

SONJA FIELITZ

## **"A Silent but Impressive Language:" The Public and Private Lives of Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz**

This essay engages with Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (1744-1818), consort of King George III of England. Charlotte was not only a dedicated wife and mother to her fifteen children but also an important catalytic figure in 18<sup>th</sup>-century British culture and European politics who transcended the limitations of the gender stereotypes of the time. The regency crisis, occasioned by George III's madness, forced her into political prominence, when the responsibility of taking care of the King's person and the Royal Household fell to Charlotte.

Furthermore, Charlotte was a well-known patron of the arts. For most of human history, queens and princesses were anomalous and often liminal, because the political, social, and cultural power of rulership was often accorded to males.<sup>1</sup> As Robert Bucholz and Carol Levin have reminded us, queenly reigns were extended moments of suspension in the 'normal' working of political, social, cultural and gender history (Buchholz and Levin 2009, xiv). As we will see below for Queen Anne, those queens who ruled successfully have not always been celebrated for their achievements. Yet it is safe to say that all British queens have changed the landscape of European politics remarkably.

The unusual combination of their gender and royal authority gave these women an opportunity to redefine power and gender roles as applied to (royal) women. Perhaps the most established field in which female gender and consortship was authoritative was patronage, particularly cultural and religious patronage. In the words of Adam Morton,

culture could be an agent of politics in a court context, with art, theatre, and literature often used as a [silent] language through which politics was conducted, pressure lobbied, and ideas represented; and that involvement in the arts often gave queen consorts an important body of resources with which to patronise groups of thinkers or political actors [...]. (2017, 1)

The irreversible decline in the King's power following Great Britain's defeat in the American War of Independence (1775-1783) furthermore invigorated Charlotte's royal charity by supporting institutions such as the House of Refuge for Orphan Girls founded in 1758 by Sir John Fielding, and the Magdalen Hospital for the Reception of Penitent Prostitutes, for which she became the royal patroness in 1765. As Tyler Giffith and Samantha Howard have shown,

these charitable enterprises did more than support women from a medical point of view: they also operated as organizations in which women could become leaders themselves. [...] At the Magdalen Hospital (for instance), the head officer was not the male Warden but instead the female Head Matron [...]. Institutions such as these became the means

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1 In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a university education was the prerogative of men, and learned societies such as the Royal Society were closed to women as well. Women thus furthered their cultural and scientific interests within the family or through access to libraries. Nevertheless, women and men's spheres were not rigidly demarcated but overlapped partly.

whereby women could exercise agency and contribute to national improvement, even while they were still being formally denied participation in 'the state' per se. The Princesses' alignment with such initiatives won them international recognition, as etchings such as *Charity of 1798* by Francesco Bertoluzzi illustrate in the case of Charlotte. (Griffith and Howard 2017, 417)

In general, Charlotte must have been a primarily pragmatic person who responded to immediate and individual distress rather than building up organized structures. In particular, she appears to have been interested in spreading medical practices that would benefit women's health:

During the reign of George III and Queen Charlotte the theory and management of childbirth gained momentum as an important and discrete field of medical research. Charlotte helped indirectly to advance the study of obstetrics in her appointment of William Hunter, the well-known anatomist and obstetrician, as her physician in extraordinary in 1762 [...] (Griffith and Howard 2017, 415)

The level of the Queen's generosity, however, had long alarmed her financial advisers, who cautioned her against profuse liberality.

In the following, this essay will cover Queen Charlotte's *private* life with a focus on her literary interests including her printing press at Frogmore as a vital facilitator of cultural transfer as well as her networks and conversations. It will then (to my knowledge, for the first time) engage with Charlotte's *public* image as it was constructed by literary testimonies, such as dedications by female as well as male authors, as well as poems by, among others, the altogether four poets laureate who were appointed during Charlotte's life.<sup>2</sup> We will conclude with a part on Queens figuratively 'talking' to each other<sup>3</sup> across time. Here, Queen Charlotte will be related to Queen Anne earlier in the same century, who, in turn, had consciously 'talked' to Queen Elizabeth I by choosing, for instance, her motto and wearing clothing patterned on the Virgin Queen's (Bucholz and Levin 2009, xiv). Anne's triumphant reign may have paved the way for Queen Victoria and her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

