Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro
Centro de Educação e Humanidades
Instituto de Letras

Natália Batista Benetti

Have you met Miss Jones? Analysing Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, a 1990s novel in dialogue with Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

Rio de Janeiro
2016

Natália Batista Benetti

Have you met Miss Jones? Analysing Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, a 1990s novel in dialogue with Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

Dissertação apresentada, como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Mestre, ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Área de concentração: Literaturas de Língua Inglesa.

Orientadora: Prof.ª Dra. Ana Lucia de Souza Henriques

Rio de Janeiro

2016

CATALOGAÇÃO NA FONTE
UERJ/REDE SIRIUS/BIBLIOTECA CEH/B

B471 Benetti, Natália Batista.
Have you met Miss Jones? Analysing Helen Fielding's Bridget Jones's diary, a 1990s novel in dialogue with Jane Austen's Pride and prejudice / Natália Batista Benetti. – 2016.
95 f.

Orientadora: Ana Lucia de Souza Henriques.
Dissertação (mestrado) – Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Instituto de Letras.

1. Ficção inglesa – História e crítica – Teses. 2. Austen, Jane, 1775-1817 - Crítica e interpretação – Teses. 3. Austen, Jane, 1775-1817. Orgulho e preconceito – Teses. 4. Fielding, Helen, 1958- - Crítica e interpretação – Teses. 5. Fielding, Helen, 1958-. O diário de Bridget Jones – Teses. 6. Mulheres na literatura – Teses. 7. Intertextualidade – Teses. I. Henriques, Ana Lúcia de Souza. II. Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Instituto de Letras. III. Título.

CDU 820-95

_____ _____

Assinatura Data

Natália Batista Benetti

Have you met Miss Jones? Analysing Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary,* a 1990s novel in dialogue with Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

Dissertação apresentada, como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Mestre, ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Área de concentração: Literaturas de Língua Inglesa.

Aprovada em 31 de março de 2016.

Banca examinadora:

_____

Profª. Dra. Ana Lucia de Souza Henriques (Orientadora)

Instituto de Letras - UERJ

_____

Profª. Dra. Daniela Gianna Claudia Beccaccia Versiani

Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro

_____

Profª. Dra. Lucia Rodriguez de la Rocque

Instituto de Letras - UERJ

Rio de Janeiro

2016

DEDICATÓRIA

Dedico este trabalho às mulheres da minha vida, minhas heroínas da vida real.

AGRADECIMENTOS

Em primeiro lugar, gostaria de agradecer a Deus por ter-me concedido mais esta conquista, e por ter-me sustentado e guiado meus passos até aqui.

Gostaria de agradecer à minha família por toda a compreensão e suporte durante esses dois anos tão intensos e tão árduos. À vovó Dorli, por ter tido um papel imprescindível na minha formação tanto como pessoa quanto como profissional; e por ter despertado em mim, já desde tão pequena, esse imenso amor pela literatura e pelas salas de aula. Obrigada vó, por ser a maior inspiração na minha vida. Agradeço também à minha querida e saudosa vovó Rita, que dizia que um dia eu seria grande. À mamãe, por me apoiar sempre, inclusive quando eu decido embarcar nas minhas mais loucas aventuras. À Vivi, por toda a sua ternura, e por já gostar da Bridget, mesmo tendo apenas oito aninhos de idade. Ao vovô, ao papai, e ao Lucas por todo amor e carinho, pois os homens da minha vida também são especiais! À maninha, por ser minha melhor amiga, e por estar sempre disposta a ouvir meus devaneios mais profundos e a compartilhar comigo um pouquinho da minha paixão pela literatura inglesa, o que não é tão sofrível assim. Afinal, assistir *Orgulho e Preconceito* over and over again, e falar sobre Mr Darcy, Colin Firth, e Daniel Cleaver não é lá um grande sacrifício...

Em especial, agradeço ao meu querido professor Tarso do Amaral. Sem a sua ajuda, certamente, eu não estaria aqui. Muitíssimo obrigada por acreditar no meu potencial quando nem eu mesma conseguia. Obrigada por toda a paciência, pela dedicação, por ter sido parte do pré-projeto que acabou virando esta dissertação, e pelas aulas fabulosas e inspiradoras sobre o Keats, sobre o Wuthering Heights, sobre o Sherlock Holmes, o Dickens e o Lewis Carroll. Tenho por você uma profunda admiração e, sinceramente, espero que um dia também eu tenha esse brilho nos olhos ao dar aulas de literatura. Você é, de fato, uma grande inspiração pra mim. Obrigada por tudo!

Agradeço à minha querida orientadora, Ana Lucia. Muitíssimo obrigada por toda a dedicação, a paciência, e o comprometimento ao longo desses quase dois anos. Obrigada também por me servir como inspiração. Certamente, minha pesquisa não seria a mesma sem a sua ajuda.

Gostaria de agradecer ao professor Roberto Ferreira da Rocha, da UFRJ, por, ainda que sem saber, ter despertado em mim, há tanto tempo atrás, a possibilidade de se fazer esta pesquisa, em meio a uma conversa informal dentro do departamento de letras anglo-

germânicas da faculdade. Muito obrigada! Obrigada também pelas aulas inspiradoras sobre Shakespeare e drama na graduação.

Agradeço imensamente aos mestres que tive pelo caminho. Aos professores da Faculdade de Letras da UFRJ, meu agradecimento especial à prof.ª Maria Lúcia Guimarães de Faria, que já bem no início da graduação me contagiou com suas aulas maravilhosas de Teoria Literária; à professora Vera Lima, por contribuir para que eu me apaixonasse ainda mais pela Literatura Inglesa, e à professora Monica Figueiredo, por me inebriar com suas aulas fascinantes de Literatura Portuguesa.

Sou imensamente grata aos meus amigos e aos meus irmãos em Cristo, que ficam genuinamente felizes com mais uma vitória alcançada na minha vida. Obrigada por estarem torcendo para que tudo desse certo, e lembrando-se de mim em suas orações. Agradeço também à minha 'urban family', que, assim como a da Bridget, está sempre pronta a me ajudar, aconselhar, me fazer rir, e me amar acima de tudo, mesmo estando a quilômetros de distância. Vocês sabem quem são, amo vocês!

Ao meu querido coordenador e amigo, Gabriel, agradeço de coração por todo o apoio e pela compreensão, principalmente nos dias em que eu tive de faltar ao trabalho para ficar em casa escrevendo. You rock, boss!

Gostaria de agradecer também aos meus amados alunos por todo o carinho, e por tornarem os meus dias mais felizes.

Por fim, agradeço à Jane Austen, à Helen Fielding, ao Keats, ao Dickens, ao Shakespeare, ao Carroll, ao Conan Doyle, ao Flemming, ao Wordsworth, dentre outros, por provocarem em mim todo esse amor que me alenta e que me transporta constantemente para outros universos.

RESUMO

BENETTI, Natália Batista. *Have you met Miss Jones?* Analysing Helen Fielding's Bridget Jones's diary, a 1990s novel in dialogue with Jane Austen's Pride and prejudice. 2016. 95 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Literaturas de Língua Inglesa) – Instituto de Letras, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2016.

A presente dissertação constitui uma análise de *O Diário de Bridget Jones*, de Helen Fielding, e seus diálogos com *Orgulho e Preconceito*, de Jane Austen. Visto que o romance contemporâneo consiste numa releitura do clássico de Austen, faz-se uma investigação sobre como as duas obras conversam entre si, apesar dos quase dois séculos que as separam, trazendo à tona temas tais como o papel da mulher na sociedade, a importância do casamento, e questões de identidade no âmbito da Inglaterra da década de 1990.

Palavras-chave: Diálogos intertextuais. Ficção inglesa. Mulher. Sociedade.

ABSTRACT

BENETTI, Natália Batista. *Have you met Miss Jones?* Analysing Helen Fielding's Bridget Jones's diary, a 1990s novel in dialogue with Jane Austen's Pride and prejudice. 2016. 95 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Literaturas de Língua Inglesa) – Instituto de Letras, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2016.

The following dissertation comprises an analysis of *Bridget Jones's Diary*, by Helen Fielding, and its dialogue with Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, by Jane Austen. Bearing in mind the contemporary novel is but a revisiting of the most famous novel in Austen's canon, the aim of this research is to investigate the way both novels communicate with one another despite the two centuries that separate them. By doing so, we bring to light issues such as the role of women, the importance of marriage and identity matters in the scope of 1990's England.

Keywords: Intertextual dialogues. English fiction. Woman. Society.

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

> But for my own part, if a book is well written, I always find it too short.
> Jane Austen, ***Juvenilia***

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a thirty-something career girl these days, might be in want of a husband. Bridget Jones is a British girl in her thirties living in London and working at a publishing company in the mid-1990s. As a twentieth-century skilled professional, she has a proper job, a flat, and she is financially independent. The owner of a bachelor's degree in English Literature, Bridget may veer from the classics to foolish programmes on television. Her best friends comprise her 'urban family', as she usually affirms, and they are always there for her whenever she needs an urgent summit to discuss both love and career crisis. Sharon is the one friend with whom Bridget usually has conversations in a tone of strident feminism as she remarks independent women like them have achieved so many things in life and have got an income of their own that they do not need to wash anybody else's socks anymore. Jude is the brilliant head of futures at an important company who often has to excuse herself from board meetings as to cry in the toilet over her commitment-phobic boyfriend, also known as Vile Richard. Tom is Bridget's gay friend, whom she always rings to as to seek some advice on her love life, and who always tells her to be an inner-poised cool ice queen when it comes to making a man utterly attracted to her.

Despite living in such a major city, being able to provide for her own self and having access to as many forms of entertainment as an urban centre can offer and having people to support her, Bridget thinks her life is a complete chaos and that she is a hopeless singleton, for she does not seem to manage to be in a substantial relationship with a proper boyfriend. As her family, her smug married friends and the people who comprise her social circle usually remind her, offices are full of career girls like her and she cannot put marriage off for ever, for her biological clock is ticking. The pressure people put on Bridget to get married and settle down affects her so much that she often dreads attending family reunions and dining with the smug married friends. At the same time, she has lots of fun talking and getting miserably drunk with her urban family at the pub on ordinary week days as well as watching silly relationship-programmes on the telly. When her mother tries to set her up with the fittest man around to marry, the top-notch human rights barrister Mark Darcy, and their first encounter is but a total disaster, Bridget Jones starts to punish herself and to declare she is a complete

failure. In her mind, the reason why she cannot find a nice and caring boyfriend and form a functional relationship is that she is too fat and uninteresting, and her low self-esteem and her strong desire to be a 'woman of substance complete without boyfriend' leads her to resort to self-help books, *Cosmopolitan* magazines, all sorts of diets, bottles and bottles of Chardonnay, several slices of Emmenthal cheese, and giant tray-sized bars of Cadbury's chocolate. In order to control her chaotic life, Bridget Jones decides to start a diary, in which she keeps daily track of her calories, her weight, her alcohol units and the amounts of cigarettes she consumes in the form of rather humorous entries. In one of them, for instance, she explains how she manages to wake up way too early in the morning and never arrive at work on time. Bridget is, indeed, an utterly funny, clumsy and ironic heroine, who struggles to change and improve. However, as much as tries, she always fails, for she cannot help being exactly who she is, and what is at stake in the story is that she is infinitely better than the person she is trying to become. In a world which is ruled by technology and globalisation, and where everything is constantly changing all the time, Bridget Jones tries to find her place in society amid the huge variety of options she has. Along the way, she gets involved with her womanising boss, the sort of person who embodies all the things she and her friends usually despise in a man; she also deals with her parent's brief separation, the pressures of her mother, and all sorts of obstacles as she never stops searching for the man of her dreams. According to British Professor Imelda Whelehan, "Bridget says something genuinely new about single life" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 21). That is probably one of the reasons why *Bridget Jones's Diary* had sold nearly six million copies by 2001 and was one of the most notorious books of the 90s. As a matter of fact, due to *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Helen Fielding is acknowledged as one of the precursors of a new genre fiction best known as 'chick-lit', and regarding that, Caroline J. Smith has argued that:

> Bridget Jones's Diary is just one of the many texts from the recent literary phenomenon popularly known as chick lit which dialogues with consumer culture mediums, particularly women's advice manuals. Loosely defined, chick lit, which arguably began with Fielding's text, consists of heroine-centered narratives that focus on the trials and tribulations of their individual protagonists. At its onset, the genre was narrowly defined in that the protagonists depicted in these texts were young, single, white, heterosexual, British and American women in their late twenties and early thirties, living in metropolitan areas. Very often, these protagonists not only mirror the authors of these texts, but they also reflect the demographic of their audience, connecting the texts directly to their readers (SMITH, 2008, p. 2).

Bridget Jones, the character, emerged from columns her creator, journalist Helen Fielding, used to write in prominent British newspapers. In fact, she came to life around 1995, coincidentally the time when the BBC was broadcasting one of the most famous adaptations

of *Pride and Prejudice* to date. The mini-series, directed by Simon Langton, was a tremendous hit and it is estimated that over 10 million people in Britain watched the episode finale, and the scene in which Austen's iconic Mr Darcy, played by actor Colin Firth, is portrayed in a wet shirt coming out of the lake in Pemberley has contributed to transform both the TV show and the classic itself into a huge obsession that has led to a phenomenon called 'Austenmania'. For the record, nowadays there is an enormous and endless proliferation of adaptations of all things Austen, and as Professor Kathryn Sutherland, an expert on the writer, points out, currently "Jane Austen catches the public imagination and captures the kind of media attention that any living author would envy" (SUTHERLAND, 2011, p. 219). As it has been asserted in several interviews, Fielding, the writer of *Bridget Jones's Diary*, is a great fan of Austen and she was so infatuated with the aforementioned mini-series that she borrowed the plot of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and used it in her book. It is not by chance that Colin Firth himself was invited to play Mark Darcy, a modern-day version of Mr Darcy, in the film adaptation of the book and that Bridget herself remarks about the episode finale of the referred mini-series in one of the entries in her diary.

As it has been mentioned, *Bridget Jones's Diary* is an extremely funny rereading of one of Austen's most cherished and beloved novels. As a matter of fact, still regarding the prominence of *Pride and Prejudice*, literary critic Ian Littlewood affims that one of its greatest tributes "is that readers can still turn to it, more confidently than to almost any other novel in the [English] language, for sheer enjoyment" (LITTLEWOOD, 1999, p. v). Throughout the story, it becomes clearly noticeable that the plot of *Bridget Jones's Diary* resembles the storyline of *Pride and Prejudice*, and its characters remind us of the characters in the classic, for in this contemporary revisiting, for instance, Daniel Cleaver, Bridget's mother, and Mark Darcy clearly make reference to George Wickham, Mrs Bennet, and Mr Darcy respectively. Bridget, on the other hand, presents features of different female characters, such as Charlotte Lucas, Lydia and Elizabeth Bennet. Concerning Elizabeth Bennet, it is possible to affirm that although Bridget is quite unlike her, especially because of the different ages they belong to, she also presents similarities to the Austenian protagonist in that both of them are genuine, unconventional to a certain extent, and remarkable heroines. In fact, Lizzie and Bridget are faithful to their own principles and they somehow question the ideals of womanhood that are in vogue in the different moments they live in. Elizabeth is unconventional in a sense that she turns down two marriage proposals for she affirms she cannot be prevailed upon to marry someone she does not love, despite her family's estate being entitled to a distant cousin and despite her having no dowries to offer to any potential

suitor. Bridget, too, is unconventional in that she does not precisely behave the way people expect her to, especially when it refers to her being thirty and unmarried, and her kind of beauty being different from the patterns of beauty widely spread by the media in the twentieth century. Apart from that, both heroines also act impulsively as the two of them tend to get carried away by their emotions.

If, on the one hand, one of Austen's main themes, which was very much present in most of her novels, was the importance of marriage in the lives of her female characters, especially the ones who had little financial resources, *Bridget Jones's Diary* on the other hand, explores the reason why marriage still seems to be very significant at a time women no longer need to find a husband to provide for themselves and legitimise their charms. Still concerning that, theoretician Leah Guenther has remarked that:

> Whereas Austen's heroines bemoan their limited choices, Fielding's lament having too many. Austen's characters are given one cultural directive, to marry, while Fielding's struggle with conflicting social messages that compel them simultaneously to find a man, be independent, build a career, start a family, have sex indiscriminately and be chaste. In this light, Bridget's struggle to control her life and her narrative results not from a literary convention that emphasizes women's economic and sexual restriction, but from a cultural imperative to strive for multiple and contradictory female ideals (GUENTHER, 2006, p. 86).

Moreover, the very diary narrative also relates to the letters that pervade *Pride and Prejudice*, for as much as the diary style gives Bridget, the heroine, some sort of inner voice that does not seem to be affected by the influence of a narrator, it is also possible to notice a sense of subjectivity in the characters who exchange the letters in the classic. Besides, it is relevant to mention that the process of revisiting canonical texts is, in fact, a phenomenon characteristic of postmodernism and as Canadian theoretician Linda Hutcheon has so extensively suggested, it usually represents a "critical revisiting, an ironic dialogue with the past of both art and society" (HUTCHEON, 1993, p. 244).

Hence, this dissertation aims at discussing the way both novels dialogue with one another. It is structured in three chapters. In chapter 1, I briefly analyse the lives of Jane Austen and Helen Fielding as well as the socio-historical context in which both writers are inserted. The information conveyed in this chapter helps understand the differences and also the similarities inherent in the two hundred years that separate the authors. One of the main sources used to write this first part was *A Memoir of Jane Austen* first published by Jane Austen's nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh in 1869 and William H. Marshall's *The World of the Victorian Novel* (1967).

Chapter 2 comprises a brief analysis of the socio-historical context of the United Kingdom in the 1990s so that it may offer a glimpse into the universe where the heroine and

the other characters in *Bridget Jones's Diary* live, and into the way those characters behave and why they behave the way they do. As a matter of fact, this chapter portrays some issues that pervaded the referred decade in Great Britain, such as the education reform that enabled more and more youngsters to attend university and its consequent interference in the British demography of the time. Nevertheless, it particularly depicts the influence of technology, consumption and globalisation in a rather ephemeral world. As Zygmunt Bauman has broadly affirmed, by "'setting the world in motion'", modernity exposed the fragility and unsteadiness of things and threw open the possibility (and the need) of re-shaping them" (BAUMAN, 2002, p. 473). Thus, in an era which is ruled by consumption, and where everything is so volatile, nothing is made to last very long, and in such context, intimate relationships tend to be rather fluid, and so does identity.

The investigation into the similarities and dissimilarities between *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Pride and Prejudice* is presented in chapter 3, which is divided into four different parts. The first part portrays the way Bridget, Elizabeth Bennet and other Austenian female characters are influenced by the pressure society inflicts on them, highlighting themes such as social behaviour, marriage, love, social classes, the dependence on self-help books and conduct manuals, which affect the lives of Bridget and her predecessors. This chapter also emphasises the importance of the diary narrative and its association with the letters present in the classic. Bridget expresses herself in the form of entries in her diary, and Elizabeth, amongst other characters in *Pride and Prejudice*, also conveys her feelings throughout the letters she exchanges; hence both heroines seem to have some sort of inner voice which accounts for their subjectivity and which gives the reader a further idea of the nature of these characters. In fact, both the diary and the letters provide spontaneous streams of consciousness, for in the two styles, the characters seem to speak without much influence of the narrator (BRAY, 2003, p. 1). It is important to mention that according to Austen-Leigh, Samuel Richardson was one of Jane Austen's favourite writers, and since his oeuvre was characterised by epistolary novels, it is not by chance that he might have influenced Austen in a sense that a few of her novels were pervaded by quite a few letters and the works that comprise her *Juvenilia* precisely consist of epistolary narratives as well. Still regarding the role of epistolary novels, Ruth Perry has suggested that "unfolding a story in letters automatically emphasises the psychological angle of vision as no other narrative form does", furthermore, a "fiction told through letters becomes a story about events in consciousness, whatever else it may be about" (PERRY apud, BRAY, 2003, p. 9).

The second part is about the role played by the mothers of both heroines. It gives insights into the relevance of marriage in the different historical moments each book belongs to, and the major concern each mother has about pairing their children up with prospective suitors. The analysis of Bridget's mother's behaviour and disposition also instigates us to embark on a little exploration of the condition of housewives in the last decade of the twentieth century.

The subsequent part is about the rogues in both novels: Mr Wickham and Daniel Cleaver. It constitutes an investigation into the aforementioned anti-heroes, with a wide focus on Daniel Cleaver, aiming at exploring the way this character embodies characteristics of his counterpart. As it is known, Jane Austen often portrays rogues in her stories as to draw parallels between them and the heroes thus bringing out, by means of comparison, the benignity of the heroes, and based on that, it is possible to infer Helen Fielding does exactly the same in *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

The last part comprises an analysis of Mark Darcy and Mr Darcy, the heroes of the two stories. Starting by the name, they have several things in common; one of them is the fact that on the one hand, Mr Darcy's position as a rich, attractive and kind landowner renders him the closest thing to the ideal of the Prince Charming in the sphere of the landed gentry in eighteenth-century England. On the other hand, Mark Darcy, as a handsome and successful well-off barrister that strikingly alludes to Mr Darcy, also represents some sort of Prince Charming in the 1990s. To corroborate that, it has been argued that:

> Just as the traditional fairy tale would not be complete without a dashing young prince riding in on his white horse to save the heroine from destruction of some sort, the contemporary chick lit novel incorporates a similar pattern revolving around the 'need' to be saved. For Bridget Jones, the serious – yet strikingly handsome Mr. Darcy (thanks, Austen) not only 'saves' her from falling into heartbreak [...] but he also represents a paradigm of order, common sense and rationality in comparison to Bridget's habitual faux pas and social misconduct (RENDE, 2008, p. 17).

Hence, in light of what was mentioned above, this section focuses on the way Fielding's novel presents questions such as: career girls these days still craving to find a Mr Right, the relevance of the prince-charming fantasy and the fairy-tale plot in the 1990s, and reasons for Austen's most famous hero being so admired in late modern days that Mark Darcy seems to be but a modern version of him.

We intend, therefore, to analyse the way *Bridget Jones's Diary* establishes an endearing and highly comical dialogue with *Pride and Prejudice*. Investigating the way both novels interact with one another is what propels us into this dissertation.

1 **TWO NOVELISTS IN CONTEXT: JANE AUSTEN AND HELEN FIELDING**

1.1 **Jane Austen**

> It was not, however, what she *knew*, but what she *was*, that distinguished her from others.
> J. E. Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen*

British novelist and critic Virginia Woolf has once remarked that Jane Austen was "the most perfect artist among women, the writer whose books are immortal" (WOOLF, 1953, p. 149). Austen, indeed one of the most emblematic female writers in English literature and worldwide icon in the 21st century, was born in 1775, in Steventon, Hampshire, England. Her father, Reverend George Austen and her mother Mrs Cassandra Austen got married in 1764. Although Mr Austen's parents had left him no inheritance, with the aid of an uncle, he received good education and eventually managed to attend St John's College in Oxford. Based on what James Edward Austen-Leigh affirmed in *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, Jane Austen had five brothers and one sister, Cassandra, "dearest of all to the heart of Jane" (AUSTEN-LEIGH, 1882, p. 15). Jane Austen's great affection for her sister is believed by many to have influenced the author on depicting the relationship between sisters in some of her stories.

Mr George Austen was the rector of two parishes and although he was not rich, he had enough to provide for his family. As Jane Austen's nephew states in the *Memoir*, being a good scholar, Mr Austen "was able to prepare two of his sons for the University, and to direct the studies of his other children, […] as well as to increase his income by taking pupils" (p. 10).

