Strategic Imaginations
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1714: The Political Context

In England, in 1700, the troubled House of Stuart lost its only acceptable chance of retaining the throne. Of the seventeen children born to Anne, daughter of the deposed King James II, and heir to the throne, only Prince William, Duke of Gloucester, survived infancy. Though carefully nurtured, the health of the prince was desperately precarious, and just five days after his eleventh birthday, he died too. Anne could have no expectation of more children; her health had already suffered greatly as a result of her efforts to bear a live child. King William III, Anne’s brother-in-law, who had ruled alone since the death of his wife, Mary II, in 1694, had no children. Already fifty years old, he was not inclined to take a second wife. It was imperative that a plan was made to secure the royal succession.

There were important criteria to be satisfied. The Bill of Rights of 1689 as well as limiting the power of the sovereign, and reaffirming Parliament’s claim to control taxation and legislation, required the monarchy to be Protestant. It stated ‘it hath been found by experience that it is inconsistent with the safety and welfare of this protestant kingdom to be governed by a papist prince’. The sovereign would be required in the coronation oath to swear to maintain the Protestant religion.
Of Catholic claimants there was no shortage; until September 1701, James II, ousted from the throne in 1688, lived in exile at St Germain-en-Laye in France. After his death, his son, Anne’s half-brother, Prince James Francis Edward Stuart, ‘The Old Pretender’, pursued his claim with vigour, but this was dismissed by Parliament, as were the claims of about fifty other Catholic near relatives. The Act of Settlement, passed in 1701, nominated a Lutheran, Sophia, Electress Dowager of Hanover, born Princess Sophia of the Palatinate, in The Hague, a granddaughter of King James I of England, and her heirs, as successors to the throne of England. Sophia had married Ernest Augustus, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg, later Elector of Hanover, in 1658.

However, in June 1714, Sophia died unexpectedly, which ensured that when Queen Anne died in London just two months later, by the terms of the 1701 Act of Succession, Sophia’s son, George Louis, was proclaimed King George I of Great Britain. He arrived in London together with his son and daughter-in-law, Prince George Augustus and Caroline of Ansbach, newly created Prince and Princess of Wales, and their three young daughters, taking up residence in St James’s Palace. George Augustus and Caroline’s son, Prince Frederick, was left in Hanover as token of the family’s commitment to their subjects in the Electorate.

The Hanoverian family inherited a precarious charge. The Jacobite threat to the new regime remained very serious. Notwithstanding The Act of Union of 1707 which had united Scotland with England and Wales under the Protestant faith and a common legislature, and was designed to prevent a separate Scottish foreign policy, expeditionary forces supporting James Stuart, the Old Pretender, invaded in 1708 and again in 1715. There would be further scares in 1717, 1719 and 1720. It was essential that George I and his family inspired confidence that the Act of Settlement served the best interests of the nation by demonstrating effective and dependable Protestant leadership for their British compatriots.

The Role of the Consort: the British Challenge

Within the royal marriage market, the principal criteria for the choice of consort was political; it potentially brought economic benefit, territorial gain, familial stability, and fulfilled dynastic ambition. The executive contract between partners within the monarchical framework had been long discussed. Niccolò Machiavelli’s The Prince and Baldassare
Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier*, debated the facets of character that combined to make an effective ruler – the warrior hero, defending the realm, and the nurturer and encourager of its community. The latter role, which aligned with the responsibility women had for the care of the family, came to be increasingly vested in the consort – often, though not invariably, a woman. Prince George of Denmark (1653–1708) was spouse of Queen Anne, Prince Albert of Saxe-Gotha (1819–1861) of Queen Victoria, and Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark (1921–) of Queen Elizabeth II. This charge eventually extended well beyond the royal family to include supporting the spiritual, social and economic well-being of the nation at large. The early Hanoverian monarchs sought to establish a new relationship with an increasingly professional framework of British parliamentary government, rebuff Jacobite challenges to their authority and reconcile continuing responsibilities in Hanover – a complex undertaking to be managed astutely. The potential benefit that their consort might bring in embedding the new regime, by their ‘soft power’ in promoting and protecting the interests of the nation, was considerable.

However, for the eighteenth-century consort, achieving any freedom of action was complicated. As spouse of the sovereign, or the heir to the throne, they were to be a helpmate to the monarch, and often confidante and principal supporter too. The sovereign’s household was but one of many power bases at court to be navigated skilfully – the heir, the siblings, the mistress, the favourite and the dowager, had theirs too – and the consort had to negotiate such familial politics with care. The consort who was too bold and independent could be seen as a political threat, and the penalty for this was isolation, even banishment. If the female consort was barren, the situation was hardly better.

The British monarchical model brought local challenges to be navigated. Court and elite culture in Britain functioned differently from European courtly tradition. There was a small number of noble families, which, at court, joined a political and social elite who were persons of quality, but not noble. The different ranks had no choice but to encounter and work with each other. There was no Versailles – indeed the royal palaces in London hardly matched the grandeur of many European noble, let alone royal or imperial residences.

