

# The Heroine Jane Eyre's Image Changing in China in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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## Abstract

Jane Eyre's image changing in China in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the portraiture of the changing of social features and ideology in China. In the era of ideology playing an important role people explain and understand Jane Eyre according to ideology. No matter what she had modern female consciousness or the pursuit of equality or holding Christ and Confuciansim and whatever kind of a woman she was, everything was Jane Eyre's expression of a specific feature in the paper.

**Keywords:** image changing, multiple analysis, multiple images

## 1. Introduction

Jane Eyre was expressed in a great many Chinese translation books as a woman image who pursued the social and economic equality. In addition to that she was a loyal Christian. Zhu Qinying briefly introduced Jane Eyre in the preface part concerning her rebellious spirit "This is the rebellious spirit owned by Jane Eyre." "so far Jane Eyre's rebellious spirit has been in the climax but when it came to that it was hard for Jane Eyre to refuse Saint John's proposal, it was pointed that "this was contrasted with the image of Jane Eyre who was eager for happiness and freedom. In our heart a cynical and brave woman all of a sudden became a loyal and tame Christian woman." Actually the writer doesn't think that she suddenly became a loyal Christian woman at that moment. From beginning to ending Jane Eyre never gave up her worshipping willing towards religion. For example when she knew that Rochester was the married husband she was determined to follow the law which had been given by God and accepted by people." That is to say she could not commit the bigamy crime. Later when in the process of her escaping, she still constantly mentioned Lord: We know that God is universal; but when his works appear before us on a large scale we are sure that we can feel his existence. It is just in the cloudless night that we can see his limitlessness, might and universe rolling forward in silence in his world. Meanwhile compared with Rochester Jane Eyre was unable to dissuade Saint John. She dared to revolt to the former tenaciously while the latter was holy in her heart, who was the messenger of the God. Although before she didn't agree with the wedding affairs, her tone was turned much softer. Certainly this was also the reason that she decided to let God arrange her marriage. Most people think that Jane Eyre compromised to the upper nobility when she came back to Rochester at the end part of the novel. Though the three sounds were cried out by Rochester at that moment, Jane Eyre's measure was to follow God's remarks. At the same time the description about Jane Eyre's feature depicted by the characters in the novel was certainly the most important factor to construct her image. When Saint John expressed his reason why he chose Jane Eyre as his wife, he summed, "Jane, you are tame, diligent, selfless, loyal, firm and brave. You are very gentle and heroic.

## 2. Multiple Interpretations towards the Orphan Woman Identity before the Liberation Period

Last century people's introduction about *Jane Eyre* was not because of the publication of its Chinese translation version. In 1931 Jin Shisheng briefly summarized Charlotte Bronte and her works in the book *The Outline of European Literature History* written by him and thought that the heroines in her works were ugly in appearance and stubborn in temperament. Here the writer didn't explore more about Charlotte or her works only to summarize the appearance and characteristics of the characters in the novel with a few words.

When *Jane Eyre* first appeared in China it was the new literature idea flourishing advocated in the May 4<sup>th</sup> movement. Wu Guang jian's choice about translation title still remained a little hero characteristic of translation and adopted the chapter style as a translation version according to the choreography. At the same time the writer gave each chapter a brief title. Compared with the original works although Wu Guangjian's version translation

weakened plumpness of the heroine image, in fact it didn't change the overall feature of Jane Eyre. Meanwhile Wu Guangjian expressed the other two images of Jane Eyre in his eyes in the translation version and paratext adding more new features for Jane Eyre than the writer Charlotte Bronte.

