

BOOK REVIEW. April Lindner's *Jane*. New York: Hachette Book Group of Little, Brown, and Company, October 2010. 373 pages. (Hardback, \$17.99) ISBN 978-0-316-08420-8
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This book review of a newly released novel in the young adult fiction classification is in keeping with the topic of adaptation for this issue of the *Journal of South Texas English Studies*. Young adult literature (YAL) frequently reworks classic literature to create engaging new texts that comment on the originals. Adaptations of canonical texts can be fascinating new texts that stand alone as literature while connecting with the originating text for an added level of meaning. As Pam Cole demonstrates in *Young Adult Literature in the Twenty-First Century* (2009), YAL spinoffs from canonical texts create opportunities for connecting contemporary literature with the classical canon (514).

The matter of literary lineage is impossible to ignore when reading April Lindner's *Jane* (2010), the latest among numerous novels inspired by Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). Lindner shifts Brontë's plot and characters into contemporary America, with *Jane* mirroring the original in ways that may delight fans of Brontë's masterpiece. Because gender conventions have altered so greatly since the 1840s, readers might find anachronistic certain characterizations like Jane's passivity. Jane Moore is no Katniss Everdeen or Tally Youngblood, yet she is not supposed to be.

Lindner's protagonist drops out of college before graduation because she is suddenly orphaned and cannot afford tuition. As a nanny rather than a governess, Jane Moore narrates her own story and describes herself as looking "perfectly average" (19). She takes care of the five year old Madeline, daughter of French pop star Celine and American rock star Nico Rathburn, who is making a comeback. Like the original not in awe of Mr. Rochester, this new Jane speaks

honestly to the rock star. Mysterious noises in the third floor, unexplained fire, a torn veil, and the tree split by lightning make their appearance. Jane realizes that she is in love with Nico Rathburn and finds her true home at Thornfield. When he falls in love with her and proposes, she accepts. But on their wedding day, Jane learns that Nico has lied to her. As in Brontë's original, with Bertha Mason Rochester as the "madwoman in the attic," a psychotic former wife named Bibi is being kept away from the world.

While a spiritual struggle between moral duty and earthly happiness makes Brontë's Jane conflicted about her romantic choice, the updated version does not have this struggle. The original St. John Rivers, a moral alternative to Edward Rochester who invites Jane to join him as a missionary, held genuine appeal for Jane and Victorian readers. But in Lindner's adaptation, there is no real chance that Jane will accept the offer from Yale divinity student River St. John to join him as a social worker in Haiti.

As a reader who treasures Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, I appreciated Lindner's contemporary retelling. Noting detailed connections with the original was a pleasure for me, although other readers familiar with the original might be less fond of the comparison. The characters and events of Brontë's novel are managed capably in Lindner's update, with suspense maintained even for readers who already know the plot. The well-crafted novel will be enjoyable to someone who has not yet read the original although it functions even better for readers who already cherish *Jane Eyre*.