

**MATTHEW REYNOLDS
AND OTHERS**



**PRISMATIC
JANE EYRE**

**Close-Reading a World
Novel Across Languages**



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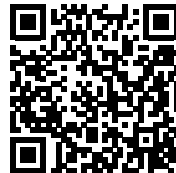


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12. Proper Nouns and Not So Proper Nouns

The Poetic Destiny of *Jane Eyre* in Chinese

Yunte Huang

To grasp what I would like to call the poetic destiny of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* in Chinese, and to explore the reasons for the book's tremendous success in Chinese-language translations, let us start with some facts and figures.

In 1925, the first Chinese translation of *Jane Eyre* appeared under the title, '重光记' (Seeing the Light Again). In this condensed rendition, the translator Zhou Shoujuan (周瘦鹃), more on whom later, reduced the original novel of about 190,000 English words to less than 9,000 characters in Chinese. Ten years later, in 1935, a lengthier abridged translation, by Wu Guangjian (伍光建), was published under the title '孤女飘零记' (Record of a Wandering Orphan Girl). In August of the same year, a complete translation, by Li Jiye (李霁野), began serialization in a magazine, leading to the publication of the book in September, 1936. Li's version bears the title '简爱自传' (An Autobiography of Jane Eyre).

In this period, when China experienced the impact of the New Culture Movement, which called for abolishing old ideologies and embracing new ideas and cultural practices, *Jane Eyre* was warmly received by Chinese readers for its perceived expression of free love and for its ostensible portrayal of a 'new woman'. Like the protagonist Nora in Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House*, which was the talk of the town in China at the time, Jane Eyre was celebrated as an icon of feminism.

However, after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, there was no more new translation of *Jane Eyre* in the Mainland because the novel was virtually banned. It was regarded as an expression of petty bourgeois sentimentality, which did not jibe well with the revolutionary spirit promoted by the Communist government.

As seen in the following poem ‘Inscription on a Photograph of Militia Women’ composed by Mao Zedong in 1961, the kind of ‘new woman’ idolized in this era was not a lady wearing ‘silk or satin’, but a militia fighter in a proletarian revolution, an almost androgynous figure who prefers her ‘battle attire’:

为女民兵题照
 飒爽英姿五尺枪，
 曙光初照演兵场。
 中华儿女多奇志，
 不爱红装爱武装。

Inscription on a Photograph of Militia Women

Bright and brave figures bear rifles five-foot long,
 On the parade ground lit up by the first rays of dawn.
 So high these China’s daughters aspire,
 Loving not silk or satin, but battle attire.¹

Indeed, Jane may hate it when Rochester buys her silk dresses, preferring instead to stay as his ‘plain, Quakerish governess’, but she doesn’t go so far as to put on battle attire.² By contrast, in Taiwan, under the rule of the Nationalist Party, new Chinese translations of *Jane Eyre* continued to appear from the 1950s to 1970s.³

When the tumultuous decade of the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976, Jane Eyre’s fortune changed again in the Mainland. With the death of Mao and the subsequent loosening of ideological control by the Communist Party, China saw a renewed interest in *Jane Eyre*. Especially during the Culture Fever, a period in the 1980s when translations of Western literature, philosophy, religion and other subjects flooded the Chinese market, multiple Chinese editions of the novel appeared to appease the growing hunger of Chinese readers. In fact, the first complete translation of *Jane Eyre* after the Cultural Revolution, an edition by Zhu Qingying (祝庆英) published in 1988, allegedly boasted a print run of over three million copies. Since 1976, there have been well over one hundred Chinese versions, including complete translations, abridged editions, edited editions, annotated

1 Mao Zedong [毛泽东], *Maozhuxi shici sanshiqi shou* [毛主席诗词三十七首] (Thirty-seven Poems by Chairman Mao) (Beijing: Wenwu Press, 1964), p. 17 (translation mine).

2 *JE*, Ch. 24.

