Research Article

Georgina Abreu*

The Queen Caroline Affair in Radical Periodicals

https://doi.org/10.1515/culture-2022-0145
received February 25, 2021; accepted March 03, 2022

Abstract: The rendering of the Queen Caroline affair by the radical periodical press constitutes a case study of the intersection of the press, propaganda, gender, class, politics, and, ultimately, a metaphor of political and cultural change. Rooted in this assertion, the present essay examines and interprets the version of the Queen Caroline affair in the three radical periodicals that resisted the passing of the Six Acts in 1819. These were *The Republican*, edited by Richard Carlile; *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, edited by William Cobbett; and the *Black Dwarf*, edited by Thomas Jonathan Wooler. The Conclusion determines the extent to which early nineteenth-century radical journalism contributed to political and cultural progress. The protagonists of the Queen Caroline affair in the radical periodicals were timeless: they were corruption, injustice, lack of freedom, and the public as the motors of change – a political struggle with deep cultural undertones.

Keywords: Queen Caroline affair, radical periodicals, radical press

Introduction

The Queen Caroline affair designates the popular movement that agitated England in 1820–1821 on behalf of Queen Caroline. It was prompted by the attempt of George IV to strip his estranged wife of her title of Queen Consort on his accession to the throne in 1820, after the death of his father. The procedure materialized in a *Bill of Pains and Penalties* presented by the government to the House of Lords, through which the queen was accused of adultery and which included a divorce clause.[1]

By proceeding against the queen in the House of Lords, the king and the government transformed a private case into a political issue. Furthermore, the queen's determination to return to England[2] to face the accusations was interpreted by many as an example of moral courage.[3]

Every stage was closely followed in the press – national, local, and radical. The most widely read newspapers of the day supported the queen, notably the *Pilot*, the *Evening Star*, the *Morning Chronicle*,

1 For a brief account of the trial of Queen Caroline, see Deutsch (1201–208).

2 Caroline could have comfortably remained on the Continent, as on April 15, 1820, the government drafted a *Memorandum* proposing an annuity of £50,000 to be enjoyed by the queen "during her natural life," on condition that she remained on the Continent. hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1820-06-19/debates/b5ea06cb-2c50-42e1-8bdc-e395e24f4d20/Appendix.

3 Even Lord Eldon acknowledged her courage: "Our Queen threatens approach to England. But if she can venture, she is the most courageous lady I ever heard of. The mischief, if she does come, will be infinite" (Fraser 351).

* **Corresponding author: Georgina Abreu,** CEHUM – Centre for the Study of the Humanities, School of Arts and Human Sciences, University of Minho, Campus de Gualtar, 4710-057 Braga, Portugal, e-mail: georginaabreu@ilch.uminho.pt, http://cehum.ilch.uminho.pt/researchers/18
ORCID: Georgina Abreu 0000-0002-3664-2764

and the leading daily *The Times*. *The Times* regularly published the *Addresses* to the queen and her replies. It also published the long, emotional letter that the queen sent to the king on August 7 (George 90–91).

Amid this deluge, the radical press stood out – it was varied, culturally innovative, politically engaged, and decidedly popular. Although spoken debate remains one of the main features of radical culture, the arena where the radicals were most innovative was the London radical press. The image of the Stanhope press, exhibited in numerous prints, became a symbol of the power of the press to communicate information and opinion and to denounce corruption and privilege.

Its most popular forms – radical periodicals, pamphlet satires, and a plethora of satirical prints and broadsides – had a distinctive mock-satiric style, which accounts for much of their appeal. Radicals drew from these forms and styles of popular culture to create "an overt political language" (Clark 51) and mobilize a popular audience. In the post-Wars years, the delight in irony, satire, and parody became not only a political weapon, but an "alternative structure of politics" (qtd. in Gilmartin 30), a community in itself, composed of journalists, activists, and the public, who met in taverns, public houses, and assemblies where the radical periodicals were read aloud and used as sources of debate. Satirical prints joined in this dialogue. They were often displayed on the windows of print shops to the amusement of passers-by, who gathered there to exchange humorous comments on prints attacking the monarchy and the government.

The loyalist camp felt threatened by this new print culture, especially by the radicals' linking of the cause of reform to the defence of a queen (Fulcher 481–502). Hence the queen was attacked in the *Morning Herald*, the *Courier*, the *Morning Post*, and after December 1820 the *John Bull*. In the *John Bull*, she was defamed, her supporters, especially women and the Whig opposition, intimidated. The *Courier*, an evening paper edited by William Mudford (Koss 44), claimed to avoid the direct attack of the queen, but the strategy of choosing third parties to defame her inflicted serious injury on her image. The satire *A Frown From The Crown, Or The Hydra Destroyed* (BMC 14007),[4] illustrated by George Cruikshank and published by John Fairburn, represented the *New Times* as a toad, and the C*ourier* and *Morning Post* as a rat.

On the 200th anniversary of the Queen Caroline affair, this essay examines and interprets the version conveyed by the three radical periodicals that survived the *Six Acts* of 1819: *The Republican*, edited by Richard Carlile; *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, edited by William Cobbett; and the *Black Dwarf*, edited by Thomas Jonathan Wooler.

These journalists were part of the radical print culture – a culture made up of authors, satirists, small-time publishers, and booksellers, most of them autodidacts of an artisan background. They put their intellectual and rhetorical capacities at the service of political change: they were engaged in the struggle for comprehensive parliamentary reform but, as Ian McCalman noted at the end of *Radical Underworld*, their influence might have extended beyond the limits of direct political action to acquire lasting meaning. Building on McCalman's hypothesis, I will argue that the radical press of Carlile, Cobbett, and Wooler translated a royal scandal into a forward-looking politico-cultural intervention, served by a confrontational discourse – often deliberately and strategically satirical – that engaged a larger audience than ever before.