### Charlotte's Private Life

It is difficult to get to know Charlotte's private life and to trace the nature of her cultural interests, because her private papers were almost entirely destroyed after her death in 1818. We do know, however, that she engaged with women's role in society. For instance, she played a crucial role for the bluestockings whose ideal of polite and rational conversation she shared without, to her lasting regret, being able to participate in similar circles (Campbell Orr 2001; 2002). Lady Charlotte Finch, her Royal

2 William Whitehead was successor to Colley Cibber, but seldom responded adequately to the challenges of the post of a poet laureate. His successor, Thomas Warton, was Professor of ancient history at Oxford, having previously been professor of poetry there. He was mainly a literary historian. In November 1788, George III went mad only a few weeks before the Ode to the New Year was due. Tactfully, the laureate remained silent. George recovered, and when his birthday came round in June, Warton was able to refer to the king's misfortune obliquely, comparing it to storm clouds passing over the landscape. Henry James Pye was no poet. He has only one claim to fame in the history of poets laureate, and this was to forego the traditional gift of wine in exchange for cash. Robert Southey was a well-known poet at the time.

3 Each of the Hanoverian Princesses added, however distantly, to the long-running performance of her predecessor. Charlotte followed Caroline as patroness of the apparently unobtrusive art of landscaping, both contributing to the Gardens of Kew.

Governess, had many connections to the Bluestocking Circle, and Frances Burney (1776-1828), the Queen's Second Keeper of the Robes, was not the first associate of the bluestockings to be employed by her. Furthermore, Charlotte encouraged the work of female artists in botany, the visual arts, domestic skills such as sewing and embroidery, as well as books. In 1809, printmaker, publisher, and Charlotte's librarian Edward Harding (1755-1840) set up the Queen's printing press at Frogmore House<sup>4</sup> which enabled her not only to extend her means of communication but also become closely involved in the physical production of books. The Harding family "published literary texts, including editions of Shakespeare's plays - 'Harding's Shakespeare'" (Roberts 2015, 148).<sup>5</sup> As Jane Roberts has shown, documentation concerning Edward Harding's royal employment and accounts relating to Queen Charlotte's library are yet to be located. As far as we can see from her books, Charlotte was enormously interested in religion (the theology section of her library was by far the biggest, making up 18% of the total) as well as gender issues.

Unfortunately, very little documentation of the Queen's books appears to have survived, because the Frogmore collection was sold at Christie's in 1819 in order to settle the Queen's debts, and only a few items, such as music manuscripts and books, escaped the sale (*A Catalogue of the Genuine Library, Prints, and Books of Prints of an Illustrious Personage, lately Deceased*, qtd. in Marschner et. al. 2017, 310, fn. 9). We know, however, of the library's final content via the catalogue made prior to its sale and dispersal in 1819 (Roberts 2015, 149).

The authorship of the works issued by Frogmore Press is not securely known. What we know is that Queen Charlotte created her own extra-illustrated productions, that is, volumes containing both hand written text and illustrations the titles of which clearly document an interest in the House of Stuart, and the last of the Queen's volumes, dated 1815, is entitled *The King of Denmark's Welcome in 1606*. (Roberts 2015, 150)

Harding's obituarist suggests that the Queen alone wrote the texts, but the dedication page of *Translations from the German* gives the translator's name as the author and bluestocking Ellis Cornelia Knight (1757-1837), who is usually named as the author of the Press's *Miscellaneous Poems* (1812) as well as being the translator of *Translations from the German* (Roberts 2015, 155).

In terms of cross-cultural communication, Wieland may have been her favourite German writer, and she owned collections of the most well-known German writers of the theatre, such as Kotzebue and Schröder, as well as Goethe and Schiller. Her library also testifies to her interest in women's role in society. According to the catalogue of her library offered at Christie's, she owned Brandes's *Betrachtungen über das weibliche Geschlecht* (1802) and C.F. Pockel's *Versuch einer Charakteristik des weiblichen Geschlechts* (1797), as well as the works of Sarah Trimmer,<sup>6</sup> Anna More, and the bluestockings Elisabeth Carter and Anna Seward. Her shelves also contained Lady Wortley Montague's *Embassy Letters*. Last but not least, the Queen's library was also part of the education she helped to provide for her children, especially her

4 For the printing press, see Roberts (2015). The first mention of a library at Frogmore dates from 1793 (Roberts 2015, 149).

5 The magnificent library founded by George III located at Buckingham House (now 'The King's Library' in the British Library), included at least fourteen bound works issued by Harding between 1795 and 1804 (Roberts 2015, 148).

