

# The Jane Eyre in Charlotte's Heart—Appreciation of Song Zhaolin's Translation of *Jane Eyre*

Liangqiu Lv

North China Electric Power University, Beijing, China

Hongye Zhu

North China Electric Power University, Beijing, China

**Abstract**—*Jane Eyre* has won worldwide reputation owing to Charlotte's skillful writing and the inspired feminist rebellious spirit. This paper mainly focuses on the analysis and appreciation of Song Zhaolin's translated work of *Jane Eyre* based on the dynamic equivalence strategy he used. The author of the original work Charlotte Brontë put a lot of her own experiences into *Jane Eyre*, which can also be shown in Song's translation. He also combined free and literal translation strategies in the translating process, which results in both faithful and expressive effect.

**Index Terms**—Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, dynamic equivalence, combined strategy

## I. INTRODUCTION

*Jane Eyre* has enjoyed wide popularity ever since its first publication in 1847, and for myself, I've always been a fan of Charlotte Brontë not only because she was a renowned novelist, but more importantly, a brilliant woman. To me, *Jane Eyre* is more than merely a love story between a governess and her master. It is an encouraging and inspiring story for any girls who are keen in going after what she desires in spite of all the possible blocks and setbacks in front of them. I myself, with no doubt, should be no exception.

After reading a biographical novel entitled *The Secret Diaries of Charlotte Brontë* (James, 2012), through which I've learnt that she and her equally talented siblings have been the real and timeless treasure in the literary world, my interest in her and her personal emotion development has grown along with my knowledge of them. Just like the character of Jane she created, Charlotte herself has led a life full of hidden passion and pain. She might be weak in every other way people could notice about her, but the real power she possessed was her indisputable underlying spirit inside.

Through this paper, I want to pay my earnest respect to this brilliant and outstanding woman and her wonderful work. Also, the translated version of *Jane Eyre* by Song Zhaolin has been a most well-received one among Chinese readers. The delicate sentiment and various grotesque imagination of Jane have been handled well by the translator, which proves to be the predominant reason for the success of his translation work. The focus of this paper would be the appreciation of various descriptive scenes in *Jane Eyre*, psychological and physical, including the connection between the novel and Charlotte's real life, the imagination and hallucination of Jane Eyre shown in her paintings and the emotional clash and concord between Jane and her master.

## II. ORIGINAL WORK OF *JANE EYRE*

### A. Main Story

Jane Eyre was brought up in Gateshead by her aunt Mrs. Reed who was nothing but mean to her after her uncle died. She spent her poor bleak childhood there without an ounce of sympathy from her aunt. Later, she was sent to Lowood Institution, where she learnt many skills, which prepared her to be qualified for being a teacher. After eight years both as student and teacher there, to fully avail her of all the advantages she owned and satisfy her wish to see the world outside Lowood, she advertised to be a governess in the newspaper.

So she ended up becoming a governess for a little girl in Thornfield, where her romance finally began. Falling in love with her master was never something she ever expected. However, love has the propensity to strike someone with least caution. That's perhaps how Jane and Rochester fall for each other in the first place. However, just when they were getting married, the cruel truth got revealed that Rochester already had a wife and he had been keeping his mad wife in the attic. So Jane fled from Thornfield to a place she barely knew.

Heartbroken and desperate, she almost got herself killed during the escape. Luckily, the inmates of Moorhouse took her in and made her a comfortable shelter, and as it turned out, Jane found herself not alone but with relatives and became an heiress of quite a large fortune from her uncle. Then she couldn't resist the desire to see Rochester and find out how things were for him after a year because she could somehow hear him call her names. Like Rochester once said, he had a queer feeling with regard to Jane. It is as if he had a string of communion tightly and inextricably knotted to a similar string situated in the corresponding quarter of Jane's heart. She returned to Thornfield only to find it burnt down

in a conflagration and her master blind and crippled. And who knows, after all they had been through, they finally got married and lived together happily after.

