

## ENG9HB The Long Eighteenth Century 1660-1800 Autumn 2011

This module explores the literature and cultural life of the period from 1660 (when the monarchy was restored after the government of Oliver Cromwell) to the end of the eighteenth century, a century and a half sometimes known as the 'long' eighteenth century.

The second half of the seventeenth century saw great constitutional changes resulting in limitations placed upon monarchical power with the growth of party politics at home and the expansion of British imperial interests abroad. The European Enlightenment's emphasis on philosophy and science made an increasing impact upon the British scene. These changes in turn are reflected in the character of literary and cultural production.

We start with John Milton's great epic, *Paradise Lost* (1668), a poem that widely influenced eighteenth-century writers, as we will see in Dr Johnson's account of Milton. The rakish, court-based culture of the Stuarts is represented on this module by the libertine amatory and satirical poetry of the Earl of Rochester. Our period is the great age of English satire and we shall debate the nature and function of satire in the political, intellectual and social life of the nation and compare the various talents of its greatest exponents, beginning with a selection of poetry by Dryden, Pope, Johnson and others, continuing with Swift's prose satire in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and ending with the satirists of the very end of the period, focussing in particular on Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* and Jane Austen's early writings.

The early eighteenth century sees the rise of the novel with an increasingly middle class readership. Here we shall study Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722). The mid eighteenth century saw a major shift to 'sensibility', here represented by Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1768). The eighteenth century also sowed the seeds of the movement that would come to be known as Romanticism, and we will consider the poets Grey, Thomson, Akenside and Young as 'pre' or 'proto' Romantic poets.

At the end of our period, the French Revolution changed the political and cultural landscape in Britain dramatically and irreversibly. We will therefore consider the literature of the 1790s within this context.

### Set Texts:

ENG9HB Module Reader

*Eighteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology* (Blackwell Annotated Anthologies), eds David Fairer and Christine Gerrard, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.

Jonathan Swift: *Gulliver's Travels* (Penguin)

Daniel Defoe: *Moll Flanders* (Penguin)

Samuel Richardson: *Pamela* (Penguin)

Laurence Sterne: *A Sentimental Journey* (Penguin)