Radical journalists conceptualized the Queen Caroline affair as a metaphor for political change. The prosecution of a queen accused of adultery by a notoriously adulterous husband, who was king, provided them with the perfect basis for political confrontation: on the one hand, they portrayed the queen as a helpless wife, the target of a revengeful husband. The Queen Caroline affair thus became a women's cause. Women acquired new visibility, especially through the publication of addresses to the queen. Albeit participants in a male public opinion, these women were crossing the boundaries between the domestic and the public and were therefore aware of the transgressive nature of their participation, as Wahrman has argued (408–409).

On the other hand, radical journalists presented Caroline as a heroine and a symbol of hope for reform. They argued that the prosecution of the queen through a *Bill of Pains and Penalties* was an abuse of power, perpetrated by a servile government and a corrupt political system. This argumentative leap forward

4 *The British Museum Catalogue*, henceforth abbreviated as BMC. It refers to Dorothy George's work *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum*.

allowed them to portray the whole political establishment as a corrupt clique of self-interested placeholders and to present parliamentary reform as the solution. In the process, they gave visibility to the discussion of the rule of law and expanded the public sphere. The Conclusion interprets this rendering of the Queen Caroline affair as a politico-cultural intervention which, despite having failed to achieve its ostensible aim of immediate political change, represented a contribution to political and cultural progress.

The Republican, Edited by Richard Carlile

The treatment of the Queen Caroline affair by the *Republican* (1819–1826) is rooted in Carlile's deep-seated belief in the power of the printed word to promote intellectual development and political justice. The didactic intention and the passionate enthusiasm for a cause, expressed in the texts he wrote in support of the queen, are even more pronounced than in Cobbett or Wooler.

Carlile was the first radical journalist to set the tone for the defence of Queen Caroline in the issue of February 25, 1820, of the *Republican*, when he introduced the theme of the wronged wife and the unscrupulous and dissolute husband:

> We feel it an imperative duty to support this injured woman ... Her husband has decoyed her into marriage to answer his own private views, without the slightest affection towards her, he just condescends to consummate the marriage, and then drives her from his house ... What tie can a woman feel towards such a husband as this? (vol. ii 189–192)

In the *Republican* of June 16, Carlile reasserted his commitment to defend a "much injured and grossly insulted woman" (vol. iii 253). In Carlile's version, the praise of the personal qualities and character of the queen stressed not the victim, but the capacity to endure adversity. Caroline might be an "injured woman," but she was essentially a "noble spirited and injured woman" for withstanding her husband's intentions and for demanding a public investigation although "she knows what the contents of this Green Bag[5] are" (vol. iii 259). It was this courage, no matter the abyssal difference of the power commanded by both parts, that Carlile admired and led his audience to admire.

Carlile's defence of the queen reflects the shifting ideas about masculinities discussed by Carter (248–266). Carter (248) argues that the views of masculinity as selfish, arrogant, and disrespectful of women (symbolized by George IV and his ministers) were giving way to a new model, marked by honourable and respectful behaviour towards women. It can be said that while critiquing the failings of the king, the defenders of the queen were "recasting the very substance of patriarchal authority" (Carter 265). Yet, by emphasizing "the open and determined manner" of the queen's arrival in England, particularly her refusal of the government's offer of an increased income to stay abroad, Carlile was endowing the queen and by extension, all women, with the qualities of courage and independence, typically the realm of men.

Consequently, the enthusiastic reception upon the queen's arrival in England and the attachment to her did not "arise from any love or adherence to the pageantry of monarchy," but from the admiration of her qualities and the people's sense of moral duty – the duty to denounce injustice independently of rank or *status*. It was the "moral chivalry of this Island," replacing "the brutal chivalry of old" (vol. iv 504).

Although these arguments are common to Cobbett and Wooler, some aspects of Carlile's defence of the queen stand out. He lamented that "a mutual separation is not legal, as it would often supersede the painful necessity of discussing family affairs" (vol. iv 439). Divorce by mutual consent was a bold idea at a time when divorce could only result from the initiative of the husband, based on an accusation of adultery. Carlile was ahead of his time also in the way he faced the sensitive issue of the queen's private conduct during her stay on the Continent. Refusing double standards of morality and sexuality, he openly admitted that the queen "would be strictly justifiable" in having had an intimate relationship. If her husband had

5 The "Green Bag" were actually two green barristers' brief bags containing the alleged evidence gathered against the queen.

"bestowed his affections on other women," and "if the Queen had actually bestowed her affections on any other man she would have been not a jot less virtuous than any married or single woman in the country" (vol. iii 526).

Unlike Wooler and Cobbett, who generally spared the king from direct attack, and preferred to focus on the depiction of a "wronged woman" and "injured Queen" at the hands of a corrupt political system, Carlile aimed essentially at the examination of the conduct of George IV in the double capacity of husband and king. He decided "to take a peep on the other side" (vol. iii 255) to arouse feelings of indignation against the conduct of George IV.

In Carlile's version, the indignation was not essentially motivated by marital infidelity, but by the abandonment, the disrespect, and the persecution of his wife: "we should not think him a jot worse as a King or a man for it [infidelity], was it not for the malignant, treacherous and abominable conduct towards a woman, whom he has drawn within the bonds of matrimony, to whom he has religiously sworn affection and protection" (vol. iii 255–256). By defending Queen Caroline's rights as an abused wife, the radicals were admitting that the rights of women were a political issue (Clark 62).

