

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL
INSTITUTO DE LETRAS
DEPARTAMENTO DE LINGUAS MODERNAS

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***CLARA MORISON: A DISCUSSION OF CLASS AND WOMEN'S ROLE IN A
FEMALE TRADITION***

PORTO ALEGRE
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Trabalho de conclusão de curso apresentado como requisito parcial para a obtenção do título de Licenciada em Letras - Língua Inglesa e Literaturas de Língua Inglesa -, pelo curso de Letras da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.

Orientador: Prof. Dr. Ian Alexander

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Aim at Heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in': aim at
earth and you will get neither "

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 1952

ABSTRACT

This paper proposes to analyse four novel: *Emma*, *Pride & Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre* and *Clara Morison*. *Emma* and the last two will be analysed concerning social class, and *Pride & Prejudice* and the last two, again, will be analysed concerning women's role. A sort of timeline will be made in the two topics, displaying an evolution in the thinking of these topics in a tradition of female writers. *Emma* and *Pride & Prejudice* by Jane Austen will come first, followed by *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë and, then, *Clara Morison* by Catherine Helen Spence. This last novel *Clara Morison* is an excluded work from Australian literature, which deserves recognition for its high level of discussion in the two topics. Thus, by putting it side-by-side to two already consecrated novel in the history of English literature I believe this recognition can be due made.

On analysing these works we have to take in consideration its geographical differences. Jane Austen was set in the southern part of England and represented only the rural gentry to which she belonged. Brontë, on *Jane Eyre*, was in the northern England and she opened the spectrum of society she represented. Finally, Spence's novel was set, firstly, in Scotland, only in the first chapter, then in Australia for the remaining of the novel. She also opened significantly the amount of society which was represented and that brought repercussions on the discussion of class and Women's roles.

Key-words: Clara Morison, Emma, Pride & Prejudice, Jane Eyre, Class, Women, Role, Autonomy, Australia, Britain, System.

RESUMO

Este trabalho se propõe a analisar quatro romances: *Emma*, *Pride & Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre* and *Clara Morison*. *Emma* e as duas últimas obras serão analisadas com respeito à classe social, e *Pride & Prejudice* juntamente com as duas últimas também, com respeito ao papel das mulheres. Uma espécie de linha do tempo será feita com relação a estes dois tópicos, inseridos numa tradição de escritoras mulheres. *Emma* e *Pride & Prejudice* por Jane Austen virão primeiro, seguidos de *Jane Eyre* por Charlotte Brontë e *Clara Morison* por Catherine Helen Spence. Este último romance, *Clara Morison*, é uma obra que foi praticamente excluída da literatura Australiana, mas que merece reconhecimento pelo seu alto nível de debate nesses dois tópicos. Então, ao colocar essa obra lado-a-lado a duas obras já consagradas na literatura inglesa, ela poderá ser mais devidamente reconhecida.

Ao analisar essas obras deve-se levar em conta as suas diferenças geográficas. Jane Austen estava inserida no sul da Inglaterra e, no seu devido contexto, representou apenas a “rural gentry” à qual pertencia. Brontë, em *Jane Eyre*, estava inserida no norte da Inglaterra e proporcionou uma maior representação da sociedade. Por fim, o romance de Spence estava inserido, primeiramente, na Escócia, por breve período de tempo, depois na Austrália, no restante da obra. Ela também representou uma significativa parte da sociedade, ainda maior que *Jane Eyre*, trazendo repercussões para o debate de classe e papel das mulheres.

Palavras-chave: Clara Morison, Emma, Pride & Prejudice, Jane Eyre, Classe, Mulheres, Papel, Autonomia, Austrália, Grã-Bretanha, Sistema, Escritoras Mulheres.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The choice of this book and this theme is so peculiar that I dare say I should start this paper with a little story: one of the reasons I entered this English program was because I was in love with English literature, especially from the 19th-century. I joined this public University certain I would leave with a final project about one of Jane Austen's book or about some other novel from the 19th-century as *Jane Eyre* for instance. However, as the semesters went on I started to doubt my so certain idea; after all, Jane Austen is one of the writers most written about, and *Jane Eyre* does not fall behind, finding a new subject to write about them would be a difficult task.

Then, some semesters ago, I enrolled to an Australian Literature course and was assigned to read *Clara Morison* by Catherine Helen Spence. The first thought which crossed my mind was how this title reminded me of Jane Austen's novels, like *Emma* or Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, as both hold a personal name as a title. So I began reading and as soon as I started it that feeling was being even more reinforced: It not only reminded me of Austen's and Brontë's novels, it was even better. During that course, we had an overview of Australian literature from the 19th and beginning of 20th century, and after several discussions had taken place, I decided to study more deeply some of the aspects discussed, social class and women's role, focusing on *Clara Morison*.

After some study, I discovered that there is actually a relation between Jane Austen, *Jane Eyre*, and *Clara Morison*. Catherine Helen Spence was an eager reader of Jane Austen (SPENCE, 1910) and *Jane Eyre* is discussed in *Clara Morison* by being the object of reading of the two main characters. I will make, then, a study on the evolution of the discussion of class and gender analysing Jane Austen's novels *Emma* and *Pride & Prejudice*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Catherine Helen Spence's *Clara Morison*, all novels written by 19th-century women writers in English. *Clara Morison* will be the point of focus of a tradition of female writers in English, as this novel seems to bring a new perspective into this debate. Also, I will be thinking how the shift from metropolis (Britain) to the colony (Australia) could have contributed to the evolution of thought about class and gender.

What motivated me the most to choose this novel was the fact that when I took the course the whole class simply loved the book and praised its qualities. However, the book simply seems to have been forgotten, when it should have been a successful one, and that intrigued me. It has all the characteristics to be a new *Emma* but it had only two editions, the last one published in the past century. In fact, Miles (1956), Green (1962), Barnes (1964) and Mitchel (1981) all agree that Catherine Helen Spence could be compared to Jane Austen as the narrator has the same ironic tone, and Miles (1956) even points out how *Clara Morison* is similar to *Emma*, which could indicate how brilliant the book is. The novel is set in Australia though, and that, unfortunately, accounts for its seclusion.

Australia being a British colony, books had to be published in the metropole if they would be likable to reach popularity. However, there were some expectations in England of an exotic Australia, full of beasts and possible adventures, and *Clara Morison*, describing the female, domestic world did not fulfill these expectations (BARNES, 1964). So, I decided to try to bring some visibility to this book, investigating more about the reasons for this exclusion, and highlighting its importance for the discussion of the evolution of thinking about class and gender in this tradition of female writers.

This novel, *Clara Morison*, was written by Catherine Helen Spence and published in 1854 in England. It tells the story of a young lady of 19 years old who lost her dad and is sent to Australia by her uncle who does not want to support her. When she arrives in Australia, more specifically the town of Adelaide in South Australia, she cannot find a job as a governess and has to accept an offer of working as a servant, having thus, to stoop down in her social class. These circumstances bring her some problems as she sees herself disabled to pursue her beloved one since he is now from a different social class from her. In the middle of her adversities, she finds some comfort in finding cousins in the colony, among them there is Margaret Elliot, an import and elemental figure in the novel, as she is the biggest representation of the ideals of the author. This is the basic plot of the novel, apart from the story itself there are several discussions about class and women's role among the characters, which contributes to its value for the study.

This novel takes a step forward in the discussion of class and gender in relation to two obvious precursors, Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. If we could make a timeline in the evolution we could place *Emma* and *Pride & Prejudice* first, followed by *Jane Eyre*, and *Clara Morison*.

When talking about class difference for instance, in *Emma* the servants simply are excluded. In the novel, basically only upper class is mentioned, there are only two mentions on servants and they are never given a voice, only are mentioned through the upper class. Then, when we consider *Jane Eyre*, we can see an evolution: the main character works and the servants are represented, they are people who have personalities and families. However, Jane is not prepared to leave a certain level of social class if she needs to, she still distinguishes herself from servants in terms of superiority. In *Clara Morison*, we can see a big difference, the novel not only depicts servants, but the main character becomes one, bringing, thus, more representation to the class, showing its adversities and victories.

When discussing gender we can also see this evolution. It is possible to see some evolution already in Jane Austen, often treated as the first significant woman novelist in English. There we consider the idea of women having their wishes, these women expect to marry for love, not because of society requirements. This evolution continues in *Jane Eyre*, where we see women becoming more independent, they work, they travel, they make their choices. In *Jane Eyre*, we can see things were a little better as Jane is determined not to marry in the wrong conditions even if she had to be destitute of everyone and everything. In *Clara Morison*, however, we have yet a bigger leap: we can see women who are able to pursue their vocation, as would say Eade (1971 apud SPENCE, 1971, page 15), whether be it marriage or work. Clara, upon being questioned when she decided to take service, said: "no matter, I will keep out of debt and out of danger; and there is no necessity for being married."¹

Clara is determined to be independent and she is willing to give up marriage if that means being able to provide for herself. She not only travels but makes a whole journey overseas. In this novel we have also Margaret, she is a very important character, elementary to the book, and this is where we find the biggest leap: she is

¹ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 86, chapter 7.

older than Clara, has refused two proposals of marriage, is determined not to marry without love and she is alright with that. She ends up single at the end of the novel; however, she is determined to make a difference in the colony, and the book ends with her having settled down and kept on studying, kept active and with plans to open a school.

I will, thus, be studying the evolution of class and gender in what could be considered a tradition of female writers in 19th-century novels, who were located in two different geographical points: Britain and Australia, metropolis and colony. I begin my research by perusing two novels by Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* which were written in the late 18th century and early 19th, and compare them to *Clara Morison*, since, as previously mentioned, many critics seem to agree that Austen and Spence have similar characteristics. Then, I will pass to *Jane Eyre*, which was written not long before *Clara Morison*, less than ten years in fact, and has many similarities to Spence's novel as both novels are about perseverance, both main characters are "unfit" for society and are seeking justice, both are left alone in the world and have to work to provide for themselves. At last, *Clara Morison* will be the final point in this evolution and investigation of the domestic world.

Much more should be added, as the evolution does not seem to have reached an end in *Clara*, but that would give space to an enormous work which does not fit in this paper, so I will be analysing until this point, leaving open the opportunity to further studies on this subject.

I believe that this study could be the start of bringing visibility to this brilliant book. In 1981, Adrian Mitchell wrote for *The Oxford History of Australian Literature* that: "The recent revival of interest in her work will no doubt lead to an increased understanding and finer awareness of just how accomplished it is." More than 30 years have passed, and it is still an unknown book. However, now may be the right time to bring this book out, with the discussions of gender specifically being so effervescent. This work is an attempt not only to put this novel in the spotlight but to show how important discussion can be taken from it.

2 METHODOLOGY

This paper analysed two aspects: Class and women's role in the three authors Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë and Catherine Helen Spence. More specifically, I chose to analyse *Emma* (concerning social class), *Pride and Prejudice* (concerning women's role), *Jane Eyre* and *Clara Morison*. The reason for choosing these authors was firstly subjectively, as I was reading *Clara Morison* I was constantly reminded of these authors.

Concerning Jane Austen, after some research I actually found out Catherine Helen Spence, *Clara Morison's* author, was very fond of her. Making it an obvious parallel to be made. I decided to choose these two novels specifically (*Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*) for three reasons specifically: 1. It would be impossible to analyse all of her works in excellency, it would be a very extensive work. 2. These were the works I was more familiar with, then I could make more relations with the other works. 3. I believe these two novels make a good synthesis of Jane Austen work in the two categories mentioned. *Emma* has from all the novels the highest rank of class level and at the same time, depicts some middle-class characters as Mrs Bates and also a poor family. *Pride and Prejudice* deals throughout the book with marriage proposals, bringing interesting discussion for the role of women. Also there is in *Clara Morison* a sentence which instantly refers to *Pride & Prejudice*: "a man can very rarely sing or dance himself into a woman's heart".² In *Pride & Prejudice* dancing is of a vital importance, it is through dancing that Jane and Bingley fall in love and it is through dancing that Lizzie despises Mr Collins, so *Clara Morison* seems to be criticizing this.

