

CORSO DI LAUREA IN LINGUE E LETTERATURE STRANIERE

LETTERATURA INGLESE I

CURRICULUM A

A. A. 2014/15

Wide Sargasso Sea (Part 1) – 05/11/2014

1. Contestualizzazione del romanzo

- Jean Rhys (1890-1979): *The Left Bank and Other Stories*, 1927; *Postures*, 1928 (released as *Quartet*, 1929); *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*, 1931; *Voyage in the Dark*, 1934; *Good Morning, Midnight*, 1939; *Wide Sargasso Sea*, 1966.
- WSS come “prequel” di *Jane Eyre* (1847): prospettiva di un punto di vista *femminile, nativo ed altro*. La figura di Antoinette/Bertha compare nel romanzo della Brontë. [citaz. 1-3]
- Bertha/Antoinette vs. Jane nella prospettiva degli studi di genere:
 - Hélène Cixous, *Le Rire de la Méduse* (1975): “écriture féminine”;
 - Sandra Gilbert e Susan Gubar, *The Mad Woman in the Attic* (1979): “Women must kill the angel in the house”.
- La prospettiva postcoloniale: intertestualità; “cleaving from” / ”cleaving to”. [citaz. 4-5]
- La dimensione caraibica: i concetti di “creole” e “creolization”. [citaz. 6-7]
- Il carattere postmoderno: (Lyotard, Barthes)
 - “[...] modernity is incredulity with regard to master narratives”.
 - “The narrative function loses its foundation, the great hero, the great perils, the great quests, the great goal.”

2. Origine e struttura del romanzo

- L'origine, la variazione del titolo e il significato del titolo: [citaz. 8-9]
- “marroon”: 1) “To put (a person) ashore on a desolate island or coast, to be left there esp. as a form of punishment”; 2) “A member of a community of black slaves who had escaped from their captivity or (subsequently) of their descendants, esp. those who settled in the mountains and forests of Suriname and the West Indies.”
- La struttura narrativa e la prospettiva multipla:

Part 1: infanzia, la natura caraibica, la condizione creola, l'incendio.

Part 2: Rochester narratore, *obeah*, pazzia.

Part 3: Antoinette diventa Bertha, Thornfield, il sogno.

3. Personaggi

Antoinette/Bertha [citaz. 10-14]: il gioco della rifrazione identitaria: Antoinette Cosway, Antoinette Mason, Rochester, Bertha Mason, Bertha Rochester.

figura prodotta dall'assioma dell'imperialismo” (Spivak)

Rochester [citaz. 15-21]: “he lacks the name of the father.” (Spivak)

“il rapporto problematico con il paesaggio;

la lingua come strumento di controllo

Annette [citaz. 22-23]: una figura di assenza, letenza e trauma;

negazione storica e *zombification* .

Citazioni – Lezione *Wide Sargasso Sea* (05-11-2014)

- 1) “This was a demonic laugh – low, suppressed, and deep – uttered, it seemed, at the very keyhole of my chamber door. The head of my body was near the door, and I thought at first the goblin-laughter stood at my bedside – or rather crouched by my pillow: but I rose, looked round, and could see nothing; while, as I still gazed, the unnatural sound was reiterated: and I knew it came from behind the panels. My first impulse was to rise and fasten the bolt; my next again to cry out, “Who is there?”
Something gurgled and moaned. Ere long, steps retreated up the gallery towards the third-story staircase: a door had lately been made to shut in that staircase; I heard it open and close, and all was still.” (*Jane Eyre*, Chapter 15)
- 2) “It seemed, sir, a woman, tall and large, with thick and dark hair hanging long down her back. I know not what dress she had on: it was white and straight; but whether gown, sheet, or shroud, I cannot tell.”
“Did you see her face?”
“Not at first. But presently she took my veil from its place; she held it up, gazed at it long, and then she threw it over her own head, and turned to the mirror. At that moment I saw the reflection of the visage and features quite distinctly in the dark oblong glass.”
“And how were they?”
“Fearful and ghastly to me — oh, sir, I never saw a face like it! It was a discoloured face — it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments!” (*Jane Eyre*, Chapter 25)
- 3) “In a room without a window, there burnt a fire guarded by a high and strong fender, and a lamp suspended from the ceiling by a chain. Grace Poole bent over the fire, apparently cooking something in a saucepan. In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it revealed, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.” (*Jane Eyre*, Chapter 26)
- 4) “*Postcolonial theory* is a complex analytical strategy that foregrounds racial difference in the relationship – political, social, economic and cultural – between First/Western and Third/Eastern worlds.”
- 5) “The term creole [Portuguese crioulu via English and French] originally meant a white man of European descent, born and raised in a tropical or semitropical colony. The meaning was later extended to include indigenous natives and others of non-European origin. The term was then subsequently applied to certain languages spoken by creoles in and around the Caribbean and in West Africa, and then more generally to other languages of similar types which had arisen in similar circumstances.” (Asher, R. *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, Oxford, Pergamon, 1994)
- 6) “[...] a specialised version of the two widely accepted terms acculturation and interculturalism: the former referring [...] to the process of absorption of one culture by another; the latter to a more reciprocal activity, a process of intermixture and enrichment, each to each.” (Brathwaite, K. *Contradictory Omens*, 1974, p. 11).
- 7) “It was a song about a white cockroach. That's me. That's what they [the black people] call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white niggers. [...] I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all.” (WSS, 1968, p. 85)