6 Trimmer's father, Joshua Kirby, had taught perspectival drawing to both Charlotte and George. Sarah Trimmer dedicated several of her stories and moral treatises to the Queen and princesses (see Campbell Orr 2004).

daughters, and it altogether links to a network of cultured women<sup>7</sup> and specialist advisers.

In terms of Charlotte's intellectual engagement, we know that her readers, that is, Mme La Fite and Jean André de Luc, both had connections to well-known representatives of the European enlightenment. The latter's works may be less known today, but in his own day, they were quickly translated into German and discussed by such eminent recipients as Immanuel Kant. Furthermore, Charlotte had strong ties to, for instance, Lichtenberg in Göttingen and other major philosophers and scientists of the time. Last but not least, Charlotte was intellectually well aware of the constant restraint and self-possession required of a consort who constantly had to think carefully of what she said, as well as the so-called 'body natural' and 'body politic' of a King, respectively Queen, as Lady Harcourt, a Lady of the Bedchamber to the Queen, famously recalls in her letters:

Her confidence she imparted to few, from a strong fear lest she should be suspected of favouritism. She judged characters quickly and truly, and her warm heart was truly attached to those who she felt loved the individual as much as they respected the Queen. I remember once my saying to her, 'I should like to tell *you* something, but pray promise never to let the *Queen* know it.' She laughed, and said, 'Oh no, *she* can have no business with what passes between us in our private, unreserved conversation. (Harcourt Papers IV, 79, qtd. in Campbell Orr 2002, 257; emphasis in original)

George III had warned his young wife not to make confidantes of the few ladies surrounding her, mostly for political reasons. The Queen's closest friend among the ladies at court seems to have been Lady Harcourt.

### Charlotte's Public Image

After ascending to the throne in 1761, George III and his wife Charlotte used family portraiture<sup>8</sup> to construct a public image of harmonious, informal domesticity. Interestingly, however, Cornelia Knight in her *Autobiography of Miss Cornelia Knight, Lady Companion to the Princess Charlotte of Wales* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London 1861) gives us a less harmonious insight into royal family life:

Perhaps also my pride had been somewhat hurt, by the Queen not always, as I thought, feeling properly my situation, and I will not say that I had not some wish for a more active and more important employment than that which I held at Windsor, dull, uninteresting, and monotonous. Every year more and more confined, and, even from the kindness of the Royal Family, condemned to listen to all their complaints and private quarrels. I certainly hoped to get honourably out of it, but I did feel attachment for the Queen [...]. (Knight 2012, 189-190)

Perhaps Knight did not enjoy the patronage of the Queen because it may have been restricted.

Let us now take a closer look at dedications and poems addressed to Charlotte which have not found much critical attention yet. What kind of public image of Char-

7 "Maria Edgeworth argued that enlightened and educated women were now an unstoppable force, making a liberally minded fictional father in 1795 say 'more knowledge and literature are expected from (the female sex) in society'" (Campbell Orr 2017, 73).

8 "The Queen commissioned many of these portraits, patronizing the leading male painters of the day. Over time, however, she became more interested in encouraging the work of women artists. Most notable are the elaborate botanical decorations that Charlotte commissioned from the Royal Academician Mary Moser for her country retreat Frogmore" (Asleson 2017, 179).

lotte do these texts convey? Do they acknowledge her numerous domestic as well as intellectual achievements or do they rather stick to gender stereotypes?

In the "Dedication to the Queen" in Frances Burney's, *Camilla, or a Picture of Youth* (1796) we read:

In those to whom Your Majesty is known but by exaltation of Rank, it may raise, perhaps, some surprise, that scenes, characters, and incidents, which have *reference only to common life*, should be brought into *so august a presence*; but the inhabitant of a retired cottage, who there receives the benign permission which at Your Majesty's feet casts this humble offering, bears in mind recollections which must live there while 'memory holds its seat,' of a *benevolence* withheld from no condition, and delighting in all ways *to speed the progress of Morality*, through whatever channel it could flow, to whatever port it might steer. I blush at the inference I seem here to leave open of annexing undue importance to a production of apparently so light a kind – yet if my hope, my view – however fallacious they may eventually prove, extended not beyond whiling away an idle hour, should I dare seek such patronage? With the deepest gratitude, and most heart-felt respect [...]. (Burney 1999, 3-4; my emphasis)