Yet Britain enjoyed the most successful economy in eighteenth-century Europe. It excelled at trade, and this led to its colonial ambition. From much of the period between 1714 and 1800, Britain was at war, furthering territorial expansion, largely victoriously, with the notable
exception of the American War of Independence. New colonies became lucrative exclusive markets for British produced commodities, especially the North American colonies with their burgeoning populations of European and African descent, as well as sources of tropical foodstuffs and exotic manufactured goods for the motherland. If the Hanoverian consort had ambition to link the new dynasty with all-important national interests, engaging with its commercial base would be key.

To balance the restraints that their gender, familial politics and etiquette imposed on their agendas, there were also factors which opened up opportunities for the British consort not available to many of their European counterparts. Since the Interregnum in the seventeenth century, the traditional injunctions that women should be chaste, silent and obedient had been undermined by a generation which wrote, preached and even petitioned Parliament. Such female participation in the public sphere – even political sphere too, through the antics of the royal bedchamber – brought proto-feminist reference to ‘the equality of women’s merits and rights with the man’ in 1669.1 In 1676, William Ramesay suggested that women were wittier, and potentially better governors than men, and therefore should be educated to fulfil that potential.2 Importantly, as Elisabeth Charlotte, Duchess of Orléans, observed from the French Court, Britain had a tradition of female rulers.3 In most of the monarchies of continental Europe, Salic Law denied women the right to sit on the throne. In England, Salic Law did not apply. George I had succeeded Queen Anne, who in turn had succeeded her sister Mary II, who ruled jointly with her cousin William III. Queen Elizabeth I was revered as the bright star of the Tudor dynasty. British consorts lucky enough to achieve good rapport with their husbands and early successes in bearing healthy children, immediately started to accrue advantage. With affection and trust from their spouses, they won a level of influence in the management of family politics, and might even achieve varying degrees of more overtly political power too.

The Eighteenth-Century Hanoverian Queen Consorts

It is my intention to explore how Caroline of Ansbach, her daughter-in-law, Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, and Augusta’s daughter-in-law, Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, three generations of royal women from Germany, chosen to marry the men who ruled Great Britain in the long eighteenth
century played their part in the process of embedding the new regime. I will examine how their projects contributed to the creation of a sense of Britishness within the wider community, and how this in its turn established the building blocks for a new resilient model for monarchy for future generations.

Caroline, born in 1683, was daughter of John Frederick, Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach and his second wife, Eleanore of Saxe-Eisenach (Fig. 1). Following the death of her father, the family moved to Dresden on Eleanore’s marriage to Johann George IV, Elector of Saxony in 1692. This unhappy alliance ended two years later when Johann George died of smallpox. Eleanore died two years later and Caroline, orphaned, was despatched to live with new guardians, Frederick III, Elector of Brandenburg, first King in Prussia from 1701, and his wife Sophia Charlotte of Hanover, in Berlin.

In Berlin, Caroline received extraordinary academic stimulation, and was introduced to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, John Toland, Pierre Bayle, George Friedrich Handel and other members of the lively intellectual circle, encouraged by her guardians. Rejecting a marriage arrangement with Archduke Charles of Habsburg, later Holy Roman Emperor, on confessional grounds, she agreed to a match with George Augustus, Electoral Prince of Hanover in 1705. Caroline would bear seven children who survived to adulthood, two sons, and five daughters, amply fulfilling that essential responsibility.

In 1714, on the accession of George I, Caroline made her first contribution to the smooth integration of the new regime, simply by assuming the role of senior woman at court. Following the breakdown of the marriage of George I, his wife Sophia Dorothea remained under house arrest in Celle. The new king had arrived in London in the company of his mistress, Ehrengard Melusine von der Schulenburg, and his half-sister Sophia Charlotte von Kielmansegg, an arrangement his new compatriots found confusing. Caroline’s status at court, as wife to the heir to the throne was unambiguous, and her openness and good humour brought a liveliness and energy to ceremonial occasions.

George Augustus succeeded his father in 1727, as King George II. Caroline, having gained the trust of her often fractious spouse was immediately drawn into political discussions. The King sought her advice and trusted her judgement, leaving her as regent entrusted with all ‘matters domestic’, when he travelled to Hanover. Even when he was in the country, he allowed her influence, especially over ecclesiastical affairs. Contemporary satirists were quick to identify her sway over her
Fig. 1. Jacopo Amigoni. Caroline Wilhelmina of Brandenburg-Ansbach, 1735, oil on canvas. © National Portrait Gallery, London
husband. During the riots which took place in London in reaction to the Excise Bill of 1735, it was Caroline’s effigy, not the King’s, which was burnt alongside that of Robert Walpole, the First Minister. However, Caroline only lived ten years as queen consort before dying of septicaemia in 1737 at the age of fifty-seven.

