

15: Restoration, Revolution

He did it in such a Manner, as to show, that He was the Sole Author of it, and that it sprang not from Human Wit, or Contrivance. 'He did it', God did it – arranged the Restoration; or so Francis Atterbury assured the House of Commons, preaching on the Anniversary of His Majesty's Happy Return, 29 May, 1701.

He did it, after our Forefathers were reduc'd to Extremities, and had tir'd themselves, by Various Attempts to bring this Great End about, and had been baffled in all of them, and sat down at last in despair of effecting it. Then was it time for him to appear for our Redemption, and to give Himself the Glory of it. All was Darkness about them, without form, and void; when the Spirit of God mov'd upon the Face of this Abyss, and said, *Let there be Light*: And both God, and Men *saw that the Light was Good*; The One, rejoicing in his Own Gift, and the Other, blessing and Magnifying the Bestower of it.¹ And as once He had 'miraculously restor'd the Right Heir' (Dryden's words, remember, in his 'Postscript' to Maimbourg), so, more lately, He had 'as miraculously preserv'd – not 'the Right Heir', exactly, but the Constitution as a whole: 'Regal Government, and the free use of Parliaments, the profession of God's pure Religion, and the Enjoyment of our Antient Laws and Liberties'.² For Atterbury's sermon, observes G.V. Bennett in *The Tory Crisis in Church and State, 1688-1730*,³ 'is the classic short apologia for the Revolution'; Glorious Revolution and Happy Return being much of a muchness granted that in every sudden Revolution of State, tho' there may be many visible Dispositions and Causes, that concur to favour it, yet still the last Finishing Turn is always from God.⁴ So 'the last Finishing Turn', 'la tour extraordinaire' of 1688, as of 1660, has about it 'quelque chose de divin', although there were a good many Dutchmen around on the later occasion, and in Dutch, as has been seen, 'Wonder en is gheen wonder'.

Over the Restoration, there was little argument. Most were prepared to 'take this on the whole to be God's work, about which men trouble themselves in vain'.

Then were strange things to be seen, Republicans with Royalists, Church-men with Church-robbers, Rebels and Traytors with Loyal Subjects, Papists with Protestants, Episcopists with Anti-episcoparians, all agreed to bring in the King, or let him be brought in. That Ethiopians should thus change their Colour, and Leopards their Spots, that the Lyon should associate with the Lamb, and the Wolf with the Kid, that things on a sudden should change their Natures, or act against them, are Miracles in the Moral, as well, as the natural World, and ought to be ascribed to his Power and special Providence, who only doth wonderful things. But the author of this, George Hickee, Dean of Worcester, here preaching on

an earlier May 29 in 1684,⁵ was to bear stubborn witness to the fact that not everyone considered 1688 a repeat performance.

Kings, he had proclaimed (the Exclusion Crisis now happily resolved), 'are petty Gods, who govern Men upon Earth . . . by immediate Delegation from God':

they are Supreme on Earth, as he is in heaven, they derive not their Authority from their Subjects (for that would be a Contradiction) as he derives not his from his Creatures, but from him alone they derive it –

and in consequence, it goes without saying, can never legitimately be deposed.⁶ Steadfastly, after 1688, he stuck to his guns. 'The old *Cavaliers*' (contrast John Hall of Richmond's new, 'true' variety) had been right, he stoutly insists in *A Vindication of Some among Our Selves against the False Principles of Dr. Sherlock*;

for they both called *Charles II*, King, and thought him to be so, tho' he was out of Possession, and out of the Land too.⁷

As with Charles II then, so with James II now; which must make 'P.O.' a mirror image of 'O.P.': not, Hickes hints, anticipating *A Parallel* ('By which we may see', stanza 9, 'His *Highness O.P.* / Was an Ass to his *Highness P.O.*'), at all an impossible inference. Indeed, 'I am sure Dr.', he tells Sherlock (who had, not long since, spectacularly abjured non-juring, and whose Restoration Day sermon of 29 May, 1692 was the occasion of Hickes's *Vindication*) –

I am sure Dr. you have done *their Majesties* [William and Mary] much disservice by awarding the legal Right from them, and giving them instead of it, *an airy Title by Providence*, which *Athaliah*, *Absalom*, and *Cromwel* had, and every prosperous Usurper can pretend to⁸ –

anybody and everybody, in short, and John Hall of Richmond's pragmatic pronouncement, who is found 'by the usual way of Providence put into Possession'.⁹