Jane Eyre was chosen for my familiarity with the work firstly, and second for its similaritude with the plot of *Clara Morison*. Also, the book is mentioned in Spence's novel and it has less than ten years of difference in publication, which should approximate its contexts, but it does not, *Clara Morison* proves to be a much richer novel for the discussion of social class and gender.

² SPENCE, 1854. Pg 36 Chapter 3

For better illustrate I will bring an example demonstrating how these evolutions on social class and women's role were analysed. A sort of timeline was made picturing Jane Austen's novels as the firsts in the evolution, followed by *Jane Eyre* and *Clara Morison*. The novels were read and excerpts that were important for the discussion of class and gender were selected. Some question were used to analyse the exerts:

1. Does it bring an evolution?
2. If yes, what kind of evolution?
3. If no, what does it indicate?

For instance: when we talk about class representation we can clearly see an evolution. In *Emma* there is zero servant autonomy, the servants are only mentioned and there is never a direct speech from them. They are only seen by the spectre of the superior class and that indicates their representation were not seen as important. In *Jane Eyre*, we can see more autonomy towards this class, they already have a voice, indicating that to represent the working class was something that was reaching some importance now. However this still was not complete, since this autonomy was still partial, the main character does not exactly relate to this class, she still separates herself from it and feels superior. *Clara Morison*, finally shows a drastic evolution as it sets the main character Clara as a servant and gives complete autonomy to her, also equalizing the classes and trying to break it when it preaches that all classes are equal since all are working for wages. Only by having to be placed in a position differently to what Clara was used to (upper class in Britain) and having to leave her comfort zone, she was able to relate and represent these lower classes.

So, by thinking about these question while reading I was able to create a good representation of how these books demonstrate somehow an evolution and how far on that evolution they went. It was also easy to see how the drift from metropole to colony aid in that evolution.

3 CLARA MORISON, ITS AUTHOR, AND ITS COUNTRY

Clara Morison, as previously mentioned, is a novel from the Australian literature. Since the story is located there, additional information about Australian history could be beneficial. Furthermore, there is not much information about Australia here in Brazil, and the only thing most people know is so stereotyped that an overview of Australian history must be made. The book is set during the Gold Rush in the 1850's, so by means of objectivity I will cover this period.

Also, on account of Clara Morison not being a very known work, an overview of both novel and its author must be done. To understand a little about the author is very relevant here since Spence's life clearly reflected in the writing of the novel. Added to that, the novel is out of print and of difficult access. So, since I am going to analyze aspects of the book, I will try to summarize it.

3.1 The Country

Australia has been inhabited by the Aborigines 50.000 year ago and at the beginning of the seventeenth century, European civilization reached the land, first by the Dutch and much later, in 1770, by the British. At this year, Captain Cook landed in Botany Bay (Sydney) and funded the colony of New South Wales. The British crown needed land for penal colonies, since Britain had just recently lost their 13 colonies, and decided to use the new found land for that purpose. Australia would be used as a penal colony until 1840. However, many free settlers emigrated to the land as well, creating in 1831, Western Australia, in 1836, South Australia, in 1851 Victoria, in 1856, Tasmania and in 1859, Queensland. The Novel is set mostly in the colony of South Australia, in the town of Adelaide, which was settled by a private British company which was "proud to have no convict links"³.

³ AUSTRALIA. **Australia's History**. c2018. Available on: <<https://www.australia.com/en/facts-and-planning/history.html>>. Accessed on: May 10th, 2018.

Figure 1 - Australia in the 19th-century.



Source: http://www1.curriculum.edu.au/ddunits/images/ms4fq1_7b.gif

At the beginning of settlement people mostly lived in the coastal area raising cattle and sheep, since this type of economy requires a great amount of land, settlers started to enter into conflict with aborigines. As a consequence, aborigines were forced to move to the center of the territory. From the beginning, British settlement had a negative impact on the aboriginal people, taking possession of their lands, spreading diseases and having an exclusive policy, leading to several massacres.

In 1850, Gold was discovered in Australia, first in the colony of Victoria - opening the period of the Goldrush. This discovery compelled the male population from different colonies to migrate to the minefields, creating economic and population growth. There was also migration from other countries, thus increasing the tension with aborigines.

3.2 The Author

The author, Catherine Helen Spence (1825-1910), was born in Scotland and moved to Australia with her family in 1839 because her father faced financial problems and Catherine was not able to continue her education. The family moved to South Australia where Spence started working as a governess. Her aim was to be “a teacher first and a great writer afterwards.” (SPENCE & MAGAREY, 2005, page 29)

In 1854, *Clara Morison* was published in London, Spence's first novel and according to Franklin (1956, page 58), "the first good novel that it was really Australian". After that, she wrote eight novels throughout her life. These novels earned some respect but did not impact society as much as the author intended, so she decided to focus on journalism. There she was able to find more space to spread her ideas: she believed in the future of the colony. She started writing for magazines and newspapers and later on she said she saw herself first as a great journalist then a fiction writer.

She wrote not only fiction or critics but also sermons for the church, in one of them specifically we can clearly see what she believed in, the sermon is called "Each on his own Tongue." In this sermon, she is discussing the event of the Pentecost, in which the apostles were filled by the Holy Spirit and started speaking in other tongues, and everyone could understand the gospel in their own tongue. She says how important that is since it opens the gospel for everybody, "the Gospel appealed to all, and all felt they could claim it." (SPENCE, 1904 page 2)

What she means here is not the fact that all people now can go to church and listen to a sermon, instead, what she means here is that all people can be free and have their rights. She understood the gospel was practical and she used her life to try to see a better future. She opened boarding schools for orphans, supported the foundation of kindergartens and a government secondary school for girls. She was also crucial for the electoral reform, leading Australia to allow women to vote, before Britain. In fact, according to the Australian Electoral Commission, South Australia (Spence's colony) was the first colony to allow women to vote and also for the right to stand for Parliament, in 1895.

Everything she did was an attempt to bring a better quality of life to those living in her land, something innovative for the time. Franklin (1956, page 58), an Australian writer in the 20th century, says that Spence had the same mind as Franklin's contemporaries and that she was almost the only one of her generation which supported Australia as an independent land. On Spence's generation, Australia was very much connected to Britain and the idea of distinction was starting to arise. Indeed, Catherine Spence herself said: "Australian poets and writers present are false in the impression they make on the outside world and on ourselves..."(SPENCE

& MAGAREY, 2005, page 202) Miles Franklin (1956, page 58) opposes Spence to those sort of writers who wrote about places they did not know about and commercialized their works as they "could not cope with the Australian scene to which they have been born." So, either in writing or in action she was trying to raise Australia.

3.3 The Novel

3.3.1 Background Information

Clara Morison is a typical example of a book that could have entered in the list of greatest books of English Literature if it was not due to several external reasons unrelated to the book itself. Clara Morison was located far from the literary center, in a colony where rumors of wild beasts and exciting adventures were propagated in England.

The expectation of a "Australian" literature was one which would be adventurous and exciting, depicting the pioneering male life. Clara Morison drifted away from these expectations entering the realm of the female and domestic life. (BARNES, 1964, page 141) Names as "Robbery Under Arms" and the "The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn", novels which were published afterwards and fulfilled the British expectations, were titles from the colony which sold in England. Clara Morison drifted away from this stereotyped world entering the realm of the female and domestic life (BARNES, 1964), being the first woman to bring this topic into fiction in Australia.

The English literature is a literature which very early on had female writers who, even though often used a pen name, wrote about domestic life. For instance, at the same period of Spence, we had names such the Brontë sisters, George Eliot, Christina Rossetti, Elizabeth Gaskell and the list goes on, not to mention Jane Austen, one generation earlier. Readers were accustomed to the female world and it was not shocking to the society to read about the incidents of domestic life. It was not, on the other hand, expected nor appealing to the English public to find novels with this theme in a colony where so many "exotical" elements could have had its place.

Hergenhan (1988, page 121) explains that the “staple” of Australian Literature was composed by male subjects such as “exploits against the natives, the apprehension of bushrangers, and extraordinary narratives of all kinds” and Spence, by portraying the interior domestic life, did not enter the list of consecrated “Australian literature.” Barnes (1964, page 141) confirms this by saying that Spence “did not pictured the kind of Australia that the bulk of the English public believed in or wished to read about”. Green (1962) also believes her lack of success was due to her desire to display a “normal” daily-life Australia. He quotes the author herself “if stories are excessively Australian, they lose the sympathy of the bulk of the public.” (SPENCE, 1910 apud GREEN, 1961, page 2) Mitchel (1981, page 45) says that Spence did not believe the popular sort of “Australian Literature” depicted the true Australia. She believed that writing *Clara Morison* would create this real description of Australian life, but again, this was not what the public wanted to read.

Despite the unsuccess of the novel, Catherine Helen Spence is compared to Jane Austen by many literary critics. Barnes (1964, page 140) says she “gives rein to a lively satirical wit and following Jane Austen, crisply fixes on social pretensions and vulgarities.” Here he is referring to the construction of some characters in *Clara Morison*, who serve to illustrate the difference between “Englishness” and “Australianism”.

In every Austen novel, there is at least one character, who is created explicitly to represent the social snobbery and oppose the heroine, something like trying to say: “this is how the society is but this is not how it should be, it should be like the main character.” In Spence, we can notice the exact same thing, the author ,however, tries to draw the character of the English society and compare it to the ideal “Australian.”

In the novel, when Clara is working as a servant for Mr and Mrs Bantam, they receive a guest, a Miss Whitering, an English lady who came to Australia to find a job as a governess. That seems very similar to Clara’s story, but in fact, she is set as a contrast to Clara. This Miss Whitering is snobbish, unkind and thinks Australia in inferior to the colony. Green (1962, page 3) agrees with Barnes (1964) and adds that Miss Whitering would be a kind of Miss Bates in the sense that “is much pleasanter to read about than she would have been to meet.”

Miles Franklin (1956, page 59) mentions how Spence enjoyed Jane Austen and could have inspired *Clara Morison* in what she had read “every year”⁴. Spence appreciated her but knew Austen only had a narrow circle as she “represented well-to-do grownup people, and them alone. The humour of servants, the sallies of children, the machinations of villains, the tricks of rascals, are not on her canvas.” (SPENCE & MAGAREY, 2005, page 60)

Franklin also mentions that even though it would be more logical to compare *Clara Morison* to Miss Austen’s first novel *Sense and Sensibility*, as it is Spence’s first work and usually first works are not the best, the novel is more similar to *Emma*, which shows how much Franklin valued the novel. It is not only that but also it is closer to Austen’s novel than it is closer to Australian novels of the same generation.

Finally, Mackellar (2016, page 8) also says that she can recognize the Austen in Spence but she thinks the author took a step further when she moved to Australia, as it opened her “mind to new possibilities in her own life and in her fiction.” She mentions that *Clara Morison* did what no Jane Austen’s heroine did, moved to the other side of the world. I could add, not only moved but changed her whole life, by having to adjust to another kind of social level.

3.3.2 Overview of the plot

The novel starts in Scotland, Clara and her sister were left under the care of their uncle after their father's death. Their uncle, however, not being able to sustain both sisters, sends the youngest to the far colony of South Australia, with the objection that she would find better opportunities in that land.

Clara, bearing only a letter of introduction to a certain Mr Campbell arrived in the Colony of South Australia quite lonely, only to find that Mrs Campbell, the one whose "motherly heart" would welcome her, was dead. Clara then has to go to a boarding house where she sees herself surrounded by men "given to vulgar jokes with manners and interests uncongenial to Clara" (FRANKLIN, 1956, page 54).

