

**THE NOTION OF SOCIAL CLASS STRATIFICATION IN ENGLISH
NOVELS: A CASE STUDY OF BRONTE'S *JANE EYRE*, SHAW'S
PYGMALION AND RUSSELL'S *EDUCATING RITA*.**

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Abstract: This article tries to point out how important is the concept of social class stratification in English novels in general, and to critically analyze how the three writers addressed that issue in their respective works. It also aims at discussing the differences and similarities regarding the depiction of social class and its relevance in the British society.

This piece of work mainly focuses on the main characters from the three books under study who struggle to survive in a society which is a class ridden one. It is also to see how the three main characters face that issue of class distinction to succeed in their lives as individuals.

It results from this research that the division of the British society into different social classes prevents people to live in harmony with one another. The three writers were pointing out that anyone could succeed in life provided they had strong determination and worked hard despite the social convention which divided the society into different social classes.

Key Words: Social Class, self-awareness, self-realization, motivation, and determination.

Résumé : Cet article tente de souligner l'importance du concept de stratification des classes sociales dans les romans anglais en général, et d'analyser de manière critique comment les trois écrivains ont abordé cette question dans leurs œuvres respectives. Il vise également à discuter des différences et des similitudes concernant la représentation de la classe sociale et de sa pertinence dans la société britannique.

Cet article se concentre principalement sur les personnages principaux des trois livres à l'étude qui luttent pour survivre dans une société dominée par les classes. C'est aussi de voir comment

les trois personnages principaux font face à cette question de distinction de classe pour réussir dans leur vie en tant qu'individus.

Il résulte de cette recherche que la division de la société britannique en différentes classes sociales empêche les gens de vivre en harmonie les uns avec les autres. Les trois écrivains soulignaient que n'importe qui pouvait réussir dans la vie à condition d'avoir une forte détermination et de travailler dur malgré les conventions sociales qui divisaient la société en différentes classes sociales.

Mots clés : Classe sociale, prise de conscience personnelle, Réalisation de soi, motivation, et détermination.

Introduction: The notion of class differences has always been the main theme of English novels, plays and poems from the early eighteenth century up to the present time. The issue of class plays an important role in English literature because English writers could never avoid criticizing or writing against the division of society into classes: upper, middle and lower. These three classes appeared in works of art or literature. As a means of criticizing social vices and teaching morality, British writers began writing to point out the weaknesses, superficialities, vices, immoralities and cruelty that the division of society into different social classes brought. Although social criticism or formal social assessment started with Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1741), many writers, especially poets from the early 18th century, had begun denouncing social conventions that fostered and deepened the gap that existed among the three social classes. Bronte (1999: v) openly stated that "*Conventionality is not morality*" when she was defending her main character, Jane Eyre. For Bronte, Shaw and Russell, determination, self-awareness and self-realization and motivation are important in life for they determine people's future success or failure in life better than social conventions that are only set up to deepen the social gap and discourage people to struggle and to succeed in life. One clearly sees that there were two groups of people having two different beliefs about the notion of class differences: the Victorian beliefs of class which are based on the old saying "your birth is your destiny", and the new thinkers' beliefs which are expressed through the main phrases and expressions like motivation, determination, self-awareness and self-realization and willingness.

The Concept of class in Britain

Defining and describing social class differences is not an easy task, especially when it is about the British society. Marx and Engels (1848), social class differences were defined in two basic terms: “*The Bourgeoisie*” and “*The Proletariat*”. The Bourgeoisie were land and factories owners and were exploiting the poor working-class people. According to Marx, social class differences were associated with the conflict between the two classes.

While Marx and Engels defined the notion of social class differences and conflict in terms of the relationships that prevailed between the Bourgeoisie (owners of the means of productions) and the Proletariat (poor working people), Weber (1947) considered the division of society into different social classes on the bases of power, wealth and prestige. Social class differences were based on social order and power was delegated following certain formal rules. For Weber, the notion of class differences was based on people’s attitudes towards others.