Jane Austen grew up in such an environment where her father taught boarding students and her eldest brother, James, having been to college and having great knowledge of English literature, certainly had "a large share in directing her reading and forming her taste" (12). It is also known that her two youngest brothers joined the Navy, which probably is the reason why she has portrayed sailors in quite a few of her novels, such as *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*. Furthermore, as Kathryn Sutherland – a professor at St. Anne's College, Oxford - points out, Jane Austen was surrounded by a family of amateur writers, since her mother wrote "playful verses, riddles and charades; her elder brothers James and Henry jointly

founded and largely wrote a humorous weekly paper, The Loiterer, while students at St John's College, Oxford" (Available at: http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/jane-austens-juvenilia).

It is believed that Jane Austen started writing at a very early age. In 1786, when she was still 11 years old, she started writing her *Juvenilia*, a set of plays, novellas and comic imitations of famous novels she created for the entertainment of her family and close friends. As it has been remarked, "her childhood writings present a "pronounced thread of comment on and wilful misreading of the literature of her day, showing how thoroughly and how early the activity of critical reading informed her character as a writer" (Available online at: http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/jane-austens-juvenilia). In light of that, it is important to highlight that since she was very young, Jane Austen had free access to her family's vast library, which contained a good deal of books; therefore, she had enough material to inspire her as to create her very own original stories. However, at the beginning of her literary career, she would rather subvert novels that had already been written, thus establishing an inter-cultural dialogue with them. Still according to Sutherland, Austen's *Juvenilia* comprises parodies of:

> the classic Sir Charles Grandison by her favourite Samuel Richardson; of Oliver Goldsmith's schoolroom textbook, *The History of England* (4 vols, 1771); of the essayists Joseph Addison and Samuel Johnson; and of the anthologies of moral pieces and 'Elegant Extracts' which formed the staple of young ladies' education 'The History of England' (Available at: http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/jane-austens-juvenilia).

The writer resided in Steventon until 1801, when she was 25 years old. As her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh remarks in her memoir, Miss Jane Austen was always surrounded by this small circle of people that comprised her family and neighbours, with whom, her family were able to "mix in the best society […] and to exercise a liberal hospitality to their own relations and friends" (AUSTEN-LEIGH, 1882, p. 22). This, added to the fact that they possessed a carriage and a few horses, seems to be a description of Longbourn and the kind of lifestyle the Bennets led in Miss Austen's most famous novel, *Pride and Prejudice*. As a matter of fact, similarly to her female characters, Miss Austen seemed to be quite fond of the dancing balls which were so common at the time and constantly depicted in her books: "Many country towns had a monthly ball throughout the winter […] Dinner parties more frequently ended with an extempore dance on the carpet, to the music of a harpsichord in the house, or a fiddle from the village" (p. 31).

Even though Jane Austen's period of life comprehended that of the French Revolution and consequently the Napoleonic wars, never did she give any account of these historical events in her stories. As it has been argued, she seemed to live in a universe of her own, which she clearly represented in her novels: "the social history of the landed families at that time in England" (WILLIAMS, 1995. p. 233). Austen was pretty much interested in depicting the ordinary life of a society which is deeply concerned with rules and moral values. Her stories are usually set in the South of England, a place she was quite acquainted with, and her characters are frequently observed and judged by others, especially women, who have very little freedom to even go for a walk by themselves and who must behave properly even inside their own houses. Since most of them cannot see their own flaws, they are judged and motivated to change so they can become better persons to live in that society. Her works give us the impression we are seeing the reflection of a time where etiquette manuals were mandatory, a time when one must follow specific rules to pay or receive a visit, to dance and make acquaintances at a ball, to be courted, to deal with people from different social classes, amongst other things. To corroborate Jane Austen's interest in ordinary life, Kathryn Sutherland states: "Her subjects are the behaviour of parents to their children, the dangers and pleasures of falling in love, of making friends, of getting on with neighbours, and above all of discriminating between those who mean us well and those who may not" (Available at: http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/jane-austens-social-realism-and-the-novel).

Despite the fact that Jane Austen was born almost at the end of the 18th century**,** her novels seem to have been very much influenced by the rationalist thought which emerged during the Enlightenment era. As William H. Marshall suggests in *The World of the Victorian Novel,* the Enlightenment was "an attempt to sustain the order once based upon the *image of divine power* by resting it upon a form of the *idea of right"* (MARSHALL, 1967, p. 25). As a matter of fact, the modern novel is known to have come out as a new literary form in the 18th century and the period was also highlighted by the emergence of a few female writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Catharine Macaulay and Mary Astell who, motivated by the revolutionary character of the Enlightenment, argued about the role of women in society and fought for emancipation and equal rights. In agreement with what professor Karen O'Brien points out, this new way of thinking "brought with it, for the first time, the idea that women, as well as men, have a history, and that, far from being intelligible in terms of unchanging biological, scriptural or domestic roles, they too can change with changing times" (O'BRIEN, 2009, p. 1). Most of the aforementioned women were fighting against a system which limited

their access to education, particularly those who belonged to the lower classes. Mary Wollstonecraft, for example, was in France at the time of the French Revolution and, undoubtedly, was one of the most critical and remarkable defenders of gender equality since she ended up writing *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, the basis for a future feminist philosophy (GOMES, 2011, p. 46).

Although things did not change that quickly, it is also important to remark that until then women were still under the oppression they had always suffered since the Middle Ages. Luckily enough, Jane Austen and her sister Cassandra had, at least, an ordinary education at a time when only men had the priority to receive formal education and attend university. Regarding Austen's educational background and its reflection on her works, Kathryn Sutherland affirms:

> Jane Austen's novels engage with the debate over women's education by exploring the intellectual and moral distance between the show of mere accomplishments and the deeper understanding that signals self-knowledge. Often the distance between show and substance is what separates her heroines from other women in their society. For Austen one route to such inward knowledge is reading. At the same time, all her heroines are keenly aware of their deficiencies in education (Available at: http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/female-education-reading-and-jane-austen).

By the end of the century, the reading public of novels consisted of middle-class people who were in their great majority Protestants. As mentioned before, it is not by chance that Jane Austen was very much concerned about moral values and human behaviour in her stories. Still according to William Marshall, Jane Austen's world view was a mixture of traditional Christian value and eighteenth-century rationalism where morality "derives from the universal structure and therefore remains simple: good and evil are polar, recognizable and distinguishable by the reasoning mind" (MARSHALL, 1967, p. 48, 49).

In light of that, Jane Austen usually depicts the good and the evil inherent to human beings in her stories. This way, several of her characters must pass through a process of adaptation in which they recognise their failures and change as to fit into the orderly universe they belong to. Such scheme was not different in *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen's most acclaimed novel and important subject to this paper. Around 1795, she started writing her first adult novel, *Sense and Sensibility*, initially called *Elinor and Marianne*. In 1797, she finished *Pride and Prejudice* whose first tentative title was *First Impressions*. Nonetheless, both books were only published a couple of years later when she was already living in Bath where she remained up to the end of her life.

"[R] ather too light, and bright, and sparkling" are the words Jane Austen used to describe *Pride and Prejudice* soon after it was released, in a letter she exchanged with her sister, Cassandra, giving an account of the reception of the book. The correspondence displays the writer's affection for the book and, particularly, its main characters which can be best emphasised by her praise to her most famous heroine, Elizabeth Bennet: "I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print, and how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like *her* at least I do not know" (AUSTEN apud AUSTEN-LEIGH, 1882, p. 98, 99).

Pride and Prejudice revolves around the lives of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy. Elizabeth is a witty, feisty and clever young woman who lives with her four sisters, Jane, Lydia, Kitty, Mary and her parents in the country city of Hertfordshire. Like her siblings, Elizabeth was brought up to get married. Since her parents did not have any son, the only possible way to secure Longbourn, the family's estate, was by tying the knot with a distant cousin called Mr Collins, the legal heir to her father's property once he died. Due to the unpredictability of the girls' future, their narrow-minded mother cannot think of anything else in life rather than marrying all of them, specially the eldest ones, Jane and Elizabeth, respectively. Mrs Bennet is, in fact, the personification of the stereotypical kind of middle-class mother of that time, who can only see marriage as the most effective and honourable solution to secure her daughters a safe and decent future life. Despite all that, Elizabeth usually claimed she would only marry for love.

When Mrs Bennet hears that a rich and respectable young gentleman, a Mr Bingley, is moving to the neighbourhood and is to occupy Netherfield Park, a mansion nearby, she immediately schemes to introduce Jane - her most beautiful daughter, as she usually remarks – to him. As literary critic Dennis Walder argues, the kind of society portrayed in the novel is "one in which a concern with wealth, property and marriage predominates. The impression given is of a small inter-knit neighbourhood in which gossip of new arrivals and opinions concerning them quickly circulate and form the main focus of interest" (WALDER, 1995, p. 31)

In effect, in the first ball held after Mr Bingley's arrival in the neighbourhood, he becomes mesmerised by Jane's beauty and to the surprise of her mother and friends, dances with her twice during the night. However, his apparently rude, snobbish, aloof and wealthy best friend, Mr Darcy, does not seem to appreciate Elizabeth's looks and emphasises that he considers her just tolerable and not handsome enough to tempt him (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 13). As a matter of fact, what Mr Darcy could never imagine is that the lady overheard everything

he said about her to Mr Bingley. His attitude towards her at the very first time they made acquaintance was enough for Lizzie and her family to detest him and assume he was a conceited and despising creature: “His character was decided. He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and everybody hoped that he would never come there again” AUSTEN, 1999, p. 12). Mr Darcy’s behaviour at the ball added to a series of events regarding him, the Bingleys, the Bennets and their acquaintances led Elizabeth to investigate and make discoveries about people’s characters and, first and foremost, about her own.

In short, not only in *Pride and Prejudice* but in all of her novels, did Austen portray a group of characters which were representatives of a world she knew quite well: the landed gentry that inhabited a part of England which had not yet been devastated by the effects of the Industrial Revolution. It was in such a satirical tone that the writer subtly argued about morals and the social conduct which governed the rural bourgeoisie that surrounded her. The impression we have whenever we read any of Austen’s novels is that she is a mere observer of particular families whose lives are intricately connected. However, by criticising these fictional families, she was striking at the very heart of that provincial English society. For the record, Sir Walter Scott corroborates that in an entry of his journal he wrote on March 14th, 1826:

> Also read again, and for the third time at least, Miss Austen’s very finely written novel of *Pride and Prejudice*. That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The Big Bow-wow strain I can do myself like any now going; but the exquisite touch, which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting, from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied to me. What a pity such a gifted creature died so early! (SCOTT, 1972, p. 114).

Jane Austen died in 1817, at 42 years old, without having ever got married. As her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh also mentions in the *Memoir*, never did Jane have the acquaintance of any other prominent writer of her time. Her writings were absolutely secluded from the literary world and she only achieved fame as a writer after her death. Besides the *Juvenilia*, Jane Austen’s legacy relies on an unfinished novel called *The Watsons* (1804), an epistolary novella entitled *Lady Susan*, which was only published in the memoir written by Austen-Leigh years after her death, most of the letters she wrote during her lifetime and seven novels: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), *Northanger Abbey* (1818), *Persuasion* (1818) and *Sanditon*, her last novel, which she started writing in 1817 and never managed to finish

1.2 **Helen Fielding**

Nick Hornby, a well-known contemporary British writer and essayist, claims right on the front cover of *Bridget Jones's Diary* that "Helen Fielding is one of the funniest writers in Britain and Bridget Jones is a creation of comic genius" (HORNBY). Helen Fielding was born in 1959, in Morley, West Yorkshire, England. Her father was a manager at a textile mill nearby. He died in 1982. She attended St. Anne's College in Oxford University and graduated in English in 1979. Still in college, she met a group of actors and writers including Rowan Atkinson, well known for interpreting famous TV character Mr Bean, and screenwriter Richard Curtis whom she became close friends with. In fact, Richard Curtis would, a few years later, co-write the screenplay for the adaption of Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

After her graduation, Helen Fielding became a trainee at the BBC, where she stayed until 1989. During her time at the BBC, she went to countries like Ethiopia, Mozambique and also to a refugee camp in Sudan where she produced documentaries to a new charity program in the company called Comic Relief, also co-founded by Richard Curtis. The experiences she acquired during her travels making the documentaries inspired her to write her first novel, *Cause Celeb*, and it has been argued that its "heroine, Rosie Richardson, becomes an aid worker, having previously worked as a publicist for a London publisher, where she met and fell in love with arts program presenter Oliver Marchant" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 11). The book was published in 1994 and had small sales. Still regarding it, Maggie Galehouse, a book critic at The New York Times, has affirmed in an online review: "A serious story that doesn't take itself too seriously, Helen Fielding's first novel is a wonderful surprise."[1]

In the 1990s Fielding worked as a journalist at different British newspapers such as the *Sunday Times*, the *Telegraph* and the *Independent*. However, it was in the latter, around 1995, that she wrote the columns which would lead to *Bridget Jones's Diary*, a huge phenomenon that soon became a best seller. For the record, the writer started writing the columns anonymously and only when she noticed the enormous success it had become did she make herself known. According to British Professor and feminist cultural critic Imelda Whelehan, a great part of the material in the columns survived intact in the books and the columns carried a by-line photograph of "a secretary at the *Independent* newspaper, holding a cigarette and a

[1] Review available online at: https://www.nytimes.com/books/01/02/25/reviews/010225.25galehot.html. Accessed on 14/03/2016.

wine glass, which seemed to contribute to the notion that Bridget actually existed, and resulted in fan mail and marriage proposals" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 12).

As Helen Fielding has already extensively affirmed in several interviews, *Bridget Jones's Diary* was very much influenced by *Pride and Prejudice*, the classic written by Jane Austen, one of her favourite writers. As it was mentioned before, the columns were written (1995) exactly at the moment the BBC was broadcasting one of the most famous adaptations of P&P[2] ever produced. In a 1996 review of The New York Times, critic John J. O'Connor stated that it was a "splendid adaptation with, a remarkably faithful and sensitively nuanced script."[3] Still regarding the connection with P&P, in a recent interview given to the BBC, Fielding affirmed:

> When I first thought of writing the *Bridget Jones* novel, I just had a collection of columns and no plot really, and simultaneously *Pride and Prejudice* was going out on the BBC and I was infatuated with it, and so I just stole the plot and hung my columns on it. The book increasingly began to mimic and nick stuff from *Pride and Prejudice*, but it is a very good plot. And I thought Jane Austen wouldn't mind, and anyway, she is dead. I think it is a really really good novel; it is not surprising that it is still popular everywhere after two hundred years. It's got a really sound plot, it's a really good romantic plot, it's got a fantastic very modern heroine who is independent minded, and funny, and perceptive, and a bit defiant [...] and it's full of themes and messages about human nature all sort of effortlessly gliding along. It's a masterpiece (Available online at: http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-21204956, my transcription).

Still in light of what has been previously remarked, the mini-series was so successful that it is believed to be the trigger to a subsequent Austen fever better known as Austenmania, which is still on the go in the 21st century. Not even Bridget Jones, and behind her Helen Fielding, could refrain from giving her own account of the aforementioned episode in the form of an entry in her diary. After revealing she had spent 245 minutes thinking about Mr Darcy, Bridget says: "**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" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 246). Coincidences aside, as seen above, Bridget Jones not only enthusiastically mentions the referred episode finale in the first novel, but also interviews the mini-series's main star, Colin Firth, in the sequel to the first book entitled *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, published in 2000. The referred 1995 TV series seemed to affect Helen Fielding herself in such a way that

---

[2] The term P&P stands for AUSTEN, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1999 and shall also be used along the text hereafter.

[3] Review can be accessed at: http://www.nytimes.com/1996/01/13/arts/television-review-an-england-where-heart-and-purse-are-romantically-united.html. Accessed on 14/03/2016.

later on, she would invite Colin Firth to play the role of Mark Darcy in the film adaptation of *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

Although Helen Fielding has clearly affirmed Bridget Jones is not an autobiographical character, she has confirmed Bridget's 'urban family' was inspired by her life in a sense that Bridget's friends present similar characteristics and behave exactly like her own friends. As Imelda Whelehan states, Fielding and her friends "represent what was, in the 1990s at least, a singularly desirable way of life. They all emerged from the world of the media in London – the heart of 'cool Britannia' by the time of the Labour victory in the General Election of 1997" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 14). Furthermore, Whelehan affirms the novel is a "commentary on the 1990s" (2002, p. 14) and it can be very well emphasised by a reference Helen Fielding makes to the decay of the British royal family at a time Princess Diana was getting divorced from Prince Charles. Reference to Prime Minister Tony Blair was also made in the subsequent book.

Bridget Jones's Diary was published in the United Kingdom in 1996 and soon turned into a blockbuster. With the release of the novel, Helen Fielding became the pioneer of an emergent genre fiction best known as 'chick-lit'. It comprehends the kind of fiction created by women and destined to women. Fielding has given prominence to the term 'singleton' (a single woman, synonym for 'spinster') and coined the expression 'emotional fuckwits' (men who cannot be seriously committed to a woman), words which were part of Bridget's lexicon and became highly adopted by the readers of the book around the world. For the record, American writer Norah Vincent has affirmed that the novel is "one of the most stinging indictments of feminism to come along in a while" (VINCENT apud MARSH, 2004, p. 53). Apart from that, in a 1998 literary review on the book, Elizabeth Gleick, from the *New York Times*, argued that to her, people would still be "passing around copies of 'Bridget Jones's Diary' for a reason: it captures neatly the way modern women teeter between 'I am woman' independence and a pathetic girlie desire to be all things to all men."[4] For the record, by 2001, the novel had already sold more than 6 million copies.

In 1997, Fielding moved to the *Daily Telegraph* where she continued writing Bridget's saga. As it has been previously mentioned, the sequel to the first novel was published in 2000. The film adaptation of *Bridget Jones's Diary* was released in 2001 starring Renée Zellweger as Bridget Jones, Hugh Grant as Daniel Cleaver and of course, Colin Firth as Mark Darcy. Its screenplay was written by Helen Fielding herself with the help of Richard Curtis. The film

[4] Review available online at: http://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/31/books/a-v-fine-mess.html. Accessed on 14/03/2016.

was directed by Sharon Maguire. In 2003, Helen Fielding published a spy novel called *Olivia Joules and the Overactive Imagination*. In an interview, she said the book was inspired by September 11th. The adaptation of *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* came out in 2004 and the screenplay was also partly written by Fielding's close friend Richard Curtis. In 2005, Fielding returned to the *Independent* and resumed writing the columns up to 2006.

Helen Fielding married *The Simpson's* co-executive producer Kevin Curran with whom she had two children. Since then she has divided her time between London and Los Angeles. The couple split up in 2009. Also in 2009, *Bridget Jones's Diary* was included in the "1000 novels everyone must read: Comedy" list by British newspaper the *Guardian*. After a hiatus of almost 14 years, in 2013, Fielding published a long-awaited third sequel to *Bridget Jones's Diary* entitled *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*.

As mentioned before, *Bridget Jones's Diary* is acknowledged as a modern rereading of *Pride and Prejudice*, portrays the life of a thirty-something British woman who lives in London, works at a publishing house, and feels the pressure of being a career girl and having to get married for, as the people surrounding her frequently imply, when it comes to having children, women have some sort of sell-by date. She is constantly making efforts to lose weight, although her obsession to find a boyfriend leads her to devour the entire content of her fridge, as well as, to smoke countless cigarettes a day and drown in several glasses of Bloody Mary. Her mother, her smug-married friends, her aunts and uncles all seem to try to fix her up with someone by saying she cannot postpone marriage forever: "In the decade where the term 'lifestyle' took on a whole new meaning, Bridget embodied that quest for 'it'" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 15).

Because of her low self-esteem, Bridget, who usually considers herself a spinster, decides to start writing a diary that begins with her New Year's resolutions which include: working out, stop smoking, being more confident, eating more pulses and, particularly, stop fantasising about her handsome boss, someone who embodies the entire list of commitment troubles. In the diary, Bridget takes note of her weight, lists the units of alcohol consumed, the quantity of cigarettes taken and her calories on a daily basis.

At the annual New Year's Day Turkey Curry Buffet her mother obliges her to attend, Bridget meets Mark Darcy, a top-notch human rights barrister, the perfect suitor in her mum's point of view. Just like the first encounter of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy in P&P, Bridget and Mark's meeting is quite awkward. Since Bridget cannot establish a substantial conversation with him, but rather frankly says she's completely hungover, the serious lawyer

leaves her standing on her own. The episode inevitably affects her confidence, and as Bridget resorts to alcohol, she keeps wondering why she is not able to get herself a proper boyfriend.

Nevertheless, Bridget has got her ‘urban family’, formed by her closest friends, to count on plus an incredible sense of humour that renders her a delightful and outstanding protagonist. By the way, Bridget is the clumsy career girl-cum-urban heroine who never manages to find any piece of clothing in the morning, which always results in her late arrivals at work. Besides dealing with the pressures contemporary western women have been under, she must also handle a flirtatious boss whom she is utterly obsessed with, a crazy mother, an annoying co-worker and her smug married friends as she never stops searching for Mr Right.

2 **THE 1990S IN ENGLAND: BRIEF CONSIDERATIONS**

> For the times they are a-changin'.
> Bob Dylan

In order to further our comprehension of the characters in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, we believe it is relevant to point out socio-historical events and issues pervading the 1990s which are somewhat associated with and affect both Bridget Jones and the people who are part of her social circle. However, it is important to stress that it is not within the scope of this research to conduct a thorough analysis of the decade in the United Kingdom, and more specifically in London.

London, England, 20th century. *Bridget Jones's Diary* revolves around a heroine who is a typical woman living in one of the most important and effervescent cities of the West. In fact, in the mid 1990s, London stands as a massive urban centre in the era of globalisation. Bridget Jones and her acquaintances are part of a world where boundaries no longer seem to exist; a world where people are impelled to come from anywhere and go everywhere all the time, a world which starts to be controlled by an emergent technological era. It was in the 90s that mobile phones, computers and laptop computers burst onto the scene and paved the way for an age in which, twenty years later, all those devices, together with new gadgets, would completely govern the every-day life of almost every citizen around the globe. If technology is constantly changing, a world that is ruled by technology can only be one which is also changing all the time. Therefore this globalised world is, above all things, multifaceted and ephemeral in its very essence.

Concerning that, Zygmunt Bauman has affirmed in his book *Globalization: the human consequences* that "we live in a strange circle whose centre is everywhere and its circumference nowhere"[5] (BAUMAN, 1999, p, 85, my translation). This constant urge to move is a characteristic of a universe where nothing is stable, but rather, quite volatile. That can also be explained by the fact that, in the current capitalist society that is part of the referred phenomenon, consumerism is an imperative; companies launch new products in the market almost in the blink of an eye and consumers, on the other hand, are always craving for more. Since "no spatial scale is, at first sight, too big for those exploring new sensations, what possible meaning could the idea of 'limit' convey? And being meaningless, there is not a possibility for temptation and desire to lose strength" (BAUMAN, 1999, p. 86).

[5] All translations into English presented throughout the text are mine.

If over-consumption inevitably leads to ephemera, it is possible to say that in the last decades of the twentieth century, nothing is planned to last a long period of time anymore; working too long for the same company, for instance, is no longer the aim. Instead, people tend to seek new challenges and different opportunities, no matter if they have to change jobs several times during their lifetime as to advance in their careers. That is also reflected in the way people have conducted their personal lives. It is relevant to say that couples have preferred to simply live together without having to sign any sort of social contract, which seems a better option than filing for divorce once the relationship is over. And even when marriage comes to an end, getting divorced is no longer an issue for these couples. Most of the time, they do not even think twice before deciding to officially split up and even being in a relationship seems to be more flexible. People break up and apparently move on really fast. Based on that, we may infer that a relationship that has failed is just like a broken toy: instead of wasting time to fix it, it is better to get another one, a new one, as many times as necessary. As Zygmunt Bauman has remarked:

> One can guess [...] that in our times the ranks of people who tend to attach the name of love to more than one of their life experiences, who would not vouch that the love they are currently experiencing is the last, and who expect there are more such experiences yet to come, is growing fast. [...] [T]he romantic definition of love as 'til death us do part' is decidedly out of fashion. [...] Rather than more people rising to the high standards of love on more occasions, the standards have been lowered; as a result the set of experiences referred to by the love word has expanded enormously. One-night stands are talked about under the code name of 'making love' (2003, p. 4-5).