George II died in 1760 and was succeeded by his grandson, George III, who married Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz in 1761 (Fig. 2). Born in Mirow, in the duchy of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, in contemporary Northern Germany, in 1744, she was the second daughter of Duke Charles Louis and his wife Elizabeth of Saxe-Hildburghausen. Despite the relatively modest circumstances of her upbringing, she enjoyed a well-rounded education. From 1760 until her marriage, she was a secular canoness at the imperial abbey of Hervoden, and may have imagined she would remain unmarried and become abbess. However, her age, favourable reputation and Protestant credentials brought her to George III’s attention.

Fig. 2. Johan Zoffany, Queen Charlotte with her Two Eldest Sons, c. 1765, oil on canvas. © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2019
Charlotte too was fortunate. Her marriage proved a perfect fit, and she enjoyed a happy life with her husband. They shared many interests—art, science, music and theatre, as well as a deep religious faith. Fanny Burney, whose relationship with Queen Charlotte is discussed in more detail in Beatrijs Vanacker’s chapter, said of the rapport between George III and Charlotte: ‘The King seems to admire as much as he enjoys her conversation, and to covet her participation in everything he either sees and or hears – their behaviour to each other speaks the most cordial confidence and happiness […]’. Like Caroline, Charlotte had success at bearing healthy children; the couple had nine sons and six daughters. However, in October 1788, George III had his first mental and physiological collapse. The episode was acutely distressing and brought Charlotte an unasked-for prominence in political affairs. The terms of the government’s Regency Bill in 1789 allowed Charlotte control of the King’s person and household. She wrested control of the dissemination of information about the husband’s condition from her eldest son, George, expressed strong views about the choice of doctors brought in to treat him and to an extent dictated their appointment. The King’s illness recurred in 1801, 1804 and, after 1811, he was so mentally unstable, as well as rendered almost blind due to cataracts, that he was confined, in seclusion, to his own apartment at Windsor Castle. She used her agency during this time to maintain sufficient continuity of procedure and personnel that, should her husband recover, he would be able to resume his duties swiftly. The pathos of her situation – information about the King’s illness was avidly reported by the press – brought her massive popular sympathy. On the King’s recovery in 1789, one hundred and sixty loyal addresses were sent to Charlotte specifically. For others, her actions were interpreted as evidence of a latent hunger for power. Charlotte died in 1818, and was buried at Windsor where her husband continued to reside. He outlived her by two years.

George III set the parameters within which his wife conducted her activities and projects, in the knowledge of the consequences of power politics in which his mother had engaged. George’s mother was Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, born in 1719, the thirteenth child of Frederick II, Duke of Saxe-Gotha, and his wife Magdelena of Anhalt-Zerbst (Fig. 3). Her marriage prospects had initially seemed inauspicious, but George II was under pressure to find a bride for his rebellious eldest son, Frederick, Prince of Wales, who had arrived in London from Hanover in 1728, estranged from his parents after many years of separation. Frederick’s
interest in his father’s position had created an immediate tension, and he was swiftly courted by the political opposition. Augusta impressed George II with her affability, good sense and dynastic pedigree within one of the small constellations of northern European protestant courts. She was married to Frederick in 1736.

Fiercely loyal to and supportive of her husband, Augusta managed astutely to navigate a course between Frederick’s court and that of her father-in-law George II. She would, however, never become queen consort. After Frederick’s death in 1751, she acted with incisiveness, destroying evidence of her involvement in oppositional politics, before petitioning her father-in-law for the right to continue the supervision of the education of her children, a charge that would ensure that, as a widow, she retained a toehold in the political position of the dynasty. However, subsequently, her influence over the children, especially over her eldest son George, the future King George III, came to be seen as self-serving and malign, and in her last years, to escape a reputation as a political schemer, she retreated from public life. Augusta died in 1772.
Caroline’s, Augusta’s and Charlotte’s knowledge of female-generated salon culture, their appreciation of their dynastic capital and the politics of visual display, as well as of German approaches to philanthropy grounded in Pietist philosophy, underpinned their agendas as consorts. They deployed their purchasing power, and more importantly bestowed prestige through their acquisitions and endorsement, firstly to facilitate the transition to Hanoverian rule and build loyalty for the new dynasty, before turning to the building of nationhood and furthering British interests in the wider world. The arenas which could serve as showcases were their homes, gardens, the court occasions over which they presided and even their persons.