### B. *Reflection of Charlotte's Real-life Experience*

As it turns out, many of the scenarios depicted in *Jane Eyre* can be traced back to the real-life experience of Charlotte Brontë which is quite common in writers' creation of their works. And based on my reading of some biographic books about Charlotte, there're quite a few of the similarities between Jane's life and that of Charlotte's. There're legends about the specters and monsters in the woods, story about maid marrying her master, myths about mad woman locked in the attic and sayings about ominous dreams of children, etc, all of which have been woven into the story of *Jane Eyre*. Deeply buried in Charlotte's heart is her affection of the Moorhouse, or her actual home back in England, where she and her siblings have spent most of their lives reading, studying and most importantly, writing and the renowned Brontë sisters were born. Whilst Mary and Diana from the book simply took their images from Emily and Anne Brontë, Charlotte's two sisters, Jane's nanny Bessie actually is the replica of Charlotte's old house servant Tabitha. Such overlapping between fiction world and real life has also confronted us with a fact that literary works, as a means of art, derived greatly from our everyday life.

### C. *Feminist Element in the Novel—Rebellious Spirit of Women*

Charlotte was brought up in a family with heavy religious roots with her father being the local clergyman and later her husband curate to her father. They were both supporters of Puseyism, which decided the destined job for women was in the kitchen cooking or in the bedroom sewing. So revealed in *Jane Eyre's* book is her long-restrained rebellious spirit against wide-accepted ideas and status of women. She and her sisters tried hard to prove to the world that women can concern themselves with more than casseroles or embroideries, but can be well-cultivated and well-informed like any men would do at that time. As a matter of fact, Charlotte herself and her two sisters was quite the model of new, independent woman and made a good example of woman writer. Such spirit has helped Charlotte through all the barriers and blocks on her way to become a published writer, which she succeeded at last even though the novel was published under the male name of Cullen Bell to avoid unnecessary prejudices against authoresses. So in this perspective, Charlotte Brontë can really be seen as a pioneer of feminist writing in Britain.

Like Jane was commented by Rochester, Charlotte herself was seen a bird behind the close-set bars of a cage, a vivid, resolute, restless captive, who, given the chance, would soar cloud high. And Jane did by making her own choice of leaving Thornfield, away from her deceptive master. Despite her feelings for him, she chose to get away from such immoral union with her loved one, thus liberating her from the tie of her master's pleading. Judging from her affection of Rochester, it was agonizing to be torn apart from him like this. Yet, she managed to make the right decision under that messy circumstance. Later, after a year, she decided to follow her heart's will and return to her master trying to mend things with him. So instead of being a girl absorbed in blind love, she took control of her own destiny and earned herself a rather different future.

## III. THE TRANSLATION WORK BY SONG ZHAOLIN

### A. *Translation Strategy*

#### 1. Translator's personal view on the translation theory

Influenced by Nida's functional equivalence theory, Song Zhaolin has put his priority in achieving dynamic functional equivalence between his translated text and the original one, which focuses on making the target reader react to the translation work the same way source language readers would react to the original work. In simpler word, Song attempts to create the closest natural Chinese equivalent to *Jane Eyre*. And to polish his translation work further to appeal to the taste of target Chinese readers, he used many Chinese idioms and popular phrases of that time. Also, for the purpose of preserving the exotic element of the original text, he did combine the method of literal and free translation. Judging from the reception of his translation work here in China throughout these years, it's quite certain that he managed to bring the truest English culture in front of Chinese readers without causing reading difficulties among receivers of different levels of education. And his role as a translator is established by recreating the exotic scenes in Chinese cultural surroundings, which proves to be a successful strategy.

#### 2. Particular approach in the translation of *Jane Eyre*

Following his usual translation principle, Song Zhaolin employed the linguistic approach of dynamic equivalence in the rendering of Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*. As a result, his translated work of this classic novel proved to be very much fascinating for Chinese readers with a vivid depiction of characters and dramatic description of dialogues. Under his exquisite touch of account, readers can basically live through the beaten and battered life of Jane Eyre and relate themselves with Jane's emotional ups and downs, which is exactly the ultimate goal of dynamic equivalence approach. Through combined strategy of free and literal translation in the rendering of Jane's psychological activities and wandering imaginations, he did convey to readers the subtle and delicate affections Jane had for Rochester, those twists and turns of which would be the main clue discussed in the following part.

