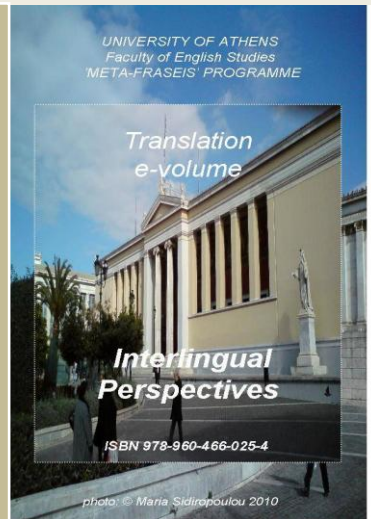


Sofia Polykreti 2014

Jane Eyre:
gender and
social exclusion



JANE EYRE: GENDER AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Sofia Polykreti

Abstract

This paper examines the construction of gender roles of Jane Eyre, the title character of Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* (1847), in two Greek translations: the first by Polyvios Vovolinis (1954;) and the second by Dimitris G. Kikizas (1997). Following the analysis of the novel by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (2000), a most influential work of feminist literary criticism, the study shows that the target texts represent Jane's gender roles in a different way. While the translator of TT1 favours options which discursively construct Jane's gender identity, the translator of TT2 refrains from overemphasizing gender differences and maintains a more neutral stance, according to modern trends which avoid sexism. This difference draws on the different mentality of the two eras, with the first translation highlighting gender inequality to construct gender-sensitive power positions, in agreement with proto-feminist work, and the second translation toning down gender bias and sexism as a manifestation of the narrative of gender equality.

Key words

Translation, gender, gender roles, class, mental health, feminist theory and criticism, feminist linguistics, Victorian literature

1. The novel

As Kikizas, translator of TT2, points out in his Translator's Note, when *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847 it attracted scholarly attention: on the one hand there were those who maintained that the work must be handled with caution due to its attitude towards religion,

while on the other hand there were those who embraced the novel, appreciating in its protagonist her independent spirit and moral integrity (Kikizas 1997: 624, translation by the researcher). It is worth noting that, as pointed out in Carter and McRae's *The Routledge History of Literature in English* (1997: 267-269), Charlotte Brontë and her sisters, Emily and Anne, also writers, radically changed the way the public viewed women insofar as the investigation of the female soul as well as its representation in literature is concerned. The Brontë sisters opened new horizons for women, socially, psychologically and emotionally speaking.

The novel is a narration of the heroine Jane Eyre in the first person. It can be classified as a Bildungsroman¹ since the novel describes Jane's personal development. The novel begins with describing Jane's difficult childhood years at her aunt's household. Then the action moves to the Lowood institution where Jane was educated. After finishing her studies, Jane goes to Thornfield Hall where she works as a governess and where she falls in love with her social superior Mr. Rochester, who at some point proposes marriage to her. But later the truth is revealed: Mr Rochester is already married while his wife is hidden in the manor, because she is mentally ill. Jane abandons the manor and only after a lot of adventures manages to marry Mr. Rochester.

Feminist theorists Gilbert and Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic* propose that Charlotte Brontë "seems here definitively to have opened her eyes to female realities within her and around her: con-

¹According to *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2006: 18-20), a Bildungsroman is a novel "detailing personal development or educational maturation". Although the term originated in Germany, in Britain it was associated with "a certain sense of social dislocation as is discernible in some classic accounts of problematic identity and stifled individuation, such as Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850)", whereas in Victorian literature George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-2) "typifies the Victorian embracing of the genre as an ambivalent site of psychosocial interaction". Therefore, *Jane Eyre*, insofar as it describes Jane's personal development and maturation in connection to her gender and social position, can be described as a typical example of a British Bildungsroman.

finement, orphanhood, starvation, rage even to madness” (2000: 336). Moreover, they claim that what really disturbed Victorian literary critics, as regards religion, was the novel’s “‘anti-Christian’ refusal to accept the forms, customs, and standards of society—in short, its rebellious feminism” (2000: 338). If the novel is described along these lines, the representation of female gender should be of critical importance in the two versions and well worth investigating, especially in connection with Greek society as the receptor of the target text, and in relation to translations which are forty years apart. The source and target texts used in this study are the following:

- ST Brontë, Charlotte. 2006 [1847]. *Jane Eyre*. London: Penguin.
TT1 Bronde [sic], Charlotte. 1954; [1847]. *Τζέην Έντ*. Αθήνα:
Δαρεμάς. (Translation by Polyvios Vovolinis)
TT2 Μπροντέ, Σάρλοτ. 1997 [1847]. *Τζέην Έντ*. Αθήνα: Σμίλη.
(Translation & Translator's Note by Dimitris G. Kikizas)

