

# John Bunyan as a Dissenter: A Study of Dissenting Literature in the Restoration\*

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## The Untold Side of the Restoration

When Charles II returned from exile in France and crossed the Dover in the spring of 1660 to take the throne, the joy and happiness of having him as a King were said to be a universal sentiment across the nation, according to Samuel Pepsys and John Evelyn. Evelyn and Pepsys wrote in their diaries that the ways from London and Dover were “strewn with flowers” and filled with “infinite the croud of people and the gallantry of the horsemen, citizens, and noblemen of all sorts”(Pepsys 33). “The bells” were ringing and the streets were “hung with Tapissry, fountains running with wines” (Evelyn 5596) and “The Major, Aldermen, all the Companies in their liver<ie>s, Chaines of Gold, banners; Lords & nobles, Cloth of Silver, gold and vellvet every body clad in, the windos and balconies all

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set with Ladys, Trumpets, Musick." (Evelyn 5596).

Persuaded by these pro-royalist diarists, the majority of Restoration historians and scholars, before the emergence of recent revisionist objections, had been emphasizing the Restoration as a period sharply different from its immediate past—the Civil Wars and the Interregnum. Instead, the Restoration was often viewed as a prelude to the long eighteenth century characterized by political stability and commercial prosperity. As Steven Zwicker elaborates the problem of this conventional view of the Restoration in a more extended way, the majority of scholars and critics

have tried variously to configure the Restoration as a world apart from the decades of civil war, social turbulence, and political experimentation, the opening act, no matter how we complicate the term, of an Augustan age with an emphasis on what we might think of as orderly and balanced in the era, what was formal and harmonious, poised and regular, or at least pointing in that direction—the beginning of a long eighteenth century that, with some unevenness along the way, saw the triumph of modernity, or representative politics, or empire, or toleration, or the scientific revolution, or the heroic couplet. (426)

By insisting to have a narrow view on the Restoration as the formative beginning of Neo-classicism of the eighteenth century, many scholars often over-emphasized the roles of the royal court and its literary culture, failing to give due attention to other important literary achievements happening outside the walls of King Charles II's libertine court. Not many people remember today that it was in the Restoration that the two most famous puritan masterpieces, *Paradise Lost* (1667) by John Milton and *The Pilgrim of Progress* (1678) by John Bunyan, were published and that, more surprisingly, their popularity was sustained throughout the period. Despite the publication of many puritan works during this age, the Restoration was

commonly dubbed as the Age of John Dryden, a poet laureate serving for King Charles and his favorites.

The over-emphasis of King Charles' court culture (dominated by libertinism) imparted too much significance to the development of Restoration comedies in which aristocratic values and libertine thoughts were strongly affirmed through the valorization of rakes over fops and beaux. The fact that these comedies did not touch on political and religious issues was often mistakenly taken for the proof that the Restoration was clean of the problems of the previous decades. It rarely did occur to the minds of the critics that the courtiers and ruling class of the Restoration consciously avoided or eschewed what they saw unpleasant topics at least in their backyard.

## **The Restoration and Dissenters**

As recent scholars point out, the Restoration was neither as politically stable as it was believed to be, nor being able to achieve a clean break from the problems and struggles (primarily in the domains of religion and politics) that had spurred the eruption of English civil wars and their continuing hang-over. Failing to accommodate non-Anglican sects within the church institution, King Charles II and his followers aggravated rather than reduced the tensions and possible conflicts among religious sects. Contrary to what Charles II initially promised in a bid to be a king, once Charles assumed the throne, his followers took coercive measure, allowing little, if any, tolerance to non-Anglican sects' religious gatherings and practices. To be more specific, in 1662 the Anglican Royalist Parliament passed the Act of Uniformity, which enforced a strict adherence to the rites and practices in the Book of Common Prayer. As a result, the clergy that refused to accept Anglican rituals and beliefs were ejected from the

established church. In tandem with other parliamentary orders enforcing the conformity of Anglican belief such as the Conventical Act of 1664, the Five Mile Act of 1665, this repressive measure created a large population of dissenters, a heterogeneous group that not only included radical Quakers as well as conservative Presbyterians and even Catholics (Achinstein 7). Despite heterogeneous composition as a group, the dissenters were in the same boat as individuals who were persecuted by the government because of their refusal of religious conformity.

