

**Matthew Reynolds et al, *Prismatic Jane Eyre: Multiplicity, Translation, and the Rewriting of a World Work*. Open Book Publishers, 2023. xi + 885 pp. ISBN 978–1-80064–844–9**

Matthew Reynolds' *Prismatic Jane Eyre* is not merely a study of translation; it is an experimental intervention in how we think about literary works, language, and reading itself. The volume is a methodological provocation, an archive of prismatic re-readings, and a collaborative feat. What begins ostensibly as a multilingual close reading of *Jane Eyre* quickly escalates into a redefinition of the novel as a *world work*: a term that is not metaphorical but ontological. As Reynolds asserts early in the volume, *Jane Eyre* exists "not only in English," but "co-existing in at least 618 translations ... into at least 68 languages" (11). This vast translingual corpus is not supplemental to Brontë's novel but constitutive of what it has become.

The conceptual shift at the heart of this volume is the rejection of translation as a unidirectional transfer from a stable "source" to a derivative "target." Instead, we are asked to imagine a field of texts in motion, a dynamic ecology in which "translation is best seen as happening, not between separate languages, but through a continuum of language difference" (12). This challenges both the monolingualism of literary criticism and the residual romanticism that still clings to ideas of authorial purity and textual fidelity. In Reynolds' formulation, the prism is more than a metaphor; it is a heuristic device to register textual diffraction.

This is particularly powerful in Reynolds' theoretical chapters (Chapters I–III), where he proposes that "texts are written with repertoires, not in languages" (778), thus deflating the assumption that Brontë wrote in some monolithic "English." The argument is not to deny Brontë's language but to foreground that it was already, in a profound sense, multilingual, shot through with French, biblical English, and the idiolect of her time. Translations, then, are not secondary acts; they are extensions, expansions, or even acts of re-authorship. Throughout the volume, we witness *Jane Eyre* undergoing cultural transfigurations. These are not failures of equivalence but forms of "narrative transformation" (93). In the Indian context, for example, the novel becomes a layered palimpsest, with Ulrich Timme Kragh and Abhishek Jain tracing its reception through adaptations like *Sarלא* (1914) and *Bēḍi Bandavaḷu* (1959), which were *re-writings* before any direct translation was attempted. The idea of "Janeeyreness" as a quality distributed across different texts and languages is introduced here, elegantly drawing on Sanskrit terms like *paryāy* and *pariṇām* to describe the novel's fluid transformations (100).

In the Portuguese and Spanish contexts, gendered ideologies surface in translation choices. In "A Mind of her Own," Marques dos Santos and Pazos-Alonso note that recent Portuguese translations emphasise Jane's subjectivity through grammatical insistence, such as retaining the first-person pronoun "eu" even where it's not syntactically required (521). Meanwhile, Andrés Claro's essay on Spanish translations reveals how Francoist censors subtly sanitized the novel's radical energies, but also how translators quietly resisted, crafting "sympathetic disobediences" that preserved the novel's egalitarian spark (297).

The affective valence of language is also central to the Arabic adaptations. Yousif M. Qasmiyeh draws attention to a 1965 Arabic radio version, arguing that in this context, *Jane Eyre*'s prismatic body is not only linguistic but also sonic and public. The orality of Arabic reshapes the novel's experience, activating the "volcanic vehemence" (to borrow a phrase from Essay 9) through rhythm, cadence, and breath (212).

One of the volume's greatest strengths is its resistance to flattening diversity into a single explanatory framework. Instead, Reynolds and his collaborators perform what Francis Nyamnjoh calls a "convivial scholarship," which "sees the local in the global and the global in the local" (13), and acknowledges the inherent "ontologies of incompleteness" in any world-scale inquiry (5). The scholars do not homogenize but allow voices to diverge, sometimes even contradict. The result is a model of collaborative criticism that is rigorous, democratic, and resolutely plural.

That pluralism extends to methodology. From statistical visualisations of emotional nouns in Italian translations (Gaudio 559–81) to philosophical treatments of genre in Persian literary traditions (Tahmasebian and Gould 421–55), the volume oscillates between data and lyricism, between theory and anecdote. It is both profoundly humanistic and digitally inflected. The interactive maps (developed by Giovanni Pietro Vitali) visualize translation activity across geographies and decades, rendering *Jane Eyre*'s history spatially alive. Reynolds mounts an unapologetic defence of close reading, not as a fetishisation of the original but as an ethical mode of attention. He contests Franco Moretti's claim in *Distant Reading* that world literature must become "second-hand ... without a single direct textual reading" (49), asserting instead that close reading is vital precisely because it can register "particularities of style, linguistic repertoire, and ideological commitment" across versions (16). This is a politics of reading as much as a method. Thus, the volume not only contributes to translation studies and world literature but also expands their horizons. It stages the text as plural, contingent, contested and thus alive.

*Prismatic Jane Eyre* is a landmark in comparative literary studies. It eschews the comfort of categorisation and instead teaches us to sit with multiplicity. It asks not what *Jane Eyre* means, but what it becomes across bodies, across languages, across histories. It reminds us, crucially, that translation is not an afterthought, but a form of thought in itself. In the process, it reanimates Brontë's novel not as a static object of critique, but as a living constellation of voices; both divergent and convergent, fragmentary yet resonant.

To read *Jane Eyre* through this prismatic lens is to realise that the novel has always been, in some sense, a translation: of Brontë's self, of her cultural moment, of desire into form. This book enables us to see that translation is not what happens *after* literature, but what literature, in its richest forms, always already is.

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