If we think that in the 1990s, the world started being governed by technology, we may assume this liquid and new kind of relationship was definitely boosted by the Internet. According to an issue of the *Washington Post*, online chat rooms became highly popular in the referred decade, a process which started with American media corporation AOL in 1992: "By 1997, the year AOL launched Instant Messenger as a stand-alone chat product, the company boasted an estimated 19,000 chatrooms. Users spent more than a million hours chatting each day".[6] It was through online messaging that more and more people began meeting other people without even having to leave their homes. They were not only able to set blind dates but also one-night stands with persons they had never seen before and, surprisingly some of them have actually ended up getting married to their virtual partners.

[6] Further information on the boom of chat rooms available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2014/10/30/a-complete-history-of-the-rise-and-fall-and-reincarnation-of-the-beloved-90s-chatroom/. Accessed on 14/03/2016.

Considering what Bauman stated that the word love itself has often been used to refer to any sort of intimate relationship, we may assume sex itself has been so much easier to have and, in an abstract sense, more fleeting than ever. Sex for its own sake is somehow dissociated from any possible attachment to love, which has everything to do with this age of consumerism in which one can never be satisfied and is always crying out for more. In the 'friends-with-benefits'[7] age, one in which casual sexual is most welcome, the same happens to pleasure and desire since "desire dos not desire satisfaction. On the contrary, desire longs for desire" (TAYLOR; SAARINEN apud BAUMAN, 2009, p. 279). The urge current humanity has to seize the moment, to seek different sensations and to collect experiences accounts for the way people have acted regarding their personal relationships and more specifically regarding sex. That can be also be corroborated by Bauman, for he has asserted that in its "post-modern expression, sexual activity is deeply concentrated in the orgasmic effect; in practise, post-modern sex revolves around orgasm" (p. 284).

When talking about intimate relationships, it is inevitable to mention family and friendship. Human beings have always needed each other and it is almost impossible for us to get by without being attached to other human beings. Our social bonds and ties may be established by blood, in the form of our kinship, or by choice, in the form of friendship. Friends are said to be the family we choose, and together with our very own family, they comprise our favourite people in the world. Like Aristotle said a great many centuries ago in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, it is not possible to live without friends (ARISTOTLE apud AGAMBEN, 2009, p. 86).

However, if we, once again, think of a time in which people living in big cities tend to be always very busy and weary due to their characteristic urban-living routine, and a backdrop of social and economic shifts, a couple of things come to our minds, such as if friendship manages to survive in modern times and, in which ways, if as a reflection of the 20th century, relationships have become more and more flexible and, consequently, less and less solid. British professor of sociology Graham Allan mentioned, in a journal on friendship originally from 1998, that despite the ongoing flexibility in personal life, it was quite likely under the developing social formation of late modernity that the significance of informal ties would, if anything, be heightened (O' CONNOR apud ALLAN, 2005, p. 262). The probable reason for

[7] The expression 'Friends-with-Benefits' typically refers to two good friends who have casual sex without a monogamous relationship or any kind of commitment. Definition available at: http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=friends+with+benefits. Accessed on 14/03/2016.

it is that in the midst of all this chaos, one inevitably feels the necessity to have someone else to rely on:

> In a world in which structural "certainties" are no longer as certain as they were and where individuals have to respond to changes that appear to be the result of nebulous and quite abstract forces (most noticeably "market forces") rather than any known agency, establishing a sense of identity and self is likely to be increasingly consequent on informal networks. Part of this...will be based around "family" ties... But equally, self-identity will also be constituted through other types of informal relationship, especially friendships... That is, relationships with friends will continue to be one of the main arenas in which we express ourselves as the people we are (ALLAN, 2005, p. 262).

In an article published in the *New York Times*, also in 1998, journalist Sara Mosle depicted the way she and her friends managed their friendship living in such a big city as New York. She argued that having such a hectic lifestyle and an overly busy daily routine usually propelled them towards cancelling their face-to-face meetings. Instead, alternatives such as sending emails and using answerphones were already an option for them to stay in touch, although they resided in the very same city: "[W]hen people ask me why I live in New York, I always say, 'Because my best friends live here.' But I almost never see them. We talk on the phone, [...] we exchange E-mail and plaintive answering-machine messages. But actually get together for dinner and a movie? It almost never happens."[8]

Certainly, this situation did not only occur in New York City, but it used to happen and probably still does as a reflection of life in urban centres. As a matter of fact, according to Professor Phillip Lopate, contemporary urban life, with "its tight schedules and crowded appointment books, has helped to shape modern friendship into something requiring a good deal of intentionality and pursuit" (Available at: https://www.college.columbia.edu/cct/jul_aug09/columbia_forum2). Based on that, we may infer that it has been hard, indeed, to actually have frequent physical interactions and spend substantial time with friends. The possible solution to catch up with them, more and more, lies on technological devices, which also enable us to never lose touch with people once we have to live in a new place. Nevertheless, despite all of that, it is possible to say friendship still has a great social importance in peoples' lives.

Education is also a major issue when it comes to comprehending the characters in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, since it made such an impact on the lives of a great many British citizens, above all, youngsters, in the 1990s. It has been found out that the few changes in the

[8] Article available online at: http://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/15/magazine/lives-the-importance-of-being-busy.html. Accessed on 14/03/2016.

labour market that arose in the early 1980s contributed to a considerable growth in the number of people enrolling at British universities in the following decade. As the economic climate of the 80s was one in which "there was a reduction in the number of jobs that were suitable for young people and offered long term career prospects, especially minimum aged school leavers", it was necessary for the government to come up with a new legislation, which thereupon resulted in an *Education Reform Act* in 1988 (GALE *et al*., 2009, p. 2).

The expansion saw its apex round the middle of the decade when, in 1997, together with new Prime Minister Tony Blair, the Labour Party came to power with "a distinctive education policy agenda, driven by a wider interest in tackling social exclusion" (2009, p. 3). The reform in education led to a decline in unemployment rates and a substantial economic growth in the United Kingdom, for more people were embarking upon higher education as to get good jobs. This situation highly affected the British demography of that time; if in the past, young people left the parental home as to get married, within this new context, the main reasons for them to leave home from this moment on is to study or work abroad. Besides that, British women tend to move out earlier than men and youngsters in general tend to leave home "before partnership and family formation, and, if anything, they are leaving home earlier". (FINCH, n.d., p.41).

As a result, this new generation began to marry at a later age or even to never marry at all, but rather cohabit. Furthermore, as women, in particular, started to have greater access to university, they also attained more participation in the labour market, which implies that they no longer need to get married for economic purposes. In Britain, age at first marriage "has increased while the number of people marrying has been in significant decline. For example, in 1991, less than three-quarters of the female population had married by the time they were 30" (ALLAN, 2005, p. 262).

Indeed, by conquering their professional and financial independence, women inevitably had to choose between having a career and starting up a family. Since it is difficult to combine a career and motherhood, most of them decided to postpone having children, which propelled them into becoming mothers at a later age or even being childless. Consequently, the United Kingdom saw a sharp fall in their total fertility rate, which is best illustrated by very low birth rates. In an article of British newspaper The *Economist*, it says that Danny Dorling, a geographer at the University of Oxford, has argued that:

> a large part of the increase in births in the 2000s was simply a result of women delaying having children in the 1990s and early 2000s. This in turn was the result of the dramatic increase in the number of people going to university in the early 1990s. Graduates, understandably, wait longer to have children than non-graduates, and so

> as more women in their 20s in the 1990s got degrees, they waited longer to have children.[9]

In fact, the average age at men's first marriage rose from 27.2 in 1990 to 30.1 in 1999, whereas women's rose from 25.2 to 28 at the same period. With women's financial independence came higher divorce rates, which ended up achieving some stabilisation due to the decline in marriage rates and to people's ongoing preference for informal relationships. Apart from that, the amount of births outside marriage increased, which is also partly due to female economic independence. There was a significant rise in the amount of mothers in their thirties and consequently, a significant decline in the amount of mothers in their twenties; the average paternal age at childbearing also shifted from their late twenties at the beginning of the 1990s to around 31 by 1999 (FINCH, n.d., p. 4-23).

In light of everything seen throughout this chapter, it is not surprising either that in such a fluid and fragmented world, identity will be, first and foremost, fluid too. As Zygmunt Bauman remarks in an interview to Benedetto Vecchi, with the substitution, in early modernity, of the rigid structures of estates for a stratified class-divided society, identities inevitably became "tasks individuals needed to perform" (BAUMAN, 2005, p. 55). With the rise of globalisation, boundaries have ceased to exist. Just like them, identities are floating in the air. In an age where everything is meant to be evanescent, so is identity. Contemporary identity is not something solid and unique, but rather, as volatile as the fragmented world we live in. Hence identity is no longer one, but comprises several multiple identities, which are "never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (HALL, 2007, p. 234).

The heroine in Bridget Jones's Diary embodies a few of the characteristics of the 1990s which have been discussed throughout this chapter. As a matter of fact, Bridget has had university education, hence she has got a career of her own and a comfortable lifestyle. Since she has a proper job and consequently is financially independent, Bridget lives by herself in a major city such as London; she has got an urban family comprised of her most loyal friends and consumes whatever kinds of entertainment she can afford as well as whatever goods her world has to offer. As an illustration of that, Bridget wears whatever she pleases, she eats whatever she wants, she reads books and Cosmopolitan magazines, and she goes to parties, restaurants, exhibitions, amongst other things. On top of all this, working with publishing enables her to be very close to the English cultural scene within her own social milieu.

[9] Article available at: http://www.economist.com/blogs/blighty/2014/07/britains-birth-rate. Accessed on 14/03/2016.

However, despite being independent, having the love of her friends and family, living in such a major city, and having access to the delights of modern-day world, Bridget Jones does not seem to be satisfied. She has got everything one would consider more than enough to lead a pleasant life, yet she is not entirely happy. As Imelda Whelehan argues, Bridget presents two conflicting impulses: "to value her own aspirations and interests and to reap the benefits of more than thirty years of modern feminism, and yet to want to be swept off her feet by an unreconstructed Byronic hero" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 17-18). Her condition also resembles that of typical western women in present times, who are frequently impelled to be fulfilled in every area of their lives. This is highlighted by British-Pakistani writer Roopa Farooki's words in her book *Half Life*: "Home, job, partner – a tick in each box, isn't that how happiness is judged these days?" (FAROOKI, 2010, p. 20). Based on that, we may reiterate that whereas Bridget Jones does manage to achieve the two first items mentioned above, i.e. home and job, she does not manage to tick the last box.

As a matter of fact, in an era characterised by uncertainties, all Bridget wants is to find herself a partner, someone whom she may rely on and with whom she may share the joys and the burdens of everyday life. More than just having a boyfriend to please her family and her smug married friends, Bridget needs someone to stand by her, someone she may love and who loves her in return. We may infer, Bridget is, above all things, a hopeless romantic. Given that it is possible to affirm that, by facing a reality in which there is but little space for her most sentimental facet, she is driven into a constant battle between reason and emotion that inevitably reminds us of conflicts experienced by Jane Austen's female characters. Actually, Bridget's diary "reveals that she has lost confidence in the power of reason to solve her dilemmas and she veers between reason and irrationality much of the time" (2002, p. 44). A great example of this ongoing reason as opposed to sentimentality turmoil very much present in the protagonist's daily life is the comment she makes in her diary a day before Valentine's Day. As we may read, Bridget states: "Oh God [...] Why is entire world geared to make people not involved in romance feel stupid when everyone knows romance does not work anyway [...] Valentine's Day is purely commercial, cynical enterprise anyway. Matter of supreme indifference to me" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 49). It is not a surprise then when, on the following day, Bridget seems to have completely forgotten what she had previously thought about it: "**8 a.m.** Oooh, goody. Valentine's Day. Wonder if the post has come yet. Maybe there will be a card from Daniel. Or a secret admirer. Or some flowers or heart-shaped chocolates. Quite excited, actually" (2001, p. 49).

Bridget's emotional side is even more evident when she makes fanciful plans with the men whom she gets involved with. An illustration of that is her daydream of leading a life as Mrs. Daniel Cleaver: "Head is full of moony fantasies about living in flats with him and running along beaches together with tiny offspring in manner of Calvin Klein advert, being trendy Smug Married instead of sheepish Singleton" (2001, p. 131). The aforementioned entries in Bridget's diary highlight the fact that although she is not entirely swayed by her reveries, the heroine constantly tries to overcome this romanticism that absorbs her most part of the time.

3 **TWO NOVELS IN DIALOGUE: BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY AND PRIDE AND PREJUDICE**

3.1 **Bridget Jones and her Austenian Counterparts in Society**

> I'm every woman, it's all in me.
> Chaka Khan

As it has been pointed out previously in this dissertation, Helen Fielding, the author of *Bridget Jones's Diary*, has once affirmed in an interview: "I shamelessly stole the plot from *Pride and Prejudice* for the [...] book. I thought it had been very well market-researched over a number of centuries and she probably wouldn't mind" (Available at: http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol22no1/salber.html). In light of that, it is not surprising that the very first chapter of Fielding's novel makes strong references to the opening of P&P, for it portrays the major concern of a mother to introduce her daughter to a wealthy man who may turn out to be her prospective beau. Therefore, Fielding, just like Austen, shows that marriage as a social imperative is going to be a central theme in her narrative.

Right at the beginning, the heroine presents her conflicting impulses at the New Year's Day Turkey Curry Buffet her parent's friends hold every single year. When her mother rings her up, several months before, suggesting that she go to the event, Bridget already knows what expects her: their enquiries into her love life and, consequently, alongside her mother, their trying to fix her up with some well-off bachelor. When she starts mentioning in the diary her mother had phoned to make her promise to go, Bridget emphasises the last thing on earth she feels "physically, emotionally or mentally equipped to do is drive" to the buffet (FIELDING, 2001, p. 8). Bridget Jones knew it would be best to avoid the awkwardness of the occasion; however, in an attempt to satisfy her mother, she gives in to her pleading.

As soon as she arrives at the party, she is welcome with a comment that alludes to the situation of women in the 1990s. When Una Alconbury, the hostess, catches sight of her, she comments straight away: "Bridget! What *are* we going to do with you? [...] You career girls! I don't know! Can't put it off for ever, you know. Tick-tock-tick-tock" (p. 11, italics in the original). Bridget cannot help feeling rather embarrassed for being single and childless at her

age, a condition that seems to be some of the worst atrocities. The people surrounding her do not even care to ask her how her work is or to enquire about any other aspects of her life. In spite of everything she has already achieved, Bridget still is officially a singleton and her inability to have a boyfriend makes people judge her and make her believe, on account of all her insecurities, she is a complete failure.

Bridget's very status as a single woman is somehow a burden in her life, although in the first half of the 1990s, a post-second-wave feminism era, being a single woman should be seen as something quite normal. Journalist Catherine Arnstr argued in an article entitled "Single Women in a Hostile World" that in America, for instance, as of 1997, "there were 46 million single women over the age of 18"[10]. However, even up to nowadays, no matter how successful and powerful women may be, society will still take a dim view of them if they reach their thirties without having a family of their own. That can be best emphasised by the way Bridget's married friends, whom she usually refer to as Smug Married couples, treat her every time they gather together for the sort of reunion the protagonist dreads even more than her parents' annual buffet:

> On top of everything else, must go to Smug Married dinner party at Magda and Jeremy's tonight. Such occasions always reduce my ego to size of snail, which is not to say am not grateful to be asked. I love Magda and Jeremy. Sometimes I stay at their house, admiring the crisp sheets and many storage jars full of different kinds of pasta, imagining that they are my parents. But when they are together with their married friends I feel as if I have turned into Miss Havisham (FIELDING, 2001, p. 39-40).

As we may notice, Bridget's acquaintances, i.e. the smug marrieds, drop hints at her love-life whenever they get to meet her. Their behaviour may be explained by the fact that although people's way of thinking has changed considerably with time, and despite the rights and the freedom western women have attained with the feminist revolutions, society still presents the remainder of the patriarchal system that has ruled the world ever since its beginning. Hence, as it has been remarked, "even if Bridget lives independently, she is still a woman in her society's view, which will show her powerlessness" (BEDEN, 2011, p. 9).

Still regarding that, it is possible to affirm that despite the two centuries that separate P&P and *Bridget Jones's Diary*, some things do not seem to have changed so much. The pressure put upon Bridget to settle down somehow reminds us of most of the female characters in the classic. In effect, according to Cecilia Salber, "finding mates in a world where single women outnumber available men is just as important for Bridget's coterie as it

[10]Information retrieved at: http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/stories/1998-07-12/single-women-in-a-hostile-world. Accessed on 14/03/2016.

was for Elizabeth Bennet's sisters, friends and acquaintances" (Available at: Available at: http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol22no1/salber.html). Bridget's situation particularly reminds us of Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth's intimate friend. Similarly to Bridget, Charlotte was ashamed to be rather old and still unmarried. Described as a "sensible, intelligent young woman", she was not considered pretty and at twenty-seven she had not yet found herself a husband (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 17). Thus it was an affliction for her to live as a single lady at her parents' house at such an age, so when Mr Collins – Lizzie's appalling cousin whose marriage offer Lizzie herself had already refused – proposes to Charlotte, she does not think twice as to accept it:

> Mr Collins to be sure was neither sensible nor agreeable; his society was irksome, and his attachment to her must be imaginary. But still he would be her husband. – Without thinking highly either of men or of matrimony, marriage had always been her object; it was the only honourable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want. This preservative she had now obtained; and at the age of twenty-seven, without having ever been handsome, she felt all the good luck of it (p. 105).

Charlotte's destiny would only revolve around three possibilities: being a spinster and taking care of her parents, getting married or becoming a governess and leading a solitary life. Rather than venturing into the other options, she preferred to accept the first marriage proposal made to her and consequently be bound to live her entire life alongside an overly foolish, dull and pompous man whom almost everyone around despised. Unfortunately, based on what critic Dennis Walder points out, her unhappy though "prudent union with Mr Collins is presented as the best she can do for herself in order to avoid the greater evils of dependence upon her father and brothers" (WALDER, 1995, p. 54).

According to professor Sandra Guardini T. Vasconcelos (2001, p.10) in "Literature and Cinema: Images of Femininity in *Pride and Prejudice*", "Austen dramatizes women's plight and, by giving us a very comprehensive picture of female identity, maps out different forms of female conduct in her characters' struggle for the right kind of marriage." As we know, women have always been oppressed by patriarchal western society. For many centuries, they have been expected to be born with the sole purpose to get married, to bear children, to knit, to sew and to perform their house duties. This situation was not different in Austen's England, where women still had very limited powers and the only way for them to leave their family's house was by getting married. As a matter of fact, if women wanted to marry well, they preferably had to have been born to a prosperous family and they were also supposed to be cultivated; that is, they were not only expected to perform all tasks previously mentioned, but

also to play the pianoforte, to have read substantial books, to know how to dance properly and to have good manners.

In the late eighteenth and nineteenth-century England, it was indeed mandatory that women were accomplished and this issue has been often portrayed in Jane Austen's stories. As a woman who grew up amongst the gentry, but who did not belong to them, Austen could see, as an outsider, the massive urge of families to marry their daughters properly. Most of the time, women could not even elicit their own suitor, let alone be engaged to someone they cared for. Marriage usually was a mere transaction for which they had always been destined to. In P&P itself, we can see the way women behave towards the subject. As literary critic Robert Markley points out:

> With the exception of Emma, all of Austen's heroines face the prospect of being banished from the estates to which they have been born (…). Suitable marriages – financially, socially, and romantically – are essential for them to *be* heroines rather than becoming objects of our comic (Mary Bennet) or satiric (Caroline Bingley) laughter. Elizabeth Bennet and her sisters thus face both challenges and opportunities: without significant dowries, they must secure husbands to support them in a socio-economic world rife with the social expectations and psychological pressures that many of Austen's original readers apparently found true to life (MARKLEY, 2013, p. 95–96, italics in the original).

In effect, it is possible to state Charlotte Lucas, though not a heroine, is one of the, if not the, most striking and realistic examples of Austen's female characters who could not afford to marry for love. Charlotte, actually, prioritised her future security to the detriment of her very own happiness. That may be corroborated by a conversation she has with Elizabeth soon after accepting Mr Collins's proposal:

> I am not romantic you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 108).

Elizabeth Bennet's point of view over matrimony differs quite a lot from her beloved friend's. If Miss Lucas is a representative of Jane Austen's realistic and critical eye over marriage, Lizzie on the other hand denotes the romantic aspect of the novel; and the vestiges of romanticism present in her personality are in evidence when she becomes deeply gutted by Charlotte's choice:

> She had always felt that Charlotte's opinion of matrimony was not exactly like her own, but she could not have supposed it possible that when called into action, she would have sacrificed every better feeling to worldy advantage. Charlotte, the wife of Mr. Collins, was a most humiliating picture! – And to the pang of a friend disgracing herself and sunk in her esteem, was added the distressing conviction that it was impossible for that friend to be tolerably happy in the lot she had chosen (p. 108).

Curiously enough, Elizabeth Bennet's reaction to her friend's attitude is one of the many associations that can be made with Bridget's personality. The latter constantly veers into reason and romanticism and the former does not behave much differently. Even though Elizabeth seems to be rather rational and sensible much of the time, she is also carried away by her emotions. It is, for instance, a rare moment of irrationality derived from her prejudice that drives her to misjudge Mr Darcy once she believes in George Wickham's story. Bridget usually daydreams of being in a state of complete bliss with a Prince Charming, and likewise, Elizabeth Bennet wishes to be happy in her personal life too. A proof of that is her refusal to sacrifice her happiness by marrying her irksome cousin, though he could grant her the family's estate. Another example is the fact that when Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Mr Darcy's aunt, asks her to promise never to marry her nephew, Lizzie affirms she "will make no promise of the kind" (1999, p. 299).

It is very true that unlike Charlotte Lucas, Bridget Jones, being a modern-day independent woman, need not form an attachment based mainly on economic purposes. Nevertheless, up to nowadays social class seems to be, in most cases, still an element of major importance when forming a personal relationship. In fact, the "key characters in *Bridget Jones's Diary* are manifestly middle-class, constrained by the usual bourgeois conventions of needing to be introduced and knowing about each other's backgrounds, professions, and marital status" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 35-36). Bridget's parents are a middle-class couple who are usually engaged in the events of their very own social milieu, that of a suburban bourgeoisie, and have friends such as Mark Darcy's parents, who would appear to manifestly have a higher standard of living than them because of their son's professional status. Similarly to what happens in P&P, in this contemporary novel, "tensions between class and social status are again played out, although as befits a novel of postmodern times, class distinctions are blurred [...] Darcy's profession as a top human rights lawyer marks him out as wealthier and weightier in status terms than Bridget" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 33). Based on that, we may infer that in Austen's England, social classes were still rather delimited, which was an obstacle for people from different social backgrounds to mix together or even marry one another. In Bridget Jones's time, social class is no longer an issue, but it certainly has not ceased to be relevant since money remains an imperative.

Still depicting the New Year's celebration, after the embarrassing welcoming by Mrs Alconbury, Bridget meets the prominent Mark Darcy, whom she used to play around with when she was a child. The occasion could not have been more frustrating to her, which is confirmed when she herself assumes that being "set up with a man against your will is one

level of humiliation, but being literally dragged into it [...] watched by an entire roomful of friends of your parents, is on another plane altogether" (2001, p. 13). There stood Bridget Jones, defied by social conventions and just like Elizabeth and Jane Bennet in P&P, forced to meet someone her mother considers to be the ideal suitor for her. It can be said that according to pre-established social rules, one must follow a certain way of behaving, including that of having proper manners when being introduced to someone. In Regency England, for instance, in order to get acquainted, young ladies and young men alike were bound to attend balls, where they would bow, dance and preferably establish some substantial conversation with the partners they just met. As it has been argued, Jane Austen was very much concerned about depicting "the importance of sociability as a performative event, that is, what possibilities or dreams are realized (or, equally, are defeated or fail) by men and women meeting together in a particular place and time" (RUSSEL, 2011, p. 176).

