

Theatricality and Restoration: the Re-construction of Royalty

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Abstract

The two artefacts under discussion in this article are the fourth Triumphal Arch, constructed in London for the coronation of Charles II in 1661, and the Killigrew Patent, one of two Royal patents drawn up in 1662 to formalize the rights, given to Thomas Killigrew (1612-1683) and William Davenant (1606-1668) exclusively, to build and run theatres in London. I propose to explore the significance of pageantry, spectacle and theatre during and immediately following the Restoration in 1660 and in particular how these artefacts impacted on the manipulation of the perception of restored monarchy.

It took King Charles II about five hours to process from the Tower to Whitehall on the pre-coronation day of 22 April 1661. A spectacular cavalcade embracing declamations, music, song, dance and architecture, with hundreds of pedestrian and mounted figures resplendent in rich clothes. The personae are listed in minute detail by the diarist and writer John Evelyn in his entry for that day,¹ and faithfully represented in a painting by the Dutch artist Dirck Stoop (Figure 1), court painter to the Princess Catherine of Braganza, who came to the English court in 1662. This painting puts the Triumphal Arches into context.



Figure 1. Dirck Stoop (1615-1686) *Coronation Procession of Charles II to Westminster from the Tower of London, 22 April 1661*. 1662, oil on canvas. © The Museum of London, UK.

The king processes into the centre of the picture, dressed in elaborate, ceremonial robes on a large, grey horse. There is a direct field of view straight to the King, on the only grey, unimpeded by foot followers, clearly prominent he is the subject of most importance. Evelyn describes this joyous occasion:

This magnificent Traine on horseback, as rich *Embroidery, velvet, Cloth of Gold & Silk* and Jewells could make them & their pransing Horses, proceeded thro the streetes, strew'd with flowers, houses hung with rich *Tapissry* ... The Fountaines running wine, bells ringing.²

Throughout the proceedings magnificence, pomp and luxury were designed to reflect the innate glory of kingship, situating onlookers in the position of subjects, an audience overawed by the spectacle and lavish excess of Royalty. Stoop has included all four of

¹ John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. by E.S. Beer, (London: Everyman's Library, 2006), 23.4.1662, p. 383. Further references will be to, Evelyn, *Diary*.

² Evelyn, *Diary*, p. 384.

the triumphal arches, through which Charles passed, marking the jurisdiction, and underlying the importance of the city. The arches were constructed for the occasion by Peter Mills (1598-1670) and Sir Balthazar Gerbier (1592-1663). Mills, an English architect and surveyor, seems to have taken the lead;³ Gerbier was something of a polymath, a Dutch courtier, diplomat, architectural designer, one-time Master of Ceremonies for Charles I,⁴ and contentiously, also a traitor.⁵ John Ogilby (1600-1676) publisher, geographer, cartographer, royalist and one time-theatre owner and master of the revels for the Earl of Strafford, was appointed to be the author of the *Entertainment* and penned the speeches and poetry that were declaimed at each arch.⁶ The classical design of the arches owes something to the classical elements in the early Stuart masques of Inigo Jones and Ben Jonson, and looking further back, perhaps also to James I, whose seven coronation arches with classical features contained references to Virgil, and whose accession appeared to herald a new golden age, like that of the Emperor Augustus. Conversely, during the Protectorate some poets had appropriated this Augustan imagery and applied it to Cromwell, the poet Edmund Waller (1606-1687) writes in his *Panegyrick* (1655):

As the vex'd World to finde repose at last
Itself into *Augustus* arms did cast:
So *England* now does with like toyle opprest,
Her weary Head upon your Bosome rest.⁷

At significant moments in the national psyche it seems that there is a need to assert legitimacy by establishing links with classical antecedents. Therefore, it seems fitting that the designs of the four arches constructed in celebration of this unique event, the restoration of monarchy, and for Charles's coronation should be steeped in classical imagery, as though seeking to root the new regime in classical tradition in order to create a Stuart mythology.