This dedication seems rather conventional, also in terms of sex and gender. Nothing is said of Charlotte's intellect in this dedication by Frances Burney. Interestingly, however, in her *Diaries and Letters*, Frances Burney does acknowledge Charlotte's inner qualities as well as intellectual skills:

The queen, indeed, is a most *charming* woman. She appears to me full of *sense* and graciousness, mingled with delicacy of *mind* and liveliness of *temper*. She speaks English almost perfectly well, with great *choice and copiousness of language*, though now and then with foreign idiom, and frequently with a foreign accent. Her manners have an easy *dignity*, with a most engaging simplicity, and she has all that fine high breeding which the *mind*, not the station, gives, of carefully avoiding to distress those who converse with her, or studiously removing the embarrassment she cannot prevent. (Vol. 1, Sect. 6: 1785-6, "General Conversation: Royalty Departs;" my emphasis)

Another and perhaps less known dedication to the queen by a female writer is to be found in Helen Maria Williams' *Poems* (Williams 1786). This dedication speaks of her "Majesty's generous feelings which is [*sic*] poured without restraint from the heart" and refuses to express anything other than feelings. It is warm and personal, but avoids any mention of the queen's intellectual skills. As it seems, these two dedications by female authors remain within the traditional virtues associated with women at the time.

Another, and in this case, male, dedication to the Queen does, however, acknowledge her bodily as well as intellectual skills: In Charles Burney's *A General History of Music* (1776) we read:

The science of musical sounds, though it may have been appreciated, as appealing only to the ear, and affording nothing more than momentary and fugitive delight, may be with justice considered as *the art that unites corporeal with intellectual pleasure*. [...] Pleasure and innocence ought never to be separated; yet we seldom find them otherwise than at variance, except when music brings them together. To those who know that Music is among your Majesty's recreations, it is not necessary to display its purity, or assert its dignity. May it long amuse your leisure, not from a relief from evil, but as an augmentation of good; not as a diversion from care, but TO THE QUEEN as a variation of felicity. Such, Madam, is my sincerest wish... for the *virtues* of your Majesty are universally confessed; and however the inhabitants of the British empire may differ in their

opinions on other questions, they all behold your excellences with the same eye, and celebrate them with the same voice. (Burney 1776, 9-10; my emphasis)

Charles Burney's slightly patronizing dedication to Charlotte is very much focused on the virtue aspect. Interestingly, it mentions the intellectual aspect and is free of conventional gender attributions.

When we proceed from dedications to poetry, Stephen Egleton's "A Poem for Queen Charlotte's Birth-day" (London, 1780?) praises Charlotte merely as wife to George III rather than as an autonomous human being:

Again we hail the usual day,  
When Briton's [*sic*] celebrate  
The birth of Her who pav's the way  
For England's happy state.  
*Born to make happy him who reigns*  
Over a people free [...]

From moral conduct turn the scale  
Unto precepts divine;  
Thro' him whose pray'r always prevails;  
Therein may Charlotte shine [...]  
*May she a nursing mother prove...*  
*With such a virtuous wife as this,*  
*May our King thankful be [...]* (Egleton 1780?; my emphasis)

Once again, this poem presents mostly patronizing stereotypes of Charlotte as a wife and mother. This is no different in the next poem by a male but anonymous author. In "The Idea: A Panegyric on Her Majesty" by a Young gentleman (London, printed and sold by W. Hay, 1775), Charlotte is nothing but a domestically virtuous woman. She is praised as "mirror of ev'ry Good," as "tender mother" and "Glory of her Time." In her, "each angelic virtue we can trace," she "protect(s) the poor," and is of "mildest manners" and simply unique: "Like – what? – Imagine! Or her picture tell, Or fly to Heaven to find her Parallel!" The poem ends with "Succeeding times should Charlotte's name adore" (Young Gentleman 1775).

A completely different picture, however, is drawn by the anonymous "Hebe, An Heroic poem on her Majesty" (London, printed for G. Allen, 1774), covering 20 pages. This poem is the prime example of Charlotte as a Princess of the Enlightenment,<sup>9</sup> since it does address her intellectual engagement in the natural sciences:

*A mind enlighten'd!* informed ev'ry sense,  
Chaste as a seraph robb'd in innocence.  
Feeling compassion glows thro' ev'ry vein [...]