The Queen Caroline affair became a political cause and the defence of the queen was conceptualized as a metaphor of political change. Carlile argued that the failure of George IV to perform his sworn duties as a husband was aggravated by the fact that he had kingly power. The use of his position as king to dishonour and degrade his wife was what made "the whole business a sinister and under-handed proceeding" (vol. iii 259–260). The conduct of the king as ruler, who did not hesitate in deploying the power of the state (executive, legislative, and judicial) to meet his private ends, becomes part and parcel of the public, political judgement: "The queen … is exposed to the malice of a husband, with kingly authority, … who has a ministry rife in wickedness and corruption, and a venal parliament in their control" (vol. iii 255). This double criticism of the conduct of George IV, as man and king, reached a peak during the enquiry in the House of Lords, which became a whole vicious process, the output of corrupted institutions – monarchy and parliament.

The remedy was the reform of the representational system and for that the queen became a symbol of the marginalized condition of the disenfranchised and "a compensation for the fools, the madmen, the hypocrites, and the swindlers of her House" (vol. iv 406). The interests of the queen were associated with those of the people: "nothing short of a full representation of the people can secure the Queen from further persecution and insult" (vol. iv 471).

As a Republican, Carlile considered the nature of the proceedings against the queen full proof of the vices of the monarchy. The priority, however, was not the abolition of the monarchy, but parliamentary reform: "as to the abolition of monarchy, I do not wish to say a word about it. When I see a reformed Parliament, … I would respect all the laws enacted by such a Parliament" (vol. iv 616).

This strategic clarity accounted for much of the mobilizing force of the radical press and its role as a "meeting place" for a multiplicity of voices. Both were amplified by the publication of addresses to the queen. Drafted by communities and trade organizations, the addresses and the respective replies by the queen were extensively published by the *Republican*. They can be viewed as part of the personal crusade fought by Carlile in the name of the right of publication.

Addresses portrayed public opinion taking initiative, not just consuming the propaganda poured out by the press and, in some ways, they are important documents. Many were the result of a process that began with the call for meetings (in a church, town hall, etc.) and ended with ceremonious delivery by demonstration or deputation. They typically expressed sympathy and grief for the queen's plight, indignation at the proposals made previous to her arrival, admiration for her courage to meet the accusers and to demand an open and constitutional investigation, as well as hope for the establishment of her rights as queen consort. The "Address from the Inhabitants of Southwark" stated that the interests of the queen and the people were identical: "We would, on no account offend, by intruding unnecessarily into the personal concerns of your Majesty. Your Majesty's interests, however, have become the interests of the public" (vol. iii 368). Addresses were also opportunities for the publicity of grievances, as the "Address from the Inhabitants of Nottingham": "The nation mourns, not only on account of your persecutions, but the manifold grievances under which it labours from a cruel misrule" (vol. iii 370). The queen's replies

denounced the falsehood and illegality of the accusations and targeted the Italian witnesses for the prosecution.[6]

Carlile's defence of Queen Caroline symbolized the claim to the moral virtue of the people as opposed to aristocratic vice, but the symbol entailed more than the manly defence of a woman. The "moral chivalry" had become political: "when she identified herself with the cause of the people, with the cause of reform, with the cause of universal freedom, then I could have clad myself in armour, and have sacrificed my life in her defence" (vol. iv 617). The intertwining of moral principle and the radical political agenda – virtue and political progress through parliamentary reform – was one of the focal points of the treatment of the Queen Caroline affair by *the Republican*.

It was an imprisoned[7] Carlile that battled for the freedom of the press and parliamentary reform during this crisis. Despite the controversial melange of ideas that formed his politics and the melodramatic facet of his personality – Thompson (843) dubbed him "the showman of free thought" – the years that he spent in prison attest to his courage and determination: "I will pursue my object until prosecution for matter of opinion be dropt" (vol. iv 297). It is Carlile at his best.

Cobbett's Weekly Political Register, Edited by William Cobbett

William Cobbett (1763–1835) was a prolific writer, but his political influence was felt essentially through the periodical that he edited over three decades. *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* (1802–1835) became a leading organ in the agitation on behalf of Queen Caroline. Remaining faithful to the political discourse that made him famous in 1816, Cobbett staged this case as political drama: the queen was the target of a revengeful husband, but through the force of her character she was a heroine and a symbol of hope for reform: "in her Majesty, the Queen, the oppressed part of the people would find a friend, a prop, a support, a foundation of hope of better days" (vol. xxxvii 503).

The personal qualities of the queen were emphasized so that her courage and determination were presented as political virtues. In Cobbett's dramatization, the queen's resolve to return to England, her refusal of an increased income for remaining on the Continent, and the demand for an open and fair trial aimed to mobilize the people. Through her courage and determination, the queen was setting an example that should be followed: she "will have opened the eyes of hundreds of thousands who were blind before her arrival, and, therefore, all the oppressed part of the nation ought to feel great gratitude towards her" (vol. xxxvi 902–903).

Hence, Cobbett appealed to the popular support of the queen – "a woman whom we have been praying (by name) to God, every Sunday, during the last twenty-five years … we see her an accused person, and, apparently, with scarcely any friends" (vol. xxxvi 891). The people and the reformers were natural allies of the queen because, like her, they had to fight against powerful enemies. Cobbett repeated the appeal when the attorney-general presented the charges: "it has always been a distinguishing characteristic of the people of this country, to sympathize with the oppressed and to lend assistance to the weak in their struggles with the strong" (vol. xxxvii 422). Wooler had used the same argument in the *Black Dwarf* of June 14, when he commented on the enthusiastic reception of the queen, by asking: "is it not better to applaud a defenceless woman than to persecute her?" (vol. iv 800).