3 See the Time Map and the List of Translations at the end of this volume.

editions, and bilingual editions.⁴ Symptomatically, in October 2015, in his speech during a state visit to Great Britain, President Xi Jinping spoke fondly of *Jane Eyre*, along with Shakespeare's plays and Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, as examples of British things that had exerted positive and lasting influences in the Middle Kingdom.⁵

Proper Nouns

A noun is a name of anything, why after a thing is named write about it.
A name is adequate or it is not. If it is adequate then why go on calling it, if it is not then calling it by its names does no good.

— Gertrude Stein, 'Poetry and Grammar'⁶

Looking back at the vicissitudes of *Jane Eyre* in Chinese translation, I would like to venture a thesis: *Jane Eyre*'s popularity is augmented by the creative rendering of proper nouns by Chinese translators.

Contrary to Gertrude Stein's skepticism, as seen in the epigraph, about names or proper nouns, there is a very different approach to the issue. Ezra Pound, for instance, likes to refer to a dialogue in *The Confucian Analects*: When his disciple Tze-Lu asked Confucius, 'The Lord of Wei is waiting for you to form a government, what are you going to do first', the master replied, 'Settle the names (determine a precise terminology)'. The Chinese concept in question here, '正名' (*zheng ming*), is variously translated as 'correct naming', 'precise definition', or 'reification of name'. It constitutes a pillar of the Confucian thought that 'if words (terminology) are not (is not) precise, they cannot be followed, or completed in action according to specifications'. As Confucius went on to say in the *Analects*, 'Therefore the proper man must have terms that can be spoken, and when uttered be carried into effect; the proper man's words must cohere to things, correspond to them (exactly)'.⁷

4 Shouhua Qi, 'No Simple Love: The Literary Fortunes of the Brontë Sisters in Post-Mao, Market-Driven China', in *The Brontë Sisters in Other Worlds*, ed. by Shouhua Qi and Jacqueline Padgett (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 19–49.

5 Xi Jinping, 'Work Together to Promote Openness, Inclusiveness and Peaceful Development', https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics_665678/2015zt/xjpdygjxgfw/201510/t20151022_705452.html

6 Gertrude Stein, *Lectures in America* (New York: Random House, 1935), p. 209.

7 Ezra Pound, *Poems and Translations*, ed. by Richard Sieburth (New York: The Library of America, 2003), pp. 711–12.

Keeping in mind this notion of ‘correct naming’, let us look at the way certain names or proper nouns have been handled in Chinese translations of *Jane Eyre*. In fact, ever since the first complete translation by Li Jiye in 1936, the Chinese title of the book has been, with rare exceptions, ‘简爱’. The character ‘简’ (*jian*), which is the homophonic rendering of ‘Jane’, means ‘simple’. The character ‘爱’ (*ai*), the acoustic equivalent of ‘Eyre’, means ‘love’. Therefore, the Chinese title, while a close approximation in sound of the English original, semantically suggests ‘simple love’. In most Chinese versions of the novel, *Jane Eyre* is simply addressed as ‘爱小姐’, or Miss Love. Such a poetically rendered title, as well as the choice of an almost aphrodisiac sobriquet of the protagonist, surely adds much to the appeal of the novel to Chinese readers looking for a romantic love story.

Perhaps the only exception to the brand name of ‘simple love’ as popularized by Li Jiye was a failed translation attempt, and its failure speaks volumes of the power of proper nouns. In 2017, the Shanghai Library discovered a manuscript of a partial translation of *Jane Eyre* by Mao Dun, circa 1935, right around the time Li Jiye had completed his translation and was looking for a publisher. In this green-covered notebook, there are sixteen pages of Mao Dun’s translation of the first three chapters of *Jane Eyre*. Most noteworthy for our interest is that Mao Dun (茅盾), one of the greatest modern Chinese writers, renders the title as ‘珍雅儿’. Granted that it is not so bad a translation of ‘Jane Eyre’, for it captures the English acoustics as well as enriching the semantics of the name with elegant, cute words like ‘珍’ (*zhen*, ‘precious’), ‘雅’ (*ya*, ‘elegant’), ‘儿’ (*er*, ‘little’), it is still no competition for the marvellous, almost magical, choice of ‘简爱’. In fact, the brand of ‘简爱’ has become so popular and predominant in the literary marketplace that Mao Dun’s manuscript, donated by his son to the Shanghai Library in 1996, went unnoticed for over twenty years, mostly because Mao Dun’s working title does not command, pardon my pun, any name recognition.⁸