⁴ “So great a charm have Jane Austen's books had for me that I have made a practice of reading them through regularly once a year.” (SPENCE & MAGAREY, 2005, page 60)

There she meets Mr. Reginald, an English gentleman who came to Australia in order to increase his income, he has a sheep station in the bush⁵. They find friendship in the middle of book discussions and Clara feels comfortable talking to him. Some weeks pass by and Clara does not find any respectable job as a governess, having, thus, to accept an offer for servitude at Mr and Mrs Bantam and hide her lady-like identity.

There, she has a very difficult time having to learn domestic work, something she had never done in her life. The difficulties increase even more when three guests arrive at the house, a Miss Withering, an English woman who came to Australia to find a job as a governess and who thinks herself superior to everyone; Mr. Reginald, which makes Clara suffer as she is not able to be his equal anymore; and Minnie a very passionate girl who does not measure efforts to defend her precious colony. At this moment, Clara admits to herself she is in love with Mr Reginal which increases, even more, her suffering since such a match would be impossible.

After Mr. Reginald and Miss Withering leave, there is a big drift in the story, the colony is in economic crises and Mr and Mrs Bantam have to move to Melbourne and leave Clara behind. Before leaving Mrs Bantam tells Clara that she had discovered Mr Reginald was secretly engaged to a lady in England, named Julia.

Destitute and hopeless, she seeks help in the Elliots, the neighbours, offering her services and eventually discovers they are distant cousins, who had received a note from a friend in Edinburg to "befriend a Miss Morison"⁶ but could not find her. She finds a home in the colony and things are starting to develop well, she has the company of five cousins Margaret, Gilbert, George, Grace, and Anne.

However, not so long after this, there is a rush of men going towards the colony of Victoria because of the discovery of gold. George and Gilbert join in this undertaking and leave behind the four women, Clara starts feeling she would be a burden and decides to accept a job in the bush as the companion of Mrs Beaufort, a sick lady with a child, whose husband is after the gold rush.

This lady's house happens to be located very near to Mr. Reginald's sheep station and there they can see each other more often and develop their friendship.

⁵ The inner part of Australia.

⁶ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 228 Chapter 21

He starts feeling something for her but does not show it since he has a commitment to the other lady in England.

After a while, Mr Beaufort returns and proves to be a dangerous man, after his wife dies he is constantly threatening Clara and proposes marriage to her, Reginald comes to her rescue and takes her to her cousins again. After that, Reginald discovers Julia will marry another gentleman, a friend of his, leaving him free to marry Clara. The novel ends by telling what happened to everybody, Reginald married Clara and both are living happily in the station, Anne and Grace are also married and Margaret does not marry but plans on opening a school and working for the development of the colony.

Franklin (1956, page 56), when writing about the plot of the book, says something which I think is very valid to repeat to this overview of the plot: "this but one thread in a thick skein of Clara's progress as a colonist. Her story is interwoven with that of many people, single and married, educated and no so literate."

4 ON CLASS

These novels being analysed here are set in three regions which make different impacts on the perspective of class. These differences will not be analysed in a historical and sociological perspective since that would require a much complex analysis. I will approach it by perusing the novels and understanding how each perspective was associated to its context in the novel.

Emma is set in the southeastern part of England, essentially rural. Jane Austen herself belonged to this society called the rural gentry, a land-owning social class. As previously mentioned, Austen represented a very small range of society, only the part she belonged to, that is what she knew.

Jane Eyre is set in Northern England as well as Charlotte Brontë, who had a different life from Austen. She worked as governess and teacher for a short period before start writing and that was reflected in her work. She enlarged the spectrum of society's representation.

Afterwards, when we reach *Clara Morison* we have a bigger change. The novel is set first in Scotland then moves drastically to Australia, both British subordinates. Again, we see some similar incidents in the life of the author. Catherine Helen Spence also lived in Scotland and then, moved to Australia. She, also, had a larger perspective on society as she had to work as a governess before writing.

4.1 Emma

Nicolson (1985, page 186) affirms that Austen wrote her novels to entertain, but also to teach what the perfect human and society could be, and to do so she had to highlight the bad in both. Concerning class she wished to highlight its "rigid system, social cruelties and hypocrisies." Austen was very successful in representing the society she belonged to, and the level of critique which she portrayed is very high according to Nicolson (1985, page 182).

A great amount of criticism can be perceived in *Emma* toward class, especially because Emma, the main character, belongs to the upper class. She is criticized in

many of her actions, especially in her snobbery. There is a point in the novel where she is discussing with Harriet the reason for not needing to get married and she says:

...it is poverty only which makes celibacy contemptible to a generous public! A single woman, with a very narrow income, must be a ridiculous, disagreeable old maid! The proper sport of boys and girls, but a single woman, of good fortune, is always respectable, and may be as sensible and pleasant as anybody else.⁷

Here she is stating that money is what makes someone agreeable which is thoroughly criticized in the novel, as Emma, who has money, conducts herself in a very disagreeable manner. The novel even starts by telling that Emma had the disadvantage of thinking too highly of herself and that could mean danger in the future.

The narrator guides us carefully towards this criticism, throughout the book Emma demonstrates a lot of prejudice and each time she is criticized for that. One of the characters she shows prejudice is Jane Fairfax, Miss Bates' niece. There is a moment where we are told about the misfortunes of Jane Fairfax, she was born in good situation, but became orphan and now was going to have to work as governess. The expected would be to be sorry for her, then we are given access to Emma's thoughts by the narrator: "Emma was sorry;—to have to pay civilities to a person she did not like through three long months!—to be always doing more than she wished, and less than she ought!"⁸ In the beginning we are led to believe Emma felt pity for Jane, but in fact she only pitied herself. This is followed by some remark from Mr Knightley, reprimanding Emma, as he is the character who most criticizes her conduct.

Mr Knightley was also the one who brought Emma to her senses concerning Miss Bates. This lady was a not so favored spinster who Emma described as a truly annoyance. In one circumstance Emma had been very reckless and was very impolite towards Miss Bates, receiving admonition by Mr Knightley here: "She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and, if she live to old age, must probably sink more. Her situation should secure your compassion." It is his words who mark the tone of criticism towards class, the point which is made throughout the

⁷ AUSTEN, 1815. Pg 47 chapter X vol 1

⁸ AUSTEN, 1815. Pg 87 chapter II vol 1

book is that the higher classes should care for those less favored and not act with snobbery. Mr Knightley condemned precisely this fault on Emma.

Criticism towards Emma did not stop on there, as there is also the case of Harriet, the school girl and Emma's "project": "She would notice her; she would improve her; she would detach her from her bad acquaintance, and introduce her into good society; she would form her opinions and her manners."⁹

Emma gets acquainted to this girl who is a "daughter of somebody" and decides to improve her, since she feels superior to her. We can see here an attempt to take Harriet's autonomy, since according to Emma, Harriet did not know best. Emma, then dictated how she should dress, act and whom she should be related to. Mr Martin, the farmer for instance, would do her harm, because he "must be coarse and unpolished"¹⁰. Emma says she would not even admit him to be her acquainted because he was below her. According to Nicolson (1985), though Mr Martin was in fact richer than Miss Smith and could give her a good situation, Emma saw money earned by effort as something which was less respectful than earned by inheritance. There again, we have Mr Knightley reprimanding Emma for her foolishness. After several failures, Emma returns Harriet's autonomy and accepts Mr Martin and Harriet's marriage in the end.

We can see in *Emma* an attempt to represent the upper classes and there is a very successful work on Austen to criticize the snobbery on these classes. We follow Austen only inside her own world and sometimes her world stumbles on some other people who did not belong to the upper class. We have Mrs Bates and her daughter who are middle class and already seen as inferiors by the upper class. We have Jane Fairfax, who is also middle class and will have to work as a governess to provide for herself. We have farmers, vicars, but that is it, no really significant character below middle class.

There is very few, almost no, lower working-class representation in the novels. Things just seem to happen by itself sometimes, servants are merely figurants. Nicolson (1985, page 182) points out the importance servants had at the age, since they conducted the whole domestic life and were mark of social status,

⁹ AUSTEN, 1815. Pg 201 chapter VII vol 1

¹⁰ AUSTEN, 1815. Pg 12 Chapter III

however, they are not portrayed significantly in the novels. Furthermore, there is only one mention on servants: “a maid, Hanna, ‘a civil, pretty-spoken girl’ who curtsied nice”. There is also James, Hanna’s father and Mr Woodhouse’s horse driver, who was thought to have no trouble in carrying people so often from one side to other. Whenever servants are mentioned they are always “thought they may like”, “thought they will not mind”, there is never a direct speech from them. They are seen by the perspective of another class.

There is a very peculiar incident in the novel which attempts to portray lower classes, the time when Emma and Harriet go visit a poor family. Jane Austen does not go into much detail into this however, it seems like a very isolated event which serves only to advance Emma’s plan to get Harriet married to Mr Elton, the vicar. There is no real attempt in sympathizing towards these people or giving voice to them.

Thus, though Jane Austen brought some class discussion in her novels, she only represented a small part of her society in the novels, as if this small part was the only important one, the essential one. “Harriet Smiths” were still second characters and did not have complete autonomy. “Jane Fairfaxes” were at the mercy of the circumstances, they had to waste their lives working if they could not find a secure home to settle. “Hannas” and “Jameses” did not think, or better had other people imagine what they were thinking, had zero autonomy.

4.2 Jane Eyre

We come, then, to Jane Eyre, which starts with Charlotte Brontë herself writing in the preface for the second edition and giving the tone for her book: denounce the evils in society. She is committed to utter what people would not like to hear and the book itself takes a new step into class representation, when allows representation and autonomy to middle class.

It’s an amusing parallel to think that in *Jane Eyre* we have a sort of Harriet Smith and Jane Fairfax, from *Emma*, as main character, since Jane eyre also is a “daughter of somebody” left in a school to fend for herself and also has to look for work to provide for herself. The difference here is Jane Eyre has autonomy since the first chapter of the book. Added to that we have a Mrs Fairfax working as

housekeeper and manager of Thornfield and is impossible not correlate this surname to the same in *Emma*. The autonomy Jane Fairfax did not have in Austen, Mrs Fairfax found in Brontë, she managed the house. The house was not her, so the autonomy was not complete, but the owner of the house being almost ever away, gave her freedom. It can be noticed, then, a change from only upper class having autonomy, in *Emma*, to here, in *Jane Eyre*, middle class having autonomy as well.

This autonomy can already be perceived in the shift from “we” to “I” in the beginning of the first chapter. *Jane Eyre* is narrated in the first person of the singular, by Jane herself, however, the book starts by using “we”: “there was no possibility of taking a walk that day. We had been wandering, indeed, in the leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning;”¹¹ It seems the narrator here is trying to place herself together with these other people, but this is rapidly broken as the beginning of the next paragraph starts with: “I was glad of it: I never liked long walks...”¹² She makes a rupture here with those other people who were walking with her, taking her autonomy and setting the tone of the novel. She does not belong to this world, she has her own desires.

Bossche (2005) comments the novel begins by introducing a rebel who fights class exclusion. We can see this exclusion when we analyse this rupture of “we”: the “we” breaks into “I”, Jane Eyre, and “we”, the Gateshead Hall. Jane is constantly reminded she is “inferior”, she is “less than a servant”, she does not belong to Gateshead Hall. She mentions: “from every enjoyment I was, of course, excluded: my share of the gaiety consisted in witnessing the daily apparelling of Eliza and Georgiana...”¹³ It is this exclusion that Jane is trying to fight and she does that when she “incorporates the narrative of the rise of the middle class together with its implied critique of aristocracy.” (BOSSCHE, 2005)

Jane Eyre is learning about class distinction at same time that she is trying to fight exclusion, so, as soon as she is faced with exclusion she seeks to change her situation (BOSSCHE, 2005). We can see that Jane is still struggling within herself, she is excluded from this social class, so she tries to separate herself from it, however she is not ready to accept significant changes: “I should not like to belong to

¹¹ BRONTE, 1847. Pg 7 chapter 1

¹² BRONTE, 1847. Pg 7 chapter 1

¹³ BRONTE, 1847. Pg 47 chapter 4

poor people...”, “I was not heroic enough to purchase liberty at the price of caste.”¹⁴ She is a child learning about class distinction.