As we think Bridget Jones is at a party and also partly trying to converse with a single man, and accordingly having to comply with the social rules of her time, we may once again assume things have not differed as much in the late twentieth century in relation to sociability. It is not by chance, for instance, that Una Alconbury mentions Bridget's profession when she introduces her to Mark in the referred buffet: "Mark, this is Colin and Pam's daughter [...] Bridget works in publishing, don't you, Bridget?" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 13). Likewise, in Austen's universe, people often made assumptions about the family background and the social status of new acquaintances and women could barely consider marrying someone their family did not approve of. In light of that, Whelehan affirms that in "reading any Jane Austen novel we get a sense of the suffocating social rules that govern possible romantic liaisons." However, it is a bit surprising that "contemporary courtship is presented as similarly hidebound by rules, rituals, and conventions" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 35-36).

If on the one hand, we have the influence of the conduct manuals of the period ruling courtship practises in Austen's time and fiction, on the other hand, we have the aid of self-help books instructing a woman, especially a single woman, to behave and, according to Cecilia Salber, to "understand the mystery of men and why they act the way they do" (Available at: http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol22no1/salber.html). Still, based on what has been suggested, singleness can "only be 'cured' by a long hard look at yourself and an adherence to 'the rules' of courtship (as outlined in self-help manuals...)" as all "singleton heroines seem to be absorbed in creating new, better 'selves'" (WHELEHAN, 2004, p. 28-29). Bridget Jones, for the record, reiterates she is one of those self-help-book-obsessive kinds of women right at this so-called first meeting with Mark Darcy. Standing by the bookcase and

scrutinising the shelves, the successful barrister, in an attempt to break the ice, asks Bridget what she has been reading lately. As a matter of fact, although she works at a publishing house, the last thing she had actually partly read was John Gray's book entitled *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, one of the most famous books of the genre in the 90s.

In effect, self-help manuals are frequently mentioned throughout the novel. By the way, it is her friend Jude who always lends books of the genre to Bridget. Actually, Jude is the most successful person in Bridget's circle of friends; she is Head of Futures at an important company and makes a lot of money, but she is always excusing herself from board meetings to cry her eyes out at the toilet because of her commitment-phobic boyfriend, also known as Vile Richard. Jude is, in fact - part of Bridget's urban family of singletons and together with Sharon and Tom - their beloved gay friend, they regularly set urgent summits to discuss both career and love crises. As Cecilia Salber emphasises, if in P&P "Charlotte and Elizabeth debate the judiciousness of a woman's showing or concealing her affection for a man, in *Bridget Jones's Diary* Bridget and her anxious girlfriends desperately scour magazines and self-help books for the key to the male psyche" (Available at: http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol22no1/salber.html). Unfortunately, these bestsellers do not help Jude sort out her love life so much for during the entire narrative it is possible to see her suffering the pains of an on-and-off relationship. Bridget also does not benefit a great deal from the referred advice manuals, however she cannot avoid devouring them as much as she cannot stop watching *EastEnders*[11] or consuming a packet of cigarettes a day, gin and tonic, Marie Claire and *Hello!* magazine.

As it has been previously mentioned, the self-help books that surround Bridget's life somehow resemble the conduct manuals characteristic of Jane Austen's time, which, according to an article by the BBC, "instructed aspiring ladies on the correct standards of behaviour and even warned against the danger of novels on impressionable female minds. Their subtext was how to secure a suitable husband".[12] These etiquette guides that were so common in the late 18th and 19th centuries not only taught women how to behave properly, but also instructed them in the arts of courtship and also in marriage itself. *The Elegant Girl*, a book from 1817, for instance, is "a collection of engravings showing suitable activities for a wealthy young girl" (Available at http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/jane-austen-and-social-judgement). The manuals were so relevant at the time that Austen - who is

[11] *EastEnders* is a successful British soap opera which has run in the UK from 1985 up to nowadays. Accessed on 14/03/2016.

considered a master of comedies of manners, for she was an acute observer of people and highly concerned with social behaviour - made reference to them in P&P itself, where she ironically criticised *Fordyce's Sermons to Young Women* (1766). A great illustration of that is the very character of Mary Bennet, Elizabeth's middle sister. Since those manuals absorbed her immensely, Mary talked like a conduct book, in that she would only give people theoretical advice thus often sounded rather artificial. Her several displays of pedantry clearly conveyed Austen's disapproval of the referred books as well as they comprised some of the funniest parts of the novel. Another example is the episode of Mr Collins's first dinner at Longbourn, in which Mr Bennet invites him to read something for the girls and he chooses the aforementioned *Sermons to Young Women* first published in 1766 by the Reverend James Fordyce. According to an article by the British Library, Mary Wollstonecraft highly condemned the sermons and by the time P&P was written, Fordyce's ideas were considered obsolete and coercive (Retrieved at http://www.bl.uk/collection-items/sermons-to-young-women). That is probably the reason why Lydia Bennet was utterly annoyed with the reading, and by seeing her sheer boredom, her cousin replied: "I have often observed how little young ladies are interested by books of a serious stamp, though written solely for their benefit. It amazes me, I confess; - for certainly, there can be nothing so advantageous to them as instruction" (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 61).

Concerning Lydia Bennet, it is important to stress that she is the youngest of Elizabeth's sisters and Bridget Jones also presents a lot of characteristics in common with her. First and foremost, Lydia is described as the good-humoured Bennet sister and, as it has been claimed, her liveliness and uncontrollable obsession for balls and officers "become the target of many wry remarks from Mr. Bennet" (Available at http://www.jasna.org/essaycontest/2009/highschool.html). As a matter of fact, Lydia's most comical side precisely lies in her lack of decorum and her endless search for a red-coat husband although she is only fifteen and her eldest sisters are not yet married. In one occasion, for example, she even says to Jane and Lizzie: "Lord! how I should like to be married before any of you; and then I would chaperon you about to all the balls. Dear me!" (p. 187). Lydia, for the record, is the daughter who has mostly taken after her mother, which accounts for her being her favourite child; she actually seems to be Mrs Bennet's most faithful disciple for all her interests revolve around the possibility of making acquaintances with single young men, especially if they are members of a militia. Indeed, in agreement with what

[12] Article available online at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/0/21122727. Accessed on 14/03/2016.

literary critic Robert Miles affirmed, “Lydia (and her mother) are the epitome of the feminine stereotype decried by Wollstonecraft, agog at the sight of an officer, without, apparently a rational thought in their heads” (MILES, p. 26, 2013). The impropriety of Lizzie’s younger sister usually ranges from comedy to shame in a sense that her behaviour and her fancies often embarrass her sisters Jane and Elizabeth towards Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy. Based on that, it is possible to affirm that just like her forerunner, Bridget Jones is also a very cheerful character whose hilarious tone has to do with her clumsiness and her inability to accomplish the unrealistic targets she constantly sets. Both of them are driven by the irrationality of their behaviour as well as by their lack of self-control and recklessness as they do not measure the consequences of their actions. Furthermore, as much as Lydia has a huge fancy for officers, Bridget is extremely obsessed with cigarettes, alcohol and food. Also, both Lydia and Bridget are rather bold: Lydia for being coquettish and Bridget for not being ashamed of nearly anything. Apart from that, it is relevant to mention they tend to create an illusory image of the men whom they are involved with. To reiterate what has been said about Lydia Bennet’s disposition, there follows an excerpt portraying the occasion in which the flirtatious Lydia sees the handsome Mr Wickham for the first time:

> But the attention of every lady was soon caught by a young man, whom they had never seen before, of most gentlemanlike appearance, walking with an officer on the other side of the way. (...) All were struck with the stranger’s air, all wondered who he could be, and Kitty and Lydia, determined if possible to find out, led the way across the street, under pretence of wanting something in an opposite shop, and fortunately had just gained the pavement when the two gentlemen turning back had reached the same spot. Mr. Denny addressed them directly, and entreated permission to introduce his friend, Mr Wickham, who had returned with him the day before from town, and he was happy to say had accepted a commission in their corps. This was exactly as it should be; for the young man wanted only regimentals to make him completely charming (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 63).

When the youngest Miss Bennet elopes with Mr Wickham, she knows he and her sister Elizabeth had been very close for a certain period time, and their proximity even contributed to town gossip about a possible romantic attachment between them. She also knew he had abruptly stayed away from Elizabeth once he had the slight possibility to marry a rich Miss King. Nonetheless, Lydia gives it very little forethought and carried away by his good looks and by his position as an officer, she completely ignores his deceptive personality and offers him something she could never have offered. By running away with Wickham, as if she were utterly oblivious of his character, Lydia not only puts herself at risk but also ends up compromising her entire family’s reputation. In fact, Bridget Jones’s involvement with Daniel Cleaver, goes hand in hand with Lydia’s relationship with Mr Wickham. Right in her New Year’s resolutions, Bridget already shows she completely fantasises about this man, whom, to

her, represented the quintessence of male beauty. Despite his being absolutely gorgeous, as Bridget usually remarks in the diary, Daniel is also her boss; the fact that he is her superior at work added to her finding him extremely attractive and interesting led Bridget to worship him and idealise a romance that only existed to her own self. Just like Lydia, Bridget cares more about his appearance than about his nature and ends up embarking upon a relationship that could only result in sheer frustration once she realises Daniel, similarly to George Wickham, was indeed a typical womaniser. However, despite their having chosen the wrong kind of men, we may affirm Lydia was very forward towards Wickham whereas Bridget was naive. Besides that, the ages which they belong to also plays a different role in their lives: once Lydia got involved with the militiaman and married him, she could no longer escape the inevitable unhappiness in their relationship: “They were always moving from place to place in quest of a cheap situation, and always spending more than they ought. His affection for her soon sunk into indifference; hers lasted a little longer” (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 324). Bridget though, for being able to connect with a man without being officially attached to him, had the possibility of starting afresh and finding love elsewhere.

Still considering Bridget Jones’s compulsion for self-help books, women’s magazines or even her interest in gossip-entertainment magazines, it is relevant to point out that it reinforces the power consumerism has over western people, above all women. This compulsion also highlights the burden inflicted on people like our heroine, whose low self-esteem makes her regularly look for role models in an attempt to perfect herself, not only physically but also psychologically. An illustration of the importance of guides in Bridget’s life is what she says after facing some severe birthday-related panic: “Whole new perspective on birthday. Have been talking to Jude about book she has been reading about festivals and rites of passage in primitive cultures and am feeling happy and serene” (FIELDING, 2001, p. 81). Yet, in another situation when she is invited to the launch of a book entitled *Kafka’s Motorbike*, Bridget decides not to be desperate about the party, but rather determined to follow the instructions she found in an article so that she can enhance her social skills and her confidence. According to the article, she should introduce people with thoughtful details and circulate as to network. Once at the event, all her efforts are frustrated as she cannot perform the way she had planned, which is a recurrent thing throughout the entire novel.

Despite Bridget’s acting exactly as she is most of the time, it is very clear along the narrative that the heroine is constantly making attempts to not only improve the way she deals with things in her life, but also to improve her own self; that is, to become someone who, in her imagination, is better than she actually is. In her mind, Bridget thinks there is always

something wrong with her and it drives her to pursue an ideal of beauty, behaviour and lifestyle disseminated by the television, by magazines and even by the internet that clearly cannot be attained, by anyone. It is not by chance that Bridget once affirms in the diary that her “culture is too obsessed with outward appearance, age and status” (p. 82) and if we think of Elizabeth Bennet, it is possible to affirm Lizzie also was part of a society that was very much concerned about all that; and when it comes to appearance itself, we must not forget she is judged by her beauty, or lack of it, when Mr Darcy first sees her. Because of the huge value western society gives to the items mentioned above, Bridget spares no efforts to change herself, which can be corroborated by the fact that right in the very beginning, Bridget’s diary presents a list of New Year’s resolutions. Amidst Bridget’s most striking goals, we find the following ones: “**I will not** smoke, get upset over men” or “sulk about having no boyfriend, but develop inner poise and authority and sense of self as a woman of substance, complete *without* boyfriend, as best way to obtain boyfriend” and “**I will** be more confident, be more assertive, not go out every night but stay in and read books and listen to classical music” plus “reduce circumference of thighs by 3 inches” (FIELDING, 2001, p. 2-3, bold in the original).

As a matter of fact, Bridget is the product of *Cosmopolitan* culture, the culture of a magazine which since the late 1960s has been the “bible for young women who want to do better” (BROWN apud WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 29). Always dissatisfied with her image, Bridget strives to meet the standards set in women’s magazines and finds in them advice to improve herself. For the record, improving herself means reaching the ideal offered by those magazines. Their guides to attain a better body, to dress well, to find a boyfriend, amongst other things are generally based on the illusory and stereotypical kind of beauty of the skinny Caucasian girl who most of the time looks like a top model. This dream girl has flawless skin, is usually fitted for any piece of clothing, wears the latest and most fashionable trends, has a picture-perfect suitor and is super confident and eloquent. As it may be perceived throughout the novel, Bridget’s appearance is a matter of utmost importance to her, especially to what concerns her body and her weight and this standard kind of beauty, one which worships the skinny body, can only contribute to worsen even more her inferiority complex. When Daniel Cleaver swaps her for a slim American girl, Bridget cannot help saying: “I’m falling apart. [...] Oh God, what’s wrong with me? Why does nothing ever work out? It is because I am too fat” (FIELDING, 2001, p. 181). Curiously enough, previously in the book, Bridget, who had been in a diet for eighteen years, manages to lose half of a stone after such a terrible struggle. As she is quite eager to show her friends she managed to lose weight, by their reaction, she

realises that all those years of painful efforts had been in vain since they tell her she looks tired and flat and that she looked better before (p. 107).

Once again, we reiterate, this search for a role model is also very much due to the consumer society in which the protagonist lives alongside a massive influence of the media. Before Bridget's first date with her gorgeous man-of-dreams boss Daniel Cleaver, she finds herself scratching her body, plucking her eyebrows, skimming the papers and waxing her legs as a preparation for the referred occasion. After so much hard work and pain, Bridget confesses:

> 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 to its own devices. I can't take the pressure. I am going to cancel and spend the evening eating doughnuts in a cardigan with egg on it (FIELDING, 2001, p. 59).

The aforementioned episode is a great example of the burdens the majority of western women bear and it shows how women's magazines tend to put not only our comic protagonist but also so many other women under a lot of pressure. That is probably the reason why a great deal of female readers identify so much with Bridget and many critics consider her a Chaplinesque 'everywoman'. In effect, these burdens and this long for perfection that distress so many girls nowadays, especially Bridget, remind us of the sense of accomplishment which governed the lives of young ladies in Regency England. A great example of this is what the glamorous and shallow Caroline Bingley says to Elizabeth as she attempts to instigate the heroine:

> No one can be really esteemed accomplished, who does not greatly surpass what is usually met with. A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 35).

Elizabeth's response to Miss Bingley proves her very own dissatisfaction with the feminine ideals established at the period and reinforces the fact that Elizabeth Bennet did not entirely conform to what was generally imposed on the women of her time: "*I* never saw such a woman. *I* never saw such capacity, and taste, and application, and elegance, as you describe, united" (p. 35, italics in the original). Once again, it is important to highlight that Lizzie's reply shows how unrealistic the notion of accomplishment was and, by looking at Bridget Jones, it is not possible to say that in the twentieth century the demands and pressures put on women have differed when, in fact, they have become even worse: now that they have acquired freedom and have become career girls, they are expected to juggle their jobs, their children and their routine as housewives, which might be a very heavy load. In effect, as it has

been remarked, both Austen and Fielding "use irony and manage to satirically describe the ideal of the accomplished woman and thus criticise it" (NILSSON, 2008, p. 4-5). A great example of what is expected of 1990s women is given once Bridget finds out her former long-term boyfriend, whom she used to call Waspy, was getting married: "Have never met Waspy's Intended of course but imagine giant thin blonde rooftop giantess-type who rises at five each morning, goes to gym, rubs herself down with salt then runs international merchant bank all day without smudging mascara" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 191).

Through Bridget's character, that of a carreer girl in an endless pursuit of a substantial relationship, Helen Fielding is able to show women these days have other possibilities to live. More than that, Bridget demonstrates that sometimes the more independent you are, the more difficult it may be to find a partner. Her friend Jude is a striking example of that: she has a very successful job at a top company, she holds important board meetings, but she cannot have something really serious with her commitment-phobic boyfriend. Bridget herself, who by the way is far from having the best job in the world, is an illustration of that too. When a woman chooses to be independent and have a career, she knows she will have to resign a lot of things; however as Shazzer, Bridget's feminist friend, constantly remarks, women these days need not be stuck in unhappy and boring relationships because of money or any other interest. In the episode of Bridget's dreadful dinner with the Smug Married couples, for instance, they eagerly tease Bridget by saying offices were full of singletons over thirty years old who could not get a chap (p. 41). As Bridget, cannot react any other way other than bursting into tears, Shazzer affirms she should have said to them:

> I'm not married […] because there's more than one bloody way to live: one in four households 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 (p. 42, italics in the original).

American writer Caroline J. Smith once claimed in her book *Cosmopolitan Culture and Consumerism in Chick Lit* that:

> Being a child of Cosmopolitan culture, then, becomes metaphoric for the hold that consumer culture mediums (...) have upon Bridget's life. Bridget struggles to determine what advice she should follow and what advice she should disregard, and subsequently, a central theme of *Bridget Jones's Diary* becomes Bridget's (in)ability to navigate these controlling texts. (...) [T]hroughout her novel, Fielding creates a complicated and contested representation of the reader/text relationship and comments, ironically, on both women characters and readers as consumers (SMITH, 2008, p. 2).

In light of that, it is important to affirm the very narrative style presented in the form of a diary enables Bridget to not only keep a record of her life events but mainly rationalise her

attitudes as she sets daily goals that she absolutely fails to accomplish. According to Portuguese scholars Carlos Reis and Ana Cristina M. Lopes in the *Dicionário de Narratologia*, due to the intimacy and privacy that characterise a diary, it seems to have its own narrator as its most desirable narratee (LOPES; REIS, 1990, p. 100, my translation), which accounts for the confessional aspect of the narrative. By writing a novel in manner of a diary, author Helen Fielding gives emphasis to the heroine's subjectivity in a sense that Bridget appears to talk to her own self through it. The idea of some sort of inner voice exposed to the readers somehow gives the impression the girl writing the diary, or rather Bridget, is simply opening up about how it feels like being a woman in the last decade of the twentieth century. Her need for confession has to do with the instability of the time she lives in. In a world where everything changes all the time and where she has millions of choices, Bridget can only try to find an identity for herself for as Stuart Hall has mentioned, a "distinctive type of structural change is transforming modern societies in the late twentieth century." Still according to him, the subject is "becoming fragmented: composed, not of a single, but of several, sometimes contradictory or unresolved, identities (HALL, 2007, p. 596, 598).

Another explanation for this contemporary heroine to create the diary is that she wants to put her targets into writing so that she may keep daily track of their outcomes and see how much she will have evolved by the end of the year. It is very true that when someone writes theirs goals down, they tend to concentrate more on what they want to accomplish. However, although Bridget seems to be quite eager to reform, once again her actions show that this is something her reason wants but unconsciously she cannot and is not willing to change. A good example of that is an entry in Bridget's journal in which she complains about putting on weight. After including a list with her new diet, Bridget declares: "I realize it has become too easy to find a diet to fit in with whatever you happen to feel like eating and that diets are not there to be picked and mixed but picked and stuck to, which is exactly what I shall begin to do once I've eaten this chocolate croissant" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 75). Still, in another entry, it is possible to see Bridget giving reasons to justify, to her own self, the number of cigarettes, calories and Instants she has consumed:

> **Wednesday 22 November** *8st 10 (hurrah!), alcohol units 3, cigarettes 27 (completely understandable when Mum is common criminal), calories 5671 (oh dear, seem to have regained appetite), Instants 7 (unselfish act to try to win back everyone's money, though maybe would not give them all of it, come to think of it), total winnings £10, total profits £3 (got to start somewhere).* (p. 275, italics in the original).

As we may see in several entries along the diary, Bridget Jones is always coming up with excuses that explain why she has failed to achieve the targets she had determined, or rather why she has smoked, drunk and eaten in a way that she has surpassed the limits she had imposed. Based on that, we may infer that no matter the protagonist's attempts to restrain herself, she is constantly trying to forgive herself for not being able to comply with the rules she establishes. In fact, that is precisely where the humour of the novel resides, in Bridget's inability to change and reform. In light of that, it has been suggested that the plot of the story itself "appears routinely to punish Bridget for attempts to manage her life, while rewarding her for being out of control – the genuineness that apparently wins Darcy's heart, after all, is the product of Bridget's persistent failure to carry through her plans to remake herself in another image" (CASE apud MARSH, 2004, p. 55). Moreover, it is also nearly impossible to see Bridget enumerate her qualifications in the diary. It is only when her mother tells her she would like to have a career that Bridget notices she has actually achieved something in life. Or when she attends her godson Harry's birthday party and goes back home extremely happy for being single and childless.

As it has been previously remarked, Elizabeth Bennet presents the characteristics of a rational and sensible woman who knows quite well what her place in the world is, however, the pressure both Lizzie and Bridge feel to marry and start up a family is not the only thing in common between these two women who are nearly 200 years apart. Elizabeth is the image of the age she lived, one still influenced by the rationalist thought of the Enlightenment, which was still in vogue at the end of the 18th century. Similarly, Bridget Jones embodies most of the issues that are inherent of globalisation, the phenomenon that has ruled late-modernity. Elizabeth Bennet's identity is one which is in agreement with the social-historical backdrop of the world she lived in; centred, responsible, witty, serious, Lizzie, to some extent, is the personification of the moral and rational individual of the referred time. In fact, she inhabits a universe that is not pervaded by uncertainties. Her identity is that of the Enlightenment subject, which:

> was based on a conception of the human person as a fully centered, unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness, and action, whose 'center' consisted of an inner core which first emerged when the subject was born, and unfolded with it, while remaining essentially the same – continuous or 'identical' with itself – throughout the individual's existence. The essential center of the self was a person's identity (HALL, 2007, p. 597).

Nevertheless, it has been affirmed that the private character of diary writing often renders it similar to the epistolary narrative (LOPES; REIS, 1990, p. 101, my translation), which makes an allusion to the letters Elizabeth exchanged with her sister Jane when the latter

was in London or to the explanatory and rather confidential letter Mr Darcy gave to Lizzie. As it has been remarked previously in this dissertation, it is important to stress that Bridget and Lizzie express their feelings and present their subjectivities in the form of the humorous entries in the diary and in the letters presented in the classic, respectively. In fact, P&P was first drafted around 1790, a time when epistolary novels were quite popular, especially the novels by Samuel Richardson, who, according to her nephew Austen-Leigh, was Austen's favourite writer. Therefore, it is not by chance that P&P is pervaded by the presence of quite a few letters, a device that not only enables the reader to have a broader idea of the characters exchanging them but also contributes to enrich and to further the storyline itself. Concerning the similarities between both the diary and the epistolary format, in his book *The Epistolary Novel: Representations of Consciousness,* theoretician Joe Bray argues that the epistolary narrative often presents a "transparent version of subjectivity, as its letter-writers apparently jot down whatever is passing through their heads at the moment of writing" (BRAY, 2003, p. 1). Still in relation to that, it has been asserted that:

> Certainly the reader was meant to believe that the characters in such epistolary fictions were transcribing uncensored streams of consciousness. Thoughts are seemingly written down as they come, without any effort to control their logic or structure. Characters talk to themselves, reflect, think out loud – on paper (PERRY apud BRAY, 2003, p. 1).

