

# Charles II: A Man Caught Between Tradition and Science



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## Introduction

Charles II was a man torn between cultural tradition and scientific progress. The son of England's only absolutist King went down in History as the nation's "Merry Monarch", while his support to Science and progress tends to be overlooked by historians. This paper presents four sections that deal with the following topics: religious traditions, scientific breakthroughs, and the King's own scientific pursuits.

In the 1600s, Charles I's open belief in the divine right of ruling and the political and personal excesses derived from that assumption were to be displayed in every possible way and kept on growing as the years went by. Taking the Arts into account, J.P. Kenyon recalls that even "the court masques of the 1630s, ever more luxurious and stylized, embodied... imperial themes, portraying a monarchy almost Byzantine in its theocratic paternalism" (126). A patron of contemporary masters like Rubens, Charles I also converted his ambassador in Venice into an art dealer in charge of purchasing Renaissance and Mannerist paintings. The high cost of the royal hobby was later another one of the straws that broke the camel's back when considering the countryside's general dim economic and social reality. In spite of owning one of Europe's finest Art collections, winds of political change were to mutilate the aesthetic taste of a generation on Continental trends due to the destruction of such precious core. As Kenyon recalls, "Charles I's great art collection was auctioned off in 1651, a transaction still regretted by many art historians" (182).

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As for this paper's leading character, Charles II was born on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May of 1630, at Saint James's Palace, on a day blessed by the intense glitter of a morning star. According to Christopher Falkus, "all day long the planet Venus was visible to the naked eye, though no one could have guessed the scale of the endowment bestowed on the baby Prince by the goddess of love" (13). Brought up at Richmond Palace under the teachings conducted by the Earl of Newcastle and later by the Marquis of Hertford, the growing personality of the royal heir, as described by Maurice Ashley, was that of a young man "more absorbed in outdoor sports than in his books, and learning the politeness of court life without being [...] bothered about their social significance" (5). At the age of 12 the Prince witnessed the initial battle of the Civil Wars, at Edgehill, under the surveillance of scientist and tutor William Harvey (who was then keener on reading a book than on the bloody developments on the battlefield ahead), and looked up at cousin Rupert's military leadership. By 1646, Charles I forced his son to seek exile with his mother, in Saint Germain (Paris), fearful of the heir's safety.

In spite of the son's appeals to several European courts and to the English Parliament, Charles I was to be executed on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January of 1649. The Prince was then 19 and reality took its toll before his eyes. He soon perceived that unlike what he had been taught of, "even the sacred person of the Sovereign was not inviolate" (Ashley 5). In 1651 the now claimant to the English throne managed to be crowned at Scone (Scotland) and gathered an army meant to rescue England from Oliver Cromwell's claws. Defeated at Worcester, Charles II was to spend weeks on the run, only to find safe passage back to mainland Europe thanks to the assistance of subjects like Major Careless. Finding refuge on top of an oak tree at the Major's Boscobel House, Charles would escape from the victorious Commonwealth troops. Such commotion on the young Prince's life would later explain his fickle character. As Malpas Pearse argues, "Charles was a nervous man, afflicted by both gaiety and tragedy. His exile and his hard times had given him a common touch, which made

him popular” (106). Kenyon, who strongly criticises Charles’ waste of money on debauchery and points out that such carelessness was actually a fault of the entire Stuart stock, grants another perspective: “he [Charles II] was cynical and dissolute; he wasted money on women, just like his father had wasted it on paintings and his grandfather on boys” (14).

