

LIT 6934

Roger Maioli

Rakes, Vixens, and Savages: Human Nature in the Long Eighteenth Century

Meeting times: T 3-5 (9:35–12:35)

Seminar Room (TUR 4112)



The eighteenth century in Europe was a time of optimism about human nature. To begin with, there was one: timeless, universal, purposive. In addition, it was essentially good. Most Enlightenment thinkers rejected the view that human beings are fallen from grace or are inherently selfish, contending instead that human nature affords all the resources we need for virtuous and peaceful lives. And yet this optimism was haunted by exceptions — by disruptive figures that didn't fit well within such an account of human nature: libertines *à la* Don Juan, who are essentially self-serving and treat the social world as a preying field; deviant women who scorn social conventions and bid defiance to modesty; and a wide range of outsiders that Europeans commonly dismissed as pagans, barbarians, or savages. The literature of the long eighteenth century is riddled with such figures, which it often exorcises but sometimes celebrates. Taken together, they threatened the Enlightenment's optimistic picture of human nature. They rekindled the old fears that, under the politeness of social surfaces, Satan still roamed around; that codes of conduct were fictions created by liars who deceived everyone including themselves; and that beyond the limits of civilization (that is, Europe), human nature expressed itself in ways deeply at odds with the Enlightenment program. These figures had to be kept under control, but they often weren't.

In this course we will discuss the role played by these figures — rakes, vixens, and savages — in the imaginative literature of the period. We will discuss the ways in which they challenged contemporary understandings of human nature and set limits to Enlightenment universalism; and we will consider the strategies writers used to either deflate or leverage this challenge. We will begin and end with two versions of the Don Juan myth — Molière's 1665 play and Lord Byron's 1824 narrative poem — which roughly define the boundaries of the so-called long eighteenth century. In between, we will read works of prose fiction from both Britain and France, including well known novels by Daniel

Defoe and Maria Edgeworth, as well as long neglected works including the anonymous *Travels of Hildebrand Bowman*, now regarded as the first New Zealand novel. Secondary sources will include sample chapters by Erin Mackie, J.G.A. Pocock, and Londa Schiebinger as well as articles by Deborah Weiss and Gary Dyer.

READINGS

All the secondary sources for this course will be available either on Canvas or through the UF library website. The primary sources, by contrast, exist either online or in book format. In some cases, I will ask you to please use the book, in the edition listed below. The versions of Richardson's *Clarissa* and Edgeworth's *Belinda* required by this course exist only in the editions below. In other cases, such as those of Defoe and Byron, an online text will do just as well. If you decide to buy the book, please buy the edition indicated below; but if you already own it in a different edition or prefer an electronic source, you are welcome to use those. The works are listed in the order in which we will be using them:

- Molière, *Don Juan and Other Plays*, ed. Ian McLean (Oxford World's Classics)
- Daniel Defoe, *Roxana*, ed. John Mullan (Oxford World's Classics)
- Voltaire, *Zadig and L'Ingénu*, ed. John Butt (Penguin Classics)
- Anonymous, *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*, ed. Lyndon J. Dominique (Broadview Press)
- Anonymous, *The Travels of Hildebrand Bowman*, ed. Lance Bertelsen (Broadview Press)
- Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa; Or, The History of a Young Lady*. Abridged Edition by Toni Bowers and John Richetti (Broadview Press)
- Lord Byron, *The Major Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford World's Classics)
- Charlotte Dacre, *Zofloya: or The Moor*, ed. Kim Ian Michasiw (Oxford World's Classics)
- Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, ed. Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick (Oxford World's Classics)

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK	READINGS
1. Aug 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Four entries from the <i>Encyclopédie</i>: “Barbarians” (by Yvon), “State of Nature” (by Jaucourt), “Woman” (by Desmahis), and “Negro” (by Formey)
2. Aug 27	THE RAKE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Molière, <i>Don Juan</i>
3. Sep 3	THE VIXEN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Daniel Defoe, <i>Roxana</i>
4. Sep 10	THE SAVAGE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Voltaire, <i>L'Ingénu</i>
5. Sep 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anonymous, <i>The Woman of Colour</i> ▪ Londa Schiebinger, “The Anatomy of Difference,” from <i>Nature’s Body</i>. Available on Canvas.
6. Sep 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anonymous, <i>The Travels of Hildebrand Bowman</i> ▪ J.G.A. Pocock, “The Invention and Discovery of Savagery,” from <i>Barbarism and Religion IV</i>. Available on Canvas.
7. Oct 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Samuel Richardson, <i>Clarissa</i>. Beginning to p. 314.
8. Oct 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Submit reader responses on <i>Clarissa</i>, 315–473. No class meeting.
9. Oct 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Samuel Richardson, <i>Clarissa</i>, 473–727. ▪ Erin Mackie, “Always Making Excuses: The Rake and Criminality,” from <i>Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates</i>, pp. 35–70. Available on Canvas.
10. Oct 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Byron, <i>Don Juan</i>, Beginning to Canto VII.
11. Oct 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Byron, <i>Don Juan</i>, Cantos VIII-XVII. ▪ Gary Dyer, “Thieves, Boxers, Sodomites, Poets: Being Flash to Byron’s <i>Don Juan</i>.” Search for it on Jstor.
12. Nov 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Charlotte Dacre, <i>Zofloya: or The Moor</i>
13. Nov 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maria Edgeworth, <i>Belinda</i>
14. Nov 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maria Edgeworth, <i>Belinda</i> ▪ Deborah Weiss, “The Extraordinary Ordinary Belinda: Maria Edgeworth’s Female Philosopher.” Search for it on Project MUSE.
15. Nov 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Submit final paper projects. No class meeting.
16. Dec 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workshop. Conclusion.

COURSE POLICY

Requirements: You are required to write one final paper, give one in-class presentation, and write weekly responses to the readings. The latter should be posted to Canvas the day before class. I will give you specific instructions on each of these assignments as the course proceeds.

Plagiarism: All written assignments should be your own work. Plagiarizing the work of others (by copying printed or online sources without acknowledgement) is illegal, and you may fail the course if you plagiarize. If you have questions about how to document your sources, or if you want to make sure you are not committing plagiarism without realizing it, please ask me.

Special accommodations: Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with the Office of Student Service in order to determine appropriate accommodation. I will be pleased to provide accommodation, but students are responsible for notifying me at the beginning of the semester.

Counseling and Mental Health Resources: Students facing difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help should call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center.

Sexual Assault and Harassment: Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are civil rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here:

http://www.ufsa.ufl.edu/faculty_staff/fees_resources_policies/addressing_sexual_misconduct/reporting_sexual_misconduct/

UF Online Course Evaluation Policy: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last 2-3 weeks of the semester. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.