I am not trying to suggest that the poetic rendition of ‘Jane Eyre’ as ‘简爱’ has ensured the novel’s success in China. Even a pornographic novel with a most salacious title and a most alluring personal name (say,

8 Li Ting [李婷], ‘Maodun ceng liangci fanyi jianai [茅盾曾两次翻译《简爱》] (Maodun Twice Tried to Translate *Jane Eyre*)’, *Wenhui* [文汇报] (Literary Newspaper) (7 September 2018), http://m.xinhuanet.com/book/2018-09/07/c_129948806.htm

Stormy Daniels) cannot secure its success without the usual features that make a book a good read or a good sell. However, we should not underestimate the power of branding, or rather, re-branding when a product, literary or otherwise, crosses linguistic boundaries, creating opportunities as well as traps for re-naming.

In addition to the intellectual weight of the aforementioned Confucian concept of 'correct naming', I do not think I need to go to great lengths to explain the importance of branding to the success of a product, or the poetic allure in commercial brand names like Coca-Cola, Kodak, PowerBook, and Blackberry. Saturated in sound symbolism, defined as the way sounds convey meaning independent of what a word actually signifies, these brand names are intangible assets that often make or break the companies' fortunes, especially upon the launch of new products. For example, in 1957, when the Ford Motor Company was looking for a name for its newly engineered and designed mid-priced car, they asked the poet Marianne Moore for help. In response to the company's request for a name that would 'convey, through association or other conjuration, some visceral feeling of elegance, fleetness, advanced features and design', Moore provided a list that includes Intelligent Bullet, Utopian Turtletop, Bullet Cloisone, Pastelogram, Mongoose Civique, and Andante con Moto. Unable to reach an agreement, Ford executives eventually named the car after Henry Ford's son Edsel. 'Launched with an unprecedented, fifty-million-dollar advertising and marketing campaign', the Edsel was a spectacular business flop. While clearheaded materialists would attribute Edsel's misfortune to changes in the car market, it is no denying that 'the name has become synonymous with failure'.⁹

By contrast, clever branding could change the fate of a product, literary or otherwise. Just imagine what would have happened to the novel *The Great Gatsby* if it had become known to us by F. Scott Fitzgerald's preferred title, 'Trimalchio in West Egg'? Or, how would *Pride and Prejudice* have fared under Jane Austen's original title, 'First Impressions'? In a similar fashion, the Patagonian toothfish, after being renamed as the Chilean sea bass, became popular among diners, as did the slimehead, reborn as the orange roughy, and rapeseed oil as canola.¹⁰

9 John Colapinto, 'Famous Names: Does It Matter What a Product Is Called?', *The New Yorker* (3 October 2011), p. 39.

10 Colapinto, 'Famous Names', p. 41.

Our concern, however, is not just with how words make things saleable, but with how words in translation make things marketable. The rule of thumb in the age of globalization is that ideal names must work across languages. As John Colapinto tells us in his article ‘Famous Names’, ‘the industry [of naming] abounds in tales of cross-linguistic gaffes, like Creap coffee creamer from Japan, Bum potato chips from Spain, and the Chevy Nova — in Spanish, the “no go”’.¹¹ And the industry is also full of examples of successful cross-linguistic rebranding, many of which may be construed as happy accidents of meaning and sound, instances such as the Chinese translation of Coca-Cola as ‘可口可乐’, Starbucks as ‘星巴克’, or even Dr Sun Yat-sen’s appropriation and condensation of Abraham Lincoln’s famous phrase ‘of the people, by the people, for the people’ as ‘三民主义’ (*sanmin zhuyi*, Three People Principle).¹²

In the case of literary products, for example, the original title of Pearl Buck’s novel *The Good Earth* was ‘Wang Lung’, named after the protagonist. Her publisher and future husband, Richard Walsh, very wisely convinced her that no English reader would be interested in a book with a title that sounds like ‘one lung’.¹³ Also, it is reasonable to speculate that ‘Wang Lung’ is most likely ‘王龙’ (*wang long*, ‘king dragon’), indeed an august and auspicious name in Chinese, and its semantic value would have been severely undercut by the acoustic suggestion of ‘one lung’.