2. Constructing the gender identity of Jane Eyre

Construction of gender and identity has attracted researchers' attention in translation studies (Cameron 1992, Bassnett 2005). They have occupied themselves with the ways gender is constructed through language, and in particular, with the ways language seems to be in favour of the male gender, "excluding, insulting or trivialising women" (Cameron 1992: 101). Jane Eyre's story is

[a] story of enclosure and escape, a distinctively female *Bildungsroman* in which the problems encountered by the protagonist as she struggles from the imprisonment of her childhood toward an almost unthinkable goal of mature freedom are symptomatic of difficulties Everywoman in a patriarchal society must meet and overcome: oppression [...] starvation [...] madness [...] and coldness (Gilbert and Gubar 2000: 339).

The novel begins with a confrontation between Jane and “John Reed, the tyrannical son of the family, who reminds her of her anomalous position in the household” (Gilbert and Gubar 2000: 340), a confrontation that ends with Jane's confinement in the famous ‘red-room’ as

a punishment. Apart from being the first important scene of the novel, this scene is important insofar as it is relived by Jane at critical points of the novel; it is brought up time and again, becoming one of the novel's fundamental motifs:

Jane's anomalous, orphaned position in society, her enclosure in stultifying roles and houses, and her attempts to escape through flight, starvation, and [...] madness (Gilbert and Gubar 2000: 341).

In example 1, Jane is hiding in a window-seat, reading a book, separating herself both physically and psychologically from the rest of the household. John Reed, though, is determined to find her, and wrongly assumes she has left the house. In TT1, Jane's rebellious nature is presented as directly linked to her gender through the item *τρελλοκόριτσο* (*crazy-girl*), thus adding to the crucial role of gender as regards Jane's social exclusion, in accordance with Gilbert and Gubar's analysis. TT2 option *βρομόπαιδο* (*wicked-child*) is gender neutral.

Example 1

- ST Joan is not here: tell mama she is run out into the rain –bad animal! (p. 11)
- TT1 Η Τζέην δεν είναι εδώ... Πέστε της μαμάς πως βγήκε στη βροχή, το *τρελλοκόριτσο*! (p. 7)
Jane is not here... Tell mum she got out into the rain, the crazy-girl!
- TT2 Η Τζόαν δεν είναι εδώ. Τρέξτε να πείτε στη μαμά ότι το 'σκασε μες στη βροχή, το *βρομόπαιδο*! (p. 12)
Joan is not her. Run and tell mum that she ran away into the rain, the wicked-child!

The fact that Jane associates madness with escape is obvious also in example 2, where, after bringing her to the 'red-room', the house servants warn her about the consequences of her behaviour:

Example 2

- ST but if you become passionate and rude, missis will send you away, I am sure. (p.16)

- TT1 Αν εξακολουθήσετε όμως τις τρέλλες, η κυρία θα σας διώξει!
 (p. 11)
 but if you continue these follies, the lady will send you away!
- TT2 Αλλ' άμα αφηνιάξεις και γίνεσαι αγενής, η κυρία θα σε
 διώξει, είμαι σίγουρη. (p. 17)
 *but if you bolt and become rude, the lady will send you away, I am
 sure*

'Bolting' is usually considered a male trait insofar as it is associated with aggressiveness, whereas 'follies' may be considered a female trait. TT1 seems to be closer to Gilbert and Gubar's analysis of the novel, an analysis which brings forward the importance of Jane's social exclusion which stems from her status and, most importantly, from her gender.

In example 3, which comes from John Reed's verbal attack on Jane, as regards TT1, Jane's social exclusion is expressed in gender terms like *φτωχοκόριτσο* (*poor-girl*), while in TT2 Jane's gender identity is neutralised, through TT2 item *δεν έχεις καθόλου δικά σου λεφτά* (*You haven't got any money of your own*) which avoids gender marking altogether:

Example 3

- ST you have no money (p. 13)
- TT1 Εσύ είσαι ένα φτωχοκόριτσο (p. 8)
 You are a poor-girl
- TT2 Δεν έχεις καθόλου δικά σου λεφτά (p. 14)
 You haven't got any money of your own

Similarly, in example 4, which again comes from Jane and John Reed's confrontation, with Jane describing her mental condition during their argument, the translator of TT1 opts for gender-marked slavery vocabulary, *σκλάβα* (*woman-slave*), a word carrying strong connotations of female servitude, while the translator of TT2 opts for the masculine noun *δούλος* (*slave*), which in this case is supposed to refer to both sexes (default gender). Greek favours the use of the masculine grammatical gender in order to refer to both sexes. However,

the grammatical gender of the Greek language is not the sole cause of discrimination. Like in English, a language which lacks grammatical gender, there are many instances of discrimination against women which are materialised in different ways (Trudgill 1995: 81-83). Besides, as Mona Baker (1992: 91) points out, in the languages with grammatical gender, Greek included, the masculine gender constitutes the unmarked choice, because it is implied that it represents the female sex as well. Therefore, the use of the feminine form is more informative, while it is presumed that in this case the male gender is not included (Baker 1992: 91).

