


Figure 2 - Robert Alexander Hillingford, *The Duchess of Richmond's Ball* (1870s), available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duchess_of_Richmond%27s_ball.

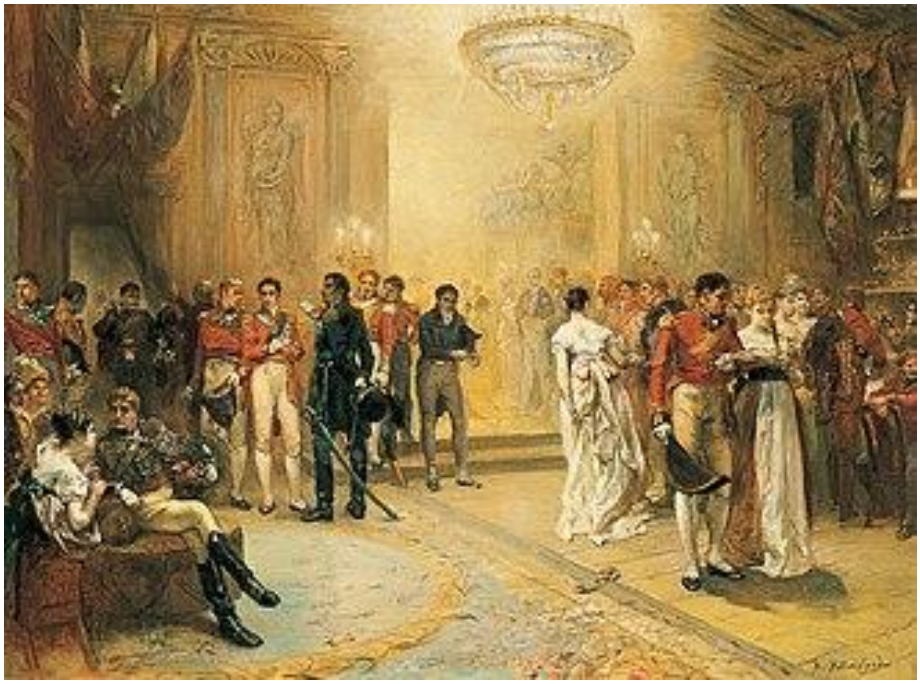
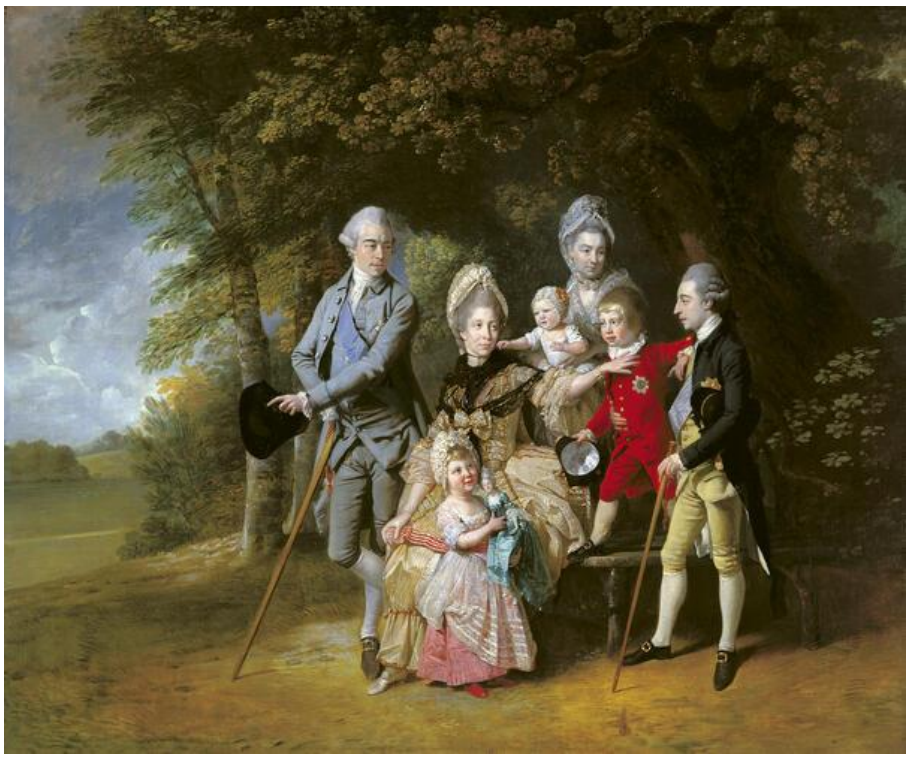


Figure 3 - Johan Joseph Zoffany, *Queen Charlotte (1744-1818) with Members of her Family*, c.1771-2, Royal Collection Trust (RCIN 401004), available at: https://www.rct.uk/collection/401004/queen-charlotte-1744-1818-with-members-of-her-family.



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