The revised title, *The Good Earth*, certainly went a long way to foreground the central narrative, a Chinese peasant’s rise and fall by the fortune of the land. Published in 1931, a novel with such a title was quite appealing to the nation of the United States in the throes of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. In addition, the title word ‘earth’ resonates with the name of the novel’s female protagonist, O-Lan (O Land), which is also a not-so-distant echo of another land-based popular novel, Willa Cather’s *O Pioneers!* At the very least, the title *Good Earth* avoided a potentially disastrous interlingual mishearing as in the case of ‘Wang Lung’.

11 Colapinto, ‘Famous Names’, p. 39.

12 For those who don’t know Chinese, let’s take the translation of coca-cola as an example. The Chinese rendition of coca-cola is 可口可乐, pronounced as kekou kele. 可口 means appetizing, and 可乐 means entertaining or pleasing.

13 Peter J. Cohn, *Pearl S. Buck: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 165.

‘简爱’ (simple love) for Jane Eyre, or ‘爱’ (love) for Eyre, is equally a case of interlingual mishearing, albeit in this case it achieves the intended effect. Likewise, as we will see in the next section, the first Chinese translation of *Jane Eyre*, by Zhou Shoujuan, contains plenty of examples of the translator mining the rich potentials for mishearing, double hearing, reverberations, and acoustic puns in proper nouns.

Not So Proper Nouns: Mandarin Duck and Butterfly

Zhou Shoujuan (1895–1968) was a leader of the School of Mandarin Duck and Butterfly (MDB), a genre of popular fiction that features romantic love, knights-errant, scandals, and detective mysteries. In the Chinese tradition, both mandarin ducks and butterflies are symbols for love and lasting companionship. A prolific writer, Zhou translated Charlotte Brontë, Daniel Defoe, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Washington Irving, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and many others.

Zhou’s translation of *Jane Eyre* was published in *Heartstrings* (心弦), a collection of his translations from foreign fiction with a common theme of love and romance, including Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa*, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Scarlet Letter*, Prosper Merimee’s *Carmen*, Charles Reade’s *Love Me Little, Love Me Long*, and others. In his rendering of *Jane Eyre*, Zhou shrank the original text down to less than 9,000 words and turned it into a novella on love akin to an MDB story. With the title referring to Mr Rochester’s regaining of vision at the end of the narrative, *Seeing the Light Again* is divided into four chapters: ‘怪笑声’ (Strange Laughter), ‘情脉脉’ (Bubbling Emotions), ‘疯妇人’ (The Mad Woman), and ‘爱之果’ (Fruits of Love).¹⁴

This is no place to discuss Zhou’s translation in great detail, but I do want to draw attention to his treatment of proper nouns, which was a key part of his strategy of rebranding *Jane Eyre* as a sui generis MDB love story. First, Zhou translated the author’s name Charlotte Brontë as ‘嘉绿白朗蝶’, which roughly means ‘fair green white open butterfly’. Secondly, his rendering of the name of Jane Eyre was particularly noteworthy: ‘嫣痕伊尔’. In this Chinese version, the name for Jane, ‘嫣痕’, literally means ‘pretty traces’, with ‘痕’ (*hen*, ‘traces’) being one of the favourite choice of words for MDB writers as well

14 Zhou Shoujuan [周瘦鹃], *Chongguang ji* [重光记] (Seeing the Light Again), in *Xinxian* [心弦] (Heartstrings) (Shanghai: Dadong shuju, 1925), pp. 1–24.