After some time, when she has to face privations at Lowood School she mentions that she would not change it for Gateshead, she had found inclusion and love in the school. However when this inclusion and love cease she decides to change her situation. Miss Temple, who worked as a mother figure for her at school, leaves. Everything that signified security and inclusion has left the school, she then, decides to leave as well.

In Thornfield she is first received by Mrs Fairfax, who Jane thinks is the owner, so is a bit surprised by the warm reception. There she returned to the place where servants are “only servants; one must keep them at due distance for fear of losing one’s authority.”¹⁵ She enter in the world of aristocracy again, where we have a rigid class distinction: first the owner of the house, then the housekeeper and governess, then the rest. In this world however, where class seemed so rigid, she is going to experience a break in the system.

In this break lies Charlotte Brontë’s greatest critique in my opinion. She risked to portray something scandalous for the society: a love between two distinct classes. There is a very intriguing conversation between Mr Rochester and Jane where he insistently says he doesn’t wish to treat her as an inferior, breaking some boundaries, to what she agrees: “I don’t think, sir, you have the right to command me.”¹⁶ It is interesting to analyse Jane’s confusion facing this situation, she says: “I felt at times as if he were my relation rather than my master.”¹⁷ There is a constant struggle between following the norms of class and breaking the boundaries. Jane is determined to break these norms, however, and defy man’s opinion.

After all the tragic circumstances of Jane’s depart from Thornfield, she finds herself destitute of all and enters a world where there are more working people, whose accent are sometimes distinguished from standard English, meaning lower education. Also, she tries to enter the world of people who “do not keep a servant”¹⁸.

¹⁴ BRONTE, 1847. Pg 40 chapter 3

¹⁵ BRONTE, 1847. Pg 182 chapter 6

¹⁶ BRONTE, 1847. Pg 253 chapter 14

¹⁷ BRONTE, 1847. Pg 277 chapter 15

¹⁸ BRONTE, 1847. Pg 625 chapter 28

She is not allowed to, and soon afterwards encounters a middle class family, which holds one servant, who funnily enough is called Hannah, as in *Emma*.

At this house the line that separates servants and other people is less precise as Hannah is also a friend of the family and sits with them in the parlour. The two women living in the house, Mary and Diana help prepare some meals when they wish or when Hannah is busy in other undertakings. Hannah is given a voice here, differently from Austen, and we have long dialogues between her and Jane. Her voice, however, is represented differently from the others: "I knawn't how they can understand t' one t'other: and if either o' ye went there, ye could tell what they said, I guess?"¹⁹. Furthermore, her lower education is stressed: "prejudices, it is well known, are most difficult to eradicate from the heart whose soil has never been loosened or fertilised by education."²⁰ Here Jane is referring to Hannah's prejudice towards her and saying that that was due to her lack of education. So, even though she is given a voice, her voice is still not the same as Jane's.

We can start seeing some servant representation here, and here these servants find some autonomy, we can hear their voices. But still, servants are servants and though this line is weaker, there is a distinction. When the two women who live in the house, Diana and Mary, found Jane in the kitchen helping Hannah, they are shocked. For them, visitors could not be in the kitchen, Diana and Mary, however, "sit in the kitchen sometimes, because" they, "like to be free, even to licence."²¹ So, the norm was: "stay out of the kitchen", kitchen was a place for servants, and these women were giving themselves the license to be there sometimes, for pleasure.

These same women, Diana and Mary, were soon going to work as governess in the south of England and they are aware of class difference, the narrator mentions that life would be very different for them when they left the house. In their work they would be regarded only as "humble dependants", there they would not have any recognition for who they truly were, they only would be evaluated by their accomplishments AS they did with their servant. There is clearly a class distinction

¹⁹ BRONTE, 1847. Pg 637 chapter 28

²⁰ BRONTE, 1847. Pg 650-651 chapter 29

²¹ BRONTE, 1847. Pg 658 chapter 29

here, and there is no attempt in trying to question that, things are as they are and people have to face it.

Even Jane herself, after facing hunger, experiencing to sleep in the open air and being able to better relate with those less privileged, does not seem to try to question this class distinction. She seems, however, to contradict herself, since when mistaken for a begger and uneducated woman she feels offended. There seems to have a conflict in Jane, she is eager to defend lower classes, but not so eager to question the system. She seems to make a distinction of what is more or less prestigious. There is no pride in being a servant, for instance, she says: "I will be a dressmaker; I will be a plain-workwoman; I will be a servant, a nurse-girl, if I can be no better."²² It is as if she is saying: "well, if there is not anything else for me to do, I will do that". She does not have to, however, as she is offered a job as the teacher of a village school.

Here we are faced with another contradiction, Mr Rivers, the one who offers the work is very careful in his description of the offer. He is sure Jane is going to decline, but she does not, then he is surprised because according to him it is a very degrading work: "It is a village school: your scholars will be only poor girls... what will you do with your accomplishments?"²³ One might expect that, after Jane accepted the offer, she would reply with a defense of the poor, as she already tried to defend them earlier. She replies: "save them till they are wanted." There is no consideration for the tastes of these poor girls. There is just a prejudicial idea that Jane's accomplishments would be too higher for them. Initially when she assumes the school, she does not find joy in what she is doing, she only is doing because she needs to do. This is a bit of a contradiction again, since she had previously said: "the utmost I hope is, to save enough money out of my earnings to set up a school someday in a little house rented by myself."²⁴

Happily, things improve as she gets to know the students and her opinion goes from being hard to understand what they are saying, due to their "broad" accent, and some being "unmannered, rough, intractable, as well as ignorant"²⁵ to having

²² BRONTE, 1847. Pg 667 chapter 29

²³ BRONTE, 1847. Pg 678 chapter 30

²⁴ BRONTE, 1847. Pg 376 chapter 19

²⁵ BRONTE, 1847. Pg 686 chapter 31

“sharp-witted girls”.²⁶ In that we can see a rupture into her initial prejudice and we can picture here Charlotte Brontë doing what she wanted to do and what she described she did in the preface: alerting society of their prejudices.

We seem to be going in the right direction again, but Jane seems to contradict herself again, she is being well regarded for her work in the school, and all seem to be fond of her. She is happy for the recognition, but seem to disregard it for “though it be but the regard of working people.”²⁷ She gives recognition to this class to soon make a clear distinction, and takes herself out of it, she does not see herself as part of it.

Furthermore, in this new job she is taking, there is a house where she can live, one could expect she would take care of the house herself, however that would be too much work so she holds an orphan girl as a handmaid. When it could be the part where we enter in the world of people who “do not hold a servant”, we are disappointed. *Jane Eyre* represents the middle class, but she does not dare to represent something below to that.

Therefore even though it goes further in class representation, giving voice to servants and autonomy to the middle class, it still makes a clear class distinction and does not question it. Bossche (2005) comments it ends in a regression to aristocracy since Jane, in the end of the novel, is placed in the same level of society as Mr Rochester. Jane passes through these levels of society only because she needs to, there is no pride in being a teacher for the village school, her mind is set in returning to Mr Rochester.

4.3 Clara Morison

Finally we reach Clara, where we can see she takes a revolutionary step towards working-class representation. *Clara Morison* arrives and tries to break the class system when it criticises the British manners and tries to offer a new one. We have to keep in mind that this book is set in a colony, very far from its metropole and in this it is trying to elevate this colony, breaking with the British system of class in some sense, Eade (1971, page 15), in fact, says Spence put the main characters as

²⁶ BRONTE, 1847. Pg 700 chapter 32

²⁷ BRONTE, 1847. Pg 701 chapter 22

examples of ideal “colonials”, assigning their attitudes and thinking as correct and desired to be followed. Every character that has a feeling of belonging to the colony is elevated and every character who feels superior to the colony is criticized.

There was some expectations in the book from people who have not been to Australia yet, these expectations concern Australia society. Most of these views are criticized as they are rooted in the idea of only “using” the colony to be rich and then returning to “civilization”. Mr Morison, Clara’s uncle, for instance thought it would be easy for Clara to find job in the colony, in his mind it was a place with not so demanding people, not civilized. He mentions that “in Australia they cannot want accomplished governess”²⁸.

That expectation is quickly broken when Clara reaches the colony, Mr Campbell, Mr Morison’s connection in Adelaide for Clara, says: “everybody that can do nothing at home is sent out as quite good enough for the colonies”²⁹. He clearly thinks it was nonsense to have sent her alone to the colonies, showing that people’s expectations were not true. The novel actually emphasizes that there is a civilization growing there and it criticizes those who do not agree with that.

Those, thus, who are merely using the land to get rich are criticized and those who have embraced the land as their home are praised. Mr Morison in his letter to Mr Campbell, says: “We hear great things of your mines in South Australia, and all your friends in Edinburgh expect you to come home as rich as a nabob³⁰ someday soon.”³¹ Mr Dent, similarly, comes to the colony to earn money, he later returns to England rich and marries a woman named Julia Marston, who was formerly engaged to Mr Reginald, and that is not very well understood by Clara. This Mr Reginald is exactly the opposite of Mr Dent, because he breaks with the old system and adapts to the ideal colonial.

Mr Reginald was an English man who also decided to make life in Australia, he had the idea he would get there, get rich and return to England to get married to Julia, but Australia changed him. Julia herself and his mom also wished him to return since according to his mom: “it seems a burying alive of Julia to take her to your

²⁸ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 2 chapter 1

²⁹ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 23 chapter 3

³⁰ Nabob: a person who returned from India to Europe with a fortune.

³¹ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 26 chapter 3

lonely sheep station, so far from town.”³² We have access to Reginald’s letters and it shows great contrasts, both his mom and Julia had very limited ideas of the colony. Julia, specially, was extremely vain in her letter, all she could think of were parties and dressings, “I cannot bear to fancy you untidy”³³, she says. She dreads the idea of living “many miles from civilization, among savages and snakes.”³⁴ To this letter Mr Reginald writes a very sound and kind letter, though being very honest: he does not agree with her, he loves his cottage, he loves the climate, he despises her idea of happiness being connected to style and even says they are in different worlds. This book is describing Jane Austen’s world and attacking it.

In the end of the novel we have two very different lives, there is Julia and Mr Dent, married and living in all splendour in England and there is Mr Reginald and Clara, also married but living simpler. Clara cannot understand how Julia had chosen Dent over Reginald and Mr Reginald answers that Dent was richer than he was, so could offer a more stylish life to Julia. But that is not seen as a good thing, what is praised is the simple life and happy one:

...dwell on the fact, that my only vehicle is a spring-cart; that I have only one sitting-room, and that it has no carpet; that we are going to live without any pretensions to style; that you will have to do a great deal of work, and will never go out into company. But when you write to your sister, tell her that we mean to be very happy;³⁵

Mr Reginald then, completely changes his vision of the world and does not wish to return to that old system where all is pretence and hypocrisy.

When talking about this idea of using the land or belonging to it we have the use of two words by the author: Colonist and Emigrant. We are presented with these terms in heading of the eleventh chapter of the first volume, which is a crucial chapter displaying this rupture with the old system. Colonist would be the aggressive behaviour towards the land, only using it, followed by a feeling of superiority. Emigrant would be exactly the opposite: those people who moved to the colony and made it their homes. These people work to improve the colony, they are not English, nor Scotch, they are “colonials”.

³² SPENCE, 1854. Pg 35 and 36 chapter 4

³³ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 37 chapter 4

³⁴ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 37 chapter 4

³⁵ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 267 chapter 24 vol 2

In this chapter we have several discussions between Miss Withering and Minnie which form a very good base for what was being preached in the novel. Beginning by the title: *Minnie stands up for her country*. The country here is not England, nor Scotland it is Australia. Miss Withering is the Colonist and Minnie the Emigrant, the old system and the new system.