Her scepter'd (*sic*) hand is rear'd to bless her Isle,  
*Trade, Arts, and Science share the youthful smile,*  
Each offspring craft does royal bounty share,  
Her Britain's grandeur's Charlotte's daily *care*.

*Scientific learning* basks in Hebe's rays  
With instinct *judgment* she bestows the bays ...  
Thus arts, and *science*, by Hebe is restor'd  
And like a goddess, Charlotte is ador'd. (Anon. 1774; my emphasis)

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9 The major publication on this topic is Marschner (2017).

This unknown author is the first one to clearly associate with Charlotte the world of the sciences and testify to her intellectual interests and skills.

When we approach the (four) poets laureate in order to throw further light on Charlotte's public image, it becomes clear that she does not feature prominently in their works. There is only little material on her.

William Whitehead (appointed poet laureate by George II in 1757) in his "Ode For the New-Year, January 1, 1784" refers to her in the second stanza as follows:

O come, ye toil-worn wand'ers, come  
 To genial hearths, and social home,  
*The tender housewife's busy care;*  
 The board with temperate plenty crown'd;  
 The smiling progeny around,  
 That listen to the tale of war. (Whitehead 1788, 105; my emphasis)

Thomas Warton (appointed poet laureate by George III in 1785) was the one to write an ode "On the Marriage of the King. M. DCC LXI. To Her Majesty." In its time, this ode received plenty of attention and was frequently reprinted in several contemporary periodicals and collections of poems.

Beginning:  
 When first the kingdom to thy *virtues* due  
 Rose from the billowy deep in distant view;  
 When Albion's isle, old ocean's peerless pride,  
 Tower'd in imperial state above the tide;  
 What bright ideas of the new domain  
 Form'd the fair prospect of thy promis'd reign [...] (Warton 1791, 30; my emphasis)

In the following, Warton even summons the trio of Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton to welcome Queen Charlotte to Britain:

While cunning Bards at ancient banquets sung  
 Of paynim foes defied, and trophies hung.  
 Here *Spenser* tun'd his mystic minstrelsy,  
 And dress'd in fairy robes a Queen like Thee.  
 Here, boldly mark'd with every living hue,  
 Nature's unbounded portrait *Shakespeare* drew:  
 But chief, the dreadful groupe of human woes  
 The daring artist's tragic pencil chose;  
 Explor'd the pangs that rend the royal breast,  
 Those wounds that lurk beneath the tissued vest!  
 Lo! this the Land, whence *Milton's* muse of fire  
 High soar'd to steal from heaven a seraph's lyre;  
 And told the golden ties of wedded love  
 In sacred Eden's amaranthine grove. (ibid. 32-33; my emphasis)

Henry Pye (appointed by George III in 1790) appears not to have written much on the Royal family as such. His "Ode on the Birth of the Prince of Wales" (II. 2) once again clearly reproduces gender stereotypes and depicts Charlotte as a lovely mother:

'Come happy child! delight the land  
 'Where time shall fix thy throne:  
 'O come, and take from Freedom's hand  
 'A sceptre all her own:  
 'And when the sacred lore of truth

'Display'd, shall form thy ripening youth,  
 'May every joyful Briton find  
 'The soul of *George's godlike race*,  
 'With lovely *Charlotte's softer grace*,  
 'Attemper'd, in thy mind. (Pye 1787, 8; my emphasis)

Robert Southey (appointed by George III in 1813) was the poet laureate to witness the Queen's death and lamenting it in his "On the Death of Queen Charlotte" (1818):

Stanza VII  
 At Court the *Household Virtues* had their place  
*Domestic Purity*  
 Maintain'd her proper influence there;  
 The *marriage bed* was blest,  
 And length of days was given.

Stanza VIII  
 No cause for sorrow then, but *thankfulness*;  
 Life's business well performed,  
 When weary age full willingly  
 Resigns itself to sleep,  
 In sure and certain hope!

Stanza IX  
 Oh end to be desired, whene'er, as now,  
*Good works* have gone before,  
 The seasonable fruit of Faith;  
 And good Report, and good  
 Example have survived.

Final stanza XII:  
 Long, long then shall Queen Charlotte's name be dear;  
 And future Queens to her  
 As to their best exemplar look;  
 Who imitates her best  
 May best deserve our love. (Southey 1838; my emphasis)

This obituary of Charlotte emphasizes her familial virtue, domestic religion, and charitable conduct. It once again remains caught up in gender stereotypes and does not mention any of her intellectual skills.