Like all heroines, the queen had fierce enemies. These were the villains in Cobbett's drama. They were "the filthy knaves," "the slippery sycophants," "these knaves; these cunning and precious knaves"

6 The prosecution was grounded on the testimony of Italian witnesses, who on cross-examination were unable to give credible evidence. For Wood (150), this was a "fatal" decision which the radicals explored, taking advantage of the "immense opportunities" for parody and satire, so easily offered by the government.

7 Carlile contributed articles to the Queen Caroline affair from Dorchester Gaol. He had been sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment and a fine of £1,500 in October 1819 on charges of blasphemy and seditious libel. The *Republican* did not stop publication, being edited by his wife, Jane Carlile and his sister, Mary Ann.

(vol. xxxvii 446). The accusations against the queen were "the foul charges hatched by your enemies," "the monstrous falsehoods," "the vile accusations," "the foul charges brought against you" (vol. xxxvii 425, 433, 443, 451). These expressions are found in the same article. The government and the beneficiaries of the representational system were the "boroughmongers," a "voracious canker-worm … ever gnawing, and never satisfied," a "tormenting, persecuting, villainous worm that is eating out the heart of the nation" (vol. xxxvii 160).

This discursive war machine was deployed with a purpose – to tie the defence of the queen firmly to the cause of parliamentary reform. The prosecutors of the queen were made into symbols of the corruption and injustice of the political system and an opportunity for the definition of an identity of interests against the political enemies – the ruling classes foremost, but also the middle classes, the oppositional Whigs, and the clergy.

The Whigs were accused of having been silent after Peterloo and now of being equally silent to the cause of the queen: "What care they for their noble-hearted Queen? What interest have they in the pure administration of justice?" (vol. xxxvii 184) Above anything else, "the Whigs are now acting towards the Queen, precisely the part which they have all along acted towards the reformers … they carp, they rail, they even revile." But, Cobbett added, they make common cause with the government (vol. xxxvii 517).

In a long article, entitled *To the Middle Class of People*, with the subtitle *Who are enemies of Reform*, Cobbett argued that the root of the present abuse of the queen lay in an unreformed House of Commons, for which the middle-classes were greatly responsible: "that the system has been upheld has been owing to the apathy of the middle classes" (vol. xxxvii 289), and " if this odious sight [of the queen going to trial] is now exhibited to the world, it is the work of those whom you have actively supported and encouraged" (vol. xxxvii 296).

In this polarized world, the radicals and reformers were the heroes and the true friends of the queen. The first article in the *Political Register* about the Queen Caroline affair was significantly addressed to the reformers. It was published on June 10, a few days after the queen's arrival in England: "it is among the Reformers, and amongst them alone, that she has found disinterested friends, and warm and efficient support" (vol. xxxvi 936).

Both, the radicals and the queen, were suffering at the hands of a tyrannical government and a corrupt representational system. The radicals were "the calumniated, the persecuted, the oppressed, the cruelly suffering advocates for a Reform in the House of Commons" (vol. xxxvii 293) … "these martyrs in the cause of truth, justice and freedom have been wicked, seditious, blasphemous agitators" (vol. xxxvii 309–310).

The prosecution of the queen was compared to the persecution of radical reformers. The passing of the *Gagging Bills* in 1817 had set the precedent that allowed the passing of the *Bill of Pains and Penalties* to "dispose of the Queen without any ceremony" (vol. xxxvii 506), and the spies who denounced the reformers were compared to the accusers of the queen in 1806:[8] "the deeds of Edwards, [illegible name], Adams, Dwyer, Oliver, Castles and Vaughan and associates were all fresh in our minds. The perjuries of 1806, against the queen, were all brought back to our recollection" (vol. xxxvii 510).

Cobbett's conceptualization of politics as drama was materialized by a journalistic style whose combination of farce and melodrama did not de-politicize the agitation as Laqueur (418) argued, but was unmistakably political and designed to mobilize a popular audience.

To this end, the audience was made present, almost physically – Cobbett addressed it directly for the exposition of ideas and commentary of events. The constant presence of the author in the first person and the occasional insertion of small stories from his personal experience or of everyday life formed the communicative strategies that helped create direct bonds with the audience. When he wrote a letter "To Lord Liverpool," on August 5, he was essentially addressing his audience: "I beg the public to bear in mind that

8 In 1806, a committee of cabinet ministers of the Whig government was appointed to secretly investigate into allegations made by Sir John and Lady Douglas (former friends of the Princess of Wales) that she had given birth to a boy in 1803. It concluded that the allegations were false (Smith 8). That secret investigation became known as "the Delicate Investigation."

every one of us is liable to the same mode of proceeding, which is now adopted against her Majesty. Her cause is, therefore, our cause as far, at least, as relates to this mode of proceeding" (vol. xxxvii 143).

The message was often underlined by a mock satirical tone. In the aforementioned article *To the Middle Class of People*, Cobbett explained the concept of *ex-post-facto* law by using the language that was largely his creation. It shows Cobbett's conscious use of laughter as a political weapon:

> For instance, I laugh upon seeing Castlereagh in a fright. This is no crime at the time when I laugh; but an act may be passed to-morrow making it a crime in me to have so laughed to-day, and punish me for such laughing. This would be an ex-post-facto law; and the laws of England say, that no such law shall be passed. (vol. xxxvii 285–286)

As happened with the other radical periodicals, addresses to the queen were massively published in the *Political Register*. Their sheer amount enabled Cobbett to joke: "thus in England, the Government is trying a Queen, and the people are addressing her … These are strange things to behold!" (vol. xxxvii 524).

Cobbett had no hidden agenda. He was genuinely and openly committed to the cause of parliamentary reform: "I have never written for temporary purposes," he declared in December 1820 (vol. xxxvii 1562). That aim was not achieved, but the "sense of mission," which Haywood (6) sees as the driving force behind the radicals' intervention in the public sphere, finds in Cobbett's rendering of the Queen Caroline affair its almost perfect incarnation.