West and Willis (2016) have a different view of social class division. Though they share the point of view that British society is divided into three classes, they argue that within each class there are two or three sub-classes. West (2016:24) mentioned that each of the three big social classes has “*a couple of sub classes*” whereas Willis (2016:11) put forward the argument that “*Class System is an English thing in which all nine Sub-classes exist*”. West divided the Lower class into “*underclass and trying to improve*”; and according to him, underclass people like taking drugs, have criminal background or might have been to prison, are jobless and rely on “*full government benefits*” whereas the trying to improve are people who do their best to “*find employment or on minimal job that requires no post-secondary education*”. In the Middle class there are the “*Blue collar*” working with hands and having an average salary and the Upper middle-class people also known as “*White collar*” people working in offices and having ownership of a house and some money for retirement. The upper class is made of Upper Nouveau Riche in which there is also a Lower Nouveau Riche and Old money. The Old money is “*the nobility, the insanely wealthy...their money is 3 generations old. They won't extravagantly show off their wealth like the nouveau riche as everyone already knows they have money*”. (West 2016: 27)

According to *'The Great British class calculator* (2013), people in the United Kingdom now fit into seven social classes. Savage and his team (2015) conducted the Great British Class Survey and have come up with a new conceptualization of class. Thus, previous definitions of social class, traditionally defined by occupation, wealth and education, are outdated. For Savage, that old definition is too simplistic, and he suggests that social class differences are “*based on the distribution of three kinds of capital: economic (inequalities in income and wealth), social (the different kinds of people we know) and cultural (the way in which our leisure and cultural preferences are exclusive).*” (p.9). He concluded in his book that social class differences will always prevail among British people. Savage stated that it is true that the nature of the different social classes has changed, but social class differences are still perceived and are as strong as one can easily agree with.

Cannadine (1998) believes that class is the conceptualization of social stratification and inequality. Although his position is clearly connected to economic powers, it is also viewed as something much more complex. This well written and thoughtful work is an analysis of the notion of class differences in recent British history. Cannadine's main concern was not to address detailed historical sociology, but he was mainly preoccupied with how class was or is defined. He dealt with the history of different conceptions of class because he thought that different notions of social class often had socio-political consequences. Cannadine depicts three basic notions of class in recent British history. The first and most important is the idea of class as hierarchy, a well-structured different level of social status. The second concept is the division of society into three class: upper, middle and lower. The last notion is a dichotomous “us” versus “them” which was since British people keep on accusing each other of being at the origin of class distinctions.

Professor Saunders (1996) argued that the division of society into different social classes was not a “disadvantage to able and hard-working children.” He had a balanced point of view regarding the British class system. While many sociologists think that the British class system is too rigid and that this class system does not allow anyone to succeed easily in life or that a child's success relates to his/her parents' social background, Saunders acknowledges that Britain is an unequal society, but this social inequality does not prevent any hard-working child or person to succeed

in life. He further mentioned that British society has moved from an aristocratic society to a meritocratic one; anyone with the ability and the sound knowledge can succeed in life. Therefore, the division of British society into different social classes is “*unequal, but fair*” and is not to be considered as a class barrier.

Critical works on the notion of class in *Jane Eyre*

Robert James Reese (2004) pointed out that *Jane Eyre* explores the idea that there is no definite close to class relationships and that social class distinctions and limits are not a true barrier that cannot be crossed, but something that can be transcended by any individual. He discussed the novel on the view that Jane Eyre struggled through the three different social classes, but she was difficult to be classified for nobody knew where she could be placed. In other words, it is not easy to read *Jane Eyre* and state that its protagonist Jane belongs to a given social class.

Paul Fyfe (2013) mentioned that life in the nineteenth century Britain was based on social class differences and Jane Eyre was going through the three different classes from the poor class to the working-class servants and aristocrats. Fyfe concluded that Jane’s movement from one class to another brings Charlotte Bronte to explore the origins and consequences of social class differences. He pointed out that the main issue in Jane’s love affairs with Rochester was their respective social class background; that Jane had to face social class prejudices about her position and have her personal qualities and virtues accepted and respected.

Karen Sayer (2013) stated that the social class differences could be best described in terms of the relationships that prevailed among the people. Sayer focused her study on the position of Jane as a governess. A governess is a middle-class woman’s job, especially the younger ones; and this job was underestimated or undervalued. Sayer mentioned that Jane Eyre did not conform herself to the rule of the Victorian belief for the fact that she did not marry for riches but for true love and respect on the one hand; and she struggled to move across all the three different social classes without looking down upon anybody on the other hand.