The arches were constructed of wood, like stage props for the performance of the coronation, designed as architectural ephemera, for the occasion not posterity and now only exist as engravings and in John Ogilby's detailed textual account of the *Entertainment*. The first arch depicts the routing of Rebellion and Confusion by Monarchy and Loyalty; the second, dedicated to the Navy, represents the sea and all things pertaining to a maritime nation; the third arch based on the Temple of Concord, looks to the restoration of the 'Golden Age', with figures representing Peace, Truth and the cardinal virtues⁸ and, once again, highlighting the importance of the City; the fourth and final arch represents the Garden of Plenty (see Figure 2).

This two-storied fourth arch contains columns of both Doric and Ionic orders, although Ogilby admits to some inclination to 'the Modern *Architecture*' in the measure of the capitals.⁹ Highly decorated with garlands of leaves and fruits, it teems with references to abundance. Above the keyblock over the lower arch a decorated, oval shield is inscribed with the words, 'Uberitati AUG. Extincto Belli Civilis Incendio' signifying that Charles

³ John Bold, 'Mills, Peter (*bap.* 1598, *d.* 1670)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, January 2008 <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/37769>, [accessed 21 February 2015].

⁴ James Stevens Curl, *A Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); online edn, <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2232>, [accessed 17 February 2015].

⁵ During the 1630s he sold names of Flemish aristocrats, whom Charles I was trying to help, to the Archduchess Isabella.

⁶ Charles W. J. Withers, 'Ogilby, John (1600–1676)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, Oct 2007 <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/20583>, [accessed 21 February 2015].

⁷ Edmund Waller, *A Panegyrick to my Lord Protector*, 1655 <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2176>, [accessed: 17 February 2015].

⁸ Fortitude, Temperance, Prudence and Justice.

⁹ Ogilby, John (1600-1676) *The Entertainment of his Most Excellent Majestie Charles II in his passage through the city of London to his Coronation.* (London, 1662) <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2176>, [accessed 30 December 2014], image 83, p. 139.

would bring not only the prosperity and plenty of Augustus, but by 'extinguishing the flames of civil war', also the peace. The letters SPQL engraved below the motto are a reference to the letters SPQR which highlighted the role of the senate in Augustus' rule. *Senatus Populusque Londiniensis* SPQL, suggests to the cognoscenti that Charles too will accept an active role of Parliament in his rule.¹⁰



Figure 2. The Fourth Triumphal Arch 1661, designed by Mills and Gerbier
from: John Ogilby, *The entertainment of His Most Excellent Majestie Charles II the city of London*.
This item is reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Merino, California.

Above the left-hand low arch Bacchus, dressed in a panther skin, seated in a chariot drawn by leopards, is crowned with grapes and holding a cup. The painting above, flying on the banner, depicts Silenus, surrounded by 'Drunken' satyres in 'Antick Postures' in a vineyard.¹¹ Above the right-hand low arch Ceres, goddess of agriculture crowned with ears of corn, holding a poppy, signifies harvest and fecundity. Over the south postern, west side, the goddess Flora is garlanded with flowers and holding roses and lilies; opposite, the goddess Pomona garlanded with fruits is holding horticultural tools. The four winds are represented in four niches. The top tier, with its vaulted ceiling and finer

¹⁰ Jenkinson, Matthew, *Culture and Politics at the Court of Charles II*, (Woodbridge, 2010) p. 60.

¹¹ John Ogilby, *The Relation of His Majesties Entertainment Passing Through the City of London to His Coronation* (1661) p. 30. Future references will be to *Relation*.

ionic columns complete with volutes, is richly garlanded and contains the musicians, 'on the two balconies within, are twelve Waits, six Trumpets and three Drums'.¹² Three urns are visible on the edge of the skirted roof, brimming with plants and at the pinnacle of the roof a crowned figure representing Plenty, a palm branch in her right hand a cornucopia in her left.

As Charles approached the arch a human figure representing Plenty addressed him from a stage:

Great sir, the star, which, at Your Happy Birth,
Joy'd with his Beams, at Noon, the wondering Earth
Did with auspicious lustre, then presage
The glitt'ring Plenty of this golden Age:¹³

An unequivocal reference to the hope that 1660 would be the new 27 BC, that Charles II would be the new Caesar Augustus and that this heralded a new 'golden age' where both the arts and trade would flourish. Contrary to the apparent balance of disruption and unity in the representations on the first three arches, it is telling that the fourth arch appears to display unalloyed abundance, even over-indulgence. Offering a stark contrast to Puritan austerity and a prescient view of the Bacchanalian revelry and licentiousness that would come to exemplify Charles II's court.

