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## Representing the Queen When the Queen Is Missing: The Duchess of Angoulême and Louis XVIII (1799-1824)

Matthieu Mensch

UNIVERSITÉ DE STRASBOURG

**Abstract:** This article argues that the Duchess of Angoulême, born Marie-Thérèse Charlotte de France, daughter of King Louis XVI and Queen Marie-Antoinette, took on the role of substitute queen during the reign of her uncle, King Louis XVIII. The King, widower of Marie-Joséphine de Savoie, realised well before his wife's death the importance of having a female figure by his side. Although the King's niece was born a *Fille de France* and did not wear the royal crown, the iconography commissioned by Louis gave her all the prerogatives of queenship, at least in appearance, and so helped shape a blurred and complex image of a royal couple such as had never been seen before.

**Keywords:** French monarchy; eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; Restoration; iconography; queenship

In the wing of the Palace of Versailles dedicated to the nineteenth century, a majestic full-length portrait of Marie-Thérèse Charlotte, Duchess of Angoulême, is on display. The daughter of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette was painted in 1816, giving us a vision of the princess under the reign of her uncle Louis XVIII. We owe the portrait to Baron Gros, a former student of Jacques-Louis David, who had already painted several works for Bonaparte in 1796. He continued to serve the emperor until his fall and readily began working for Louis XVIII in 1814. At first glance, the 1816 portrait might seem to depict a ruling sovereign, showcasing as it does all the trappings of majesty. But at this time, Marie-Thérèse Charlotte was only Madame, Duchess of Angoulême, the wife of Monsieur's son Louis-Antoine, Duke of Angoulême.<sup>1</sup> This paper will use this portrait as a starting point to consider the princess's place within the royal family and the shift or continuity in terms of her pictorial depiction to project her actual or supposed power and rank.

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<sup>1</sup> Monsieur was Charles-Philippe, count of Artois (1757-1836), youngest brother of Louis XVI and Louis XVIII, future Charles X.

In Ancien Régime France, the queen and the dauphine only existed as wives—they could not hold political power. Fanny Cosandey discussed the gradual effacement of the Bourbon queens from Louis XIV's rule on, as they slowly drifted fully into the domestic sphere.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, they acquired an image as motherly, family-oriented women, and increasingly came to play a supporting role in official ceremonies. While the royal wives played an ever more domestic role, the mistresses, conversely, played a real political role with the approval of the sovereign.<sup>3</sup>

The Duchess of Angoulême, although she was not the wife of a sovereign, participated in the royal majesty, regularly appearing with the King at official ceremonies but also in iconographic representations.<sup>4</sup> Given that she was neither the queen in exile nor the queen consort or dauphine before 1824, it should not have been possible for her to display all the symbolic assets of a royal consort. Yet the first commissioned portraits that circulated of the princess contributed to the confusion about her visual status. Abby Zanger has highlighted the nuptial fiction created by the royal marriage between two essentially different bodies, especially when the queen was foreign, but the Duchess of Angoulême was an exception in that she was born a *Fille de France*.<sup>5</sup> In 1814, two female sovereigns were alive in French memory: Joséphine de Beauharnais, a Frenchwoman but not royal, and Marie-Louise of Austria, a traditionally foreign princess. Their many portraits in majesty left impressions of two shining women, indispensable ornaments of imperial majesty and of Napoleon I's glory. Such portrayals became the norm for court images, merging with the portraits of the former Bourbon queens to constitute a new avatar, then a new evolution, of female royal representation.<sup>6</sup>

As Sylvène Édouard has shown, the queen was political through the majesty of her image and her biological function of childbearing. The Duchess of Angoulême channelled

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2 Fanny Cosandey, *La reine de France: symbole et pouvoir, XV<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 381.

3 Tracy Adams and Christine Adams, *The Creation of the French Royal Mistress: From Agnès Sorel to Madame Du Barry* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2020).

4 The Duchess of Burgundy, then Dauphine of France (1685-1712) was the only woman of the family, but Louis XIV never associated her the same way Louis XVIII did the Duchess of Angoulême. Hélène Becquet, *Marie-Thérèse de France, l'orpheline du Temple* (Paris: Perrin, 2012); Anne-Marie Rosset, *Collection De Vinck: inventaire analytique, Volume V: La Restauration et les Cent-Jours* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1938).

5 Abby Zanger, *Scenes from the Marriage of Louis XIV: Nuptial Fictions and the Making of Absolutist Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 3.

6 Susan L. Siegfried, "Fashion and the Reinvention of Court Costume in Portrayals of Josephine de Beauharnais (1794-1809)," *Apparence(s)* 6 (2015), [doi:10.4000/apparences.1329](https://doi.org/10.4000/apparences.1329).

the image of a queen in portraits, in her appearance and in her demeanour.<sup>7</sup> The image of the Duchess of Angoulême was as complex as her status. She was close to power, but never actually wielded any. Her place in history was virtually unprecedented—that of a *Fille de France* led her to occupy, by an ironic twist of fate, her father's throne as a consort. Claude de France (1499-1524) had experienced the same fate, but as a result of the absence of a male heir. Marie-Thérèse Charlotte's unusual position sometimes contributed to a confusion between the princess's real image and her constructed royal image.

Long before her marriage to the Duke of Angoulême, the image of Marie-Thérèse Charlotte circulated to remind the French that there was still a *Fille de France*. Her popularity then became the most valuable leverage for Louis XVIII to exploit in order to associate a female aspect with his own male royal power. The more powerful the king, the more absent the queen. The path taken by absolutism had tended to shift the queen's existence into the domestic sphere.<sup>8</sup> Louis XVIII was less brilliant than Louis XIV; he was not a martial or graceful figure, the absolutist conception was no longer in the agenda in 1814, and the female figure also had to serve to (re)install the monarchy. With the Restoration, the royal power sought to restore the visibility and public role of the princess. The queen had to become a visible and identifiable figure. This was all the more necessary as the Duchess of Angoulême was the best-known member of the royal family, and she returned to France haloed by her misfortunes.

### **From a queen in exile to an absent queen**

Before ascending to the throne, Louis XVIII, then Count of Provence and brother of the Dauphin, was called upon to enter into a brilliant union. Louis XV, his grandfather, chose to reinvigorate the Franco-Savoyard alliance. He was himself the son of a princess of Savoy, Marie-Adélaïde, daughter of Victor Amédée II, who married the Duke of Burgundy and future Dauphin, the grandson of Louis XIV. From 1770, the Baron de Choiseul was in charge of negotiating the conditions of a union between the French prince and a Savoyard princess. The choice fell on the King's eldest granddaughter, Marie-Joséphine Louise. On 3 November 1770, the official marriage proposal was finally presented in Turin and its acceptance arrived at Versailles on the fourteenth. The princess received a miniature

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7 Sylvène Édouard, *Le corps d'une reine: histoire singulière d'Élisabeth de Valois* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2009), 7-13.

8 Cosandey, *La reine de France*, 382.



portrait of her fiancé mounted on a bracelet from Choiseul's hands.<sup>9</sup> The new Countess of Provence, Madame, arrived at court on 12 May 1771, and her unappealing physique quickly relegated her to the shadow of her brilliant new sister-in-law, the Dauphine Marie-Antoinette. Bachaumont's assessment of Marie-Joséphine was that "this princess is very dark, she has rather beautiful eyes but shaded by very thick eyebrows, a small forehead, a long and upturned nose, an already most markedly downy moustache on the upper lip, and a turn of the face which presents nothing august or imposing."<sup>10</sup> After the birth of the Dauphin, first son of Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI in 1781, and being herself without an heir, her position at court was reduced to what was strictly necessary, which always seemed to annoy her: "I am fed up with the visits ... all these ladies come at whatever time they want, and they come in a stampede."<sup>11</sup>

After a successful escape from the violence of the Revolution and her semi-imprisonment in the Luxembourg Palace, in 1791 the princess travelled from exile to exile, most often without her husband. When Monsieur learnt of the death of his nephew, Louis XVII, he proclaimed himself king, making his wife effectively the new Queen of France. In their correspondence, he addresses his wife as "Her Majesty the Queen,"<sup>12</sup> but this was an empty title without power. The Prince of Ligne described Marie-Joséphine as "Queen, now, alas without a kingdom! the wife of Louis XVIII," but she was not visible in royalist iconography and her image barely circulated to remind the French that there was still a queen.<sup>13</sup> Should we see in this absence the impossibility for the King and his wife to compete with the brilliant image of Napoleon's wives?

The plan to use a female image as a counterpart to Louis XVIII's own male royal image was developed even before his return. At first, the King made use of his own wife.

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9 Archivio di Stato di Torino, Materie politiche per rapporto all'interno, 1.18, Lettere diverse Real Casa, Lettere Principi diversi, Lettere di Maria Giuseppina di Savoia, 1765-1800.

10 "Cette princesse est très brune, elle a d'assez beaux yeux mais ombragés de sourcils très épais, un front petit, un nez long et retroussé, un duvet déjà très marqué aux moustaches, et une tournure de visage qui ne présente rien d'auguste ni d'imposant," Louis Petit de Bachaumont, *Mémoires secrets de Bachaumont, de 1762 à 1787* (Paris: Brissot-Thivars, 1830), 3:294.

11 "Je suis excédée des visites ... toutes ces dames viennent à l'heure qu'elles veulent et elles viennent à la débandade," Bachaumont, *Mémoires secrets*, 3:294.

