

University of Pardubice
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

Popular Image of Women in Britain in the 90s

Nikol Čechlovská

Bachelor Thesis

2021

Univerzita Pardubice
Fakulta filozofická
Akademický rok: 2019/2020

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(projektu, uměleckého díla, uměleckého výkonu)

Jméno a příjmení: **Nikol Čechlovská**
Osobní číslo: **H18279**
Studijní program: **B7310 Filologie**
Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro odbornou praxi**
Téma práce: **Populární obraz ženy v Británii 90. let**
Zadávací katedra: **Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky**

Zásady pro vypracování

Studentka se ve své bakalářské práci zaměří na období druhé poloviny 20. století, především období 90. let. Nejprve se bude zabývat kulturně-historickou charakteristikou období s důrazem na postavení ženy. Dále představí literární kontext populární kultury, resp. tzv. chick-lit. V praktické části prováže poznatky z teoretické části se svou vlastní literární analýzou zvolených primárních zdrojů.

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:
Rozsah grafických prací:
Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**
Jazyk zpracování: **Angličtina**

Seznam doporučené literatury:

- Marr, Andrew. *A history of modern Britain*. London: Pan, 2009.
Clarke, Peter. *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-2000: Updated to Cover 1992-2000*. London: Penguin Books; 2nd edition, 2004.
Morgan, Kenneth O. *The Oxford History of Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
Abrams, Meyer H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. For Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1999.
Ferris, Suzanne and Young, Mallory. *Chick Lit: The New Woman's Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
Lu, Yingru. *Chick Lit: Themes and Studies, Comparative Literature*. China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House, 2014.
Harzewski, Stephanie. *Chick Lit and Postfeminism*. University of Virginia Press, 2011.
McRobbie, Angela. *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*. London: Sage, 2009.
Smith, Caroline J. *Cosmopolitan Culture and Consumerism in Chick-Lit*. Routledge, 2007.
Fielding, Helen. *Bridget Jones's Diary*. London: Picador, 1996.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **Mgr. Olga Roebuck, Ph.D.**
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **30. dubna 2020**
Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **31. března 2021**

Prohlašuji:

Tuto práci jsem vypracovala samostatně. Veškeré literární prameny a informace, které jsem v práci využila, jsou uvedeny v seznamu použité literatury.

Byla jsem seznámena s tím, že se na moji práci vztahují práva a povinnosti vyplývající ze zákona č. 121/2000 Sb., o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon), ve znění pozdějších předpisů, zejména se skutečností, že Univerzita Pardubice má právo na uzavření licenční smlouvy o užití této práce jako školního díla podle § 60 odst. 1 autorského zákona, a s tím, že pokud dojde k užití této práce mnou nebo bude poskytnuta licence o užití jinému subjektu, je Univerzita Pardubice oprávněna ode mne požadovat přiměřený příspěvek na úhradu nákladů, které na vytvoření díla vynaložila, a to podle okolností až do jejich skutečné výše.

Beru na vědomí, že v souladu s § 47b zákona č. 111/1998 Sb., o vysokých školách a o změně a doplnění dalších zákonů (zákon o vysokých školách), ve znění pozdějších předpisů, a směrnicí Univerzity Pardubice č. 7/2019 Pravidla pro odevzdávání, zveřejňování a formální úpravu závěrečných prací, ve znění pozdějších dodatků, bude práce zveřejněna prostřednictvím Digitální knihovny Univerzity Pardubice.

V Pardubicích dne 31.3. 2021

Nikol Čechlovská

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my supervisor Mgr. Olga Roebuck, Ph.D., M. Litt for her valuable advice and kindness. I would also like to thank my boyfriend and my family for their support and encouragement during my studies.

ANNOTATION

This work deals with the life of women at the end of the 20th century in Britain. It comprises the cultural and historical characteristics of the period, followed by the description of feminism and post-feminism. It also depicts what is popular culture and the so-called genre chick lit and lastly, it analyzes chosen primary source which is *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

KEYWORDS

Life in Britain, Feminism, Post-feminism, Popular fiction, Chick lit, Bridget Jones's Diary

NÁZEV

Populární obraz ženy v Británii 90. let

ANOTACE

Tato práce je zaměřena na období druhé poloviny 20. století a postavení žen ve Velké Británii v této době. Práce se dále zabývá feminismem, s důrazem na jednotlivé vlny tohoto hnutí a postfeminismem, který představuje posun v rámci feminismu. Dalším tématem této práce je populární fikce a tzv. chick lit neboli literatura pro ženy. V neposlední řadě práce analyzuje vybraný primární zdroj, kterým je Deník Bridget Jonesové.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

život v Británii, femisimus a postfeminismus, populární fikce, chick lit, Deník Bridget Jonesové

Table of contents

Introduction.....	8
1 Life in Britain at the end of the 20 th century.....	10
2 Feminism and post-feminism.....	16
3 Popular fiction – Chick lit.....	22
4 Analysis of Bridget Jones’s Diary.....	27
5 Conclusion.....	42
Resumé.....	44
Bibliography.....	47

Introduction

Helen Fielding's novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* gained success not only in the United Kingdom but worldwide. This novel is considered to be the groundbreaker of a genre so-called Chick lit, broadly speaking, literature from women to women. Although many can think that there is not much to analyze about this book, surprisingly the novel is full of relatable aspects experienced by the majority of women.

The thesis is divided into two parts, theoretical and practical part. The theoretical part consists of three chapters which lay the foundation for the practical part which is the analysis of the primary source – *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

The opening chapter of the thesis illustrates how was life in Britain at the end of the 20th century, specifically from the 1970s to the 1990s. The novel was written in 1996, therefore it is necessary to mention the preceded years to give the reader an idea of how different the individual decades were. Life back then was different from what we know now and that is what the chapter tries to depict.

The second chapter deals with feminism, its individual waves, and the crucial terms and events that took place during this movement. Most importantly it concerns social media and its platforms as a voice of today's women. It also briefly explains the term post-feminism, as a result of the previous waves.

The following chapter describes what is popular fiction and how should the reader understand it. A more extensive part of this chapter is dedicated to the so-called genre chick lit, explanation of the term, its origin, and the main protagonists.

The last chapter is the analysis of Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, it concerns the most important aspects of the character's life such as single life, love life, her family and friends, job, and lastly her body and examines them in depth.

The aim of this thesis is to find out whether the information from the theoretical part is comparable with the practical part. The thesis will also describe and compare life in Britain and

the position of women at the end of the 20th century with women from the late 21st century, what are the differences between these two generations, and what has changed over the years.

1 Life in Britain at the end of the 20th century

When talking about life in Britain at the end of the 20th century, it is necessary to take a look a few decades back to have a better understanding of the political and also cultural background. Every decade and every period influenced the ones which followed. In this case, it is essential to mention the main events which took place in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. As Kenneth O. Morgan states, the 1970s was an important and crucial period as it is known as Britain's gloomiest period since World War II. This decade was one of the most difficult and desperate for Britain because of constant conflicts between classes, industrial struggles, dramatic decline of the economy, growing unemployment, food shortages, and outbreaks of violence.¹ All these negative aspects and issues were forcing the public to protest and support different strikes and demonstrations to show their unhappiness. To put it to other words, the mood in Britain around this era was rather tense and uneasy.

During the 1970s, a large part of Britain's electricity was produced by coal mining. But mineworkers felt like their hard and exhausting job was not paid enough, the government did not accept their demand to increase salaries, therefore the only thing left to do was to strike. According to Andrew Marr, the first national strike took place in 1972, when the National Union of Mineworkers demanded a pay rise of 45 percent. The civil disorder the country was facing was terrifying, therefore the government had to agree and accept their demands. The second strike started in 1974 when the mineworkers' pay demands were not met. The constant strikes led to frequent blackouts, so in order to reduce the electricity and power consumption the then Prime Minister Edward Heath announced the three-day working week, meaning the working time was reduced to three days a week only.² Marr states another measure that was implemented which was that television broadcast had to end at 10.30 p.m. to conserve electricity. Due to these frequent power cuts, many families dependent on electricity could not cook, light, or heat their homes.³ All of these measures and actions caused more depression and unhappiness among the citizens.

Edward Heath was not the only Prime Minister who had to face some serious political problems. The three-day working week ended in March 1974 when Harold Wilson became the Prime

¹ Kenneth O. Morgan. "Britain in the Seventies – Our Unfinest Hour?", *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* (December 2017), 1.

² Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (London: Macmillan, 2008), 340.

³ Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, 340.

Minister of the United Kingdom for the second time. According to Marr, the biggest matter Harold Wilson had to deal with during his second period as Prime Minister was the referendum in 1975 on British membership of the European Community, a predecessor of the European Union. The citizens were asked to vote for Britain to either stay in the European Community or leave it.⁴ As Marr states, around 17 million people voted for Britain to stay, 8.5 million voted for Britain to leave the organization, therefore Britain remained as the member state.⁵ This was one of the first referendums that were ever held in the United Kingdom. As the official website of the British Parliament states, the latest and probably the most controversial referendum was in 2016. This time, the nation decided to leave the European Union and the well-known term Brexit was born.⁶ To conclude the leadership of Harold Wilson, apart from a few foreign affairs, he decided to resign in 1976 and was replaced by James Callaghan.⁷

As Marr suggests, James Callaghan is known for the term ‘Winter of Discontent’. As Callaghan stated himself, the period between 1978-79 was very chaotic in terms of strikes, inflation, unemployment, and many other political events.⁸ But this time it was not mineworkers who demanded a pay rise. According to Morgan, oil-tanker drivers, power workers, or dustmen were trying to draw the government’s attention to unsatisfactory pay levels. Rubbish piling up in the streets was the outcome of striking dustmen, children were not in the schools because of the striking teachers and unfortunately, some people died because the hospital staff was striking as well. The strikes went on for many weeks, on one of the worst days almost 1.5 million people working in the public sector did not come to work. The situation was not tense only in England. Morgan adds that the situation in Northern Ireland was rather alarming due to religious and racial problems among the Protestants and Roman Catholics, high rate of unemployed people, and violence caused by the IRA.⁹ All of this led to the fall of Callaghan’s government in May.¹⁰ Downing Street 10 was home to many Prime Ministers during the 1970s, but the most important figure was yet to come.

⁴ Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, 348.

⁵ Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, 349.

⁶ “Referendums held in the UK,” UK Parliament, accessed February 12, 2021, <https://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/vote-in-general-elections/referendums-held-in-the-uk/>

⁷ Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, 363.

⁸ Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, 373.

⁹ Kenneth O. Morgan, *The Oxford History of Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 650.