It was not easy to determine the exact number of Dissenters during the time.<sup>1</sup> However, its presence and influence during the time has been more and more appreciated among the recent generation of Restoration historians. Gary S. De Krey, one of these scholars, for example, notes that “one of the stumbling blocks to understanding the full importance of Protestant divisions in the politics of the Restoration has been the assumption that dissenters were a small minority” (“Between Revolutions” 749). In his more full-fledged work, *London and the Restoration, 1659-1683*, De Krey details the ways in which Dissenters living in London were able to create an alternative discourse of “conscience” to subvert the hegemony of King Charles and to fight with the royalists over the succession to the crown, the election of London sheriff, and other civil affairs.

Given these conflicts and struggles between the royalists and their opponents, it would be not surprising to see Milton and Bunyan going to the jail at some point during the Restoration since both of them as puritans stubbornly refused to make compromise with those in power. What makes their imprisonments extraordinary was the coincidence of these happenings;

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Dissenters” refers to a group of Protestants during the Restoration, who refused to confirm to the tenets of the Church of England. Because they refused to conform themselves to the authority of Anglican Church and its traditions, they are also often called “Non-conformists.” For the general explanation of Dissenters during the Restoration, see Sharon Achinstein, “Reading Dissent,” *Literature and Dissent in Milton’s England*, 1-23.

Both Milton and Bunyan were imprisoned at the opening year of the Restoration, although, as Thomas Corns explains in detail, the former's prison term was much shorter than the latter's and the official charges filed against them were likely to be different (24-28).

Before the arrival of the Restoration, there were not many things in common between Milton and Bunyan. The former was highly educated, a high-profiled official (Latin secretary) working for Cromwell and the commonwealth government. The latter, on the other hand, was a foot soldier during the civil war, making a living as a tinker, and leading a "sinful" life until he joined the Baptist church of Bedford to be a Christian. Even when both of them were in the prison, Milton was able to shorten his term, most likely due to his strong personal connections with elites, whereas Bunyan had to stay in the jail for twelve years (from 1660 to 1672). Despite the difference of social status, wealth and background, however, it should be noted that their sufferings as Dissenters and their imprisonment due to their religious faith made them alike and comparable in the eyes of their contemporary (puritan) readers. In other words, whatever differences between the two easily evaporated in the minds of their readers, who were willing to sympathize with those persecuted for their faith and conscience. Thus when Milton portrays Samson, who was "made Captive, Blind, and now in the Prison at Gaza," sitting in despair, Milton's puritan readers were likely to see Samson not only as an allegorical figure resembling Milton sitting in the prison but also as an average Puritan who could fall any time into the pit of despair and misery (Milton 748). In a similar way, when Bunyan details the sufferings and trials of Faithful and Christian in Vanity Fair from *The Pilgrim's Progress* a city allegorically symbolizing a Restoration society engrossed only in worldly goods and affairs, Bunyan encourages his readers not to lose their faith like Faithful and Christian, even though the worldly men as in the story "took them and beat them, and besmeared them with dirt, and then put them into the Cage, that they

might be made a Spectacle to all the men of the Fair" (Bunyan 72).<sup>2</sup>

The prison and trial scenes frequent in both Milton's and Bunyan's stories clearly reflect the common experiences of Dissenters during the Restoration. In short, having a hard time with the authorities during this time for the refusal of confirming to the religious codes was not confined to the powerful figures such as Milton. An example could be found in the trial of the printer John Twyn in 1664. Shortly after Charles II returned to the throne, the parliament passed the Licensing Act in 1662, which aimed at "preventing the frequent Abuses in printing seditious, treasonable, and unlicensed Books and Pamphlets, and for regulating of Printing and printing press" (Sutherland 2). The then Surveyor of the Imprimerie, Sir Roger L'Estrange ransacked Twyn's premise one day and arrested him after finding the printed sheets of *A Treatise of the Execution of Justice*. The book justified the King Charles' execution and asserted the godly duty to rise against the restored monarch (Auchter 342; Sutherland 2), and the trial judge, Sir Robert Hyde, condemned Twyn to death for "most grievous and highest treason":