12 Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Fonds Bourbons, Volume 621, Correspondance de Louis XVIII.

13 "Reine d'à présent, hélas sans royaume! La femme de Louis XVIII," Prince de Ligne, *Fragments de l'histoire de ma vie* (Paris: Plon, 1928), 295.

She was almost unknown to the French and the King intended to exploit an idealised image of her. In 1807, an engraving of Marie-Joséphine was published in London by J. Weber (Figure 1). Beneath the portrait represented in bust and wrapped in the ermine cloak, we can see the arms of France and Savoy surmounted by the royal crown. It was no longer about representing Madame, but the Queen of France; this engraving was intended to circulate in France rather than in England, where it was originally published. Shortly before the death of the Queen, between 1809 and 1810, a much less flattering portrait was commissioned from Marie-Éléonore Godefroi, entitled *Marie-Joséphine Louise de Savoie, Countess of Provence and Queen of France* (Figure 2). Long considered lost, its appearance in an auction room in 2012 has allowed us to rediscover it.<sup>14</sup> Seated on a throne trimmed with blue velvet with golden lilies, the Queen wears a white dress and above all a matching tiara and brooch featuring the arms of France. As a queen in exile, she remained the only true consort for her husband and for the legitimists. This surprising portrait, the only one presenting Marie-Joséphine as the Queen of France, could not be fully exploited by the royalists as propaganda, because she died in London a few months after its completion, on 13 November 1810. In addition to this royal iconography, the English government paid her a posthumous tribute befitting a reigning queen consort. King George III held a grand burial ceremony for her at Westminster Abbey, where she was briefly buried.<sup>15</sup> Her funeral oration was indeed that of Marie-Joséphine Louise de Savoie, Queen of France and Navarre.<sup>16</sup>

In 1814, the monarch who ascended the restored French throne was thus a childless widower. Louis XVIII needed a female figure, a sensitive counterpart to his necessarily masculine political power. As it happened, while the royal family was without a queen, it was not without a royal princess. Since the death of the Queen (and of her sister, the Countess of Artois, a few years earlier), there was one woman left in the royal family: Marie-Thérèse Charlotte of France, the Duchess of Angoulême. This daughter of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette was known as the “Temple Orphan,” whose “misfortunes ... have

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14 Sold by Osénat on 10 June 2012 at Fontainebleau.

15 However, on 13 April 1811, in accordance with her last wishes, her remains were transferred to the Santa Maria Cathedral of Cagliari, Sardinia. See *The Morning Chronicle*, *The Morning Post*, *The Times* or *The Annual Register* from the 14, 15, and 16 November 1810.

16 Abbé Bouvens, *Oraison funèbre de très-haute, très-puissante et très-excellente princesse, Marie-Joséphine-Louise de Savoie, reine de France et de Navarre* (London: R. Juigné, 1810).

mounted so high, that they constitute one of the glories of the revolution,” and who “could view, without regretting them, all of the kingdoms of the Earth pass by below, several of which have crumbled from beneath the feet of her race.”<sup>17</sup> Her husband, Louis-Antoine, Duke of Angoulême, was destined to inherit the French throne after his father Charles X. Therefore, that made the martyred princess the future Queen of France, but she did not take the title of Dauphine until the death of Louis XVIII in 1824.

The princess had a particular, nearly unprecedented status at court. As the daughter of Louis XVI, she bore the title of *Fille de France*.<sup>18</sup> She was thus a Bourbon of France, whereas most queens consorts and dauphines of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries came from foreign royal families: the Habsburgs, the Wettins, the house of Savoy, and the Spanish Bourbons, to name the most recent.<sup>19</sup> Her status was in a sense “pure,” uncorrupted by birth in a foreign country. This was an important difference. Louis XVIII sought to benefit from the image of his niece, the “princess of all pains,”<sup>20</sup> the daughter of the martyred king and, as such, a sort of missing link between her father and her uncle’s respective reigns, links that the King wanted to renew.<sup>21</sup> While, as a woman, she could not ascend to the French throne, she could lend a form of moral and familial backing to her uncle’s reign. This was also a political backing, especially with the disappearance of her brother Louis XVII, which was suspicious to some royalists, who believed that the young king was not dead. By supporting her uncle, the princess showed that she gave no credence whatsoever to the rumours afoot.<sup>22</sup>

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17 François-René de Chateaubriand, *The Congress of Verona*, uncredited translator (London: Richard Bentley, 1838), 395–396.

18 One of the earliest iterations of this title was *filia regis Francorum*, daughter of the King of France, which began to be used during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. See Anne-Hélène Alliot, “*Filia regis: titulature et pouvoir des dernières reines capétiennes*,” in *Femmes de pouvoir et pouvoir des femmes dans l’Occident médiéval et moderne*, ed. Armel Nayt-Dubois and Emmanuelle Santinelli-Foltz (Valenciennes: Presses universitaires de Valenciennes-Belles-Lettres, 2009), 439–470.

19 Only Claude de France, the daughter of Louis XII and Anne de Bretagne, became Queen of France, through her marriage to François I. If Jeanne, first wife of Louis XII and Marguerite de Valois, first wife of Henri IV were queens, they never had the honour of the court.

20 *La Gazette de France*, 31 October 1851; *La France*, 13 August 1841.

21 Preamble of the 1814 Charter.

22 Hélène Becquet, *Louis XVII* (Paris: Perrin, 2017), 205.

By marrying her cousin, the princess quickly assumed the role of queen in exile, as Marie-Joséphine's health was quite precarious.<sup>23</sup> In the negotiations for the princess' return to her paternal family, the King was more than determined to reunite with his niece. His correspondence was explicit, to say the least:

She must always think that she is French, that she is of my blood, that she has no other father than me, that she must share, along with the rest of my family, my happy or unhappy fate, and above all that she must only make commitments by my admission and under my authority ... I have found no surer way of achieving these various aims than to marry her to the Duke of Angoulême, my nephew.<sup>24</sup>

The King was convinced of the imperative need for a reassuring female presence by his side and seemed panicked by the idea that the princess might contract another marriage. The King was equally insistent with his nephew: "by giving her to you ... I am fulfilling the wish of the French who with transports of repentance and love will see her placed beside you on the steps of the throne."<sup>25</sup> The King did not hide his objective: the image of his niece should serve him politically to win the affection, by proxy, of his subjects. Royalist iconography showed the King with his niece rather than with his wife. She performed the functions traditionally assigned to the queens consort, such as charity. For example, an engraving shows her caring for the wounded French. *Bienfaisance de l'héroïne française* (Figure 3) highlights the self-sacrifice of the princess who did not hesitate to come to the aid of Napoleon's soldiers, who in her eyes were Frenchmen first and soldiers of the Empire second. Although the scene was set in 1807, before the death of the Queen, the picture was

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23 See especially the correspondence of Lady Jemingham, *Letters, 1780-1843* (London: R. Bentley and Son, 1896), 1:230.

24 "Elle doit toujours penser qu'elle est Française, qu'elle est de mon sang, qu'elle n'a d'autre père que moi, qu'elle doit partager, ainsi que le reste de ma famille, mon sort heureux ou malheureux, et surtout qu'elle ne doit prendre d'engagements que de mon aveu et sous mon autorité ... je n'ai pas trouvé de moyen plus sûr pour atteindre ces divers buts que de la marier au duc d'Angoulême, mon neveu," letter of 29 September 1795, in Ernest Daudet, *Histoire de l'émigration pendant la Révolution française, Volume II: Du 18 fructidor au 18 brumaire* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1905), 137.

25 "En vous la donnant ... je remplis le vœu des Français qui la verront avec des transports de repentir et d'amour placée près de vous sur les marches du trône," letter of March 1797, Daudet, *Histoire de l'émigration*, 326.

not published until 1816.<sup>26</sup> At this point it was a question of reinforcing the image of the Duchess of Angoulême as a supporter of the throne, at a time when the memory of Marie-Joséphine had been completely forgotten and was therefore useless for the King to exploit. The *a posteriori* image of the princess was used to compensate for the absence of a queen at Louis XVIII's side. Thus, the Duchess of Angoulême became the new Antigone, a role she played in exile with her uncle but which was only put into image between 1814 and 1816. This association with Antigone, princess of Thebes, who was a symbol of unconditional support for her father Oedipus, seemed the ideal reference. Louis XVIII did not hide his desire to exploit this image, particularly in his correspondence with the Chevalier d'Azara, the Spanish ambassador to the Holy See: "The long misfortunes of my niece, her courage, her virtues have gathered an interest in her, have earned her a love on the part of the French people, which it is essential for me to take advantage of and appropriate."<sup>27</sup> In fact, this association had already been used in 1795 to link the princess to her father. Speaking of the events of 10 August 1792, M. d'Albins referred to the woman who "followed her father to the Legislative Assembly; a sensitive and generous Antigone, she did not abandon Oedipus; she was locked up with him in the Temple on 14 August, the day before his feast day."<sup>28</sup> In 1814, the parallel was clear to see: a father king driven out of his homeland by an ungrateful son, who, once his fault was recognised, sought to have him returned; and a father king who granted his pardon on the advice of a gentle, providential and wise princess. Moreover, "associated with Louis XVII, she [was] a metaphor of life associated with death, a royalist metaphor of continuity."<sup>29</sup>

Images illustrating this re-appropriation of the myth were released in 1801, 1814, and 1816.<sup>30</sup> The most significant was produced and distributed before the return of the

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26 Rosset, *Collection De Vinck*, 4–5.