The Black Dwarf, Edited by Thomas Jonathan Wooler

The *Black Dwarf* was edited and printed by T. J. Wooler[9] from 1817 to 1824. During Cobbett's absence in America, it became the leading radical weekly with a national circulation of over 12,000 at its height (Haywood 10). The *Black Dwarf* was a blend of political journalism and satire, as suggested by the motto of the periodical – "Satire's my weapon." Its most original feature was the creation of the character that gave the name to the periodical, the Black Dwarf, Wooler's satiric-literary *persona*.[10] The Black Dwarf wrote letters – typically to the Yellow Bonze in Japan. These used the literary convention of the pseudo-Oriental correspondent who informed the home correspondent about controversial issues of the day. They conveyed criticism of the English polity, especially the government, in a combination of satire and melodrama, with roots in both elite and popular culture, as Epstein has shown in *Radical Expression*.

During the Queen Caroline affair, The *Letters of the Black Dwarf in London to the Yellow Bonze at Japan* took most of the space in the periodical. However, a whole gallery of lesser satirical characters occasionally appeared as readers' letters to the editor. These fictional readers were Peter Dolike, Mrs Caroline Willhaveit, George Shallnothaveit, The Brown Ape, W. Goodman, amongst others. They usually expressed naïve viewpoints and mock-satirical commentary on the king and the government, or the proceedings against the queen. This commentary grants a sharp edge to the satiric discourse of the *Black Dwarf*. It is the art of baiting authority through parodic laughter.

The themes that dominate the polemics in the *Black Dwarf* – the private sphere of familial behaviour, the legal issues concerning the method of prosecution of the queen, the identification of the cause of the queen with the sufferings of the radicals and the people in general, the publication of addresses, and the answers to attacks on the queen in the loyalist press – do not greatly differ from those treated by Cobbett or Carlile. The main differences lie in the comparative more space allotted to the discussion of the legal issues of the case and the literary quality of some of Wooler's prose.

---

9 Thomas Jonathan Wooler (1786–1853) was a Yorkshire-born printer who, like William Hone, William Cobbett, Richard Carlile, and others, moved to London as a young man to make a living as a bookseller and publisher. Between 1813 and 1816 he edited and published several journals, namely the theatrical journal *The Stage*, Wooler's first important weekly (Hendrix 110).

10 For an analysis of this character, see Abreu (2016).

The Queen Caroline affair was not an obvious radical cause, and at the end of June *the Black Dwarf* was still scoffing at the royal quarrel and considering it "a trifling matter." … "All national interest in public business is suspended because a man and his wife cannot agree" (vol. iv 895). This reticence may explain the playful language and almost conciliatory tone used in the letter of June 14, entitled *A Queen to be Disposed of – a Wife to be Given Away*:

> Oh, my yellow friend! We are in a most pitiful plight. We are sadly in want of a little Eastern law, concerning the disposal of wives! … Here is a woman, who was thought to have been decently and quietly got rid of; – and lo! Here she is again, to disturb a nation, and frighten her husband out of his well-merited repose! (vol. iv 797).

Despite the initial hesitation, Wooler enthusiastically took up the cause of Queen Caroline. Her return was interpreted as female subversive intervention: "it was rebellion against the lord of the creation Man! for a woman to be thus borne in triumph past the threshold to which she had sworn obedience" (vol. iv 801). The Queen Caroline affair became an opportunity to speak to women, by discussing the twofold dimension of the case – the private sphere of familial behaviour and the public sphere of government and justice.

Like Carlile, Wooler denied a husband that neglected and abandoned his wife, because he did not like her, the right to accuse her, even if she erred: "Is the man who blighted the first year of her married expectations with such neglect and persecution, entitled to reproach her with a fault?" (vol. v 73–74). Gender and politics were not separate and divisible entities, and both have shaped radical opposition, as Carter (249) argues. Loyalist attacks on the involvement of women in the Queen Caroline affair show that loyalists were aware of the subversive nature of women's participation in the political life of the country.

As the identity mark of the periodical, satire depicted authority in undignified, ridiculous situations during the Queen Caroline affair. The representation of the king as a willing cuckold – a favourite theme in pamphlet satires and satirical prints – was also exploited in the *Black Dwarf*. In *A Queer Story* (vol. v 454–455), published at the end of September, the comic effect is produced by the "dialogising counter-movement" (Grimes 181) between the original and the parodied. Lincoln, an imaginary reader, writes to the *Black Dwarf* telling the strange story of a man who had married a wife to pay his debts.[11] After abandoning her and sending her into a foreign country:

> A fanciful thought came into his head that he should like to make the world believe that he was a cuckold …. The story first made the people laugh; then they said he was mad, and ought to be taken care of. However, nothing could remove his determination. He was bent on being a cuckold. (vol. v 455)

Parodying the powerful defied class barriers. The king's conduct towards his wife was exposed in *Justice! Mon! Justice!* a letter to the editor by the imagined reader Peter Dolike, published in the edition of July 5. The discrepancy between the sophistication of the parodied character and the bad English and low social condition of the author of the letter enhances the comic effect:

> Why, would ye think it, sur? Here be I in the House of Correction, and all for what? Because I don't like my wife, and am determined not to live wi her any longer. … As you live in town, will ye be kind enough to ask Lord Eldon about it for me: and get me a bill of divorce seat down as speedily as possible, that I may be my own man again, like other great folks. (vol. v 31)

These elements of the private sphere are intertwined with the political dimension of the case and fictionalized as a grotesque dream in a letter from the *Black Dwarf to the Yellow Bonze at Japan*, entitled *Trial of a King, in the Similitude of a Dream* (vol. v 285–300). The Black Dwarf tells a dream he had of the trial of a king for immoral conduct. The mix of comic and grotesque elements exposes the "risible incongruity" (Donald 29) between the principle of royal responsibility and actual reality: "From the arguments of the Crown Lawyers I was glad to perceive that royalty itself ought to be subjected to a strict account; … The case of the Queen, I was well aware, was no proof of the doctrines; … But the idea pleased me" (vol. v 288).