¹⁰ Morgan, “Britain in the Seventies,” 4.

Apart from politics, the seventies was a decade full of music, many art forms, and fashion. An era of Pink Floyd, Sex Pistols, The Rolling Stones, Queen, David Bowie, or Elton John. An era of flared trousers, platform shoes, and heavy makeup. But deep inside, it was still a period of darkness and desperation mainly due to the economic events that were taking place in Britain. In comparison, the decade that preceded the 1970s was much more liberating. The 1960s was a period of abandoning traditional taboos and prejudice, homosexuality and abortion were legalized, contraceptive pills became available, it was the time of hippies, feminism, Beatles, and mainly freedom. There is no doubt that the 1970s' popular culture and the mood was much calmer and reserved. But still, people had to stay optimistic and enjoy the little things during this hard time.

As the 1970s ended, a new and more promising decade was approaching. The 1980s began with a love story of Prince Charles and Lady Diana, followed by the Falklands War between Britain and Argentina in 1982. Unfortunately, as Kenneth O. Morgan suggests, Britain experienced strikes and bad economic situation once again in 1984.¹¹ Furthermore, this period brought new technologies, video games like Pacman, Rubik's cube, Michael Jackson, or Madonna.

There is no doubt that the most eminent but also controversial figure of British politics was Margaret Thatcher. She was the first female Prime Minister in British history as well as the longest-serving. Before she started her premiership in May 1979 she was the leader of the opposition. According to Jonathan Lea, Margaret Thatcher became the Prime Minister after the not so pleasant events, such as the 'Winter of Discontent', permanent strikes, or blackouts. Her goal was to make the country great again after all these years of depression by implementing reforms. During her premiership she was able to make a few great and significant achievements, one being privatization.¹² As the website *The Guardian* states, privatization meant a way of power that was given to people, they could buy shares and profit from them. Many British companies and enterprises such as British Airways or British Telecom, together with electricity or coal industries were nationalized.¹³ Besides privatization, Thatcher wanted to change home ownership. According to *The Guardian*, in 1980 came the Housing Act and because of this

¹¹ Morgan, *The Oxford History of Britain*, 655.

¹² "Margaret Thatcher's Greatest Achievements," Jonathan Lea Network, last modified April 6, 2020, <https://www.jonathanlea.net/2013/margaret-thatchers-greatest-achievements/>.

¹³ "Margaret Thatcher: 20 ways that she changed Britain," *The Guardian*, posted April 14, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/apr/14/margaret-thatcher-20-changes-britain>.

reform, tenants were given the right to buy flats or houses and make them their own.¹⁴ Another reform worth mentioning is the attempt of implementing the poll tax. Marr says that poll tax represented a new system when each citizen had to pay a certain amount of money. The problem was that the amount was fixed, there was no difference between the rich and the poor social classes.¹⁵ That naturally led to disagreements among the citizens and even escalated into demonstrations. According to Marr, there was, in fact, a big demonstration on Trafalgar Square the day before the poll tax was meant to enter into force. Hundreds of people were arrested, and many policemen were injured.¹⁶ The riots and demonstrations caused by this new system and the overall resistance against her leadership style forced Margaret Thatcher to resign in November 1990. Even though Thatcher was given the nickname ‘Iron Lady’ because of her harsh and sometimes stubborn way of leading, this time the stubbornness had to step back. Margaret Thatcher was able to help Britain and pull it out from not only economic but also social and cultural chaos. Although she guided the country out of crisis and other potential troubles, she was and probably still is one of the most disliked political figures to this day.

The last ten years of the 20th century were rather epochal. As Marr suggests, the Thatcher years were full of new applications and innovations, but what was about to come was not expected.¹⁷ This decade, new technologies such as mobile phones, computers, digital cameras, and televisions were more and more common in British households.

As for popular culture, there were more possibilities in filmmaking as the whole process was much easier with all the new technologies. Films such as *Mr. Bean*, *Notting Hill*, or *James Bond*. This decade also marked the beginning of the very popular *Harry Potter* series. But apart from British films and series, the American ones were even more popular. In the words of Andrew Marr, series like *Baywatch* or *The Simpsons* drew the attention of the British people.¹⁸

When Margaret Thatcher resigned in November 1990, John Major became her successor. As explained by Morgan, unfortunately for Major, he had to deal with some of the Thatcherite policies that were no longer relevant. For instance, people were angry about the privatized trains

¹⁴ “Margaret Thatcher: 20 ways that she changed Britain,” The Guardian, posted April 14, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/apr/14/margaret-thatcher-20-changes-britain>.

¹⁵ Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, 467.

¹⁶ Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, 468-469.

¹⁷ Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, 481.

¹⁸ Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, 480.

which were always running late.¹⁹ Morgan also says that the mood around the mid 1990s among the people was rather doubtful. The government faced a few sexual accusations and some cases of corruption which led to many resignations. The British citizens simply did not believe the people governing their country, therefore they were skeptical. During this period, people did not feel equal to each other, even the British royal family experienced separation and tension among their family. This was caused mainly by the divorce of Princess Diana and Prince Charles, but also by the criticism of not being able to fit into the modernity of the world. Furthermore, the damage caused by the fire at Windsor castle in 1992 was paid by the public funds which was not fully accepted by the British people.²⁰ Some people were upset by the overall situation in British society. This is when the famous novel *Trainspotting* (1993) by the Scottish author Irvine Welsh was written. According to Dominic Head, Welsh was able to depict how people lived during this time. Drug addictions, high rate of HIV infection, and violence were common during this period.²¹ Kenneth O. Morgan adds that the city of London was full of homeless people, diseases like AIDS and tuberculosis were spreading and youth unemployment was high.²² But nothing lasts forever and after a few political and social problems, the country started to thrive and the mood within the people improved. Morgan suggests, that the economic situation was getting better, unemployment decreased, and young students began to enter universities. Because of the Channel Tunnel connecting the United Kingdom and France, there was a possibility to go on a holiday with no obstacles.²³ As it is stated on the official website of the British government, on one hand, Major had to face some difficult times during his leadership but on the other hand, the period under John Major represented massive economic growth, he was able to force the IRA (Irish Republican Army) to end the constant conflicts and was, in fact, a good Prime Minister to his country.²⁴

The last Prime Minister of the 20th century was Tony Blair. Marr states that Blair succeeded John Major in 1997 when Blair's Labour Party won the most seats in government in British history.²⁵ Marr also says that Blair was enthusiastic about making the country great again and

¹⁹ Morgan, *The Oxford History of Britain*, 633.

²⁰ Morgan, *The Oxford History of Britain*, 665-666.

²¹ Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 44.

²² Morgan, *The Oxford History of Britain*, 667.

²³ Morgan, *The Oxford History of Britain*, 667-668.

²⁴ "Past Prime Ministers," UK Government, accessed February 20, 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/john-major>.

²⁵ Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, 509.

his top priority was education and the overall growth of the British economy.²⁶ He was able to initiate a few reforms that were meant to move Britain forward. One of Blair's biggest achievements was the so-called *Good Friday Agreement*. According to BBC, this agreement of 1998 was the end to constant conflicts and violence in Northern Ireland, also known as The Troubles.²⁷ As the official website of the British government says, Blair was involved in creating the Human Right Act or a Freedom of Information Act.²⁸ This illustrates the fact that Blair was capable of leading his country the right way.

To conclude, life in Britain at the end of the 20th century was full of obstacles and hard times but when the nation unites and holds together, there is nothing they are not able to overcome. Many significant figures have taken turns in Downing Street 10, some of them brought uncertainty, others brought happiness and hope. Every single one of them gave Britain something that shaped it into Britain we know today. More obstacles may come in the future, but the United Kingdom will make it through, as always.

²⁶ Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, 512.

²⁷ BBC News, "What is the Good Friday Agreement?" posted October 5, 2020, video, 4:28, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-northern-ireland-54380051>.

²⁸ "Past Prime Ministers," UK Government, accessed February 21, 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/tony-blair>.

2 Feminism and post-feminism

The image of women in society has changed over the years. In the past, women were expected to be good wives to their husbands, great moms to their children, and amazing housewives. The husbands were those who were making decisions, women had to listen to their husbands as they were the providers for the family. Some of the women had their lives pre-lined by their parents by not being able to marry someone whom they loved. Instead, they had to marry the person, whom their parents wanted them to marry. Metaphorically said, women in the past were trapped in a cage and it took many years to achieve equality between the two sexes. Women did not want to give up and due to their determination, step by step, they began to be integrated into the 'men's world'. Over the years, women have developed into human beings with different wants and needs. Nowadays, women are much more free in terms of jobs or free time. They can be whatever they want – a doctor, a driver, a politician, or a lawyer. They can see their friends whenever they want, they can go to a cafe or go shopping and they will not be judged by the public.

As mentioned previously, the image of women has changed over the past years, however, we can still see some similarities from the past. Women are still expected to take care of their families and households. When a couple decides to have a child, it is the woman who is most likely going to stay home and take care of the baby. But prioritizing the wife's career over the husband's is more and more frequent. There is nothing wrong with a man being home with his kid when the wife is able to provide more for the family in terms of money. But for some men, this might be a delicate topic because most of them consider themselves as the provider and they would never accept the idea of being on paternity leave.

When talking about women's rights, the first topic which comes to everyone's mind has to be feminism. Feminism is an extensive topic that cannot be described only by one definition. For example the Longman Dictionary states that feminism is "the belief that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men."²⁹ The main idea of this term is that women should have the same rights and options as men and both genders should be equal. According to Lucy Mangan, the term feminism was used in 1837 by French philosopher Charles Fourier for the

²⁹ "Feminism," Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, accessed February 21, 2021, <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/feminism>.

first time. However, the term began to be used more frequently in the late 19th and 20th century while it brought many ways of feminism.³⁰

Some experts say there are three waves of feminism, some of them claim there are four of them. Each wave represented different demands and events but what they have in common is the desire to make women equal to men.