27 "Les longs malheurs de ma nièce, son courage, ses vertus ont rassemblé sur elle un intérêt, lui ont valu un amour de la part des Français, dont il m'est bien essentiel de tirer parti et de me les approprier," Daudet, *Histoire de l'émigration*, 152.

28 "Suivit son père à l'Assemblée législative, sensible et généreuse Antigone, elle n'abandonna point Œdipe; elle fut enfermée avec lui au Temple le 14 août, la veille de sa fête," M. d'Albins, *Les adieux de Marie-Thérèse-Charlotte de Bourbon* (Basel: Chez Tournesen, Libraire, 1795), 17.

29 "Associée à Louis XVII, elle est métaphore de la vie associée à la mort, métaphore royaliste de la continuité," Louis-Pascal Jacquemond, "De criminelles à victimes: l'héroïsation réactionnaire. La figure de Madame Royale, fille de Louis XVI," in *La place des femmes dans l'histoire: une histoire mixte*, ed. Geneviève Dermenjian, Irène Jami, Annie Rouquier, and Françoise Thébaud (Paris: Belin, 2010), 168.

30 Rosset, *Collection De Vinck*, 5–6.

Bourbons to Paris: *L'Antigone Française*, also called *Les deux errants* (Figure 4). Not precisely dated, it was first published in 1801 but was reissued and widely distributed on the return of the King in 1814.<sup>31</sup> The drawing was by the Marquis de Paroy, a loyal royalist, who produced numerous engravings and miniatures.<sup>32</sup> In spite of censorship, the 1801 version could be found in Paris, at Boulet, 8 rue de Chabannois. The snowy scene recalls the wanderings of the royal family after they were driven out of Mittau by Tsar Paul I in 1801. The princess is presented as the faithful support of her uncle, morally and physically, the Queen being once again totally ousted from the picture.<sup>33</sup> This direct and almost physical association between the mythical princess and the real princess shows to what extent Marie-Thérèse was an essential agent in the royal discourse, making us forget that until 1810 the King still had a wife. Antigone offered a model of virtue, righteousness, and self-sacrifice that allows us to move towards a more concrete image of the princess's majesty.

Louis XVIII intended to show his niece not as the Duchess of Angoulême and wife of the future king, but as the kingdom's almost queen. Considering that women usually only occupied a rank in relation to their husband, artists would normally have been expected to depict her as the Duke of Angoulême's wife.<sup>34</sup> Even though she took her husband's title upon marrying him, she did not take his rank as *Petit-fils de France*. This was a privilege accorded to the *Filles de France*, who "alone had the right to retain their rank if their husband's was lesser. The other princesses would lose it in a similar event."<sup>35</sup> This privilege underlined their birth as well as the fact that "the Royal House is above all others."<sup>36</sup> The Duchess of Angoulême stood out from this image of a wife, because she was a *Fille de France*. If traditionally "women after the wedding ceremony leave their country, their relatives,

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31 Alfred Nettement, *Vie de Marie-Thérèse de France, fille de Louis XVI* (Paris: Jacques Lecoivre et Cie, 1859), 269.

32 He was present with the royal family at the Tuileries on 10 August 1792. Comte de Paroy, *Mémoires du comte de Paroy: souvenirs d'un défenseur de la famille royale pendant la révolution (1789-1797)* (Paris: Plon, 1895), 454–459.

33 The second engraving, published in 1816, used the same codes. *L'Antigone française à Mittau en 1807*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, RESERVE QB-370 (69) -FT 4.

34 Fanny Cosandey, "Les femmes en monarchies, épouses ou héritières?," in *Le genre face aux mutations: masculin et féminin du Moyen-Age à nos jours*, ed. Luc Capdevila et al. (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2003), 201–209.

35 BNF, MS fr. 20825, fol. 103.

36 BNF, MS fr. 20825, fol. 108.

their homes, their name, to take on a new life,”<sup>37</sup> this was not the case for her. She, therefore, enjoyed special treatment because, from the outset, her position was special. Moreover, the princess used her title many years later in a power of attorney granted to her secretary of commands, Baron Charlet, on 9 September 1830, where she was described as “Marie-Thérèse Charlotte de France, *Fille de France*, *Dauphine*.”<sup>38</sup>

The study of the image of the Duchess of Angoulême under the reign of Louis XVIII allows us to think of the royal family differently. It was no longer based on a regnal couple and possibly a delphinal couple, but on heterogeneous figures, and associations were made according to political needs. “Dynastic women possessed a wide range of rights, which were secured by birth and/or their position as wives,” but Madame became much more the wife of her uncle than of her husband.<sup>39</sup> Her status as *Fille de France* brought her closer to the sovereign than to her husband, whose rank should have forcibly demoted her. She had a wholly hybrid status and her image was just as hybrid. What Fanny Cosandey describes as the “royal identity” of the princess was understood not in terms of her status as a wife but in terms of her status as the daughter and niece of a king.<sup>40</sup>

By proposing the representation of a French princess rather than a foreign one, Louis XVIII was able to dismiss criticism of the royal family as well as the foreign status of the princess, as happened for Marie-Antoinette, the Austrian. Stanis Perez, in his discussion of the empresses Joséphine and Marie-Louise, suggested the idea of “paradoxical body,”<sup>41</sup> which seems very much to apply to the image of the Duchess of Angoulême. Joséphine was neither born to a ruling House, so she could not be represented as part of a lineage of sovereigns, nor the mother of the heir to throne. Like that of Joséphine de Beauharnais, the body of the Duchess of Angoulême remained sterile.<sup>42</sup> However, her image was used by monarchical propaganda as the necessary counterpart to the King’s figure and as the descendant of the Bourbon queens consort. Just like Joséphine’s

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37 “Les femmes après la cérémonie des Noces quittent leur país, leurs parens, leurs domiciles, leur nom, pour prendre comme une nouvelle vie,” Antoine Bilain, *Traité des droits de la reine très-chrétienne, sur divers états de la monarchie d’Espagne* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1667), 119.

38 Archives personnelles de la famille Charlet.

39 Marion Romberg, ed., *Empresses and Queens in the Courtly Public Sphere from the 17th to the 20th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 5.

40 Cosandey, *La reine de France*, 365.

41 Stanis Perez, *Le corps de la reine: engendrer le Prince, d’Isabelle de Hainaut à Marie-Amélie de Bourbon-Sicile* (Paris: Perrin, 2019), 340.

42 The empress did have two children, but from her first union.

imperial iconography, the Duchess of Angoulême's created an illusion, depicting a power that she did not have or share. Only the king's wife could be queen. Thus, how could the Duchess of Angoulême, the third most prominent member of the royal family by order of precedence, be included in the royal dialectic and the sovereign's image?<sup>43</sup>

### **The heir to the Bourbon queens?**

For the King, it was important for the Restoration to be part of the French monarchical tradition.<sup>44</sup> To do this, he chose the figure of Henri IV, ancestor of the Bourbon kings, as a tutelary figure.<sup>45</sup> But it seemed important to him to also include his niece, as the daughter of a king and *Fille de France*, in this double filiation: masculine as a descendant of Henri IV herself, but also feminine as the heir to past queens.

A print entitled *Les reines de France, épouses des Bourbons* was engraved in 1814 by Jacques-Louis-Constant Lecerf, on a model drawn by Pierre Chasselat (Figure 5). In a large medallion, framed by a rectangle decorated with four fleurs-de-lis at the four corners, emanating from clouds and surrounded by a crown of fleurs-de-lis, seven bust portraits stand out. At the top are Marie de Medici, then Anne of Austria, Maria Theresa of Austria, Marie Leszczyńska, Marie-Antoinette (in profile on the left, wearing the palm of martyrdom on her right shoulder), and Marie-Joséphine-Louise de Savoie, and finally the Duchess of Angoulême, both depicted wearing crowns. The letter reads: "Companions of the Bourbons, faithful to France, they have passed on Henry's fortunate blood. O, daughter of kings, who come after them, like them you owe this blood to our nephews." This sentence was addressed directly to the Duchess of Angoulême, as future queen, placing her in the direct line of descent of these royal consorts, both by blood and by the hope that she would beget an heir.

As Stanis Perez noted, although the queen and the dauphine had more than just a reproductive role, they were in no way the king's equals, which raises the question of a

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43 She came after the King and his brother Artois, but before her husband. As a king's daughter, she took precedence over the Duke of Angoulême until 1824. BNF, MS fr. 20825, fol. 103.