---

11 Marriage was the condition established by Parliament to pay off the Prince of Wales's debts. He was notorious for a life style that had got him into financial problems.

In a flash-forward, the scene is suddenly placed in 1868, the reign of the dissolute Edward VII. What follows is the description of the trial of the king – a grotesque allegory to present the trial of the queen as a weird mockery of justice:

> An infirm likeness of Lord Liverpool, with a few grey hairs thinly scattered upon his aged head. He seemed to my mind as a willow, almost broken with bending to so many storms. … At the bar stood a decrepit copy of the present fiery Attorney-General. All the keenness of his eye had vanished …. The lovely carbuncles upon his countenance had vanished; and his voice, turning again to childish treble, piped and whistled in his stand …. the scene was awful! (vol. v 290–291).

Although satire is the cement that links and unifies the themes of the polemics, other discursive modes (ranging from melodrama to rational discussion) are played against the political establishment. This discursive diversity lends a dialogical, multi-voiced mark to the rendering of the Queen Caroline affair in the *Black Dwarf*. This sense of "open discussion" (Hwang 50) is illustrated by the examination of the legal issues underlying the prosecution of the queen. Hence, after the presentation of the *Bill of Pains and Penalties* on July 5, the confrontational tone escalated. In an article entitled *Sacrifice and Divorce of the Queen* (vol. v 65–70), the *Bill of Pains and Penalties* is considered "one of the most contemptible indictments in the world" (vol. v 66), one no court of law would accept: "It is execrated as an accusation – it would be detested as a law" (vol. v 77).

Wooler argued that this method of prosecution justified that the queen demanded to be openly accused and fairly tried (vol. v 77). Like Cobbett and Carlile, he explored the argument that the defence of the legal rights of the queen was intimately linked to the defence of public liberties: "the Tyranny which destroys her today, makes every man's liberty less secure tomorrow" (vol. v 134). The attack upon the rights of an individual was considered an attack upon the security of everyone's rights. In the *Letter from the "Black Dwarf" to "The Reverend J. W. Cunningham,"* published on the front page of the edition of September 20, Wooler argued that "the state is worst governed where an injury done to the greatest is not considered as an injury at all to the community" and that "legitimate freedom depends upon the unalterable basis, and impartial administration of equal laws" (vol. v 397).

Hence to support the queen is an exercise of citizenship: "the Sympathies of the People and the Potent Agency of Public Opinion form the best safeguard against the aggressions of Tyranny and the Enormities of Injustice!" (vol. v 134). Public opinion, which since the 1790s had acquired a "pronounced and legitimate role" (Schweizer 33) was presented by Wahrman (405) "as the main protagonist against aristocratic and ministerial corruption" during the Queen Caroline affair.

During the trial interim from September 9 to October 3, it had become clear that the prosecution would not win the case against the queen. This was the moment the queen's supporters had longed for. Numerous satirical prints, pamphlets, songs, addresses, and newspaper articles poured from the print shops. On September 27, the *Black Dwarf* published an article, whose title *The Case against the Enemies of Her Majesty the Queen Clearly Stated. With an Exposure of the Swearings of Their Witnesses; and a Demand for their Responsibility* (vol. v 449–452) signals the turnover, by transforming the case against the queen into a case against her prosecutors: "shall we not call for the Responsibility of the accusers to the laws of their country, for the insulting injuries they have committed against their country through the person of the Queen?" (vol. v 452).

However, Wooler seemed more aware than Carlile or Cobbett of the fact that popular indignation is ephemeral, and that the demand for governmental accountability was unrealistic. The failure of the prosecution to condemn the queen would not automatically bring about the establishment of her rights. At a moment of general celebration, Wooler saw beyond the limits of propaganda and asked the relevant questions:

> They know the public spirit is broken – that the bull may bellow – but that his horns are in no condition to toss. Impeachment they deride …. what then have they to fear, even in the failure of the atrocious conspiracy against the Queen? Nay, in the proof of her innocence, how is she to be established in her rights? How is she to be restored to the enjoyment of her rank and dignity? (vol. v 356)

Wooler was aware that the dropping of the divorce clause in the *Bill of Pains and Penalties* was not necessarily a triumph of the queen, let alone of the people. At the second reading on November 6, the

Bill passed with a small majority that was further reduced at the third reading on November 10. In face of the results, Lord Liverpool moved that "the further consideration of the *Bill* be adjourned for six months," which was interpreted as an acquittal of the queen and celebrated with illuminations in London and all the major cities for five nights.

However, the adjournment of the discussion of the *Bill* for 6 months and Parliament until January emptied the popular agitation of its motive and favoured the counter-attack by the loyalist press. The edition of the *Black Dwarf* of December 13 reflected the new situation when loyal addresses began to find their way into the press. The irony and mockery thrown upon the writers of loyal addresses in the letter *To the Wise Men of Gotham, Resident on the Ward of Cheap, in the City of London* (vol. v 835–836), by The Brown Ape to Thomas Helps, and his Associates are strong, but they are no longer the instruments of joyful attack. The tone of irony sounds like defeat:

> The "Brown Ape" from Borneo writes to Thomas Helps to express the congratulations of the apes of Borneo at the English apes, for their authorship of loyal addresses. The English apes now live among the "Bulls" – a "discontented race" who do not appreciate the comfort, morality, benevolence, safety, just laws and the mild and paternal government that they have. (vol. v 835)

The Queen Caroline affair thus ended in a pessimistic tone. However, Wooler fully justified the pertinence of "satire's my weapon" during this crisis. He showed that satire could unite people in asserting their claims and expanding the public sphere. The fact that this exercise was moved by the plight of a woman constitutes a contribution to a new view of society and polity.