Charles's return to England had been in some doubt. As late as 3 March 1660 Pepys notes, 'that things are in a very doubtful posture', with rumours abroad that Monck might assume power or even that 'my Lord Protector would come in place again.'¹⁴ Charles needed to, and did, capitalise on the tide of popularity. Many people were keen to seek an alternative form of rule having been disenchanted by the Republican venture. And encouraging the mood of celebration was crucial to the effort to suppress anti-Royalist sentiment voiced, for example, by Milton who expressed his contempt for the English people, 'in this noxious humour of returning to bondage.'¹⁵ The climate of popular opinion would be critical to the re-establishment of the monarchy. Celebrations started whilst Charles was still in Breda and from the time of his arrival in England he stage-managed his progression from Dover to London, ensuring that his formal entry to the capital coincided with his thirtieth birthday. Evelyn talks of the 'inexpressible joy' of the people at Charles's return, effected he notes, 'without one drop of blood, by that very army, which rebell'd against him.'¹⁶ In his wonder of the 'very army' returning to power the son of the king they had decapitated, '[s]uch a restauration was never seene in the mention of any history antient or modern ... this hapning when to expect or effect it, was past all humane policy,'¹⁷ Evelyn is not alone. The positive connotations of a Royal Procession with all its associated pageantry reminded people of the time prior to the turmoil of tyranny, parliamentary government, republican commonwealth and military dictatorship, and from the outset Charles's reign was in sharp contrast to Cromwell's grim puritanism. And for a time the outward pomp disguised the fragility of the Restoration.

Charles, tall, dark, debonair, affable and extrovert, exuded an air of the unabashed laxity that had been on display in Louis XIV's court where he had spent the early part of his exile. On his return to London, theatres, brothels, taverns and racecourses were re-opened, music returned to church galleries and the celebration of traditional festivals, such as Christmas, re-instated. Charles enthusiastically renewed the practice of the thaumaturgic 'King's Touch',¹⁸ a very public, theatrical expression of the power of the

¹² Ogilby, *Relation*, p. 31.

¹³ Ogilby, *Relation*, p. 31.

¹⁴ Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys (1660-1668)* ed. by Latham and Matthews, 11 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970-83), Volume I.

¹⁵ John Milton, 'The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth' (1660) in *The Major Works*, ed. by Orgel and Goldberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 331.

¹⁶ Evelyn, *Diary*, 29th May 1660, p. 370.

¹⁷ Evelyn, *Diary*, p. 370.

¹⁸ A form of laying on of hands, believed to cure scrofula – the monarch was deemed to have divine powers.

anointed king, which may be seen as legitimizing his position through re-mystifying it. It is telling that after the execution of a king, an eleven-year interregnum, anxiety about foreign powers, religious and political instability at home, one of the first things Charles should do as King¹⁹ was to grant licenses to two courtiers to re-open theatres. Significant too that his Coronation robes were used as theatrical costume for the character Prince Alvaro, in Davenant's play *Love and Honour* (1634) in 1661.²⁰ Costume and regalia were as important a part of the visual display in the theatre, as they were for the new King processing through the streets of London.

Thomas Killigrew and William Davenant were authorized, initially by draft Royal Warrant on 19 July 1660, to give performances with scenery and music.²¹ On 25 April 1662 Killigrew was granted this definitive patent (Figure 3) empowering him and his heirs to:



Figure 3. The Killigrew Patent - by kind permission and © The Really Useful Theatre Groups Ltd.

'lawfully, quietly, and peaceably frame, erect, new-build, and set up ...a Theatre or Playhouse, with necessary tiring and retiring rooms, and other places convenient'²² in

¹⁹ Within three months of his return to England.

²⁰ John Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, (London, 1789). Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. University of Oxford. p. 30, image 67. All future refs. to Downes, *R.A.*

<http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2119/>, [accessed 14 February. 2015]

²¹ 'The Killigrew and Davenant Patents', in *Survey of London: Volume 35, the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden*, ed. by F. H. W. Sheppard (London, 1970), pp. 1-8 <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol35/pp1-8>, [accessed 19 February 2015].