Celebrating a British Pedigree

Arguably for Caroline, senior woman at court as the Hanoverian dynasty succeeded the Stuarts, the embedding of the new regime was the greatest priority. New supporters were won as her enthusiasm and energy brought new dynamism, indeed glamour, to court ceremonial, and her young family were flaunted as evidence of the resilience of the regime. In addition, programmes of visual display were set up within the royal homes and gardens to express more explicit political messages, designed to celebrate connections between the House of Hanover and the British monarchy. However, Caroline’s early promotional projects met with mixed success. This was in part consequence of her giving equal weight to romantic mythical histories connected to the British monarchy pivoting around the legend of King Arthur, and contemporary historical debate following recent archaeological excavations at Stonehenge, Avebury and other sites. Merlin’s Cave, a folly pavilion she commissioned in about 1731 from the architect William Kent for the grounds of the country house Richmond Lodge, was called a ‘cave’, while it was, in fact, a thatched cottage with dramatic beehive-shaped roofs. Andrews Jelfe, the builder, though certainly familiar with archaeological sites with Arthurian association, seems to have taken inspiration from popular Druidical imagery in the detail of the structure too. A lawn was laid in front its entrance on which traditional English country dancing was encouraged, adding to its incongruities (Fig. 4).
The iconographic programme selected by Caroline for the interior was also muddled. Waxwork tableaux were installed, in which mythic characters confronted figures drawn from British history; the magician Merlin and his secretary were placed beside Queen Elizabeth I and her nurse. Nearby stood Queen Elizabeth of York and another figure described variously as Minerva, Britannia or Britomart, the ‘warlike Britonesse’ from Edmund Spenser’s epic poem *Faerie Queene*, imagining a romantic chivalric history for the Tudor dynasty. However, it was just as likely that the figure was intended as Bradamante, the heroine of Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*, an alternative rendering of the Arthurian myth in which Merlin’s prophesies anticipate future glory for the House of D’Este and, by extension, their Guelph ancestors. Henry the Lion from the House of Guelph had married Matilda, the daughter of the English King Henry II in 1158, and the House of Hanover too...
claimed descent from this dynasty, drawing the histories of Hanover and Britain together.\footnote{10}

Merlin’s Cave was almost universally criticized by visitors to the royal garden. Not only was its message obscure, but the use of wax was deemed inappropriate for serious royal commemoration. Even George II took Caroline to task for indulging in such ‘childish silly stuff’.\footnote{11} Caroline’s second sculpture commission in celebration of the dynasty, made by Michael Wright in 1735, was designed to avoid earlier misjudgement.\footnote{12} The inventories of her book collections serve as evidence of her concern to learn more about the history of her new homeland, especially the history of Queen Elizabeth I and other Tudor predecessors, and Wright was tasked to make a thoroughly researched series of portrait busts of Caroline’s royal forebears. The subjects, including King Alfred, the Black Prince, Henry VII and Elizabeth I, were selected for their contributions to the construction of the British constitutional monarchy. To ensure historical authenticity, the artist was encouraged to mine the collection of royal portraits recently reassembled in the palaces as source material for his work.\footnote{13} The statuary would adorn her new library at St James’s Palace.\footnote{14}

On the accession of George II, failing to find a ‘Line of Kings’ portrait series, Caroline had, through gifts and purchase – she was even prepared to ‘beg’ the owners of medieval and early Tudor royal portraits to relinquish these works – ensured that the pictures hang celebrating the royal line were installed in public spaces in all the royal homes.\footnote{15} The prominent display of images of the family of King James I, and his family in particular, as well as the present generation of Hanoverians underlined the links between the Houses of Hanover and England. Caroline’s picture closet, installed at Kensington Palace in 1735, represented in the mass display of small-scale paintings, enamels and miniatures, a veritable visual family tree of British and European dynastic connection. Holbein’s striking drawings of members of the Tudor court and portraits of Queen Elizabeth I, representing the royal predecessors of greatest distinction, were hung high as a frieze round the room.\footnote{16} Miniatures of Caroline’s infant children completed the narrative.

Caroline’s cabinet of curiosities, which also occupied rooms at Kensington Palace, containing coins, medals, virtuoso metalwork and exotic naturalia, as typical of the cabinet of a member of a European ruling family, would eventually include material retrieved from archaeological excavation in Rutlandshire as the historical research
behind her projects became more rigorous. Her library contained the works of William Stukeley, physician, clergyman and passionate antiquary, a driving force behind the re-founding of the Society of Antiquaries and pioneer of British field archaeology.

Conservation programmes promoted by Caroline were further evidence of Hanoverian investment in their new responsibility and benefitted both the ancient seats and the venerable treasures of royal predecessors. William Kent was instructed to manage the conservation of Antonio Verrio’s wall paintings on the west wall of St George’s Hall at Windsor Castle illustrating the Black Prince’s triumphs, as well as the King’s Great Staircase and the Communication Gallery there. At Hampton Court, Kent made repairs to the Queen’s Staircase. The royal tour of the Banqueting House at Whitehall had revealed the delicate state of the magnificent ceiling canvasses painted by Peter Paul Rubens in 1636. A programme of conservation was personally monitored by Caroline and George, with Caroline climbing the scaffolding tower ‘forty foot high’ in 1734 to inspect the work. Comparable care was taken following the re-marshalling of Tudor and Stuart collections of jewels, gems, medals and miniatures that were by turn cleaned, conserved, reset and redisplayed.

The urgent imperative which drove Caroline’s dynastic promotional projects had mitigated somewhat by the time Charlotte became queen consort, but she too connected to the past in many ways, through her print collecting, the production of written catalogues and of ‘Grangerized’ books, in which research and printed illustration were brought together to construct attractive and compelling historical narrative. To inform such projects, she maintained book collections with many historical works. While only thirty-five percent of the books in Caroline’s libraries were in English, in Charlotte’s library the proportion rose to over fifty percent, indicating that although she was an able linguist, fluent in many European languages, the Hanoverians had made steady progress in negotiating a British identity in the hundred years after 1714.