Firstly the translator endowed the novel the feature of popularity. Although the record of the lonely and homeless girl orphan was the description for the heroine encountering in the text, compared with Jane Eyre these two words, it made the readers be filled with more mercy and sympathy. At the same time it also made the readers who had never read the novel be able to understand the heroine's birth and her life experience in a short time. So in the translation version in order to highlight Jane Eyre's identity of girl orphan and her homeless experience, Wu Guangjian either added something or modified it. Other translation versions can not match it. As a result the universal image had been formed in Wu Guangjian's translation version. In Wu Guangjian's translation version there were seven parts where Jane Eyre was mentioned as a solitary girl, but the four parts were not in the original works. In addition to that the words chosen by Wu Guangjian were obviously more miserable than other translation versions. For example solitary means "of a person or an animal enjoying being alone; frequently spending time alone/ of a person, thing or place alone, with no other people or things around". While the words "alone" and "lonely" are compared, the former emphasizes only a person not refers to solitude in heart. Wu Guangjian's translation is a solitary girl which can not help making people feel that Jane Eyre keeping herself to herself was not liked by herself, while it was the result deserted by others. The readers would show compassion to her. At the same time he gave the word the color of sadness which was better than the word of a cold and lonely girl. When Wu Guangjian translated this novel, he employed the section translation method. But in order to highlight the translation title—*A Solitary Girl* and the heroine image in his heart, he got out of the binding power of the original works and added or emphasized the solitary identity of Jane Eyre obviously. Here the subjectivity of the translator can be shown. In addition to that, the part of the translator sequence also needs to be emphasized. In the eyes of Wu Guangjian, Jane Eyre was a girl who was not sexually immoral with a great deal of wealth; who would not be able to abandon with poverty of somebody; who could not yield with the power of somebody. This remark was from the book *Menci Teng wengong*. These characters just belong to the gentlemen. The image of a girl with so high personality can not help making people respect. Meanwhile Wu Guangjian gave such an image to Jane Eyre and he just wanted to make a conclusion for Jane Eyre's life experience at the beginning of the text. Jane Eyre could not yield with the power of somebody when she was at her aunt's home in her childhood and she rebelled at Lowood in her youth. Jane Eyre would not be able to abandon with poverty of somebody when she was prepared to be married to Rochester refusing to accept his jewelry to her. After she got away from Thornfield mansion Jane Eyre only begged from the people with the same rank as well as her, like the cottage man. Jane Eyre wanted to exchange food with her body clothes with the the shop girl. Jane Eyre was not sexually immoral with a great deal of wealth when she shared heritage with her cousins. In his translation version the translator gave the translation as "Lucre had no undue power over you". The image of Jane Eyre was shown directly in his heart between the lines. As the saying goes "live in the world, stand in the world straight, go the right way in the world; success by people, no success to get its way." The ambition possessed by Jane Eyre determined her all kinds of measures.

Jane Eyre was an orphan under the pen of Charlotte who had lived the homeless and miserable life. If Wu Guangjian's translation title and remarks in his preface of translator will be combined together, the readers can see a hero orphan image who was kind-hearted, self-esteemed and self-relied with the humble origin. Accompanied by the legendary color, it was an important character of hero translation at that time. That year Li Jiye's translation version *The Autobiography of Jane Eyre* was published. The translator did not mention his attitude towards the novel or the characters in it. In the republication of the following 1950's and 1960's it was the same. Until in the 1980's after Li Jiye took part in the first foreign literature research meeting, he revised the former translation version of *Jane Eyre*, expressing the image of Jane Eyre in his eyes in the publishing preface.

In the original works the "rank" and "caste" refer to "the position, especially a high position, that sb. has in a particular organization, society, etc.", "a social class, especially one whose members do not allow others to join in it/ the system of dividing society into classes based on differences in family origin, rank or wealth" separately. From the explanation, "rank" emphasizes a person's position in a certain society. "Caste" means system in a society. However Li Jiye chose "caste" as the Chinese equal word. Perhaps he was influenced by the times. The word "caste" also frequently appeared in the translation version of Wu Guangjian. It is necessary to pay attention to the other different translation by Zhu Qinying and Huang Yueshen who turned "caste" translated by Li Jiye and WuGuangyuan into the word "status". It seems that the similar words have the essential difference.

At the same time when Li Jiye translated *Jane Eyre* for the first time it was Anti-Japanese War Period in China. At that time enhancing people's ideological consciousness was advocated. As a result Li Jiye endowed Jane Eyre