### **1. Restoration & Religious Traditions**

After 11 years of Republican intermission, by 1660, Charles’ trusted counsellors had negotiated with Parliament his return to England and the Restoration of the Stuart dynastic line. His arrival at Portsmouth was not without ceremony – with General George Monck (Parliament’s representative) kneeling down to kiss the new King’s hand– and not without compromise, with Charles accepting to forgive those who had once fought against his family (the “Roundheads” or “Parliamentarians”). The sole exception was to fall on the men who signed his father’s execution, for they had to be brought to justice. The 1660 Declaration of Breda and the Act of Indemnity and Oblivion were the touchstones for England’s return to serenity after Oliver Cromwell’s demise in 1658. All in all, Charles II “pardoned his enemies, promised to uphold the Anglican Church... and to leave all difficult questions to the will of Parliament” (Falkus 65). The Restoration recovered the Monarchy, the House of Lords, and the country’s order, putting an end to the constraints once imposed by the Republic, for it was “not only a monarchy but a whole way of life [that] was being restored” (Fraser 233).

Though mooring at Portsmouth on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May of 1660, Charles spent some time at Canterbury and only on the 28<sup>th</sup> did he leave to Rochester for his triumphal arrival into London was expected the following day. Indeed, the 29<sup>th</sup> of May was the chosen date since it coincided with the monarch’s 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. Three decades before Prince Charles had been baptised with water imported from the Jordan River (in the Holy Land), and the 1630 bright star that shone in the sky was

commonly accepted as the Star in the East, announcing the birth of the new Messiah (Ogilby 30). In 1660, John Evelyn, one of the period's diarists, watched the entrance ceremony and "thanked God the king had been restored without bloodshed, and by the very same army that rebelled against him" (Molloy 11).

Charles' impending coronation was planned to the tinniest of details with an aura of mysticism, divine Justice, and hope hovering over him. Starting with the Crown Jewels, all pieces of goldsmithery had to be forged from scratch, since Cromwell's orders had once been to melt or sell the symbols of royal power shortly after its extinction in 1649. The only original pieces left were the 1199 Anointing Spoon, purchased and preserved by Clement Kinnersley, and the gold collected after the melting of Saint Edward the Confessor's Crown, which was used in the making of Charles II's new Crown. The Stuart heir also reinstated the Order of the Garter and Saint George's Hall at Windsor Castle as its seat, this time with French influences after spending years exiled at the court of Louis XIV. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of April of 1661 the ceremony to bestow the Garter's honorific badges to new knights and loyal companions like brother James (II) and cousin (Prince) Rupert was held at Saint George's Chapel. The event emulated the pomp of Parisian society, since the "knights' costumes had been [...] redesigned along more elaborate lines. Possibly they were influenced by the French king's knights of the Saint Esprit" (Fraser 255). 1661 also registered the foundation of the Order of the Royal Oak (granted to those who had helped Charles to flee after Worcester's defeat) and the legislation of a new holiday, the Royal Oak Day (falling on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, to celebrate his return and birthday, oak sprigs were worn on hats): the Royal Oak "stood as a sign of God's protection on his chosen king" (MacLeod and Alexander 11). Soon there would be no more leaves, branches or bark of the (holy) oak at Boscobel House, for the site became an unofficial pilgrimage centre during Charles' reign.<sup>1</sup>

The Coronation itself obeyed a key rule: that of reviving the medieval trail that once linked the Tower of London to Westminster Abbey. Scheduled for the 23<sup>rd</sup>

of April of 1661, Saint George's Day, the nation's patron's preference was to fall over Charles II on a spring morning remarkably plunged into blissful joy, for "London was blessed with glorious weather [... and] all the capital flocked to the river bank to see him" (Falkus 85). As Cristina Carvalho claims, the choice made upon that specific day can be explained by the wish to celebrate two ephemerides full of significance in a single day and the hope that Saint George's divine aura might be incorporated by the Sovereign's royal persona (117-8). Molloy's reminder that "the splendour of the pageant was such as had never been before" sustains Carvalho's opinion (Molloy 30). Time was to echo the exuberance of the moment when Charles II brought Order into Chaos, Prosperity into Repression, and Light into Darkness, thus embodying the nation protector's finest qualities. Even the allegories painted over the four triumphal arches planned by John Ogilby promoted the Stuart monarch as the Messiah of a new Golden Age (Ogilby 21-39). As MacLeod and Alexander recall, "Charles was presented to his subjects as Jupiter triumphing over his foes, as the imperial Augustus, as the biblical King David [...] and as St. George rescuing his people from the dragon of sedition" (11).