Augusta, though never queen consort, was, importantly, mother of a king. After the death of Frederick, Prince of Wales, she commissioned a family portrait by George Knapton in 1751, in which, enthroned, she presides over the next royal generation. She emphasizes the distinction of her pedigree by integrating a portrait of her husband and the figure of Britannia (see Fig. 4). She followed Caroline in her interest in archaeology. After William Stukeley undertook an excavation within the grounds of her country house at Kew, the White Lodge, they discussed
the purpose of the finds, which he identified as Druidic ‘instruments’. His 1763 book on Stonehenge, *Palaeographia Sacra*, was dedicated to her, ‘Veleda, Archdruidess of Kew’, connecting Augusta with the mythical Germanic prophetess described in Tacitus’s ‘Histories’, as analyzed by Elisabeth Krimmer in her chapter in this volume. 23

**Promoting the Interests of Britain and Empire**

British attachment to trade and empire posed a challenge for the three German-born Princesses. Raised in courts where the ruling family’s intervention in support of state industry was usually expected, they joined a monarchy with a severely constrained freedom of action. Yet their new country was one of the richest in Europe, its court considerably wealthier than those they left behind, with its government intent on international economic supremacy, and the population convinced of their nation’s commercial destiny. As members of a royal dynasty that periodically had to justify itself in the face of opposition, the princesses demonstrated their commitment to their new homeland by persuading their compatriots of a shared patriotic interest in the nation’s industrial and imperial progress.

British territorial acquisition built steadily during the eighteenth century. The Peace of Utrecht, in 1713, had ensured the continued possession of Britain’s holdings in the Indian subcontinent, enlarged the empire to incorporate French domains in North America and Spanish territories in the Mediterranean, and had granted to Britain a monopoly on the slave trade that provided forced human labour to fuel the empire’s agrarian prosperity. In the later eighteenth century, Britain experienced substantial losses in North America through the creation of the United States of America – but also saw significant territorial expansion across Canada, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, China and Australia. It was these colonies which served as breadbaskets for raw materials and labour to fuel British industrial ambition, as well as providing markets for the products of that industry.

As they sought to champion Britain’s trading and industrial ambitions, the Princesses deployed both their purchasing power and the prestige of their imprimatur. Members of the royal family were expected to dress magnificently, and the Princesses’ choice of textiles became an important signal of their patronage. Local manufacturers from London, the nation and regions were first to benefit, with Caroline championing lace from
craftsmen in the Midlands, textiles from Ireland, and was celebrated ‘in her home-wrought Silks’ as ‘the British QUEEN’. Augusta and Charlotte conspicuously wore silks woven in Spitalfields in London and from the 1740s, Augusta and Frederick indeed required all attending their court to wear British-made clothing. However, royal support was given to the productions of colonial enterprise too. Caroline, in 1736, wore silk woven from raw silk produced in Georgia in America, and later Augusta’s enthusiastic support of textile ventures would lead Eliza Pinkney, a plantation owner from Charleston, to London in 1753, with the intention of lobbying the Princess for her interest in her own slave-raised silk and indigo cultivation.

The royal homes also became the stages on which royal patronage and promotion was evidenced and performed. Their furnishings included cotton, woollen and silk textiles; decorative metalwork, clocks and watches; furniture ranging from tea stands, to mahogany tables and ivory dining chairs; earthenwares from British manufactories; and fine porcelain from East Asia. In about 1765 Johan Zoffany was commissioned to paint Queen Charlotte with Her Two Eldest Sons (see Fig. 2). He depicted Charlotte seated at her dressing table in Buckingham House, her children at her feet, surrounded by the stuff of her life. The royal accounts confirm that the lace trimming the dressing table came from Flanders, the carpet was Turkish, the silver-gilt toilet service was probably German and framing the Queen are Chinese lacquer figures. Through the window a flamingo can be seen strolling through the garden. Her boudoir was the global world in microcosm.

Just as eagerly as the Princesses acquired scientific instruments – measures and weights, microscopes, magic lanterns – to satisfy their own curiosity and benefit the educational programmes devised for their children, they engaged with new experimental scientific and technological initiatives in the wider world. Caroline claimed Sir Isaac Newton, the lion of English science, championing him over his European rival Gottfried Leibniz, and drawing him from Cambridge to the Court to perform his experiments as spectacle. Charlotte made purchases from industrial innovators such as Matthew Boulton and Josiah Wedgwood. Wedgwood and Charlotte forged a symbiotic relationship between their agendas – Charlotte agreed that his newly perfected mid-priced cream-coloured earthenware could be renamed Queens Ware, thereby ensuring that her name travelled as widely as the products from his highly successful international business.
Drawing on their figurative claim to be mothers not just to their children but also to the nation and empire, they embraced opportunities to engage publically with peoples from Britain’s colonies. Information about Caroline’s reception, in 1734, of a delegation from the Yamacraw nation in the American state of Georgia, brought to London by James Oglethorpe on behalf of the Trustees of Georgia, circulated widely. Omai, a native from Tahiti, who arrived in England aboard the *Adventure* in 1774, on the return of Captain James Cook’s second Pacific voyage, was the second native Pacific Islander to visit Europe, and was promptly introduced to Charlotte by his patron, Sir Joseph Banks.