44 Emmanuel de Waresquiel and Benoît Yvert, *Histoire de la Restauration, 1814-1830* (Paris: Perrin, 2002), 52–56.

45 Yann Lignereux, "Dans les pas d'Henri IV: la Restauration à Paris, Lyon, Amiens, 1814-1827," in *Imaginaire et représentations des entrées royales au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: une sémiologie du pouvoir politique*, ed. Corinne Perrin-Saminadayar and Éric Perrin-Saminadayar (Saint-Étienne: Presses universitaires de Saint-Étienne, 2010), 19–36.



body deprived of procreation.<sup>46</sup> As fertility was a required quality, the princess's body was first and foremost expected to be fertility's tool. The Duchess of Angoulême did not fit that model. By the time she returned to France, her chances of becoming a mother were low due to her age: she was thirty-six years old in 1814. Her body could therefore be considered as an object that was alienated from procreation. With Louis XVIII, there was a genuine "interaction between royal power and a certain regnal symbolism."<sup>47</sup> The King's power drew its legitimacy and some of its greatness from the image of his niece. We can see her as the prisoner of a system: not that of reproduction, but of the memory of a previous era. The image of the Duchess of Angoulême can be conceived as derived from the memory of her family that died during the Revolution. Her image worked on several levels in that sense: first, as a witness, recalling the regicide and the dynastic lineage. Second, as a means of transmission, in that she represented the regnal tradition conveyed by the portraits of Marie Leszczyńska or Marie-Antoinette. She represented a continuity in the function of the queen's role, although she was not yet the consort of the king.

A little-known portrait also underlined the royal aspect of the princess, when the king was now well established. It was delivered in 1818 by Madame Desperrières and offered to the city of Bordeaux in 1823 (Figure 6). She also painted a portrait of Louis XVIII the following year, then of Charles X and the Duchess of Berry. She was a royalist loyal to the Bourbons. It is a portrait in majesty with dimensions close to reality, 2.13 by 1.49 metres. The princess, in the centre, wears a white dress. She is covered in jewels and carries a diamond tiara topped with ostrich feathers. Her court train, fixed under her chest, embroidered with golden fleurs-de-lis, reflects the traditional colour of French sovereigns: blue.

Behind her, a red velvet throne embroidered with gold thread recalls the rank of the model. It is different from Gros's throne and more reminiscent of the thrones depicted in portraits of empresses. The armrests are sphinxes, creatures that referred "to prudence and to the sun from which nothing is hidden."<sup>48</sup> This ancient reference was again exploited

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46 This is particularly true of the Duchess of Angoulême. In 1816, the princess was thirty-eight years old and it was certain that she would never be a mother. Stanis Perez, *Le corps du roi: incarner l'État, de Philippe Auguste à Louis-Philippe* (Paris: Perrin, 2018), 95–109.

47 Perez, *Le corps du roi*, 109.

48 "À la Prudence et au soleil, à qui rien n'est caché," François Noël, *Dictionnaire de la Fable, ou Mythologie grecque, latine, égyptienne, celtique, persanne, syriaque, indienne, chinoise, scandinave, africaine, américaine, iconologique, etc.* (Paris: Le Normant, 1801), 2:592.

by the Empire, notably in the throne made for Napoleon for his coronation. The backrest seems to be embroidered with the princess's initials, itself surrounded by large palm leaves. A symbol of victory, probably that of the Bourbons, it was also an emblem of justice and a sign of eternity because "the palm tree lasts a long time."<sup>49</sup> It showed the Bourbons' desire to maintain their restored dynasty.

All these qualities could refer to both the princess and the dynasty. On the right, the princess leans her fan on a large table covered with documents. She points to a map of the city of Bordeaux with the date 12 March, when her husband entered the city in 1814.<sup>50</sup> An almost identical copy replaced Bordeaux with a map of the Eure department. Her dominant position, her dress, the throne—everything seems to point to her being a queen. The presence of maps of France links the princess to the kingdom but also appeared to give her a natural authority over it. On a smaller scale, this positioning was reminiscent of the very rare presence of a globe on Gauthier d'Agoty's portrait of Marie-Antoinette. This territorial domination was generally reserved for the sovereign alone. However, the portrait of the Queen nuanced this approach by the presence of more traditional reginal references, such as books, sheet music, and a viola da gamba, all of which are absent from this portrait. The princess seems to be in action. She is not a mere embodiment of royal majesty but a real acting figure. While the crown is not represented, this attitude and dominance over documents generally outside of a female purview gave her a royal position. By presenting her surrounded by maps, Madame Desperrières showed a princess playing a political role, knowing the borders of her kingdom. This vision corresponded much better with the imperial reading of the image of the sovereign than with that of the Bourbon queens. The engraving took up this vision and proposed an image of the Duchess of Angoulême that almost merged with that established by the imperial power for Josephine.

In an anonymous print of 1814, published in Paris by Jean at 10, rue Saint-Jean-de-Beauvais, the princess is depicted before a throne surmounted by the royal arms, the back of which is embroidered with a fleur-de-lis. She wears a ceremonial outfit, with a red velvet

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49 "Le palmier dure longtemps," Honoré Lacombe de Prézel, *Dictionnaire iconologique ou Introduction à la connaissance des peintures, sculptures, médailles, estampes* (Paris: Chez Théodore de Hansy, 1756), 206.

50 Pierre Lacour and Jules Delpit, *Catalogue des tableaux, statues, etc. du Musée de Bordeaux* (Bordeaux: Duviella, 1856), 97; Philip Mansel, "De la révolution royaliste du 12 mars 1814 à Bordeaux au duc de Bordeaux: Bordelais, Bourbons et Britanniques en 1814," in *Les Lys et la république*, ed. Emmanuel de Waresquiel (Paris: Tallandier, 2015), 25–42.

coat lined with ermine and a tiara (Figure 7). It was an exact copy of an earlier engraving of her cousin, the late Empress Marie-Louise of Austria (Figure 8). A second version, issued by the same publisher, uses the same symbolism and more or less the same dress (Figure 9). However, this time the princess is seated on her throne.<sup>51</sup> The imperial eagle of the throne was simply erased in favour of the lilies of France.

This red, white, and gold outfit is reminiscent of the representations of the first Empress, Josephine, both in her commissioned portraits, such as the one by Henri-François Riesener, and in engravings (Figure 10). The distinctions are minor. The dress, the embroidery, the *chérusque*, the tiara, the court mantle, and the throne are identical. Only the lilies on the mantle replaced the Napoleonic bees. The three reginal figures were interchangeable and occupied, in the collective imaginary, the same position of power; only the specific emblems could make it possible to identify which one represented the function. The image of the princess went beyond what she represented in reality: “It is a figure whose instruction goes beyond appearances and tells of the vocation to embody a status by referring the *figura* to that which it represents.”<sup>52</sup> Queenship was not suggested by a particular physical beauty—one cannot really distinguish the features of one from the other—but rather by the reception of this image of royal power. It was a form of idealisation, not so much of the figures of the queens but of the authority and political meaning they represented. If their names were interchangeable, the attitudes and symbolism were not. They participated in the construction of a perfect image of the good queen, which made it possible to legitimise authority and to inscribe it as such.<sup>53</sup>

They were depictions of majesty, which did not differentiate between Josephine wearing the imperial crown as the emperor’s wife, and Marie-Thérèse, who was then only the Duchess of Angoulême. These were ceremonial images, offering visions of majesty par excellence, “revealing embodied grandeur, a grandeur that must inspire respect and

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51 An engraving of the King pairs this image.

52 “Il est une figure dont l’enseignement dépasse les apparences et dit la vocation à incarner une stature en renvoyant la *figura* à ce qu’elle représente,” Sylvène Édouard, “Le portrait du roi, de la tête aux pieds,” in “Le promeneur de Versailles,” special issue of *Bulletin du Centre de recherche du château de Versailles* (2018), [doi:10.4000/crcv.14785](https://doi.org/10.4000/crcv.14785).

53 Édouard, “Le portrait du roi.”

love.”<sup>54</sup> Marie-Thérèse’s image was “rearticulated to fit varying expectations.”<sup>55</sup> This image must therefore be linked to something known in order to allow the Duchess of Angoulême to be quickly associated with the image of the Queen.

Finally, there circulated reappropriations or portraits inspired by these representations. We can mention in particular the little-known work of Alexis Nicolas Perignon the Younger, which was strongly inspired by Gros. Three versions of this painting from 1817 are kept at the Bowes Museum in Barnard Castle in Yorkshire, in Bordeaux (Musée des Arts Décoratifs), and in Montpellier (Église des Pénitents bleus). These were head-and-shoulders portraits showing the Duchess with a diamond tiara and feathers, precious jewels in her earrings and necklace, and wrapped in an ermine-lined blue coat. The official iconography of the princess therefore created a great deal of confusion.

This confusion was reflected in certain family representations, such as Charles Lafond’s painting *Le duc de Bordeaux présenté au peuple et à l’armée par la duchesse de Berry en présence du roi, entouré de la famille royale et des principaux personnages de l’État*, which was commissioned directly by Louis XVIII (Figure 11). Unveiled in 1821, this true propaganda painting aimed to present all the members of the royal family. The left-hand side shows members of the army, magistrates and people who have come to acclaim the new-born prince, while the right-hand side is a family portrait. Seated on his throne, Louis XVIII appears in coronation robes, holding the sceptre. To his right, seated and holding his hand, the Duchess of Angoulême appears as the Queen, which is highly unusual as her husband is only two rows behind her. Dressed in white with a red train and adorned with diamonds and feathers, she appears truly royal and seems to be watching the scene with affection. If the King appears as a father, the Duchess of Angoulême seems a tutelary mother, especially for Marie-Caroline of Naples, Duchess of Berry (as she recalled in her correspondence with the princess’s family: “I look upon myself as her mother by the tender friendship I had for her and by my age which is so different from hers”), and for the heir to the throne.<sup>56</sup>

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54 “En ce qu’il révèle la grandeur incarnée, cette grandeur qui doit susciter respect et amour,” Édouard, “Le portrait du roi.”