Critical works on the notion of class in *Pygmalion*

Robert C Harvey (1970) mentioned that Shaw was against the use of parts of his plays in schoolbooks. Harvey confirms that despite the writer’s wishes, people introduced part of *Pygmalion* in schoolbooks because of its useful values. He also mentioned that *Pygmalion* is

often used when teaching grammar lessons with the message that like Liza, students can succeed if they learn to speak correctly. Harvey ends with the conclusion that the true value of the play for the students is to try to grasp its writing complexity on the one hand; and the social class importance of varieties of spoken English and the inequality of every dialect Shaw wrote the play to solve.

Jane M. Miller (1988) made a critical analysis on the influence of Ovid's version of the Pygmalion myth on later works. Miller stressed that the sexual implications of the Pygmalion-Galatea relationship in Ovid's story influenced Shaw's version. She stated that the various versions of *Pygmalion* tend in general to be of two types: historical, which depict a social transformation, and which usually contain "an element of social comment"; and a mystical which explore "love as a divine experience". She concluded that Shaw's *Pygmalion* belongs to the element of social comment.

Lynda Muggleton (1993) did a detailed study of the social importance of *Pygmalion's* exploration of accent and pronunciation as determiners of social status acceptability. Muggleton concluded that Shaw addressed the absurdity of social class division using language. For Shaw, people have different accents when speaking English; and this is related to their social class background and education.

Critical works on the notion of class in *Educating Rita*

The Guardian (2015) dedicated part of its news to *Educating Rita*. This newspaper addressed the historical background of the play including its connection with the writer's own life. It explained how the play was written as well as its performance and first feed-back. The feeling as well as Julie Walters's attitude were also addressed. Julie was the young lady who performed the role of Rita in the play. She stated that she was shocked whenever she acted, and people laughed, but finally concluded that the character Rita was part of her life as Rita was trying her best to move the social ladder. The newspaper concluded that the play became well-known thanks to Julie Walters's contribution as an actress.

GCSE Bitesize (BBC 2014) made a critical analysis of *Educating Rita* based on the autobiographic elements, the context, themes and the tone of the play. That study established that the play was based on the playwright's own experience and the influence of the Pygmalion myth.

The autobiographical elements can be seen through the background of both Willy Russell's and Rita's life: they were all hairdressers and left school earlier and went back again to study. Both have the motivation to move the social ladder through education.

Tony Rawdin (2003) addressed four main points regarding the critical analysis of *Educating Rita*: environment, incompleteness, metamorphosis and education. Tony compared the two main characters' environment pointing out that they both came from different environments or social class. While Professor Frank has a room full of books and belongs to the academic body, Rita is a working-class woman with non-academic background. He also dealt with the notion of 'incompleteness'. Tony concluded his critical analysis stating that Rita had a strong belief in education as a source of social growth and improvement as it can make people look different from one another.

The Social Stratification and Class Realities

The idea that any human society is divided into different social classes is universal; but the British people are more aware of that phenomenon than others. In fact, Great Britain is said to be a 'class ridden society'; a society which is dominated by the idea of class. This particularity dated from the early seventeenth century when references to different social classes in Britain appeared in books and novels. That division of society was deepened in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Fielding (1985) wrote: "Be it known then that human species is divided into two sorts of people... High people and Low people...the upper-class people are people of fashion; the lower-class people are people of no fashion" (p.158).

Following Fielding's ideas, the three authors had also presented and addressed the issues of social stratification and its real meanings. They pointed out that there were three social classes: the upper class; the middle class and the lower class.

Charlotte Brontë was highly criticizing the existing social class hierarchy that prevailed during the Victorian period. In *Jane Eyre*, the characters who are easily fascinated in the pursuit of wealth acquisition and social status become hypocrites or lack good morality on the one hand, and characters who know themselves as poor people but prove their great morality and ethics are also laughed at and neglected. Brontë makes Jane break that belief of 'normal class structures' that was supported by the Victorian Belief. For Brontë, poor people can be respected if they have

the strong desire to work hard to improve their lives or at least to earn their living through hard work.