We have on one side Miss Withering whose first appearance is one where she only complains about the colony to which Mrs Bantam replies: "We are but young people here, and Rome was not built in a day."³⁶ Mr and Mrs Bantam for instance already saw themselves as part of the colony and Mrs Bantam mentioned she did not wish to return to England. Miss Withering is portrayed as if out of place, she requires a lot of service, requiring help to be served from a jug, for instance, and that is seen as strange, since not even the owners of the house required so much. Miss Withering represents the old system, where servants were not equals to their masters, they could not read, for instance, otherwise they would rebel. In fact, her name "Withering" refers to something that "withers", as if Spence was saying that Miss Withering and the old system which she represented was now fading away, opening space to the new one.

On the other side there is Minnie, a friend of Mr and Mrs Bantam, who dislikes Miss Withering from the first moment, as she thinks Miss Withering will "not take kindly to Minnie's own dear colony."³⁷ Minnie is the antithesis of Miss Withering, one finds all the faults on the colony, the other is passionate about it. She breaks the system when she says she prefer servants who are better in conversation than are working machines. She was worried if she would give much work to Clara and volunteered to help her in her services.

While Minnie stately affirms she wishes to adapt herself to the people she is addressing, in order to give them pleasure, Miss Withering says: "I was born to rule and cannot stoop my inferiors."³⁸ Minnie then, mentions Margaret Elliot, she says that Margaret is as fine as any English Lady and "stoops" low. When told by Miss Withering Minnie should not talk about certain subject, because it was not ladylike,

³⁶ SPENCE, 1854. pg 76 chapter 9

³⁷ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 85 chapter 10

³⁸ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 119 chapter 11

she mentions she would rather not be a lady then, so she could be free to talk about whatever she wished.

We can see a contrast on their principles, Miss Withering's ideas of a fine person are that one is elevated above other, does not do any household chores, does not talk about certain subjects, is unreachable by the others. Minnie states absolutely the opposite, one has to adapt, one has to be reachable and she sets the Elliots as a perfect example to that. Miss Withering only disagrees as "these girls actually wash and scour".³⁹

In this novel we have also the question of the main character, Clara, and most of the people she gets acquainted with being Scottish and not English, and most of the people being attacked by criticism being English. Scotland, as Australia, was also a subject of the crown, and in the novel there is a clear distinction between English and Scottish. Mr Morison mentions he would like to see Clara set "in some nice Scotch family in Adelaide"⁴⁰. He does not wish her to stay in a nice family, it is specifically in a nice Scotch family. One page later, the narrator mentions: "for English and Scotch people never reckon on Australia having a winter at all."⁴¹ It is not British people, it is English and Scotch, distinct things. Being Scotch carried a different background, Mr Campbell says: "Scotland is the place to be inducted into the humanities"⁴² This could have come from the Scottish tradition of offering education to all population, male and female, differently from England (HOUSTON, 1985 page 4)

Beyond this clear distinction there is also the desire of not being neither English nor Scotch. People who are set as examples in the book desire to be "colonial", belonging to the colony that is. Anne Elliot, for instance, though being Scotch by nature affirms she is "colonial" and identify herself to that.

Thus, we have these people who were former upper class arriving in Australia, decreasing in social class and not wanting to return. This new middle class is cultured and talk about literature, politics, education and this middle class wants to pass over this knowledge to the rest of the colony. Margaret, in the end of the book,

³⁹ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 119 chapter 11

⁴⁰ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 6 chapter 1

⁴¹ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 7 chapter 1

⁴²SPENCE, 1854. Pg 77 chapter 7

intends to open a school and this is an indicator that all should learn about what they had learned, no matter the social class.

Differently from *Emma* where we can see a lot of superiority towards inferior classes here they see the other as their neighbour, and try to follow that “love thy neighbour as yourself”, that can be seen when they try to help a very poor woman called Miss Ker. She was deceived by a man and was left destitute and with a little baby to take care of. The Elliot sisters and Clara go to the place she is living, which is very miserable and try to change her situation, moving her to Mrs Bantam’s house. Very differently from what we could see in Jane Austen’s novel, where we find Emma and Harriet trying to help that poor family, but seem only to do it for it would be the right and good thing to do, not because they truly cared for those people.

Also, differently from *Jane Eyre* where Jane’s desire to be a teacher and help the community did not seem so genuine as she quickly abandons it to return to Mr Rochester, Margaret has a profound wish to open a school and teach those less fortunate. She does not wish to marry, her ambition is the improvement of the colony and she in the end, fulfills that by opening a school.

Spence does not, however, try to set the colony as a perfect environment, on the opposite, the colony has faults and she accuses it by placing the main characters as models and as preachers of the model. Clara’s first job offer is a good example of this, she attempted a position for governess in Mr and Mrs Denfield’s house and had a terrible experience. This lady in fact is not well seen by the other characters. A woman who Clara encounters on her way to Mrs Denfield’s house affirm this mistress is a very difficult person to deal with. Also, Mrs Bantam, later mentions she does not wish to get acquainted with her. When Clara meets Mrs Denfield she is only diminished by her, and is received with a very snob behaviour. Mrs Denfield portrayed the same characteristics that were later portrayed by Miss Withering and were thoroughly despised by the main characters. The narrator in fact says: “the congeniality of their natures drew them together”⁴³ because after leaving Mr and Mrs Bantam’s house, Miss Withering is accepted as Mrs Denfield’s governess. The

⁴³ SPENCE, 1854. Chapter 11 first pg

narrator is very ironic in portraying them two together, saying that Mrs Denfield was delighted by Miss Withering, as she, “of course, could do everything under the sun.”⁴⁴

We can see here that we have very different values being set as the right ones. According to Mackellar (2016, page 7) Spence represented the middle class in a broader range: servants, innkeepers, shopkeepers, governess, gold diggers. They are not only represented as figurants, but she placed them as main characters. In fact, there is a clear inclusive approach, towards lower classes, in the speech of the main characters.

Clara, at one moment, writes a sermon inspired by the book of Luke, which says in the fourteenth chapter: “‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’⁴⁵ In this verse, Jesus is telling a parable about a banquet of a king, in this banquet all the people that were invited refused to come because they were too busy. The king, then, leaves it open for everybody that would like to come. The king says: “Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.”⁴⁶

That brings some light to what was being preached in the book, and could be a metaphor for the aristocracy and lower class in Britain/Australia. The aristocracy being invited first but refusing to act as it should act, thinking about themselves instead of the improvement of the colony, then, the invitation is now open for the lower classes. Clara having experienced almost all levels of class could relate to the lower classes and defend them.

Clara Morison is first in the position of a lady, then she falls into the level of governess and lastly to the level of servitude. Not only she takes part in this but is set as an example by having courage to place herself so low. Everybody advised her not take the offer and become a servant as she would stoop low in the social class and would maybe not get married. She only says these things do not matter for her: “I will keep out of debt and out of danger; and there is no necessity for being married.”⁴⁷ Again, it does not mean the colony was a perfect environment where everybody

⁴⁴ SPENCE, 1854. Chapter eleven pg 118

⁴⁵ Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Luke 14. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

⁴⁶ Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Luke 14. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

⁴⁷ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 86 chapter 7

agreed to Clara, far from it. Mrs Handy, the boarding-house owner, advised Clara very firmly she would lose all her connections if she entered this world, as people would probably think her inferior. Clara, nevertheless, is here again to preach the opposite and to try to maybe convince the world they are wrong.

She is very determined and tries her best to fit into this new world which is in front of her. She brings representation to this class and shows their importance when she describes how hard work it is and how much she struggles to succeed. She starts to have a better understanding of how difficult it is to belong to this world and concludes:

I see now the line of demarcation which separates the employers from the employed ; and if I ever, by any chance, should again have a servant under me, I shall surely understand her feelings, and be considerate and kind. How I reproach myself now for the unnecessary trouble I used to give our good faithful Peggy and Helen, and all through want of thought.⁴⁸

Here we have a drastic change if comparing to *Emma* and *Jane Eyre*. It is as if the maid Hanna from *Emma* was given a voice. Also, as if the Hannah from *Jane Eyre* was made equal to Jane Eyre, as now Clara herself is the servant. In terms of autonomy Clara has all, when told not to read nor write on bed by Mrs Bantam, her mistress, she says, respectfully, but firmly, she would read and write in the kitchen then. There is an understanding that there is equality between servants and masters, as “they are all working for wages”.⁴⁹ This is uttered by that woman in a cottage whom Clara encounters in her way to Mrs Denfield’s house. She actually turns to be the mother of Mrs Denfield’s maid and she thinks servants are usually treated as if they were not made of flesh and blood.

By giving representation to this lower class we already have a huge difference from the other two novels. However, beyond giving voice to a servant, *Clara Morison* reaches a class where there is no servants, people do their own work, and they are fine with it. We finally reach the house where they “do not hold a servant” and we enter it. In the colony the common was to know how to manage inside a house, Mrs Bantam mentions that the girls next door, the Elliots, who everybody knew were

⁴⁸ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 93 chapter 8

⁴⁹ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 65 chapter 5

ladies, did not keep a servant and had to manage all house work, but they were not considered inferior for that.

The Elliots, Margaret specially, are the ideal colonials, they defend and try to improve the colony. The Elliots respect Clara for her determination and bravery in accepting servitude and they welcome her in their house when she has no place to go. They form a perfect team as their principles seem to unite. Mr Reginald mentions that their situation would have been very different if they were in England, “in these days of absurd pretence”⁵⁰ they might break their familiar home, two might have had to work in order to sustain a bigger house with servants. In the colony there is no need for that according to him, again here we can see the attempt to break with the old system.

We perceive, also, that much of the old system was broken by necessity, in the end of the first volume we can see that the colony is going through a crisis, people are having to move to other colonies to survive and things have to be rearranged. Mr and Mrs Bantam are some of those who move, they go to live in a smaller house and have to leave Clara behind. Adding to this crisis, gold is found near Adelaide and a new wave of men migrate to the area in order to get rich, there class does not matter. Gilbert mentions that “what a man is or know doesn’t matter at the diggings”⁵¹ only how much of gold he can dig.

But there is also great criticism from the Elliots towards people who only care about getting rich vainly, Gilbert mentions that this could only do more evil than good. The Elliots and Clara also have strong criticism towards a Mrs Tubbins, whose husband got rich in the diggings. Now that their situation had changed, Mrs Tubbins was spoiling her children and Margaret strongly criticized this behaviour. For her, work was what dignified people, to only earn money easily would only to harm, as it would not teach about perseverance and character. This is an absurd contrast compared to Emma who saw money earned by effort as inferior. She despised the honest farmer Mr Martin and thought of her family, who earned money through the work of others, as superior.

⁵⁰ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 65 chapter 5 vol 2

⁵¹ SPENCE, 1854. Pg 90 chapter 8 vol 2

It can be perceived, thus, in this female tradition which I am analysing here a degree of evolution in class representation, starting by upper class representation in *Emma*, middle class in *Jane Eyre* and lower class in *Clara Morison*. We can notice an enlargement in class representation, Jane Austen depicting a very narrow circle and this being broadened on *Jane Eyre* and even more in *Clara Morison*. There is also a clear shift of focus. In *Emma* the focus is the upper class, there is criticism towards this class, but this is the only class which has complete autonomy. In *Jane Eyre* the focus is the middle class and its autonomy. In *Clara Morison* the focus also is the middle class, but class representation goes even further here, since Clara had to go below middle class for a moment.

Clara Morison starts in a “handsome house... in a fashionable street in Edinburgh.”⁵² Nothing very different from *Emma* and *Jane Eyre*. Emma, however, remains in this great house, visiting some other houses, not so great ones, but mostly not so bad, and moves to another great house in the end. Jane Eyre does not remain in the great house, she soon moves to a boarding school for orphans, the very opposite of a great house, she then returns to another great house, as a governess. Then she has no house, almost enters a house with no servants, reaches a middle class house and finally returns definitely to a great house, as the lady. Clara starts in a great house but when she leaves it she never wants to return to it and she never does. She goes from a great house to a ship and then a boarding house. She almost enters a great house as a governess but fails, she then enters in a nice house as a servant, and some time afterwards moves to a house with no servants, there she visits very bad houses. Finally she moves to her own house, a nice house.