Mangan suggests that the first wave of feminism started in the mid 19th century in the United States and also Europe. The main idea of this wave was that women will have the right to vote. It was important for women to be able to vote and to be at the same level as men, at least a little bit. This is when the word ‘suffragette’ gained its meaning. According to the Longman Dictionary, a suffragette is “a woman who tried to gain the right to vote for women, especially as a member of a group in Britain or the US in the early 20th century.”³¹ As Mangan claims, these women were not afraid of being arrested or hurt. Not surprisingly, their goal was to make women equal to men.³²

Britain was one of the first countries in Europe whose women were trying to call for equal rights for both genders. As for the situation in Britain, there was a woman who initiated the suffragette’s movement in the country. Her name was Emmeline Pankhurst, a women’s rights activist and according to BBC, it is because of her that women in Britain over 30 years old were able to vote from the year 1918, from 1928 over the age of 21.³³ She was an important figure in the early 20th century, she influenced and helped millions of women to be heard. It is no wonder Time magazine put her on their list of 100 most influential people of the 20th century.³⁴ Additionally, Morgan says that Pankhurst and her actions contributed to more job opportunities for women, such as administration or office work, while these kinds of jobs were primarily just for men.³⁵ As can be seen, the first wave marked the beginning of women not being afraid to

³⁰ Lucy Mangan, *The Feminism Book* (New York: DK Publishing, 2019), Introduction, <https://www.scribd.com/document/428836889/The-Feminism-Book-Big-Ideas-Simply-Explained-DK-pdf>.

³¹ “Suffragette,” Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, accessed March 2, 2021, <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/suffragette>.

³² Mangan, *The Feminism Book*, Political Equality in Britain.

³³ “Emmeline Pankhurst,” BBC, accessed March 5, 2021, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/pankhurst_emmeline.shtml.

³⁴ “TIME 100 Persons of The Century,” Time, posted June 14, 1999, <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,991227-2,00.html>.

³⁵ Morgan, *The Oxford History of Britain*, 590.

raise their voices and they were no signs that all of this will end any time soon. In fact, harder times were approaching.

There was a small gap before the second wave came probably because the women were satisfied with what they had achieved in the first wave, particularly being able to vote. But it was not long before the second wave was initiated. In the words of Lucy Mangan, the second wave began around the 1960s because women realized that the right to vote is not enough. While Mangan claims that their aim was to legalize the pill and abortion, stop domestic violence, and have the opportunity to work on a higher paid job title,³⁶ Margaret Walters argues that the second wave's biggest concern was the woman's body.³⁷ During this time, women were in a difficult position. Walters says that women struggled with the emphasis on body image and what should their bodies look like. The pressure from media with pictures of gorgeous and thin women forced other women to buy expensive clothes, undergo cosmetic surgeries, or maintain strict diets to look like them, even just a little bit.³⁸ One may think that women in the past could be an example to women now of how unhealthy and ridiculous this behavior is. But still, women are willing to go through anything in order to look like their idols.

As mentioned previously, 'the pill' was highly demanded in the 1960s. It refers to a kind of birth control that prevents women from being pregnant and is considered one of the most effective kinds. In the words of Lucy Mangan, when the pill appeared in Britain, only married women were able to get it. All women, regardless of their status were able to buy it from 1967.³⁹ Because of the pill, women were much more calm and there was no need to worry about unwanted children. According to Andrew Marr, abortion was a frequent demand in 1960s Britain. The poorer women were not able to pay for the procedure, therefore illegal abortions were performed. In terrible conditions, the women had to stand the unbearable pain. Illegal abortions were often made with a coat hanger, causing infection and the women were sadly dying because of that. Almost 35,000 women in Britain had been taken care of in National Health Service hospital, due to badly done abortions.⁴⁰ The website *The Independent* says that "Women would drink bleach to try to induce miscarriage. They would have very hot baths, or

³⁶ Mangan, *The Feminism Book*, The Waves.

³⁷ Margaret Walters, *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: University Press, 2005), 110.

³⁸ Walters, *Feminism*, 110.

³⁹ Mangan, *The Feminism Book*, The Pill.

⁴⁰ Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, 256.

move heavy furniture, or try to do it themselves with a needle or a crochet hook.”⁴¹ Thankfully, the British government legalized abortion in 1967, which probably saved lives of thousands of women.

Another problem women were facing was domestic violence. Domestic violence and abuse was a rather tricky and awkward topic to be talked about and it still is to this day. It is not easy for any woman to talk about a subject so intimate and personal. Mangan claims that during the 1960s and 1970s a few groups of women decided to overcome their fears and they started to talk about this unpopular topic.⁴² Walters adds that these ‘consciousness-raising’ groups were never intended but became popular among women.⁴³ Although women had these groups where they felt comfortable talking to other women about their worries, the number of abused and scared women was still high. The best possible way to help those women was to provide them with a place where they will not be judged. Therefore, according to Mangan, in 1971 there was the first shelter for women to be open in West London. The main role of the shelter was to give the women the emotional support and empathy they needed.⁴⁴

During the second wave feminism, a number of female artists and musicians strongly supported this movement. According to BBC News, a song called ‘I Am Woman’ by Helen Reddy became a feminist anthem in 1972, probably due to the lyrics of the song. She refers to herself as “strong and invincible” and the women were happy to identify with her.⁴⁵ Broadly speaking, women from all around the world became more engaged in the music industry. Names like Barbra Streisand, Cher, Joni Mitchell, or Aretha Franklin became popular around the 1970s and still are today.

The third wave of feminism took place in the last decade of the 20th century. This wave is different because of the diversity of the protagonists, they are women of different colors, religions, and ethnicities. They wanted to fight for sexual freedom but also against violence and women harassment. As it is described by Lucy Mangan, feminists not only in the United

⁴¹ “What an Illegal Abortion Was Like in the 1960s, Reveals 86-year-old Activist,” The Independent, posted March 30, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/illegal-abortion-1960s-sixties-uk-pro-choice-activist-diane-munday-bpas-a7657726.html>.

⁴² Mangan, *The Feminism Book*, Protection from Domestic Violence.

⁴³ Walters, *Feminism*, 112.

⁴⁴ Mangan, *The Feminism Book*, Protection from Domestic Violence.

⁴⁵ “Helen Reddy: Australian singer of feminist anthem I Am Woman dies,” BBC, posted September 30, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-54350248>.

Kingdom were not happy with the changes that were supposed to happen in the past years. During this period, the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was against homosexuality, even though she wanted to legalize it in the past.⁴⁶ Homosexuality during the third wave of feminism was a frequent topic to be talked about. While lesbians were fully accepted during the preceding second wave, bisexual women were treated differently. A bisexual person is sexually attracted to men and women, but the majority of people could not understand why and therefore the bisexual people were disrespected and not accepted by society. In the words of Mangan, *Women and Bisexuality* (1993) by British writer Sue George says that bisexuals had been an important constituent of feminism as a whole.⁴⁷ Nowadays, people are much more understanding and respectful, and they know that the relationship between man and woman is not the only one. In fact, there is a whole movement called LGBTQ+ which represents other genders and sexualities.

The fourth wave of feminism began around the 2010s and is closely connected with the usage of social media. Women of the fourth wave use social media platforms to speak up about certain problems. According to Mangan, the protagonists of this wave are mostly women from “Generation Y” (born between 1980-1995) and “Generation Z” (born between 1995-2012).⁴⁸ Due to the use of social media, it is much easier to connect with people from around the world, even for feminists. Mangan suggests that the fourth wave brought a new term called “hashtag activism.”⁴⁹ Hashtags are used on social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook to help people find information about the topic they are interested in. The person interested in this topic can click on the hashtag and it will bring them to a list of posts concerning the same subject. Then, they can read through the list and gain the information they needed. Mangan also states a few examples of the use of hashtags. One being the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls used to bring people’s attention to the Nigeria kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls by a terrorist group. Similarly, in recent years the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter is frequently used in connection with police brutality against black people.⁵⁰ According to these examples, the usage of hashtags does not have to be only connected to feminism, but the most prominent hashtag of modern history is indeed a feminist one. The fourth wave is connected with the #MeToo movement which emerged in 2017. The main idea of this movement was and

⁴⁶ Mangan, *The Feminism Book*, Postfeminism and The Third Wave.

⁴⁷ Mangan, *The Feminism Book*, Bisexuality.

⁴⁸ Mangan, *The Feminism Book*, Bringing Feminism Online.

⁴⁹ Mangan, *The Feminism Book*, Bringing Feminism Online.

⁵⁰ Mangan, *The Feminism Book*, Bringing Feminism Online.

still is to draw people's attention to violence and sexual harassment against women and to point out that what is happening to women is not correct. Surprisingly, a lot of celebrities and famous people have joined this movement since 2017, expressing their sympathy for those who do not have the means to be heard easily.

A term that is closely linked to feminism is post-feminism. As the prefix 'post-' suggests, it represents something after. As Ann Brook claims, this prefix can cause problems in terms of not understanding the term correctly. She states that "the concept of 'post' implies a process of ongoing transformation and change."⁵¹ Just like feminism, this term does not have a specific definition. The main idea of post-feminism is the examination of all of the goals the previous movements have achieved. It is the symbol of women's integration into society, suggesting that there is no need to fight for their rights anymore. Angela McRobbie adds that post-feminism is "a process by which feminist gains of the 1970s and 1980s are actively and relentlessly undermined"⁵² which seems like a not so positive aspect of feminism. According to Brooks, the term post-feminism became familiar in the late 1980s and early 1990s and it can sometimes be confused with fourth wave feminism.⁵³

Looking back we can see how different were lives of women in the past. In many ways, women are very lucky today as they are able to live the life they want without any difficulties. They can do things they want to do, they can wear clothes they want to wear, they can go to school and have a good education, they have many employment opportunities, they do not have to become mothers and they will not be judged for it. For all those reasons, women can be considered on the same level as men, but the question is – are they?

⁵¹ Ann Brooks, *Postfeminism: Feminism, Cultural Theory and Cultural Forms* (London: Routledge, 1997), 1.

⁵² Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism, Gender, Culture and Social Change* (London: Sage, 2009), 11.

⁵³ Ann Brooks, *Postfeminism*, 2.

3 Popular fiction – Chick lit

Popular fiction, as the name suggests, is a type of fiction read by large numbers of people. A more detailed description of the term comes from *The Cambridge Companion to Popular Fiction* which says that popular fiction represents books that everyone likes and reads and because people buy the books, they can be successful in terms of commerce. This description can give you the idea that every book can be considered popular fiction.⁵⁴ The books just need the time and a little bit of popularity to become a part of this extensive literary genre. Indeed, it can be hard to write a book that would fit into this genre. There are thousands and millions of writers who wanted their books to be read and appreciated, but the market is so extended that their vision was sadly not fulfilled.

Another description of the term is from *Pulp Reading Popular Fiction* and according to the author, Scott McCracken, popular fiction has the ability to give us space for self-appreciation because who we are is not determined. It is impossible because us, humans, are still evolving.⁵⁵ This means that while reading popular fiction we can get the idea of ourselves and who we actually are.

