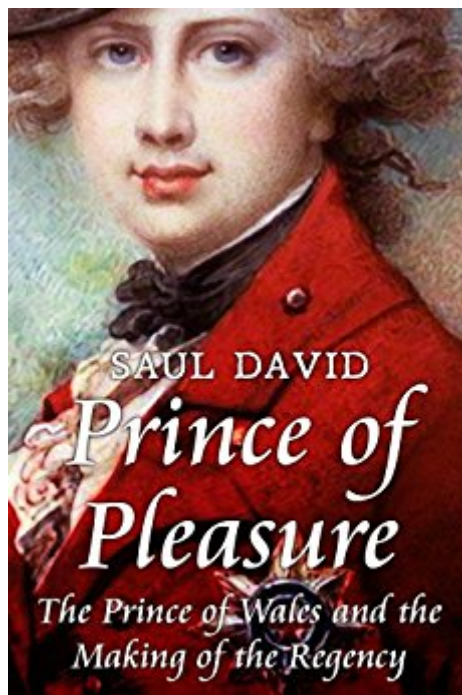


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# Prince Of Pleasure: The Prince Of Wales And The Making Of The Regency



## Synopsis

Described by the Duke of Wellington as 'the most extraordinary compound of talent, wit, buffoonery, obstinacy and good feeling that I ever saw in one character in my life', George Augustus Frederick, Prince of Wales, later George IV, was a highly controversial figure. He courted both Whigs and Tories in his attempts to establish the Regency during the 'madness' of his father, George III. Scandalous liaisons with prostitutes and duchesses, and his 'secret' marriage to the Catholic Mrs Fitzherbert, tested his duty - to nation and to family. Yet his support for overseas campaigns against Napoleon, culminating in such historic victories as Trafalgar and Waterloo, consolidated Britain's status as the pre-eminent world power amid the great social and economic upheavals of the Industrial Revolution. Drawing on a wealth of original accounts of life in Georgian Britain, Saul David has created a masterly portrait - of a flamboyant, opportunistic and influential figure, and of a nation in a time of great change. Saul David is Professor of War Studies at the University of Buckingham and the author of several critically-acclaimed history books, including *The Indian Mutiny: 1857* (shortlisted for the Westminster Medal for Military Literature), *Zulu: The Heroism and Tragedy of the Zulu War of 1879* (a Waterstone's Military History Book of the Year) and, most recently, *Victoria's Wars: The Rise of Empire*. Saul David also writes acclaimed historical fiction. *Zulu Hart*, the first in the George Hart series, was a bestseller in 2009, and the sequel, *Hart of Empire*, will be published in August 2010. An experienced broadcaster, Saul David has presented and appeared in history programmes for all the major TV channels and is a regular contributor to Radio 4. Praise for Saul's books: 'Filled with swashbuckling derring-do, the reek of blood and gunpowder, combined with shrewd analysis of power, war and psychology' (Simon Sebag Montefiore on *ALL THE KINGS MEN*) 'Those wishing to immerse themselves in this golden age of British military success will relish David's fine piece of history' (Sunday Times on *ALL THE KINGS MEN*) 'A first-rate historian, now a masterly story-teller' (Bernard Cornwell on *ZULU HART*) 'David is a popular historian with a rare talent . . . An unashamed crowd-pleaser with a compelling, sexy hero who could give Cornwell's Sharpe a run for his money.' (The Times on *ZULU HART*) Endeavour Press is the UK's leading independent digital publisher.

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## Customer Reviews

As I mention from time to time, I am a fan of Jane Austen, and I regularly read books by or about her in some fashion. So it would make sense that when I found a free book that served as a biography to the man who made the Regency period the Regency period by being the Regent, George IV (or "Prinny"), I would download it and read it. And so I did. This particular book is not for the faint of heart for several reasons. For one, this single volume biography of George IV is a long one. Second, there are some minor formatting difficulties (like insufficient quotation marks) which makes it sometimes difficult to tell exactly where a quotation (and this book has many quotations from primary sources like letters and diaries and minutes from Parliament and the like) begins or ends. These are minor quibbles, but as they are something that makes this book a bit harder to read than it would be otherwise, it is important to at least recognize these concerns. As a whole, this book seeks to take a balanced approach to George IV that recognizes his moral failings (including cowardice, political opportunism, disloyalty to his wives and friends and family) as well as his unpopularity with the people and his virtues (including generosity to others and an eagerness at supporting art and literature). One of George IV's early tutors thought that he would either be a great patron of the arts or be a notorious blackguard. He ended up being, in the judgment of the author, both of those things. The author does not take this on mere prejudiced opinions, though, but strives to support that judgment through voluminous research and a lengthy bibliography of both strong primary and secondary sources. This book has a