The fact that the novel is located in the colony would have helped the perpetuation of this big evolution from Jane Austen’s novels and *Jane Eyre* to *Clara Morison*. Being in the colony does not mean you have a blank canvas, we could see the type of society it was forming still carried some of the characteristics from the former society. However, here, it can be noticed that this new colony was essential for the maturity of new ideas concerning the class system. Mrs Macnab, former Miss Waterstone, Clara’s companion in the ship reflects how different things were at the colony: “gentlemen marry people who are not ladies, and ladies frequently marry

⁵² SPENCE, 1854. Pg 1 chapter 1

persons who are not gentlemen”⁵³ Displaying a break in the system of class. According to Hartz (1964) the type of colonization impacts on the development of society. Australia having a late colonization (late eighteenth century) promoted the spread of more social ideologies, making the social fluidity easier and facilitating the representation of the working class. The novel extols the work and the values of equality and excludes its opposites. The fact most of the main characters are Scotch, also could have contributed to this, since they carried a different background from English.

⁵³ SPENCE, 1854, pg 270 chapter 24

5 ON WOMEN'S ROLE

Concerning women's role we have to consider the different parts of society which are being analysed here, it is the same as in the chapter of class. Austen was representing only her limited view on this topic, the role of women in her social class. Brontë broadened that, englobing more levels of society, but still admitted what was the norm. Spence also englobes more social levels, however, she defies the social acceptable concerning Women's roles.

5.1 Pride & Prejudice

The most famous sentence of Jane Austen in *Pride & Prejudice*, "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife"⁵⁴, sets the tone of the novel: marriage. This sentence carries the essence of the part of society Austen belonged to, that is the necessity of woman to marry as a matter of surviving. Marriage is depicted as the only possible ending for a woman here. This sentence, however, also carries the ironic approach Austen gives to this subject, portraying characters who are excessively worried about this and setting the main character, Elizabeth Bennet, as acting differently from the rest.

In *Pride & Prejudice* Austen deliberately creates Mrs Bennet, an excessively worried and caricatured mother. She is only thinking about marrying one of her daughters and does not even consider the character of these prospective husbands. When news of the arrival of a rich young man is spread in Hertfordshire, Mrs Bennet instantly starts to make plans to how this young man could possibly marry one of her daughters. She is depicted as almost a foolish woman, as Mr Bennet constantly makes fun of her:

"You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion for my poor nerves."

"You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these last twenty years at least."

"Ah, you do not know what I suffer."

"But I hope you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a year come into the neighbourhood."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ AUSTEN, 1813, pg 1, chapter 1

⁵⁵ AUSTEN, 1813, pg 2, chapter 2

The novel also sets Elizabeth Bennet, the second eldest daughter of the family, as the one the narrator follows more closely, and she totally disagrees with her mother's behaviour. Expressions as "she blushed" or "felt embarrassed" are usually followed by any of her mother's attempts at marrying her daughters indiscreetly. A very good example of this is when Mrs Bennet sends Jane, the eldest daughter, in the rain to Mr Bingley's house, so she would have to stay longer there, and maybe would make Bingley in love with her. The plan is successful and Jane, in fact, catches a strong cold and has to stay longer at Netherfield. This is viewed with mockery by Mr Bennet and with stress by Lizzie Bennet:

"Well, my dear," said Mr. Bennet, when Elizabeth had read the note aloud, "if your daughter should have a dangerous fit of illness—if she should die, it would be a comfort to know that it was all in pursuit of Mr. Bingley, and under your orders."

"Oh! I am not afraid of her dying."

Elizabeth, feeling really anxious, was determined to go to her..."

Mrs Bennet's desperate attempt to marry her daughter shows the importance of marriage to women of that class. In the novel, that is strongly stated: if these Bennet girls do not marry, they will have no means of providing for themselves, their father's estate will go to the nearest male relation, Mr Collins. Marriage was the way they had to raise in society. Mullan (2017) says Austen represents marriage as a very economic contract, attaching woman's value to those which could be marketable and directly criticizing that. One way she displayed this critique was by conveying it through Lizzie Bennet's views.

Elizabeth Bennet did not agree with this view on marriage and strongly opposed it throughout the book. In one conversation with her close friend Charlotte, where her friend is giving some advice concerning Jane's behaviour towards Mr Bingley, Lizzie strongly shows her beliefs on marriage are different from those of her friend. Charlotte said Jane should demonstrate more she was interested in Mr Bingley otherwise she might lose him. Lizzie responded she thinks that would be a good idea if she was already sure Jane wanted to marry him, she barely knew him, though. Charlotte then said this was not the most important, she could get to know him when they were married. She needed to "secure" him now for her safety,

because “happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance.”⁵⁶ This was the view society had, on marriage, in the novel. Lizzie then said: “You make me laugh, Charlotte; but it is not sound. You know it is not sound, and that you would never act in this way yourself.” Which is utterly comical since we know Charlotte is going to act exactly in this way. Elizabeth Bennet has a very strong conviction concerning marriage and cannot understand when somebody does not agree with her.

The narrator seems to play with the ideas of what ideal woman would be, all the time, always contrasting this ideal to Elizabeth Bennet, who breaks it. So, when most women would be desperate to get Mr Bingley’s or Mr Darcy’s attention, she does not. She is set as more intelligent than the other daughters by Mr Bennet and the narrator encourages this by contrasting the behaviour of the two younger sisters Kitty and Lydia: “Their minds were more vacant than their sisters”⁵⁷. These two girls are portrayed in the novel as being very foolish, and only thinking about officers, and balls.

This behaviour, though censured by Lizzie, is actually encouraged by their mother, who says they are only young and will get wiser with time. According to Nicolson (1985), Austen wrote her novels in a moralist didactic, so we could say Lizzie here was the moral example as she is constantly warning her dad to watch out for her younger sister’s behaviour. These warnings were unsuccessful as Lydia elopes with Mr Wickham and at the end of the novel, the narrator tells us the two were living in poor conditions and had to be aided. This instantly alludes to that earlier conversation of Lizzie with Charlotte where Lizzie firmly insists on the importance of really knowing the character of the person one would marry, and here the narrator imparts what are the consequences of not marrying wisely.

This society which revolved around marriage carried also the necessity of creating accomplished women. In a world where having money to make a good match was an essential, people who were not so rich could at least hold on to having many accomplishments, Mary Bennet for instance: “in consequence of being the only plain one in the family, worked hard for knowledge and accomplishments.”⁵⁸ It was

⁵⁶ AUSTEN, 1813, pg 15 chapter 6

⁵⁷ AUSTEN, 1813, Pg 18 chapter 7

⁵⁸ AUSTEN, 1813, Pg 16 chapter 6

expected from a woman to be able to perform several activities as drawing, singing, playing, sewing.

Sutherland (2014) brings a very interesting perspective on how Austen copes with this topic of accomplishments. She mentions that reading is essential for Austen's heroines. It is this that distinguishes "the show of mere accomplishments and the deeper understanding that signals self-knowledge." In reality, when Lady Catherine finds out Lizzie and her sister did not learn many things, she was shocked. Lizzie expressly disagrees saying they were given encouragement and all sources of reading for their improvement, debating, then, her opinion on the necessity of having to display the accomplishments.

Lizzie was also criticized by Bingley's sisters when she opposed the idea of "accomplished women". Bingley comments how amazed he is by the number of accomplishments a woman has, to that his sisters soon oppose saying that only a few women are truly accomplished. Mr Darcy adds that many women who are said to be accomplished are not completely and to this Lizzie answers: "I never saw such a woman. I never saw such capacity, and taste, and application, and elegance, as you describe united." She is stating here the impossibility of a perfect woman in an age where women had to be perfect.

By following Elizabeth Bennet's views we can see a different approach on woman's possibilities. She is determined not to follow the social expectations concerning accomplishments and standards. She sets herself as independent to walk alone, get her attire dirty by that, and does not care about people's criticism. She also is not interested in flattering other people if that does not agree with her views, she constantly argues (in a respectable way) with others as she says: "I would not wish to be hasty in censuring anyone; but I always speak what I think."⁵⁹ In this independent conduct, seeking autonomy she understands she does not necessarily need to accept any marriage proposal.

She is determined to choose who she will marry and will only do it for love, not for necessity. Austen then, allowed women to choose who they wanted to marry and criticizes her society towards the marketability of marriage. As a matter of fact, Mullan (2017) says: "The rule in Austen's novels seems clear: if a man proposes as if he

⁵⁹ AUSTEN, 1813, Pg 9 chapter 4

cannot imagine that the answer will be no – the answer will be no.” Austen seems to play with this, and makes the main character to refuse two proposals. Lizzie Bennet when refuses Mr Darcy’s offer is strongly declaring money is not essentially the main reason for marriage. Again, when she refuses Mr Collins she is stating that not even securing a comfortable and stable home is the main reason for marriage.

This perspective on marriage it was not the most usual view in the novel. Those as Charlotte Lucas’, more rational ones are the majority: she is older, is afraid of bringing burden to her parents, so decides to marry Mr. Collins, only for security:

I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins’s character, connection, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage state.”⁶⁰

Lizzie Bennet feels very shocked by this attitude as for her this was like selling herself. She has her own opinion and can choose to reject marriage proposals, so for her, it was not necessary for Charlotte to have accepted it. In fact, she says: “she had not supposed it to be possible that, when called into action, she would have sacrificed every better feeling to worldly advantage.”⁶¹ Lizzie is joined by her father into this thinking as he mentions he did not think Charlotte could be so foolish to accept such an offer. The narrator does not seem to see this attitude of Charlotte in good eyes and emphasizes it in the person of Elizabeth and Mr Bennet.

Before Charlotte accepted the offer, Elizabeth had declined the same offer. At the time she rejected Mr. Collins proposal, he earnestly insisted, as if rejecting would be such an unreasonable thing that she must had been playing with him. The way he proposed seemed more like selling a property, having to describe all the benefits of it, than an actual marriage proposal. It would be beneficial for Lizzie to accept it, after all, Mr Collins would inherit her father’s estate, she would have a home and would secure the house of her father. She, however, firmly insisted that she was determined to reject as he could never make her happy, and she, then, left the room. Mr Collins sincerely believed she was just “bashful modest” in declining, but he had “every reason to be satisfied”⁶². In his mind to decline such a good offer was not a possibility, he could not understand there could be another possibility. Her mother,

⁶⁰ AUSTEN, 1813, Pg 89 chapter 22

⁶¹ AUSTEN, 1813 Pg 89 chapter 22

⁶² AUSTEN, 1813 Pg 78 chapter 20

however, saw what was to succeed and was enraged. She tried to command Lizzie to accept as she would be very foolish not to do it. Her father in the other hand thought the opposite and was happy she did not accept: "Your mother will never see you again if you do not marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you do."⁶³ We can see her father was much closer to her views than her mother, he seemed to agree one should think wisely who to marry and do not do it in a hurry or for mere necessity.

Elizabeth similarly rejects Mr Darcy's proposal, she would have every possible reason to accept it since he would give her more than a comfortable life, she did not find it possible to marry someone she hated so much. Here, as Mr Collins, Mr Darcy was very surprised by the refusal. Mr Darcy acted in a very proud behaviour throughout the book, also separated Jane and Mr Bingley, and now expected to be accepted. Women's inner feelings did not seem to be taken into account, for him there was no doubt she would have accepted. What Elizabeth Bennet said seems to have caused an effect on him: "I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry."⁶⁴ He thought he was the perfect match, she explained there is more to marriage than a comfortable life, he understands that and passes the rest of the novel trying to remediate what he has caused, trying now to earn her love.