55 Romberg, *Empresses and Queens*, 10.

56 “Je me regarde comme sa mère par la tendre amitié que j’avais pour la sienne et par mon âge si différent du sien,” letter from the Duchess of Angoulême to the Hereditary Prince, 8 June 1816, Archivio di Stato di Napoli, Archivio Borbone, 495, Lettere de la casa reale di Francia.

The image of the Duchess of Angoulême as queen is thus found throughout the reign of Louis XVIII. It was largely inspired by the Bourbon queens of his ancestors and aimed to compensate for the absence of a queen in title. However, the King could not content himself with reactivating an iconography of the Ancien Régime. In this new situation, he had to redefine the very image of the queen.

### **Redefining the queen in a monarchy where she is absent**

An examination of the royal iconography intended by Louis XVIII quickly shows how important the image of his niece was. The affirmation of the Bourbons' return to the throne of France also entailed the development of an ambitious iconographic programme, inspired both by Bourbon tradition and by the imperial family portraits, and aimed at presenting the sovereign and the "almost queen."<sup>57</sup> The artists who worked for the Bourbons remained mostly the same as those who worked during the Empire, including Baron Antoine-Jean Gros, and no portraitist's style can be genuinely considered to characterise the Restoration.<sup>58</sup>

This royal intent was made clear since Louis XVIII's return to the throne in 1814. The King asked Gros to rethink the iconography of the inside of the dome of Paris's church of Sainte Geneviève. A royal ordinance dated 12 April 1816 returned the Panthéon to Catholic worship, and Louis XVIII intended to rectify and adjust the decorative programme initiated by Napoleon I. In 1811, the Emperor had entrusted Gros with the task of painting a depiction of the apotheosis of Sainte Geneviève.<sup>59</sup> In Gros' project, Napoleon himself was to be featured in the painting, holding the French Civil Code in his hand, with the Empress Marie-Louise and the King of Rome by his side (Figure 12). The fall of the Emperor put a halt to the project, but on 10 August 1814, the Minister for the Maison du Roi asked Gros to put Louis XVIII in the place of Napoleon and the Duchesse of Angoulême where the Empress would have been, and allocated a sum of 50,000 francs to the painter.<sup>60</sup> The project endorsed by Louis XVIII glorified French royalty and clearly associated his niece to it, both as the heir of this royal lineage and its female counterpart (Figure 13). A poem by Delphine Gay recalled this inheritance:

But look at this illustrious victim at your feet,  
She who consoled through her sorrows,  
May a holy zeal animate you for the daughter of kings,

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<sup>57</sup> Becquet, *Marie-Thérèse de France*, 209.

<sup>58</sup> Marie-Claude Chaudonneret, *L'État et les artistes: de la Restauration à la monarchie de Juillet (1815-1833)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999); Émeline Wirty, "Le pouvoir et les Beaux-Arts sous la Restauration (1815-1830)" (PhD thesis, Paris X-Nanterre, 2002).

<sup>59</sup> Letter of engagement from Baron Gros to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 1811, in Justin Tripiet Le Franc, *Histoire de la vie et de la mort du baron Gros, le grand peintre* (Paris: J. Martin et J. Baur, 1880), 293–294.

<sup>60</sup> "Gros," in *Nouvelle Biographie générale, des temps les plus reculés jusqu'à nos jours*, ed. Dr Hoefer (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1858), 20:165.

Reserve good deeds worthy of her misfortunes.<sup>61</sup>

Gros's work depicted the Saint blessing the King and his niece, surrounded by angels scattering flowers. By her side, the spirits of Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette, princess Élisabeth, and her brother Louis XVII bask in their heavenly glory. They were the link between past and present, symbolised by the joint presence of Louis XVIII and the Duchess of Angoulême. In a letter dated 10 August 1814, Neuville, the provisional Commissioner for the Department of the Interior, informed Gros that "the fourth place after Clovis, Charlemagne and Saint Louis shall be occupied by his Majesty the King Louis XVIII, flanked by his august niece the Duchess of Angoulême."<sup>62</sup> They are surrounded by royal couples that symbolised the preceding dynasties: Clovis and Clotilde for the Merovingians, Charlemagne and Hildegard for the Carolingians, and Saint Louis and Marguerite of Provence for the Capetians. Yet, while these were all married couples, the Duchess stands by her uncle and not by her husband.<sup>63</sup> Even the representation of the Duchess could be misleading. She appears with all the symbols of royalty. Standing next to the King, she supports his arm that holds the sceptre. Gros made virtually no major changes to the costume that had been devised for Marie-Louise, only small adjustments. However, here, the Duchess is not wearing a simple tiara but the closed crown of queens, and a red ermine mantle, like the empresses, rather than the blue worn by queens. The Duchess is shown supporting the King, as a queen would be. The work was delayed and ultimately only completed in 1824.<sup>64</sup> At the Duchess's feet, the Duke of Bordeaux replaced the King of Rome.<sup>65</sup> The Duchess of Angoulême, in addition to being placed on equal footing with previous sovereigns, is also depicted as the mother or at least the protector of the heir to the throne, since the duke's biological mother, the Duchess of Berry, is absent in the

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61 "Mais regarde à tes pieds cette illustre victime, / Celle qui consolait à travers ses douleurs, / Pour la fille des rois qu'un saint zèle t'anime, / Réserve des bienfaits dignes de ses malheurs," Delphine Gay, "À Sainte Geneviève," quoted in Le Franc, *Histoire de la vie et de la mort du baron Gros*, 456.

62 Jean-Baptiste Delestre, *Gros, sa vie et ses ouvrages* (Paris, J. Renouard, 1867), 169.

63 Heta Aali, *French Royal Women during the Restoration and July Monarchy: Redefining Women and Power* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 27.

64 Archives nationales, BB 17A, Ministère de la Justice, Cabinet particulier du ministre, Correspondance (1815-1848), Bureau du Cabinet, Dossiers de caractère historique, Lettre du baron Gros, October 1824.

65 Respectively, Henri of Artois, duke of Bordeaux, son of the duke of Berry and his wife Marie-Caroline of Bourbon-Two Sicilies, 1820-1883, heir to the throne, then legitimist pretendant to the French crown; and Napoléon Bonaparte, King of Rome, then duke of Reichstadt, 1811-1832, only son of Napoleon I and Marie-Louise.

painting. This should not, however, be seen as an intent to entrust the princess with some sort of formal political power, as in France, royal power could technically only be exercised by a single male individual.<sup>66</sup> This image served both to accompany the King's image and to offer a new feminine image for the Bourbons, giving the princess a royal image that seems unequivocal.

Some pre-Restoration literature raised the possibility of entrusting the crown of France to the daughter of Louis XVI. In abolishing the monarchy, the Revolution also abolished its laws, including the Salic law. Although these writings did not meet with widespread approval, the King was aware of them. In his correspondence with Louis XVIII, Monseigneur de La Fare confirmed to the King, as early as 1798, that royalist literature fustigating the Salic Law was being sold throughout Europe.<sup>67</sup> But the Viennese court was also trying to stir up trouble. The Archduke Charles declared in public that the Salic Law "could not be invoked with any foundation against the rights and claims of the royal princess of France."<sup>68</sup> Reminiscences still existed after 1815. The song *Madame Cadet Butteux* evoked the possibility of finding the princess on the throne:

For example, they say Madame  
Don't think like that;  
Here's her heart, here's her soul,  
That's a man for you.  
Without this damn Salic law  
That's stuck us here,  
We'd have a monarchical state  
Better'n this.<sup>69</sup>

It was therefore imperative for the King to use a royal image, framing and defining it himself by reaffirming the intangible principles of the French monarchy: "Lily flowers

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66 Michelle Coquillat, "Les femmes, le pouvoir et l'influence," in *Femmes et pouvoir: mythes et fantasmes*, ed. Odile Krakovitch, Geneviève Sellier and Éliane Viennot (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), 18.

67 Archives du Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Mémoires et documents, France, vol. 611, cahier 6, Letter from Mgr La Fare to Louis XVIII, 8 March 1798, fol. 54.

68 AN, AF III/296, Archives du Directoire exécutif, Notes personnelles.

69 "Par exmpl'on dit q'Madame / Ne pens' par com 'ça; / Ça vous a z'un cœur, z'un âme, / C'est un hom'que ça. / Sans stéchienn' de loi Salique, / Qui nous fisque là, / J'aurions l'état monarchique / Mieux tourné q'stila," *L'Ambigu, ou variétés littéraires et politiques* 56 (1818), 491.



cannot sympathise with the distaff and the wool.”<sup>70</sup> Louis XVIII was aware that, for some royalists, his niece was at least as acceptable a candidate for the throne as he was, and his image was “distinctly anti-heroic.”<sup>71</sup> What Marion Romberg describes as “media appearance” was intended to give a positive impression “on the legitimacy of rule” of the Bourbons.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to this first project, the King’s government was eager to disseminate an official portrait of the King in full regalia. Whereas this was to be expected, seeing the Duchess of Angoulême in the place of the Queen was more surprising. The princess’s paradoxical status was reflected in her first official portrait executed by Gros (Figure 14). The painting was commissioned by the *Chambre des Députés*. On 21 August 1815, the quaestors of the Chamber asked the Minister of the Interior for permission to replace the portraits in the King’s salon of the Palais Bourbon. From the outset, the order concerned full-length portraits of the sovereign and the Duchess of Angoulême. The request specified that these paintings “must be made.”<sup>73</sup> The official portrait was a feature of the essential role of representation traditionally entrusted to princesses.<sup>74</sup> They were usually depicted in “a space devoted to their authority, to their majesty,” such as official state buildings—ministries, town halls or palaces—meant to convey their rank.<sup>75</sup> In this painting, the Duchess of Angoulême was shown, and accordingly meant to be seen, as a royal princess.<sup>76</sup> The use of traditional regalia, the association with the King’s image and the reminiscence of royal but also imperial iconographic codes clearly distinguished the royal princess. Yet, the princess’ portrait shows the daughter of Louis XVI, her gaze turned upwards towards his father; and she appears practically as Louis XVIII’s consort, occupying the same place as the other royal wives represented. This portrait, however, did make sense in that “the

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70 “Les fleurs de lys ne [peuvent] compatir avec la quenouille et la laine,” René Choppin, *Trois livres du domaine de la couronne de France* (Paris: Chez Étienne Richer, 1613), 350.

