The Shock of the New:

Restoration and Early Eighteenth-Century Literature

In this course we will read a selection of exciting and significant works of Restoration and early eighteenth-century literature and explore how they contribute to the creation of new literary modes and to the formation of modern notions of personal identity. We will give particular attention to the career and works of Aphra Behn, England’s first widely successful female professional writer.

Restoration and early eighteenth-century literature is exciting, dynamic, and experiment-rich, and it has something for just about every interest: the sexual satire of court wits such as Rochester and Etherege; the reflective poetry of Anne Finch; attacks on the new scientific learning by Jonathan Swift and defences of women scientists by Margaret Cavendish; witty celebrations of female autonomy and desire (by Aphra Behn and Eliza Haywood); new ideals of individual and colonial heroism (Milton’s Adam, Defoe’s Crusoe) and comic satires of those ideals (Swift’s Gulliver); new genres (such as the novel, travel narrative, biography, and autobiography); new kinds of published authors (such as women and the middling ranks); new media (widely disseminated print forms such as the newsbook); the appearance of the professional writer (Grub Street); and new literary relationships to classical Greek and Roman literature and learning, relationships which—according to some critics at least—see “Athenian” or forward-looking, modernizing writers such as Defoe in conflict with “Augustan” or backward-looking, reactionary writers such as Swift.

These diverse literary and cultural trends, set in motion by the upheavals of the mid-seventeenth century civil wars in England, may remind us a bit of the miscellaneousness of the scatological debris flowing down the gutter in Swift’s “A Description of a City Shower”: “Sweepings from Butchers’ Stalls, Dung, Guts, and Blood, / Drowned Puppies, stinking Sprats, all drenched in Mud, / Dead Cats, and Turnip-Tops come tumbling down the Flood.” This is not eighteenth-century literature as it has traditionally been taught—a period of literary decorum, rococo neo-classicism, and domestic sentimentalism. Instead, the wild, levelling dynamism of Swift’s city is a fitting metaphor for the social and literary energies of the oft-hidden side of the literature of the period 1660-1730.

Rather than approach our readings by way of a chronological survey, I have grouped the material under four headings—satire and the new science; the libertine; the new woman and her detractors; and anti-colonialism. In each unit we will sample both venerable classics and upstart contenders to the canon, and consider how shared literary techniques and concerns, and shared social questions, serve to organize the texts within each unit. One writer in particular—Aphra Behn—will be singled out for attention across three of our four units.
Office: Hagey Hall 257; Phone: 888-4567, ext. 2416
Office hours: 4:00-5:00 Tuesday and 1:00-2:00 Thursday, or by appointment

Required Texts:
  Robert DeMaria, Jr., ed., British Literature, 1640-1789: An Anthology (Blackwell)
  Jonathan Swift, Gulliver's Travels (Oxford)
  Gamini Salgado, ed., Three Restoration Comedies (Penguin)
  Janet Todd, ed., Oroonoko, The Rover, and Other Writings (Penguin)

Recommended Texts:
  Joseph Gibaldi, MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 5th ed. (MLA)

Assignments: Attendance and active preparation for and participation in class (10%); 5-minute class report on a scholarly essay or book chapter (5%); mid-term or 15-minute class presentation on a longer work (or set of shorter ones) from the syllabus (your choice = 15%); 7-page paper (30%); and a final examination (40%).

Students are required to prepare course readings ahead of the relevant lectures and class discussions. For those who choose to write it, the mid-term will be held on October 19. The paper is due in class on November 23. Class reports and class presentations, for those who choose to deliver one, will be scheduled in class by the end of September. Papers must be typed and double-spaced; if using a word-processor, laser print and do not use right justification. A page is 250 words. Papers must follow the format for citation and quotation laid out in the MLA Handbook, 5th ed. Papers late without prior permission may be penalized 2% per day. Uncompleted assignments will be graded F-.

NOTE: Please keep a photocopy of any paper you submit, and never hand a paper in by sliding it under (or sticking it to) my office door.
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SYLLABUS

September 12: Introduction

September 14: Prelude: New Forms, Novel Identities:
   Swift, “A Description of a City Shower” (in DeMaria)
   Dryden, “Mac Flecknoe,” esp. ll. 1-60, 94-107, 139-160, 211-217 (in DeMaria)

I. Satire and the New Science

September 19: Science and the Style of Politics:
   Sprat, The History of the Royal Society (excerpt in DeMaria)
   Dryden, “To My Honoured Friend, Dr. Carleton” (in DeMaria)

September 21 & 26: Against Nature:
   Swift, Gulliver’s Travels (Part 3)

II. The Libertine

September 28 & October 3: The Future of Illusion:
   Rochester, “The Imperfect Enjoyment,” “A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind,” “The Disabled Debauchee,” “A Satyr on Charles II” (in DeMaria)
   Behn, “The Disappointment,” “To the Fair Clarinda,” “Ovid to Julia” (in DeMaria); “On Desire” (in Todd); “In Imitation of Horace” (handout)

October 5 & 10: The Constraints of Desire:
   Wycherley, The Country Wife (in Salgado)

October 12 & 17: Sexual Modernism:
   Etherege, The Man of Mode (in Salgado)
October 19: Midterm

October 24 & 26: Women Who Rove with the Wolves:
            Behn, The Rover (in Todd)

III. The New Woman and Her Detractors

October 31: Liberating Women:
            Behn, “An Epistle to the Reader, Prefixed to The Dutch Lover”
            (handout); “Epilogue to Sir Patient Fancy” (in Todd)
            Chudleigh, “To the Ladies” (in DeMaria)

November 2 & 7: Problems of Publicity:
            Finch, “The Introduction,” “The Unequal Fetters,” “The Answer,”
            “The Spleen” (in DeMaria); “A Nocturnal Reverie,” “Ardelia’s
            Answer to Ephelia” (handout)
            Haywood, “Fantomina” (in DeMaria)

November 9 & 14: Masculine Backlash?:
            Swift, “A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed” (in DeMaria)
            Pope, “Of the Characters of Women” (in DeMaria)

IV. Anti-Colonialism:

November 16 & 21: Noble, African, and Anti-Christian:
            Behn, Oroonoko (in Todd)

November 23 & 28: Satire and Anti-Humanism:
            Swift, Gulliver’s Travels (Part 4)

November 30: Conclusion and Review