as in classical Chinese novels and poetry. Often paired with such words as ‘tears’ or ‘love’, ‘痕’ is also a homophone of ‘恨’ (*hen*, ‘hate, lament, regret’). Together with the condensation of the content, such re-branding of proper nouns framed the reading of *Jane Eyre* upon the novel’s debut in Chinese. As one Chinese scholar puts it, ‘Zhou Shoujuan intentionally put a “love” label on *Jane Eyre*’ (周瘦鹃是有意为《简爱》贴上‘言情’标签).¹⁵ But such a label — call it a birthmark, if you will — also doomed the novel in the later, revolutionary period when the ruling ideology turned against literary schools such as the MDB. Persecuted and publicly humiliated during the Cultural Revolution, Zhou committed suicide in 1968.

Pronouns

Pronouns are not as bad as nouns because in the first place practically they cannot have adjectives go with them. That already makes them better than nouns...they of course are not really the name of anything. They represent some one but they are not its or his name. In not being his or its or her name they already have a greater possibility of being something than if they were as a noun is the name of anything...there is at least the element of choice even the element of change.

— Gertrude Stein, ‘Poetry and Grammar’¹⁶

Given Gertrude Stein’s fondness for pronouns for their flexibility, she might have hated what happened to personal pronouns in early twentieth-century China. Rather than providing choice and change and hence allowing for escape from fixed labels (identity, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc.) — Stein’s sensitivity towards pronouns derived from the fact that she was living as a lesbian Jew in wartime Europe — new personal pronouns were invented in China to specify gender and other categories. For thousands of years, in classical Chinese, there was no differentiation between genders in the use of third person pronoun. ‘他’ was the catch-all word for third person pronoun, regardless of gender or personhood. It referred to a man, woman, or nonhuman being.

15 Li Jin [李今], ‘Zhou Shoujuan dui jianai de yanqinghua gaixie jiqi yanqingguan [周瘦鹃对《简爱》的言情化改写及其言情观] (Zhou Shoujuan’s Sentimentalizing Revision of *Jane Eyre* and His Sentimentalism), *Wenxue pinglun* [文学评论] (Literary Review), 1 (2013), 70.

16 Stein, p. 212.

The encounter with western languages in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries made Chinese literati rethink their millennial-old language habit. The first two experiments took place in grammar books. In 1823, in the first English grammar book written in Chinese, 英国文语凡例传, the famous Anglo-Scottish Protestant missionary, Rev. Robert Morrison (马礼逊), translated 'he' as '他男', 'she' as '他女', and 'it' as '他物'. He likewise translated 'his', 'her', and 'its' respectively as '他男的', '他女的', and '他物的'. Then in 1878, in his Chinese translation of an English grammar book, 文法初阶, Guo Zansheng (郭贇生) appropriated a classical word '伊' and adopted it as the Chinese equivalent of the English pronoun 'she'.

The person eventually responsible for the neologisms we are now familiar with was the writer and linguist, Liu Bannong (刘半农, 1891–1934), who in 1917 came up with the idea of using the traditional '他' for a man and a new word '她' to refer to a woman. Publicized by Zhou Zuoren (周作人), Liu's proposal was later modified by others, who added variations such as '它' and '牠' for nonhuman beings, and '祂' for nonhuman but sacred beings. Supposedly, it was in the following poem by Liu Bannong that he first used, in 1920, the feminine pronoun '她' (she, or her):

教我如何不想她
 天上飘着些微云,
 地上吹着些微风,
 啊.....
 微风吹动了我的头发,
 教我如何不想她?

How Can I Not Miss Her
 Light clouds drift in the sky
 Gentle breezes blow on earth
 Alas!
 Gentle breezes brushing my hair
 How can I not miss her?¹⁷

Liu's neologism triggered a firestorm, with many leading intellectuals jumping into the fray, debating the pros and cons of adopting gender-specific pronouns. While the supporters advocated the usefulness of the newly minted pronouns, especially in the context of translating

17 *The Big Red Book of Modern Chinese Literature: Writings from the Mainland in the Long Twentieth Century*, ed. by Yunte Huang (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016), p. 35.