One of the criteria for the division of society into different social class is wealth acquisition and money. Those who have much money belong to the middle or upper class and those who do not have enough money belong to the lower or poor class. According to Brontë, it is easy to value poverty and hard work especially when all the hard-working people earn their living at the end. Throughout the novel, one notices that Jane Eyre moved from the poor class, the middle class and to upper class thanks to her strong desire to succeed in life. In the novel, she earned some money through her own efforts and became a wealthy woman; and this leads her to marry the well-to-do Mr. Rochester. In *Jane Eyre*, it is easier for people to have good morality if they are poor or if they refuse or renounce possible wealth. This implies that moral purity is the virtue of poor people whereas rich people lack it; and this is what brings people to experience social disturbances. Here is an account of what Brontë wrote about Jane experiences as someone from the poor class. When Jane reads a book that belongs to her aunt's family, John Reed, the son of Jane's aunt rebukes her. Brontë (1999) wrote:

You have no business to take our books; you are a dependent...you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen's children like us, and eat the same meals we do, and wear clothes at our mama's expense. (p.6)

When reading the novel, one notices that Jane Eyre has an ambiguous and ambivalent social position. She is a poor but morally well-educated girl coming from a good family; and this leads her to hate some discrimination based on social class although she ironically makes class discriminations herself. Despite her education and proper behaviour, she is still working as a governess to earn her living which makes her relatively powerless. She challenges Rochester and his guests from the upper class regarding their behaviour towards the poor class people, but unfortunately, she herself asks her fellow lower-class mate, Leah, to give her a candle instead of getting it herself on the one hand, and also has a female servant who works for her when she is a school mistress at the village school in Morton. Brontë wants to point out here that some issues regarding the social class distinctions are very difficult to overcome even by people who are fighting against them since they may do the same things.

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 treatment of this theme. It is true that the relationship that prevails between Rochester and Jane in the very beginning is that of master and employee and that Jane is always aware of that, she does not see herself as an inferior to him. She rather sees him as his equal and this can be noticed in her passionate speech before Rochester's first proposal. Brontë (1999, p.223) wrote: "...It is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal, -- as we are". For Jane, nobody is superior to any other before God since everyone is equally created by him.

Jane ends up with an understanding of the double standard that makes her sad 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 a bit reluctant to marry Rochester because she thinks that she would feel indebted to him for "condescending" to marry her. Jane's distress, which appears most strongly in Chapter 17, is to be considered as Brontë's critique of Victorian class attitudes. Jane herself protests class prejudice at certain moments in the book. Here are a few lines from Chapter 23 when Jane reproaches Rochester expressing her feelings. In Brontë (1999) Jane tells Mr. 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. (p.223)

However, it is also important to note that nowhere in *Jane Eyre* are society's boundaries rigid. That is why Jane moves from one social class to another having no specific class till the end of the novel. Finally, Jane is only able to marry Rochester as his equal because she comes into money through the inheritance of her uncle's fortune.

In Shaw's *Pygmalion*, one becomes aware of a division of society into classes based on language, education and wealth. The playwright points out how this gap can be filled successfully as well as unsuccessfully. For him, the British society cannot simply be explained by the two words 'rich' and 'poor' since there are small differences within each group, and that

the main issue of social class division is with the middle class which is in-between wealth and poverty.

In the play, Shaw introduces members from different social background and areas of society. Eliza, the main character, comes from a very poor family and is someone from the 'gutter' whereas Professor Higgins, his mother Mrs. Higgins and Colonel Pickering are from the rich family and live in nice places. The Hill's family is one of those middle-class families whose wealth had decreased and who could no longer live according to middle class morality but pretend to still live accordingly. Shaw made a very good description of Liza's room in Act I. Shaw (2015) wrote:

A small room with very old wallpaper hanging loose in the damp places. A broken pane in the window is mended with paper... a wretched bed heaped with all sorts of covering that have any warmth in them, a draped packing case with a basin and jug on it... a chair and table. (p.21).

One of the serious ways Shaw uses to point out the problem of class differences is the way the rich people communicate with the poor. People from the upper class do not only laugh at the poor people's speech, but they also use chocking or harsh words to speak to them. Although Professor Higgins is a well-educated upper-class person, he keeps on abusing other people verbally especially the poor. An instance of this treatment of poor people is the conversation between Lisa and him. When Liza asks people to buy her flowers speaking in a poor class way, Professor Higgins almost insults her. Shaw (2015) wrote:

A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere – no right to live. Remember that you are a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech...don't sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon (p. 12).