### B. *Practice of the Translation Approach*

### 1. Appearance and personality of Jane

As the old saying goes, “beauty lies in lover’s eyes”, Jane, as an average poor girl in want of freedom, was seen differently in the eyes of different people, as by her merciless aunt Mrs. Reed, her devout companion Helen and her beloved master Mr. Rochester. Differently as she might be viewed, there’s one opinion about her physiognomy that was shared by all of them. That, in Jane’s own words, was her plain looking and small figure. “平凡” and “矮小” were actually two exact simple words to describe her, as Song Zhaolin did in his translation.

She was a discord in her Aunt Mrs. Reed’s eye, a troublesome burden left on her hands. As is interpreted by Song Zhaolin, she was “给她带来许多麻烦的大累赘”. (Song, 2007, p. 206) The word “累赘” was more localized and familiar with Chinese readers and better than the word “负担”, which is the formal equivalence to “burden”. In this way, Chinese readers can also relate themselves with such expressions and thus understand Mrs. Reed’s hatred for Jane Eyre.

However, Jane looked totally differently according to Mr. Rochester’s statement. Apparently in his eyes, Jane was a childish and slender creature. Song translated it as “多孩子气、多小巧的人儿” (Song, 2007, p.283) using the literal meaning of those two words as well as paraphrasing them into authentic Chinese expressions. Perhaps in Rochester’s eye, Jane’s presence was a refreshingly beautiful thing to catch in his rather degradation life. Like a spring breeze, Jane entered Rochester’s life, bringing not just freshness, but his long lost enthusiasm for life ahead of him. It was Jane who saved him from the fire in his chamber. It was also Jane who helped take care of Mason’s wound from his mad wife. And it was Jane still who stayed by his side and swore to keep him company for the rest of his life after the conflagration consumed Thornfield into ruins and himself crippled and blind. I think it’s safe to say that Rochester was lucky to have Jane as his life partner and they made up for each other’s flaws with Rochester’s sophistication and Jane’s innocent integrity.

### 2. Her imagination and psychological activities

Owing to her personal experience and her upbringing, Charlotte put a lot of her own character into the establishment of Jane’s image. In simpler words, Jane was her reflection, a poor, small, obscure woman. But be it that might, she’s got more talent than what she actually presented to others. And in the book, Jane’s talent and imagination can be shown through her paintings. Here is the passage of Jane’s explanation about the idea and design of her painting. Jane’s painting, in a way, is also the faint portrait of her confused and lost inside, from which Rochester was able to tell that she has been a cold, lonely and poorly expressive girl in desperate need of passionate love. She may appear to be carefree, but when it comes to love in the guise of light, she ought to go for it at whatever cost.

“As I saw them with the spiritual eye, before I attempted to embody them, they were striking; but my hand would not second my fancy, and in each case, it had wrought out but a pale portrait of the thing I had conceived.” (Brontë 1999, p.109)

Song’s translation is:

“当我心灵的眼睛刚看见它们，还没试图把它们表现出来以前，它们确实是非常动人的。可惜我做不到得心应手，每次画出来的，不过是我构思出的图景一个苍白无力的写照。” (Song, 2007, p.110)

This passage is a quintessential display of his combined application of different translation strategies, which has attended to the loyalty to both the original author and the readers of his translation. The translated phrase “心灵的眼睛” clearly follows the literal translation strategy, while “得心应手” practically used the dynamic equivalence approach. His rendering does, in a way, produce an effect of the compromise between exotic taste and Chinese authenticity.

### 3. Dreams and their symbolic meaning

There’re many places in the novel where Jane had ominous dreams with bad premonition, which proved, as it turned out, to be true. The depiction of these dreams was also a highlight of this book along with their symbolic meaning. Here’s an example.

“...and that to dream of children was a sure sign of trouble, either to one’s self or one’s kin.” (Brontë 1999, p.193)

“.....而梦见小孩肯定是个不祥之兆，不是自己有灾，就是亲属有祸。” (Song, 2007, p.197)

Despite the fact that ominous dreams maybe superstitious, we could, through Song’s rendering, sense a connection between English and Chinese culture. The separate use of the Chinese word “灾” and “祸” is surly brilliant, making the target text both fluent and sound.