Example 4

- ST like any other rebel slave, I felt resolved, in my desperation, to go all lengths. (p. 15)
- TT1 Ήμουν μια σκλάβα που είχε επαναστατήσει. Είχα αποφασίσει, να μην υποχωρήσω εμπρός σε τίποτα, καθώς ήμουν απελπισμένη. (p. 9)
I was a woman-slave that had rebelled. I had decided, not to yield in front of nothing, because I was desperate.
- TT2 Όπως κάθε εξεγερμένος δούλος, έτσι κι εγώ, μες στην απόγνωσή μου, ένιωθα αποφασισμένη να φτάσω στ' άκρα. (p. 16)
*As every rebelled **slave**, thus I, in my desperation, felt determined to go to any lengths.*

In example 5, Jane is confined into the red-room. The importance of this scene in connection to Jane's character development relies on the fact that "the red-room [...] perfectly represents her vision of the society in which she is trapped" (Gilbert and Gubar 2000: 340). The translator of TT1 captures this idea of entrapment by using the female past participle *φυλακισμένη* (*female prisoner*), thus emphasising her gender as being one of the factors that leads to social exclusion, while the translator of TT2, as usual, opts for a more neutral choice (*κλειδωμένη* [*locked*]).

Example 5

- ST I was not quite sure whether they had locked the door; and, when I dared move, I got up and went to see. Alas! yes: no jail was ever more secure. (p. 17)
- TT1 Δεν ήμουν απόλυτα βέβαιη, πως είχαν κλειδώσει την πόρτα απ' έξω. Σηκώθηκα και πήγα να ιδώ. Ναι, με είχαν κλειδώσει! Ήμουν φυλακισμένη. (p. 11)
I was not absolutely sure, that they had locked the door from outside. I got up and went to see. Yes, they had locked me up! I was a (female) prisoner.
- TT2 Δεν ήμουν βέβαιη αν είχαν κλειδώσει την πόρτα. Μόλις τόλμησα να κουνηθώ, σηκώθηκα και πήγα να δω. Αλίμονο! ήταν κλειδωμένη. Ποτέ δεν είχε υπάρξει ασφαλέστερη φυλακή! (p. 19)
I was not sure whether they had locked the door. As soon as I dared move, I got up and went to see. Alas! it was locked. There had never been a more secure jail!

As mentioned, this scene is of paramount importance because it is revisited by Jane in crucial moments of her life. For instance, when Jane returns to her aunt's house after many years, her aunt mentions this incident, as we see in example 6:

Example 6

- ST I declare she talked to me once like something mad, or like a fiend (p. 267)
- TT1 Όταν θυμούμαι κάποια μέρα που μου μίλησε σαν τρελλή, ή σαν δαίμονας... (p. 204)
*As I remember one day that she spoke to me like **a crazy-woman**, or like a fiend...*
- TT2 Μια φορά, ειλικρινά, μου μίλησε λες και ήταν κανένα ον αλλοπαρμένο, σαν δαίμονας. (p. 304-305)
*Once, honestly, she spoke to me as if she were **a loony being**, like a fiend.*

We see here as well that TT1 uses the female adjective which is gender-marked, thus emphasising female madness, while TT2 follows the English source text more closely, representing madness in a more neutral way, without bringing gender forward.

As mentioned TT1 constructs Jane's social exclusion in terms of her gender. As her social exclusion is directly linked to her being employed as a governess, the assumption is that it is particularly important that TT1 translates *governess* as *δασκάλα* (*female teacher*) throughout the novel, while TT2 item *παιδαγωγός* (*educator*) is not inflected for gender in Greek and is thus less gender-marked. In example 7, Mr. Rochester meets Jane for the first time, and he finds it difficult to identify her status:

Example 7

- ST 'You are not a servant at the hall, of course. You are —' He stopped, ran his eye over my dress, which, as usual, was quite simple: a black merino cloak, a black beaver bonnet; neither of them half fine enough for a lady's-maid. He seemed puzzled to decide what I was; I helped him. 'I am the governess.' (p. 135)
- TT1 – Αλλά, δεν φαίνεστε να είστε κάποια απ' τις υπηρέτριες. Ποια είστε;
Με κοττούσε [sic] από πάνω ως κάτω ερευνητικά. Φυσικά, ήμουν ντυμένη πολύ απλά, όπως πάντα. Το καπέλλο μου όμως και το μανσόν μου μαρτυρούσαν πως δεν ήμουν υπηρέτρια. Βρισκόταν, λοιπόν, σε αμηχανία. Τον βοήθησα:
– Είμαι η δασκάλα. (p. 88)
– *But, you don't seem to be one of the servants. Who are you? He looked at me from head to toe inquiringly. Of course, I was dressed very simply, as always. My hat thought, and my muff, gave away that I was not a servant. So he was puzzled. I helped him:*
– *I am the (female) teacher.*
- TT2 – Δεν θα 'στε υπηρέτρια στην έπαυλη, βέβαια; Πρέπει να 'στε... Κοντοστάθηκε και περιεργάστηκε τα ρούχα μου, τα οποία, ως συνήθως, ήταν πολύ απλά: ένα μαύρο μερινό πα-

νωφόρι κι ένα μαύρο καστόρινο μποννέ, κανένα από τα δύο αρκετά κομψό έστω και για καμαριέρα. Έδειχνε σαστισμένος, ανήμπορος ν' αποφασίσει τι ακριβώς είμαι. Τον βοήθησα.

– Είμαι η παιδαγωγός. (p.151)

– *You 're not a servant of the mansion, right? You must be... He paused and examined my clothes which, as usual, were very simple: a black merino cloak and a black beaver bonnet, none of which elegant enough even for a chambermaid. He looked confused, unable to decide what I was exactly. I helped him.*

– *I am the (feminine definite article) pedagogue.*

As the popular Greek culture lacks the notion of governess, translators inscribe their own ideology onto the target texts, as Bassnett (2005: 83) points out:

Negotiating the Other, the translator has to take into account not only the foreignness of the culture in which the source text is embedded, but other issues, more properly described as ideological.

Thus, while TT1 prefers to domesticate the ST using the item *δασκάλα* (*female teacher*) which inscribes the female gender as well as lacks the prestige of TT2 choice, *παιδαγωγός* (*educator*). TT1 item, an obviously lower prestige choice, is more in agreement with the novel's original purpose of bringing forward the heroine's gender-induced hardship and social exclusion in connection to her being a governess.

Meanwhile, Gilbert and Gubar note that the novel's central confrontation is not between Jane and Mr. Rochester, but between Jane and Mr. Rochester's mentally ill wife, Bertha Mason, who, according to Gilbert and Gubar, seems to represent a part of Jane's self (2000: 339-340). Therefore, the way she is represented is directly linked to Jane's exclusion based on her gender, one of the novel's major themes. In example 8, Jane is aware of the wife's presence, although she cannot see her. In describing the situation, the translator of TT1 opts for the socially marked item *μουνιούρα* (*nagging*) which evokes certain stereotypes in connection to the female gender which are still relevant today, while the translator of TT2 seems to favour a more neutral

choice *ψιθυρο* (*whispering*). Consequently, it appears that TT1 evokes the novel's feminist orientation since it emphasizes the representation of the female gender as weak and irrational.

Example 8

- ST The laugh was repeated in its low, syllabic tone, and terminated in an odd murmur. (p.126)
- TT1 Το γέλιο ξανακούστηκε σε τόνο πιο χαμηλό και τελείωσε σε μια παράξενη *μουρμούρα*. (p.82)
The laugh was heard again in a lower tone and it ended in an odd nagging.
- TT2 Το γέλιο επαναλήφθηκε με τον σιγανό, συλλαβιστό τόνο του, σβήνοντας σ' έναν παράξενο *ψιθυρο*. (p.141)
The laugh was repeated in its low, syllabic tone, terminating in an odd whispering.

In example 9 Mr Rochester presents his wife Bertha to an astonished Jane. This scene is of particular importance since it appears to affirm a gender-induced weakness. TT1 item *φέρνει στον κόσμο τρελλούς ή ηλίθιους* (*brings to the world mad or idiot people*) seems to ridicule motherhood - among other things, while TT2 option *κατάγεται* (*comes of*) is less eloquent in this respect. Again, TT2 is more neutral in this regard, following the source text closely.

