

# On the Writing Skills of Jane Eyre

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**Abstract**—Jane Eyre is an outstanding masterpiece in the field of literature, but I think its main artistic charm results from its splendid writing skills. In this essay I mainly talk about its excellent writing skills from four aspects: Gothic Novel style, complicated plots, the first person and the use of imagination. Personally, in my opinion, it is the excellent writing skills that really make Jane Eyre a significant work.

**Keywords**—gothic novel; plot; first person; imagination

## I. INTRODUCTION

Jane Eyre, the masterpiece of Charlotte Bronte, is an outstanding novel in the field of literature, in which the author has successfully created a rebellious woman Jane Eyre, plain looking but full of emotion, who fights for freedom and equal social status with man. By writing this novel, the author gives readers a new picture of woman.

The story told in the novel gives every person who has finished it a very deep impression, and some critics speak highly of its plots and characters. But in my opinion, compared with the plots, the writing skills of this novel are more wonderful. For a long time, I have believed that it is the various writing skills that make it a wonderful work. Therefore I would like to touch upon some features of the writing techniques of this novel.

## II. GOTHIC NOVEL STYLE IS USED TO DEVELOP THE PLOTS

First, I'd like to point out that the author uses Gothic Novel style creatively to coin an atmosphere of terror or horror, and covers a mysterious tint to this realistic work.

Gothic Novel is popular in Britain from the end of 18th century to the beginning of 19th century. The main plots of this kind of novel are about the descriptions of violence, persecution, some abnormal matters with the terror atmosphere. The stories often take place in Gothic Buildings, the characters are usually criminals, gangsters, etc, and the plots are weird, grotesque. From the aspect of literature, Gothic Novel has the feature of combining mystery, terror with psychological analysis, and indirectly influences the surrealism in the 20th century. In horror novels, the descriptions of terror take a big share, while in non horror novels, the main function of these horrible descriptions is used to create an environment so as to reflect the character's feelings.

At the beginning of Jane Eyre, after quarreling with her aunt, Jane was locked in a red room, "the red room was a spare chamber, seldom slept in", yet it was one of the largest and stateliest chamber in Gateshead hall. "This room was chill, because it seldom had a fire; it was silent, because remote from the nursery and kitchen; solemn, because it was known to be so seldom entered". In this kind of room, anyone could feel lonely, furthermore, it was in this chamber that Mr. Reed breathed his last. In that visionary hollow, all looked colder and darker. Jane thought about some injustice between her and her cousins, "Unjust! unjust!", her reason said. When it was past four o'clock, "the colorful afternoon was tending to dreary twilight" with the rain and the wind, Jane began to feel terrible. She recalled dead people, suddenly, "a light gleamed on the wall, then this stirred", but then, prepared as her mind, she thought the swift darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another. "My heart beat thick, my head grew hot", she was oppressed, suffocated, and rushed to the door, shock the lock in desperate effort.

Indeed, the red room episode evokes our sympathy for the badly treated child, and it looks as if we can see a poor girl was crying desperately. It is at this moment the main keynotes of the novel for the first time is vivid in front of the readers. In the childhood, the harsh life molded Jane's character—lonely, dismal. Apparently, being excluded from others may be her destiny, but she didn't yield to this unfair treatment. We also can understand that the descriptions in red room give an foreshadowing for the following plots, which indicates that the heroine's life was not smooth.

Furthermore, there is one point we should not neglect. Normally, when a writer portrays children, he often chooses the aspects of some happy scenes, for example, innocent faces, attractive tales, pleasant thymes, etc. But from the beginning of the novel, the author describes the harsh treatment, desperation, horror of the little poor girl, which are seldom seen in depicting a child. Hence, in a short while, the author can seize the readers' attention, on the other hand, setting the tone of the following plots. Again, the more melodramatic Gothic incidents of the novel are prepared for, in a sense, by the whispering of the servants at Gateshead, and by the faculty of enlarging imagination in the sensitive child.

Another feature of Gothic Novel in this novel is the horrible laugh. During the period of Jane Eyre's staying in Thornfield, she heard several times of this kind distinct,

formal and mirthless laugh. If the laugh only appeared for one or two times, we can understand that it is just used to describe Jane's feelings, for a certain period, it is natural for Jane Eyre that from a harsh environment to a comparative comfortable environment, she might recall some past terrible experiences. However, the harsh laugh occurred for many times, which indicated that the laugh was an important clue.

In the whole novel, there are only two times giving a direct description of the mad woman. One is on the evening before Jane's wedding. Jane was roused from sleep, and saw a tall and large Vampyre, who rent her veil in two parts and trampled on them. The other is that after the wedding was interrupted, people saw Mr. Reed's real wife. As for the mad woman, the author mainly used the indirect descriptions. It looks as if the appearance of the mad woman had her own way, but it was when Jane was in trouble that the mad woman appeared. When Jane Eyre came into Thornfield with a happy mood, the mad woman "join in the fun"; Jane didn't like the expensive veil, she "did justice to" her: tent them in two parts; Jane earnestly wished to postpone the wedding, she "helped" her; even Jane dreamed that the Thornfield was burnt, after one year, the mad woman really set a fire to it. The horrible atmosphere that the mad woman created was coincided with the mental state of the heroine—dejected, horrible and some of mysterious. The mad woman produced an atmosphere of horror in the new environment and reflected the feeling of characters', moreover, we can infer from it that the marriage between Mr. Rochester and Jane did not follow their inclinations.