Popular fiction has undeniably changed over the years. The mid or late 19th century is considered to be the era when this term emerged, but it has evolved over time. What was considered popular fiction in the 18th century will probably not be considered a part of popular fiction today. And vice versa, people in the 18th century would be surprised and maybe even shocked by what is considered popular fiction now.

A significant part of popular fiction is indisputably a genre called chick literature, or better known as chick lit. The term ‘chick’ is from American slang meaning a young woman⁵⁶ and ‘lit’ is an abbreviation of literature. As Ferris and Young state, chick lit began as a British and American phenomenon, novels as Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (1996) and Candace Bushnell’s *Sex and the City* (1997) are considered to be the groundbreakers of the genre.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ David Glover and Scott McCracken, *The Cambridge Companion to Popular Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1.

⁵⁵ Scott McCracken, *Pulp: Reading Popular Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 2.

⁵⁶ “Chick,” Cambridge Dictionary, accessed January 5, 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/chick>.

⁵⁷ Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young, *Chick Lit: The New Woman’s Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 6.

Almost every definition of the term chick lit is similar to the other. Ferris and Young suggest that chick lit represents women in their twenties or thirties and their efforts and attempts in trying to keep their personal life and career on the same level.⁵⁸ Another definition comes from the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* and it says that “chick lit are books about young women and the typical problems they have with men, sex, losing weight, etc., especially books written by women for other women to read – used humorously.”⁵⁹ This definition mentions humor, which is a very important aspect of the genre since every chick lit author uses it in their books. Ferris and Young also say that chick lit shows us the everydayness of women but also men. Chick lit protagonists are not perfect at all, but they have the ability to make fun of themselves which is something the readers like and can relate to it.⁶⁰ The protagonists often have certain qualities that are typical for this genre. Ferris and Young state that “The heroine of these books can be rude, shallow, overly compulsive, neurotic, insecure, bold, ambitious, witty or surprisingly all of the above.”⁶¹ The heroines are the type of women that every non-fictional woman can relate to, this being the main reason why chick lit books are so popular. Women like to see that they are not alone in dealing with everyday issues and that almost every woman goes through the same pitfalls in life. The best fictional character representing the problems and issues of every woman has to be Bridget Jones. Speaking of Bridget Jones, as mentioned previously, she marks the beginnings of the chick lit madness. According to Yingru Lu, the year 2001 was significant for chick lit due to the launch of Red Dress Ink by Harlequin Enterprises. This company’s only interest was in publishing chick lit novels.⁶²

Although chick lit books are popular among the readers who think these kinds of books are hilarious and relatable, there are opinions that differ in the viewpoint of literary criticism. Some critics do not consider chick lit as a literary genre, simply because it does not have anything interesting to offer. Ferris and Young claim that some British novelists describe this genre as a waste of time or they say that it would be better if the authors did not use these petty characters and their distorted view of the world, instead, they should write as they see the reality.⁶³ On one

⁵⁸ Ferris and Young, *Chick Lit*, 3.

⁵⁹ “Chick lit,” *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, accessed January 12, 2021, <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/chick-lit>.

⁶⁰ Ferris and Young, *Chick Lit*, 3-4.

⁶¹ Ferris and Young, *Chick Lit*, 4.

⁶² Yingru Lu, *Chick Lit: Themes and Studies* (Sichuan: China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House, 2014), 104.

⁶³ Ferris and Young, *Chick Lit*, 2.

hand, some critics are not afraid to traduce this genre, on the other hand, authors like Salman Rushdie are generous with praise, as his words “A brilliant comic creation. Even men will laugh.” are imprinted on the book jacket. Therefore, it really depends on the reader if they prefer this kind of reading.

As mentioned previously, Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary* is considered to be the first novel to be called a chick lit novel. Ferris and Young claim that it is impossible that Bridget Jones was fully made just by Fielding.⁶⁴ In fact, Helen Fielding admits in an interview for BBC News when she started to write the Bridget Jones novel, she only had a collection of columns with no plot. While Fielding was thinking about the plot for her novel, *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen came out as series on BBC. Fielding was amazed by the story so instead of thinking about new and original plot, she simply stole Jane Austen’s one.⁶⁵ Originally, Bridget Jones started as a collection of columns for *The Independent* newspaper. As Fielding herself admits in an interview, she was asked by *The Independent* to write a column about her single life in the city of London. But because she was too afraid that the whole country would know about her experiences with men and that she would be embarrassed and exposed too much, she came up with the character of Bridget Jones.⁶⁶

It is always good to know something about the author’s life to have a better understanding of how their books are written and what is the gist of the books, as it can be closely associated with their personal life. As mentioned previously, the book jacket is full of reviews by significant book authors or editors and all of them say that Helen Fielding made every one of them laugh. This can give the reader an idea of what to expect from the novel just by looking at it. During Fielding’s life, she worked as a newspaper and TV journalist, traveling around the world, mainly to Africa. The frequent visits to Africa inspired Fielding in writing her first novel in 1994 called *Cause Celeb*.⁶⁷ Fielding was inspired by many aspects of her life throughout the book, one being the job in television. Bridget’s first job is in a publishing house, later she works as a TV reporter. *Bridget Jones’s Diary* was Fielding’s second book, published in 1996, followed by a sequel called *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* in 1999. Over a decade later,

⁶⁴ Ferris and Young, *Chick Lit*, 4.

⁶⁵ BBC News, “Bridget Jones vs *Pride and Prejudice*,” posted January 28, 2013, video, 2:47, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/entertainment-arts-21204956>.

⁶⁶ Charlie Rose, “Helen Fielding,” posted June 24, 1998, video, 11:56, <https://charlierose.com/videos/1694>.

⁶⁷ “Helen Fielding: Beyond Bridget,” *The Independent*, posted October 16, 2013, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/helen-fielding-beyond-bridget-89876.html>.

in 2013 Fielding published her third novel about Bridget called *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*, and in 2016 she wrote *Bridget Jones's Baby: The Diaries*.

Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* was inspired by Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel from 19th century England and even though it is over 208 years old, these two novels have a lot of things in common. Both of the novels are about the life of a single woman, both of the main characters (Bridget and Elizabeth) are at the age to be married but did not find the right man for them and the same name of Mr. Darcy and Mark Darcy does not even have to be mentioned. In film adaptations, both, Mr. Darcy from *Pride and Prejudice* and Mark Darcy from *Bridget Jones's Diary* are played by the same British actor Collin Firth, but the film will be mentioned later. To conclude the similarities between the two women protagonists, Elizabeth is much more elegant, intelligent, and distinguished whereas Bridget is more disorganized and almost lost in many aspects of her life. But still, Bridget, in fact, loves to watch *Pride and Prejudice* on BBC series and is fascinated by the relationship between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy.

8.55 a.m. Just nipped out for fags prior to getting changed ready for BBC *Pride and Prejudice*. Hard to believe there are so many cars out on the roads. Shouldn't they be at home getting ready? Love the nation being so addicted. The basis of my own addiction, I know, is my simple human need for Darcy to get off with Elizabeth. [...] They are my chosen representatives in the field of shagging, or, rather, courtship. I do not, however, wish to see any actual goals. I would hate to see Darcy and Elizabeth in bed, smoking a cigarette afterwards. That would be unnatural and wrong and I would quickly lose interest.⁶⁸

The novel is written in a form of a diary. It tracks Bridget's life throughout a whole year, there are 12 chapters, each represents a month of the year. Almost every passage of the book begins with Bridget's weight, a number of consumed alcohol units, how many cigarettes she smoked, how many calories she consumed that day and other comments, such as: "9st 2 (but in a good cause), thigh circumference 16 inches (either miracle or hangover error), alcohol units 0 (but body still drinking units from last night), cigarettes 0 (ugh)."⁶⁹ These entries make the book even more hilarious and relatable. According to Helen Fielding, writing in a form of a diary is very direct and intimate. Because the author can hide behind the character, they can write about things that many people are scared or embarrassed to even talk about. These fictional characters

⁶⁸ Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary* (London: Picador, 1996), 246-247.

⁶⁹ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 187.

allow authors to talk more easily about topics that are socially unacceptable.⁷⁰ Not many books are written in a form of a diary, therefore it makes the book more interesting and it might be another reason why it is so popular among the readers.

The *Bridget Jones's Diary* novel was so successful that it was even made into a film in 2001. Bridget was played by an American actress Renée Zellweger and as mentioned previously, Mark Darcy, the love of Bridget's life was played by Colin Firth. Her second novel *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* and *Bridget Jones's Baby: The Diaries* were made into films as well. The public loves the films about Bridget Jones, just like the books. According to the online film database IMDb, the first film was nominated for many awards, such as Golden Globe for Best Film – Musical or Comedy, BAFTA Awards, British Comedy Awards, and Renée Zellweger was even nominated for an Oscar.⁷¹

Bridget Jones represents 'a new life,' hope and things that women could hardly do or achieve before. According to Ferriss and Young, Bridget Jones changed the viewpoint on women. Before chick lit emerged, films, TV shows, and books were demonstrating the conservative and traditional ways of how women lived and what were their obligations and responsibilities. Chick lit brought new changes and moves in women's lives. Thanks to chick lit movies and popular fiction like *Bridget Jones's Diary* or *Sex and the City*, women know that they can do anything, but primarily it needs to make them happy.⁷² Due to these shifts and changes that took place in the past, women can be themselves and stand up for their opinions and beliefs.

⁷⁰ "An Interview with Helen Fielding," Book Browse, accessed January 5, 2021, https://www.bookbrowse.com/author_interviews/full/index.cfm/author_number/236/helen-fielding.

⁷¹ "Denik Bridget Jonesové," IMDb, accessed March 5, 2021, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0243155/awards>.

⁷² Ferriss and Young, *Chick Lit*, 192.

4 Analysis of Bridget Jones's Diary

Now, that everything regarding the birth of the Bridget Jones story was mentioned, it is time to talk about the plot and the analysis of the novel. The story of Bridget Jones takes place in Britain's capital city in the 90s. Bridget is a 32-year-old single woman, struggling with her life, not knowing what exactly to do with it. She deals with her love life which is not ideal nor is her career or body. It seems like not one aspect of her life is perfect and that is what she struggles with the most. Every year, she wants to quit her bad habits and she wants to find the perfect boyfriend and settle down to have a peaceful life. This time, she wants to write down her goals to see the progress she has made at the end of the year. Therefore she starts to write a diary.

To analyze the *Bridget Jones's Diary* novel, it is important to determine what topics are the most important in Bridget's life. It definitely has to be the life of a single woman, her love life, her friendships and family, her job, and lastly her body. Each topic will be described more into details.