So let O.P. or P.O. be King,
Or anyone else, it is the same thing,
For only Heaven does that blessing bring,
Which nobody can deny,

as another ballad, *The Weasel Uncased*, written to celebrate Sherlock's sudden conversion to the Williamite cause, maliciously proclaims.¹⁰

Something else 'which nobody can deny' is that 'the usual way' is not what is normally understood by 'miracle' – unless, of course, 'Wonder en is gheen wonder'. 'As Nature is nothing but Divine Art; so such admirable Revolutions can be nothing but Divine Artifice and Contrivance', had been Hickes's assessment of the Restoration. Then,

Certainly the seasonable Contrivance of so many wonderful Scenes into every Act, and of so many curious Acts into one harmonious Play, must needs have been the Study and Invention of a very skilful Author, even of the All-wise, and Almighty Dramatist; who hath the World for his Theatre, and seldom less than a Kingdom for his Stage.¹¹

Then, all well and good; but now?

Now,

'Tis to your Pen, Great Sir, the Nation owes
For all the Good this mighty Change has wrought;
'Twas that the wondrous Method did dispose,
E're the vast Work was to Perfection brought,
Oh Strange effect of a Seraphick Quill!

That can by unperceptable degrees
Change every Notion, every Principle
To any Form, its Great Dictator Please!
The Sword a Feeble Pow'r compar'd to That,
And to the Nobler Pen subordinate;
And of less use in *Bravest* turns of State.

Now, according to Aphra Behn's *A Pindaric Poem to the Reverend Doctor Burnet*,¹² what has happened is not so much the result of a divine as of a divine's 'Plot of State': the realisation of a 'model' not of God's, but the future Bishop of Salisbury's 'Brain', trumpet though he may about

that amazing Concurrence of Providences, which have conspired to hatch and bring forth, and perfect this extraordinary Revolution . . . for we have before us a Work, that seems to our selves a Dream, and that will appear to Posterity a Fiction.¹³

'A Fiction', implies the ironic Aphra, is just about what it will be, too

'Tis you, Great Sir, alone, by Heaven preserv'd,
Whose Conduct has so well the Nation serv'd,
'Tis you that to Posterity shall give

This Ages Wonders, and its History,
And great NASSAU shall in your Annals live
To all Futurity.

Your Pen shall more Immortalize his Name,
Than even his own Renown'd and Celebrated Fame.¹⁴

This 'Great Sir's' – and 'Great Sir', by the bye, is normally an honorific of the King, as in the coda to Waller's *Instructions to a Painter*¹⁵ which begins,

GREAT SIR, Disdain not in this piece to stand
Supreme Commander both of Sea and Land:

so Behn is laying it on with a trowel – this 'Great Sir's' contractarian propaganda had, before 1688, mapped out the groundplot for revolution. His 'Annals' will colour future conceptions of what then happened 'glorious'. Whig history will become canonical. 'Posterity' will view developments through Burnet-tinted spectacles, Restoration providentially plumbed into Revolution, the tide of affairs neatly canalised, William III the creation, in the last analysis, of Gilbert the King-maker.

Even Behn herself had been sucked, struggling somewhat, into his vortex; been cajoled, if report is right, by the man himself into supplying her own notes towards his 'Supreme Fiction' (to remember, again, Wallace Stevens), in the shape of *A Congratulatory Poem to Her Sacred Majesty Queen Mary upon Her Arrival in England*.

Yet if with Sighs we View that Lovely Face,
 And all the Lines of your great Father's Trace,
 Your Vertues should forgive, while we adore
 That Face that Awes, and Charms our Hearts the more;
 But if the *Monarch* in your Looks we find,
 Behold him yet more glorious in your Mind;
 'Tis there His God-like Attributes we see.
 A Gracious Sweetness, Affability,
 A Tender Mercy and True Piety;
 And Vertues even sufficient to Attone
 For all the ills the Ungrateful World has done,
 Where several Factions, several Int'rests sway,
 And that is still i'th Right who gains the Day;
 How e'er they differ, this they all must grant,
 Your Form and Mind, no One Perfection want,
 Without all Angel, and within all Saint.¹⁶