The whole trajectory was animated with masked actors, singers, and musicians, turning London's streets into the set of a moving open-air play. After a decade living only on shades of grey, Londoners were thus bewildered by the radiant colours, the glitter, and the scent of amusement of the event: "everything [...] had to be paid for. Nevertheless, the impact on observers... was all the King could have wished" (Fraser 258). Anointed the monarch by the Archbishop of Canterbury, at Westminster Abbey, the ceremony continued with the nation pledging allegiance to the ruler, the Sovereign presiding a banquet served to the nobility and the clergy at Westminster Hall, only to end with a peculiar and unexpected episode. Instead of laying his royal robes at one of London's leading Anglican temples, Charles II preferred to sail up the Thames River and offer the

garments to Thomas Killigrew's theatrical company (that he would soon sponsor and often visit). An Age of Change had arrived.

Charles II was aware that his throne rested over the respect for his forefathers' traditions and his subjects' devotion. Therefore, in spite of the brief innovations indicated and the King's kindness towards the people's spontaneous contacts, the link to God's authority was preserved or renewed through centuries-old religious rites and profane habits. On the latter, one can mention the re-erection of the Maypoles for May's Pagan worshipping of Nature's bounty (through the performance of ancient Morris Dances around the structure). Theatres were re-opened (now with female elements). Music and laughter were allowed to echo again across a nation now feasting on the long-forsaken merriment forbidden by Cromwell's Puritanism. In religious terms, Christmas was again celebrated, as were the King's Touch and Maundy Thursday ceremonies, at Lent. Considering the effects derived from his staged coronation the King's Touch was a good barometer for measuring how the people revered Charles II, since "sometimes as many as six hundred [subjects] came for their cure in a single session, and his reputation was such that he even had an occasional patient from the New World" (Falkus 77). Held at Banqueting House (in front of which Charles I's scaffold had been placed and the beheading accomplished in 1649), the King was supposed to touch the sick persons' neck to cure their scrofula (a skin disease), and to offer them a white ribbon with a gold medal depicting Saint Michael (to be worn as a sort of holy talisman). A curious episode describes how Arise Evans, a Welshman, once approached Charles II during his morning stroll near Saint James's Park and rubbed the royal hand against his nose, thus revealing the folk belief in the sanctity on the physical body of the ruler (cf. Picard 81). As for Maundy Thursday, it established a parallel with Jesus' life for rulers were supposed to wash the feet of the Poor, as the King of Kings had done, and Banqueting House was again the stage for the Lent ceremony.

Fig.1 Banqueting House<sup>2</sup>

A date of supreme religious importance during the Age of Charles II was the 30<sup>th</sup> of January, the mournful reminder of his father's "martyrdom". Not only were churches erected to honour the now-praised "Saint Charles I" (like at Royal Tunbridge Wells, in 1678), as the day was also one of fasting and of honouring a ruler recalled as humble, kind, and tender, a sort of lamb slaughtered by the cruelty of Men (cf. Kenyon 209). Ironically, at the age of 30, Charles II kept facial features of the «martyrised» parent, showing he was his father's son, and that Charles I was to have the Stuart's right of ruling back, like a Phoenix rising again to power (Fraser 236).