There's nothing that pretends to Religion, that will avow or justify the killing at Kings, but the Jesuit on the one side, and the Sectary on the other; indeed it is a desperate and dangerous Doctrine, fomented by divers of your Temper, and it's high time some be made Examples for it. (*Cobbett's Complete Collection*, 56)

The prison in Restoration society turned itself into a site of testimony to personal and collective conscience. As Bunyan emphasizes it in *Prison*

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<sup>2</sup> Richard L. Greaves reads the scene of Vanity Fair in *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a literary set piece most resembling and satirizing Bunyan's trials in Bedford court. He argues Bunyan vents his frustrations and anger against Bedford elites, who in Bunyan's view are sure to suffer divine vengeance and punishment. To know more about Greaves' reading of Vanity Fair, see 587-605 in his article "'Let Truth Be Free': John Bunyan and the Restoration Crisis of 1667-1673."

*Meditations*,<sup>3</sup>

This gaol to us, is as a Hill,  
 From Whence we plainly see  
 Beyond this World, and take our fill  
 Of things that lasting be. (Stanza 34)

In the world of Bunyan's radical imagination, "gaol" ceases to be a place to lower himself into a humble position. Instead, it became a raised platform that enables him to look beyond this world and to feed him full with holy nourishments. By refusing to conform to the definition of prison as a despicable place of shame and disgrace, Bunyan stands firm against the threats and temptations of "worldly" authorities.

This defiant attitude toward the Restoration authorities was the very common ground that connected Milton and Bunyan, despite their difference in status and personal background. At least in the minds of their contemporary readers, their writings came across to be similar than different because they were largely written for the inspiration of the godly, who were struggling to find their paths to salvation in the night of the Restoration.

## John Milton and Collaborative Authorship

To truly appreciate the role of dissenting community in the formation of Bunyan's authorship, we need to take a moment to consider the recent debates on early modern authorship. Since Michel Foucault's questioning of the validity of individual authorship in "What is an author?" many attempts have been made to challenge the traditional view of authorship,<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> All the quotes of *Prison Meditations* are taken from the collection of Bunyan's works, *the Works of John Bunyan*.

<sup>4</sup> In Foucault's view, (individual) authorship is just a modern invention in the domains

which tends to valorize and romanticize a literary writer and see him as the sole bearer of textual meanings. Instead of assigning the whole meanings of the text to a nominal author, more and more critics nowadays tend to argue that “writing that we routinely consider the work of a single author” is a “collaborative product of the nominal author and a friend, a spouse, a ghost, an agent, an editor, a translator, a publisher, a censor, a transcriber, a printer, or—what is more often the case—several of these acting together or in succession.” (Stillinger v-22).

The notion of collaborative (or multiple) authorship can be a powerful conceptual window of exploring very rich social and cultural contexts in which a book in question was produced, consumed and circulated. Stephen Dobranski’s *Milton, Authorship and The Book Trade* illustrates how this type of new approach to authorship offers a fresh departure from traditional ways of thinking Milton and his works. Dobranski begins his book by criticizing the general practices of modern scholarship of Milton, which have been fostering what Dobranski calls “the myth of the solitary genius” (180). Starting with the general introduction of the radical difference in early modern publication practices from those of the modern, as clarified by numerous recent scholars such as Jerome MaGann, John Kerrigan, Walter J. Ong, and Arthur F. Marotti, Dobranski emphasizes the collaborative nature of book-making during the time and stresses the necessity to examine Milton’s works in historical and bibliographical contexts. Dobranski’s critical interest in collaborative nature of authorship enables him to look at differently the first edition of *Poems* in 1645, published by Humphrey Moseley. Dobranski resists the conventional understanding of this work, sumptuously furnished with the (questionable) Milton’s portrait as well as with a series of encomium devoted for the

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of literary products in order to conveniently govern and regulate the traffic of textual meanings, which is closely affiliated to the rise of “industrial and bourgeois society” and “private property” since the eighteenth century (119).



introduction of the young poet, as signs of Milton's authorial power over the text in print. Instead, Dobranski calls attention to the editorial power of Moseley, an established publisher whose taste and selection were then given much more weight than those of Milton as a less known young poet, to complicate the account of genesis of the work, while at the same finding evidence of collaborative efforts on the para-textual level, such as "letters by Lawes and Wotton," "complimentary verses by Selvaggi and Joannes Salsillus," (100). According to Dobranski, these collaborative aspects of the work reveal that Milton was not as autonomous as Milton's scholars assume to be, but "a dependent author whose texts arose out of social context" (80).