In the novel, Jane has altogether had about three weird dreams about child; one and each time has foreseen an unfortunate accident to either her relatives or herself, like her cousin John Reed’s death, her aunt Mrs. Reed’s severe sickness and her wedding drama with Mr. Rochester. Those dreams proved her steadfast belief that dreaming of a little child was never a good sign, which is the exact belief of Charlotte herself.

And the last time was just when Jane and Rochester were getting married, she had another bad dream involved with a little child, which in the next day, proved to be bad luck for their wedding. Also in their wedding, Jane found out that Rochester had already had a wife, who was a mad woman locked in the attic of Thornfield by her beloved master. Shocked by such treacherous cheat, Jane finally gathered enough courage to flee from her master to an unknown future. From this perspective, Jane’s dreams not only foretold bad events, but also helped promote the development of the whole story, serving as a catalyst for emotional outbreak.

### 4. Charlotte’s idea of an ideal marriage

Charlotte, through her popular novel *Jane Eyre*, made the feminist declaration “...we stood at God’s feet, equal, —as

we are.” (Brontë 1999, p.223) Song translated “as we are” into “因为我们本来就是平等的” (Song, 2007, p.226), adding the justified meaning of equality between women and men. It was Jane’s immovable belief in equality that made her what she was and attracted Rochester. She made it clear that even though she merely was a governess in his house, she was capable of love and only love on the basis of equality. And in her short yet somehow legendary life, she did marry a man in earnest respect and faithful love with her. So she made herself Jane Eyre, the model of what she thought was the independent and wise woman in her time.

In the end of the book, Charlotte described the happy marriage of Jane and Rochester, which reflected her own opinion of a happy marriage based on equality and mutual understanding. Her words are “To be together is for us to be at once as free as in solitude, as gay as in company.” (Brontë 1999, p.399) The Chinese equivalent according to Song Zhaolin is: “对我们来说, 守在一起既像独处时一样自由, 又像在伙伴们中间一样欢乐。” (Song, 2007, p.409) Obviously, the original sentence and the translated equivalence share the same pattern thus creating the same reading effect; besides, the accurate comprehension of “solitude” and “company” does produce on his target readers the same effect Charlotte did on her English readers. Like she portrayed, the truly complete marriage should be able to make the couple feel like they’ve got all the bliss and joy in the whole world anyone could ever have.

The happy couple from the novel certainly has enjoyed a better and longer married life than Charlotte’s. She died less than a year after she married her husband Arthur Bell Nicholls, leaving him alone in sorrow and grievance without a child. But during the days when they were together, they were truly happily married despite the fact that her husband was nothing but a poor and obscure curate in the village and her father despised him. It was his honesty and integrity that touched Charlotte and got her accept his proposal. After they married, they would talk all day sharing thoughts and huddle at night dreaming about their future together. Guess happy times always tend to pass faster; such sweetness didn’t last long before death took her away from her beloved ones. Thus, her novel was actually an honest epitome of her own experience and her desire of an ideal marriage established with love just like Jane and Rochester’s.

### C. Translation of Classic Paragraphs

In this novel, there’re many places where the outbreak of emotions is so intense and mysterious that it strikes me as both exiting and intriguing to read it. Here’re the examples.

#### 1. Jane’s confession

Rochester made Jane think that Miss. Ingram and him were about to get married and Jane had to make a full confession to Rochester about her secret affections before she had to leave him. Here are Jane’s words:

“I’m not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh; —it is my spirit that addresses your spirit.” (Brontë 1999, p.223)

Song’s rendering goes:

“我现在不是凭着习俗、常规, 甚至也不是凭着肉体凡胎跟你说话, 而是我的心灵在跟你的心灵说话。”

The use of four-word Chinese phrase “肉体凡胎” to translate “mortal flesh” is brilliant, both accurate and neat. Furthermore, it creates a sharper contrast between the words “mortal” and “soul”. (Song, 2007, p.226)