71 Nathalie Scholz, “La monarchie sentimentale : un remède aux crises politiques de la Restauration?” in *Représentation et pouvoir: la politique symbolique en France (1789-1830)*, ed. Natalie Scholz and Christina Schröer (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2007), 188.

72 Romberg, *Empresses and Queens*, 8.

73 “Faut faire faire,” Archives de l’Assemblée nationale, 8 P 234, letter of 21 August 1815.

74 Bartolomé Bennassar, *Le lit, le pouvoir et la mort: reines et princesses d’Europe de la Renaissance aux Lumières* (Paris: Éditions de Fallois, 2006), 7.

75 Édouard, *Le corps d’une reine*, 43.

76 Gros, *ses amis, ses élèves*, catalogue for the Petit Palais exhibition of 1936 (Paris: Imprimerie de Frazier-Soye, 1936), 101.

place of women can only be intelligible in that it mirrors that of men.”<sup>77</sup> Here, the mirror in question was her father’s, and perhaps also her uncle’s: the royal status of the two men conferred her a place of her own in the court and family hierarchy. The letter from the quaestors to Baron Gros is revealing; it envisaged the duchess’s portrait as “the counterpart” to that of the King.<sup>78</sup> The choice of a form of homogeneity seems essential, probably in order to offer a coherent vision of this unprecedented “couple.” The portrait of the princess had already been commissioned from Anne-Louis Girodet. However, he eventually gave up, because “he felt the inconvenience and the lack of harmony that would result if two paintings intended to be opposite each other were of two different touches.”<sup>79</sup> Gros was thus commissioned to create the portrait of the princess according to that of the King. The King therefore faced the portrait of his niece, and vice versa. We find here the imperial practice initiated by Napoleon of having portraits of his wife Josephine made to match his own, in particular the two portraits by Gérard in coronation costume in 1805 and 1807.<sup>80</sup> Louis XVIII reactivated this process since the Minister authorised the portrait of the princess.

It was noted that “the Duchess posed at the Tuileries palace on several occasions for the outfit and the likeness of the face.”<sup>81</sup> Gros proposed a vision of the princess’s protocolary image that required a form of gravity and pomp designed to signify royal majesty.<sup>82</sup> He chose to paint a full-length rendition of the Duchess, standing on a raised platform covered with a green carpet. In general this materialised the unique position of the King and distinguished him. Behind her stands a gilded throne upholstered with a blue cloth embroidered with golden fleurs-de-lis. Her throne and by extension her very person “should not be placed on the same level occupied by the subjects.”<sup>83</sup> This image may suggest that the princess had her own throne, like the King. Placing the Duchess of Angoulême in the throne room was not a straightforward representation. This position

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77 Gros, *ses amis, ses élèves*, 101.

78 “Le pendant,” Archives de l’Assemblée nationale, 8P 234, letter from 4 October 1815.

79 “Il sentait mieux l’inconvénient et le défaut d’harmonie qui résulterait si deux tableaux destinés à être en regard étaient de deux touches différentes,” AAN, 8P 234.

80 See Pierre Branda, *Joséphine, le paradoxe du cygne* (Paris: Perrin, 2016).

81 “La Duchesse posa plusieurs fois aux Tuileries pour l’ensemble et la ressemblance du visage,” Le Franc, *Histoire de la vie et de la mort du baron Gros*, 337.

82 Édouard, *Le corps d’une reine*, 44.

83 Jacques Charles-Gaffiot, *Trônes en majesté: l’autorité et son symbole* (Paris: Cerf, 2011), 65.

referred to different practices. The layout of the Tuileries apartments had been modified by Napoleon and the throne room recovered by Louis XVIII corresponded to the former king's bedroom.<sup>84</sup> There was an imperial desire to reverse the importance of these two rooms, making the throne room more important than the parade room of the Bourbon sovereigns. Louis XVIII did not wish to change this organisation, but he did indicate his desire to restore the parade room first and the throne room only later. All the furniture and decorations were changed and the furniture by Percier and Fontaine was not removed until 1822. For this purpose, a new stage was ordered, a new gilded throne and two large throne curtains.<sup>85</sup> The room represented was thus the one desired by the emperor. The new order of 1822 did not mention a throne specifically commissioned for the Duchess of Angoulême. We can therefore assume that the princess used, at least until 1822, the furniture allocated to the empresses. In particular, she had two representation armchairs in her apartment, made by Jacob-Desmalter for Napoleon to furnish the throne room of the Montecavallo palace in Rome. She had only the fabric changed.<sup>86</sup> The furniture ordered in 1822 included a new throne, destroyed during the 1848 Revolution, but also two armchairs, mutilated in 1848, one of which could perhaps have been reserved for the princess.<sup>87</sup>

The presence of this seat in this type of representation was not neutral. The throne was a materialisation of elevation and by extension of the superiority of whoever occupied it.<sup>88</sup> It is worth noting that the previous Bourbon monarchs, Louis XIV, Louis XV, and Louis XVI, chose to remove it from their portraits. Thrones were then generally replaced with *fauteuils*; they went back to being an essential feature of formal royal portraits under the Empire. In this case, the throne is topped by the French crown and the princess's coat of arms, including the three fleurs-de-lis, symbolising the Holy Trinity. The armrests with sphinxes or winged lions also indicate furniture in the imperial taste,<sup>89</sup> reminiscent of the armchair of the empress Josephine in the grand salon of the Tuileries palace,

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84 The King lived here from 1664 to 1667. Antoine Boulant, *Les Tuileries, château des rois, palais des révolutions* (Paris: Tallandier, 2016).

85 AN, O3 1902 X, Ameublement des châteaux et hôtels royaux, acquisitions proposées, cérémonies, 1822.

86 AN, O3 1989, letter from Ville d'Avary to comte Pradel, 9 September 1819.

87 Database from Mobilier National Paris.

88 Chantal Delsol, "L'autorité et ses symboles," introduction to Jacques Charles-Gaffiot, *Trônes en majesté: l'autorité et son symbole* (Paris: Cerf, 2011), 12–13.

89 See the emperor's throne in the Senate by Jacob-Desmalter.

commissioned in 1807 and which was not changed until 1817.<sup>90</sup> The possibility for the Duchess of Angoulême to benefit from the furniture of the empresses is quite conceivable because, in many royal residences, she also recovered the furniture of the apartments of the Queen her mother. In 1817, for example, Marie-Antoinette's large jewel box from Versailles, which Marie-Louise had been using in Compiègne since 1811, was placed in her apartments in the Tuileries palace.<sup>91</sup> The idea that the princess could benefit from a form of throne, at least until 1822, is reinforced by the study of a portrait of the empress Marie-Louise. Painted by Madame Benoist in 1812, it probably served as an inspiration for Gros (Figure 15). The codes were reused and adapted, with a portrait much closer to that of Marie-Louise than that of Marie-Antoinette. The throne here is very similar and one can imagine that the imperial elements (eagles and fabrics embroidered with bees) were the only ones to have been quickly modified. This general organisation of the portrait contributed to the confusion between the real rank of the princess and that which was attributed to her. Under the throne, another accessory can be glimpsed—a velvet cushion, a staple of portraits in regalia. Used when the royals were seated to position their feet, it symbolised the promise of help from above, a discreet reminder of the divine nature of French royal power.<sup>92</sup> The throne was placed on a three-step rostrum where the bed used to be, which explains the balustrades on the left in the painting.

The princess wears a white court dress embroidered with gold threads. Her dress and stance and the staging of the painting are clearly reminiscent of the portraits of the Empresses Joséphine and Marie-Louise.<sup>93</sup> This was also a way to promote the new court outfit all ladies were expected to wear, even those who were vocally unhappy about it.<sup>94</sup> The dress came complete with a long gold-embroidered, ermine-lined velvet red train, reminiscent of the mantle worn at the coronation. However, the coat is not royal blue but

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90 AN, O3 1985, letter from Ville d'Avray to comte Pradel, 16 April 1817.