Still regarding diaries, Carlos Reis and Ana Cristina M. Lopes go even further when they say it is in the novel that the survival of the diary becomes most interesting: throughout the diary, the narrator of the novel presents uncertainty, indecision towards the future, and even suspense, which come from the fragmentary and gradual content of the narrative, and consequently, of the very story (p. 101, my translation). In fact, when Bridget starts the diary and writes down her resolutions, she does not know what will have happened to her by the end of the year. Her daily entries and conflicts instigate the reader to know what she will do after her first date with Daniel Cleaver or what party she will attend the following Saturday and whom she may bump into over there, for instance. Based on the words of Kelly A. Marsh, there are even "instances in which Bridget appears to lack control over her narrative and its ironies. For example, at some points in the novel, the verisimilitude of the diary form gives way to a minute-by-minute account of Bridget's actions" (MARSH, 2004, p. 55), which seems to be some sort of "direct feed from Bridget's consciousness, rather than a self-consciously produced written record" (CASE apud MARSH, 2004, p. 55).

Reiterating what has been discussed along this chapter, it is important to stress that Bridget Jones suffers a lot of pressures: the pressure inherent of the times she lives in, such as

trying to get an identity for herself in a world that is ephemeral; the pressure to be like the role models she sees in the magazines, and also pressure from society, in general, to get married and settle down. All of this added to her lack of confidence contribute to Bridget's desire to reform. She does not see flaws in the people around her, as much as she does not seem to realise the pieces of advice she gets may be unsuccessful. Instead, when they do fail, she blames herself and reckons things have not worked out because she is a hopeless case. In her mind, she is always the problem and the situation becomes even worse when Bridget compares herself to other people, especially the people who are part of her social circle. That is what happens when her short-term boss-cum-boyfriend Daniel Cleaver cheats on her and replaces her for a bronzed American woman: "There, spread out on a sunlounger, was a bronzed, long-limbed, blonde-haired [...] woman. I stood there frozen to the spot, feeling like an enormous pudding in the bridesmaid dress" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 178). Whenever she compares herself to others, especially other women, Bridget often finds them superior to her; in her imagination, they have got qualities she would like to possess. Another person who usually shows this sense of superiority to Bridget is Natasha, a glamorous top family-law barrister, Mark's co-worker and wannabe girlfriend. She is first introduced to the heroine during the literati launch to which Bridget Jones is invited and together with Bridget's co-worker Perpetua in a conversation about hierarchies of culture, she keeps teasing Bridget because of her taste for popular TV programmes. Natasha also belittles Bridget in other circumstances when they happen to come across one another. Actually, Mark's Natasha and her conduct towards Bridget Jones at the referred event resemble the encounter Mr Darcy and Mr Bingley's sisters, above all Caroline Bingley, have with Elizabeth Bennet.

In P&P, Caroline Bingley has feelings for Mr Darcy and once she notices his interest in Lizzie, she starts to humiliate and despise the protagonist. After her sister Jane becomes ill with a cold, for instance, Lizzie goes to Netherfield Hall, Mr Bingley's house, on foot. When she arrives there, her petticoat is six inches deep in mud, something that obviously could not go unnoticed by Miss Bingley and her sister, who make comments on her appearance such as: "To walk three miles, or four miles, or five miles, or whatever it is, above her ankles in dirt, and alone, quite alone! What could she mean by it? It seems to me to show an abominable sort of conceited independence, a most country town indifference to decorum" (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 32-33). Even if she heard what the sisters said about her, Elizabeth would probably be more able to control herself and be less affected than Bridget is when Daniel Cleaver's new affair mentions she thought he had commented Bridget was thin (FIELDING, 2001, p178). Elizabeth's personality was a very peculiar one indeed. Differently from her eldest sister, for

instance, she did not seem to be entirely preoccupied with social conventions, but rather seemed more interested in expressing her own opinions and be faithful to her principles. Terry Eagleton stated that in “Austen’s world, where there are so many corrupting influences abroad, it is vital to look to your own principles and take your own decisions” (EAGLETON, 2005, p. 110). As it has been remarked, not for a moment did Lizzie hesitate to walk a long way to Netherfield as to see Jane, who was ill, no matter if that meant being scrutinised by the fancy Caroline Bingley and her party. In light of that, literary critic Ian Littlewood points out that for “contemporary readers, Elizabeth’s irreverent wit, her unladylike tramp to Netherfield, her impatience with elegant female inanity would all have situated her within an ongoing debate about the proper role of women” (LITTLEWOOD, 1999, p. XIII). Lizzie had always known she would have to get married since her family’s property would be inherited by her distant cousin, the only male heir to her father. Nevertheless, the heroine was so determined that she often affirmed she would only marry for love, otherwise she would rather be single. That can be corroborated by the occasion of Mr Collins's proposal to her; although her mother sees him as an advantageous match, she does not hesitate to turn him down: “I am perfectly serious in my refusal. You could not make *me* happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who would make *you* so” (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 92, italics in the original).

Still according to Marsh, Bridget Jones, with all her insecurities, is made to feel “she is a sinner, but what makes her narrative comic is that it is the confession of a sinner who has no intention whatsoever of reforming. Her confession is not about striving toward perfection [...] it is about celebrating the self” (MARSH, 2004, p. 61). Consequently, the diary itself is the means Bridget has to justify her actions rather than attain control over them. Both Natasha and Daniel Cleaver’s American girl are very glamorous and elegant, but unconsciously Bridget would not rather be them, as much as Elizabeth Bennet would not wish to be like the rich and shallow Caroline Bingley. Bridget’s diary is somehow an attempt to demystify women’s idea of control and having to improve oneself because of the pressures of a consumer society. The pressure Lizzie and Bridge feel to marry and start up a family is not the only thing in common between these two women who are nearly 200 years apart. Elizabeth differed from all the other female characters in P&P because she did not entirely accept what that society imposed on her. Both Lizzie and Bridget somehow reflect the conditions of the women of their time. As it has been argued, for sure “Elizabeth does not entirely fit the prescribed ideal of femininity… Elizabeth, and behind her Jane Austen, go beyond the parameters of their time and resist the generalized ideal of womanhood” (VASCONCELOS,

2001, p.15) and so does Bridget Jones. Both of them subvert the feminine ideal of an ‘accomplished woman’, or rather, the demands and expectations imposed on women in their different ages. Elizabeth does so by sticking up to her principles, no matter if she should decline as many marriage offers as she pleases, and Bridget by undermining the idea of a perfect Cosmopolitanesque creature and of a woman who must juggle a career and a family when in her thirties. Bridget Jones does not manage to change because, in spite of all her flaws and dissatisfactions, she cannot be anyone rather than her own self, and that is the reason why she is rewarded with Mark in the end of the story. In parallel, Elizabeth Bennet is enlightened in the course of her story as she learns her pride had led her to be prejudiced against Mr. Darcy, but just like Bridget, she is not changed, nor would we want her to be (MARSH, 2004, p. 71).

3.2 **Mrs Bennet and Mrs Jones: Two faces of the Same Coin?**

> Don’t say ‘what’, say ‘pardon’, darling, and do as your mother tells you.
> Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones’s Diary*

Pam Jones, Bridget’s mother, is the one person who considerably tries to control Bridget most of the time. In effect, the fact that Bridget went to the New Year’s Day Turkey Curry Buffet is not due to Bridget’s good will to attend what to her means a most boring and painful event; she went to the buffet because her mother somehow forced her to go. Similarly to what happens in P&P, the introductory chapter of *Bridget Jones’s Diary* also starts with a mother’s strong desire to marry her daughter off to a rich man. When Bridget writes in her diary she is supposed to attend the event, she explains her mother had already talked about it on the phone many months before, which accounts for Mrs Jones’s anxiety and eagerness to have Bridget meet the prominent Mark Darcy. The episode inevitably reminds us of the sheer despair Mrs Bennet finds herself in after hearing that a single man in possession of a good fortune was moving into Netherfield Hall, a fine house in the neighbourhood. As soon as she receives this news, Lizzie’s mother begs her husband to pay the young gentleman a visit for if she can “but see one of [her] daughters happily settled at Netherfield [...] and all the others equally well married, [she] shall have nothing to wish for” (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 10). As a matter of fact, in this very first chapter of Jane Austen’s classic, we may have a glimpse of

Mrs Bennet's demanding disposition and her longing to have her children acquainted with the fittest men around to marry.

Mrs Bennet is never quiet, but always making ceaseless remarks about her daughters' need to get married, and so is Mrs Jones. Her insistence to have Bridget flirt with Mark Darcy makes an allusion to her Austenian counterpart. In the referred phone call, for instance, Mrs Jones emphasises over and over again how much she would like Bridget to meet Mark and keeps on making endless comments about him, especially to what regards his professional and economical status: "Oh, did I mention? Malcolm and Elaine Darcy are coming and bringing Mark with them. Do you remember Mark, darling? He's one of those top-notch barristers. Masses of money. Divorced" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 9). In fact, Bridget's mother repeats four times the same things, using basically the same sentences in the same call to convince her daughter of the great opportunity she may have to get to know Mark Darcy. In her mind Mark, the son of her friends Malcolm and Elaine Darcy, is a great match and now he was divorced, she could not accept Bridget's not meeting him and thus showing him she is available too. At some point, even Bridget becomes fed up with her mother's attempt to literally push her into the lawyer, which results in her utterly ironic and humorous confession to her diary: "I don't know why she didn't just come out with it and say, 'Darling, do shag Mark Darcy over the turkey curry, won't you? He's *very* rich' (FIELDING, 2001, p. 12, italics in the original).

As it has been observed, P&P presents "a direct preoccupation with estates incomes and social position, which are seen as indispensable elements of all the relationships that are projected and formed" (WILLIAMS, 1995, p. 236-237). Therefore, although Mrs Bennet's behaviour was most irritating much of the time, she was distressed by the material condition of her daughters, who had an entailed estate and no dowries to offer. Hence it is somehow comprehensible that she craved to find her girls wealthy husbands. Since the family's property was entitled to their cousin, who was the only male heir to their father, and unless they became governesses, they would have no means to support themselves did they not get married. As Austen critics Claudia Johnson and Susan Wolfson have argued, "Mrs Bennet may seem only foolish, vulgar, myopic, and hysteric, but she knows that an unmarried woman is a social abject" and that her daughters can only find financial security in marriage (JOHNSON; WOLFSON, 2003, p. xix).

Pam Jones, on the other hand, need not worry as much in relation to Bridget, who, as a career girl, is independent and can provide for herself regardless of her being married or not. However, as much as Mrs Bennet wishes to see an attachment between Jane and Mr Bingley,

the richest man in the area, Bridget's mother wants to set her up with Mark, whom she considers to be the ideal partner for her beloved daughter. In light of that, it can be said that despite the two centuries apart, these two women show that the role of a mother has not really changed, in that up to nowadays they still want the best for their children and, to them, happiness may be still partly associated with money, comfort and protection. Besides, both mothers wish their children have the lifestyle they have themselves; they want their girls to be settled down, start a family and step into motherhood because that is precisely the kind of life they lead and somehow, even if unconsciously, they want her daughters to perpetuate their role in society. In Mrs Bennet's case, being a homemaker is possibly the most dignified position for a woman at her time. Mrs Jones, however, is a housewife living in the 20th century. As a matter of fact, in spite of her major concern about Bridget's being a singleton, at some point in the narrative, she resigns her housewife condition, leaves Bridget's father and ventures herself into a temporary single life. In comparison with Mrs Bennet, Mrs Jones represents this contemporary kind of homemaker, i.e. a woman who is married with children but who has emancipated herself from solely having to take care of her family and the duties of her house. Unlike Mrs Bennet, her children do not live with her anymore and her property does not belong to a distant relative. Consequently, when Bridget's mother ponders on the way she is leading her life, she realises neither her husband nor her age are obstacles for her to enjoy it exactly like her daughter does. As soon as she comes up with the decision to move on, Mrs Jones explains to Bridget that she realised she "had spent thirty-five years without a break running [her father's] home and bringing up his children" and now she feels like the "grasshopper who sang all summer" who "in the winter of [her] life (...) [hasn't] stored up anything of [her] own". (FIELDING, 2001, p. 53, 71). Pam Jones's attitude and her thoughts on the way she had been spending her life as a homemaker somehow reminds us of what was portrayed in Betty Friedan's acclaimed book from 1963 entitled *The Feminine Mystique*. According to the writer, most of the American housewives she interviewed suffered from 'a problem that has no name', that is, despite performing all their duties and dedicating all their time to their families, most of those women had a feeling that they could not see their worth nor find an identity of their won except as a wife and a mother anymore. Based on Friedan's words, it is possible to say Mrs Jones's outburst may be associated with "the voice within women that says: I want something more than my husband and my children and my home" (FRIEDAN, 1963, p. 32).

According to Swedish scholar Lina Widlund, Mrs Bennet "changes her opinions the same way as the wind blows" (WIDLUND, 2004, p. 9), that is, she presents lots of

contradictions in the way she acts and in the things she says, though she is always quite firm when it comes to her intention of marrying her daughters off. Despite Mr Darcy's, with all his arrogance, for instance, probably being the man she despises the most, she cannot be any happier when she sees Elizabeth married to him. Another example is that of Lydia's escape with Wickham. Mrs Bennet, along with the entire family, was deeply sorry for her daughter's reputation after she had run away with a man without being officially committed to him. Nevertheless, the moment she hears Lydia and Wickham are wedded, she cries tears of joy regardless of the bad character of her son-in-law or the circumstances in which the wedding took place. In light of that, it can be said that Mrs Jones is as contradictory as Mrs Bennet since she longs for Bridget to find a partner and start a family, but she does not realise that seeing her own mother leaving her own father after so many years does not give her daughter much hope to find happiness in marriage. A day before Valentine's Day, for instance, Bridget writes in her diary: "Why is entire world geared to make people not involved in romance feel stupid when everyone knows romance does not work anyway. Look at royal family. Look at Mum and Dad" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 49).

Actually, what Bridget may think when she sees her mother trying to become a career woman at her age is that her mother wishes to be exactly what she is, or rather single and independent. Therefore, Pam Jones's attempt to get Bridget to marry and settle down is discouraging for she wants Bridget to precisely have the lifestyle she has resigned from and that is where the greatest mother-daughter-relationship irony of the story lies. In one of the most dramatic conversations she has with Bridget, for example, Pam affirms to her daughter: "[T]o be honest, darling, having children isn't all it's built up to be. I mean, no offence, I don't mean this personally but given my chance again I'm not sure I'd have..." (2001, p. 196). As it is possible to see, Mrs Jones is so contradictory that she calls into question something which should be extremely important to a woman who has a family, her motherhood. Furthermore, her aforementioned response to Bridget evokes the idea that in the last decade of the twentieth century, there are other ways for a woman, even if she is middle-aged, to be fulfilled in life, apart from being a mother and a wife.

The whole time, Bridget's mother demands that her daughter not only get herself a boyfriend but also change a lot of things in her life like her eating habits, the way she dresses, and even the colour of her hair amongst a set of innumerable other items. She never really takes into consideration Bridget may not identify with what she imposes on her or that Bridget already is an adult with an opinion of her own. Actually, Mrs Jones frequently drops by Bridget's flat just all of a sudden opening her cupboards, her wardrobe and checking what is

going on in her life and when she does not manage to get Bridget to do what she wants, she blackmails her by making her feel guilty (WIDLUND, 2004, p. 10). In one particular episode, Pam, who had, all of a sudden, got a job in television, tries to convince Bridget to give an interview to a programme called 'Suddenly Single', which, in effect, makes a strong allusion to her single state. As Bridget refuses, her mother sets out arguments such as "Oh, please, Bridget. Remember, I gave you the gift of life. Where would you be without me? Nowhere. Nothing. A dead egg. A piece of space, darling" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 135).

Mrs Jones's several interferences in Bridget's life once again reinforce her similarities to Mrs Bennet, as both mothers are indeed very manipulative and try to regulate their families all the time. As Jane Austen stressed, Mrs Bennet was "a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news" (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 4). A great example of Mrs Bennet's manipulation over her daughters may be found in the episode in which she hears Elizabeth refused Mr Collins's proposal. Even though she knows how unpleasant Mr Collins is, she finds herself in utter vexation once she knows Lizzie has not grabbed the opportunity to marry the man who is to inherit their house and as a result, she tries to convince her otherwise:

> But depend upon it, Mr Collins, she added, that Lizzy shall be brought to reason. I will speak to her about it myself directly. She is a very headstrong foolish girl, and does not know her own interest; but I will *make* her know it (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 96, italics in the original).

Curiously enough, the episode also displays Mrs Bennet's preferences in relation to her very own children. Mr Collins's first intention was to propose to Jane, the eldest girl and, whom Mrs Bennet considered to be her prettiest daughter. As soon as she became aware of it, she warned him Jane was already attached to Mr Bingley, which actually was not true. In fact, she wanted to save Jane's beauty for a far more tempting and promising suitor and consequently, as Elizabeth was her least favourite child, especially because she was the one who had mostly taken after her father's wit, Lizzie was the one she had chosen to marry the ugly duckling who could secure the family's property.

As it has been previously illustrated, just like her forerunner, Mrs Jones is also very temperamental, especially when she is displeased with something. Besides, she also appreciates being round the people who comprise her social circle, especially her dear friend Una Alconbury, her greatest ally in fixing Bridget up with Mark. In P&P, Mrs Bennet seems to be, indeed, quite powerful, for she is the person who seems to be in control over the household, including her own husband. Even though she is a woman and, unlike Mrs Jones,

she inevitably needs her husband to perform his duties as a gentleman, such as calling on prominent bachelors on behalf of her girls, she is the one who gives orders and decides what must and must not be done. Pam Jones, in parallel, is an overconfident woman who is also in command of her house and as a consequence of her power, just like Mr Bennet, her husband has a passive role in the story. If on the one hand, Elizabeth's father does not do much apart from spending his days amusing himself as he is constantly mocking his wife's folly, on the other hand, Bridget's father becomes incapacitated towards Mrs Jones's authority. A good illustration of Mr Bennet's passivity may be found when Jane asks him to lend her the coach to visit the Bingleys, after her mother affirms she is to go on horseback, and his response is so mild that it makes no interference in Mrs Bennet's tricky plan, but rather it reiterates her power over him:

> **Jane:** I had much rather go in the coach
> **Mrs Bennet:** But, my dear, your father cannot spare the horses, I am sure. They are wanted in the farm, Mr Bennet, are not they?
> **Mr Bennet:** They are wanted in the farm much oftener than I can get them (p. 27).

Another example is the fact that whenever Mrs Bennet allowed her younger daughters to go to Meryton flirt with the officers on the pretext of visiting their aunt and uncle, their father never intervenes. It is only when Lydia elopes with Wickham that Mr Bennet realises he had been rather lenient and neglectful as he was only occasionally involved in the affairs of the family. Similarly, after Mrs Jones decides to give up on her married life, Bridget's dad can only cry as he constantly rings Bridget and comes over her house to find some comfort:

> At 2 o'clock Dad arrived at the door [...]. As he sat down on the sofa, his face crumpled and tears began to splosh down his cheeks. When she got back (from her latest trip to Albufeira) she started saying she wanted to be paid for doing the housework, and she'd wasted her life being our slave. [...] She wants me to move out for a while, she says, and... and... He collapsed in quiet sobs (FIELDING, 2001, p. 48).

Besides that, his wife swaps him for a Portuguese man, makes him move into their friends' "dead granny's flat at the bottom of their garden" (2001, p. 57) and when she returns, he accepts her back.In effect, Mrs Jones seems to be a mere puppet in Mrs Jones's hands, even more than Mr Bennet in his wife's due to the different ages they belong to. However, it is interesting to notice that after eloping with her lover, Mrs Jones decides to go back home, for she already lived the adventures she wanted to experience, and she realises that is not the kind of life she is actually meant to have, and Julio is not the kind of man for her to spend the rest of her life with.

Still regarding Bridget's father and his passivity, professor Imelda Whelehan remarks: "[H]e is cowardly and dysfunctional and helpless in the face of the breakup of his marriage

because he has left the maintenance of their relationship to his wife. His stereotypical British reserve [...] is counterpoised by the equally stereotypical latin lover Julio" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 52). As a matter of fact, although Lizzie's father, too, was oppressed by Mrs Bennet, due to women's still very limited power in society, there were several things Mrs Bennet had to rely on her husband to do. Being born in the 1990s, Mrs Jones does not depend upon her husband as much, and after living so many years with him, she may even withdraw money from their joint account without his consent and run away to Portugal with her lover.

If we take into consideration Mrs Bennet is a nineteenth-century woman "confined, for better or worse, to the all-encompassing quiescence of what might be called 'Longbourn-ian time'- the quotidian dullness of country life" (Available at: http://www.jasna.org/essaycontest/2013/highschool-3.html), it is only understandable that her main distraction lies in her social gatherings, in dining "with four and twenty families" in the neighbourhood and in finding her girls proper suitors (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 40).; thus, according to what was highlighted before concerning Mrs Bennet, although she seems to be slightly nonsensical, Pam is everything but a woman of little information. Even though Bridget's mother had always played the role of a typical housewife, who raised her children and always took care of the house and the family, some of her personality traits and her sudden transformation prove she is a little bit crazy, though, clearly not insane. In fact, Pam often plays her part in the most comic moments of the story and it is not by chance that once Bridget affirms she was beginning to suspect that:

> she would open the *Sunday People* to see [her] mother sporting dyed blonde hair and a leopardskin top sitting on a sofa with someone in stone-washed jeans called Gonzales and explaining that, if you really love someone, a forty-six-year age gap really doesn't matter (FIELDING, 2001, p. 53).

Mrs Jones abandons her husband, flirts with the tax man, gets a job in television, and ultimately embarks upon an adventure as she elopes with a Portuguese man of dubious character in manner of young and naive Lydia Bennet. As if it were not enough, she is led by Julio, the Portuguese lover, to defraud her family's and their closest friends' money. In effect, Pam starts doing as she pleases without considering the consequences of her attitudes. Mrs Bennet, as a matter of fact, also has her lunatic moments, especially the referred one, in which she sends her eldest daughter Jane to Netherfield Hall on horseback. As it has been previously illustrated, she denied Jane's request to use the carriage as she saw in the upcoming rain a great opportunity for her daughter to catch a slight cold and spend a few days at Mr Bingley's fine house.

Other characteristics in common between both mothers are their shameless attempts to pair their girls off with eligible bachelors. Just like Pam Jones, Mrs Bennet embarrasses her children, especially the eldest ones, most part of the time. For instance, in the occasion of Mrs Bennet's visit to see Jane at Mr Bingley's house, Mrs Bennet, with her silly remarks about the countryside and the exceeding praise to her eldest daughter, could not have embarrassed Elizabeth any more than she did in the presence of Mr Bingley himself, his snobbish sisters, and worst of all, towards Mr Darcy. Elizabeth was so ashamed that the situation made her "tremble lest her mother should be exposing herself again" (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 41). In parallel, Bridget feels the same in relation to her mother when, at the ruby wedding celebration Mark organised to his parents, her mother looks at the room and says she finds the party 'showy' within three feet from the host. As Bridget estates in her diary: "I glanced around nervously and jumped in fright. [...] He must have heard everything. I opened my mouth to say something – I'm not quite sure what – to try to improve matters [...] Hi, I said, hoping to make amends for my mother's rudeness (FIELDING, 2001, p. 230).