In sum, all of the four poets laureate adhere to gender stereotypes and construct Charlotte as a caring mother and housewife without acknowledging her intellectual achievements (as less known or anonymous poets indeed do!). Intellectual achievements of a princess, it seems, were excluded from the (male-dominated) public discourse of the time. At a time when the power of the crown was declining, the Queen's female virtues and good works were emphatically praised in public.

### Queens 'Talking' to Each Other<sup>10</sup>

Of all the women who ever ruled in Britain, Queen Anne (reigned 1702-14) is probably the most obscure. Although she was one of Britain's most successful rulers, Anne

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10 When in the following we relate Queen Charlotte to Queen Anne, we are perfectly aware of course that Queen Anne as well as Queen Victoria and Queen Elisabeth I ruled as sovereigns in their own right. Other than Charlotte, they had considerable political involvement.

has left comparatively little impact on our collective historical memory. In terms of period, Queen Anne even lacks her own adjective, and her period is generally called 'Augustan.' Her reign has long presented critics, historians and the general public with an apparent paradox: a woman of seemingly ordinary gifts and virtues who presided over an age of phenomenal military, diplomatic, economic and cultural success (cf. Reverand 2014). In terms of politics, it was under Queen Anne that the debates about the succession, the roles of the Monarch and Parliament, the established religion, and Britain's place in Europe were resolved. Anne's death secured the Hanoverian succession. For decades, if not centuries, however, the common critical view on Anne had been rather dismissive, and she was characterised as fat, sluggish and dull, her body distorted and racked by pregnancies. When commentators remarked on the Queen's reputation for gentleness, mercy and clemency, as well as her virtues of charity, marital fidelity, mercy and moderation, these virtues were in her case (other than in Charlotte's) used against her as being too passive. Her public reserve, poor health and resultant isolation portrayed her as a woman of limited intellectual capacity who was beset by favourites such as Sarah Churchill, the Duchess of Marlborough.

It was only recently that a scholarly reappraisal was undertaken by, among others, James Anderson Winn who re-established Queen Anne as a formidable, discerning patron and performer of the arts who was also skilled in governing (cf., for instance, Reverand 2014 and Winn 2014). In Winn's words, "her practice and appreciation of the arts [...] helped give Queen Anne the moral and intellectual vitality that sustained her throughout her remarkable reign" (2014, 38). This recent revisionary view has shown that Anne was deeply cultured and, not unlike Charlotte, found great pleasure in theatrical performances, poetry and music. She was skilled in dancing, playing musical instruments, and judging art. We should not forget that it was for Queen Anne that Georg Friedrich Händel wrote his only birthday ode, *Eternal Source of Light*, and the Utrecht *Jubilate* and *Te Deum*.

Interestingly, in terms of Queens 'talking' to each other, Anne portrayed herself as the "mother of her people," in association with, but also in distinction to, the metaphor of Elizabeth I as her people's virgin bride. Elizabeth I had become the one generally approved female ruler because she had widely been credited with the heart and stomach of a king, that is, of being a man inside a woman's body. Her refusal to play by the traditional rules, that is, forge alliances through marriage and child bearing, may have encouraged Queen Anne to follow in her footsteps. Where Elizabeth I created her public image of the Virgin Queen, wedded to the people of England, Anne constructed her public image of their nursing mother while carefully preserving a public image of wifely devotion to her husband, George of Denmark, who enjoyed a benign yet popular reputation as an important man of affairs, which complemented Anne's own popularity with her subjects at large. Elizabeth I as well as Anne achieved success unparalleled in the reigns of their respective ancestors.

When we take a look at the poet laureate of Anne's lifetime, i.e., Nahum Tate (laureate 1692-1715),<sup>11</sup> it becomes clear that Tate's rather formal laureate writings on Queen Anne do not count among the masterpieces of British poetry. There are numerous unintended comic moments, and Tate may have been much better where no formal 'laureate' requirements were to be met.

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11 Tate was famously ridiculed and attacked in Pope's *Dunciad* (several editions between 1728 and 1743) for bringing poetry into disrepute, and the most well-known line may be "Still Duncce the second reigns like Duncce the First" (Book I,6). Tate may be best known for his adaptations of Shakespeare's plays and creating a happy ending for Edgar and Cordelia in *King Lear*.