Example 9

- KA Bertha Mason is mad; and she came of a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations! (p. 337)
- KY1 Η Βέρθα Μείζον είναι τρελλή. Κατάγεται από οικογένεια που εδώ και τρεις γενεές φέρνει στον κόσμο τρελλούς ή ηλίθιους. (p. 279)
Bertha Mason is mad. She comes of a family which through three generations brings to the world mad or idiot people.
- KY2 Η Μπέρθα Μέησον είναι τρελή. Και *κατάγεται* και από οικογένεια τρελών: ιδιωτών και μανιακών επί τρεις γενιές. (p. 382)
(Bertha Mason is mad. And she comes of a family of mad people:

idiots and maniacs through three generations).

Table 1 summarizes shifts which have implemented gender-sensitive variation in constructing Jane's identity in the target versions.

Table 1. Differences in the representation of the female gender

Ex. no	ST	TT1	TT2
1	bad animal	crazy-girl	wicked-child
2	if you become passionate and rude	if you continue these follies	if you bolt and become rude
3	you have no money	you are a poor-girl	you haven't got any money of your own
4	slave	woman-slave	slave
5	no jail was ever more secure	I was a (female) prisoner	there had never been a more secure jail
6	something mad	crazy-woman	a loony being
7	governess	(female) teacher	(female) pedagogue
8	an odd murmur	an odd nagging	an odd whispering
9	she came of a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations!	she comes of a family which through three generations brings to the world mad or idiot people	she comes of a family of mad people: idiots and maniacs through three generations

3. Conclusion

Luise von Flotow (1997) mentions that issues of gender moved very quickly from the social sciences to the fields of linguistics and literature, while the notion of language as a tool for manipulation became very important. The connection between gender and language raised a lot of questions about how men and women are represented in linguistic terms, how gender differences are constructed through language, and how power relations and manipulations become apparent in language use. She maintains that “[t]he work of translating in an ‘era of feminism’, in an era powerfully influenced by feminist thought, has had an acute effect on translation practice”

(1997: 14) while she contends that “[g]ender awareness in translation practice poses questions about the links between social stereotypes and linguistic forms”(1997: 14). Therefore, the difference between the English source text and the two Greek translations with regard to gender can shed light to the ways social stereotypes materialize in language. Meanwhile, second-wave feminism, which began in the 1960s, and unlike first-wave feminism which focused mainly on women's right to vote, embraced a whole range of issues from female sexuality to workplace inequalities, is evident in TT2, a translation which neutralized the source text, as we have seen in the above examples, by removing gender-specific language, according to the trends of our times.

On the other hand, translation is a field in which language is of paramount importance. Therefore, when it comes to feminism, language and gender are categories which can be examined in reference to translation, as Sherry Simon points out:

Translation studies have been impelled by many of the concerns central to feminism. [...] The most compelling questions for both fields remain: how are social, sexual and historical differences expressed in language and how can these differences be transferred across languages? (Simon 1996: 8-9).

Simon also underlines the fact that translators “communicate, re-write, manipulate a text in order to make it available to a second language public. Thus they can use language as cultural intervention, as part of an effort to alter expressions of domination” (1996: 9). As the Greek society is becoming more sensitive regarding gender equality, we observe a concern about the way gender is represented through language, since “[f]ollowing feminist linguistics [...] the concern about the extinction of such linguistic inequalities in Greece is already present for many decades” (Georgakopoulou and Goutsos 2011: 180, translation by the researcher). The study shows that, in accordance with von Flotow's views, this concern is becoming obvious also when it comes to translation. Translators should always research about the work and its context, its historical context as well

as the literary criticism it received, in order to decide what the appropriate translation strategies and style may be. This seems to be the case in the present study where TT1, that is, the older translation, is much closer to the novel's original purposes, namely to bring forward proto-feministic issues, whereas the modern TT2 is much more neutral, according to the new trends in translation practice as well as to the modern trend of avoiding sexism from texts and translated texts and in accordance with second-wave feminism. TT1's choices (1954?) reflect the position of women of that time: Greek women voted for the first time as late as 1956. Therefore, we could argue that the reason why TT1 brings forward social exclusion based on gender is closely related to the era's particular social conditions and the attitudes towards the position of women while TT2, appearing after second-wave feminism, aims at a more gender-neutral approach.

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About the author

Sofia Polykreti holds a Rural and Surveying Engineering Degree from the National Technical University of Athens, a BA in English Language and Literature from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and a MA in Translation-Translatology from the Interfaculty Postgraduate Programme of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She is currently working as a surveying engineer and a freelance translator. Her contribution to the *Interlingual Perspectives* e-volume is an edited version of the research initiated in her 'Translation Research Methodology' MA course, taught by the editor.