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# 外国语言 文学论丛

石发林 陈 才 主编

III



电子科技大学出版社

# 外国语言文学论丛(Ⅲ)

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# 前 言

经过近一年的努力,《外国语言文学论丛(Ⅲ)》终于与广大读者见面了。该书汇集了辛勤耕耘在外语教学第一线的广大教师和教育工作者的教学及科研成果。内容涉及语言学、文学、文化、翻译、教学法、教学管理、电化教学等领域。本书可供大专院校师生及中小学教师学习、参考。本书能成功出版,得益于全国外语界专家学者的大力支持。在此,仅向他们致以衷心的感谢。

由于时间仓促,编者水平有限,书中难免有不足之处,敬请学界前辈、同仁批评斧正。

编 者

2006 年 12 月

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目

录

# 文学



# Jane Eyre's Personality

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文

学

**Abstract:** *Jane Eyre*, written by Charlotte Bronte, has been popular with readers all over the world. This article summarizes Charlotte Bronte's writing background and Jane Eyre's experience. By the author's describing of Jane Eyre's personality: struggle against the social class, struggle for independence and rebellion against her fate, Jane Eyre appears to be one of the critics of Victorian England's strict social hierarchy.

**Key Words:** *Jane Eyre*; background; experience; personality

## I Charlotte Bronte's writing background

*Jane Eyre* has been popular with readers all over the world since its publication in 1847. It was written by Charlotte Bronte. It is the girl of Jane Eyre who attracts all of us. Quite different from heroines to other works, Jane is a poor, plain, little orphan. What impresses our readers is not her appearance but her personality.

Bronte's works are marked by a new conception of women as heroines of vital strength and passionate feelings. In Victorian times women did not have any status. Although women's colleges were established at Cambridge in 1869 and at Oxford in 1879, women could not take degrees at the universities until 1920 - 1921. Until the last decade of the 19th century, almost the only job open to women of good families was teaching as schoolmistress or more likely serving as governess in a private family. The Victorian moral code for women was that they should remain ignorant and uneducated. It was regarded as ridiculous that women should aspire to be writers. So when Bronte had her books published, she had to use a pen name, pretending she was a male writer. Although Charlotte Bronte succeeds in publishing her works, we still can find many elements that express her fighting with the unequal circumstances.

## II Jane's experience

### 1. Jane's childhood at Gates head

Jane Eyre is a young orphan being raised by Mrs. Reed, her cruel, wealthy aunt. A servant named Bessie provides Jane with some of a few kindnesses, telling her stories and singing songs to

her. One day, as punishment for fighting with her bullying cousin Jon Reed. Jane's aunt imprisons Jane in the red-room, the room in which Jane's Uncle Reed died. While locked in, Jane, believing that she sees her uncle's ghost, screams and faints. She wakes to find herself in the care of Bessie and the kindly apothecary Mr. Lloyd. To Jane's delight, Mrs. Reed agrees to Mr. Lloyd's suggestion, so Jane is sent away to school.

## 2. Jane's education at the Logwood School

Jane finds that her life is far from leisurely at the Logwood School. The school's headmaster, Mr. Brocklehurst, is a cruel, hypocritical man. Brocklehurst preaches a doctrine of poverty and privation to his students while using the school's funds to provide a wealthy lifestyle for his own family. At Logwood, Jane gets her best friend, a young girl named Helen Burns. A massive epidemic sweeps Logwood, and Helen dies of consumption. The epidemic also results in the departure of Mr. Brocklehurst by attracting attention to the conditions at Logwood. After a group of more sympathetic gentlemen take Brocklehurst's place, Jane's life improves dramatically. She spends eight more years at Logwood, six as a student and two as a teacher.

## 3. Jane's time as Adele's governess at Thorn field

After teaching for two years, Jane yearns for new experiences. She accepts a governess position at a place called Thorn field, where she teaches a lively French girl named Adele. The distinguished housekeeper Mrs. Fairfax presides over the estate. Jane's employer at Thorn field is a dark, impassioned man named Rochester, with whom Jane finds herself falling secretly in love. She saves Rochester from a fire one night. Jane sinks into pain when Rochester brings home a beautiful but vicious woman named Blanche Ingram. Jane expects Rochester to propose to Blanche. But Rochester instead proposes to Jane, who accepts almost disbelievingly.

