

# John Bunyan and Aphra Behn: Ancestors of the Novel

The Second Half of the 17th Century

# John Bunyan: *The Pilgrim's Progress*

- Protestant, **Nonconformist** preacher. After the Restoration atmosphere unfavourable to Protestants → he is arrested, 12 years in **jail**, starts writing his masterpiece in prison. It is finished in 1677.
- Religious **allegory**, **enormous success**, renewed over time. Staple (di base) reading, especially in **America**. A dream of a pilgrimage towards the Celestial City. Written in **prose**.
- The protagonist “**Christian**” recalls *Everyman* (morality play) and *Piers Plowman* (medieval allegory)
- The protagonist's journey is his “progress”.

# Allegory

- He crosses **symbolic places** the Valley of Humiliation, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, Doubting Castle where he meets various allegorical characters. He has to overcome difficulties and obstacles of every kind. At the end he reaches the **Celestial City**, with his friend **Hopeful**.

# Vanity Fair

- Another fellow pilgrim, **Faithful**, is put to death in **Vanity Fair**, a place where everything is for sale (gold, silver but also wives, children, titles, lives). The pilgrims are taken to court and tried, as their values /principles are diametrically opposed to those of their judges (they don't want to buy everything).
- His experience in jail influences him. Absurdity of the legal logic.
- Judge = Lord Hate-Good. The 3 witnesses that testify against Faithful (swearing falsely): Envy, Superstition, and Pickthank

# Bunyan's puritan values

- Like Milton, B. gives the most important inhabitants of Vanity Fair, the courtiers of Beelzebub, the names of the vices and sins that the Puritans associated with the aristocracy: "Prince Beelzebub and . his honorable friends, . . . Lord Old Man, Lord Carnal Delight, Lord Luxurious, Lord Desire of Vainglory, my old Lord Lechery, Sir Having Greedy, with all the rest of our nobility."
- Hell = the place of the false values of Aristocracy.

# Realism: an ancestor of the novel

- However, the attention to **details**, some aspects of the places and characters, the tone of the narration, his dialogues are thoroughly **realistic**. → people enjoyed it because the
- Pilgrim is an **ordinary** person facing extraordinary adventures, as in the **novel**. It was not read for religious reasons only.

# Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*: another ancestor of the novel

- *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave* (1688), in prose.
- An African prince is captured by the British and convicted to Surinam with his beloved Imoinda. He rebels, therefore he is tortured and dies as an honourable hero.
- Surinam = English colony where the writer lived → eye-witnessing; this function will be used in the novel.
- He is **not a noble savage**. He is a complex being and belongs to a refined civilisation. Embodies many principles: honour, honesty, spiritual love for his beloved.
- **Royal slave (oxymoron) vs world of European avid merchants and ruthless colonisers.** Criticism of slave trade and Colonialism.
- A mix of *romance*, autobiography, travelogue.

# In prose but different from the novel

- Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* : Mix of allegory and Realism
- Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*: Mix of romance and Realism
- The novel (Defoe, Richardson): verisimilitude, adherence to reality, realism



# What happens outside GB?

- **African slave trade:** 1500-1870, from West and Central Africa to the New World especially Brazil.
- Some people were traded, some were captured through raids. Between 9.4 and 12 million Africans arrived by force in the New World. Middle Passage.
- 1682 William Penn set the Quaker colony of **Pennsylvania**

# Charles II -James II

- 1685: **Charles II** died and converted to Catholicism on his deathbed.
- His brother **James II** succeeded to the throne. He was openly **Catholic**, autocratic and hostile to Parliament.
- He was a widower with two Protestant daughters: Mary (married to William of Orange) and Anne (married to the King of Denmark).
- When James remarried a Catholic, Mary of Modena, and had another son and heir → fear of the return of Catholicism.

# The Glorious Revolution 1688

- To avoid civil war Parliament and William of Orange negotiated secretly. James was deposed. He and his family had to leave England.
- “Glorious” revolution because it was (apparently) bloodless.
- William and Mary became monarch at the request of Parliament. They signed a contract: the **Bill of Rights** (1689), which gave the parliament alone the right to raise taxes, control an army and pass laws. → **Britain = the first Constitutional Monarchy in the world.**
- **Act of Settlement, 1701**: excluded Catholics from the throne. In case the Royal couple died childless, Anne would come to the throne (to exclude James’s heir).

# Monarchs in the second half of 1600

- Charles II Stuart, 1660-1685
- James II Stuart, 1685-1689
- William of Orange and Mary , 1689-1702, joint monarchs called by parliament (no children)
- Queen Anne 1702-1714