



Allan Ramsay, *Queen Charlotte* (1761-1769)

GEORGE ELLIOTT CLARKE

THE UNFALSIFIED HISTORY OF QUEEN CHARLOTTE SOPHIA (1744-1818)

George Elliott Clarke (1960-) was born in Windsor Plains, Nova Scotia. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Waterloo in 1984 and published his first poetry collection, *Saltwater Spirituals and Deeper Blues* (1983). He also earned a master's degree from Dalhousie University in 1989 and published his second collection, *Whylah Falls* (1990). After earning a doctorate from Queen's University in 1993, he taught at Duke University and published the collections *Provençal Songs* (1993) and *Lush Dreams, Blue Exile* (1994). In 1999 he became a professor at the University of Toronto and published the collections *Gold Indigoes* (1999), *Execution Poems* (2001), *Blue* (2001), *Illuminated Verses* (2005), *Black* (2006), *I & I* (2009), *Red* (2011), *Illicit Sonnets* (2013), *Traverse* (2014), *Extra Illicit Sonnets* (2015), and *Gold* (2016). He also served as Poet Laureate of Toronto from 2012 to 2015. The following poem was published in the autumn 2015 issue and included in the first volume of *Canticles* (2016), which Fiona Sampson described as “an astonishing excavation of myth, history, and identity,” which is “unlike anything else being written today.”

Princess of a gerrymandered German
Duchy—Mecklenburg-Strelitz, and only
17 when packed off to George III,
Who drooled for a legs-jacked-wide, Virgin bride,
Ignorant of politicos (Don Juans
And Machiavellis), and, fetchingly,
More like Sade's Justine than Sade's Juliette,
Queen Charlotte Sophia was “dark-complected”;
Had flared nostrils; mirrored a pallid cow.

Shipped out from her backward, awkward nowhere,
 Hot August of 1761,
 Charlotte docked, still *intacta*, in England,
 On September 7. The sequent morn,
 Promptly at 9, she lisped, “I do,” to George,
 And the King launched quick *Raunch*. Her haunches, laid,
 Had her coming, kicking, to splayed outcome:
 In 1762, the Welsh Prince,
 (Later George IV), came bawling to breath.

Even in pastel, Charlotte looked Negroid—
 More like Beethoven than *Mona Lisa*,
 That usual, European cream blush.
 She selected only Negro servants,
 Appropriately, who conceived her as
 A Creole vision, poetic in tint.

Anyway, the Black Queen loved Palatial
 Decoration, hanging halls in brocade,
 Vivid as rainbows, to cheer up *Le Roi*,
 After he’d slain limp fawns and broke-wing swans.

When hubby became too erratic, weird,
 Hinging on unhinged, the Queen demanded—
 Fanatically—more baroque fixtures,
 Rococo furniture, ornamental
 Bric-a-brac, *les beaux-arts*, et cetera,
 Even commandeering that brat, Mozart,
 To fix up Opus 3, in her honour,
 For a princely price, some 50 guineas
 (Coinage coined after Afro, Negro gold).
 She preferred flowers as art, and so renamed
 South Africa’s “Bird of Paradise” bloom,
Strelitzia reginae, her licence,
 Right, as Royal Patroness of Botany
 And everything anyone deems “Pretty.”

Charlotte Sophia was taken aback
By George's *porphyria*, true. Much worse,
Though, was Marie Antoinette's beheading.
("Shit," murmured the Queen.) Down France's beach front
Thumped that royal head—bump, bump, bump—ending
In a ditch, a sewer—a right royal flush.

By 1812, so bizarre was King George,
Queen Charlotte could stomach no more congress,
And, besides, she had now to keep an eye
To the statecraft of her boy, the Welsh Prince,
Who was prosecuting wars (diffidently),
Piling up debts (profligately), draining
The treasury as he drained his sherry.

The strain of watching her son leech England—
Bleed dry her Empire—stopped the Queen's own breath.
His ma'm deceased, the Prince lived off her jewels.
Next, George III—gone berserk, went kaput,
In 1820, thanks to totally
Chugging the drugs of total witchdoctors.

Charlotte Sophia survives regally
In a portrait across the Atlantic
In the Red Room, at the Nova Scotia
Legislature. Here, clearly, her face seems
Perfectly "Mulatto," despite dissent
From naysayers who ignore her descent
From Margarita de Castro e Souza,
Offspring of Portugal's Alfonso III
And his gal pal, Madragana, who was
Either Moorish or Jewish (Sephardic),
But, by all accounts, gifted visibly
With pretty features pretty much "*Negro*."