According to Dobranski, the problematical understanding of Milton as a solitary genius in part originates from naïve (mis)identification of the artistically constructed persona of Milton presented in numerous writings with the real person of Milton in a daily life. While re-examining abundant letters between Milton and his acquaintances, contemporary lives of Milton, and other relevant documents, Dobranski finds the radical side of Milton, a sociable and outspoken character fond of having dynamic interactions with his friends and colleagues, which is a quite different description from the conventional picture of Milton as a reclusive scholar, hesitating to meddle in political and social affairs, if not necessary.

The more interesting analysis, however, comes when Dobranski reconsiders Milton's writing process of his masterpiece, *Paradise Lost*. Traditionally Milton's sight loss in his late life has been often cited as a testimony to his extraordinary capacity as a visionary poet. The crippling handicap, as a story goes, could not do any harm to Milton, since Milton as a guiding beacon light must be immune to ordinary sufferings, "majestic," "free," and "like a Star, dwelt apart" (Wordsworth).<sup>5</sup> Instead of interpreting

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<sup>5</sup> Our current understanding of Milton as a solitary genius in the turbulent historical period has been firmly established in the romantic era. The cult of Milton in

Milton's blindness within the frame of heroic narrative, however, Dobranski emphasizes it as a necessary condition for Milton to seek help from his family and friends. He notes that Milton's blindness ". . . necessitated that he [Milton] rely on friends and acquaintances before *Paradise Lost* went to press." He continues to explain that "after awakening at four in the morning," Milton wanted someone who "read to him" and once "he was ready to compose," the poet "asked as he sometimes called it 'to bee milkd'" (Dobranski 33). Not only seeking "his daughters' aid," Milton also asked "his students" and some elderly men to "serve as his amanuenses" at the time of writing the epic (Dobranski 33).

Of course, although Dobranski does not specify, the well-known friend Andrew Marvell was very likely to be among the friends that gave a hand to Milton to finish the epic.<sup>6</sup> Dobranski's mapping out of the social network in which Milton supposedly wrote the epic enables us to come up with a different picture of Milton, a man of flesh and blood in everyday interaction with his acquaintances and friends, who were in general sympathetic to the Dissenting cause. Inspired by Dobranski's approach, we can in a similar manner challenge a traditional view of Bunyan's authorship, which has been interpreted mainly from the forbidding circumstances of Bunyan's poor education, low birth, and long imprisonment. Just as blindness dictated Milton all the more to seek aids from his friends and family, long prison years necessitated Bunyan to rely on his church friends as well as the publishers and printers based in the Dissenter community when he sent his books to press.

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Romantic and Victorian society and culture is documented excellently in Erik Gray's book (especially the first chapter) *Milton and the Victorians*.

<sup>6</sup> As for the friendship between Milton and Marvell, see the pages 509-10 in Barbara Lewalski's *The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography*.

## John Bunyan and His Friends

A solitary figure in the dark prison without companions is one of the common images that we have of Bunyan. Prison for us is a place of solitude, and more than twelve years of prison life that Bunyan had to endure, we assume, must leave him alone and disconnected most of the time. If we want to tread this well-trodden path of reading Bunyan's works, there are plenty of passages in them that should confirm our view. In *Prison Meditations* (1665), a long poem Bunyan wrote during his prison years, for example, Bunyan seems to portray himself as a lone figure without companion except God or its presence in the form of truth.