- 8) "I came to England between sixteen and seventeen, a very impressionable age and *Jane Eyre* was one of the books I read then. Of course Charlotte Brontë makes her own world, of course she convinces you and that makes the poor Creole lunatic all the more dreadful. I remember being quite shocked, and when I re-read it rather annoyed. "That's only one side - the English side" sort of thing." (*The Letters of Jean Rhys*, Letter 267)
- 9) Then one day, very early, I saw her horse lying down under the frangipani tree. I went up to him but he was not sick, he was dead and his eyes were black with flies. I ran away and did not speak of it for I thought if I told no one it might not be true. But later that day, Godfrey found him, he had been poisoned. "now we are marooned," my mother said, "now what will become of us?" (WSS, 1968, p. 16)
- 10) "I never looked at any strange negro. They hated us. They called us white cockroaches. Let sleeping dogs lie. One day a little girl followed me singing, "Go away white cockroach, go away, go away." (WSS, 1968, p. 20)
- 11) "If she was a child she was not a stupid child but an obstinate one. She often questioned me about England and listened attentively to my answers, but I was certain that nothing I said made much difference. Her mind was already made up. Some romantic novel, a star remark never forgotten, a sketch, a picture, a song, a waltz, some note of music, and her ideas were fixed. About England and about Europe. I could not change them and probably nothing would. Reality might discontent her, bewilder her, hurt her, but it would not be reality. It would be only a mistake, a misfortune, a wrong path taken, her fixed ideas would never change.
Nothing that I told her influenced her at all." (WSS, 1968, p. 78)
- 12) "First when I answered your advertisement you said that the person I had to look after was not a young girl. I asked 'If she was an old woman and you said no. Now that I see her I don't know what to think. She sits shivering and she is so thin." (WSS, 1968, p. 145)
- 13) "There is no looking-glass here and I don't know what I am like now I remember watching myself brush my hair and how my eyes looked back at me. The girl I saw was myself yet not quite myself- Long ago when I was a child and very lonely I tried to kiss her. But the glass was between us - hard, cold and misted over with my breath. Now they have taken everything away What am I doing in this place and who am I? ." (WSS, 1968, p. 147)
- 14) "When night comes, and she has had several drinks and sleeps, it is easy to take the keys. I know now where she keeps them. Then I open the door and walk into their world. It is, as I always knew, made of cardboard. I have seen it before somewhere, this cardboard world where everything is coloured brown or dark red or yellow that has no light in it. As I walk along the passages I wish I could see what is behind the cardboard. They tell me I am in England but I don't believe them. We lost our way to England. When? Where? I don't remember, but we lost it. [...] This cardboard house where I walk at night is not England." (WSS, 1968, p. 148)
- 15) "I watched her critically. She wore a tricorne hat which became her. At least it shadowed her eyes which are too large and can be disconcerting. She never blinks at all it seems to me. Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either. And when did I begin to notice all this about my wife Antoinette? After we left Spanish Town I suppose. Or did I notice it before and refuse to admit what I saw? Not that I had much time to notice anything. I was married a month after I arrived in Jamaica and for nearly three weeks of that time I was in bed with fever." (WSS, 1968, p. 56)

- 16) “Everything is too much [...]. Too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near. And the woman is a stranger. Her pleading expression annoys me.” (WSS, 1968, p. 59)
- 17) “[...] but it seemed to me that everything round me was hostile. The trees were threatening and the shadows of the trees moving slowly over the floor menaced me. The green menace. I had felt it ever since I saw this place. There was nothing I knew, nothing to comfort me.” (WSS, 1968, p. 123)
- 18) “I was tired of these people. I disliked their laughter and their tears, their flattery and envy, conceit and deceit. And I hated the place. I hated the mountains and the hills, the rivers and the rain. I hated the sunsets of whatever colour, I hated its beauty and its magic and the secret I would never know. I hated its indifference and the cruelty which was part of its loveliness. Above all I hated her. For she belonged to the magic and loveliness.” (WSS, 1968, p. 141)
- 19) “Then I will have the police up. I warn you. There must be some law and order even in this God-forsaken island.” (WSS, 1968, p. 131)
- 20) “She tell me in the middle of all this you start calling her names. Marionette. Some word so.
(*Marionette, Antoinette, Marionetta, Antoinetta*)
That word mean doll, eh? Because she don't speak. You want to force her to cry and to speak.”
(WSS, 1968, p. 127)
- 21) “Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name. I know, that's obeh too.” (WSS, 1968, p. 121)
- 22) “I hated [my mother's] frown and once I touched her forehead trying to smooth it. But she pushed me away, roughly but calmly, coldly, without a word, as if she had decided once and for all that I was useless to her. She wanted to sit with Pierre or walk where she pleased without being pestered, she wanted peace and quiet. I was old enough to look after myself. ‘Oh let me alone’ she would say, ‘let me alone,’ and after I knew that she talked aloud to herself and I was a little afraid of her.” (WSS, 1968, p. 17)
- 23) “I put my arms around [Annette] and kissed her. She held me so tightly that I couldn't breathe and I thought ‘It's not her.’ Then, ‘It must be her. She looked at the door, then at me, then at the door again. I could not say, ‘He is dead,’ so I shook my head, ‘But I am here, I am here,’ I said, and she said, ‘No,’ quietly. Then ‘No no no’ very loudly and flung me from her. I fell against the partition and hurt myself.” (WSS, 1968, p. 40)