Fig.2 Statue of Charles I, Trafalgar Square, London  
(with wreath of flowers placed on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January)

A superstitious cultural behaviour inherited from previous times and prescribed by physicians was the visit to the thermal springs at Tunbridge Wells, in Kent. In 1630, Queen Henrietta Maria went there to recover her health after giving birth to Charles (II), and, in 1632, Doctor Lodwick Rowzee wrote a treatise on the therapeutic properties of the waters entitled *The Queen's Wells*. By 1663, Charles II started visiting the spot with his wife, Queen Catherine of Braganza, hoping for an heir. As Anthony Hamilton mentions, since the 1630s, besides the treatments conducted on wells of rusty-coloured water, leisure was also part of the social programme at the resort: “there was dancing everyday at the Queen’s House, since the doctors prescribed it and nobody objected” (Hamilton 155). It was also at

Tunbridge Wells that Charles II met his mistresses Moll Davies and Nell Gwynn, in 1668.

Considering these examples of religious revival and of the monarch's own participation on them, a question arises: was Charles II a religious man? This has been a topic of much debate among historians. As Richard Ollard emphasises: "Of all the questions on which Charles II has been suspected of duplicity both in his lifetime and in history, the largest is religion" (103). As King of England he was the leader of the Anglican Church; on the other hand, his next of kin were mostly Catholic (his French mother, brother James (II), sister Minette, and his Portuguese wife Catherine). The humiliations suffered in 1651 at the hands of the Presbyterians of Scotland (when he had to acknowledge Charles I's sins and Henrietta Maria's idolatry as a way of gaining allies to fight Cromwell) did not leave a good impression on him, and Charles was shrewd enough to understand how Religion had fragmented 16<sup>th</sup>-century Europe and England's social unity for nearly 150 years. However, he was also aware of how his French grandfather's (Henri IV) tolerance allowed France to prosper while other countries still dealt with internal skirmishes. Falkus believes the "Merry Monarch" was a sceptical, for when his mistress Louise de Kéroualle tried to convert him to Catholicism he answered with scorn and requested for a priest who knew of Science, "because there were many problems related to the scientific basis of Catholicism which he needed to discuss" (Falkus 149). Other scholars pin point his conversion to Catholicism only on his deathbed, this discrete conversion being necessary to ensure the safety of the Stuart throne, unlike his father had done and his brother would do (cf. Picard 267).

## 2. Restoration & Science

After the 16<sup>th</sup>-century scientific breakthroughs, the following centuries were to observe the speeding up of a new understanding of the Universe, Nature, and Man. Theological principles were casted aside by Modern Science in exchange for

experimentation and observation. And Reason was embraced as “the way forward to increase human knowledge and understanding” (Hook 109). Mathematics rooted itself as the language of the intellectual revolution at bay, thanks to men like Napier, Kepler, Pascal, Descartes, and Newton. And, while scientists at the time of Galileo were looked down or ignored by the State, conducting their endeavours thanks to private sponsorship, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the paradigm was reversed and rulers started cherishing their innovations. The Royal Academy (1662) founded by Charles II is a good example of this reversal. The same could be said of the *Académie Royale des Sciences* (1666) initiated by Colbert (Louis XIV’s Minister of Finance), and all the other academies that would soon spread across Europe thanks to Frederick I of Prussia (Berlin, 1700) or Peter the Great of Russia (Saint Petersburg, 1725). Although Francis Bacon’s Scientific Method had seen the light of day at the brink of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, comets were still generally perceived as signs of bad omens, and Medicine kept on following Galen of Pergamon’s theory of humours (physicians were to keep these humours balanced according to the position of the stars). Besides, people still held on to the belief that “charms and incantations could expel evil influences from the system” (Bryant 93). Thermal springs like Tunbridge Wells where Queen Catherine “went in the mistaken belief that the waters would give the throne an heir” (98), were still sought after by upper layers of an educated society. A clear sign of Charles II’s dual conduct was the foundation of the Royal Society in 1662, sided with the unconscious fear that led him to protecting the ravens at the Tower of London, after being told the legend that their departure would mean England’s demise under foreign forces. The law then published shows how cautious he was, after so many unexpected twists and turns in his own life.