The purpose of the palaces as entrepôts of nation and empire spilled into the royal gardens under the Princesses’ charge, especially those developed around the royal houses which lined the river Thames at Kew. Caroline, from 1719, began developing the estate around Richmond Lodge into a templed landscape which, while it celebrated Anglo-Hanoverian dynastic connections and encouraged a pride in nationhood above other agendas, also revealed her interest in botany. She corresponded with Sir Hans Sloane on matters of plant identification. In 1729, when the naturalist Mark Catesby began to publish the first overarching natural history of Britain’s colonies, *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands*, he was granted an audience to present her with the first part, consisting of twenty plates and their associated texts. When he completed the first volume in 1731, he dedicated it to the Queen. The second volume of his *Natural History* (1743) was dedicated to Augusta, who had followed in Caroline’s footsteps as a student of natural history, partnering with her husband, Frederick, Prince of Wales, in the development of the grounds of the White House, their country house located adjacent to Richmond Lodge, which had been acquired in 1730. Following Frederick’s death, encouraged by his associate, John Stuart, third Earl of Bute, and the architect William Chambers, the plans for the garden were embellished and completed. It too was populated with pavilions but this time cast to reflect and celebrate the architecture of empire, including an ‘alhambra’, a mosque and a pagoda.

The living stuff of the first empire in the Americas gave way to material from the second empire in the East in the gardens in which Charlotte had an interest, at Buckingham Palace, Frogmore and especially at Kew. Through the aegis of the naturalist Sir Joseph Banks, eventually appointed director of the garden at Kew in 1797, plants from India, Africa, the Caribbean, the Iberian coast, New England and Canada were
drawn in following plant-hunting expeditions by William Roxbrugh and Francis Masson. Exotic animals were also transported to Britain from the far reaches of the globe. One of the most famous was Queen Charlotte’s African zebra, satirized as the ‘Queen’s Ass’. The first living specimen of its kind to reach Britain, the zebra was a gift from Sir Thomas Adams, Commander of H.M.S. Terpsichore, who acquired the animal in South Africa in 1762 (Fig. 5). Immediately upon her arrival in Britain, the zebra was added to the Royal Menagerie at Buckingham Palace. George Stubbs portrayed her in 1763 in a series of paintings of royal animals, including the nilgai, painted in 1769–1770, to which he probably gained access through Charlotte’s physician, William Hunter, with whom he was engaged in the study of comparative anatomy.

Fig. 5. George Stubbs, Zebra, 1763, oil on canvas. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B1981.25.617
Building a Healthy Nation

For the European elite, from both a religious and social standpoint, philanthropy had long been seen as more than a mark of power; it was also a responsibility for any person of rank. It attested to their nobility quite as much as other courtly pursuits, and importantly, it was a sphere in which women particularly could exercise agency and contribute to national improvement.33

In the Protestant German states in which Caroline, Augusta and Charlotte were raised, models of charity were conditioned by Pietist philosophy, which encouraged individual rather than communal religious observance and put new value on living an active Christian life and doing good works. The Princesses’ Pietist leanings proved to be a good fit with new methods of charitable organization under construction in Britain, which explored alternatives to religious models. Their philanthropic engagement eventually assisted the better integration of English and Scottish peoples, and encouraged moral imperialism. Perhaps most importantly, they supported initiatives which sought to build a healthy and plentiful workforce in support of the commercial and imperial ambitions of their new homeland. In this, their knowledge of particular contemporary German charitable initiatives would prove crucial. The Thirty Years War (1618–1648), which was partly a religious civil war between Protestant and Catholic forces in Europe and partly a struggle between Germany’s ruling dynasties over territorial authority and independence, had a devastating impact on population numbers in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Europe. In the wake of the war, Pietist adherents had turned to champion concerns that enabled better access to medical services, and to address the nurturing of infants and children in the interest of rebuilding the nation.