After all, the novel is not a horror novel, here, the descriptions of horror are used to create the development of the plots, and set off the character's destiny by contrast. Again, we accept all the horrible descriptions in the novel as tokens of a possibly sinister of experience, shadowing the reality of Jane's world.

### III. COMPLICATED PLOTS MAKE THE NOVEL MORE ATTRACTIVE.

Generally speaking, for an outstanding novel, its plots must be attractive. The relation between plot and novel is close to relation between water and fish: without water, the fish will die, equally, without brilliant plot, the novel will witness failure. Fascinating story, tight nit plots, intricate details are essential elements in producing an excellent work. If the plots are ingeniously conceived, plus the pending incidents emerging in an endless stream, the novel will tug at the readers' heart, strings and attracts the readers' attention. So here we should acknowledge that the success of Jane Eyre not only depends on the characters created by the author, but also the complicated and attractive plots play very significant roles.

According to common logic, after Jane and Mr. Rochester falling in love with each other, Jane would become Mrs. Rochester smoothly and naturally, which was to the satisfaction of all. However, if the story went on like that way, the rebellious disposition of Jane might be given a great discount. The fact that Charlotte Bronte is recognized as an outstanding writer is attributed to the fact that she did

not end the novel by the wedding of Jane and Mr. Rochester, whereas an episode took place—the wedding was interrupted by Mr. Mason. Although the appearance of the mad woman had become a puzzle in the readers' mind, it is still very difficult for us to believe that the interruption of Mr. Mason could work so important a role. Hence, the happiness became a visionary hope.

Jane left the Thornfield determinedly, however, she did not know where to go, but in her mind, there was only one hope: leaving Thornfield. Because she was cheated and insulted there, which was not in accordance with her rebellious disposition. Jane Eyre became a beggar suffering the terrible hardship of hunger and coldness all of sudden, even nearly starved to death. Indeed, in the three days of roaming, the agony she suffered was worse than in Lowood. Meanwhile, we should attach importance to the arrangement of this plot. It is impossible for Jane to continue to stay in Thornfield to be a governess as before. At the end, Jane bravely left Thornfield, and smashed the bonds of tradition. Though there are a few words in the chapter twenty eight, we can regard it as a praise song for Jane Eyre. From the action of Jane's leaving Thornfield, we can clearly understand that Jane's rebellious temperament reaches the top. As for readers, we certainly hope that Jane could get a satisfactory ending, marrying to Mr. Rochester, but we could not predicted that Jane could get rich—her rich uncle died, and left her a great deal of money, however, it is even unbelievable that at the end, the mad woman set a fire to Thornfield, and died because of falling from the upstairs, furthermore, Mr. Rochester was burnt badly, and became blind and poor. But to the readers' surprise, the rich Jane married to the poor Mr. Rochester decidedly. The bitterness ended and the sweetness began, Jack should have Jill, all should be well.

But I think there is a defect in the arrangement of the ending of the novel. After becoming rich, Jane obtained the love of Mr. Rochester, to some extent, by the money. Mr. Rochester was at a disadvantageous position, Jane became his benefactor in his feeling and material, and she also entered the ranks of the capitalist class, towards whom she had a hostile attitude before. Readers can get consolation from Jane's marriage, but in fact, this plot discounts Jane's character.

As a whole, we should acknowledge that Jane Eyre certainly has no lack of "startling incidents", but Bronte's maturity as a writer is evident in her placing of such episode within an entirely credible and fully—realized autobiographical framework. The author uses Jane's fate as a clue from the beginning to the end to arrange the development of the plots, behind which various suspenses are linked with one another, and then arouse the readers' attention to know the development of the story. On one hand, these suspenses portray the characters, on the other hand, they perfect the content of the novel.

### IV. THE FIRST PERSON GIVES THE NOVEL AN EXTRAORDINARY AND FASCINATING INTEREST

When Bronte produced this novel, called "simple and unadorned" by herself, she used the first person to tell the

story directly and created an excellent autobiographic novel. If there was an onlooker making a live report objectively, it is certain that accurate details could be provided, but the core of the novel is not just an objective report, on the contrary, it is a subjective expression. British critic Seamus has pointed that Bronte is "the first British writer using the novel as a tool to reveal oneself". Because the author desalinated the narration, and focused on the character's psychological feeling, those unkempt, bound and intense details can give the readers room to guess, and the readers can feel as if he is participating.