²² Text from Killigrew Patent (fig.3).

London, in perpetuity.²³ By these patents, rights were also granted to set ticket prices, employ companies, employ women to play the 'women's parts' and to eject all 'scandalous and mutinous' persons. 'And we do ...declare all other company and companies saving the two companies before mentioned, to be silenced and suppressed.'²⁴ The patents effectively created a duopoly of theatrical rights and, as documents, contribute something to the weaving of a Stuart mythology – dated, prior to the King's signature, as the '14th year of our reign', effectively implying a continuous line of Stuart rule and obliterating the interregnum.

Of the two patents issued only Killigrew's survives, the property of the owners of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane,²⁵ who still exercise their rights under the Patent, which is currently on display at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.²⁶ Killigrew's company was known as the King's Company with links back to Shakespeare's King's Men, from whom they inherited most of the plays. Born into a distinguished family, Killigrew was a page to Charles I and one of Charles II's Grooms of the Bedchamber, he spent the Interregnum in exile with the royal household, writing closet drama to amuse Queen Henrietta Maria. Davenant's company was to be known as The Duke of York's. Davenant, the son of an Oxford innkeeper, playwright and poet also came to enjoy the patronage of the Queen. He was imprisoned between 1650 and 1652 for his Royalist ties. Both men wrote and adapted plays, although Davenant, who had worked with the designer Inigo Jones in the last days of the Caroline Masque extravaganzas, became well known for his innovations in stage technology, including the development of movable scenery. By issuing only two patents to such loyal supporters of the monarchy it ensured, that at least in the early years, the theatre would be loyal to the king.

The Puritan regime closed all theatres and banned dramatic performance on 2 September 1642. Whilst it would be erroneous to assume that all live theatre during this period was restricted to coterie or Royalist theatre, those few producers, Davenant among them, who decided to ignore the ban had to be extremely careful about the choice of material, venue and audience for their 'illegal' performances. Therefore there was a hiatus in new writing during the interregnum and consequently a necessary recourse to reading the works of those playwrights who had achieved the distinction of folio publication. The three pre-existing folios included Ben Jonson's *Workes* (1616), Shakespeare's *Comedies, Tragedies and Histories* (1623) and Beaumont and Fletcher's *Plays* (1647). The period of drama immediately following the Restoration in England is significant for its adaptations of existing plays and may be defined as an era concerned with form. Richard Flecknoe writes in 1664, 'the chief faults of ours, are our huddling too much matter together, and making them too long and intricate... [a] good play she'd be like good stuff, closely and evenly wrought.'²⁷ The desire for balance and symmetry, for form and adherence to the classical unities of action, time and place, can be seen as a reflection on the state of the nation emerging from the turmoil of the Civil War, when, in a period of consolidation and recovery from political trauma, stability was an over-riding concern. And 1660 saw not just the Restoration of Monarchy, but also the restoration of Theatre, and like the monarchy, part of the restoration process is to look back and seek to establish unbroken lines of tradition.

The 1661-2 theatre season records show that out of 58 plays performed only 4 were new, 54 were either un-adapted or adapted versions of existing plays.²⁸ So there appears to be a dichotomy of indulging in a form of cultural conservatism in looking back, and yet simultaneously the renewal of the theatrical past is being adapted and transformed for modern times. The re-construction of royal rule could be seen to be

²³ Davenant's patent was granted 15 January 1662/3.

²⁴ Text from Patent.

²⁵ The Really Useful Theatres Group Ltd.

²⁶ Victoria and Albert Museum Theatre and Performance Collections.

²⁷ Richard Flecknoe, *A Short Discourse of the English Stage* (1664), 4th page, <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2176> image 50, [accessed 22 February 2015].

²⁸ Michael Dobson, 'Adaptations and revivals' in *English Restoration Theatre*, ed. by Deborah Payne Fisk, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 41.

going through similar processes. Influenced by French theatre and continental spectacle experienced by the Court during their exile, and aiming to entertain the King and an audience of courtiers who were used to this level of production, Killigrew and Davenant opted for continental-style roofed theatres where stages were raked, thrust and framed by a proscenium arch.