from foreign languages, the detractors of various ideological camps raised objections for very different reasons. The cultural conservatives wanted to preserve the language habit of China, characterizing the neologism as a case of ‘cutting one’s foot to fit the new shoe’. The women’s rights group, surprisingly, also vocalized their objection. As their rationale goes, if the central issue of women’s rights is gender equality and gender desegregation, enabling women to function and compete in cultural arenas previously reserved for men, then adopting gender-specific pronouns would only defeat the purpose of the cause. An editorial in a women’s magazine took issue with the word ‘她’, arguing that since the former catch-all pronoun ‘他’ contains the radical ‘人’ (person), using ‘她’ for women only is to deprive them of their personhood or humanity. Another commentator opined that since many Chinese words with negative connotations contain the radical ‘女’ (woman), such as ‘奸’ (rape), ‘嫉’ (envy), ‘妒’ (jealousy), and ‘奴’ (slave), adding one more word of the kind to the list would make matters worse for women.¹⁸

Despite the objections, the convenience of the new pronouns became too apparent. Especially after the founding of the People’s Republic, the government sponsored a few rounds of language reforms, codifying all aspects of Chinese ranging from spelling to grammar. Three different third person pronouns became the standard: ‘他’ for ‘he’, ‘她’ for ‘she’, and ‘它’ for ‘it’. The proverbial cow was out of the barn.

Given that somewhat complicated, entangled history of these pronouns in China, I would now like to examine the use of third person pronouns, particularly ‘她’ (she) and ‘它’ (it), in half a dozen representative Chinese translations of a section of *Jane Eyre*. As most readers of the novel know, the following dialogue between Jane and Mr Rochester, in which she recalls an eerie encounter with Bertha Mason, encapsulates a dynamic motif in the narrative, that is, in the words of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, the ‘parallels between Jane and Bertha’:¹⁹

‘Shall I tell you of what it reminded me?’

18 Lang Bo [朗博], ‘Weile yige hanzi [为了一个汉字] (For the Sake of a Chinese Word)’, *Shijie Huaren Zhoukan* [世界华人周刊] (World Chinese Weekly) (23 October 2018), https://www.sohu.com/a/272476071_176673

19 Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 360.

‘You may.’

‘Of the foul German spectre — the Vampyre.’

‘Ah? — What did it do?’

‘Sir, it removed my veil from its gaunt head, rent it in two parts, and flinging both on the floor, trampled on them.’

‘Afterwards?’

‘It drew aside the window-curtain and looked out: perhaps it saw dawn approaching, for, taking the candle, it retreated to the door. Just at my bedside the figure stopped: the fiery eye glared upon me — she thrust up her candle close to my face, and extinguished it under my eyes. I was aware her lurid visage flamed over mine, and I lost consciousness: for the second time in my life — only the second time — I became insensible from terror.’²⁰

In what has now become a classic interpretation of the novel, Gilbert and Gubar associate the ‘madwoman in the attic’ with the female protagonist, calling Bertha ‘Jane’s truest and darkest double’. The feminist critics deem the gothic scene as ‘the book’s central confrontation’, an encounter between Jane and ‘her own imprisoned “hunger, rebellion, and rage,” a secret dialogue of self and soul on whose outcome [...] the novel’s plot, Rochester’s fate, and Jane’s coming-of-age all depend’.²¹

Given the high stakes of the psychodrama here, it is important to pay attention to the shifting pronouns that Jane uses to describe the ‘spectre’, the ‘Vampyre’, which is, to quote Gilbert and Gubar again, ‘her own secret self’.²² As seen in the passage quoted above, Jane begins by using the pronoun ‘it’ to describe the figure that entered her bedroom: ‘of what it reminded me’, ‘it removed my veil’, ‘It drew aside the window-curtain’, and so on. Then she switches to the female third person pronouns of ‘she’ and ‘her’: ‘she thrust up her candle’, and ‘her lurid visage’ (or ‘her wild visage’ in the first edition). The switch, or rather, ambiguity, between the menacing figure as an animal and as a person, highlights the doubling of Jane/Bertha; rather than simply a demonic other, Jane recognizes the figure as part of her rebellious, angry, almost beastly self.

