

**Bettina Schötz**

**1220**                      **Rewriting a Literary Classic: *Jane***                      **Wed (6)**  
**70320**                      ***Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea***  
**2220**  
**2420**  
**73120**  
**73130**

Ü                              2 KP (regular and active participation, 15-minute presentation or written assignment)  
PS                             6 KP (regular and active participation, 15-minute presentation or written assignment, term paper)

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) is a central work in the canon of English literature. Greeted as "[t]he masterwork of a great genius" by the contemporary writer William Makepeace Thackeray, the story of the orphan Jane and her attachment to the Byronic Mr Rochester continues to be immensely popular. Not only has the *bildungsroman* given rise to numerous film, TV, radio, opera, and musical adaptations, but it has also inspired various literary responses. The most famous instance of the latter is Jean Rhys's award-winning novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). It gives voice to the previously marginalised "mad woman in the attic" (Gilbert and Gubar), Rochester's West Indian wife Bertha, thus providing *Jane Eyre* with a prequel.

In the first part of this seminar, we will thoroughly examine Charlotte Brontë's novel and discuss select screen adaptations, such as Cary Fukunaga's recent *Jane Eyre* (2011). In the second part, we will familiarise ourselves with the major tenets of Postcolonial Studies and read Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a *rewriting* of the Victorian novel. We will pay particular attention to the way in which Rhys's "masterpiece" (Doris Lessing) (1) challenges its canonical precursor by foregrounding the marginalised colonial Other, and (2) suggests a new understanding of the relationship between Jane and Bertha, initiating feminist rereadings of Brontë's novel by Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, among others.

In studying these works, we will practise the precise application of the categories and methods necessary for any analysis and interpretation of narrative texts (in the medium of book and film). However, this course is also aimed at students who have not yet attended the introductory lecture to Literary Studies.

Please purchase:

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Oxford: OUP, 2000. Oxford World's Classics.  
Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. London: Penguin, 1997. Penguin Modern Classics.

You will be able to access all the films we discuss through an *Audiovisueller Semesterapparat* in the SLUB. Please register for this *Semesterapparat* by sending an email to Bettina Schötz ([bettina.schoetz@tu-dresden.de](mailto:bettina.schoetz@tu-dresden.de)) that states your name and your SLUB account number.