Bridget lives a life of a 'singleton'. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a singleton is "a man or woman who does not have a romantic or sexual partner."⁷³ In fact, this term is used multiple times in the book. According to Fielding, she thought that she was the first person to be using this term but later on she found out that the person who came up with this word was P. G. Woodhouse, a British author of the early 20th century.⁷⁴ Bridget refers to her as a singleton due to not having a partner nor kids. She is tired of being single, therefore she wants to do something about it. At the beginning of the novel, she makes a list as a result of New Year's resolution, where she mentions the things she will and will not try to do. She starts with the list of things she will not do.

I will not drink more than fourteen alcohol units a week, smoke, waste money on: pasta makers, ice-cream machines or other culinary devices which will never use; books by unreadable literary authors to put impressively on shelves, exotic underwear, since pointless as have no boyfriend, I will not behave sluttishly around the house but instead imagine others are watching, spend more money than earn, fall for any of following: alcoholics, workaholics, commitment phobics, people

⁷³ "Singleton," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed March 10, 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/singleton>.

⁷⁴ BBC Bookclub, "Bridget Jones's Diary by Helen Fielding," posted November 3, 2019, podcast, 28:47, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0009yxq>.

with girlfriends or wives, misogynists, megalomaniacs, chauvinists, emotional fuckwits or freeloaders, perverts.⁷⁵

Besides the things she will not do, there are some things she will and wants to achieve, and those examples seem much more positive.

I will try to stop smoking, drink no more than fourteen alcohol units a week, reduce circumference of things by 3 inches, purge flat of all extraneous matter, improve career and find new job with potential, make better use of time, be kinder and help others more, go to the gym three times a week not merely to buy a sandwich or form a functional relationship with a responsible adult.⁷⁶

This gives the reader an idea of how messy her life is, and it also proves the fact that her life is mainly about her love life, her body, and job. Bridget is, in fact, a very nice person and deserves all the best but some may say the opposite. According to K. A. Marsh, Bridget is a problematic character as she always sets some goals and is never able to accomplish them.⁷⁷ Therefore, the reader can sometimes feel bad for her as it looks like she has no luck, but the truth is that she is just not able to hold on things and she will rather give up. On one hand, Bridget is always optimistic and takes things easy, she is able to make fun of herself, but on the other hand, her desire for a loving boyfriend and perfect body is making her look silly and desperate. But the biggest problem of Bridget is her confusedness and instability and therefore it is hard for her to have a long-term relationship. Marsh also says that Bridget is sadly obsessed with trivialities, therefore the image of women that was created due to feminist movements in the past is now ruined.⁷⁸ This is another example of criticism of this genre. Some feminists might be offended by some of Bridget's actions even though they are not necessarily intentional.

In terms of Bridget's love life, it is something she struggles with. She is not able to find her Prince Charming to live the life of her dreams. She is, in fact, desperate to find a loving boyfriend. After all, she is a 32-year-old single woman who thinks she is fat and unattractive and that she will die alone with a bottle of wine. Her biggest fear is that she will end up as a 'spinster.' This term is used multiple times throughout the book. According to *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, a spinster is "an unmarried woman, usually one who is

⁷⁵ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 2.

⁷⁶ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 3.

⁷⁷ Kelly A. Marsh, "Contextualizing Bridget Jones," *JSTOR* 31, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 52.

⁷⁸ Marsh, "Contextualizing Bridget Jones," 53.

no longer young and seems unlikely to marry.”⁷⁹ Although Bridget reads a great deal of books and manuals on how to get a man such as *Women Who Love Too Much; Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, or *The Ultimate Sex Guide* she still did not find one. As Ferris and Young state, the protagonists of chick lit novels do not necessarily long for marriage, the only thing they want is a happy relationship.⁸⁰ This is the case of Bridget; she does not need to be married, she just wants to have a loving and devoted boyfriend.

When Bridget is around people she quite often gets questions about her love life which drives her crazy. She is not confident herself and these types of questions are not helping her with how she feels. For instance, one of her mother’s older friend asked Bridget how is her love life. Bridget annoyed by the question thinks to herself:

Oh God. Why can’t married people understand that this is no longer a polite question to ask? We wouldn’t rush up to them and roar, ‘How’s your marriage going? Still having sex?’ Everyone knows that dating in your thirties is not the happy-go-lucky free-for-all it was when you were twenty-two.[...]⁸¹

Of course, Bridget is sad and sometimes even embarrassed that she has no partner at the age of 32, but still, these questions can be uncomfortable not only for Bridget but for many non-fictional women. What has changed from the previous century is that women are not expected to be married at 30, not even at 20 years old. Times and priorities are changing and so does the image of women. A few decades back it was normal that women were getting married and having children at a young age. Nowadays, women often prefer career over family life and that is absolutely fine as long as they are happy with their lives.

At the beginning of the story, it seems like Bridget is actually going to stay alone but thankfully, her luck turned around. During the year of writing the diary, Bridget is involved in two relationships with men. The first one being her boss, Daniel Cleaver, who is a very attractive editor chief of the publishing company in which Bridget works as well. Daniel has a slight weakness for women, Bridget is no exception. He likes to flirt with her, often uses inappropriate words and sexual references. They begin their relationship via email conversation when Daniel points out Bridget’s non-existing skirt. “You appear to have forgotten your skirt. As I think is

⁷⁹ “Spinster,” Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, accessed March 12, 2021, <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/spinster>.

⁸⁰ Ferris and Young, *Chick Lit*, 39.

⁸¹ Fielding, *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, 11.

made perfectly clear in your contract of employment, staff are expected to be fully dressed at all time. Cleave”⁸² This is the first time Bridget received a message from her boss. She cannot believe that this message is from her good-looking boss whom she was fantasizing about every day at work. In the words of Ferris and Young, Bridget perceives this message as a signal of flirt rather than some inappropriate comment.⁸³ Therefore, she does not hesitate and answers. “Sir, am appalled by message. Whilst skirt could reasonably be described as a little on the skimpy side (thrift being ever out watchword in editorial), consider it gross misrepresentation to describe said skirt as absent, and considering contacting union. Jones”⁸⁴

Even though she likes to flirt, if the then Bridget lived now, she would definitely participate in the #MeToo Movement. These sexual comments from her boss, coworkers, or her mother’s friend constantly touching her are not acceptable. “[...] He did a jokey Bruce Forsyth step then gave me the sort of hug which Boots would send straight to the police station.”⁸⁵ In cases like that, this movement is a great thing. Men back then had more chances to get away with this kind of behavior as women did not have the means to speak up about these problems.

Although many women after receiving such comments on their appearance would feel uncomfortable, Bridget enjoys the attention from her boss and therefore she is not afraid to be straightforward. This represents the relationship between Bridget and Daniel, flirtatious and full of innocent sexual references and it seems like they both like it. Eventually, Bridget and Daniel start to date and even though their relationship is not exclusive, everything seems all right and Bridget is finally happy. The fact, that she is dating the most attractive man she knows is making her feel special. One day, Bridget decides to make an unannounced visit at Daniel’s house. She rings the bell, but he did not let her in immediately, it took him a while to answer that he is busy and that they will meet in a nearby pub in ten minutes. Bridget is suspicious, as she knows Daniel’s reputation. She has a feeling that there is a woman in his house and she tries to find out what is going on. After a few minutes of Bridget’s insistence to let her in, Daniel finally did it. Bridget goes through his apartment, trying to find any hint of unfaithfulness.

Daniel was staring at me as if I was mad, so I couldn’t go and check the bedroom. Instead, I locked the loo door and started frantically looking around for things. I

⁸² Fielding, *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, 23.

⁸³ Ferris and Young, *Chick Lit*, 10.

⁸⁴ Fielding, *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, 23.

⁸⁵ Fielding, *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, 11.

wasn't exactly sure what, but long blonde hairs, tissues with lipstick marks on, alien hairbrushes – any of these would have been a sign.⁸⁶

Eventually, she finds a naked woman sunbathing on his roof. Daniel being the womanizer that he is, cheats on Bridget with another girl. Bridget is devastated because she actually thought that Daniel was interested in her. The outcome of the relationship between Bridget and Daniel is obvious. Daniel was never serious about the relationship whereas Bridget was infatuated with him and saw a bright future by his side. Not surprisingly, she does not want to be around him anymore, therefore she quits her job in the publishing house and finds a new job as a TV reporter which will be mentioned later.

The second man who walked into Bridget's life is Mark Darcy, a successful and wealthy lawyer. Bridget's and Mark's parents are friends and it was Bridget's mother who had the idea to get them together as she thinks Mark is the perfect match for Bridget. She always calls Bridget and tries to talk her into meeting him. "Of course you remember the Darcys, darling. They came over when we were living in Buckingham and you and Mark played in the paddling pool!"⁸⁷ Another time her mom called and was trying to make Bridget get to know Mark, once again. "Oh! Did I mention Malcolm and Elaine are bringing Mark with them to Una's New Year's Day Turkey Curry Buffet? He's just back from America, apparently. Divorced. He's looking for a house in Holland Park. Apparently, he had the most terrible time with his wife. Japanese. Very cruel race."⁸⁸

Her mother calls so often that annoyed Bridget agrees to go to her mom's friend Una Alconbury's New Year's Day Turkey Curry Buffet. Bridget's and Mark's first encounter was quite embarrassing as Mark is a distinguished gentleman who does not like to talk about average topics whereas Bridget is the opposite. Ferris and Young claim that their first encounter is quite similar to Elizabeth's and Mr. Darcy's in *Pride and Prejudice*, as it symbolizes their first impressions of each other and also their first 'prejudice.'⁸⁹ In fact, almost every encounter of theirs is embarrassing because they do not know what to say or how to act. For instance, Mark invites Bridget to a celebration of his parents' wedding anniversary but Bridget does not want to go. Firstly, because she does not know any of Mark's friends, and secondly and most

⁸⁶ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 175.

⁸⁷ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 12.

⁸⁸ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 12.

⁸⁹ Ferris and Young, *Chick Lit*, 73.

importantly, she would miss both of her favorite TV shows *Blind Date* and *Casualty*. Therefore, she tries to think about how to excuse herself from the event.