Regarding the King’s upbringing, it is worth mentioning his father’s sponsorship to William Harvey (who in 1628 discovered the mechanism of blood circulation) and his nomination as the princes’ tutor. The breaking of the shackles of conformity during the Renaissance justifies why the following generations were to

discuss the Cosmos, the Earth, and Man. Since 1645 a group of scientists, mathematicians, physicians, and philosophers met weekly at London's Gresham College and in Oxford, aiming at debating ideas and conducting experiments. The Philosophical Society of Oxford is considered as the embryo for the 1662 Royal Society, but Cambridge also witnessed the rise of the Invisible College at Trinity College, proving Man's inquisitive nature was restless. By 1626 Francis Bacon published *New Atlantis* where he presented Solomon's House as a venue where debating natural philosophers met, maybe foretelling the foundation of the Royal Society by Charles II. The ruler was mesmerised by the constant flow of breakthroughs, which is why "the king made science fashionable by his own burning interest in the subject [... and] he [even] wanted to examine every [...] invention before the patent was passed" (Fraser 251).

The extensive list of knowledge-thirsty minds of the dubbed Scientific Revolution includes the chemist Boyle, the geometrist Hooke, the physicist Newton, and the astronomers Flamsteed and Halley, thus revealing the early creation of different cores of scientific development. Robert Boyle was the «father of Modern Chemistry» and author of *The Spring and Weight of Air* (1660) and *The Sceptic Chymist* (1661). Believing in Alchemy, like Descartes, he defended a mechanical vision of the Universe, taking experiments as a means to understand God's Great Work. Boyle's assistant, Robert Hooke, was a Geometry professor at Gresham College and published *Micrographia* (1665), a study that describes the cellular structure of plants and the beauty of fish scales under microscope lenses. As Hart-Davis points out, "his drawing of a flea is dramatic even today, and in 1665 it must have been sensational" (166). Not only was Hooke the inventor of the word "cell", but he was also the author of "The Monument", a landmark of London's cityscape after the fire of 1666.



Fig.3 The Monument

Isaac Newton was a mathematician and a physicist who admired Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler, teaching at Cambridge University. His main legacy was to be revealed after Charles II's rule. He was the president of the Royal Society in 1701 and he was knighted by Queen Anne in 1705. Known for the *Universal Law of Gravitation and Motion* and the *Laws of Optics*, Newton, too, believed in a mechanical conception of the Universe. In *Principia Mathematica* (1687), he compared it to a finely tuned clock created and maintained by God. Recent studies unveil his religiosity and alchemic preferences. Newton was the first scientist to have his remains buried at Westminster Abbey alongside England's monarchs (cf. Carvalho 103-5) and Dan Brown has recently used his tomb as a pivotal element for the plot of one of his books.<sup>3</sup>

In 1675, John Flamsteed, the first Royal Astronomer, founded the Royal Observatory in Greenwich (built by Wren), and the result of years of charting the skies was to be published by Halley, in 1725, under the title of *Historia Celestis Britannica*. Flamsteed is also reminded for the accuracy of his calculations on solar eclipses.



Fig.4 Royal Observatory, Greenwich

By 1720, Flamsteed would make way for Edmund Halley at Greenwich. A Geometry professor at Oxford, Halley financed Newton's *Principia* and applied its principles to predict the return of the comet now bearing Halley's own name. In 1676 he moved to the South Hemisphere in order to chart 341 stars. After his return and the 1678 publishing of a catalogue, he was bestowed a Master's degree by the King himself, after dedicating the study to Charles II and naming a constellation as *Robur Carolinum*.<sup>4</sup> The astronomer was also a member of the Royal

Society (1678-1743) and of the French *Académie Royale des Sciences* (1729-1743) (cf. Carvalho 103-5). Botany and Gardening were other areas that caught Charles II's eye and at Ham House one may still behold a Henry Danckerts' canvas in which John Rose, the Royal Gardner, grants him the first pineapple ever grown in England (cf. Tomlin 16).