Jonson's close adherence to the classical unities left his performed works unaltered, seventeen works from the Beaumont and Fletcher stable were substantially re-written for Restoration production,²⁹ but it was Shakespeare's plays that underwent such radical alteration, and especially in the years preceding the Exclusion Crisis. These adaptations were not always received with universal approbation. Flecknoe accused Davenant of the 'spoiling and mangling of [Shakespeare's] Plays.'³⁰ Of the three pre-Civil War folios Shakespeare's plays conformed least to the classical unities, and therefore, as Jonathan Bate suggests, probably required more modernisation.³¹

According to Downes, *Pericles* was the first Shakespearean revival in 1660, followed closely by *Othello* making theatre history with the first female player on stage playing Desdemona. The number of female roles increased in most adaptations, and in Davenant's 1663 version of *Macbeth* the roles of Lady Macbeth, Lady Macduff and the witches³² were considerably expanded. Downes writes:

The Tragedy of Macbeth, alter'd by Sir William Davenant being drest in all its finery, as new cloaths, new scenes, machines, as flying for witches, with all the singing and dancing in it ... it being all excellently performed ... proves still a lasting play.³³

It was an age where outward spectacle was more important than introspective reflection, which underwent a certain reduction in these adaptations, reflecting a society that has spent years looking in on itself, constantly on watch for the enemy within. The subject matter of *Macbeth* dealing as it does with regicide, succession and civil war, must in 1663 have seemed agonisingly relevant to Davenant's audience. The arguments in *Macbeth* could be seen to externalise the inner conflict of a nation where these ideas and arguments needed airing.

In Davenant's *Macbeth* the virtuous Macduffs provide a symmetrical foil for the Macbeths. In a new scene, in rhyming couplets, Lady Macduff, the play's sympathetic and moral voice, discusses Macbeth's guilt and the future of the kingdom, telling Macduff:

Usurpers lives have but a short extent
Nothing lives long in a strange element³⁴ (III.i.p.32)

Arguing against usurpation of a title to which he has no claim, Macduff answers:

What if I shoul'd
Assume the sceptre for my Countreys good?
Is that an usurpation? can it be
Ambition to procure the liberty
Of this sad Realm: which does by Treason bleed?³⁵ (III.i.p.32)

²⁹ Michael Dobson, 'Adaptations and revivals' in *English Restoration Theatre*, ed. by Deborah Payne Fisk, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 42.

³⁰ Flecknoe, *Sr William D'avenant's voyage to the other world* (1668), pp. 8-9.

³¹ Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare* (London, 1997), p. 165.

³² To ensure maximum utilisation of innovative stage technology.

³³ Downes. *RA* pp. 42-3.

³⁴ William Davenant, *Macbeth* (London, 1674), <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2176/>, [accessed 26 February 2015].

³⁵ William Davenant, *Macbeth*.

Parallels with Cromwell are instantly recognisable: 'My aim is not to govern, but Protect.' (p.35) However Macduff resists claiming the crown in order to redress the 'common ills', presenting the oppositional viewpoint to the ignoble Macbeth, a Cromwell figure doomed to exemplary punishment. Together with the 'improved' language and certain 'corrections' in the violation of genres,³⁶ integration of modern scenic devices and politicisation of the text, Davenant's play was such a success with contemporary (and later) audiences that for over a century Shakespeare's original vanished, in favour of this adaptation.

The original grants of patents were due to Royal connections, and initial productions supported hereditary monarchy by eulogising Charles I and/or vilifying Cromwell. However as the political climate changed, so did the adaptations. Charles's popularity never again reached the heights that it did at his coronation. The late 1670s political crisis and the Exclusion Crisis had a profound effect on theatres, particularly audience attendance. People were more interested in performances in the real-life political arena than going to the theatre, as Aphra Behn wrote: 'The devil take this curséd plotting age, / 'T has ruined all our plots upon the stage.'³⁷ Subjects that had been suppressed were now being addressed, and although feared, civil strife did not recur. The Restoration might be seen as a successful attempt to turn back the clock, to subdue the collective memory, which enabled the crown and the state to find a basis for some sort of progression.

³⁶ Two examples: all the characters are social equals, and Banquo is killed off-stage.

³⁷ Behn, Aphra, *The Feigned Courtesans* in *Aphra Behn, The Rover and other plays*, ed. Jane Spencer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), Prologue, p. 93.

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