Bridget Jones regrets that she will be unable...
Miss Bridget Jones is distraught, that she will be unable...
Devastated does not do justice to the feelings of Miss Bridget Jones...⁹⁰

But because all of these excuses sound bad, eventually, she decides to come to the party, so she sends Mark an email. “Dear Mark, Thank you for your invitation to your ruby wedding party for Malcolm and Elaine. I would love to come. Yours, Bridget Jones.”⁹¹

Bridget trying to make herself sound fancy and classy makes it even more hilarious. She never uses these kinds of words and phrases, unless she is talking to Mark Darcy. But over time, when they are more used to each other, Bridget starts to talk as she normally would. One time, Mark asks her if she had read any good books lately, but Bridget is annoyed with Mark asking the same questions over and over again.

Mark. If you ask me once more if I’ve read any good books lately, I’m going to eat my head. Why don’t you ask me something else? Ring the changes a bit. Ask me if I’ve got any hobbies, or a view on the single European currency, or if I’ve had any particularly disturbing experiences with rubber.⁹²

But everyone knows that opposites attract and these two are not an exception. Bridget’s and Mark’s relationship had potential from the beginning. Mark was always polite and nice to Bridget, even though he thinks that she is crazy and chaotic. He helped her multiple times, for instance with her job interview, he found Bridget’s mother’s boyfriend who stole money, or he helped Bridget cook a celebration dinner for her friends. Mark with his mature character and organizational skills balances Bridget’s chaotic nature which makes them a great duo. If he was not interested in Bridget, he would not do such things. Over time, they begin to develop feelings for each other, and since Christmas day, their relationship is official. Therefore, Bridget was able to accomplish one of her New Year’s resolution, probably the one she wanted to accomplish the most.

⁹⁰ Fielding, *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, 219.

⁹¹ Fielding, *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, 221.

⁹² Fielding, *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, 235.

Both men Bridget dated throughout the book represent different qualities. Daniel is the bad guy whereas Mark seems like a perfect man without any flaws. But why is that women are often more attracted to bad guys? Why are the perfect men always overlooked even though they are doing everything right? We will probably never understand how women's brain works.

Bridget has a small circle of friends. In fact, she has three single best friends – Jude, Sharon, also called 'Shazza', and her gay friend Tom. They often go to a bar or restaurant to talk about their problems. This is when Bridget's immaturity often can be seen. Whenever she has a problem with Cleaver or Darcy, instead of talking directly to the men about the problem, she rather calls for 'an emergency summit' with her friends to help her with the situation and their conversations are full of vulgarisms and swearwords. Jude is a careerist, who similarly to Bridget, has problems with men. Despite her relationship problems, she tries to help Bridget in every situation regarding men. Sharon considers herself a feminist. She despises men or as she likes to call them 'emotional fuck-wittages'. In fact, there is a short passage in the book which accurately describes Sharon's feminist view of the world.

[...] There's more than one bloody way to live: one in four households are single, most of the royal family are single, the nation's young men have been proved by surveys to be completely unmarriageable, and as a result there's a whole generation of single girls like me with their own incomes and homes who have lots of fun and don't need to wash anyone else's socks.⁹³

As for Bridget, she cannot be considered a feminist, however, sometimes she acts like one. When she is dating a man, she loves him so much but when he disappoints her, she breaks up with him and does not want to do anything with men for a long time.

It is evident that Bridget loves Tom the most, maybe because they are both interested in the same sex and Tom is able to explain to her what is going on inside men's brains. On one hand, he is not afraid to tell her the ugly truth but on the other hand, he is here for her no matter what. When Bridget needs a piece of advice, she will most likely call Tom first.

Called Tom for second opinion, particularly on whether I should call Daniel over the weekend. 'Noooooo!' he yelled. He asked me various probing questions: for example, what Daniel's behavior had been like over the last few days [...]. I reported

⁹³ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 42.

that he had seemed flirtier than usual. Tom's prescription was wait till next week and remain aloof.⁹⁴

She also has one married best friend Magda, who is giving her advice from a viewpoint of a happily married woman. Bridget, from time to time, is jealous of her perfect life and likes to call her and her husband 'Smug Marrieds.'

Bridget's friends are honest to her but if she needs a bit of comforting, they are ready to do so. They are very important to her, they help her to feel better about herself and her actions. She shares everything with them and she knows that they are here for her and no matter what, they will stick together. This supports the idea of Ferriss and Young who claim that some of the characteristic elements of chick lit are "the heroine's search for an ideal romantic partner; her maturation and growth in self-knowledge, often aided by friends and mentors."⁹⁵

Another important aspect of Bridget's life is her family, even though it does not seem like she cares about them, especially her mother. She annoys her because she always calls and tells her things Bridget is not interested in. But the worst thing is that Bridget's mom is concerned about Bridget's love life. As mentioned previously, her mom wants Bridget to get to know Mark Darcy because of his wealth and social status. This is smart of her mom because having Mark in her family would improve the name of the family and also their social status. Apart from Bridget being fed up with her mom's stories and ideas, she goes to her when times get hard. When she broke up with Daniel, it was her mom who gave her comfort.

[...] I can't believe you've got in a state like this over a stupid man. They're all completely self-centered, sexually incontinent and no use to man nor beast. [...] Now come along, darling. Brace up. Back to sleep. Go into work looking drop-dead gorgeous. Leave no one – especially Daniel – in any doubt that you've thrown him over and suddenly discovered now marvelous life is without that pompous, dissolute old fart bossing you around and you'll be fine.⁹⁶

Her father, on the other hand, loves his daughter but is not that invested in her life. Nevertheless, they became much more closer when they find out that Bridget's mom is having an affair with a younger man from Portugal. This situation is not comfortable for neither of them and therefore, Bridget starts to investigate. One day, mom invites Bridget for lunch which is a great

⁹⁴ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 52-53.

⁹⁵ Ferriss and Young, *Chick Lit*, 49.

⁹⁶ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 182.

opportunity to ask her if there is someone else, but her mother denies it. Bridget starts thinking about the whole situation.

Why, when people are leaving their partners because they're having an affair with someone else, do they think it will seem better to pretend there is no one else involved? Do they think it will be less hurtful for their partners to think they just walked out because they couldn't stand them any more and then had the good fortune to meet some tall Omar Sharif-figure with a gentleman's handbag two weeks afterwards while the ex-partner is spending his evenings bursting into tears at the sight of the toothbrush mug?⁹⁷

This whole situation is hard for Bridget and so it is for any other human being to experience their parent's separation. But she has to accept the fact that her mother is seeing someone else and has to deal with it. After all, she is an adult and she has to focus on her own life.

As mentioned several times before, Bridget works in a publishing house. The novel was written in the 1990s when big shifts and changes were happening due to the feminist movements. Women were much more free in terms of choosing their job and they were much more independent. This is the case of Bridget. She is a single woman with no children, therefore she has a lot of free time, due to not having any hobbies and she is financially independent as well. According to Ferris and Young, chick lit characters are not satisfied with their job, as the majority of them work in low-level positions and they have no opportunities for career and professional growth or they do not like the environment they work in.⁹⁸ Therefore, they just go to work with no enthusiasm because they simply do not enjoy it.

Bridget's colleague, Perpetua, likes to boss her around even though she is not officially her boss. "Ugh. Perpetua, slightly senior and therefore thinking she is in charge of me, was at her most obnoxious and bossy. [...]"⁹⁹ Perpetua is one of the reasons Bridget does not like to work at the company, Daniel gave her another reason why she should quit this job. After Bridget's finding out that Daniel is cheating on her, she tries to find another, maybe more suitable job for her. "Oh God. Terrified about the interview. I have told Perpetua I am at the gynaecologist – I know I should have said dentist but opportunities to torture the noisiest woman in the world must not be allowed to slip through the net."¹⁰⁰ Bridget goes to the interview where she made

⁹⁷ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 55-56.

⁹⁸ Ferris and Young, *Chick Lit*, 54.

⁹⁹ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 17.

¹⁰⁰ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 196.

a good impression, therefore she is accepted and starts to work as a TV reporter at *Good Afternoon!* One of her first times on-camera was at a fire station in Lewisham and her role was to slide down the pole just like a fireman and straight away going to interview one. But Bridget being her chaotic self, slid down too early and then was trying to climb up again, meanwhile, the camera starts pointing at her comically trying to do something.

Hysterically I grinned at the camera and dropped myself down, landing, as scheduled, by the feet of the fireman I was supposed to interview. ‘Lewisham, we’re out of time. Wind it up, wind it up, Bridget.’ yelled Richard [Bridget’s boss] in my ear. ‘And now back to the studio,’ I said, and that was it.¹⁰¹

Due to this disastrous experience, Bridget is ashamed and does not want to continue with her new career. Eventually, she was given another chance.

‘Right, Bridget,’ said Richard Finch. ‘I’m going to give you another chance. The Isabella Rossellini trial. Verdict expected today. We think she’s going to get off. Get yourself down to the High Court. I don’t want to see you climbing up any poles or lamp-posts. I want a hard-headed interview. [...]’¹⁰²

Bridget does not want to disappoint her boss once again, therefore she tries her best to do this interview. But, it would not be Bridget if something did not happen. While waiting for Rossini to come out of the court, Bridget decides to quickly run to a near shop. When Bridget was ready to pay, a man jumped the queue and Bridget had to say something.

‘Excuse me, does the word ‘queue’ mean anything to you?’[...] It was Mark Darcy all dressed up in his barrister outfit. [...] At that moment the camera assistant burst into the shop. ‘Bridget!’ he yelled. ‘We’ve missed the interview. Elena Rossini’s come out and gone. Did you get my Minstrels?’¹⁰³

Bridget learns that Mark was her defense and he told her not to talk to anyone. But Mark, wanting to help Bridget as he has some feelings for her, made an exception and allowed Bridget to do the interview with Elena. Thus, Bridget’s interview was the only one as nobody else had the chance to do it, she was acknowledged by her boss and her reputation was restored.

¹⁰¹ Fielding, *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, 223.

¹⁰² Fielding, *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, 239.

¹⁰³ Fielding, *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, 241.

As can be seen, Bridget has her ups and downs in her career. When she is not doing good, she just needs a little encouragement and her hard-working character is back. Quitting her job at the publishing house was definitely a good decision. Bridget does not mind being in front of an audience and she is talkative as well. Working in the publishing house did not offer her any interesting career moves.

Although the novel mainly focuses on Bridget's relationships and love life, her body is something that is mentioned quite often in the book. Even though the reader does not know how Bridget looks, they can imagine her due to her constant comments on how unattractive her body is. From time to time she finds it hard to be a woman because of all the things women have to do to make their bodies at least a little bit appealing.