If Bridget could not see her parents' relationship as a role model for herself, nor could Elizabeth, who was determined to only marry someone she loved, for she would not wish to mirror her parent's marriage, a marriage that did not present many signs of happiness. In fact, "Elizabeth Bennet's family's deficiencies – most importantly the irresponsibility of her father and vulgar acquisitiveness of her mother, are nearly her undoing in the marriage market" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 36). Mr and Mrs Bennet's relationship seemed to be the typical kind of relationship of a couple who could not entirely find conjugal felicity any more. In fact, it seems Mr Bennet was chiefly attracted to Mrs Bennet's outward appearance when they got married, but after living with her and having to endure her folly, the initial excitement appears to have rendered them to be conveniently married, since, throughout the story, Mr Bennet gives the impression that he barely tolerates his wife. That can be reiterated by the fact that he is always secluded in his library, away from the rest of the house, and particularly away from Mrs Bennet's comments on the situation of their property and of their girls. As a matter of fact, if Lydia Bennet fate consisted of an unhappy marriage, that is highly due to Mrs Bennet's influence over her daughter, the child whose disposition was the most similar to hers. Lydia's relationship with Wickham reflects the relationship of her parents, since theirs too was a marriage constructed with no solid foundations. Still regarding Mrs Bennet's folly, in the explanatory letter Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy gives Elizabeth, he argues that the lack of decorum of her family, especially of her mother, was one of the causes that led him to separate her beloved sister from his best friend: "The situation of your mother's family

(...) was nothing in comparison of that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed by herself, by your three younger sisters, and occasionally even by your father" (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 169). Based on that, we may assume that if Lizzie and Jane Bennet have managed to marry far above their station, it is solely due to their own efforts and accomplishments, with their family playing no part in the matter. Bridget Jones, on the other hand, had been somehow acquainted with Mark Darcy ever since she was a toddler and his parents were part of her family's circle of friends. Furthermore, we must not forget that it was Mrs Jones who found Bridget a job when she felt compelled to leave the publishing company after being heartbroken by Daniel Cleaver's treachery. Also, it is important to emphasise that by eloping with Julio, Bridget's mother gives Mark an opportunity to reveal Julio's real character, rescue her, take her back to her husband and family, and with that, she gives Mark a reason to be close to Bridget. As the heroine herself argues at some point in her diary: "Everything is going from bad to worse. Had thought only silver lining in cloud of mother's criminality was that it might bring me and Mark Darcy closer together" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 276). In light of that, it is possible to conclude her mother, in spite of all her craziness and against all the odds, is eventually the person who somehow helps bring Mark and Bridget together.

3.3 **George Wickham and Daniel Cleaver: Anti-Heroes in Perspective**

> I can much more easily believe Mr Bingley's being imposed on, than that Mr Wickham, should invent such a history of himself as he gave me last night; names, facts, everything mentioned without ceremony. – If it be not so, let Mr Darcy contradict it. Besides, there was truth in his looks.
> Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

In *Pride and Prejudice*, when she is enlightened about the true character of the deceiving George Wickham and the misjudged Mr Darcy, a self-mortified Elizabeth Bennet cannot but admit to her sister: "One has got all the goodness, and the other all the appearance of it" (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 191). Indeed, in Austen's portrayal of both men, it is possible to see a polarity distinguishing the two kinds of male figure. In the story, Mr Wickham is the overly handsome, charming, chivalrous yet greedy young rascal who had grown up with the haughty,

wealthy and moral Mr Darcy. Regarding this difference between the two characters, professor Jennifer Preston Wilson has stated that the author of the classic:

> carefully preserves her premise that Darcy is a reserved man who is reluctant to enter into conversation about himself. Instead of resounding his thoughts against those of a close friend, such as Mr. Bingley or Colonel Fitzwilliam, Austen uses a different mode of comparison to develop his character. In pairing Darcy with the foil of Wickham, she draws upon both biblical and contemporary standards of appropriate behavior to delineate the differences between the two men. Thus, while her primary women characters develop through personal discussion, her main male characters develop by allusion to well-known outside standards (Available at: http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol25no1/wilson.html).

In fact, it is solely based on outside standards and rather on superficial appearances that Elizabeth immediately has a great liking for Wickham. Since her first impressions of Mr Darcy could not have been any worse after the Meryton ball, once she meets the sociable officer and sees he also shares the same dislike for the gentleman, the heroine becomes enchanted by his manners, his great communication skills and his beauty, which is considerably understandable if we take into consideration Jane Austen's primary description of Mr Wickham:

> But the attention of every lady was soon caught by a young man, whom they had never seen before, of most gentlemanlike appearance, walking with an officer on the other side of the way. All were struck with the stranger's air, all wondered who he could be, and Kitty and Lydia, determined if possible to find out, led the way across the street [...] Mr Denny addressed them directly, and entreated permission to introduce his friend, Mr Wickham, who had returned with him the day before from town, and he was happy to say had accepted a commission in their corps. This was exactly as it should be; for the young man wanted only regimentals to make him completely charming. His appearance was greatly in his favour; he had all the best part of beauty, a fine countenance, a good figure, and very pleasing address (p. 63).

As it is clear in the aforementioned excerpt, the narrator in P&P can only praise Mr Wickham for his appearance and good manners without, not even for a single moment, evoking his past records or exposing his true nature, which somehow has to do with the intended suspense that will contribute to the climax of the narrative. In *Bridget Jones's Diary*, we seem to have the personification of the alluring George Wickham in Bridget's cynical and irresistible boss, whom, as we may notice, she fantasises about for quite a while for right in her new year's resolutions, she remarks she will not "obsess about Daniel Cleaver as pathetic to have crush on boss in manner of Miss Moneypenny or similar" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 2). Since he occupies an important position at the publishing company Bridget works, Cleaver is a well-read, cultured, twentieth-century bachelor who has been to Cambridge and who quite resembles Wickham in that, through Bridget's detailed accounts, he is extremely gorgeous, eloquent, and incredibly flirtatious and, above all things, just like his predecessor, Daniel Cleaver is the bastard of the story. Furthermore, both Daniel and Mark Darcy, the men whom

Bridget gets involved with along the novel, are also connected for they attended the same university, and as it is implicit in the narrative, it seems they have had a past history in which Cleaver must have done something to Mark in a way that the latter is not only completely aware of his dubious nature, but also, later in the story, tries to warn Bridget about it. In parallel with P&P, Mark and Daniel play the roles of hero and anti-hero consecutively and according to Imelda Whelehan:

> Both hero and bastard have to share certain qualities to build up the tensions between them, and sure enough, Cleaver and Darcy are at times aloof, self-centered and wilfully insensitive to Bridget's feelings. Both roles call for a fairly traditional mold of masculinity [...] The bastard carries the bulk of the plot in the first half of the novel because it creates the best initial obstacle to hero and heroine, and because bastards are interesting in the range one can give the character, as opposed to the growing benignity of the hero (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 50-51).

A few days after the New Year's, Bridget has got to go back to work, something she absolutely complains of by expressing how bad it is to be obliged to face the office after being utterly nonchalant at home watching the telly and eating lots of food during the holidays. She also whines about her bossy co-worker Perpetua and affirms the only silver lining in returning is the possibility of seeing Daniel again: "Mmmm. Daniel Cleaver, though. Love his wicked dissolute air, while being v. successful and clever. He was being v. funny today [...] Also asked me if I got anything nice for Christmas in rather flirty way. Think might wear short black skirt tomorrow" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 19). As we may realise, Bridget shows, right at the beginning, she has always fancied her boss, and as much as Lydia, Kitty and even Elizabeth Bennet, she could not ignore his good looks and his intelligence. Still regarding Elizabeth, Bridget's impulse to dress herself in a short black skirt as to attract Daniel reminds us of Lizzie, who, had not only been quite excited to see Mr Wickham in the upcoming Netherfield Ball, but also to dance a great deal with him in the occasion: "She had dressed with more than usual care, and prepared in the highest spirits for the conquest of all that remained unsubdued of his heart, trusting that it was not more than might be won in the course of the evening" (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 78).

Unlike Lizzie, Bridget, because of her low self-esteem, never really thought Daniel Cleaver could actually be interested in her. However, as she realises he has an instinct for flirting, in manner of Lydia Bennet she becomes quite determined to appeal to him and consequently flirt with him as well. Much to her surprise, some days later, Bridget sees herself exchanging countless messages at work with Daniel Cleaver and his articulation in the texts presents another similarity with his Austenian predecessor, in that both of them are great speakers. One of the messages in particular also demonstrates rather too well how much of a

womaniser, just like Wickham, her boss actually is: "**Message Jones** If walking past office was attempt to demonstrate presence of skirt can only say that it has failed parlously. Skirt is indisputably absent. Is skirt off sick? **Cleave**" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 24).

This initial contact between Bridget and Daniel and also between Lizzie and Wickham is quite interesting and quite important to the plot of the two stories because for both heroines, these imminent romantic liaisons represent a possibility to distract them from their catastrophic first encounters with their romantic heroes at the Turkey Curry Buffet and on the Meryton assembly. As professor Imelda Whelehan has argued, the "character of the bastard has to have some credibility and depth to be desired by the heroine in the first place" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 51) and by seeing that both Daniel and Wickham seem to be rather kind, gentle, captivating and handsome, they cannot help being fascinated by them. Both bastards, at a first moment, present qualities and characteristics that are apparently very different from the arrogance, conceit and seriousness the protagonists saw in the heroes when they were rejected by them at the beginning of both novels. Even Elizabeth Bennet herself, who was a very sensible young lady and who was far more reasonable than Bridget, gets carried away by Wickham in the first place:

> The gentlemen did approach; and when Mr Wickham walked into the room, Elizabeth felt that she had neither been seeing him before, nor thinking of him since, with the smallest degree of unreasonable admiration. The officers of the – shire were in general a very creditable, gentlemanlike set [...] but Mr Wickham was as far beyond them all in person, countenance, air, and walk [...] Mr Wickham was the happy man towards whom almost every female eye was turned, and Elizabeth was the happy woman by whom he finally seated himself; and the agreeable manner in which he immediately fell into conversation [...] made her feel that the commonest, dullest, most thread-bare topic might be rendered interesting by the skill of the speaker (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 65-66).

In light of what has been previously illustrated, it is important to highlight that Elizabeth's sudden passion for Wickham is not entirely based on his appearance, but also on the fact that he was indeed someone she could converse with for he was, as Austen reiterates over and over again, very extroverted and communicative and quality conversation was something the heroine, being a woman of substance, really appreciated and this is best illustrated in the following excerpt:

> Her sisters may be attracted to his red coat, but Lizzy primps for the Meryton ball, in anticipation of meeting with Wickham again in order to continue the conversations she meets with so rarely at home. What she fails to recognize, however, is that she should beware of a man who is a master of conversation; the quiet, proud, reserved man may be more truthful. [...] Wickham is more interesting to Elizabeth because of the past he has fabricated (Retrieved at: http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/printed/number18/hall.pdf).

The recent acquaintance with Wickham, perhaps, meant even more to Elizabeth than to Bridget for although Wickham's gallantry helped her somehow overcome Mr Darcy's rudeness to her, he pleased her because he told her all things she wanted to hear about Mr Darcy. Since she was a woman of strong personality, when Darcy mortifies her pride, she inevitably starts to abhor him more than anything else in the world. That is best corroborated by scholar Peter Know-Shaw's words, as he states that "Elizabeth's readiness to accept the fiction that Wickham weaves round his connections with Pemberley is shaped not by her infatuation alone, but by her need for anything that will salve the damage done to her pride at the assembly" (KNOX-SHAW, 2013, p. 33). Hence, as Wickham goes for supper at her aunt's house and tells her the stories through which he tarnishes Darcy's reputation, he gives Lizzie the opportunity to talk about his conduct in further details, which contributes for her to despise the gentleman even more and consequently have even higher regards for Mr Wickham:

> Whatever he said, was said well; and whatever he did, done gracefully. Elizabeth went away with her head full of him. She could think of nothing but of Mr Wickham, and of what he had told her, all the way home (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 73-74).

When Elizabeth's uncle and aunt, Mr and Mrs Gardiner, stay at Longbourn to spend Christmas with the family, her aunt notices how close Lizzie is to Mr Wickham, and assumes she may be slightly falling in love with the officer. As she gets preoccupied with a possible attachment between her niece and the young man, she advises Lizzie not to allow her interest for him to lead her to connect with a man who has not got much to offer. By the heroine's reply to her aunt, it is possible to notice that, the very sensible Elizabeth was indeed a bit enchanted by Mr Wickham, and similarly to Bridget, she was so out of her mind, that if she really found herself infatuated with him, not even his lack of fortune could discourage her feelings:

> At present I am not in love with Mr Wickham; no, I certainly am not. But he is, beyond all comparison, the most agreeable man I ever saw – and if he becomes really attached to me – I believe it will be better that he should not. [...] In short, my dear aunt, I should be very sorry by the means of making any of you unhappy; but since we see every day that where there is affection, young people are seldom withheld by immediate want of fortune, from entering into engagements with each other, how can I promise to be wiser than so many of my fellow creatures if I am tempted, or how am I even to know that it would be wisdom to resist? (1999, p. 123).

Based on the aforementioned excerpt, it is possible to notice that, as it has been pointed out, "Elizabeth's lack of a sizeable dowry explains, in part, her initial fascination with George

Wickham" and she "knows that Wickham is penniless, yet his comparative poverty does not necessarily disqualify him as a potential mate" (MARKLEY, 2013, p. 93-94).

If being courted by George Wickham helped increase Lizzie's hatred for Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy, exchanging rather provocative text messages with Daniel Cleaver drives Bridget to totally overcome the Mark Darcy episode. In fact, the texts render Daniel to ask for her phone number, which implies he is going to ask Bridget out on a date soon. Nevertheless, as a typical womaniser and commitment phobic (an expression Bridget often uses to refer to the kind of men she needs to stay away from), Daniel keeps stalling the heroine until she gets so desperate by awaiting his call that she herself ends up ringing him, which means she has made some sort of a faux pas, for according to the implicit courtship rules in the world of modern dating, a woman had better not ask a man out, but rather it is supposed to happen just the other way round. As Cleaver sets to meet Bridget on a Sunday evening, Sunday being a bizarre day for going out on a date as the protagonist affirms, Bridget Jones, possibly like any other western girl in her situation, spends the entire day preparing herself for the occasion. However, after all the hard work, as she sees an apologetic message on her answerphone, she realises Daniel Cleaver has stood her up, and leaves her 'hanging in the air' to only invite her for another date some eight days later. As we may notice, it is from the very start that Bridget's boss gives signs of his bad character and shows he, in fact, embodies most of the types of men whom Bridget and her friends despise and so badly avoid to get attached to, i.e.: "alcoholics, workaholics, commitment phobics, people with girlfriends or wives, misogynists, megalomaniacs, chauvinists, emotional fuckwits or freeloaders, perverts" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 2).

In spite of Daniel's already giving Bridget an idea of his personality and showing he could hardly be the kind of nice, sensible boyfriend she had been so keen to find, she becomes so obsessed with him that she cannot perceive that she does not spare the efforts to get involved with this glamorous man who, at the same time, proves to be so unworthy. That can be corroborated in the episode of their first date, when Daniel takes Bridget to a Genoan restaurant. Once they head to his flat after supper, and he tries to unzip Bridget's skirt, he does not hesitate to remind her: "This is just a bit of fun, ok? I don't think we should start getting involved" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 33). The insecure Bridget Jones then surprisingly gets herself together and, in manner of Elizabeth Bennet, not only confronts him but also asks him how he dare be so "fraudulently flirtatious, cowardly and dysfunctional" and affirms she is

"not interested in emotional fuckwittage[13]" as she leaves his place and goes back home sunk into frustration (2001, p. 33). Although the episode is quite disappointing, it will not prevent Bridget from growing a deep interest for Daniel; instead, it will make her act as an inner-poised aloof unavailable ice queen as the best way to attract him and it is not by chance that, later in the story, as their affair unfolds, she admits to her diary that she may officially "confirm that the way to a man's heart these days is not through beauty, food, sex, or alluringness of character, but merely the ability to seem not very interested in him" (2001, p. 73).

Daniel Cleaver appears to be so devil-may-care in the beginning that Bridget's struggles to be with him somehow allude to the condition of a great many women who still have to depend on a man to make the first move and who suffer the burdens of having to wait for a phone call the day after the first meeting. As Bridget points out, it seems up to nowadays women find themselves in some sort of a ladder, in which the one who cares less about the other in a relationship, that is men most of the time, will always be on top. Bridget's experience with Cleaver somehow paves the way for author Helen Fielding to bring into light the remainders of the patriarchal characteristics that are still very much present in the world of modern dating. For the record, after Bridget gives Daniel a second chance, and goes out on another date with him, this time far better than the first one, she cannot help but feeling alarm: "What now? No plans were made. Suddenly I realize I am waiting for the phone again. How can it be that the situation between the sexes after a first night remains so agonizingly imbalanced? Feel as if I have just sat an exam and must wait for my results (FIELDING, 2001, p.60).

Once again, we reiterate Bridget is so blind with the possibility of getting together with this man whom she had always put on a pedestal, that she is unable to acknowledge he is most interested in playing games with her. Her willingness to insist on forming an attachment to him is partly due to the pressure she suffers from her family and her colleagues to find a boyfriend no matter what. Daniel is so selfish and vain that Bridget's attempt to ignore him bothers him so much that he decides to invite her to go on a short getaway to Prague just to see if she is still interested in him. As soon as Bridget accepts his offer, he comes up with an excuse saying he will not be able to make it. This episode is only another proof of the chop-

[13] 'Emotional Fuckwittage' is a term that has been first introduced by Helen Fielding in *Bridget Jones's Diary* and it accounts for the emotional turmoil intentionally wreaked by men who fall anywhere along the spectrum of womanizers to commitment-phobics (Retrieved at: http://www.romancewiki.com/Bridget_Jones's_Diary).

change treacherous nature of Daniel Cleaver, which is inevitably reflected on their fleeting relationship, and at some point, also reported in an entry in her diary:

> I'm fed up with you, I said furiously. I told you quite specifically the first time you tried to undo my skirt that I am not into emotional fuckwittage. It was very bad to carry on flirting, sleep with me then not even follow it up with a phone call, and try to pretend the whole thing never happened. Did you just ask me to Prague to make sure you could still sleep with me if you wanted to as if we were on some sort of ladder? [...] It's all chop-change chop-change with you. Either go out and treat me nicely, or leave me alone. As I say, I am not interested in fuckwittage (FIELDING, 2001, p. 76).

It is only in the literati launch of the fictional *Kafka's Motorbike* that Bridget Jones comes across Mark Darcy for the first time after the buffet. It is also at this party that Bridget becomes slightly aware of Cleaver and Darcy's past acquaintance. As Daniel sees Mark and Bridget talking, he waits until Mark is gone to approach her and as she lightly feels his hands on her waist and wishes he were not looking so quite attractive, much to her surprise, he briefly explains he had already been acquainted with the famous lawyer:

> **Bridget:** Have you been at the party? I didn't see you.
> **Daniel:** I know you didn't. I saw, though. Talking to Mark Darcy.
> **Bridget:** How do you know Mark Darcy? I said, astonished.
> **Daniel:** Cambridge. Can't stand the stupid nerd. Bloody old woman. How do you know him? (2001, p. 103).

The resentment Daniel Cleaver expresses when he talks about Mark Darcy, especially when he affirms he cannot 'stand the stupid nerd', implies that he may be partly dissatisfied with the fact that, although they have attended the same university, Mark, as a top-notch human-rights barrister, has a far better job and, professionally speaking, is far more successful than him. Besides, as it has been argued, "Daniel Cleaver assumes Wickham's role more fully by misrepresenting his past history with Darcy in order to denigrate a former friend and monopolise the heroine's affections" (OPREANU, 2011, p. 92). Cleaver's confession is essential to the plot for when he admits he knows Darcy, something which until then Bridget was utterly oblivious to, he not only reinforces that he is indeed the anti-hero of the story, but also contributes to establish, once and for all, the rivalry between both hero and anti-hero that can be traced back in P&P. Even though both Mark and Daniel, unfortunately, never get to face or stumble into one another in the novel, the referred episode makes reference to George Wickham and Mr Darcy's awkward and unpleasant encounter which Elizabeth witnesses and that takes place when the protagonist's mind is still absorbed in all the false remarks the wicked Mr Wickham had made about the gentleman:

> [T]he whole party were still standing and talking together very agreeably, when the sound of horses drew their notice, and Darcy and Bingley were seen riding down the street. On distinguishing the ladies of the group, the two gentlemen came directly towards them, and began the usual civilities. Bingley was the principal spokesman,

> and Miss Bennet the principal object. He was then, he said, on his way to Longbourn on purpose to enquire after her. Mr Darcy corroborated it with a bow, and was beginning to determine not to fix his eyes on Elizabeth, when they were suddenly arrested by the sight of the stranger, and Elizabeth happening to see the countenance of both as they looked at each other, was all astonishment at the effect of the meeting. Both changed colour, one looked white, the other red. Mr Wickham, after a few moments, touched his hat – a salutation which Mr Darcy just deigned to return. What could be the meaning of it? – It was impossible to imagine; it was impossible not to long to know (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 63).

Despite all the initial flirtation between Bridget and Daniel, because of all the chop and change and mind games her boss liked to play, it takes her nearly four months to actually start dating Cleaver. As a boyfriend, he sometimes drops by her house drunk, refuses to go on a stroll on hot summer days to spend all day at home watching cricket and avoids romantic mini-breaks. However, he also plays the picture-perfect boyfriend when he turns up uninvited to one of Bridget's reunions with her girlfriends, whom, for the record, Bridget always seek to find advice in her love life with this dashing man. In the episode, he gives Bridget's friends a lift home, spoils Bridget and the girls with boxes of Milk Tray and does the shopping for the weekend. Bridget herself becomes so surprised with this sort of double persona of her boss-cum-boyfriend that she affirms in her diary:

> As the girls fluttered around finding their handbags and grinning stupidly at Daniel I started eating all the nut [...] out of my box of Milk Tray, feeling a bewildering mixture of smugness and pride over my perfect new boyfriend whom the girls clearly wished to have a go at shagging, and furious with the normally disgusting sexist drunk for ruining our feminist ranting by freakishly pretending to be the perfect man. Huh. We'll see how long that lasts, won't we? I thought, while I waited for him to come back (FIELDING, 2001, p. 128).

Although their official relationship lasts only three months, it is possible to notice author Helen Fielding tackles a lot of feminist issues in several examples she presents to describe their involvement. The very fact that the attachment lasts little time also reiterates the idea of how frail intimate bonds are in a world that is so ephemeral. Furthermore, it also shows how difficult indeed it may be for a single woman to be in a substantial relationship in her thirties, an "age when men of [Bridget's] own age no longer find their contemporaries attractive" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 148). Fielding uses the figure of Wickham in Daniel Cleaver to expose the sort of chauvinistic man that exists up to nowadays, which is incredibly curious for Bridget lives at a time when women, especially career girls like the heroine, no longer need to be stuck in a relationship in which they are bound to perform the duties of a quintessential homemaker after all the conquests achieved with the feminist revolutions.

What is at stake in the connection is that Daniel inevitably sees Bridget as his inferior, both in her professional status (especially if we take into consideration Bridget performs at some sort of secretary at work) and in intellect, even though he finds her extremely amusing

to be around and is sexually attracted by her. Apart from having fun with the heroine, he also shows that outward appearances are extremely important to him, for he cheats on Bridget with a skinny American girl, who not only meets the top-model ideal of beauty spread by western media, but who is also his equal in both looks and wit, and also has a prominent function at the branch of his company in the States. One night, for instance, Bridget is trying to have a conversation with Cleaver about a dream she had in which she is doing her French test and realises she is wearing nothing but her Domestic Science apron and becomes desperate that her teacher may notice it. Since she wakes up with a start and tries to associate the dream with her preoccupations with her career, she tells her boyfriend about the nightmare as she expects him to give her some advice. This talk about her career is probably the most serious talk Bridget has with him, nonetheless, it is in this specific episode that we may find Daniel Cleaver in his most Wickham and chauvinistic moment:

> **Bridget:** I expected Daniel to at least be sympathetic. I know it's all to do with my worries about where my career is leading me but he just lit himself a cigarette and asked me to run over the bit about the Domestic Science apron again. It's all right for you with your bloody Cambridge First [...] I'll never forget the moment when I looked at the notice board and saw a D next to French and knew I couldn't go to Manchester. It altered the course of my whole life.
> **Daniel:** You should thank your lucky stars, Bridge. [...] Anyway... he started laughing, ... there's nothing wrong with a degree from... from... (he was *so* amused now he could hardly speak) ... Bangor (p. 166, italics in the original).