However, though we can notice this attempt at giving more autonomy to women by allowing them to refuse, nothing seems to be done if the choice of the women is not to marry. The role women could occupy is limited in Austen's world, if a woman did not marry she would become an old lady, usually poor and made fun of. We do not see women engaged in any other activity that is not somehow related to the house. There is no example of women who need to earn money to survive because she did not marry. Kitty and Mary Bennet, who do not marry at the end of the novel, seem to be perfectly fine at home, we are not shown what would happen to them if their parents died.

It is peculiar that women were portrayed in that manner by Austen since she herself did not marry and was able to sustain herself. Shaffer (1992, pg 52) explains

⁶³ AUSTEN, 1813, Pg 79 chapter 20

⁶⁴ AUSTEN, 1813, Pg 135 chapter 34

that this was a common mechanism used by writers, especially female ones, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Jane Austen knew the extremely conservative society of the time would not approve a different ending for women, so she used conservative plots to convey her message. For this reason, the idea of women refusing marriage proposals is so strong in the novels, this was the way Austen found to try to give some acceptable (in the society's eyes) autonomy to women.

However, we still have a very limited space women can join. Sutherland (2010?) says Austen "doesn't allow them to pursue individual courses of behaviour" and "the best a woman can hope for is marriage to a companionate man who knows how to handle her". One feels that if the woman does not find her match she will be miserable and incomplete. Somehow it was not possible to display women in other environments than the conventional one, giving only this possibility to women.

5.2 Jane Eyre

Here, as on the chapter concerning class, the shift from "we" to "I" is essential as it gives voice to a woman and tries to give her autonomy. The novel already starts by breaking every socially acceptable standard towards women. Bossche (2005) says Jane is portrayed initially as a rebel, who is not pretty and does not fit the society since she is too extreme in her emotions. So, though she has a voice, her voice is not recognized by others and she, as a child, is constantly questioning it. She cannot find her place in Gateshead Hall and leaves to try to fit somewhere else.

Jane reaches Lowood school thereafter, where she encounters strong repression towards women. There we are shown the religious hypocrisy in the person of Mr Brocklehurst, as he demands modesty for the students, but supports his own family in a very luxurious manner. He utters nonsense everytime he attempts to speak something "pious". For instance, when the girl Julia is humiliated in front of the whole class because her hair was curled, and curls were forbidden since that would be "conforming to the world". Miss Temple then, argues that her hair curled naturally, he then, changed his position and stated that "we are not to conform to nature".⁶⁵ He makes a reference, afterwards, of the verse from the bible which says women should

⁶⁵ BRONTE, 1847, Pg 117 chapter 7

“adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing.”⁶⁶ He says his mission was to hinder the girls’ lusts, however, this is nonsense.

Butt and Div (2003) explain that one has to look at the context in which this verse from 1 Timothy was written. The apostle Paul wrote this for Timothy, who was inserted in a very specifically context, and only when understanding this context one can try to apply it. The context was that in the church Timothy was leading, women were starting to display an extremely competitive conduct by showing off their beauty and richness. Paul is not stating here it is a sin to wear braided hair, jewels or costly clothing, he is stating here it was wrong in that specific situation in which women were sinning in their hearts. The narrator states the same, by signaling that what Mr Brocklehurst was doing was useless: “he would perhaps have felt that, whatever he might do with the outside of the cup and platter, the inside was further beyond his interference than he imagined.”⁶⁷ He was not hindering any lust, he was, in fact, repressing women and taking their autonomy, the narrator, Jane herself, extremely criticizes it.

At Lowood, she meets Miss Temple, who is essential for her development and autonomy’s growth. As previously mentioned in the last chapter, she acted as a kind of a mother for Jane as she gave her the confidence she needed to be sent into the world. There is one occurrence where Mr Brocklehurst humiliates Jane Eyre in front of the school by saying lies about her. Jane is miserable afterwards as now she thinks everybody in the school will believe she is wicked. Miss Temple comes and allows her to defend herself, after that she says: “(...)to me, Jane, you are clear now.’

⁶⁸

The figure of Miss Temple encouraged Jane and helped her to find her place, so when this figure is gone Jane starts feeling an urge to leave Lowood. Jane describes that the school now seemed as a kind of imprisonment and she needed to be freed and meet the world: “And now I felt that it was not enough; I tired of the routine of eight years in one afternoon. I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty

⁶⁶ Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. 1 Timothy 2. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

⁶⁷ BRONTE, 1847, pg 118 chapter 7

⁶⁸ BRONTE, 1847, Pg 133 chapter 8

I uttered a prayer;”⁶⁹ We have here Jane expressing women had desires, a desire to go and travel the world. There is no such thing in *Pride & Prejudice* the only thing women aspired to was marriage, because that was the way that class had to maintain their lifestyle and social position. Jane Eyre was not from the same class, she needed to find other ways to earn money.

Therefore we can see a much more independent woman here who chooses her way. Jane has no one to make the choices for her, she chooses to apply for a governess position for instance and accepts it without being interfered by no one. The distant walk from Longbourn to Netherfield Lizzie had taken and was criticized for it, now has turned into a journey from Lowood School to Thornfield Hall.

She, then, enters Thornfield and there Jane starts to understand more about the world and how it works and she does not agree with it entirely. Concerning women she demands equality: “Women feel as just men feel”.⁷⁰ She describes the feeling she has when she observes the horizon and how much she has to conquer yet. By that she defies the idea that women are tranquil and feel satisfied by remaining only in domestic affairs, women need to exercise all their faculties as men do. We can see in the figure of Mr Rochester the difference between genders, he had complete autonomy and would travel all around the world. He also “had such a direct way of giving orders”⁷¹ and here we see a fight for Jane’s autonomy as she is in a position of subordinate and under Rochester’s control.

The relationship between Mr Rochester and Jane Eyre is peculiar, Jane feels controlled by him at times and his equal at others. To be emotionally attached is to be controlled for Jane. This can be best noticed when Mr Rochester disguises himself as a gypsy woman and tells Jane her fortune. We can see Mr Rochester using a lot of manipulation on her, and Jane mentions she felt like in a trance.

Jane, after engaged to Mr Rochester, starts to be afraid, when she hears her name changed to Jane Rochester she turns pale. When he sings a song to her talking about love and a bride who he sings: “My love has sworn, with sealing kiss, With me to live—to die;”⁷² she only focuses on the part “to die” and is afraid. She

⁶⁹ BRONTE, 1847, Pg 160 chapter 10

⁷⁰ BRONTE, 1847, Pg 207 chapter 12

⁷¹ BRONTE, 1847, Pg 246 chapter 14

⁷² BRONTE, 1847, Pg 519 chapter 24

sees herself as unequal to Mr Rochester and, I believe, thinks she will lose part of herself and her autonomy by marrying him. As a way of defending herself, she does not allow him to kiss her after the song, and keeps him in a sort of “probation”, trying to maintain the control. She also tries to hold some independence by writing to her uncle in Madeira and hoping to secure herself as his heir and become Mr Rochester’s equal, as she would never bear to be entirely dependent on him: “his intention to adopt me and make me his legatee. ‘It would, indeed, be a relief,’ I thought, ‘if I had ever so small an independency; I never can bear being dressed like a doll by Mr. Rochester.’”⁷³

Bossche (2005) also mentions that she chooses not to be placed in a position of “enslavement”: when Rochester try to transform her into his bride and offers to change her, she eagerly refuses, she wants to retain her autonomy. She does not want to be transformed by anyone: “And then you won’t know me, sir; and I shall not be your Jane Eyre any longer”⁷⁴

Later, when she is hindered from marrying Mr Rochester, the two pass long hours of discussion where he tries to persuade her, using of manipulation again, to live as his mistress, she is firm in her decision to follow what she believes and decides to run away. Jane again is trying to hold on to her autonomy, since by breaking her principles she would allow someone to change her.

After running away she goes to Marsh End and Morton, where she understands that companionship not necessarily means marriage and she finds in the Rivers siblings a new home, she finds her place and finds autonomy. She spends this time in a most blissful manner, she has a home again, can provide for herself and is not alone in the world.

All is well until Mr St John asks Jane to go to India with him as his wife, and starts to influence and control her, he wants to train her to be a missionary. Again, here, Jane’s autonomy is attacked and she firmly rejects the proposition as she says:

But as his wife—at his side always, and always restrained, and always checked—forced to keep the fire of my nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry, though the imprisoned flame consumed vital after vital—this would be unendurable.⁷⁵

⁷³ BRONTE, 1847, Pg 512 chapter 24

⁷⁴ BRONTE, 1847, Pg 494 chapter 24

⁷⁵ BRONTE, 1847, Pg 781 chapter 35

The novel describes, then, that it was as if Mr St. John had cast a spell on her and she felt compelled to accept the proposal, again her autonomy was taken, but she is awakened by hearing Mr Rochester's voice calling her. She, thus, returns to him and marries him, as now there are no impediments, Bertha Mason is dead, so Jane would not need to break her principles. Furthermore, she believes to be his equal, since she now has money from her uncle's inheritance.

This novel, thus, highlights the importance of autonomy in a woman's development as a person. Also, brings some different possibilities where women could fit and find their place, beyond that of marriage. We finish the novel, however, in the same way *Pride & Prejudice* finished, by having all women in the novel married and perfectly happy. Though it offers different possibilities for women throughout the novel, it seems to return to the conventional ending of marriage being the only desirable possibility.

5.3 Clara Morison

Clara Morison takes a huge step as related to the other two, as it not only brings the topic of women's role into perspective, but it makes its characters discuss it constantly. In *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre*, I had to make some interpretation as things were not so clear, in *Clara Morison* all that was interpreted in the other novels is said out loud by the narrator and the characters, added of even more critical discussion. Franklin (1956) mentions that in Jane Austen's times politics seemed to be an unfit topic of conversation since it is very rarely found in the book. Differently from *Clara Morison*, where women are talking about the politics of the colonies and comparing the situation with Britain.

The novel already starts investigating what happens to women when they are destitute, Clara is an orphan, she is in the same position of Jane Eyre here and very differently from the position of Jane Austen's characters. So, already at the start, we can see the narrator debating the value of women and the expectations society had. We can see many of these expectations towards women's role being broken here. Firstly the idea that women had to be accomplished to have any value.

Right from the beginning this novel raises a question concerning the values of accomplishments. Clara has a sister, Susan, who has all accomplishments a young lady should have at the time:

(...) her voice was exquisitely musical, her manners graceful and refined, and every accomplishment which she had cultivated was thoroughly acquired; she was a skilful musician, she drew admirably, and she understood more than one foreign language.⁷⁶

Because of these qualities she is allowed to remain in Scotland with her uncle and aunt, whereas Clara, was pretty, but “without one accomplishment that had any marketable value.”⁷⁷ She read, she knew a lot of what she read by heart, she could understand French, could write short-hand⁷⁸ and a little latin, “but she hated crochet and despised worsted-work.”⁷⁹ Because of this she was despised and sent to Australia, as according to Mr Morison, she would be useless in Britain.

This does not align with the narrator and the characters, which the narrator seems to agree with. Susan, for instance, says: “You have finer abilities than I have; but because I make a noise on a piano, and scratch figures on Bristol board, I am extolled, and you are disparaged. They will judge better in Adelaide, I hope;”⁸⁰ We can see here, Susan not only saying she does not believe her accomplishments to be better than Clara’s, but also demonstrates an expectation of things being different in the colonies.

Later, already in Adelaide, we see that things have not changed so much, as Clara cannot find a position as a governess for lack of accomplishments. But, again, the narrator and the main characters do not agree with that. Minnie says: “the only young ladies in the neighbourhood are so busy with their accomplishments that they are but dull company.”⁸¹ and Margaret Elliot says Clara is useful for the family and they cannot spare her. The values these women considered important were different for them. But they were aware of the pressures of society concerning accomplishments and tried to do their best. Margaret offered to teach Clara music as she says: “you will find your ignorance of that essential accomplishment a great

⁷⁶ SPENCE, 1854, Pg 1 and 2 chapter 1

⁷⁷ SPENCE, 1854, Pg 2 chapter 1

⁷⁸ A method of rapid writing by means of abbreviations and symbols, used especially for taking dictation.