Shaw further stresses along the play the different forms of language in *Pygmalion*: from slang "What are you sniggering at" and small talk "do me in" to heartfelt pleas and big talk about soul and poverty. One also learns that the use of language varies from one person to another depending on the different situations and that it can divide or link people, destroy or rise. Furthermore, Shaw clearly points out that language doesn't obviously need to be perfect to be effective, and that it can lead to deception just as easily as it can reveal the reality. Although Liza has improved her ways of speaking after getting trained, she keeps on speaking in her old manner whenever she is emotionally affected. But Shaw knows the important role language

plays in British society for even to be a shop assistant one should speak a better English on the one hand, and to be respected on the other hand. Shaw (2015) wrote:

You see this creature with her kerbstone English; the English that will keep her in the gutter to the end of her days...I could pass that girl off as a duchess at an ambassador's garden party. I could even get her a place as a lady's maid or shop assistant, which requires better English (p.12).

Another notion of class differences one learns from Shaw is that class distinctions are changeable. In other respects, anybody can change their social status at any moment depending on their financial situation. This implies that a poor person can turn out to become a wealthy depending on the change that occurs in their life while a rich person can also become a poor person once they do no longer have the necessary means to face the upper-class expenses. One notices this through Alfred Doolittle and the Hill's family. In the beginning of the play, one clearly sees that the Hill's family looks like people from the upper class, but almost in the middle of the play Shaw reveals the identity of that family. When Clara does not behave properly at Mrs. Higgins's party, her mother Mrs. Hill tries her best to justify why she does so. Shaw (2015, p.40) wrote: "You mustn't mind Clara...We're so poor! And she gets so few parties, poor child! She doesn't quite know".

Shaw is aware of the paradoxical aspects of class. He knows that despite her new skills, Liza will never be ready to fit in the upper class since she does not have the necessary means to live there accordingly. The tough discussion between Professor Higgins and her mother Mrs. Higgins are a very good example of that observation. When Professor Higgins thinks he is doing some favor to Liza teaching her to speak fine language as well as doing some social work, Mrs. Higgins sees what he does a destructive action since he makes Liza both unable to go back to her former life and to move to the next social class: The Middle class.

In Shaw (2015) Mrs. Higgins questions Professor Higgins and Colonel Pickering:

What was the advantages of that poor woman who was here just now? The manners and habits that disqualify a fine lady from earning her own living without giving her a fine lady's income! Is that what you mean? (p.43)

Besides, Shaw claims that what is very important in the society is the equal treatment for everybody, acting and reacting as if there are no social class differences. He thinks that the only society that prevails is that of the "human soul" where every single human being is part of. He

made that clear through the answer Professor Higgins gives to his mother in the final act. Professor Higgins states that what matters is not behaving properly or badly but getting on well with everyone. In Shaw (2015) Professor Higgins tells Eliza:

The great secret, Eliza, is not having bad manners or good manners or any other particular sort of manners but having the same manner for all human souls: in short, behaving as if you were in Heaven, where there are no third-class carriages, and one soul is as good as another (p.61).

Taking this assertion seriously, one can conclude Shaw is once more putting forward his socialist points of view regarding the division of society into three different classes. So, contrasting Mrs. Higgins and her son Mr. Higgins with the Hill's family is another way Shaw uses to mention that even among the upper-class people there are still differences in terms of language, education, and wealth. One also learns that in each social class there are smaller less obvious distinctions, and this can be mostly seen among people from the middle-class, a class that separate the rich from the poor. It is also from that middle-class that most several burning questions arise leading to surprising undeniable truth. Higgins was questioning people at her mother's house about their knowledge of science, poetry and so on; but nobody was able to say something in reply. This clearly points out that the pretention that the upper-class people are the most intelligent one is not true; and this is one of the surprising undeniable truths that Shaw criticizes when writing *Pygmalion*.