an image of a reformer. In the 32<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the novel Li Jiye translated faculties quite torpid. It was completely different from the translation of Zhu Qinying and HuangYuanshen. It implied that “Jane Eyre was a revolutionary with the high sense of enlightenment. She thought that she had duty to help and save those wretched country girl who were derived the right of being educated and dignity.” Jane Eyre was a unique image in the translation version of Li Jiye, a reformer who had the consciousness of hierarchy. Surrounding the translation version of Li Jiye the reviewers both read the basic image character of Jane Eyre and gave a new explanation about it based on his identity, social environments and other factors. Zhangjing first pointed that the novel showed the writer’s character and ideas and then the vivid description about Jane Eyre, an orphan depending on others for living in *the Journal Entry of the Biography of Jane Eyre*. Firstly she could retreat under endurance and humiliation without forgetting rebellion under domineering and violence. Secondly although it was poor in material life it could not influence the spiritual pleasure. No matter how difficult and hard the life was, she would not reduce the desire to seek knowledge. Thirdly respect love fair and make art and love combined into beautiful soul. In addition, the writer also thought that Jane Eyre was a woman with the notion of deep caste, who could endure the pressure from the outside in all aspects. But for the social rules she could fight against them with revolution. This concept reflected the characteristics of that time in a significant way. The time when the article was published was the Anti-Japanese war period in China. Women were not high in Anti-Japanese sentiment at that time. In their eyes the battlefield belonged to men. They had no more fighting awareness about their own destiny arrangement. Here Mr Zhang jing thought that Jane Eyre had no revolutionary idea but a person adhering to the old ideas. The writer thought that this was the result of Jane Eyre’s respect to the God. In her opinion law was issued by God. Meanwhile Zhangjing’s remarks were not conformed to the revolutionary image of Jane Eyre in Li Jiye’s translation version in which Jane Eyre was a revolutionist enlightening numb people. The journal Chinese Women published the article whose main purpose was to arouse the enthusiasm of women’s resistance. And at the same time in the magazine of Professional Women which was used to propagandize anti-Japanese war, Zonghai mostly depicted Jane Eyre as an orphan girl who got happiness by chance and luck. He also mentioned that only in the reasonable social system can everyone be happy. In China there were so many young orphans, but they would not become Jane Eyre or only a small part. Of course this analysis degree was weak but this was also the writer’s explanation based on the specific situation of China at that time. The ultimate purpose was similar to the journal Chinese Women calling for the women to take part in Anti-Japanese war. The status of a solitary girl for Jane Eyre was created in multilevel before the liberation period, a self-esteemed, self-relied and kind-hearted solitary hero with humble origin; a solitary reformer with the awareness of hierarchy, a solitary girl knowing love affair, being good at seeking knowledge, being brave enough to fight against but conservative and deep with hierarchy.

### 3. Jane Eyre’s Positive and Negative Role Playing in the 1950s and 1960s

By 1950s and 1960s constrained by the gradual unification of political ideology people had had obvious class criticism about Jane Eyre’s attitude. There were no other new translation versions appearing besides three retranslation versions about Li Jiye’s translation works. At the same time the reviewers kept the same attitude with the remarks of the main stream. In a book of *On Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre* in 1958 the writers’ commenting words towards Jane Eyre’s image stood for the voice of the mainstream ideology. In the article of *How to Know about Jane Eyre* the reviewers firstly made certain that Jane Eyre had positive factors. There were some things to praise Jane Eyre just because of her asking for freedom and equality of economy and spirit. She required to be respected and struggled to achieve this ideal. Then later it was pointed that with her age increasing, her experience deepening, her struggle became weaker and weaker. Until at last it was hard to see her resistance. ... Her life required her to be revolutionary and democratic but eventually she reconciled with that dark society greatly satisfied with a fortune and a peaceful family life. ... Jane Eyre only pointed out the equality of economy and spirit but she did not speak of the political equality. She was far from a revolutionist but only a weak individualist who fought in isolation just for her own purpose.... Compromise with society, believe in God with superstition, be far away from people.

Faced with this character’s interpretation in double facets and influenced by the rule of art serving workers, peasants and soldiers in China at that time, but considering Marx and others’ positive words towards Charlotte, reviewers had double explanation about her praise and devalue, which made the novel survive in that age with the relatively strong political factors. Achieve happiness through miserable experience.

During the cultural revolution period Ren Yezhong’s translation version was not republished let alone the new translation version would be published. The reviewers did not give more comment about *Jane Eyre*.

#### 4. The Multi-image Creation of Female Rebellion as the Core in the 1980s and 1990s

In 1976 *Jane Eyre* appeared in China again in the form of the film, some translation versions and commenting articles appearing in a fast speed at once. From that time to the end of the 1990s people regarded the heroine as the female rebels creating multi-images of Jane Eyre. In the beginning suppressed by ideology the reviewers thought the image of Jane Eyre with the color of a certain class. They were certain that Jane Eyre was a tough girl who was in adversity not liking to be corrupted and fighting with struggle, pursuing stubbornly. Meanwhile they also pointed that Jane Eyre's struggle was still for herself about family problems who was not associated with the workers, peasants and the public. They gave a common English girl a certain class nature.