#### 2. Emotional clash

The climax of the whole novel was Jane’s confession to Rochester about her cryptic admiration and affection to him. After their heart-to-heart conversation, Jane struggled hard in his arms because she was incredulous about the fact that her master should love her just like she did him. Here’s an extract:

“Jane, be still; don’t struggle so, like a wild frantic bird that is rending its own plumage in its desperation.” (Brontë 1999, p.223)

“简, 安静点, 别这么挣扎了, 像只绝望中狂躁的小鸟似的, 拼命抓扯着自己的羽毛。” (Song, 2007, p.226)

The translated text is both faithful and expressive, which would bring the readers to the most vivid image of Jane’s restless struggle accompanied with awkward ecstasy. Charlotte compared Jane to a bird here because of two similarities they share, one of which is that they both longed for freedom and the other that they both sought for a nest to perch on.

After Jane finally believed Rochester’s love for her, she kept him waiting for the answer of his proposal. Here is the countenance of Rochester:

“His face was very much agitated and very much flushed, and there were strong workings in the features, and strange gleams in the eyes.” (Brontë 1999, p.224)

“他脸上神情激动, 满脸通红, 五官在抽搐, 眼里闪现着奇怪的光芒。” (Song, 2007, p.228)

Judging from the description, we can very much feel the intense and contradicted emotions suffered by Rochester during this torturing waiting. The use of four-word phrases like “神情激动”, “满脸通红”, “五官抽搐” not only helps create the mind-numbing tension, but also conveys such feeling with most acceptable and familiar Chinese equivalence.

#### 3. Mysterious summons

Charlotte’s novel of *Jane Eyre* is also characterized by another feature involved with mystery, which is the mysterious summons and calls between Jane and her master Mr. Rochester. It was when Rochester was extremely down and desperate that he called out Jane’s name. However, miraculously, Jane heard him and replied in a house far away from him. Rochester thought that it was Jane’s soul wandering from her cell to comfort his. “灵魂飞出了躯壳” (Song, 2007, p.407) was Song’s rendering of such phenomenon replacing “cell” with the word “躯壳”, which is the common

expression in Chinese. “躯壳” to “灵魂” is like what “cell” is to “soul”. Such mental calls between lovers showed that Charlotte was a believer for soul mate, because only soul mates can connect and communicate like that.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The novel of Charlotte Brontë encourages women readers in the western world to pull up strength to pursue their true love, while its translation work by Song Zhaolin helps bring the spirit here into China. We may learn different knowledge from this book, ranging from British literature to celebrity anecdotes. But whatever you know and how much you learn should not stop you from reading both the original work and the translated work, through which you can see the cultural and linguistic differences, and most importantly, the efforts and workings translators put into their translating. My respect and reverence to the original writer and the translator is hopefully paid through this paper, which I know touches only but a tip of the literary translation essence.

Note: The present paper is one of the periodical results of the Project “A Study on the Translation Process under Cognitive Psychological Perspective” (No.13MS50), supported by the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities of China.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Brontë Charlotte. (1999). *Jane Eyre*. London: Wordsworth Editions Limited.
- [2] James, Syrie. (2012). *The Secret Diaries of Charlotte Brontë*. Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House.
- [3] Lv, Yinping. (2011). *Dynamic Equivalence and E-C Novel Translation—Taking the Example of Two Translated Chinese Versions of Jane Eyre*. Jinan: Time Literature.
- [4] Ma Huijuan, Miao Ju. (2009). *Selected Readings of Contemporary Western Translation Theories*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- [5] Song Zhaolin. (1997). *Two Exotic Flowers in Heather Moorland*. Wuhan: Foreign Literature Studies.
- [6] Song Zhaolin. (2007). *Jane Eyre*. Beijing: Beijing Yanshan Publishing House.

**Liangqiu Lv** was born in Anhui, China in 1973. He received his Master's degree in linguistics from University of Science and Technology Beijing, China in 2004.

He is currently an associate professor in the School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University, Beijing, China. His research field is theory and practice in translation.

**Hongye Zhu** was born in Zhenjiang, China in 1990. She is currently a master candidate in the School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University, Beijing, China.