6 p.m. Completely exhausted by entire day of date-preparation. Being a woman is worse than being a farmer – there is so much harvesting and crop spraying to be done: legs to be waxed, underarms shaved, eyebrows plucked, feet pumiced, skin exfoliated and moisturized, spots cleansed, roots dyed, eyelashes tinted, nails filed, cellulite massaged, stomach muscles exercised. The whole performance is so highly tuned you only need to neglect it for a few days for the whole thing to go to seed. [...] Is it any wonder girls have no confidence?¹⁰⁴

Again, this shows how relatable Bridget is. All of these examples are something the majority of women have to deal with on daily basis. Fielding is able to humorously describe all these procedures, even though most of the women are annoyed every time they have to do them.

Bridget can be jealous of women who either look good without any hard work or women who do not care about how they look and what people think. “Perpetua could be the size of a Renault Espace and not give it a thought. How many hours, months, years, have I spent worrying about weight while Perpetua has been happily looking for lamps with porcelain cats as bases around the Fulham Road?”¹⁰⁵ Bridget simply envies Perpetua's disinterest in what people think about her and wants to be able to do that too. “Wise people will say Daniel should like me just as I am, but I am a child of *Cosmopolitan* culture, have been traumatized by supermodels and too many quizzes and know that neither my personality nor my body is up to it if left its own devices.”¹⁰⁶ While in the words of Marsh: “when Bridget appears unable to extricate herself

¹⁰⁴ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 30.

¹⁰⁵ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 18.

¹⁰⁶ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 59.

from “*Cosmopolitan* culture” she is clearly not alone. When she returns again and again to the basic ideas that she must perfect herself, control her life, and secure a mate, Bridget is enacting an inevitable process.”¹⁰⁷, Smith adds: “Bridget’s observation, along with her pre-date actions, reveals the pervasive hold that women’s magazines have upon her life.”¹⁰⁸ In other words, Bridget admits that she is influenced by the outer world and it is hard for her to step outside of it and accept what she actually looks like.

Bridget often questions herself, what is the beauty ideal and what are men looking for. As mentioned previously, she is traumatized by supermodels and all the good-looking women from the magazines she reads but mainly from TV she watches. She does not think of herself as good-looking and she feels like she is not enough for men. She lacks confidence and that is something other women are experiencing these days as well. Especially social media can be cruel and harmful, mainly for younger girls because it seems like what is on Instagram or any social platform is the reality.

It is okay when Bridget talks about herself as fat and unattractive but when someone else mentions it, it hurts her. For instance, when she found the woman on Daniel’s roof. “‘Honey,’ said the woman, in an American accent, looking over my head at him. ‘I thought you said she was thin.’”¹⁰⁹ The look on this gorgeous woman clearly hurt Bridget’s self-esteem. The whole situation was uncomfortable and painful but when the woman mentioned her body, it was even worse.

To keep her body in shape, Bridget likes to follow various manuals and diet magazines as she is obsessed with counting her calories. Caroline J. Smith suggests, that “although Bridget cannot immediately remember what letter of the alphabet comes before J, she can easily guess how many calories are in a black or green olive.”¹¹⁰ Once again, this example shows how influencing magazines or TV can be. But counting calories is not enough when talking about a good-looking body, healthy eating habits are connected with it as well but sadly that is something Bridget does not really have.

¹⁰⁷ Marsh, *Contextualizing Bridget Jones*, 61.

¹⁰⁸ Caroline J. Smith, *Cosmopolitan Culture and Consumerism in Chick Lit* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1.

¹⁰⁹ Fielding, *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, 178.

¹¹⁰ Smith, *Cosmopolitan Culture*, 30.

9 a.m. Aargh. How can I have put on 3lb since the middle of the night? It was 9st 4 when I went to bed, 9st 2 at 4 a.m. and 9st 5 when I got up. I can understand weight coming off – it could have evaporated or passed out of the body into the toilet – but how could it be put on? Could food react chemically with other food, double its density and volume, and solidify into every heavier and denser hard fat? I don't look fatter. I can fasten the button, though not, alas, the zipper on my '89 jeans.¹¹¹

Sometimes, she tries to follow a strict diet but her love for food is stronger. Another aspect that is ruining her desire to have a perfect body is alcohol. Even though not drinking alcohol is on her New Year's resolution list, she consumes a lot of alcohol; sometimes in order to drown her sorrows after an unsuccessful relationship.

But what if Bridget was flawless? Would the readers be still interested in her story? Ferris and Young suggest the following:

With beauty, chick lit writers must toe a fine line. If the heroine is too stunning, readers may resent her; if she is too ordinary looking (let alone attractive), she gives readers nothing to admire. If she is utterly obsessed with her looks, she risks turning off readers, although the immense popularity of Bridget Jones demonstrates the comic and satiric potential of excessive preoccupation with weight gain and appearance.¹¹²

This statement proves the fact that Bridget is unique in terms of her approach to what she looks like. On one hand, she really cares about how she looks and how people perceive her. But on the other hand, if she is so obsessed with her appearance, why is she not more obstinate? Why cannot she stop with her bad habits and rather go to the gym?

As far as Bridget's cultural life is concerned, she is not a big fan of going out to cultural events. Even though the 90s in Britain were wild and London was full of cultural and social events Bridget would rather stay home, watch a movie and eat her favorite snacks. If she has to go out, it would be to a bar with her friends or on a date with a man. Fielding quite often uses events that took place in Britain in the 1990s in her book. "I am almost ready and merely need to complete my make-up while practicing my opinions on Tony Blair's leadership."¹¹³ or "5 a.m. I'm falling apart. My boyfriend is sleeping with a bronzed giantess. My mother is sleeping with a Portuguese. Jeremy is sleeping with a horrible trollop, Prince Charles is sleeping with Camilla

¹¹¹ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 74.

¹¹² Ferris and Young, *Chick Lit*, 59.

¹¹³ Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, 196.

Parker-Bowles.”¹¹⁴ In fact, the relationship between Prince Charles and Princess Diana is mentioned several times throughout the book. There is no wonder why as she was adored by the whole country. In the words of Andrew Marr: “By the summer of 1997, Britain had two super-celebrities. One was Tony Blair and the other was Princess Diana.”¹¹⁵

The whole novel ends with Bridget’s brief summary of the past year.

Alcohol units 3836 (poor)
Cigarettes 5277
Calories 11,090,265 (repulsive)
Weight gained 5st 2lb
Weight lost 5st 3lb (excellent)
[...]
Hangover-free days 114
Boyfriends 2 (but one only for six days so far)
Nice boyfriends 1
Number of New Year Resolutions kept 1

An excellent year’s progress.¹¹⁶

According to this summary, she was able to fulfill some of her New Year’s resolutions, for instance even though she has lost only one pound from her previous weight, she is proud of herself that she was able to accomplish such a hard task. However, if a year has 365 days, Bridget was hungover over one-third of the year, which is not something to be proud of. At least, she deserves praise for fulfilling her biggest dream – she found herself a loving boyfriend.

To conclude Bridget’s year, it was rather an interesting one. She experienced many things throughout the year – from a failed relationship with Daniel Cleaver, her mother’s infidelity, a new job, many drunken nights with her friends to a new relationship with Mark Darcy.

The character of Bridget Jones is truly remarkable. Her approach to things is what makes her so unique. On one hand, she can be hard-working and mature but most of the time, she is chaotic and desperate which can easily influence her relationships with men. Sadly, she does not care about important things in life, she would rather talk about her weight and calories. Sometimes, it seems like she lacks moral values.

¹¹⁴ Fielding, *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, 181.

¹¹⁵ Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, 517.

¹¹⁶ Fielding, *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, 310.

Bridget was, is, and will be an immortal character. The number of women who could relate to this fictional character is enormous. Bridget has entertained millions of women cross generations and helped them conquer hard times in their lives with her relatability and sense of humor.

5 Conclusion

The aim of this bachelor thesis was to depict the image of women in Britain at the end of the 20th century. The theoretical part offers insight into life in Britain at the end of the 20th century, describes feminist, and post-feminist movements and describes the popular culture and the chick lit genre. The theoretical part also serves as the foundation for the book analysis which is the last chapter of the thesis. The image of women has definitely changed over the years, as they are much more independent today in terms of jobs or free time. In the past, they were expected to take care of the household and they had no personal life whatsoever. The thesis confirms that women nowadays are not treated like women in the past used to be.

The thesis also says that the individual waves of feminism have brought equality between men and women. In other words, these waves have shaped the society we know today. Women are able to vote, have a job they love, and, in most countries, they have free access to health care and contraception. To conclude, women are very lucky nowadays.

Chick lit as a genre has been popular since the end of the last century and there are no signs that that will change any time soon. Even though the genre faced some criticism, it will not turn the readers off. Women will always love to read about fictional characters dealing with the same struggles as they do.

Bridget as a character has everything what a heroine of this genre should have. The only thing she cares about is her body and her non-existing boyfriend. She loves to go to bars to gossip with her friends. She hates her job but eventually she finds a new, better job. Bridget is influenced by manuals and magazines full of good-looking women. She follows the advice from them and then wonders, why is her life so messy. After all, it is just a magazine, it cannot be compared to real life, which is something Bridget does not want to admit.

The novel itself has proven to be a successful piece of work. There were many aspects from the theoretical part that could be applied to the practical. For instance, feminism was still a strong movement back in the 1990s, with Bridget's friend Sharon being proof. Life in Britain in the 1990s was peaceful, people were having fun, going to social and cultural events, to bars and restaurants, just like Bridget and her friends. Helen Fielding did a great job as she was able to

depict life in the 1990s so accurately. The carefreeness, freedom, and the expectation of what the future holds – this is everything the novel has. *Bridget Jones's Diary* will definitely entertain millions of women and men in the future, after all that is what it is supposed to do.

Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá postavou Bridget od známé britské spisovatelky Helen Fieldingové z jejího románu *Deník Bridget Jonesové*. Práce studuje její postavení ve společnosti a zabývá se jednotlivými aspekty, které ovlivňují její život. Práce je rozdělena do čtyř kapitol a každá podrobně popisuje dané téma.

První kapitola je zaměřena na život v Británii na konci 20. století. Román byl napsán v roce 1996, bylo by tedy logické se zabývat pouze touto dekádou. Avšak historie Velké Británie je natolik obsáhlá a mnoho událostí předcházelo 90. létům, že bylo nutné vrátit se o několik desítek let zpět. Tato kapitola tedy začíná v 70. letech, kdy se Británie nacházela v nepříjemné situaci, někteří odborníci ji považují za nejhorší od druhé světové války. Pokles ekonomiky, nedostatky jídla, růst nezaměstnanosti, agrese a mnoho dalších aspektů vedlo k častým stávkám. Následovala 80. léta, která občanům dávala naději na lepší časy a skutečně tomu tak bylo. Tato dekáda začala vztahem Prince Charlese a Lady Diany, kterou celý národ miloval. Nejdůležitější postavou 80. let byla ale bezesporu Margaret Thatcherová, premiérka Spojeného Království, která přišla s mnoha inovacemi na vylepšení stávajícího politického systému. Začátek 90. lech přinesl nové technologie, filmy a hudbu. Velká Británie byla spojena s Francií Euro tunelem, rovněž skončila válka s irskou republikánskou armádou. Lidé se již nebáli užívat si života a s blížícím se začátkem nového století doufali v život ještě lepší.