In translation, sensitivity, or the lack thereof, to the subtle and meaningful variations of the pronouns in the English original would also help us assess the degree to which the translator understands the

20 *JE*, Ch. 25. See Chapter VII below for further discussion, together with a verbal animation of this prismatic scene.

21 Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, pp. 360, 339.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 348.

psychodrama at play in the novel. Interestingly, without the coinage of new pronouns as we discussed above, a Chinese translator would have had much difficulty rendering those pronoun changes in the English passage. But even with the new pronouns at their disposal, some Chinese translators, as we shall see, still fail to produce a version that does justice to the original.

To make comparison easier, I outline the chain of pronouns used in the English original as follows:

It—it—it—she—her—her

Now let's look at some of the Chinese translations.

It is worth noting that in Zhou Shoujuan's abridged translation in 1925, the first ever in Chinese, the famous MDB writer rejected the new pronouns and consistently used the classical Chinese '伊' for third person female pronoun. A heavily condensed version, Zhou's text does not contain the passage in question.

In comparison, in the 1935 translation by Wu Guangjian, the translator did adopt the new pronoun '她', but did not use the other pronoun '它' to create a sense of differentiation:

她拉开窗帘往外看：也许她看见天破晓了，拿了蜡烛，向房门走。走过我的床边，站住脚，她两只冒火的眼瞪住看我——把蜡烛凑近我的脸，就在我眼前，把烛吹灭了。我觉得她的冒火眼照住我的眼，我就不省人事。

Disregarding the pronoun variations in the original, Wu used the third person female pronoun '她' throughout the passage: '她—她—她—她的', or to back-translate, 'she—she—her—her'. To add another wrinkle here, the word 'figure' in the original passage contains ambivalence over beast/human. In fact, the sentence 'Just at my bedside the figure stopped' is where the narrator transitions from the use of 'it' to that of 'she'. Since he ignored the pronoun shift, Wu omitted translating the word 'figure' by restructuring the sentence to the equivalent of 'Passing by my bedside and stopping, she stared at me with two fiery eyes'.²³

In contrast, Li Jiye in his first complete Chinese translation of *Jane Eyre* in 1936, managed to make use of the newly minted pronouns '她' and '它', thus retaining the word play in the original on pronouns as well as the word 'figure':

23 Charlotte Brontë, *Gunu piaoling ji* [孤女飘零记] (Record of a Wandering Orphan Girl), trans. by Wu Guangjian [伍光建] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1935), p. 424.

它把窗帘拉到一旁,向外看:或许它看到黎明快到了,因为,它拿着蜡烛,退到门那里。正在我床边,这形体站住了。火般眼睛闪视着我——她把蜡烛伸到我脸跟前,给我看着吹熄了。我觉得她的青白的脸面在我的脸上发着光,于是我晕过去了。

The chain of pronouns Li used: ‘它—它—它—她—她的’, or to back-translate, ‘it—it—it—she—her’. And he translates ‘figure’ as ‘形体’, literally ‘body form’, as ambivalent and noncommittal as the original English word.²⁴

Fast forward a few decades, to after the Cultural Revolution, when we saw a sudden surge in the number of Chinese renditions of *Jane Eyre*, and we find that translators differed in their treatments of the key pronouns in the passage. In his version published in 1990, Wu Junxie (吴钧燮) followed the path paved by the earlier translator Li and retained the play on pronouns:

它拉开窗帘,望望外面,也许它发现天快黎明了,因为它拿起蜡烛,朝门口走去。正走到我床边,这个人影停住了。火一样的目光瞪着我,——她猛地把蜡烛一直伸到我的脸跟前,就在我的眼皮底下把它吹灭了。我感觉到她那张可怕的鬼脸在我的脸上面闪闪发光,我昏了过去。

The chain of pronouns Wu used: ‘它—它—它—她—她’, or to back translate, ‘it—it—it—she—her’. One difference between Wu and Li, however, lies in that Wu rendered ‘figure’ as ‘人影’, literally ‘human shadow’, thus losing the ambiguity.²⁵

