The Age of Aphra Behn: Restoration Literature

SYLLABUS

September 11: Introduction:
Rochester, “The Disabled Debauchee” (in DeMaria)

September 13: New Societies, New Forms, New Energies:
Dryden, “Mac Flecknoe” (in DeMaria)

I. The New Woman

September 18: The Status of Women:
The Marriage Service (handout)
Chudleigh, “To the Ladies” (handout)
Astell, A Serious Proposal to the Ladies (excerpt in DeMaria)
Defoe, “An Academy for Women” (in DeMaria)

September 20 & 25: Female Friendship:
Cavendish, “Female Orations” (in Bowerbank and Mendelson)
Philips, “To Mrs. Wogan, My Honoured Friend, on the Death of Her Husband,” “Orinda to Lucasia,” “Parting with Lucasia. A Song” (in DeMaria)

September 27 & October 2: Liberated Women:
Behn, “An Epistle to the Reader, Prefixed to The Dutch Lover,”
“Epilogue to Sir Patient Fancy” (handout)
Cavendish, The Convent of Pleasure (in Bowerbank and Mendelson)

II. The Libertine

October 4 & 9: Future Passion:
Rochester, “The Imperfect Enjoyment,” “A Satyr on Charles II” (in Demaria)

Behn, “The Disappointment,” “To the Fair Clarinda,” “Ovid to Julia” (in DeMaria)

October 11 & 16: The Constraints of Desire:

October 18: Midterm

October 23 & 25: Sexual Modernism:
Etherege, *The Man of Mode* (in Salgado)

October 30 & November 1 & 6: Women Who Rove with the Wolves:
Behn, *The Rover*

**III. The New Science**

November 8 & 13: Genres of Science:
Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society* (excerpt on handout)
Dryden, “To My Honoured Friend, Dr. Carleton” (in DeMaria)
Rochester, “A Satyr on Reason and Mankind” (in DeMaria)
Behn, “Preface to Her Translation of Fontenelle’s *Entretiens*” (in Bowerbank and Mendleson)

November 15 & 20: Genders of Science:
Pepys, *Diary* (excerpt on handout)
Cavendish, *The Blazing World* (in Bowerbank and Mendleson)

**IV. Anti-Colonialism**

November 22 & 27: Noble, African, and Anti-Christian:
Behn, *Oroonoko* (in DeMaria)

November 29: Conclusion and Review

IMPORTANT NOTE: Scheduled dates for readings may vary depending on class progress through the material. It is the responsibility of students taking this course to be up-to-date on class progress. Students will keep up with class progress by attending course lectures.
The Age of Aphra Behn: Restoration Literature

DESCRIPTION

In this course we will read a selection of exciting and significant works of Restoration literature, including a number of Restoration stage comedies, 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.

The "restoration" of King Charles II in 1660, after two decades of social turmoil (turmoil that included such disruptive events as the English civil wars, the execution of Charles I, the formation of a Puritan Republic under Oliver Cromwell, and a period of wild social experimentation) was widely celebrated by all sectors of a society (even many former republicans) tired of constant ideological conflict. Compared with the self-denying ideals of the 1640s and 1650s, when both plebeian and aristocratic social and sexual license was attacked (and even Christmas was banned for a few years!), the Restoration period (roughly 1660 to 1700) was a time of great social and sexual indulgence. With the easing of restraints on personal behaviour, social ideas, and even literary expression (Cromwell, for example, had closed the theatres; Charles II reopened them), Restoration literature both represented and helped to create an exciting, dynamic, and experiment-rich burst of energetic cultural expression.

The literature of the Restoration has something for just about every interest: the sexual satire of court wits such as Rochester and Etherege; the reflective poetry of Katherine Philips; defences of women in science by Margaret Cavendish; witty celebrations of female autonomy and desire (by Aphra Behn and Cavendish); new ideals of individual and colonial heroism (Milton's Adam, Behn's Oroonoko) and comic satires of those ideals (Dryden's Mac Flecknoe); new genres (such as the novel, travel narrative, biography, and autobiography); new kinds of published writers (such as women and the middling ranks); new media (widely disseminated print forms such as the newsbook and the broadside); the appearance of the professional writer (Grub Street); new modes of old genres (women actors were now allowed on the public stage for the first time in England, leading to a female-dominated system of theatrical stars and to an increasingly heteroexualized stage); 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 in a literary war with "Augustan" or backward-looking, reactionary writers).

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 Restoration and eighteenth-century literature as it has traditionally been taught—a period of literary decorum, rococo neo-classicism, and sentimental effusions. Instead, the wild, levelling dynamism of Swift's city flood, and all its copia, is a fitting metaphor for the social and literary energies of the oft-hidden side of the literature of the period between 1660 and 1700, and beyond.

Rather than approach our readings by way of a chronological survey, I have grouped the material under four headings—the new woman; the libertine; the new science; 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 all four units.

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Logistics:

Contact Information:
Office: Hagey Hall 257; Phone: 888-4567, ext. 32416
Office hours: 2:30-3:30 Tuesday, or by appointment

Required Texts:
Robert DeMaria, Jr., ed., British Literature, 1640-1789: An Anthology, 2nd ed. (Blackwell)
Silvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson, eds., Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader (Broadview)
Gamini Salgado, ed., Three Restoration Comedies (Penguin)
Frederick M. Link, ed., Aphra Behn, The Rover (Nebraska)

Recommended Texts:
Joseph Gibaldi, MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6th ed. (MLA)

Assignments:
Attendance and active preparation for and participation in class discussions and exercises (10%); in-class midterm essay or 15-minute class presentation on a Restoration cultural or historical topic (your choice = 20%); 2000-word paper (30%); and a final examination (40%).

Students ARE REQUIRED to prepare course readings ahead of the relevant classes. Class exercises will include regular breakout groups on five key aspects of Restoration literature: libertine sexuality, women's consciousness, self-fashioning, Puritan and Royalist ideologies, and Athenian and Augustan aesthetics (a sign-up sheet for the breakout groups will be circulated in the second week of classes). Class presentations, for those who choose to deliver one, will be
scheduled for dates starting in the sixth week of classes; a sign-up sheet for topics and dates will be circulated in the second week of classes.

For those who choose to write it, the midterm will be held on October 18. The paper MUST be handed in to the instructor at the start of the class on November 20. Due to my administrative and research responsibilities and other factors such as class sizes, I am not able to mark papers handed in at other times. For this reason, papers handed in before, during, after, or outside the November 20th class, in the absence of a serious personal or medical reason, will be graded 0 (zero). Papers must be typed, double-spaced, and fastened with a staple (DO NOT use plastic report folders or other fasteners or covers); if using a word-processor, laser print your paper and do not use right-justification (i.e., leave the right-hand margin jagged, as it is in this document). Papers must follow the format laid out in the MLA Handbook. All uncompleted assignments will be graded 0 (zero).

Finally, it is expected and required that students will at all times follow both University and Departmental regulations on plagiarism (in particular, all work apart from group assignments must be your own, and the words and ideas of others must appear within your work inside quotation marks and with complete citations in foot- or endnotes).

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