At that time Zhu Qinying was the first female translator about *Jane Eyre* so it was necessary to study Jane Eyre's image in her eyes. During the period of calling for improving women's status again in the preface of her translation version Zhu Qinying mainly emphasized Jane Eyre as a rebel who tried her best to get rid of men's oppression and discrimination. She thought that Jane Eyre showed her fierce resistance spirit in face of Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield but facing with Saint John's proposal Jane Eyre suddenly became a docile and tame woman Christian from a cynical and brave woman, which greatly reduced the brilliance of Jane Eyre as a resister. In fact just as the writer once stated that the reason why Jane Eyre was hard to refuse Saint John was that she was bound by her sincere heart to Lord in a large degree but not decreasing of Jane Eyre's rebellion spirit. About the former reviewers' attitude towards Jane Eyre, Zhu Qinying thought that it was unpractical for Jane Eyre to struggle with the mass public and pointed that it was unfair for people to criticize Jane Eyre being an individualism just to take care of herself. According to that the readers can see that the building process of the literature character image in reviewers and readers' heart was pinned by the social character of the specific period in China in a large degree. Different from the male translators Zhu Qinying as a female translator chose the direct translation and made her translation version contain the meaning of feminism. In this aspect some scholars also made a study in China and pointed that in Zhu's version the female's independent identity was more prominent after they compared and studied the vocabulary of more translation versions. Therefore her rebellion was more intense in seeking equal consciousness. For example: Rochester: "You will give up your governess slavery at once." Jane: "Indeed, begging your pardon, sir. I shall just go on with it as usual, I shall keep out of your way all day, as I have been accustomed to do: you may send for me in the evening, when you feel disposed to see me, and I'll come then; but at no other time." (Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, p. 238) "Never give up" shows Jane Eyre's firm willingness and determination. At the same time continuing to act as a governess was above reproach while the remarks like "I still did something as I like" "I don't give up" have weak power. The sentence such as "the other time was not ok" shows Jane Eyre's gentleness and her tactful refusing words. In a word in Zhu Qinying's translation version Jane Eyre's femininity is stronger than in other versions. Meanwhile the attitude of the heroine's seeking equality is also the strongest.

Two years later LiFeiye's second version of *Jane Eyre* came out. Although it was retranslated the translator still expressed that it was the old translation after all. It was hard to make the word "governess" be perfect. One word's revision was so obvious that it could only correct some wrong and inflexible translations. The whole book turned the former word "baby-sitter" into "governess". Meanwhile LiFeiye stated his changing opinion about Jane Eyre in the preface part of this version. "Jane Eyre is full of passion daring to be bold enough to express herself. She is also rich in resistance daring to fight against with society, custom and the oppressors. She can keep her own independent personality at the times when women had no independent position in the aspect of society and economy, fighting for equality with men. In the process of her social life she had the courage to break through difficulties..."

In the translation version when Jane Eyre knew that Rochester would send her to the faraway Ireland to teach, she was brave enough to tell Rochester her feeling. When she arranged to prepare wedding, she refused Rochester's jewel for many times and emphasized that "after marriage I would go on acting as Adeilie's governess, by doing this job I got my food and house even the salary of 30 pounds a year."

The action that Jane Eyre wanted to be Rochester's bride at that time broke the regular rules of suitable marriage ordinance. When she knew that Rochester had already been married she was determined to leave him with much grief. Although this content existed in the original works and translation version LiJiyie's conclusion could make us see the influence of readvocating to pay attention to and improve the women's status in the 1990s. By the middle of 1990s people had interpreted the image of Jane Eyre in a more objective way with the weakening of political factors. More reviewers began their interpretation from their own understanding about this character. The scholars presented a rebellious girl with the modern consciousness through the deep and further study of the novel translation comparing with the other novels. She fought against the bourgeoisie who were oppressing her and the established rule of female subordination. Although this figure was restricted by times and had some

limitations Jane Eyre did not get rid of servility possessed by women in Victorian times. In the sexual relationship Jane Eyre adopted the traditional double moral standards. She was the first woman image in the English literature history to take advantage of independence and aggressiveness about love affair, life, society and even religion. She fought strongly against the literature tradition and social system where women had no right and position exploring the women's status and outlet actively. About this kind of interpretation for her, it was closely connected with the emphasis of improving the women's status in China and the introduction of western feminist theory. Some scholars also pointed the opposite side that there was a self-abased, fragile, selfish, insignificant and cool soul under the seemingly strong and big appearance. They were the same with the positive character of Jane Eyre standing in the complicated personality like the iron and steel wall.

In addition to the above some scholars analyzed the character of Jane Eyre's ideology and morality and even some thought she had Confucianism. "The readers appreciate her quiet, calmness, moderation, sincere, kindheartedness and grace, convinced by her moral cultivation and personality power, thinking that an autobiography from solitary childhood to happy wedding was the portraiture of one good turn deserving another." At the same time "she was also an image of the religious philanthropist and social status supremacist. Therefore we can conclude that the equality that Jane Eyre got was not the original equality..."

## 5. Conclusion

Jane Eyre appeared in different image character during that period according to scholars' different understanding. No matter what she had the modern female consciousness or pursued equality or held Christ and Confucianism, or no matter what kind of woman she was, all was the specific expression that Jane Eyre had in the text about her certain character.

Jane Eyre's image changing in China in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was in fact a portrayal of the changing of Chinese social features and ideology. In the times of ideology playing the important role, people understood and interpreted her based on ideology. While at the times of market playing the central role the sponsors' willpower also affected people's interpretation to her but the influence intensity was much less than the former.

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