91 AN, O3 1985, letter from Ville d'Avray to comte Pradel, 1 July 1817.

92 Charles-Gaffiot, *Trônes en majesté*, 74.

93 Especially those by François Gérard and Robert Lefèvre.

94 "Madame désirait revenir aux paniers comme à Versailles ... la révolte fut tellement générale qu'elle céda. Mais on ajouta au costume impérial tout le 'paraphernalia' de l'ancien, ce qui faisait une singulière disparate. Ainsi, on attachait à nos coiffures grecques ces ridicules barbes, et on remplaça l'élégant chérusque, qui complétait un vêtement copié de Van Dyck, par une lourde mantille et une espèce de plastron plissé. Dans les commencements, Madame tenait à ce que cela fut strictement observé. Un modèle déposé chez ses marchands devait être exactement suivi; elle témoignait son mécontentement à qui s'en écartait," Comtesse de Boigne, *Récits d'une tante: mémoires de la comtesse de Boigne* (Paris: Émile-Paul Frères, 1921), 1:351.

red, the colour of power, and particularly of “the imperial power.”<sup>95</sup> We have here an adaptation of the monarchy, which traditionally used blue, to fit with the imperial legacy. The duchess wears numerous jewels: a gem-studded tiara topped by white feathers, and a black plumed headdress to which a long veil is attached. She sports a necklace and diamond earrings, a pair of pearl bracelets and a brooch below the chest. The inventory of the 1888 sale of the crown diamonds provides information on the use of these gems during the Restoration. The Duchess of Angoulême benefited from the use of the jewels of the empresses, most of which were remounted for her use. To this must be added her personal collection, inherited from Marie-Antoinette.<sup>96</sup> On her right is a stool ornamented with fleurs-de-lis, on top of which a closed crown topped by a lily was placed on a cushion. This is recognisably the crown of the queens of France, which can be seen on the portraits of all the Bourbon queens. This portrait in regalia was part of the tradition of queens’ portraits, in line with Jean Nocret’s depiction of Marie-Thérèse of Austria (1660), Louis Tocqué’s Marie Leszczyńska (1740), and Jean-Baptiste André Gautier-Dagoty’s Marie-Antoinette (1775). In the same way, Louis XVIII’s portrait by Gros perpetuated a tradition exemplified by Rigaud for Louis XIV, Louis-Michel van Loo for Louis XV and Antoine-François Callet for Louis XVI. Accordingly, the image of the Duchess of Angoulême had more of a symbolic political meaning than a genuine political role.

The Duchess was expected to serve as an agent of propaganda for the restored monarchy and to display a genuinely royal image. This was a difficult assignment for Gros, but he took it “happily,” according to his pupil Jean-Baptiste Delestre. Beyond the royal function and the rank, he also had to show the princess to be benevolent and attractive. But the princess did not make it easy for him: “she too came to pose for him, but did not let him see a smile: misfortune had wiped it from the lips of Louis XVI’s daughter for too long.”<sup>97</sup> The princess thus had to be shown as possessing majesty, and kindness had to be suggested without betraying the model. Gros “was able to skilfully disguise the ravages of time and the mark left by long sorrows on this woman’s face,” but he also “lit his model in

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95 Gabrielle Melison-Hirschwald, “Les couleurs du pouvoir politique sous le ciel parisien,” *Romantisme* 157, no. 3 (2012): 75–88.

96 Arthur Bloche, *La vente des diamants de la couronne: son histoire, ses préparatifs, ses résultats. Catalogue raisonné des bijoux* (Paris: Quantin, 1888).

97 Delestre, Gros, *sa vie et ses ouvrages*, 216.

a vivid and ample manner”<sup>98</sup> and had to “soften her appearance somewhat”<sup>99</sup> while painting a “head where the accuracy of likeness equals the merit of the brush.”<sup>100</sup> As Louis Marin explains, all visual elements—the dress, the coat, the objects—were manifestations of the strength of the person being represented: “the representation puts the strength in signs.”<sup>101</sup> Here, the princess’s strength was largely overstated, but was meant to reflect the restored monarchy as a whole. The artist sought to fully include her in a whole to serve the King and by extension the dynasty. The representation of sovereigns fulfilled a desire for power, a power that was shown as a spectacle to be admired not so much through the figure being represented, but through the signs with which it was endowed. There was a form of narcissism at work here, as argued by Louis Marin, for whom “all power is fundamentally narcissistic,”<sup>102</sup> less from the perspective of the princess herself than from that of the power she was supposed to embody in this painting. By granting her a power she did not have, the restored monarchy gave itself a shining new image and a queen that could measure up to her predecessors Joséphine, Marie-Louise and Marie-Antoinette. With this representation of the Duchess of Angoulême, it was not so much the woman that was being depicted but a ruling queen, in a fashion similar to previous ones and therefore easily identifiable as such. Here, she was being introduced into the royal historiography.

The portrait was completed on 5 September 1816. Then it was exhibited at the 1817 Salon, and transferred to the Chamber of Deputies, its intended location, at the Palais Bourbon. The critical response was damning, some deploring a “lack of resemblance and character in the features, of grace in the pose.”<sup>103</sup> The painting can be fully understood when mirrored by the full-length portrait of the King (Figure 16). The decor is similar: an identical throne on a rostrum, and the stool with a cushion on which the King’s crown and the hand of justice rest. The sovereign wears the ermine-lined blue velvet royal coat, adorned with fleurs-de-lis, with the badge of the Order of the Saint-Ésprit on his chest. In his left hand, he holds a hat with feathers and a black plumed headdress, while his right hand rests on the sceptre. When painting a king, an artist recalls all those who came before

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98 Delestre, *Gros, sa vie et ses ouvrages*, 216–217.

99 Le Franc, *Histoire de la vie et de la mort du baron Gros*, 237.

100 Delestre, *Gros, sa vie et ses ouvrages*, 218.

101 Louis Marin, *Politiques de la représentation* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 2005), 74.

102 Marin, *Politiques de la représentation*, 85–86.

103 François Antoine Marie Miel Edmé, *Essai sur les beaux-arts et particulièrement sur le Salon de 1817* (Paris: Didot le Jeune, 1817), 312.

him and accordingly evokes the power entrusted to him and the dynasty which he is a part of. It is therefore conceivable that the portrait of the Duchess was not so much meant to represent her particularly, so much as her function.<sup>104</sup> The work reproduces the composition of sovereigns' portraits since Rigaud's portrait of Louis XIV, showing "hereditary monarchs chosen by God, thaumaturgic kings possessing an unchallenged sovereignty."<sup>105</sup> Rigaud, by employing certain traditional codes, brought a new vision of the royal portrait by using the regalia, while at the same time transforming them and modernising the whole. For example, the sceptre held upside down is more like a walking stick.<sup>106</sup>

The virtually identical composition of the two portraits, and their exhibition in the same place, was suggestive of a royal couple rather than an uncle and his niece. The two portraits were closely related and can only be understood together. It is not unlikely that they were conceived as a pair, designed to show a new kind of royal couple. By borrowing the codes of the portraits in regalia of the Empresses Joséphine and Marie-Louise and more broadly of Ancien Régime queens, Gros placed the Duchess of Angoulême in the same ideological and symbolic line. By replacing the Empress and the Queen, virtually in this portrait, and literally on the dome of Sainte Geneviève, the Duchess took their place, not only in the image but also in terms of their functions. These two portraits remained suspended until 1830. When Charles X ascended the throne and the princess became Dauphine, she remained associated with the previous sovereign and not with the current one. After the July Revolution, the quaestors asked Count Forbins, director of the National Museums, to remove the two paintings. They specified that "it would be unfortunate if these works were destroyed."<sup>107</sup> The two portraits were therefore stored in the Louvre "to keep them safe."<sup>108</sup> This vision of the Duchess of Angoulême as a queen but also as a supporter of the King and a female presence on his side blurred the classical distribution of roles within the royal family. This portrait had a certain posterity because it contributed

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104 Louis Marin, *Le portrait du roi* (Paris: Éditions de minuit, 1987), 260.

105 Rainer Schoch, *Das Herrscherbild in der Malerei des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Prestel, 1975), 91–93; Charles Maumené and Louis d'Harcourt, *Iconographie des Rois de France, Volume II: Louis XIV, Louis XV, Louis XVI* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1932).

106 Myriam Tsikounas, "De la gloire à l'émotion: Louis XIV en costume de sacre par Hyacinthe Rigaud," *Sociétés et Représentations* 26, no. 2 (2008): 57–70.

107 "Serait fâcheux que ces œuvres soient détruites," AAN, 8 P 235, letter of 22 February 1831.

108 "Pour les mettre à l'abri," AAN, 8 P 235.

to establishing the image of the Duchess of Angoulême and thus to fixing the image of a sovereign. The Duke of Luxembourg asked, through the Duke of Luynes, for permission to have the portrait copied in 1841, when the princess was given the title of Queen in exile for five years.<sup>109</sup>

When Louis XVIII became King in 1795, his wife Marie-Joséphine de Savoie naturally became Queen of France. Ancien Régime kings, whose legitimacy was not questioned, had no need to capitalise on the image of their wives, but Louis XVIII could not do it without a female presence on his side. Although they wore the crown, these sovereigns did not have a throne and their kingdom seemed quite chimerical. The royalist iconographic propaganda that continued to produce and disseminate images of the Bourbons seemed to largely ignore this Queen in exile. Very quickly, iconography, the press and literature took hold of the image of Madame Royale, the daughter of Louis XVI and the only survivor of the royal family. Louis XVIII understood the political benefits of associating his image with that of his unfortunate niece. He would not give up trying to get her to join the Bourbon family. His manoeuvres were successful and he had her marry his nephew, the Duke of Angoulême, the future heir to the throne, thus promising Marie-Thérèse a future role as Queen of France.