Conclusion

This essay has claimed that the rendering of the Queen Caroline affair by radical journalists constituted an innovative politico-cultural intervention of lasting significance.[12] Despite having failed to achieve the political goals set during this crisis, or unite the movement in its aftermath (Stevenson 143–144), Richard Carlile's war of resistance for the right of publication, William Cobbett's staged political drama, and Thomas Wooler's sophisticated wit have empowered public opinion, battled for parliamentary reform and freedom of the press and fostered the participation of women in a male public sphere.

Those battles are still meaningful. In an article about the mission for present-day journalism, Katharine Viner (2017), editor of the *Guardian* newspaper, grounded the enquiry into that mission in the paper's relationship to early nineteenth-century popular radicalism. She dated the history of the *Guardian* from 16 August 1819, the day of Peterloo, and linked its history to the *Manchester Guardian*, a newspaper devoted to enlightenment values, liberty, reform, and justice, whose 1821 founding manifesto Viner considered "a powerful document, and one whose ideals still shape the *Guardian*."

The radical version of the Queen Caroline affair thus appears as a metaphor for the struggle for new values. The radical discourse that reached a climax with the Queen Caroline affair was a battlefield against "things as they are" – the political and the cultural. The theme of the "wronged woman" and "insulted queen" imaginatively tied issues related to the private sphere of familial behaviour to the reform of the political system. The link established between domestic and moral concerns, the demand for parliamentary reform, the denunciation of injustice, and the defence of the freedom of the press proposed a view of society in which culture was political and politics was a cultural act. The weapons were the printed word in all its forms and genres – rational-critical, melodramatic, and satiric – and a class-based counter-discourse.

Referring to the different types of radicalism, the literary, and the popular, Halstead (364) notes that the latter was more effective in terms of explaining the processes of change. Despite its inconsistencies and contradictions, the radical press of William Cobbett, Richard Carlile, and Thomas Wooler was more effective

12 For a discussion of the radical inheritance, see Abreu and Paisana (2015).

in creating a real opposition to the existing political system than the "intellectually acute" arguments by Leigh Hunt or William Hazlitt. Unlike Laqueur's (452–453) claim that the radical representation of the Queen Caroline affair as melodrama and romance led to its de-politicization, these popular forms linked the personal to the political, and both enabled the common people to undermine the moral hegemony of the upper class, as Clark (52) argues. Radicals constructed powerful rhetoric that engaged a lower-class public by portraying their miseries while simultaneously going beyond critique to present a view of a society based on the rule of law and individual liberties. Their emblem was parliamentary reform, and their agents were the struggle for the freedom of the press and the belief in public opinion as a force against arbitrary power. Two hundred years later, these struggles echo in the demands for transparency and democracy.

Acknowledgements: I wish to thank the editors of *Open Cultural Studies* for the funding of the publication of this manuscript.

Conflict of interest: The author states no conflict of interest.

Data availability statement: This work was partly based on the investigation conducted for my PhD thesis entitled *Queen Caroline and the Print Culture of Regency Radicalism*.

Works Cited

Abreu, Georgina. *Queen Caroline and the Print Culture of Regency Radicalism*. Unpublished PhD thesis, 2012. http://hdl.handle.net/1822/19777

Abreu, Georgina. "Contested Imprints: The Letters of the Black Dwarf in London to the Yellow Bonze at Japan." *Diacrítica*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2016, pp. 225–241. hdl.handle.net/1822/61876

Abreu, Georgina and Paisana, Joanne. "The Early Nineteenth-Century English Popular Radical Press and Today's Anti-Capitalist Protest Movement." Conflito e *Trauma, XVI Colóquio de* Outono, edited by Ana G. Macedo, et al. Humus, 2015, pp. 487–507. hdl.handle.net/1822/63131

Carter, Louise. "British Masculinities on Trial in the Queen Caroline Affair of 1820." *Gender & History*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2008, pp. 248–269.

Clark, Anna. "Queen Caroline and the Sexual Politics of Popular Culture in London, 1820." *Representations*, vol. 31, 1990, pp. 47–68.

Cobbett's Weekly Political Register, vol. xxxvi, 1820. books.google.pt/books?id=YuYaAQAAMAAJ&pg=PP5&lpg=PP5&dq=Cobbett%E2%80%99s+Weekly+Political+Register.+vol.+xxxvi,+1820&source=bl&ots=bq8H8PZn0T&sig=ACfU3U2z-j0TsKst3dKD2D-eqF1zxTal8g&hl=pt-PT&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwig3ZGEybrxAhXsIMUKHZZoCocQ6AEwA3oECAQQAw#v=onepage&q=Cobbett%E2%80%99s%20Weekly%20Political%20Register.%20vol.%20xxxvi%2C%201820&f=false

Cobbett's Weekly Political Register, vol. xxxvii, 1820. books.google.pt/books?id=asw7AQAAMAAJ&pg=PP7&lpg=PP7&dq=cobbett%27s+weekly+register,+vol.+xxxvii+1820&source=bl&ots=k9RDuYCBpe&sig=ACfU3U3gwTTvB55ahOPFjUa3nWqQ43Bc-g&hl=pt-PT&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiv372myrrxAhXOsaQKHZXsBA0Q6AEwCHoECAYQAw#v=onepage&q=cobbett's%20weekly%20register%2C%20vol.%20xxxvii%201820&f=false

Deutsch, Eberhard P. "The Trial of Queen Caroline." *American Bar Association Journal*, vol. 57, no. 12, 1971, pp. 1201–1208. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25725687.