Based on what was quoted above, we may perceive quite well the sense of pride and superiority Daniel Cleaver expresses when he laughingly scorns the university where Bridget graduated from. Moreover, his sheer disregard for Bridget's worries in relation to her professional life not only shows his lack of genuine feelings for her, but also implicitly shows that in his mind she should not care about it so much for she is a hopeless case intellectually speaking. All of this is corroborated as the very same conversation goes on:

> **Daniel:** You know I think you're a ... an intellectual *giant*. You just need to learn how to interpret dreams.
> **Bridget:** What's the dream telling me, then? I said sulkily. That I haven't fulfilled my potential intellectually?
> **Daniel:** It means that the vain pursuit of an intellectual life is getting in the way of your true purpose.
> **Bridget:** Which is what?
> **Daniel:** Well, to cook all my meals for me, of course darling, [...] And walk around my flat with no pants on (FIELDING, 2001, p. 167, italics in the original).

In fact, Daniel Cleaver, since the beginning, shows how unworthy he is of the heroine, and his actions throughout their short affair only reinforce that he actually is a scoundrel and cannot be at all compared with the ethical and honest Mark Darcy. Bridget sees in the Tarts and Vicars party, a party organised in the countryside by her parents' friends, a great opportunity to introduce Daniel and show the world, or rather her world, that she finally has a

boyfriend and, this time, they would not be able to bother her by making enquiries into her love life. However, Daniel makes up an excuse not to go at very short notice, which renders the protagonist absolutely upset. Cleaver's not turning up in the occasion makes an allusion to the ball in Netherfield Hall, where Elizabeth Bennet becomes disappointed when she finds out Mr Wickham did not go, and instead of dancing with him, as she had fantasised, she ends up dancing with Mr Darcy, much for her dislike.

It is in the Tarts and Vicars party that Mark Darcy, by getting to know Bridget was dating Daniel Cleaver, gives some hints at the true character of her boyfriend. After the party, as Bridget becomes suspicious by what Mark had told her, she decides to drop by Daniel's flat only to find out an alluring stark-naked American woman on his roof. This disastrous situation provides Bridget with an awakening of the rogue Daniel Cleaver had always been. Actually, in previous entries in her diary, Bridget had already shown she regularly had suspicions that when Daniel was not with her, he might be cheating on her with someone else and most of her friends, including the overly feminist Shazzer always knew nothing good could come out of this relationship. When, back in February, Daniel leaves Bridget 'hanging in the air' for a few weeks, he suddenly gives her a Valentine's card, Shazzer advises her not to give him much importance: "**10 p.m**. Just called Sharon and recounted whole thing to her. She said I should not allow my head to be turned by a cheap card and should lay off Daniel as he is not a very nice person and no good will come of it" (2001, p. 52, bold in the original).

Although Bridget feels very sad and humiliated by the treachery, she cannot help feeling miserably heartbroken, for she really liked Daniel and got so carried away with the possibility of showing everyone she had got such a gorgeous, clever and fun boyfriend that in her moony mind, she expected that the relationship would work. Differently from Bridget, when Elizabeth Bennet receives Mr Darcy's letter accounting for Wickham's past behaviour, including his intentions towards Mr Darcy's sister, she, whom had always been quite rational, does not get as awfully unhappy as Bridget, for even though she fancied George Wickham when she met him, her involvement with him was not as deep as Bridget's with Daniel Cleaver, and that can be explained by the different times both pairs belong to. Concerning that, Marion Gymnich and Kathrin Ruhl have asserted that:

> Daniel Cleaver [...] clearly resembles the notorious George Wickham from *Pride and Prejudice*, but while the readers of Austen's novel may at best deduce that Elizabeth has a temporary crush on Wickham, Bridget, in accordance with changed moral standards and gender roles, has a (short-lived) affair with Daniel (GYMNICH; RUHL, 2010, p. 27).

Apart from that, Lizzie's any possible romantic feelings for Wickham had probably already been softened when Wickham's inclination towards her was withdrawn as he saw the prospect of marrying a Miss King, who was to inherit a great fortune. As soon as Lizzie tells her aunt this news, Mrs Gardiner cannot help judging Wickham as a mercenary, since to her, it only revealed his greedy nature. Furthermore, the discovery about his true character not only shows Elizabeth that she had entirely mistaken Mr Darcy, but also that she had deceived her own self because of the contempt and pride she felt towards the true gentleman in the story. Indeed, after she finishes reading the letter, Lizzie concludes:

> How despicably have I acted! She cried. I, who have prided myself on my discernment! [...] How humiliating is this discovery! – Yet, how just a humiliation! – Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly. Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment, I never knew myself (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 177).

When Bridget finds out Daniel's deception - rather than assuming she had been mistaken from the start about the fact that her picture-perfect boss could indeed be the substantial boyfriend she had been looking for - Bridget takes for granted Daniel ditched her because she was too fat and uninteresting. Unlike Elizabeth, she is not immediately enlightened to believe their relationship did not work because of the treacherous, womanising, egocentric and chauvinistic disposition of Daniel Cleaver. Bridget does not realise Daniel had only seen her as an adventure most of the time. Elizabeth Bennet never dared check Wickham's past or believe what people said about him, including Caroline Bingley, and nor did Bridget and there is where both heroines play their part in their own deception. Nevertheless, Bridget had to get involved with Daniel for their brief affair was the obstacle in her path to eventually find her Mr Right, and despite all odds, after being alone for quite a while, being with such an attractive man as Daniel contributed, in part, to cheer Bridget and her low self-esteem up. Likewise, in P&P, before "Wickham is revealed as a gambler, liar and opportunistic seducer of women, his flirtation with Elizabeth is treated with some seriousness as a plot device" (MARKLEY, 2013, p. 94). However, as we think of the similarities between Wickham and Cleaver and the flaws in their personalities, we realise both heroines could not have ended up with them, for as Charlotte Lucas advises Lizzie in the ball, they should not "allow their fancies for Wickham [or Cleaver] to make [them] appear unpleasant in the eyes of a man of ten times his consequence" (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 79).

Apart from Daniel Cleaver, Fielding also draws an analogy between Wickham and Julio, Mrs Jones's Portuguese lover. Similarly to George Wickham, Julio is also handsome

and represents a sweet escape for Bridget's mother who is more than sick of staying at home taking care of her passive husband's house after so many years. As Whelehan suggests, Julio is the personification of the "stereotypical latin lover [...] who emerges as a dashing anti-hero in the novel's denouement" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 52). As a matter of fact, regarding his good appearance, at some point in her diary Bridget affirms: "Oh, he's so Latin, hahaha, said Mum coquettishly [...] Every time I've met Julio he has been clean and coiffed beyond all sense and carrying a gentleman's handbag" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 302). In the story, Julio resembles Wickham not just for being an attractive seducer, but also because he drives Mrs Jones to elope with him to Portugal after defrauding all her friends' and even her husband's money and possibly ruining the family:

> **Mr Jones:** Apparently Julio, using your mother as – as it were – 'front man', has relieved Una and Geoffrey, Nigel and Elizabeth and Malcolm and Elaine (oh my God, Mark Darcy's parents) of quite considerable sums of money – many, many thousands of pounds, as down payments on time-share apartments.
> ...
> **Bridget:** So what happened?
> **Mr Jones:** The time-share apartments never existed. Not a penny of your mother's and my savings or pension fund remains. I also was unwise enough to leave the house in her name, and she has remortgaged it. We are ruined, destitute and homeless, Bridget, and your mother is to be branded a common criminal (2001, p. 273).

In parallel with what happens in *Pride and Prejudice*, according to what Mr Darcy reveals to Lizzie, in the past Wickham seduced Georgiana Darcy, Mr Darcy's sister who was only fifteen years old at the time, and tried to elope with her in an attempt to lead her to marry him so that he may have a share in her large fortune. As it is known, Wickham had spent the small inheritance the late Mr Darcy had left him on gambling and turned down the possibility of being a clergyman. He had no property and his position as an officer at the militia paid him but little money. Therefore, the only way for him to succeed and have a comfortable living was by marrying a rich woman. That is why he takes advantage of Georgiana's innocence and stays away from Elizabeth Bennet once he discovers Miss King is to inherit a substantial sum of money. Just like Wickham, Julio is a mercenary, and he uses Mrs Jones in order to steal the money of her bourgeois friends. As if trying to elope with Miss Darcy were not enough, at the end of P&P, Wickham runs away with the foolish and naive Lydia Bennet. However, he saw in Lydia only an adventure, for he knew she had no dowry nor did her family have anything to offer him. Never did George Wickham have any intention to actually marry Lydia, but rather, he just wanted to have an affair with her and compromise hers and her family's reputation at a time when such a liaison could extinguish any possible way for her to enter marriage in the future. His attitude towards Lydia shows the lack of respect he had for the Bennets, a family

with which he dined quite often and which cared for him somehow. This fact added to all the other wicked things Wickham did reiterate indeed how unscrupulous and immoral he was. Wickham only marries Lydia when Mr Darcy intervenes, by assisting him with money and forcing him to do so. Likewise, it also takes Mark Darcy, not by chance a first-rate lawyer, to find Julio and Bridget's mother, bring her back home and recover his parents' and their friends' money. Once again, as this sub-plot eventually brings Mark and Bridget together, as much as Lydia's elopement unites Lizzie and Mr Darcy, it is possible to assume that in the heroines' journey to happiness, it is necessary to pass through a Mr Wickham to finally reach a Mr Darcy.

3.4 **Mr Darcy & Mr Darcy: The Princes Charming**

> Then we had a long discussion about the comparative merits of Mr Darcy and Mark Darcy, both agreeing that Mr Darcy was more attractive because he was ruder but that being imaginary was a disadvantage that could not be overlooked.
> Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*

It is very clear right at the first chapter of *Bridget Jones's Diary* that the storyline of the novel not only alludes to the romantic plot of *Pride and Prejudice*, but in Mark Darcy, the hero of the story, it is possible to perceive the echoes of Jane Austen's most famous male protagonist, that is, Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy. As it has been suggested, "Mark Darcy appears cold and distant towards Bridget, straight away singling him out to the seasoned romance reader as the real hero of the piece" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 32). For the record, the opening scene of the Helen Fielding's novel describes the previously mentioned New Year's Day Turkey Curry Buffet where Bridget Jones is introduced to the top-notch human rights barrister Mark Darcy several years after playing with him in the paddling pool. His connection with the proud and aloof Mr Darcy, whose 'good opinion once lost is lost forever', is established by Bridget when she first catches sight of him:

> The rich, divorced-by-cruel-wife Mark – quite tall – was standing with his back to the room, scrutinizing the contents of the Alconbury's bookshelves (...) It struck me as pretty ridiculous to be called Mr Darcy and to stand on your own looking snooty at a party. It's like being called Heathcliff and insisting on spending the entire evening in the garden, shouting 'Cathy' and banging your head against a tree (FIELDING, 2001, p. 13).

As Bridget remarks, Mark is rich, quite tall and conceited and seems to be detached from the rest of the party, since she sees him standing on his own looking at the host's bookshelves. All those traits resemble the characteristics presented by Austen to describe Mr Darcy and his behaviour at the moment of his entrance at the Meryton ball:

> Mr Bingley was good looking; [...] but his friend Mr Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien; and the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year. The gentlemen pronounced him to be a fine figure of a man, the ladies declared he was much handsomer than Mr Bingley, and he was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity [...] His character was decided. He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and everybody hoped that he would never come there again (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 12).

In light of the aforementioned extract, in the referred episode it is possible to notice Mr Darcy is very reserved and awfully haughty towards those whom he has not been acquainted with. The aristocrat displeases nearly everyone around, including Elizabeth Bennet, about whom he remarks: "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men" (1999, p. 13). Based on that, it is relevant to point out that after Bridget's mum and her matchmaking friend Una try to push Bridget into a conversation with Mark, Bridget gets so anxious due to the awkwardness of the situation that she barely knows what to say apart from sheer nonsense. Consequently, as much as Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy does not show any interest in dancing with the girls in the ball, Mark does not make efforts to socialise with the heroine. Actually, he dismisses her the same way Mr Darcy dismissed Lizzie at the assembly, and inevitably hurts Bridget's feelings since he "suddenly bolted off towards the buffet, leaving [her] standing on her own by the bookshelf while everybody stared at [her]" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 15). Mark Darcy's attitude at the party reiterates the fact that, although he is a man of the 20th century, his personality presents some of the traits of a Byronic hero, which is a concept often used to characterise the kind of hero Mr Darcy is. In effect, the same way Bridget and Lizzie are rather unconventional heroines, the screenwriter of the BBC miniseries Andrew Davies has affirmed that Darcy is "the perfect romantic hero...aloof, withdrawn, but hot as well" (DAVIES apud CARROLL; WILTSHIRE, 2013, p. 162). Besides, Mr Darcy's principles and values, his sense of duty and responsibility, his honesty and integrity added to his strong personality, his good looks, his striking attitude and his willingness to change as to conquer Elizabeth's love contribute to render him the quintessential traditional romantic hero. Apart from that, according to Jennifer Preston Wilson, at Jane Austen's time:

> In the cult of manliness, a new naturalness was exalted, favouring sincerity over [...] constant reading of the social pulse and adaptation to its beat. Characters like Darcy's, unremarkable for their manners, came to be valued for being free of dissimulating meanness. Darcy fits the 'manly' description because even when he tries to please, he does not do so in a manner which is insincere (Retrieved at: http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol25no1/wilson.html).

Therefore, when author Helen Fielding creates Mark, which, of all the other characters in her revisiting text, perhaps is the one that resembles the most his Austenian predecessor, which can be reiterated by the sole fact that he is the only character in *Bridget Jones's Diary* whose name is exactly the same as his counterpart's. Besides, Fielding makes us realise that after two hundred years Mr Darcy represents the ideal of masculinity that stands the test of time. He not only is the kind of man Bridget wishes to find in her frantic pursuit for a substantial boyfriend, but also the kind of man several women still dream of. It is not by chance that up to nowadays Mr Darcy is so cherished and he, actually, is one of the main reasons why P&P is constantly adapted and readapted, leading to a phenomenon called 'Darcymania'. As a matter of fact, this phenomenon arose with great vigour after Colin Firth's iconic performance of the emblematic character and his aforementioned wet-shirt lake scene in the 1995 BBC mini-series and it is best explained by Devoney Looser's comments on the subject:

> Andrew Davies's 1995 six-part BBC adaptation, starring Colin Firth, singlehandedly transformed Austen's cultural stock. Firth's jumping into the lake at Pemberley became a cultural sensation. [...] This scene has made Darcy loom larger than all of Austen's other characters, leading to what one critic calls 'Darcy's escape to iconicity,' noting how it prompted his 'cutting himself away from the source novel.' Although some critics called this mid-1990s period 'Austenmania', others accurately dubbed it 'Darcymania'. It is of significance because it marked the moment that Darcy became for many readers and viewers the imaginative centre of *Pride and Prejudice*, taking that role over from Elizabeth (LOOSER, 2013, p. 182-183).

In light of what has been discussed throughout this dissertation, such was the impact of Colin Firth's performance in the referred mini-series that the actor was invited to play Mark Darcy in the film version of Helen Fielding's book. In effect, as Whelehan point outs, Fielding "herself confessed that she drew the character of Mark Darcy with Colin Firth's portrayal of Darcy in her mind" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 34). Bridget also makes several remarks about the show in the narrative and in one specific entry in her diary, which was mentioned previously, she admits she is going to watch its episode finale and 'loves the nation being so addicted' to it. In the same entry, for the record, Bridget talks about her very own obsession with Mr Darcy and Elizabeth: "The basis for my 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" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 246, 247). Still concerning that, Julie Sanders has claimed that intertextuality refers to the "notion of how texts

encompass and respond to other texts" in a sense that the "inherent intertextuality of literature encourages the ongoing, evolving production of meaning, and an ever-expanding network of textual relations" (SANDERS, 2008, p. 2-3). Therefore, if we analyse the aforementioned passage, we may perceive the presence of an intricate net of intertextuality in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, for Bridget evokes the television adaptation of P&P in the novel, when Fielding's novel already is but a rewriting of the classic. As it is well known, film or television adaptations of books, especially classic novels, usually tend to undergo several changes in order to meet current cultural demands and expectations. In relation to that, scholar Lucia Opreanu claims that:

> The BBC mini-series established a unique intertextual dialogue with a particular dimension of the novel, the subversive fantasy of female autonomy, to the extent of transforming the gaze into a major structuring principle and promoting the female spectator's sympathy towards a hero 'allowed to express weaknesses, doubts and emotions which the late twentieth century constructed as desirable in a man' (Aragay, López, 206-207) and therefore embodying an updated masculinity which differs greatly from that of Austen's mostly distant and impenetrable Darcy (OPREANU, 2011, p. 90-91).

Based on what has been described of the BBC's Mr Darcy, we may assume that this postmodern approach of the traditional sentimental hero accounts for Bridget and Jude's acknowledgement that Mr Darcy was ruder than Mark Darcy, which made the former even more attractive than the latter (FIELDING, 2001, p. 247). Still, the references to the television adaptation go on and on as Bridget mentions the actors who play Darcy and Elizabeth, that is, Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle, to her boss and suggests that they cover their off-screen romance. Bridget's reaction to the actors' love affair is not really good since she cannot dissociate them from their fictional roles and it shows that she is disappointed to see her favourite and idealised all-time romantic couple 'dressed as modern-day luvvies':

> When I stumbled upon a photograph in the *Standard* of Darcy and Elizabeth, hideous, dressed as modern-day luvvies, draped all over each other in a meadow: she with blonde Sloane hair, and linen trouser suit, he in striped polo neck and leather jacket with Shoestring-style moustache. Apparently, they are already sleeping together. That is absolutely disgusting. Feel disorientated and worried, for surely Mr Darcy would never do anything so vain and frivolous as to be an actor and yet Mr Darcy *is* an actor. Hmmm. All v. confusing (FIELDING, 2001, p. 248, italics in the original).

When Bridget states that she feels disorientated and appalled by seeing Darcy and Elizabeth off the screen like a modern-day couple, she gives the impression that she cannot see the pair of actors as the pair of actors, for in her mind, they are indeed the fictional characters she is so fond of. The mere thought of 'Darcy and Elizabeth' sleeping together is disgusting to Bridget because, since she sees them as characters, she cannot accept the fact that they have surpassed the fictional limits of romantic fantasy. Moreover, her confusion about Mr Darcy's being

actually an actor corroborates the author's passion for Colin Firth and the idea that she really created Mark Darcy based on him. This mixture of fiction and reality that is so very present in the narrative is further discussed by Opreanu as she appropriates the words of critic John Wiltshire:

> These intricate interactions between the various fictional narratives and film scripts reveal the extent to which, far from being interesting merely in terms of literary intertextuality, Fielding's novels are emblematic of a much wider phenomenon 'typical of cultural production in this era of greatly diversified means of mechanical reproduction' (Wiltshire 2). The 'remaking, rewriting, adaptation, reworking, appropriation, conversion, mimicking of earlier works into other media' has been repeatedly identified as one of the most important features of the current landscape (OPREANU, 2011, p. 93).

If we take into consideration what has been discussed so far, once again we may argue that starting by their names, Mark Darcy and Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy have quite a lot of things in common indeed. In effect, even Mark's career as a top barrister would be, somehow, the modern-day equivalent of the landowning aristocratic position of Mr Darcy. In fact, according to scholar Reshma Dhrodia, Mark is:

> An intelligent, sophisticated hero who specializes in international human rights work combating the policies of corrupt foreign governments. He is everything that Bridget (and those readers who identify with her) should desire in a man. Like his predecessor, Austen's Fitzwilliam Darcy, Mark is not only strong, silent and handsome. He also seems to embody the perfect mix of stoic conservatism and liberal empathy (DHRODIA, 2006, p. 43).

Furthermore, if we take into consideration what has been mentioned concerning Mr Darcy's sexual attractiveness, we may assume it has to do with his qualities of a perfect romantic hero, that is, 'his handsome features, noble mien,' his high birth, his social responsibilities and power and also his fortune and estate. Similarly, as a modern prince charming, Mark Darcy conveys this same connotation of attractiveness mostly because of his being just outstanding in his prominent profession. That is very well illustrated by Bridget's comments on him at the moment he tries to investigate the disappearance of her mother: "He started to pace around the room firing questions like a top barrister. 'What's being done to find her?' 'What are the sums involved?' 'How did the matter come to light?' [...] It was pretty damn sexy, I can tell you" (FIEDLING, 2001, p. 274). Nevertheless, both characters also present dissimilarities, and that is partly due to the time gap that separates them. One of the reasons why Mr Darcy was immensely snobbish at the Meryton assembly he and Elizabeth Bennet first saw one another is related to his social position. At the time, social classes were of utmost importance, and Mr Darcy's being of the highest rank granted him the right to somehow have a sense of superiority towards the others. This fact associated with Mr Darcy's being at a public ball

with people who were not part of his party accounts for a possible discomfort amongst those people and his consequent arrogance. A great illustration of that is the conversation Charlotte Lucas has with Lizzie about Mr Darcy's behaviour at the ball:

> His pride, said Miss Lucas, does not offend *me* so much as pride often does, because there is an excuse for it. One cannot wonder that so very fine a young man, with family, fortune, everything in his favour,, should think highly of himself. If I may so express it, he has a *right* to be proud (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 19, italics in the original).

At the end of the 20th century though, ranks and titles do not confer as much power on a man. Hence, Mark Darcy was not rude to Bridget Jones at their first meeting because of his position or social class, but because she herself was not able to adapt to the rules of courtship and gave him the wrong signals. She was so nervous by the pressure her mother and her mother's friends had put on her flirting with him that she acted completely clumsy when he asked her if she had been staying with her parents over New Year as well: "'Yes. No. I was at a party in London last night. Bit hungover, actually.' I gabbled nervously so that Una and Mum wouldn't think I was useless with men I was failing to talk to even Mark Darcy" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 15). When Bridget goes on explaining why "New Year's Resolutions can't technically be expected to begin on New Year's Day" (p.15), she mistakenly suggests that she leads a very hectic lifestyle which revolves around massive drinking, smoking, partying hard and being hungover, and more than that, she gives him the impression that she is not the sort of woman he could possibly be attached to.

Even though Bridget did not really fancy Mark Darcy when they were first introduced, his lack of interest in taking her telephone number undeniably affects her self-esteem and contributes to worsen even more her lack of confidence, for as the heroine admits, "It's not that I wanted him to take my phone number or anything, but I didn't want him to make it perfectly obvious to everyone that he didn't want to" (p. 16). In light of that, it is possible to affirm that although Elizabeth and Bridget do not really fancy both heroes as soon as they meet them, they feel extremely hurt because, when it comes to courtship matters, their aloofness represents a huge humiliation towards the people around them. Elizabeth starts to detest Mr Darcy not only because he mortified her pride, as she confesses to her friend Charlotte, but also because of his high rank. At a time when the gentry were allowed to be snobbish due to the duties and responsibilities that were associated with their position, Lizzie can only mistakenly prejudice Mr Darcy for being a conceited aristocrat. On the other hand, instead of even considering the reason why Mark behaved the way he did, Bridget punishes herself and, eventually, finds her consolation in the form of a giant chocolate bar, gin and tonic, and a cigarette; small pleasures the consumerism era she lives in can provide. Lizzie is

more mature than Bridget and she reacts to the first encounter with Mr Darcy in a tougher way since she, too, is proud. Bridget does not seem to take much pride in being who she is, but the same way, she also judges and prejudices Mark based on the first impressions she has of him. However, in agreement with her comic nature and the time in which she is set, her immediate observation on Mark's appearance is given in the form of a rather humorous entry in her diary:

> He turned round, revealing that what had seemed from the back like a harmless navy sweater was actually a V-neck diamond-pattern in shades of yellow and blue – as favoured by the more elderly of the nation's sports reporters. As my friend Tom often remarks, it's amazing how much time and money can be saved in the world of dating by close attention to detail. A white sock here, a pair of red braces there, a grey slip-on shoe, a swastika, are as often as not all one needs to tell you there's no point writing down phone numbers and forking out for expensive lunches because it's never going to be a runner (p. 13).