In Russell's *Educating Rita*, the notion of class differences is crystal clear right from the beginning. One can easily notice that Frank and Rita come from two different social classes. Frank's knowledge, educational background and career set him without any doubt in the middle-class whereas Rita's ways of speaking, behaving and professional background put her in the working-class which is part of the lower class. Although her life is very difficult, she does not cross her legs and rely on assistance as some people would do. She decides to go back to school to better her knowledge and to change both her social living conditions and her social class. Rita is almost one hundred percent sure of her success in changing and bettering her social living when she says to Professor Frank, Russell (1997, p.17) that: "But if you want to change y' must do it from the inside, don't y'? Know like I'm doin'...tryin' to do. Do you think I will Think I'll be able to do it."

Another complex notion of social class differences that Russell addresses while writing his play is that it is still difficult for poor people to come to the rich people's house even though they have reached a certain level of education. This is what happens between Professor Frank and Rita. When Professor Frank invites Rita to come to his house, she is perplexed and refuses to come. Russell (1997) wrote:

I don't wanna spend the night takin' the piss, comin' on with the funnies because that's the only way I can get into the conversation. I didn't want to come to your house just to play the court jester (p.50).

This passage shows Rita's frustration that she is aware that she does not fit in anywhere, not even in her former class, and certainly not in the new one that Frank is inviting her into. She knows she is an outsider, and that small things such as her dress, the wine she chose, and the conversation she made, would give her away. She also suspects that people there would have tried to figure out that she was merely attempting to be one of them, and she did not want to be their source of amusement.

Willy Russell honestly reveals some real facts about people from the upper through his character Professor Frank. One learns that it is not everyone from the upper class who could behave properly in the society on the one hand; and the belief that drinking too much and losing control are what characterized the poor on the other hand. Professor Frank is an intellectual and is from the upper class, yet he is a heavy drunkard and cannot do without taking alcohol. The most famous example is what Frank says about life. Russell (1997, p.59) writes: "Life is such a rich and frantic whirl that I need the drink to help me step delicately through it."

The three authors associate the notion of class differences with that of identity and authenticity. When reading the three works under study, one can notice that the three main characters from the three books still have something in connection with their natural social backgrounds. In other respects, Jane Eyre, Liza Doolittle and Rita still reveal their identity after their social changes through education or learning. Through the three books, three different rich families face the same situation. In *Jane Eyre* for instance, the Reed's family experiences life difficulties, but they keep on behaving as if they still had enough to live according to the upper-class standard. The Eynsford's family in *Pygmalion* also reveals that social class background is a very difficult challenge to face. Although their wealth has decreased and that they do not have enough money,

they pretend to still belong to the upper class. The reaction of Mrs. Eynsford at the very beginning of the play when Liza accidentally pronounces the name of her son Freddy is one of the best illustrations of this attitude. Shaw (2015) wrote:

How do you know that my son's name is Freddy, pray? Please allow me, Clara. Have you any pennies? Now this is for your flowers... You can keep the change. Now tell me how you know that young gentleman's name? (p.7)

One can clearly see the pretention of that lady who used to belong to the upper class but now is facing financial difficulties to cope with living according to that class standard. Furthermore, she wants to prove her identity by being able to pay the flowers that her son has caused to fall on the ground from the poor flower girl on the one hand; and to show the superiority of her family over that of Liza by leaving her the change on the other hand. There are many people who live pretentiously like that. They want to prove people that they are still able to live within their former rich class despite the decrease of their wealth or their lack of financial means. They do this because they want others to keep on respecting them or considering them as very important people; but they are suffering financially and can no longer live according to their social class standard.

Conclusion

Shaw, Bronte and Russell think that the division of society into different social classes is not fair especially when it is based on social conventions and one's place of birth. They make their main characters stand against the idea that poor people cannot succeed in life or behave properly due to their social background. For them, this social stratification is not authentic, and they make their main characters believe as such. Rita, Liza and Jane Eyre think that where they are now is not their right place; that they can improve their social class and living conditions if they decide to learn or to do something relevant that can lead them towards this change. One can see here that the three writers were addressing the notion of social stratification linking it with the notion of authenticity as well as identity. The three authors use the straightforward style to point out that things become more difficult when identities are built or made up through social conventions. The use of the first personal pronoun 'I' is relevant to deal with that question of class and identity or authenticity. The main characters speak using 'I' which implies that they are mentioning something about their own social class identity rather than being busy about

someone else's. The first-person narrative enables the three writers to discuss thoroughly the complex notion of social class division and identity and authenticity.

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