All three princesses demonstrated a marked interest in – even enthusiasm for – promoting initiatives that helped women. The raising of a healthy family was the principal charge of the royal consort and their projects started with the exploration of safer practices in childbirth, as well as measures to prevent infant mortality in their own family before helping to promote better practice in society at large. Dr William Hunter, Charlotte’s physician extraordinary in 1762, played a leading role in advancing the study of obstetrics. His reputation now rests largely on his extraordinary anatomical publication, Anatomia Uteri Gravidis Tabulis Illustrata/The anatomy of the human uterus exhibited in figures, by William Hunter, physician extraordinary to the Queen, professor in the Royal
Academy, and Fellow of the Royal and Antiquarian Societies, which he had been working on since the 1750s, though it appeared only in 1774. The book, referencing Charlotte in its title, included thirty-four prints that were the most naturalistic images of a foetus within the uterus produced to that date (Fig. 6).
Anticipating the birth of her fourth child, born in 1766, the Queen dismissed the royal midwife and placed herself entirely in the care of Hunter. This appears to have been the first time a royal mother went through labour with a male physician delivering the child, breaking traditional gendered expectations of the role of the birth attendant, and transforming gender politics around royal childbirth – the crucial function of the consort for the future generations. Charlotte championed initiatives which supported women through pregnancy and childbirth in wider society and promoted medical practices that benefitted women’s health more generally. Very soon after her arrival in London, she informally began to support a maternity hospital called the Lying-in Hospital, later Queen Charlotte’s Hospital, originally founded on Jermyn Road in 1739 by Sir Richard Manningham. It relocated to St Marylebone in 1752. She eventually became its royal patron in 1809. She took interest in Westminster Hospital, the House of Refuge for Orphan Girls, founded in 1758 by Sir John Fielding and the Magdalen Hospital for the Reception of Penitent Prostitutes, of which she became the royal patron in 1765. The royal seal of approval enabled this last institution ‘to triumph over the prejudices raised against it in the public mind’. Institutions such as the House of Refuge and Magdalen Hospital were not, strictly speaking, state institutions, but associated charities that were not distinctly religious denominational, took a variety of patients and had a flexibility that broke the strictures of existing state comparators.

In the interest of protecting her children, whose health underpinned the longevity of the dynasty, Caroline championed experiments into the efficacy of inoculation against smallpox. Contagious and frequently fatal, she was acutely aware that the illness had recently decimated three generations of the French royal family. When Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, wife of the British ambassador in Constantinople, arrived at court in London claiming success for the procedure she had encountered as part of Middle Eastern medical practice, Caroline, encouraged by royal physician Hans Sloane, persuaded George I to grant approval for the embassy surgeon in Constantinople, Dr Charles Maitland, to conduct experiments using prisoners and orphans. All survived. In 1722, convinced of its safety, Caroline arranged for her younger children to undergo the same procedure. The success of this was widely publicized and subsequently, in 1724, Caroline sent Maitland to Hanover to inoculate Prince Frederick, their heir apparent.

Caroline was lauded by the medical fraternity for her role in helping to promote inoculation and, by mid-century, the procedure had
widespread acceptance. Richard Holland’s 1728 ‘Observations on the small pox: or, an essay to discover a more effectual method of cure’ was dedicated to her. Augusta and Charlotte would later have their children inoculated too. After two of Charlotte’s children, two-year-old Alfred and four-year-old Octavius, died in 1782 from its side effects, Charlotte took interest in Dr Edward Jenner’s experiments with vaccination in the later eighteenth century. This was a less risky procedure using the related but milder cowpox virus to build immunity, rather than the smallpox virus proper. Charlotte first met Jenner in 1800 and in 1814 agreed to become patron of a campaign to draw up a testimonial in his honour, to be signed by mothers throughout the country whose families had been saved from illness and disfigurement by the practice he pioneered.37

One of German Pietism’s expressions had been in the founding of orphanages and institutions for abandoned children, such as August Hermann Francke’s home for foundlings established in 1698 in Halle in Saxony. As she knew of this venture from her early years, Caroline was receptive to the ambition of Thomas Coram to establish a Foundling Hospital in London. It fulfilled a very real need in eighteenth-century London, where England’s Poor Law provision, established in the sixteenth century, struggled to cover the increasingly complex needs of urban society conditioned by war, disease, emigration, infanticide and child desertion. High mortality rates, especially those amongst infants, put the state at risk of losing some of the most crucial participants in its society: sailors, soldiers, agricultural workers and domestic staff. For the infants consigned to the Hospital by mothers who were unable to care for them, an education in a trade was envisioned – its philosophy was to build a productive citizenry.

Caroline pragmatically initiated the gathering of research from a distinguished European Catholic model, the Hôpital des Enfants-Trouvés in Paris, to support Coram’s plan. While the report presumably provided useful intelligence for the Foundling Hospital administrators, augmenting the knowledge of the Halle institution held by other champions of Coram’s project, it would only be published in 1739, two years after Caroline’s death. However, her successors, Augusta and Charlotte, were willing and able to have practical involvement and to give financial support.38 The Foundling Hospital, like the Lying-In Hospital and House of Refuge, was an early example of what we might now call a ‘commercial charity’ – a philanthropic organization dedicated to the common good, but only semi-official and relying significantly on non-
state support for its financial and managerial well-being. Its marketing techniques were drawn from the commercial world. With the hospital as much a public spectacle for London’s well-to-do as it was a strictly charitable foundation, the Princesses attended concerts which took place there and took interest in its art collections, with the intention that others would soon follow their example.