'Ecce homo'! 'Behold the Lambe of God, which taketh away the sinne of the world' (John 1. 29). The features of the father look with meek reproach through the lineaments of his daughter's 'Perfection'. 'He is despised and rejected, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefe' (Isaiah 53. 3). This is 'emotional Jacobitism'¹⁷ if not quite with a vengeance, then a *mea culpa!* And resemblance, customarily cause for rejoicing, the very stamp of legitimacy – Your Mother was most true to Wedlock, Prince,
 For she did print your Royall Father off,
 Conceiving you,

Leontes congratulates Florizel in the final act of *The Winter's Tale*¹⁸ – resemblance becomes now, despite the reassuringly conclusive triplet, distinctly disquieting. 'For I know *that* my Redeemer liveth' (Job, 19. 25), and the issue (a key word, by the way, in *The Winter's Tale*) was, as everyone knew, not straightforward: the father not dead, and so regularly succeeded, but supplanted; and that, too, having just been blessed (though sceptics spoke of juggling-tricks with warming-pans) with a male heir who should have taken precedence, and whose birth had been welcomed by Behn herself with a euphoria which makes even Dryden's effusion on that occasion, *Britannia Rediviva*, seem a model of restraint.

'Methinks', she had prophesied, addressing *A Congratulatory Poem to the King's Most Gracious Majesty*:

Methinks I hear the *Belgick* LION Roar,
 And Lash his *Angry Tail* against the Shore.
 Inrag'd to hear a PRINCE OF WALES is Born:
 Whose *Angel* FACE already does express
 His *Foreign* CONQUESTS, and *Domestick* PEACE.
 While in his *Awful little* EYES we Find

He's of the *Brave*, and the *Forgiving* KIND¹⁹ –
 a true Stuart, in short; born to be 'Forgiving' as an uncle whose 'fatal mercy' had once made 'Pardon'd Rebels, Kinsmen to the Throne', *Brave*' as a father who had once cut –

so prodigal is he
 Of Royal Blood as ancient as the Sea,
 Which down to Him so many Ages told,
 Has through the veins of Mighty Monarchs roll'd –

so fine a figure in Waller's *Instructions to a Painter*,²⁰ inspiring (except that 'Told is a poultry botch') 'four of y^e best verses almost y^l ever were writt'. So Atterbury thinks, at least;²¹ who was, in the end, to be carried away by that blood-dimmed tide.

What, then, all this will amount to, is an heir apparent born to put a miserable heir presumptive's nose quite out of joint: a genuine 'PRINCE OF WALES' whose advent ought (though the upshot was the opposite) to banish all thought of ersatz Oranges and leave their *leo belgicus*, pictured by patriotic cartography²² in the outline of Netherlandish territory, to ramp off into the Continent and lash the North Sea into frustrated foam with a tail rooted by the mapmaker around Gravelines and thence drawn up and over to dangle a terminal tassel (concealing that bony protuberance or 'thorn' with which lions were legendarily supposed to lash themselves into a fury) provocatively under East Anglia's nose. 'The devill', St Peter warns, 'as a roaring Lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devoure'; but Isaiah exults, 'unto us a child is borne'.²³

This note resounds, too, through the companioning *Congratulatory Poem* to James's wife, Mary of Modena:

bless'd QUEEN, to whom ALL HAIL belongs
 From *Angels*, rather than from Mortal Tongues;
 Whose Charms of *Beauty*, *Wit* and *Vertue* join'd
 To chuse you Second *Bless'd* of *Woman-kind*.²⁴

'Your MAJESTY is authoris'd by the greatest example of a Mother, to rejoyce in a promis'd Son', affirms Dryden, dedicating to her his translation of *The Life of St. Francis Xavier*.²⁵ 'Ave Maria, gratia plena': music to papistical ears! Yet, having knelt thus devoutly, June, 1688, before this image of a Madonna (without warming-pan) and Child, come February next, Behn is hail-marrying, if somewhat less perfervidly, William's wife; and that, moreover, on the instigation, so it would seem, of Bishop-to-be (that very year, for services rendered) Burnet himself. So it is not surprising that the eulogium should sound, now and then, cracked within the ring. Nor, most conspicuously, is there on this occasion a companion-piece – or, indeed, any reference whatsoever to a husband. Behn, Hamlet-like, promises, 'I shall in all my best obey you, madam', leaving William, if he wants, to conclude, "Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply", with the disregarded Claudius.²⁶