The truth and I were both here cast  
 Together, and we do  
 Lie arm in arm, and so hold fast  
 Each other; this is true. (Stanza 33)

In a similar manner, "Christian's solitary pilgrimage" in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, leaving behind his family and village people to enter the Celestial City, conjures up loneliness that Bunyan might have felt in prison (Knott 200). The title page of the book also suggests that the story was a result of lonely meditation in prison (or the outcome of involuntary divine inspiration, if you want to see that way). In the title page, Bunyan says, it was "a Denn" (a gaol) that he fell into an allegorical story:

As I walk'd through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a Denn; And I laid me down in that place to sleep: And as I slept I dreamed a Dream. I dreamed and behold I saw a Man cloathed with Raggs, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own House, a Book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. . . . and as he read, he wept and trembled: and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry; saying, what shall I do? (11)

One individual's spiritual agonies and cries dominating the first scene appear to set the tone of the story, in which the hero Christian against the backdrop of allegorical landscape such as "the Valley of the Shadow of Death," "a very solitary place," must go through many difficulties before he reaches the Celestial City (49-50).<sup>7</sup>

The portrait of Bunyan as a lone figure, however, can be misleading to the extent to which it has come to underestimate the important roles of his sympathetic friends and publishers in securing the remarkable success of his books. As Kathleen Lynch points out, even when he was incarcerated, Bunyan was not completely alone but with "other nonconformist prisoners" such as "Thomas Marsom and Samuel and John Fenne, and even William Wigmore, John Dunne, and Thomas Haynes" (289). Their presences in jail not only comforted Bunyan in a time of difficulties but also "provided him with an opportunity to develop his tenets through reading, writing, and discourse with some of his fellow prisoners" (Greaves, *Glimpses* 609). During the prison years, Bunyan often wrote his thoughts to use them as material for preaching and conversation with his fellow prisoners. For example, Greaves explains that Bunyan, "feeling spiritless and barren" due to imprisonment, wrote his early piece of biblical interpretation, "Out of Babylon," to "find something to say to his fellow prisoners" (176). In a similar manner, as a local story goes, "a Mar. Thomas Marsom, another religious dissenter who had spent time in the Bedford jail, used to say that Bunyan had read the manuscript of *The Pilgrim's Progress* aloud to his fellow prisoners, and that he, Marsom, had encouraged Bunyan to publish it after a silent reading in his own cell" (K. Lynch 288). Although not specifying the names of early readers, Bunyan himself actually acknowledged in "The

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Davies, for example, in *Graceful Reading* argues that the opening scene of *The Pilgrim's Progress* "marks an essentially Puritan' ethos, encapsulating in a single frame 'the lonely drama of the individual soul' on its hazardous journey heavenward" (2).

Author's Apology for His Book" in *The Pilgrim's Progress* that his story had been read to "others" (presumably his friends or acquaintances) prior to publication.

Well, when I had thus put mine ends together,  
 I shew'd them others, that I might see whether  
 They would condemn them, or them justify:  
 And some said, let them live; some, let them die.  
 Some said, John, print it; others said, Not so: (5)

However, it was not only his friends and acquaintances within the walls of prison that motivated Bunyan not to lose faith and instead to continue writing his stories. Dissenters outside the prison walls, including Bunyan's second wife Elizabeth, also took important roles in having Bunyan's voice heard through his books. In the case of Elizabeth, she took a laborious trip to London sometimes to get a pardon from the legal authorities and other times to deliver his manuscripts to Dissenting booksellers such as Francis Smith (Greaves, *Glimpses* 152-67). And the publisher Smith was one of several publishers who had a long-standing friendship with Bunyan and played a seminal role in publishing his works. According to *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, "between 1661 and 1676" Smith "published the majority of Bunyan's writings with the significant exception of the author's major work of 1666, *Grace Abounding*" (B. Lynch). Smith, often "known as Elephant Smith on account of his trademark sign" devoted his professional career to publishing "radical and republican tracts" (B. Lynch).