Donald, Diana. *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Age of George III*. Yale University Press, 1996.

Epstein, James. *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual, and Symbol in England, 1790–1850*. Oxford University Press, 1994.

Fraser, Flora. *The Unruly Queen. The Life of Queen Caroline*. Macmillan, 1996.

Fulcher, Jonathan. "The Loyalist Response to the Queen Caroline Agitations." *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 34, 1995, pp. 481–502.

George, Dorothy. *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum*. Vol. x, 1820–1827, Printed by Order of the Trustees, 1952.

Gilmartin, Kevin. *Print Politics: The Press and Radical Opposition in Early Nineteenth-Century England*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Grimes, Kyle. "Verbal Jujitsu: William Hone and the Tactics of Satirical Conflict." *The Satiric Eye: Forms of Satire in the Romantic Period*, edited by Steven Jones, Palgrave, 2003, pp. 173–184.

Halstead, John L. "Kevin Gilmartin's Print Politics: The Press and Radical Opposition in Early Nineteenth-Century England." *Labour History Review*, vol. 63, no. 3, 1998, p. 364.

Haywood, Ian. "Radical Journalism." *Romantic Period Writings 1798–1832: An Anthology*, edited by Zachary Leader and Ian Haywood, Taylor & Francis, 2005, pp. 5–30.

Hendrix Richard. "Popular Humour and the Black Dwarf." *The Journal of British Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1976, pp. 108–128.

Hwang, Jing-Huey. "Rethinking Britishness in the Fictional Japanese Letters of T. J. Wooler's Black Dwarf." *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2013, pp. 49–65.

Koss, Stephen. *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain*. Fontana, 1990.

Laqueur, Thomas W. "The Queen Caroline Affair: Politics as Art in the Reign of George IV." *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 54, no. 3, 1982, pp. 417–466.

McCalman, Iain. *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London 1795–1840*. Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Schweizer, Karl W. "Newspapers, Politics, and Public Opinion in the Later Hanoverian Era." *Parliamentary History*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2006, pp. 32–48.

Smith, Ernest. *A Queen On Trial. The Affair of Queen Caroline*. Allan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1993.

Stevenson, John. "The Queen Caroline Affair." *London in the Age of Reform*, edited by John Stevenson, Basil Blackwell, 1977, pp. 114–148.

The Black Dwarf, A London Weekly Publication by T. J. Wooler. vol. iv, 1820.

The Black Dwarf, A London Weekly Publication by T. J. Wooler. vol. v, 1820.

The Republican, vol. ii, printed and published by Jane Carlile, 1820. books.google.pt/books?id=AiArAAAAYAAJ&pg=PP7&lpg=PP7&dq=The+Republican,+vol.+ii,+1820,+London,+printed+and+published+by+Jane+Carlile&source=bl&ots=iz23RP3H5N&sig=ACfU3U21Qcqp4WuAJ2RkxC7gxW5fS5VVGQ&hl=pt-PT&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjjuM3vv7jxAhUImBQKHUcxAVwQ6AEwEHoECAUQAw#v=onepage&q=The%20Republican%2C%20vol.%20ii%2C%201820%2C%20London%2C%20printed%20and%20published%20by%20Jane%20Carlile&f=false

The Republican, vol. iii, printed and published by Jane Carlile, 1820. books.google.pt/books?id=vMs9AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA256&lpg=PA256&dq=if+the+Queen+had+actually+bestowed+her+affections+on+any+other+man&source=bl&ots=BJJfWdJ8iz&sig=ACfU3U1WLhQeVNBpy2AKT0QyWoslaPkeOA&hl=pt-PT&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiymu6DzbjxAhWl0eAKHfOJD1wQ6AEwA3oECAQQAw#v=onepage&q=if%20the%20Queen%20had%20actually%20bestowed%20her%20affections%20on%20any%20other%20man&f=false

The Republican, vol. iv, printed and published by Mary Ann Carlile, 1820. books.google.pt/books?id=7Ms9AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA217&lpg=PA217&dq=the+republican,+vol.+iv,+1820,+london,+printed+and+published+by+jane+carlile.&source=bl&ots=8Qh0LRE0A4&sig=ACfU3U1gi4SzQYsO44LziHZiZomASaTCNw&hl=pt-PT&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwilie7_ybjxAhUtA2MBHRFJD1wQ6AEwEHoECBUQAw#v=onepage&q=the%20republican%2C%20vol.%20iv%2C%201820%2C%20london%2C%20printed%20and%20published%20by%20jane%20carlile.&f=false

Thompson, Edward P. *The Making of the English Working Class*. Penguin Books, 1991 [1963].

UK Parliament/Hansard/Commons: 19 June 1820/Commons Chamber/Appendix: hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1820-06-19/debates/b5ea06cb-2c50-42e1-8bdc-e395e24f4d20/Appendix.

Viner, Katharine. "A mission for journalism in a time of crisis". *The Guardian*, 16 November 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/nov/16/a-mission-for-journalism-in-a-time-of-crisis

Wahrman, Dror. "Middle-Class Domesticity Goes Public: Gender, Class, and Politics from Queen Caroline to Queen Victoria." *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 32, 1993, pp. 396–432.

Wood, Marcus. *Radical Satire and Print Culture 1790–1822*. Clarendon Press, 1994.