In his two poems on Queen Anne, i.e., "A Congratulatory Poem on her Majesty's Happy Recovery" (1714), of 174 verses, and "On the Death of our Late Most Gracious Sovereign" (published in 1716) covering no less than 373 verses, Tate depicts the Queen as titular subject only and is much more interested in the health of the nation than in the Queen's well-being. One example may suffice:

Nahum Tate (1652-1715), A POEM On the DEATH of *Our Late most Gracious Sovereign Queen ANNE*. *Address'd to his GRACE the Duke of Buckinghamshire* (published posthumously in 1716):

Final stanza (Tate's Muse speaking)  
 The Charm that from Oblivion's Gulf can save,  
 Tomb-worth, and make Reprizals on the Grave;  
 Make Virtue, Truth, and Honour, from their Hearse  
 Spring up, and Flourish in Immortal Verse.  
 If such a *Muse* the Glorious Toil embrac'd,  
 And with Her Images, the Subject grac'd,  
 Our *Royal Saint* wou'd look with Pleasure down,  
 And with a Smile, the beauteous Labour crown;  
 While I, to solemn Shades, depriv'd of Day,  
 Retire, and Mourn the short Remains of Life away.  
*FINIS* (my emphasis)

Throughout the poem of no less than 373 verses, there is much ritualised grief and (depersonalised) mourning, chiefly on the part of Tate's Muse summoned for the occasion.<sup>12</sup> The poet attempts to express that, without the queen, the nation is sick, and the nation's peace and commerce are dependent on the Queen's state of health. Any great personal anxiety for Anne does not seem to be his major concern. When in the final line Tate speaks of "Mourn[ing] the Short Remains of Life away," the poet obviously does not see a solution to an overall turbulence. What we miss is the tribute to the incoming monarch, as it would be traditional on these occasions. King George I remains unmentioned. With reference to Queen Charlotte, it is interesting to see that Queen Anne's political and intellectual achievements are not praised either by 'her' poet laureate.

## Conclusion

Queen Charlotte in her long queenship of fifty-eight years did indeed produce and perform a silent but impressive language, and this in various fields. Over her lifetime, she did exercise considerable cultural and also political agency. Despite her limitations as queen consort, Queen Charlotte left an admirable imperial as well as personal legacy. Interestingly, contemporary literary testimonies, such as dedications and poems, which were discussed here for the first time, did by no means all acknowledge her intellectual achievements and engagement with, for instance, the sciences and the arts. Significantly, the (male-dominated) public literary discourse most prominently represented by the poets laureate rather adhered to the stereotypical image of the caring mother and devoted wife. It was mostly left to unknown or even anonymous poets ("Hebe") to celebrate Charlotte's admirable intellectual engagement in public. Earlier in the same century, Queen Anne had fully occupied the office of the

<sup>12</sup> While Anne presided over its fortunes, claims the Muse, Britain was a Garden of Eden, tended by its Queen, but concealed behind this paradisaal appearance is "A Pillage'd Realm, and Pawn'ed Posterity" (266).

Sovereign, and in her case it was even more striking to what extent she was dismissed by the public and male dominated discourse. Queen Anne, as well as Queen Charlotte, did, however, by their impressive examples encourage the feminization of the monarchy, which was to transform the British crown in the centuries that followed.

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Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (Sophia Charlotte; 19 May 1744 – 17 November 1818) was the wife of King George III. She was Queen of Great Britain and Ireland from her marriage in 1761 until the union of the two kingdoms in 1801, after which she was Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland until her death in 1818. She was also the Electress of Hanover in the Holy Roman Empire until the promotion of her husband to King of Hanover on 12 October 1814, after which she was also queen Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz was the Queen consort of Great Britain and Ireland. Check out this biography to know about her childhood, family and life history. Private tutors gave her basic instructions on language, natural history, and botany with special emphasis on religion and household management. Continue Reading Below. You May Like. Famous Beautiful Women With Green Eyes. The Hottest Male Celebrities With the Best Abs. The Most Beautiful Women Rock Stars of All Time. Actors Who Have Played Onscreen Couples More Than Once. Public domain. Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. German wife of King George III of the United Kingdom. Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz was a famous German wife of King George III of the United Kingdom, who was born on May 19, 1744. As a person born on this date, Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz is listed in our database as the 54th most popular celebrity for the day (May 19). People born on May 19 fall under the Zodiac sign of Taurus, the Bull. Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz is the 1419th most popular Taurus. Aside from information specific to Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz's birthday, Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz is the 160th most famous German. In general, Charlotte of Meck...