Another version from that period, by Huang Yuanshen (黄源深), published in 1993, the translator also retained the wordplay on pronouns but killed off the ambiguity by going in the opposite direction in his rendition of ‘figure’:

它拉开窗帘,往外张望。也许它看到已近拂晓,便拿着蜡烛朝房门退去。正好路过我床边时,鬼影停了下来。火一般的目光向我射来,她把蜡烛举起来靠我的脸,在我眼皮底下把它吹灭了。我感到她白煞煞的脸朝我闪着光,我昏了过去。

As we see, the chain of pronouns Huang used: ‘它—它—她—她’. And he renders ‘figure’ as ‘鬼影’, literally ‘shadow of a ghost’. Just like Wu’s ‘human shadow’, Huang’s choice also eliminated the room for ambivalence between human/nonhuman.²⁶

24 Charlotte Brontë, *Jianai* [简爱] (Jane Eyre), trans. by Li Jiye [李霁野] (1936; reprint, Xian: Shaanxi People’s Press, 1982), p. 348.

25 Charlotte Brontë, *Jianai* [简爱] (Jane Eyre), trans. by Wu Junxie [吴钧燮] (Beijing: People’s Literature Press, 1990), p. 381.

26 Charlotte Brontë, *Jianai* [简爱] (Jane Eyre), trans. by Huang Yuanshen [黄源深] (first published in 1993; reprint, Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2016), p. 284.

The most extreme would be the 2005 version by Song Zhaolin (宋兆霖), who used the nonhuman ‘它’ throughout the passage:

它拉开窗帘,朝外面看了看,也许是它看到天快要亮了,因为它拿起蜡烛,朝门口退去。正走到我床边,那身影停了下来,一双火红的眼睛恶狠狠直朝我瞪着。它猛地把蜡烛举到我面前,在我的眼皮底下把它吹灭了。我感到它那张可怕的脸在我的脸上方闪出微光,我失去了知觉。

The chain of pronouns Song used: ‘它—它—它—它—它—它—它’, or to back translate, ‘it—it—it—it—it—it’. Like Wu Guangjian in his 1935 version, Song completely eliminated the play on pronouns, although he did so by consistently using the nonhuman ‘它’ whereas Wu had chosen the human ‘她’. And just like Wu, Song might also claim a redeeming factor, that is, he rendered ‘figure’ as ‘身影’, literally ‘body shadow’.²⁷

All things considered, it was the translation by Zhu Qingying, the 1988 edition that enjoyed a phenomenal print run of three million copies, that gave us the most even-handed treatment of pronouns and related issues. Zhu’s version reads:

它拉开窗帘,朝外边看看;也许它看到了黎明来临,因为它拿起蜡烛退到门口去。这个身影就在我床边停了下来;火一样的眼睛瞪着我——她把蜡烛猛地伸到我前面,让我看着她把它吹熄。我感觉到她那灰黄的脸在我的脸上方闪出微光,我失去了知觉。

The chain of pronouns Zhu used: ‘它—它—它—她—她—她’, or to back translate, ‘it—it—it—she—her—her’. And she translated the word ‘figure’, as Song would do later, as ‘身影’, (‘body shadow’).²⁸

Half a century after Li’s first complete translation, through the undulations of the Chinese experience as dramatic as the Cultural Revolution, or as seemingly trivial as the minting of new pronouns, we finally find in Zhu a translation that does poetic justice to the sentimental pilgrimage of Jane Eyre, or ‘简爱’, Simple Love. But as we know, the book is no simple love story, and neither is the translational journey of this beloved novel in the Chinese language.

27 Charlotte Brontë, *Jianai* [简爱] (Jane Eyre), trans. by Song Zhaolin [宋兆霖] (first published in 2005; reprint, Shanghai: Shanghai Art and Literature Press, 2007), p. 305.

28 Charlotte Brontë, *Jianai* [简爱] (Jane Eyre), trans. by Zhu Qingying [祝庆英] (Shanghai: Shanghai Yiwu Press, 1988), p. 372.

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