If we look more closely at the ways in which Smith published highly explosive political subjects, we soon find out that the publishers and booksellers sympathetic to the cause of dissenters worked closely all together, taking over someone's responsibilities and roles in case a person in the group was arrested or in exile. Roger L'Estrange, an infamous press

censor in early Restoration period, and his servants' tracking down of the "seditious" book, *Mirabilis Annus, or the Year of Prodigies and Wonders* (1661), would be one good example. *Mirabilis Annus* was a politically dangerous book, since the (anonymous) author argues, "the day of calamity is at hand for persecutors of the church," and the imminent arrival of God's judgment day is "witnessed by signs and prodigies of the kind that signified the overthrow of the Pharaoh and his Egyptian subjects" (Greaves, *Deliver* 214). L'Estrange discovered the sheets of the book, still yet to be printed and bound, while he was searching for another seditious book entitled *Phoenix: or, the Solemn League and Covenant*, and tracking down those responsible for the publication of *Phoenix*. Even though L'Estrange managed to arrest the publishers responsible for these books (i.e. Livewell Chapman, Giles Calvert, and Thomas Brewster), and put them in jail, *Mirabilis Annus* was eventually sent to press and published because "Calvert's wife Elizabeth, secretly working in conjunction with Francis Smith, managed to print the book" (Greaves, *Deliver* 213). Of course, later, L'Estrange was able to arrest Smith, and to put him in jail, but even then there were other underground publishers and booksellers who would fill in his role.

The episode about *Mirabilis Annus* shows us that Francis Smith, one of the major publishers of Bunyan's works, worked closely with other booksellers and publishers in Dissenting community. As N. H. Keeble points out, "Nonconformist publishing was a collaborative enterprise requiring from printers, booksellers and other tradesmen a shared commitment with the author to challenge and outwit the agents of the state" ("John Bunyan" 17). In fact, believing that Smith fell under increasingly tight surveillance of press censors, Bunyan seemed to replace Smith with someone else as he was about to finish his spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding*. In the year of 1666, when *Grace Abounding* was published, according to Christopher Hill, Smith was again in trouble with the state authorities, which forced Bunyan to choose a different

publisher, George Larkin (287-88). Larkin was relatively unknown to the state officials at the time of publishing *Grace Abounding*, but his subsequent professional performance indicates that Larkin was strongly committed to publishing Non-conformist books and pamphlets. Larkin was “prosecuted in 1668 for his role in publishing satirical verse” (Keeble, “John Bunyan” 18), and during the Exclusion Crisis from 1678 to 1681, he “was a marked man for having printed exclusionist newspaper for Ricahard Janeway” (Greavies, *Glimpses* 490). His name was also found, alongside with famous Dissenters as well as other Bunyan’s publishers such as “Francis Smith, Dorman Newman, Benjamin Harris, and Benjamin Alsop,” in the petition to King Charles during the Exclusion Crisis (i.e. London’s Monster Petition of 1680), which urged the opening of Parliament and the “the trials of Danby and the five Catholic peers in the Tower” (Greaves, *Glimpses* 391).

However, on the other hand, we should also consider the fact that political and religious motivations, important as they might be, were not the sole reason for Bunyan’s publishers to print Bunyan’s books. The complaint of Nathaniel Ponder, arguably the most well-known Bunyan’s publisher, against the pirated copies of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, would be a case in point. In the beginning when Ponder started to publish *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, he was very likely to be motivated by the commitments shared with Dissenting publishers. According to *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, even before Ponder met Bunyan, his name was already familiar to press censors, because he not only published “Andrew Marvell’s *The Rehearsal Transpros’d*, a satirical animadversion on the reactionary Anglicanism of Samuel Parker, future bishop of Oxford” but also published most of the works of John Owen, one of the most influential theologian and Independent (Non-conformist) ministers (B. Lynch). However, with the growth of lucrative prospects after every edition, Ponder actively asserted his rights to protect the book against pirated copies. Ponder sued a printer Thomas Braddyl for printing a pirated edition of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* in

1679, and complained about “Land pirates” including Braddyl in an “Advertisement from Book-seller.” He argued that “there are some malicious men of our profession, of lewd principles, hating honesty, and Coveting other mens rights, and which we call Land Pirates, one of this society is Thomas Bradyl a Printer,” and showed an easy way of distinguishing “the true Copie” from the “Counterfeit.”

You may distinguish it thus, The Notes are printed in Long Primer a base old letter, almost, worn out hardly to be read, and such is the Book itself. Whereas the true Copie is Printed in Leigable fair Character and Brevier Notes as it always has been. This Fourth Edition hath as the third had, The Author’s Picture before the Titile, and hath more than 22 passages of Additions, pertinently place quite thorow the Book, which the Counterfeit hath not.