Druhá kapitola se zabývá feminismem. Feminismus bývá definován jako snaha o zrovnoprávnění postavení mezi muži a ženami ve společnosti. Ženy často bývají považovány za podřadnější mužům a cílem feminismu bylo tyto mylné domněnky vyvrátit. Základní práva, kterých ženy chtěly dosáhnout byla například právo volit, právo pracovat na jakékoliv pozici, legalizace potratu a antikoncepce, zastavení domácího násilí a sexuálního harašení. Někteří odborníci tvrdí, že feminismus lze rozdělit na tři, jiní na čtyři vlny, každou z nich se tato kapitola zabývá dopodrobna. Zároveň se kapitola zabývá post-feminismem. Jak jistě předpona napovídá, jedná se o něco, co následuje. Hlavní myšlenkou post-feminismu je úspěšná integrace žen do společnosti a zároveň naznačuje, že již dále není třeba bojovat za jejich práva, jelikož už všeho, co chtěly, dosáhly.

Ve třetí kapitole je vysvětlen pojem populární literatura, do kterého patří i žánr chick lit. V češtině by tento pojem mohl být přeložen jako literatura pro ženy. Do tohoto žánru patří především knihy s hlavní protagonistkou, kterou nebaví její práce, není spokojená se svým tělem a zejména nemůže najít pravou lásku. Tyto knihy tedy nejsou typickými romány, kdy čtenář již od začátku ví, jak celý příběh dopadne. Hlavní hrdinka v žánru chick lit si dokáže sama ze sebe udělat legraci, je sebekritická a zabývá se každodenními starostmi, které v reálném světě řeší i většina žen. Proto jsou tyto knihy mezi čtenáři tak oblíbené. Za průkopníky tohoto žánru se považují romány *Deník Bridget Jonesové* od autorky Helen Fieldingové a *Sex ve městě* od americké autorky Candace Bushnellové.

Poslední část této bakalářské práce je věnována právě již zmíněnému románu *Deník Bridget Jonesové*. Tato kapitola se zabývá analýzou knihy a jednotlivých problémů, které Bridget provází jejím životem. Jednotlivými problémy jsou život jednotlivce, milostný život, její rodina a přátelé, práce a v neposlední řadě nespokojenost s jejím tělem. Bridget žije sama, nemá partnera ani děti. Nemá ani žádné koníčky, takže ve volném čase nejraději chodí s kamarády do baru. Nicméně si uvědomuje, že už sama být nechce, a tak se rozhodne s tím něco udělat. Napíše si seznam novoročních předsevzetí čímž také celá kniha začíná a od těchto předsevzetí se kniha i odvíjí. Chce přestat pít alkohol, kouřit, přestat utrácet peníze za zbytečnosti apod. Na druhou stranu si chce najít partnera, zhubnout nebo si najít novou, lepší práci.

Během jednoho roku, kdy Bridget píše svůj deník se seznámí se dvěma muži. Jedním je její šéf, Daniel Cleaver, se kterým prožije krátký vztah, který je ukončen Danielovou nevěrou s mladší, atraktivnější dívkou. Bridget je zdrcena a rozhodne se, že s muži již nechce mít nic společného. Zde se ukazuje, že nemůže být považována za feministku. Balancuje mezi potřebou mít po boku muže, aby se necítila sama, zároveň je schopna všechny muže odsoudit a začít jimi pohrdat. Druhý muž, který vstoupí do jejího života je majetný právník Mark Darcy, ze kterého nejdříve nemá dobrý pocit. Mark ji ale neustále něčím překvapuje a na konci knihy se čtenář dozví, že tvoří pár. Tudíž se Bridget podařilo splnit jedno z jejích novoročních předsevzetí.

Bridget také řeší problémy s její matkou, která není spokojená ve vztahu s jejím otcem, ze kterého se nakonec rozhodne utéct. Najde si nového, mladého muže, se kterým je ze začátku šťastná, nicméně, když zjistí, že je to zločinec, dala by všechno za to, aby se mohla vrátit ke svému dřívějšímu, stereotypnímu životu.

V první části příběhu Bridget pracuje v nakladatelství, její práce ji ale nebaví. Největší problém má se svou nadřízenou, která ji neustále komanduje a také s některými kolegy, kteří mají často nemístné sexuální narážky. Také Danielova nevěra Bridget utvrdí v tom, že by měla práci změnit. Dá tedy výpověď a začne pracovat jako televizní reportérka. Ze začátku má v nové práci problémy, ale vzhledem k její chaotičnosti se něco takového dá předpokládat. Následně ale zaboduje, když jako jediná z novinářů získá rozhovor se ženou obžalovanou z pokusu o vraždu. Tento rozhovor ji zajistí Mark Darcy, který již zmíněnou ženu zastupuje jako právník. Její kariéra je tedy nakonec úspěšná a Bridget je ráda, že opustila nudnou práci v nakladatelství.

Co se týče Bridget a jejího těla, je sebekritická, připadá si neatraktivní, myslí si, že ji tak vidí i muži, a právě z toho pramení problémy v jejím milostném životě. Ráda sleduje televizi nebo čte časopisy, které jsou plné krásný modelek s dokonalými postavami. Sama Bridget přiznává, že je ovlivněna okolním světem a není schopna přijmout se takovou, jaká je.

Není divu, že je kniha *Deník Bridget Jonesové* považována za průkopnickou. Nikdy předtím zde žena podobná Bridget nebyla. Ničeho se nebojí, je upřímná a spousta čtenářek se v ní vidí. Tato kniha je po mnoho let čtena napříč generacemi, které jsou jistě ovlivněny touto fiktivní postavou.

Bibliography

BBC. "Bridget Jones's Diary by Helen Fielding." Posted November 3, 2019. Podcast, 28:47. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0009yxq>.

BBC. "Bridget Jones vs Pride and Prejudice." Posted January 28, 2013. Video, 2:47. <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/entertainment-arts-21204956>.

BBC. "Emmeline Pankhurst." Accessed March 5, 2021. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/pankhurst_emmeline.shtml.

BBC. "Helen Reddy: Australian singer of feminist anthem I Am Woman dies." Posted September 30, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-54350248>.

BBC. "What is the Good Friday Agreement." Posted October 5, 2020. Video, 4:28. <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-northern-ireland-54380051>.

Book Browse. "An Interview with Helen Fielding," Accessed January 5, 2021. https://www.bookbrowse.com/author_interviews/full/index.cfm/author_number/236/helen-fielding.

Brooks, Ann. *Postfeminism: Feminism, Cultural Theory and Cultural Forms*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Cambridge Dictionary. "Chick." Accessed January 5, 2021. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/chick>.

Cambridge Dictionary. "Singleton." Accessed March 10, 2021. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/singleton>.

Coman, Julian. "Margaret Thatcher: 20 ways that she changed Britain." *The Guardian*, April 14, 2013. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/apr/14/margaret-thatcher-20-changes-britain>.

Ferriss, Suzanne and Mallory Young. *Chick Lit: The New Woman's Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Fielding, Helen. *Bridget Jones's Diary*. London: Picador, 1996.

Gander, Kashmiri. "What an Illegal Abortion Was Like in the 1960s, Reveals 86-year-old Activist." *The Independent*, March 30, 2017. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/illegal-abortion-1960s-sixties-uk-pro-choice-activist-diane-munday-bpas-a7657726.html>.

Glover, David and Scott McCracken. *The Cambridge Companion to Popular Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

- Head, Dominic. *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002.
- IMDb. "Deník Bridget Jonesové." Accessed March 5, 2021. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0243155/awards>.
- Lea, Jonathan. "Margaret Thatcher's Greatest Achievements." Last Modified April 6, 2020. <https://www.jonathanlea.net/2013/margaret-thatchers-greatest-achievements/>.
- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. "Chick Lit." Accessed January 12, 2021 <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/chick-lit>.
- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. "Feminism." Accessed February 21, 2021. <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/feminism>.
- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. "Spinster." Accessed March 5, 2021. <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/spinster>.
- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. "Suffragette." Accessed March 2, 2021. <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/suffragette>.
- Lu, Yingru. *Chick Lit: Themes and Studies*. Sichuan China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House, 2014.
- Mangan, Lucy. *The Feminism Book*. New York: DK Publishing, 2019. <https://www.scribd.com/document/428836889/The-Feminism-Book-Big-Ideas-Simply-Explained-DK-pdf>.
- Marr, Andrew. *A History of Modern Britain*. London: Macmillan, 2008.
- Marsh, Kelly A. "Contextualizing Bridget Jones." JSTOR 31, no. 1. (Winter 2004): 52. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25115173?seq=1>.
- McCracken, Scott. *Pulp: Reading Popular Fiction*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998.
- McRobbie, Angela. *The Aftermath of Feminism, Gender, Culture and Social Change*. London: Sage, 2009.
- Morgan, Kenneth O. "Britain in the Seventies – Our Unfinest Hour?" *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* 12 (December 2017): 1. <https://journals.openedition.org/rfcb/1662>.
- Morgan, Kenneth O. *The Oxford History of Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Rose, Charlie. "Helen Fielding," Posted June 24, 1998. Video, 11:56, <https://charlieroose.com/videos/1694>.
- Smith, Caroline J. *Cosmopolitan Culture and Consumerism in Chick Lit*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

The Independent. "Helen Fielding: Beyond Bridget." Posted October 16, 2013.
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/helen-fielding-beyond-bridget-89876.html>.

Time. "Time 100 Persons Of The Century." Posted June 14, 1999.
<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,991227-2,00.html>.

UK Government. "Past Prime Ministers." Accessed February 20, 2021.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/john-major>.

UK Government. "Past Prime Ministers." Accessed February 21, 2021.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/tony-blair>.

UK Parliament. "Referendums held in the UK." Accessed February 12, 2021.
<https://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/vote-in-general-elections/referendums-held-in-the-uk/>.

Walters, Margaret. *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: University Press, 2005.