### 3. Scientific Principles applied to the Arts

In artistic terms the Restoration coincided with Christopher Wren's early glorious period. A follower of Inigo Jones' Palladian taste and Bernini's Baroque delights, Maurice Ashley brands him as an "eclectic artist for he drew upon classical and baroque models including the work of both Inigo Jones and Bernini" (Ashley 154). An Astronomy professor at Oxford, a mathematician and an amateur architect, Wren was a founding member of the Royal Society, which he would later lead in 1680. In the summer of 1665 he visited Paris and admired in first hand Mansart's and Le Vau's works, besides having met Bernini who even revealed to him "the designs for the Louvre, for which, he says, he would have given his skin, but the old reserved Italian gave him but a few minute's view" (Strange 16). Of all his architectural feats, one shall only focus on the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire of 1666, although all creations were proof of Wren's mathematical and geometrical mastering. One should bear in mind the conical steeples of temples rebuilt across the City, in order to better understand his awareness on the principles of Gravity and optical effects. The colossal Saint Paul's dome that stood as symbol of resilience amidst the dusty London skies during the 1940s *Blitzkrieg* is, indeed, Master Wren's ultimate (mathematical) masterpiece. Built between 1675 and 1710, Saint Peter's was England's first cathedral to have been built by a single architect, which was commendable when considering the lack of manpower available after the mortality rates of the Great Plague of 1665. Bernini's canopy at St. Peter's (the latter an architectural influence over St. Paul's) was to inspire Wren's own canopy,

which was later built in marble and gilt oak and placed at Saint Paul's main altar in 1958. Art historians keep on debating Wren's Classical and Baroque guidelines, seeking a simplistic classification over the cathedral's artistic features. However, one agrees with Joseph Levine's position that "whether the result is truly classical or baroque is perhaps besides the point [... for Wren] valued classical imitation, but needed freedom to accommodate his own buildings to the practical exigencies of time and place" (Levine 187-8).



Fig.5 St. Paul's canopy

Another reminder of the spot where the Fire of 1666 began is Robert Hooke's "The Monument". If at the lower level pedestrians may easily admire Caius Ciber's allegories of Charles II's victory over Evil and Envy (1669-1676), it is on top of the slender pharaonic obelisk one must focus the attention, at a safe optical distance. It was initially to be topped by a telescope that would serve scientific purposes, but the draughty confluence of the site offered no stability for the lenses to be set at 60,6 metres high and produce accurate data. In the end, the Sovereign would suggest a sun-like golden globe meant to be visually perceived from afar as Restoration London's symbol of urban renovation (cf. Carvalho 77-8). The truth of the matter is that in spite of the scientists who worked on the new capital city, Charles II's Baroque/exuberant wishes were always cut short by Parliament's financial restraints. What is most admirable is that by 1668 1.200 houses were already standing (Ackroyd 240). The rebuilding of the City benefited from the application of modern urban trends, in which concerns on traffic and navigation, paving methods, sanitation, and hygiene features were central, in addition to the creation of necessary harbour infrastructures, respecting a new understanding on the dynamics of a capital city and its growing connection to an overseas empire (mostly after the Anglo-Dutch Wars that ended in 1674 with England's commercial and naval domination over the Atlantic Ocean).

#### **4. Charles II's Scientific Pursuits**

Since an early age Charles II had been learning about Science. Besides, the secrets of the visible world fascinated him to the point of later attending meetings of the Royal Society as a means to learn directly with the Age's brightest minds. The Sovereign was also very fond of clock mechanisms and by the end of his life seven of these devices were to be found in the royal alcove on Whitehall Palace. He also ordered the setting of a sun dial and a telescope at the Privy Garden so that he could gaze at the skies (cf. Carvalho 4). The King even had a private laboratory at

the Palace, and one of the theories on his cause of death blames mercury poisoning for his demise (Fraser 585-6).