The wedding day arrives, and as Jane and Mr. Rochester prepares to exchange their vows, the voice of Mr. Mason cries out that Rochester already has a wife. Mason introduces himself as the brother of that wife - a woman named Bertha. Mr. Mason testifies that Bertha, whom Rochester married when he was a young man in Jamaica, is still alive. Rochester does not deny Mason's claims, but he explains that Bertha has gone mad. He takes the wedding party back to Thorn field, where they witness the insane Bertha Mason shouting like an animal. Rochester keeps Bertha hidden on the third story of Thorn field and pays a servant to keep his wife under control. Bertha was the real cause of the mysterious fire earlier in the story. Knowing that it is impossible for her to be with Rochester, Jane flees Thorn field.

## 4. Jane's time with the Rivers family at Moor House

Hungry and penniless, Jane is forced to sleep outdoors and beg for food. At last, three people who live in a house alternatively called Marsh End and Moor House take her in. Their names are Mary, Dania and St. John Rivers, and Jane quickly becomes friends with them. St. John is a clergyman, and he helps Jane find a job teaching at a charity school in Morton. He surprises her one day by declaring that her uncle John Eyre, has died and left her a large fortune of 20000 pounds. When Jane asks how he received this news, he shocks her further by declaring that her

uncle was also his uncle: Jane and the Rivers are cousins. Jane immediately decides to share her inheritance equally with her three newfound relatives.

St. John decides to travel to India as a missionary, and he urges Jane to accompany him as his wife. Jane agrees to go to India but refuses to marry her cousin because she does not love him. St. John pressures her to reconsider, and she nearly gives in.

### 5. Jane's reunion with and marriage to Rochester at Fern dean

However, she realizes that she cannot abandon the man she truly loves when one night she hears Rochester's voice calling her name over the moors. Jane immediately hurries back to Thorn field and finds that it has been burned to the ground by Bertha Mason, who lost her life in the fire. Rochester saved the servants but lost his eyesight and one of his hands. Jane travels on to Rochester's new residence, Fern dean, where he lives with two servants named John and Mary.

At Fern dean, Rochester and Jane rebuild their relationship and soon marry. At the end of her story, Jane writes that she has been married for ten joyful years and that she and Rochester enjoy perfect equality in their life together. She says that after two years of blindness, Rochester regained sight in one eye and was able to behold their first son at his birth.

## III Jane's Personality

### 1. Her struggle against the social class

Jane Eyre is critical of Victorian England's strict social hierarchy. Brontë's exploration of the complicated social position of governesses is perhaps the novel's most important attitude of this theme. Jane's manners and education are those of a noble, because she gets good etiquette as well as academics. Yet, Jane is more or less treated as a servant; thus, it is no doubt that Jane remains penniless and powerless while at Thorn field. Jane is in great pain when she becomes aware of her feelings for Rochester; she is his intellectual, but not his social equal. Even before the crisis surrounding Bertha Mason, Jane is hesitant to marry Rochester because she senses that she would feel much more painful to him for marrying him without the same social status. Jane's sorrow, which appears most strongly in Chapter 17, seems to be Brontë's critique of Victorian class attitudes.

Jane speaks out against class prejudice at certain moments in the book. For example, in Chapter 23 she tells Rochester: "Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong! - I have as much soul as you - and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you." In my opinion, it is the climax of the book. We can find that it is Jane who speaks out the prejudice by many noble people. Although in other people's eyes, it is impossible to let a poor woman marry a rich man, only Jane can fight with the thought. Finally, Jane is only able to marry Rochester as his equal because she has almost magically come into her own inheritance from her uncle.

## 2. Her struggle for independence

Her fear of losing her autonomy motivates her refusal of Rochester's marriage proposal. Jane believes that "marrying" Rochester while he remains legally tied to Bertha would mean rendering herself a mistress and sacrificing her own integrity for the sake of emotional gratification. On the other hand, her life at Moor House tests her in the opposite manner. There, she enjoys economic independence and engages in useful work, teaching the poor; yet she lacks emotional support. Although St. John proposes marriage to Jane, Jane refused. Because she knows that their marriage was not based on the true love.

Jane asserts her strong sense of moral integrity more important. Rochester has been trying to convince her to stay with him despite the fact that he is still legally married to Bertha Mason. His argument almost persuades Jane: Rochester is the first person who has ever truly loved her. Yet she knows that staying with him would mean compromising herself, because she would be Rochester's mistress rather than his wife. Not only would she lose her self-respect, she would probably lose Rochester's, too, in the end. Thus Jane asserts her worth and her ability to love herself regardless of how others treat her.

Feeling ...clamored wildly. "Oh, comply!" it said. "...Soothe him; save him; love him; tell him you love him and will be his. Who in the world cares for you? Or who will be injured by what you do?" Still indomitable was the reply: "I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unquestioned I am, the more I will respect myself. I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man. I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane and not mad - as I am now. Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation ...They have a worth - so I have always believed; and if I cannot believe it now, it is because I am insane - quite insane: with my veins running fire, and my heart beating faster than I can count its throbs."