After Jane and Mr. Rochester fell in love with each other, the heroine revealed her feeling to the readers once again. Could the young girl love the man who was much older than her? He hesitated. He must sound out how she loved him. But Mr. Rochester's ambiguous attitude could produce misunderstanding to Jane: she thought she was rejected. Her loved Thornfield would come a new hostess, they would be separated by a vast sea.....The torment in feeling was beyond for a young maiden, she broke into sobs."That I am not Edward Rochester's bride, that I have wakened out of most glorious dreams, and found them all void and vain, is a horror I could bear and master; but that I must leave him decided, instantly, entirely, is intolerable. I wish I never have come here!" If using the third person, the tone of self sympathy, self aggrieve could not be expressed thoroughly. The all long hidden love, prompted by the despair, came down in torrents."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 as heart! And if the 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."

Here, Jane convinces us that she has heart as well as soul. This plot puts the story to its climax, it is from here that Mr. Rochester realized that Jane loved him. The narration of the first person did justice to the development of the whole novel, and for the readers, this writing skill makes the readers act as listeners, for the one thing, they read the novel, for the other thing, they listen to the words from the heart of the character, which can give them a real feeling of the character's mind. If using the third person, now that the readers have a clear knowledge of Mr. Rochester's real attention, it is useless to concern whether Jane's deep love could be returned or not(in fact, it is also a suspense), and her exciting and bitter monologue could not arouse the readers' response.

In short, we should acknowledge that the first person of the novel is very excellent. With this first person, daily like narration, the readers are allowed an insight into the heart and the mind of the heroine from the beginning to the end. The loneliness and the feeling of being unloved and unreasonably maltreated of the little orphan girl at Gateshead, the eagerness to learn and to win love and respect from people around her and painful experience of the grown up Jane after she comes to Thornfield, and her final decision to come back to Mr. Rochester, all of which are narrated in great details and with vividness. In the novel, all the objective, subconscious or supernatural world—natural scenery, paintings, dreams—becomes either backdrops or

reflection of her heart and mind. What's more, everything and everybody in the novel is seen through the eyes of Jane Eyre. Her opinion decides the readers' likes and dislikes; her moods affect the readers' sights and feelings. From the beginning, the readers are established as complex, vividly reacting participants in the events the author describes. In a word, the first person gives the work an extraordinary and fascinating interest.

In the preface of the second edition of Jane Eyre, Bronte has said that: Thanks for readers listening to the simple and plain story with lenient ears. So we can infer that the using of subjectivity is the reflection of author's one of intention in writing this novel.

#### V. THE USING OF IMAGINATION MAKES THE CHARACTERS AND THE SETTING SO REAL TO US

In the process of producing literary work, proper imagination can make the work more attractive and real to us. Throughout the novel of Jane Eyre, the imagination is developed. During the period of creating this novel, the author frequently uses the romantic imagination and sensitivity to describe Jane's feelings. When talking about the using of imagination, Bronte has said that: any person's real experience is very limited. If a writer merely produce the works mechanically, he not only can not make any achievement, but also he will become egoist. From the narration, we can infer that Bronte is an author who pays much attention to the imagination in writing this novel. In fact, in the whole novel the author consciously uses continuous imagination to figure Jane's inner world, for example, the natural scenery, the wind and the moon, etc., all of which make the story so real to us.

I would like to cite two examples to illustrate this kind of writing skill in her novel.

Before meeting with Mr. Rochester, there is a paragraph which describes the natural scene when Jane was strolling in an afternoon of winter. ".....I walked slowly to enjoy and analyze the species of pleasure brooding for me in the hour and situation.....the charm of the hour lay in its approaching dimness, in the low—gliding and pale—beaming sun.....but whose best winter delight lay in its utter solitude and leafless repose.....and the little brown brides which stirred occasionally in the hedge, looked single russet leaves that had forgotten to drop....."The scene around the Thornfield is pretty beautiful and attracting, here we could not feel the gloomy air if Gateshead, nor the depressed atmosphere of Lowood, the silent picture is in accordance with Jane's feeling, from one environment to another. Contrary to Jane's past experiences, we can easily feel Jane's moods at this moment—happy. We also can dimly infer that Jane may have a smooth and happy life in the future.

The other example is about the descriptions of the nature. One night before the wedding, Jane was anxiously waiting Mr. Rochester's back. Ordinary speaking, the inner world of the heroine should be quiet and happy. However, to the readers' surprise, Jane felt uncomfortably at this moment. Here the author uses horrible scenery to reflect Jane's inner mind: stormy waves, roaring wind, thundered trees, wretched

cry, etc., which give vivid pictures of Jane's contradictory and uneasy mind: Jane wanted to marry to Mr. Rochester, but in her deep mind she hesitated. The imagined scenery set a foreshadowing for the interruption of the wedding.

Interestingly, in the novel the author imagines the names of some places as symbols of the stage or status of the heroine's life. For example, Lowood refers to geographically to the enclosed, low position of the school and also suggests the suffering in her life there. Thornfield, a field strewn with thorny roses, is an indication of the difficulty in the love between Jane and Mr. Rochester and the obstacles they have to overcome to obtain their happiness.

#### REFERENCE

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