In historic and artistic terms, Charles II's reign is still marked by conflicting opinions on his political, religious, and aesthetic preferences. Ashley, for instance, speaks of twenty-five years of lurking political turmoil, though admitting the ruler had some skills his brother/heir James II lacked: "Charles was, on the whole, a successful politician, but he was certainly not a great statesman; and nearly everything he struggled for was destroyed during the reign of his successor" (326). Molloy too praises his management skills, regretting, however, the King's lack of concentration on serious matters:

With the [...] courage he had shown in danger, the shrewdness and the wit he [...] evinced [...] Charles II might have made his reign illustrious, had not his love of ease and detestation of business rendered him indifference to all things so long as he was free to follow his desires. (Molloy 33-4)

Samuel Pepys believed the sovereign did not take his role seriously, for "instead of hard work, he settled into a life devoted to amusement and pleasure" (Tomalin 220). Kenyon, on the other hand, sustains that Charles II "was not a lazy man, but he lacked concentration, his interests were too diversified, and he did not apply himself to the business of governing" (Kenyon 211-2). Tim Harris defends that while the political analyst will admire Charles's governing skills, the historian will criticise the human cost derived from his innuendo (138). All in all, the King preserved the Stuarts' flaws: he knew little of Finance; he was a poor public speaker; and he disliked Parliament (under an invisible cloak meant to avoid direct confrontation, in exchange for negotiation). In spite of the dynasty's defeat at the Glorious Revolution, Time proved its kindness towards the memory of the "Merry Monarch". According to Ollard, two hundred years later, when questioned on whom of her predecessors would she invite for a gala dinner, (bleak) Queen Victoria chose no

one else but Charles II: “as the pendulum swung back from the strict decorum of the high Victorian age Charles II stood to gain” (Ollard 198).

### Conclusion

Charles II was a man of pleasures, a King of compromise, and a patron of Knowledge whose life story was marked by shining lights and deep shadows. The 1<sup>st</sup>-born son of the King of England soon went from a lawful heir into a fugitive on the run, then from a claimant to the throne in exile into a saviour long-yearned by his country fellowmen. And though historians still criticise his ruling, the people keep on fancying him as the “Merry Monarch”. In pragmatic terms, Charles II’s Restoration was a period when ancient (religious and profane) traditions were revived as a means to provide the illusion of a return to political and socio-cultural stability. However, the world kept on turning and changing, and the main mutations were perceived in the fields of the Arts, Science, and commercial expansion. And, as Falkus sums up, attuned to the spirit of times, Charles II “led fashion, danced, was an enthusiastic sportsman and a regular theatregoer [... and] under his patronage all the arts flourished; and the sciences too” (2)

Though the Baroque style was not fully accomplished in architectural terms, it infiltrated itself in interior designs, decorative arts, and in the luxurious lifestyle of King and Court, yet in a less pompous manner than what was happening at *Versailles*. Though society still believed in omens, prophecies, incantations, amulets, holy springs, and divine preferences, Pre-Enlightenment characters strove to unveil the Universe’s and Nature’s secrets through the lenses of Reason. Though the Age of Discoveries had started in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries under the leadership of the Iberian nations (Portugal and Spain), by the 17<sup>th</sup> century many territorial and commercial endeavours skip from Dutch into English hands. Ironically, British historians tend to overlook the importance of the marriage of Charles II to the Portuguese Princess Catherine of Braganza, and how her dowry granted England

two cities where European diplomacy and trade connections had been firmly rooted for over a century and a half. Indeed, Tangiers was a key city in the control of ancient Mediterranean trading routes, much like Bombay (present-day Mumbai) was for the East African and Asian (Indian and Sino-Japanese) commercial pathways.

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<sup>1</sup> Much like it happened in Central Portugal to a specific holm oak after Our Lady of Fátima's apparitions in 1917.

<sup>2</sup> All the photos that illustrate this paper belong to the author, Cristina Carvalho.

<sup>3</sup> Reference to 2003 *The Da Vinci Code*.

<sup>4</sup> Latin translation for «Charles's Oak», located between the constellations of *Crux* and *Carina*.

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