⁷⁹ SPENCE, 1854, Pg 2 chapter 1

⁸⁰ SPENCE, 1854, Pg 5 Chapter 1

⁸¹ SPENCE, 1854, Pg 108 chapter 5 vol 2

drawback to your success here, and you really ought to make an effort and master the first difficulties.”⁸²

Secondly, on these expectations being broken, we have the idea that women would easily fall in love with anyone who flattered her. Clara states women are not as simple as men think, and that they “can very rarely sing or dance himself into a woman’s heart.”⁸³ This seems to be a reference to Jane Austen, since Catherine Spence, *Clara Morison’s* author, was her frequent reader. In *Pride and Prejudice* dancing was of vital importance for the development of a relationship, here Clara says there is more to it, it is more complex than that.

Thirdly, the idea that women are better with children than men. Margaret criticises men for their looking at their children “as pleasures, not as duties.” She says father only hold their children while they can amuse them if they start crying they hand them over to their mother. Clara says her father did differently with her and her sister, but she saw that was not the common conduct.

Fourthly, the idea of women’s work being easy. When the Elliot brothers and Mr Martin go to the diggings they have to perform all sorts of domestic tasks and they find out it is actually very hard work. Mr Martin writes a letter to Grace describing his disappointment when his washing did not work at all. He tells that in another day he saw an old woman at the digging having a hard time doing her wash and he was very glad he could help her, now he understood and valued the work. He mentions that in the future when he and Grace are married he hopes she will not need to do this (though another woman would have to). There is not even a hint of such discussions in the other two novels, women’s work was women’s work and that is it.

Finally, the idea that the topic of conversations could only be about the female world. The women in this novel talk about all sorts of things, politics, education, domestic affairs, literature, the role of women, all of this with a great level of criticism. Minnie even says she thinks ladies can have a political opinion as much as men.

While this novel breaks these expectations it does two things concerning women’s role: In the first place, it changes the concept of marriage, and in the second place, it sets marriage as one of the possible options, not the only one. In

⁸² SPENCE, 1854, Pg 3 Chapter 1 vol 2

⁸³ SPENCE, 1854, Pg 36 chapter 3

fact, it preaches equality of value between the genders, Margaret thinks, “what men can understand should be comprehensible to women.”⁸⁴

Again we see that society was not aligned to Margaret’s ideal of equality. Clara mentions that girls were generally taught to place generosity before justice.”⁸⁵ Here we have a clear contrast between the society, which is criticized, and the ideals that are shared by the main characters. Clara says her father, who was portrayed to be an excellent father, did not raise his daughter in that way, taught them to be just firstly, breaking this stereotype. Mr Reginald agrees and actually supports and praises Clara for being like this, instead of expecting her to be like the other girls, who “gratify a selfish desire to make others happy”.⁸⁶

Though we had the Elliots, Clara, Minnie, and Reginald to follow this ideal, still there is a strong demonstration in the novel that this was not the truth for the entire society. Gilbert says women writing on the press would bring terrible criticism towards Margaret. Clara feels sorry for being a woman at times, as she probably would have found more job positions in the colony, she says: “I am so unfortunate as to be a woman, and my sphere is very limited.”⁸⁷ Clara also mentions that women are usually underpaid because people think they cannot do the job as well as men.

Concerning marriage, we continue with the idea displayed in *Pride & Prejudice* that women should marry whoever they wished for and should not just accept any proposal. In a conversation between Minnie and Miss Withering, Minnie says Mr Dent had proposed for Margaret and she did not accept because she did not like him. Miss Withering thinks it strange since it would have been such a good connection and says:

' Don't you think she was wrong and selfish in refusing such a connexion, Miss Hodges?

' What would it have been worth to the family if Margaret had not been happy? George and Gilbert were quite satisfied with her conduct, and I am sure she must have been right.⁸⁸

We can notice that Minnie believes in that, but also Margaret’s brother agrees she did the right thing, in contrast to what the society preached women should do.

⁸⁴ SPENCE, 1854, Pg 209 chapter 18 vol 1

⁸⁵ SPENCE, 1854, Pg 57 chapter 5 vol 1

⁸⁶ SPENCE, 1854, Pg 58 chapter 5 vol 1

⁸⁷ SPENCE, 1854, Pg 264 chapter 24

⁸⁸ SPENCE, 1854, Pg 121 chapter 11

Minnie also says love should be the main reason for marrying, again to be contradicted by Miss Whitering.

This novel also places marriage as an equal relationship. Mr Reginald and Clara have equality in their union. As previously said Mr Reginald himself said total dependence of a wife on her husband is not healthy. He also mentions that a husband relies on his wife's counsel and needs it. The type of marriage that is valued is the one which is based on love and where each other can develop each other's character. The narrator says: "the cold-mannered and reserved Charles Reginald thawed and grew genial under her influence."⁸⁹ Also, it is one possibility for women, not the only, marriage is not mandatory for women.

Margaret Elliot, for instance, chose not to marry even knowing she would be tagged as an "old lady" in the future. She does not marry because she felt different from other women, and every man who proposed to her wanted to change her, she would not accept this, she says: "I wonder if I'll ever be loved by myself."

This Margaret Elliot is an extremely important figure for the novel, she is the one who conducts the most interesting conversations concerning women's role and she is a sort of mentor for Clara, "I am going to try to be like you"⁹⁰, Clara says. She is a sort of representation of the author in the novel, as their lives seem to have had the same characteristics. It could be said, also, that this novel exists only to be able to represent people like Margaret, a story only about her would have been very shocking for the time, but uniting Clara, who follows a more traditional path, to Margaret, makes it possible for her existence.

Margaret believes not getting married is not a problem. She believes that women can have different vocations, hers was to work on the development of the colony, in fact, she constantly says: "something must be done for our people." So she, when choosing not to marry does not get miserable, follows her vocation and keeps studying and writing for the newspapers, as she says: "let's make all the papers wiser and better, and the people will improve with them."

By setting marriage as one option, Catherine Helen Spence on *Clara Morison* becomes extremely revolutionary, she enlarges women's roles in society by

⁸⁹ SPENCE, 1854, Pg 175 chapter 15 vol 2

⁹⁰ SPENCE, 1854, Pg 16 chapter 2 vol 2

displaying, according to Mackellar (2016), women in servitude, innkeepers, shopkeepers, entrepreneurs. This was revolutionary in the sense “it was a demonstration of the roles women could play beyond that of wife and mother.” Mackellar (2016) also point out that the narrator does not diminish any woman for having to work, on the contrary only praises the bravery on their part.

In the novel, we are presented with two possible endings: marriage or work. We had already seen this in *Jane Eyre*, however here there is not the same sense that ending not married and having to work is less desirable. According to Eade (1971), there is a sense of vocation permeating the whole book and its characters are free to follow it. We have Clara marrying and being fulfilled in that but we have Margaret not marrying and choosing to spend her life by working to improve the colony, this was her “calling”.

Therefore, concerning women’s role, we can see a clear evolution from *Pride and Prejudice* to *Jane Eyre* and *Clara Morison*. In *Pride and Prejudice*, women start to be able to choose who they want to marry and are allowed to decline a marriage proposal. The range of possibilities besides marriage, however, is not depicted, if women did not marry it was a problem and a reason for anxiety.

In *Jane Eyre*, the main character from the second works as a governess which already gives another possibility for the role of a woman. This novel brings interesting discussions about the different endings from a woman beside marriage, here they could be teachers or governess or housekeepers. At the end of the novel, however, all these expectations of new possibilities seem to be broken as all women that seemed to be reaching the end of the novel single seems to quickly marry, closing down again the possibility of remaining single and working.

Clara Morison seems to have resolved this as it gives other possibilities for women, it also brings the possibility of working as governess, teacher, and housekeeper. Furthermore, at the end of the novel it leaves these possibilities open, we see Clara marrying, but we see Margaret not wanting to marry and being fine with that. At the end of the novel, she intends to open a school and works in the development of the colony.

There is, also, a constant feeling of “ok, that is not how it should be, but then, let’s do something about it” in the novel. It portrays the failures in society and it is,

firstly, restless in showing how it should be, and secondly, trying to change it. This was only possible to happen, maybe, because being in the colony one had more space to do something. A woman trying to change a whole society in Britain, which carried traditions for thousands of years, would require a lot of work, but as this woman moves to a new colony, with people who sometimes were trying to find refuge from the old system, it is easier. Also, the migration of male population to the mines, enabled the women who were left behind to be more active in society. Spence herself was active in public life and made it possible for women to earn the right to vote before in Australia than in Britain.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

I can say that much of my perspective towards Austen and *Jane Eyre* changed after *Clara Morison*. I still like the first two, but I like the last one best, the level of critique in that novel is just absurd. There are not even 10 years apart from *Jane Eyre*'s publication, the authors even had similar lives: both were governess for a period and wrote. But still the differences in class representation and women's roles discussions are so different that it seems Spence was much ahead in time.

Jane Austen surprised me with its attempt of giving autonomy to women by allowing them to choose who to marry, for the time and for the narrow circle she was inserted in it was a big thing. It was a shame, however, she could not portray a character more like herself, a more independent woman, who wrote and earned money, society, maybe, would not approve so. She died young though, and we will not know if she would have married and would have stopped writing maybe.

Jane Eyre frustrated me with its lack of boldness maybe. I am not against her marriage to Mr Rochester, on the contrary, I may be too much of a romantic. But I finish the novel with a sense of marriage being the only way to bring satisfaction. I, also, finish it feeling that her attention toward lower class was only a brief moment in her life where she really needed, it was like a sort of a mean for helping her find herself. Charlotte Brontë seems to have lived this as well, she wrote, and then she stopped. The moment she married she seemed to have forgotten society.

I say again: I simply am fascinated by *Clara Morison*. Not only the novel but also the life of the author is just so inspiring. She never married, but she kept on writing, she was determined to change society. When writing was not enough she became involved in public life, she changed her land, and now she is known as the "Grand Old Woman" of Australia" and is print in every five-dollar bill.

Almost no one knows *Clara Morison* though, not even the Australians. Jane Austen was famous in her lifetime, not only because her books are brilliant, but because she gave what was acceptable for society. Charlotte Brontë received more critique, the preface of second edition of *Jane Eyre* says so. It was, however, as Brontë herself wrote, only a few part of the reader that believed her novel to be

unacceptable. Why? I dare say because in the end it was the same, society did not change, it tried to change, though, and that was a little dangerous, but not dangerous enough. *Clara Morison*, however, changed too much society and got lost in a few copies still available in the world, no present edition existent. From the three it is the one that could be more relevant nowadays, I would say, and I think that if we look at the cinema that could be even clear.

If we just think a little bit on the adaptations that were made for the movies or for TV, we might think *Jane Eyre* was more relevant than *Pride & Prejudice*, for instance. There are 37 adaptations from 1910 to 2011 from *Jane Eyre* to only 10 from *Pride & Prejudice*. As a matter of fact, in the last adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice*, from 2005, the director made some interpretations in a more feminist perspective, in order to make it more relevant for today, I believe. Added to that, there are also a number of other modern adaptations of *Pride & Prejudice*, transforming it into a much more relevant work for nowadays. *Jane Eyre* had much more direct discussions concerning class and women's role, making it more relevant.

But then, we take *Clara Morison*, where you do not need to force any interpretation, it is all there, written, spoken by the characters, discussed by the narrator. But no present edition available, no movie out there for the world to see. That reflects the difficulty of not being in the literary centre, Australia is far from it, the world could enjoy such a fine work but is, unfortunately, missing it.

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