From 1799 to 1810, the new Duchess of Angoulême was not the only woman in the family and she had to step aside for the Queen. However, the King was much more willing to show off his niece than his wife, and royalist propaganda widely disseminated the image of the princess, with or without the King. The Queen, who was ill and not very keen on representation, did not seem to be affected by his image-crafting. This unprecedented situation of a princess taking the place of a queen who was still alive was surprising and could not fail to blur the perception of the royal family. Although Louis XVIII wanted his wife to be considered Queen, he preferred to associate himself with his niece, who was the guarantor of political hopes and whose image was more likely to seduce, touch and move the people of France than that of a decrepit queen.

The queen, who could not exist in France without the king, should not have had any independent form of visibility under the Restoration. When Louis XVIII ascended the throne in 1814, his wife was dead. Far from simplifying the situation, this state of affairs

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109 AN, Archives des musées nationaux, Département des peintures du musée du Louvre, P 18, letter of 8 March 1841.



made the image of the Duchess of Angoulême a little more complex. First as a daughter of Louis XVI but also as female figure, she was essential to the representation of royal majesty. The King was effectively stating that the Duchess of Angoulême played the role of consort in his court, a function accorded to her by her status as daughter and niece of kings. The representation of this unusual pairing, who were not a married couple, nevertheless continued throughout the reign of Louis XVIII who never married again.

She, who should be only Madame, saw her role and image largely merged with that of a sovereign in office. The iconography developed in parallel with that of the monarch seems to propose the vision of a wife rather than a niece. The confusion is all the more disturbing as the iconography took on the heritage of the previous Bourbon sovereigns as well as that of the Bonaparte empresses. The King and his niece thus formed an original, unprecedented, and particularly unlikely couple, especially considering that the Duchess of Angoulême did not appear to retain this prerogative throughout the Restoration.

Long considered a political moment without a sovereign, the Restoration offered a more complex version of the queenly image. Although no princess wore the crown, the image of the queen was not absent, and the iconographic work carried out during the reign of Louis XVIII for the benefit of his niece deserves to be integrated into the reflections on questions of queenship. Thus, the Duchess of Angoulême finds her place in the evolution of reginal images, from the consorts of the Bourbon sovereigns to the last empress of France.

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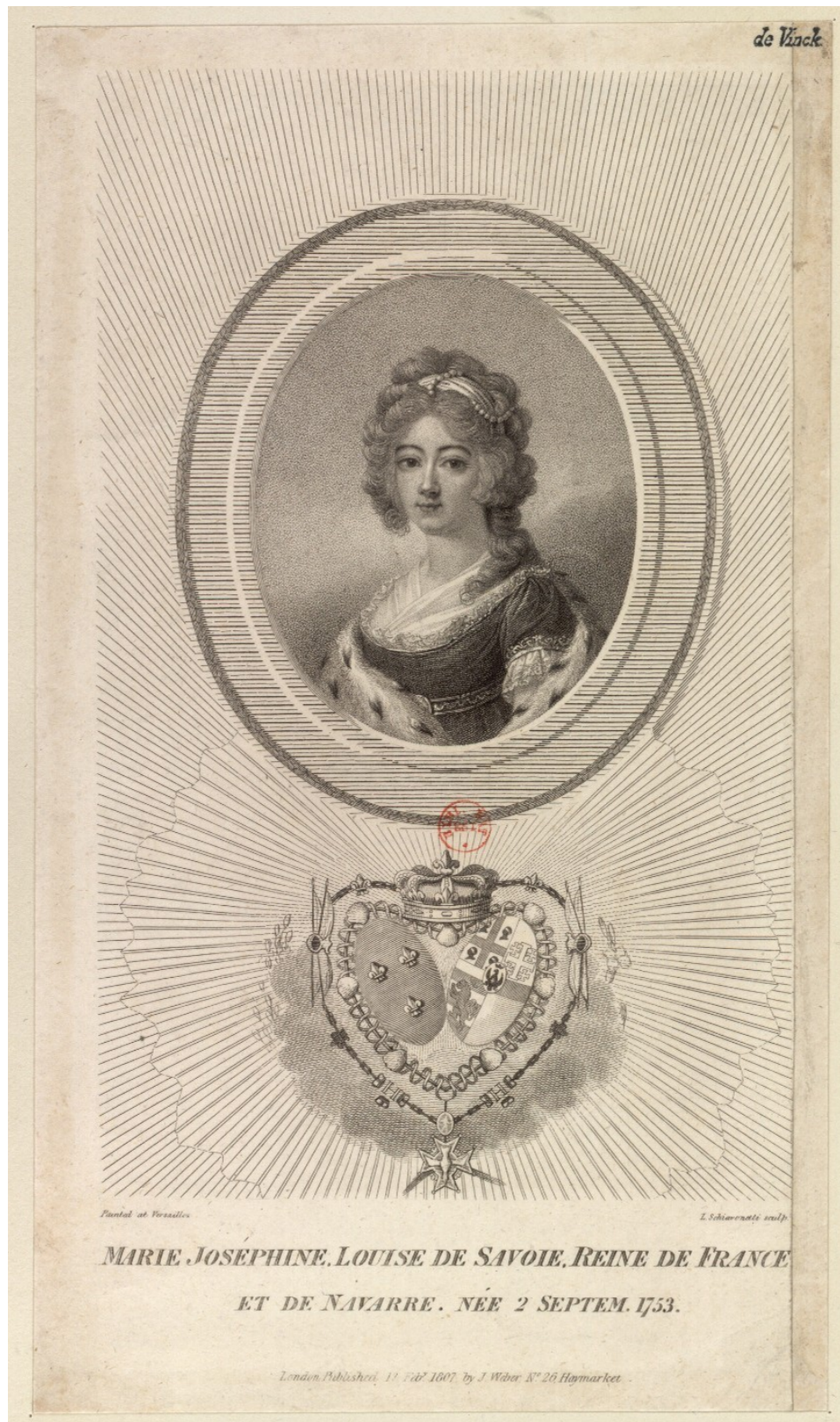
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**Figure 1. Marie Joséphine Louise de Savoie, reine de France et de Navarre (London: J. Weber 1807). BNF, Département des Estampes et de la photographie, De Vinck, 9041.**



**Figure 2. Marie-Éléonore Godefroid, *Marie-Joséphine Louise de Savoie*, 1810, oil on canvas, 98 x 81 cm. Private collection.**





Figure 3. Jean-Dominique-Étienne Canu, *Bienfaisance de l'Héroïne Française* en 1807 (Paris: Canu, 1816). BNF, Département des Estampes et de la photographie, De Vinck, 9030.





**Figure 4.** Comte de Paroy, *Les deux errants* ou *L'Antigone française* (Paris, 1814). BNF, Département des Estampes et de la photographie, Hennin, 12699.





**Figure 5. Les reines de France, épouses des Bourbons (Paris). BNF, Département des Estampes et de la photographie, De Vinck, 725.**





**Figure 6. Madame Desperrières, *Portrait de la duchesse d'Angoulême*, 1818, oil on canvas, 213.5 x 148.5 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux.**



**Figure 7. S. A. R. Madame, duchesse d'Angoulême (Paris: Jean, 1814). BNF, Département des Estampes et de la photographie, RESERVE QB-370 (77) -FT 4.**





**Figure 8. Marie-Louise. Archiduchesse d'Autriche, Impératrice des Français (Paris: Jean, 1810). Private collection.**





**Figure 9. Marie Thérèse Charlotte, fille de Louis XVI (Paris: Jean, 1814). BNF, Département des Estampes et de la photographie, De Vinck, 10026.**





**Figure 10. *Joséphine en costume de sacre* (Paris, 1804). BNF, Département des Estampes et de la photographie, De Vinck, 7929.**



**Figure 11. Charles-Nicolas Lafond, *Le duc de Bordeaux présenté au peuple et à l'armée par la duchesse de Berry en présence du roi, entouré de la famille royale et des principaux personnages de l'État*, 1821, oil on canvas, 138 x 195.5 cm. Musée des châteaux de Versailles et des Trianons (reproduced by kind permission of the Château de Versailles).**





**Figure 12. Antoine-Jean Gros, *Projet pour L'Apothéose de Sainte-Geneviève*, 1811, 73 x 73 cm. Musée Carnavalet, Paris.**



**Figure 13. Antoine-Jean Gros, *L'Apothéose de Sainte-Geneviève* (detail), 1824, Paris. Panthéon, author's photograph.**





**Figure 14. Antoine-Jean Gros, *La duchesse d'Angoulême*, 1816, oil on canvas, 269 x 191 cm. Musée des châteaux de Versailles et des Trianons (reproduced by kind permission of the Château de Versailles).**



**Figure 15. Marie Guilmimine Benoist, *Portrait de l'impératrice Marie-Louise*, 1812, oil on canvas, 238.5 x 176.5 cm. Musée national du Château de Fontainebleau (reproduced by kind permission of the Château de Fontainebleau).**





**Figure 16. Antoine-Jean Gros, *Louis XVIII en tenue de sacre*, 1816, oil on canvas, 292 x 205 cm. Musée des châteaux de Versailles et des Trianons (reproduced by kind permission of the Château de Versailles).**