Aside from Smith, Larkin and Ponder, there were other publishers and booksellers that worked with Bunyan and helped him to amplify his godly voice through the channels of press. But our discussion of the three major publishers would be enough to show that Bunyan did not struggle alone to get through his difficult time and to carve his reputation as a writer. Without the aid of the social and cultural network of Dissenters, it was almost unthinkable for Bunyan to reach such a large scale of readers beyond his “gaol” and his Bedford Independent Church.

## Conclusion

Until the recent reconsideration of the historiography of the Restoration, it has been assumed that Charles II’s libertine court was the center of Restoration culture and literature, thereby seeing Restoration comedies, supported by Charles and his courtiers, as the high-water mark of



Restoration literature. However, thanks to a new wave of challenges from literary historians such as Keeble, Margaret Ezell,<sup>8</sup> and others, we start to understand that there was a substantial body of Dissenters, which created an underground culture, whose nature was largely religious and confrontational to ethos and world views endorsed by Charles and his followers. With the new perspective on the role of Dissenters in Restoration society being in place, it is not surprising that Bunyan's scholarship has accordingly changed. Instead of looking at Bunyan as someone politically indifferent and disinterested, more and more Restoration scholars pay attention to his ties of friendship and cooperation with Dissenting sects and publishers, who "many in authority in his [Bunyan's] society, especially among the gentry thought" were "in itself seditious" (Hill 15). In other words, a previous generation of the critics tended to emphasize that Bunyan was pacifist, only interested in purely spiritual and timeless issues such as damnation, original sin, salvation, grace, and so on. But, as more critics contextualize Bunyan's works within Dissenting community and its related issues, we start to have a different picture of Bunyan. His apparently submissive gestures toward the authority and his seemingly indifference to the politics has become something not to be taken at face value.<sup>9</sup> As our study shows, Bunyan was not alone in a fight with the state and its agents and he actively took advantage of the underground network,

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Margaret Ezell's "Literary History's Alternate Groove: The Expectations of Periodization and Seventeenth-Century Literary Culture," and Keeble's *The Restoration: England in the 1660s*.

<sup>9</sup> Some critics argue that Bunyan's doctrinal teachings reveal a differential positioning from radical sects during the time such as Quakers and Ranters (Underwood 137-38). To prove Bunyan's submissive attitude toward the powerful, they often quote the following words from Bunyan, who declared his royalty to the King before the judges: "I look upon it as my duty to behave myself under the King's government, both as becomes a man and a christian; and if an occasion was offered me, I should willingly manifest my loyalty to my Prince, both by word and deed" ("A Relation of the Imprisonment" 112).

and selectively chose the publishers and booksellers whom he wanted to work with. The sense of co-belonging between him and his Dissenting friends indicates that he was neither weak nor helpless, not simply because of Christian conscience locked within his heart, but because of the power of Dissenting community united under the banner of “conscience” against the repressive regime of King Charles II. I hope this study, although not extensive enough to reveal the full picture of Bunyan’s ties to the underground network, may contribute to the growing scholarly interests in Bunyan as a Dissenter.

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## ABSTRACT

**John Bunyan as a Dissenter: A Study of Dissenting Literature in the Restoration**

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Only in recent years, Dissenters in the Restoration have been receiving overdue attention, consequently challenging the conventional view of Restoration literature as a prelude for the age of Neo-classicism that would blossom in the works of Alexander Pope. While criticizing the linear historiography of Restoration literature and the often overemphasized role of royal courts in it, this article attempts to focus on and describe the cooperative aspects between Bunyan and his sympathetic companions, a group of Dissenters who influenced or helped Bunyan to gather his thoughts and publish them in print. The mutual relationship between Bunyan and his publishers such as Francis Smith, George Larkin and Nathaniel Ponder is described in detail not only to show how closely and within what circumstances Bunyan worked with these Dissenting publishers but also to illustrate another way of portraying Bunyan's authorship and time period.

**Key Words** | John Bunyan, Dissenters, The Restoration, John Milton, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Francis Smith, George Larkin, Nathaniel Ponder, *Prison Meditations*, Authorship