generally chronological approach, although chapters often tend to be topical in nature. For example, one of the chapters examines the Regent's support of authors, including his efforts to encourage Jane Austen (who loathed him on grounds of gender politics, and probably morality) as well as his immense expenditure on constantly improving his house, which sounds like something that a Willoughby would do, ending up hopelessly in debt for it as well. The book discusses his somewhat tedious love life, as well as the likely adultery of his second wife, and his troubled family relations (including a daughter who at seventeen was a willful and accomplished flirt who eventually married to try to get away from home from an overly protective father, before dying in childbirth). This is in many ways a work to be appreciated and respected, but not necessarily enjoyed. This is an accomplished work, with a wide-ranging scope and keen eye for telling details, like the hypocritical views of society towards fallen women and the men who took advantage of them, the dark nature of the politics of the time, as well as endless conversations about dressing and bathing habits and wives and mistresses and parents and children. The historical research is impeccable, the writing style smooth, the use of language excellent, as is the frequency of quoted material from the period and from the key players. What tends to reduce the enjoyment of reading the material, except as a historical exercise, is the fact that this material itself deals with immense corruption, showing the massive divide between a prince who managed to wrack up a debt that was several orders of magnitude greater than my student loans (more debt than anyone should have to wrestle with) and people who were struggling to survive among the horrors of the Napoleonic Wars and the threat of debtor's prison for those who could not have their debts paid for by taxpayers. The immense moral hypocrisy of the age is simply something that limits the enjoyment of reading history about it, and makes the achievement of Jane Austen, in pointing out that hypocrisy through biting wit and humanity, even greater. This particular book has at least a couple large areas of relevance. The end of the book explicitly connects the disastrous marriage of George IV and Caroline of Brunswick, along with her emotional neediness and resulting adultery and the fact that the injured princess was beloved by the people while the adulterous prince was not, with the analogous problem of Prince Charles and Princess Diana. This is an astute conclusion to draw, even if Prince Charles is far less cavalier as an adulterer than Charles IV, who was a far more notorious rake, and a far more dishonorable man in many ways. The other relevance of this work is for those who, like me, are fond of reading regency fiction. After all, knowing the historical context of a given time helps one understand why books were written as they were, and also helps to explain the in-jokes and references that a writer would use to those who were familiar with the time. Knowing the setting and scene and background information helps to make greater sense of a

given work or a given body of work (like that of Jane Austen). For these reasons, and no doubt others, this is a worthwhile book to read, so long as one does not find the prince or his behavior to be particularly sympathetic.

There are some very obvious factual errors here, but it is an excellent book, and very detailed and lively. Queen Mary's Aunt Ausgusta was her mother's sister, hence her aunt, not her great aunt as the author states. Franz Josef's wife was named Elisabeth, not Elizabeth, as the author has it. Otherwise, a splendid biography.

Quite an interesting book dealing with an obviously selfish and self-centred person -However, it would have been better had someone proof read it prior to publication -The number of obvious errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation detracted greatly from any real pleasure in reading the book.

As Prince of Wales he was an astoundingly selfish, vain, foolish, spendthrift. In the 21st century he would have made a perfect reality star. This is well-informed but light history. I read it as entertainment. Cynically as a comedy.

I'm past halfway and feel I know enough of the book to judge. The title, subtitle and back copy are misleading. This book offers far more political history than cultural history and the focus on the Prince himself wavers so often I found myself wanting to sit Saul David or his editor down and deliver a stern talking-to. Prince of Pleasure? Prince of Politics is more like it, with one endless shuffle of the cabinet after another. As if that weren't enough, the writing is flat, though at times David gets slangy or jokey as if aware of his prosaic style. And as a historian, he's inconsistent: we get endless gross detail about how unclean and unhygienic Princess Caroline was, yet she goes on to have many lovers--did no one else besides her husband and some courtiers early on ever comment? Or did she have a soap-related epiphany? Inquiring minds want to know.

Biography of King George III's debauched son George Prince of Wales. An absolute lecher at 17 and still practising at the time of his death. We learn of his mistresses and his perfectly legal Roman Catholic marriage to Mrs Fitzherbert despite the law disqualifying any heir to the throne marrying a Roman Catholic. Contrary to the common claims she was not an already married actress but rather a twice widowed heiress with a good fortune behind her. The marriage was therefore not morganatic

as so many claim. His story is superbly told along with details of the political background of the time and the Napoleonic Wars. The King's recurring bouts of apparent madness receive their medical explanation, George III comes over a rather a decent sort of fella. The scandals that left the British Common Taxpaying People to settle the Prince's massive debts on several occasions are well recounted as is his second marriage to the rather revolting Princess Caroline who seldom washed let alone changed her undies. An excellent picture of the man and his times,

Never mind Prince Harry's night in Vegas this Prince has him beat with dependable dissolution. Big drunk, big spender, big appetite, which limited funds could not reign. A bigamist who treated his Royal wife horribly. Cheated on the love of his life. Like many despots he built a few extravagances way over budget, Carlton House, the Brighton Pavilion. Lots of interesting political developments, plus the Napoleonic Wars.

Excellent written biography.

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