Caroline of Ansbach, Augusta of Saxe-Gotha and Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz enjoyed far more than simply maternal success. As royal consorts, having won a degree of agency after establishing a trustful bond with their husbands, their work to support their husbands, and in support of the monarchy, was conducted with imagination, energy and confidence, eventually touching the interests of the nation and empire. Their contributions were grounded in a knowledge of Frenchified court culture, of learning, conversation and debate, and in a tradition of pious good works and approaches to philanthropy based in Pietist philosophy of the German Enlightenment. In their new homeland, this served to facilitate the integration of the Hanoverian regime, to promote national commercial and trading ambition at home and in the world, and to help build, quite literally, a healthy nation. In their fulfilment of this, they began to identify a practical role that the monarchy could assume within the framework of national government after the growth in ministerial authority circumscribed the King’s room for manoeuvre as the eighteenth century progressed. As the monarch’s powers declined, it became gradually easier to distinguish between monarch and minister, and to celebrate the former without owing allegiance to the latter. The Princesses helped to create a province in which the monarchy could be recast as the nation’s moral conscience and heart. It was a role which was solidly patriotic but non-party political. It was under Queen Victoria that the process of the domestication – the feminization of the institution of monarchy – a ‘Welfare Monarchy’ – was completed.

Notes


7 The accounts were signed, marking the completion of the building of Merlin’s Cave on 1 August 1735, see TNA. Thatching of Merlin’s Cave see TNA. Works 4/4 22 December 1730.


9 As Princess of Wales in 1715, Caroline presided over a rural sports day at Hampton Court at which local boys and girls competed for prizes of smocks, petticoats and hoods, see *Political State of Great Britain* (London, 1716), pp. 139–140. She learnt traditional country dances, such as the Hemp Dressers, which she introduced into court celebrations, see Mary Granville, Mrs Delany, *Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delany*, series I, vol. 3, ed. Lady Llanover (London: Richard Bentley, 1861), pp. 191–192; Sarah Churchill, *Letters of a Grandmother, being the correspondence between Sarah Duchess of Marlborough with her granddaughter Diana Duchess of Bedford*, ed. G.S. Thomson (London: Jonathan Cape, 1943), pp. 171–172.

10 In the eleventh century, this house had split into two branches: the elder was known as the House of Welf-Este, usually referred to as simply the House of Welf or Guelph; the younger as the House of Fulc-Este. The House of Guelph went on to produce the dukes of Bavaria, the dukes of Saxony and significantly the dukes of Brunswick-Lüneburg.


14 Joanna Marschner, ‘Michael Rysbrack’s Sculpture Series for Queen Caroline’s Library at St James’s Palace’, in *Burning Bright: Essays in Honour*


16 George Vertue and Horace Walpole, A catalogue of the collection of pictures etc. belonging to King James the Second; to which is added a catalogue of the pictures and drawings in the closet of the late Queen Caroline … (London: William Bathoe, 1758).

17 For a description of the condition of the King’s Staircase, see TNA. T.56/18, p. 352 and TNA.Works 4/4, 7 July 1730. Further accounts relating to conservation projects undertaken by Kent are found in Calendar of Treasury Books and Papers, 1729–1730, p. 402, Calendar of Treasury Books and Papers, 1731–1734, p. 63, p. 65 and p. 89. TNA. AO1/2453/164, TNA. AO1/2453/165, TNA. Works 4/4 April 1731 and TNA. Works 4/7 July 1736.

18 Following the report he presented in May 1734, Kent was paid £450 in 1735 for the conservation of the Queen’s Staircase at Hampton Court Palace. TNA. Works 5/141, 1735.

19 BL. Ms Rawlinson D540.


26 Johann Zoffany, *Queen Charlotte (1744–1818) with Her Two Eldest Sons*, c. 1765, oil on canvas. RCIN 400146.


34 Lady Mary Coke, in her diary for 14 September 1766, wrote ‘The Queen was to be brought to bed by Dr. Hunter instead of the old woman but that it was to be kept a secret as if the fate of the country depended on this change.’ Quoted in C. Helen Brock, *The Correspondence of Dr William Hunter, 1740–83*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 243. Lisa Forman Cody, *Birthing the Nation: Sex, Science, and the Conception of Eighteenth-Century Britons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 215.
35 See ‘A List of the Guardians’, in An account of the institution, and proceedings of the guardians, of the asylum or house of refuge, situated on the Surry side of Westminster Bridge, for the reception of orphan girls residing within the bills of mortality, whose settlements cannot be found (London: Asylum for Orphan Girls, 1761), pp. 27–33.


38 An Account of the Foundation and Government of the Hospital for Foundlings in Paris, drawn up at the Command of her late Majesty Queen Caroline, and now published for the Information of those who may be concern’d in carrying on a like Design in this City (London: R. Montagu, 1739); John Styles, Threads of Feeling: The London Foundling Hospital’s textile Tokens, 1740–1770 (London: Foundling Museum, 2010).

39 Foundling Hospital, The Royal charter establishing a hospital for the maintenance and education of exposed and deserted young children (London, 1740).