Nonetheless, the events of Jane's stay at Moor House are necessary tests of Jane's autonomy. Only after proving her self-sufficiency to herself can she marry Rochester and not be dependent upon him as her "master." The marriage can be one between equals. As Jane says: "I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine ...To be together is for us to be at once as free as in solitude, as gay as in company ...We are precisely suited in character - perfect concord is the result" (Chapter 38).

## 3. Her rebellion against her fate

Jane Eyre was not born with her spirit of rebellion. It is gradually formed and developed from her childhood. Before she is sent to Logwood School, she lives at the household of her aunt, Mrs. Reed. In Gates head Hall, Jane is treated badly by her cold-hearted aunt and cousins. Once in an outbreak with John, Jane fights back and is taken away by force to the red-room and locked there. In spite of this, she has her first victory. Her initial bravery and rebellion draw much attention from the readers. In Chapter IV, Jane Eyre has a quarrel with Mrs. Reed, who often treads her severely and without mercy. Considering her social status, Mrs. Reed thinks she'll subdue

her niece, but on the contrary, Jane Eyre says straight to her aunt what she thinks of Mrs. Reed, which makes Mrs. Reed also angry. She says: "People think you a good woman, but you are bad, hard-hearted. You are deceitful!" Then she speaks in her mind: "I have finished this reply; my soul begins to expand, to exalt, with the strangest sense of freedom, of triumph. I ever fell. It seems as if an invisible bond has burst, and that I have struggled out into un hoped-for likely." She is very furious and gets rid of Jane by sending her to a charity school for poor girls in Logwood. No matter what happens, Jane Eyre tastes something of vengeance for the first time at Gates head. The author presents before her readers the first impression of the rebellion character of Jane Eyre.

During the eight long years in Logwood School, Jane suffers a lot both physically and mentally. What she experiences in Logwood School carves her into a more strong-minded girl. The author gives a clear picture of the charity school, not only to expose to the public something evil of such a so-called charity school, but also to stress the spirit of rebellion which is already formed and hidden inside Jane Eyre. Logwood, as a matter of fact, provides her with better circumstances where she can fight. In Logwood, once she says to her best friend, Helen Buns: "When we were struck at without a reason, we should strike back again very hard. I'm sure we should fight so hard as to teach the person who struck us never to do it again!" (Chapter VI) Strike back again very hard! This is Jane Eyre with the spirit of rebellion. At this time she is much more mature in mind than before. Only after Jane Eyre arrives at Thorn field does her rebellion reach a climax. At Thorn field she becomes a governess teaching a girl. As time goes by, Jane and her master, Mr. Rochester, fall in love. They're about to be married when Jane breaks the engagement on the wedding day, upon learning that Mr. Rochester has a wife, a raving lunatic who is secretly kept back under lock and key in the house. Shocked by the news, Jane decided to flee from Thorn field. It is naturally difficult for her to make such a frightful but firm decision. After all she loves Rochester deeply and her love to him is passionate and genuine. However, Jane Eyre has her own dignity; she tries to stand on her dignity. At no time does she ever forget her yearning for liberty, and equal rights. She doesn't want to be subordinate and obedient to men; neither does she want to sacrifice her dignity to compromise with social customs and habits. To her, to be a lover is unbearable, so she decides to rebel against her marriage. She steps out of the Thorn field very firmly and bravely.

## IV Conclusion

The development of Jane Eyre's character is central to the novel. From the beginning, Jane possesses a sense of her self-worth and dignity, a commitment to justice and principle, a trust in God, and a passionate disposition. Her integrity is continually tested over the course of the novel, and Jane must learn to balance the frequently conflicting aspects of her so as to find contentment.

An orphan since early childhood, Jane feels exiled and suffered at the beginning of the novel, and the cruel treatment she receives from her Aunt Reed and her cousins only deepens her feeling

of loneliness. Afraid that she will never find a true sense of home or community, Jane feels the need to belong somewhere, to find a home or at least the spirit of a home. This desire tempers her equally intense need for autonomy and freedom.

In her search for freedom, Jane also struggles with the question of what type of freedom she wants. While Rochester initially offers Jane a chance to liberate her passions, Jane comes to realize that such freedom could also mean enslavement — by living as Rochester's mistress, she would be sacrificing her dignity and integrity for the sake of her feelings. St. John Rivers offers Jane another kind of freedom: the freedom to act unreservedly on her principles. He opens to Jane the possibility of exercising her talents fully by working and living with him in India. Jane eventually realizes, though, that this freedom would also constitute a form of imprisonment, because she would be forced to keep her true feelings and her true passions always in check.

Charlotte Brontë may have created the character of Jane Eyre as a means of coming to terms with elements of her own life. Much evidence suggests that Brontë, too, struggled to find a balance between love and freedom and to find others who understood her. At many points in the book, Jane voices the author's then-radical opinions on religion, social class, and gender.

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# Major Currents in American Literature in the 20th Century

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## I Background

In the early 20th century, nothing had more important and long-lasting effect on America than the two great world wars. America entered the era of big industry and big technology, a mechanized age that deprived individuals of their sense of identity. The war affected young writers' attitude toward life, society, and writing. Also during the interval between the two wars, some significant events exerted great influence on American literature. First, many young American writers and artists lived abroad for months and years. For them Europe was exotic, glamorous, and exciting, and because of the rate of exchange living was cheaper in Europe than in America. Second, Marx - ism and Freudianism were widely studied. They changed people's view of society and themselves. Third, up to this point, the typical American writer had been native - born, white, more or less rich, Protestant, and Anglo-Saxon. After the war, the voices of new groups of Americans were heard. They were poor, or immigrants, or Jews, or blacks. There was the new literature coming out of the South and the literature written by women with awakened self-consciousness. Fourth, during this period there occurred in America an intense reexamination of the structure of literature and of the nature of the critical activity itself. This was stimulated in part by the science of semantics, depth psychology, anthropology, and important new studies in the symbolism of ancient cultures, mythological patterns, and comparative religion.

The First World War lasted from 1914 to 1918 in Europe. But America fought in the war only a few months from 1917 to 1918. When the war was over there was a distinct change in the life of Europe and America. The years before World War I had been calm and peaceful. There had been times when Victorian moral attitudes continued. There had been order. There had been meaning in life. But the war shattered all of these complacent pictures of life. Almost as if an idyllic world scene had been completely destroyed by the war, and in its place were despair and disillusionment. The time-honored American dream was shattered and young intellectuals faced an utter spiritual wasteland with old tradition collapsed under the burden of capitalist development.

Americans had entered the war with this slogan, "War to end all wars!" They had entered

with a sense of nobility and purpose to make the world safe for democracy. In duration and cost, it meant comparatively little because Americans fought the war for only five months. Yet disgust at the war and revulsion from it were almost universal in America.

For male American writers of the 1920s, some of them were enlisted in the battlefield before the main American forces joined in fighting such as Hemingway, John Dos Passos (1896 - 1970), E. E. Cummings (1894 - 1962), who were all in ambulance units. They saw the war as a nightmare. Some of them failed to complete military training before the war ended such as Fitzgerald and Faulkner. They felt doubly cheated, having known only the backwash of the nightmare. After they were demobilized from the army, they all believed that the war had been futile and horrible, that the Prohibition Law was a mistake, that sex was important, that things commonly believed in were false, that artists were isolated from the rest of society, and that life in Paris or on the Riviera was cheaper and more stimulating than life back home. They were literary acquaintances with each other, and their literary creation focused on the war, its immediate effects, and the subsequent peace.

Pound had gone to Europe at about this time. He was one of the leaders of this group of young American writers. They formed a community of expatriates. They had a common purpose, trying to understand what life was all about. They tried to invent a new style of writing which would communicate their thoughts. Thus free verse in poetry, expressionism in drama, lyricism, impressionism, and stream of consciousness in fiction became terms for emergent styles and techniques. These writers liked to express themselves in pungent, economical poetry and prose. Their cry in the post-war years was for liberty: liberty for individual self-expression. They established a new experimental era and found themselves disappointed.

## II MODERN FICTION BEFORE 1945

Ever since the first American novel, *The Power of Sympathy* (1789) by William Hill Brown (1765 - 1793), the early American fiction was usually didactic in purpose, sentimental in tone, sensational in material, but that did not guarantee the appearance of any real talented genius. The modern fiction before 1945 served as an assessment of possibilities in life and in literature. Naturalism had shown that social and biological forces limited individual freedom. Writers now either agreed or disagreed with it. They depicted the situation of the poor, the immigrants, the Jews, the blacks, the leftists, the women, and the "average" people in a rich paradigm of possibilities. Therefore, fiction emerged as the testing ground for new ideas and new techniques. For instance, the commonest techniques for expressing linguistic blight are fragmentation, literary montage, and the frenetic inter-penetration of passages to suggest a disordered simultaneity as shown in Hemingway's *In Our Time* (1925). In the process of this change, American fiction grew mature and became a leading force in world literature.

The years after the war were productive ones for the American fictionist. His prose medium was admirably adapted to what the writer had to say. His principal theme that of secession from so-