Concerning her close friend Fanny's good opinion of the characters in P&P, Jane Austen confessed in one of the letters she exchanged with her sister Cassandra that her friend's "liking Darcy and Elizabeth is enough. She might hate all the others, if she would" (AUSTEN-LEIGH, 1882, p. 100). In effect, Darcy and Elizabeth represent one of the most romantic couples and, perhaps, one of the greatest matches in all of Austen's novels. That is due to the irrevocable fact that they are each other's equals in terms of character and personality and also to the erotic appeal that is always in the air whenever they stumble into another. Therefore, by uniting Bridget Jones and Mark Darcy, the author of the contemporary story makes use of the Cinderella plot that is characteristic of Jane Austen, who, according to Juliet McMaster, is "often happy [...] to make a happy ending out of marrying her heroine to a man notably above her income and social prestige" (MCMASTER, 2011, p. 113). In effect, in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, we have the cold-at-first-sight prominent and awfully rich barrister who is bewitched by a very peculiar woman such as the clumsy Bridget whom he winds up next to at the end of the story. Based on that, we may assume that the fairy-tale storyline is still present and still interests a lot of readers, or rather, generally female readers in the 1990s. That can be explained by professor Imelda Whelehan as she claims "Austen is credited with producing one of the perfect romance narratives in *Pride and Prejudice*" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 31). Furthermore, she argues that, just like Bridget Jones:

> the heroines of these [formula romance] novels [...] tend to have a rewarding job, their own home, and a social life, but their relationship to the hero is always traditional, even if they put up a little feminist 'resistance' in the first place. The heroes they fall for are always dark, tall, a little older, successful, surly, and smouldering with unawakened passion (p. 31-32).

Still regarding Elizabeth Bennet, as long as she had the opportunity, she was constantly teasing and confronting Mr Darcy, which is a great proof of her unconscious interest in him. Differently from Lizzie though, Bridget seems to manifest her deliberate indifference towards Mark, especially during the time she was involved with Daniel Cleaver. Nonetheless, it is important to mention that both of the couples have their romantic paths pervaded by several unexpected meetings. For the record, the first time Bridget sees Mark after the buffet is in the occasion of the book launch party, where she realises she had been mistaken in her first impressions of the lawyer, whom she had last seen wearing a freakish old-fashioned jumper. Once she realises Mark is out of his horrible Christmas outfit, Bridget blatantly affirms: “I was just standing waiting for my coat, reflecting on how much difference the presence or absence of a diamond-patterned sweater can make to someone’s attractiveness” (FIELDING, 2001, p. 103). By the way, it is in his accidental encounters with Elizabeth that Mr Darcy is able to observe and analyse her better, and hence gradually fall in love with her, which eventually accounts for his enlightenment and the change in his conduct. As it has been suggested, Elizabeth does not usually care to look at Mr Darcy, such was her antipathy towards him. Actually, when Lizzie goes to Netherfield to visit her sister Jane, Mr Darcy has the first opportunity to carefully look at her beautiful ‘pair of fine eyes’ and this is precisely the moment when he realises were it not for her low connections, he could be in great danger of becoming infatuated with the heroine. Based on that, we may highlight that Elizabeth was often unaware of Darcy’s deepening attraction to her and that is precisely the reason why she is taken by sheer surprise when he first proposes to her. Mr Darcy is, indeed, a very keen observer, something that is triggered by his natural reserve, which can be seen in the following excerpt:

> Occupied in observing Mr Bingley’s attentions to her sister, Elizabeth was far from suspecting that she was herself becoming an object of some interest in the eyes of his friend. [...] Of this she was perfectly unaware; - to her he was only the man who made himself agreeable nowhere, and who had not thought her handsome enough to dance with. He began to wish to know more of her, and as a step towards conversing with her himself, attended to her conversation with others (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 21).

Just like Lizzie, Bridget, too, is completely oblivious of Mark Darcy’s sudden interest in her, apart from his being incredibly polite and nice to her during the launch. However, whenever Bridget meets Mark, she always notices him staring at her, especially when she bumps into him at a convenience shop: “Excuse me, does the word ‘queue’ mean anything to you? I said in a hoity-toity voice, turning round to look at him. I made a weird noise. It was Mark Darcy all dressed up in his barrister outfit. He just stared at me, in that way he has” (FIELDING, 2001, p. 241). It is possible to perceive that Mark stares at Bridget in several different

passages throughout the story, which only reiterates the incredible resemblance between him and Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy. Also, at the Tarts and Vicars party held by Mr and Mrs Jones's friends, for instance, Bridget, who had thought it was meant be a fancy-dress party and consequently turned up disguised as a bunny, notices someone staring as it turns out to be Mark: "I could feel someone's eyes on me and looked up to see Mark Darcy staring fixedly at the bunny tail" (p. 169).

Still concerning the Tarts and Vicars episode, it is mandatory to point out that it is at this party that Mark shows a few signs of his thoughtful, caring, protective and gentlemanlike manner, especially after Una Alconbury tells Bridget that because of her fancy dress, Mark was "just saying [she] must feel dreadfully uncomfortable with all these older chaps around" (p. 170). Besides, it is at this same occasion that he becomes aware Bridget is dating Daniel Cleaver, and gives hints at the character of the latter as well as corroborating the fact that he, too, already knew Bridget's boss:

> **Una:** What a shame Bridget couldn't bring her boyfriend. He's a lucky chap, isn't he? [...] What's his name, Bridget? Daniel, is it? Pam says he's one of these sooper-dooper young publishers.
> **Mark:** Daniel Cleaver?
> ...
> **Una:** Is he a friend of yours, Mark?
> **Mark:** Absolutely not.
> **Una:** Oooh. I hope he's good enough for our little Bridget.
> **Mark**: I think I could say again, with total confidence, absolutely not (FIELDING, 2001, p. 171).

As it is illustrated above, this episode inevitably reminds us of the explanatory letter Mr Darcy gave Elizabeth after she inquired him into his misdeeds in relation to Mr Wickham. In fact, it becomes even more evident when Bridget goes on confronting Mark for having criticised Daniel Cleaver behind his back and Mark tells her to look out for herself and for her mother, because of Julio. Just like Elizabeth, after she hears Mr Wickham's accusations of Mr Darcy, Bridget immediately judges Mark as she says he "must have some reason to be so horrible about [her] boyfriend other than pure malevolence" (p. 171). Similarly to what happens in P&P, she only happens to know the real reason of Mark's resentment later in the story. Also, it is due to Mark's hints that Bridget decides to leave the party and go straight to Daniel Cleaver's house only to find out he was actually cheating on her. Once again, we may assume that the same way Lizzie has her awakening regarding Wickham's attitude and her own folly when Mr Darcy reveals the truth, Bridget, too, realises she had been deceived all along by Daniel.

Apart from Elizabeth Bennet's deeply rooted hostility to Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy, many of the people around her tried to advise her, most of the time, that the gentleman was not all

that what she thought he was. Starting with her sister Jane, who was ever so careful not to misjudge people deliberately, her friend Charlotte Lucas and even the unpleasant Caroline Bingley gave her clues to Darcy's integrity throughout the story. Likewise, as soon as she gets impressed by seeing Mark looking handsome all dressed up in a suit at the book launch, Bridget decides to ring her friend Jude, who, much to Bridget's dislike, makes great comments on him:

> **Bridget:** Just called Jude and told her about [...] Malcolm and Elaine Darcy's son, whom Mum and Una had tried to get me off with at the Turkey Curry Buffet, turning up at the party looking rather attractive.
> **Jude:** Wait a minute. You don't mean *Mark* Darcy, do you? The lawyer?
> **Bridget:** Yes. What – do you know him as well?
> **Jude:** Well, yes. I mean, we've done some work with him. He's incredibly nice and attractive. I thought you said the chap at the turkey curry buffet was a real geek.
> **Bridget:** Humph. Bloody Jude (p. 104).

It seems that, throughout the narrative, Bridget keeps on being reminded of Mark's importance, influence and status. A good proof of that is the fact that even when she is reading a magazine, she comes across an issue portraying the lawyer: "Tried to read myself to sleep with new issue of Tatler, only to find Mark Bloody Darcy's face smouldering out from feature on London's fifty most eligible bachelors going on about how rich and marvellous he was" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 194). Mark's advertisement on the paper, in fact, makes a slight allusion to the moment Elizabeth sees herself at Pemberley and stumbles into his portrait. It is only when Lizzie sees his portrait that she realises how handsome and pleasant Mr Darcy really was:

> In the gallery there were many family portraits, but they could have little to fix the attention of a stranger. Elizabeth walked on in quest of the only face whose features would be known to her. At last it arrested her – and she beheld a striking resemblance of Mr Darcy, with such a smile over the face, as she remembered to have sometimes seen, when he looked at her. She stood several minutes before the picture in earnest contemplation, and returned to it again before they quitted the gallery (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 210).

Near the end of the book, Bridget Jones is invited to attend the ruby wedding of Mark Darcy's parents. The party was held at Mark's house, which Bridget had never seen before, and whose grandeur rendered her utterly surprised for it was a "huge, detached wedding cake-style mansion on the other side of Holland Park Avenue surrounded by greenery" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 228). Holland Park Avenue actually comprises one of the most expensive and luxurious addresses in London to date, and if we think that Mark's house is located in such a fancy area, it is nearly impossible not to associate it to Pemberley, Mr Darcy's magnificent estate in Derbyshire. Similarly, Bridget's account of Mark's property

resembles Elizabeth Bennet's reaction to Mr Darcy's impressive mansion at the first time she saw it:

> [T]he eye was instantly caught by Pemberley House, situated on the opposite side of a valley, into which the road with some abruptness wound. It was a large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; [...] Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. They were all of them warm in their admiration; and at that moment she felt, that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something! (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 206).

It is in Pemberley that Elizabeth Bennet confirms she has indeed fallen in love with Mr Darcy. In spite of the property's being extremely breathtaking, it is not the material value of the house that contributes to the change in her feelings. As several critics have suggested, that is due to the fact that "Pemberley teaches Elizabeth how to read Darcy: it gives her both the language and the context for understanding him and his origins" (PAGE, 2013, p. 105). Similarly, the party Mark organises also gives Bridget hints of his thoughtful and caring nature as she is able to see his efforts to delight his parents in every tiny detail: "He had certainly pushed the boat out for his mum and dad. All the trees were dotted with red fairy lights and strings of shiny red hearts in a really quite endearing manner" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 228). If her stay at Pemberley, enables Lizzie to have a clearer picture of Mr Darcy's character and be more infatuated with him, it is at Mark's house at the ruby wedding that Bridget gets to be a little bit closer to the lawyer. In effect, their approximation occurs when Mark catches sight of her dancing in the garden with an adolescent boy and claims her hand in manner of Mr Darcy towards Elizabeth in the Netherfield ball. The sole fact that this approach takes place outside the house and away from the party, in the garden, contributes to give the episode some sort of Austenian romantic atmosphere, in a sense that in Austen's fiction, the "outdoor space offers freedom but paradoxically also privacy that would be impossible in the drawing room, and, consequently, an emotional outlet for the characters" (PAGE, 2013, p. 99).

As we turn to the end of P&P, we may find Elizabeth inquiring Mr Darcy into what set his liking off for her in the first place, as she tells him:

> You were disgusted with the women who were always speaking and looking, and thinking for *your* approbation alone. I roused, and interested you, because I was so unlike *them*. Had you not been really amiable you would have hated me for it; but in spite of the pains you took to disguise yourself, your feelings were always noble and just; and in your heart, you thoroughly despised the persons who so assiduously courted you (AUSTEN, 1999, p. 318).

In light of the passage quoted above, it is possible to realise it alludes to the fact that although Natasha, Mark's co-worker, seemed to be his equal and Caroline Bingley seemed to be Mr Darcy's equal in social position and manners, both women do not, at any circumstance, manage to attract the heroes. That is because both heroes become precisely interested in the women who appear to be indifferent towards them due to their initial arrogance and snobbery. Therefore, what is at stake in *Bridget Jones's Diary* is that, just like P&P, it is the saga of a man who learns how to love an unconventional heroine not for her looks or her social status, but rather for the consistency and peculiarity of her nature. That is clearly depicted at the referred ruby wedding, since Mark not only eventually asks Bridget out for dinner, but also confesses the reason he fallen in love with her: "Bridget, all the other girls I know are so lacquered over. I don't know anyone else who would fasten a bunny tail to their pants" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 237). In fact, the reference to the episode of the fancy-dress party - which had happened months before and where Mark Darcy came across Bridget Jones disguised as a sexy bunny - corroborates the fact that it is Bridget's remarkably genuine character that eventually conquers the heart of the lawyer. Based on that, it is possible to conclude that by establishing a dialogue with the plot of P&P, *Bridget Jones's Diary* once again has romantic love "represented as a magical transforming power in the lives of hero and heroine", for it "purports to be subversive in that it seems to flout family authority, social status and economic considerations" (WALDER, 1995, p. 55). Hence, when Elizabeth Bennet refuses Mr Darcy's first proposal, she is true to her own principles, in that she shows him marrying someone she really loves is more important to her than his £10,000 a year. Likewise, despite everything her mother and her mother's matchmaking friends tell Bridget about Mark Darcy and his successful career, Bridget does not care so much about it, for the only thing she really wants is to have someone she loves and who loves her in return by her side. That probably is the reason why the authors of both stories decide to grant both heroines, who defy social conventions in the different moments they live, with the fittest man around to marry, that is, the prince charming. However, that does not happen before Mr Darcy or Mark Darcy secretly rescue the families of their beloved heroines from the harm the elopement of Wickham and Lydia, and Julio and Mrs Jones may cause them. Such act only reinforces the heroes' repressed passion for the heroines and the protective aura that revolves around them. Since he is the inspiration for Mark, all of the qualities presented before render Mr Darcy the ultimate romantic hero, which is so much adored and still very much in vogue in women's imagination even after two hundred years.

Moreover, it is important to consider that Bridget Jones is the inhabitant of an era that is pervaded by independent career girls; an era in which it should not matter whether women are married or single anymore. Nonetheless, when writer Helen Fielding allows this insecure protagonist to have her happy ending with Mark Darcy, she shows that despite Bridget's efforts to be "a woman of substance who does not need men in order to be complete" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 43), she does feel the urge to have a partner. In effect, Imelda Whelehan explains that what is at stake is that the fairy-tale storyline that is still present in lots of novels destined to women accounts for the fact that perhaps "women do nostalgically treasure the romance fantasy even when it is wildly out of kilter with their actual experiences" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 60). As a matter of fact, we may assume that Bridget and, with her, several other career girls still have a human need for romance, and above all, the need to find some sort of security in a world where certainties no longer exist. Mark Darcy is not just a top-notch human rights barrister, he is the Mr Right Bridget had been so keen to find, or rather, the man Bridget may finally rely on. Besides, although twentieth-century women no longer needed men to financially support them, they still certainly appreciated having someone to share their lives with, for as it has been remarked, romance is "an arena in which men and women seek meaning, transcendence, wholeness and ecstasy: the interest and human instinct for wholeness is projected on to love" (JOHNSON apud TODD, 2013, p. 157).

CONCLUSION

Even though Jane Austen lived in a time when women had but very little freedom, she was born only a few years before Mary Wollstonecraft, who is known to have contributed to lay the foundations for the future feminist movement that would, a great many years later, inevitably influence the lives of women such as author Helen Fielding and her contemporaries. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that Austen was born nearly at the end of the eighteenth century, the greatest majority of her characters presented characteristics that might be partly associated with the rationalist thought of the Enlightenment, which was still in vogue at the time. In light of that, critic Jocelyn Harris has argued that all of Austen's "heroines penetrate through appearances to truth, an epistemological endeavour dear to the Enlightenment" (HARRIS, 2011, p. 41). Hence, it is possible to assume Elizabeth Bennet, for instance, lived in a world of certainties and according to what Stuart Hall has so extensively claimed, hers was an identity typical of that of the Enlightenment subject in that it was fully centred and remained "essentially the same [...] throughout the individual's existence" (HALL, 2005, p. 597). Apart from that, by analysing the life of the canonical writer, we may infer that one of the main reasons for Austen to portray marriage in her novels is that, as it has already been mentioned, she herself felt the pressures of having to get married, and as a woman who was amongst the gentry, but did not really belong to it, she not only knew the urge parents had to marry their daughters off, but also how hard it was for poor girls at her time to find a suitable husband, or even, to marry above their station. Hers was an era where women were brought up with the sole purpose to marry and have children and where marriage was, indeed, a social imperative.

Helen Fielding, on the other hand, is a twentieth-century journalist and therefore, an independent and successful woman living in London by the time Bridget Jones comes to life. By creating a novel that irrevocably dialogues with *Pride and Prejudice,* Fielding establishes herself as one of the several female writers who tend to visit and revisit canonical texts, a procedure that is characteristic of postmodernism. As previously remarked, according to critic Linda Hutcheon, postmodernism comprises a "critical revisiting, an ironic dialogue with the past of both art and society" (HUTCHEON, 1993, p. 244). However, in agreement with the interpretation of *Bridget Jones's Diary* presented throughout this dissertation, we may assume that Fielding's text does not interact with the referred classic in order to undermine it, but rather, it pays tribute to Jane Austen and her most famous novel. In fact, *Bridget Jones's*

Diary brings to light issues such as the role of women in modern-day contemporary society and the ongoing relevance of marriage, amongst other things. All of that is approached in a humorous, yet sometimes ironic way with a tone of strident feminism, and somehow, the novel shows that those themes such as the role of women and marriage are still as relevant as it was in Jane Austen's era, even after all the feminist revolutions that started to take place in the mid-twentieth century. Helen Fielding, in fact, was one of the female writers who sparkled a new genre fiction entitled 'chick-lit', since she wrote a book that was primarily destined to women, especially when it refers to its diary narrative. Moreover, she has coined the expression 'emotional fuckwittage' and employed the terms 'singleton' and 'smug marrieds' in such a unique way that it has contributed to give the novel a very authentic, and somehow revolutionary, tone and led its author to become a reference of paramount importance in the genre.

Since Bridget Jones is a thirty-something career girl who has a series of conflicting problems concerning her appearance, her intelligence, and above all, her self-esteem, she proves it is very hard to find a suitable partner in a world full of choices, uncertainties, insecurities and fluid identities. As Bridget's mother affirms to the protagonist, "Oh, honestly, darling. You girls are just so picky and romantic these days: you've simply got too much choice" (FIELDING, 2001, p. 195). Taking that into consideration as well as the analysis of the socio-historical events and issues intrinsic to the 1990s in the United Kingdom, we may further understand how consumerism and globalisation, amongst other things, affect Bridget Jones and the other characters in the novel. Based on what Zygmunt Bauman has affirmed in relation to the subject, it is possible to deduce that late modernity, in general, is the product of a consumer society in an era where technology is an imperative and where, with the presence of globalisation, boundaries cease to exist. Actually, the world in the last decade of the 20th century is but a multifaceted, liquid and ephemeral one, and it inevitably interferes in the way people conduct their lives, especially concerning intimate relationships. Amongst the most important social events that took place in the United Kingdom in the 90s, we could notice that an education reform enabled a great number of British youngsters to attend university in the referred decade. As a consequence, young people, and women above all, started having more and more opportunities to become highly skilled professionals, which led them to be financially independent and less inclined to marry or have children. This new panorama accounts for the considerable shifts in the British demography of the time. Since women were becoming career girls, the number of birth rates in Great Britain at the time, for instance, declined substantially.

By making a close comparison between Bridget Jones and Elizabeth Bennet, we may realise that although they present lots of differences, especially because of the distinct ages the heroines belong to, they also present similarities. The two protagonists are somewhat unconventional heroines in that they do not seem to entirely conform to what society imposes on them, and both of them are true to their very own principles and feel compelled to demonstrate their feelings and to constantly act on impulse. Besides, both protagonists are in search of true love, regardless of the pressures society inflicts on them to get married and settle down. As a matter of fact, if we take into consideration the diary narrative of the contemporary novel, it is possible to assume that as much as Bridget expresses her feelings in the form of her humorous entries, Elizabeth also expresses hers in the letters she exchanges with other characters in the story. it is possible to reiterate what was briefly discussed in chapter three regarding the authenticity given to Bridget Jones due to the diary format. Thus we may assume that the narrative style of *Bridget Jones's Diary* also alludes to *Pride and Prejudice,* for we may realise that there is no interference of the narrator in the diary, and the same occurs in the letters displayed in the classic.

It was also rather interesting to notice that Bridget Jones also embodies characteristics of other Austenian female characters that were depicted throughout this dissertation. Regarding that, we may affirm Bridget resembles Charlotte Lucas, for she, too, is already considered a spinster due to her advancing age. Moreover, Bridget makes a striking allusion to the character of Lydia Bennet, in a sense that both of them are immature and unrealistically romantic women who usually get carried away by their fantasies. Apart from that, it is also possible to associate conduct books, such as *Fordyce's Sermons to Young Women*, which were in vogue during the Regency era, to women's magazines like *Cosmopolitan* that are so very present in Bridget Jones's life. In effect, conduct books were quite common at Austen's time for women were still very constrained by society and those manuals helped reinforce the strict rules by which middle-class women had to abide. In an article by the *British Library*, it is mentioned that one of the conduct books Austen read was Thomas Gisborne's *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, from 1805. According to the article, the referred manual surprisingly differed from the *Fordyce's Sermons* Mr Collins tried to read in P&P, since it did not stress "the need for women to be submissive and modest" (Available online at: http://www.bl.uk/collection-items/conduct-book-for-women). The article also suggests that Gisborne's views were not very different from those Austen conveyed in her novels. Taking that into consideration, it is possible to infer that Austen's constant remarks about personal

conduct and behaviour accounts for her being considered a master of comedies of manners. As Professor Kathryn Sutherland affirmed in an interview:

> Very little social behaviour happens in private in this world. There are always lookers on. Jane Austen's novels show both women particularly have very little freedom, but also everybody has very little freedom because we are all being watched by somebody. Most of our activities are happening in a kind of halfway public private space and we are always subject to gossip, to conversation, to a kind of watchfulness and to judgment, of course (Interview available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcWjzxFFmqY, my transcription).

Based on that, it is important to acknowledge that as much as, in P&P, Austen implicitly undermined the sorts of conduct books that oppressed women, Helen Fielding also indirectly criticises self-help books and women's magazines due to the pressure such items, and the media in general, put on women, with great emphasis on outward appearance. If Austen's world was one in which people were constantly observed and judged and people, women in particular, were taught how to behave properly, by taking a look at Bridget Jones's life, we may assume that, in relation to that, things have not quite shifted in the twentieth century.

Regarding the mothers of both heroines, it was possible to find out that since both of them are housewives, they somehow want their children to perpetuate their roles, which explains their strong desire to see their daughters properly married. Although women these days are able to provide for their own selves and although the boundaries between social classes are now blurred, mothers still want their children to pair up with someone who could offer them stability, comfort and protection.

In the character of Daniel Cleaver, we may identify a strong reference to the eighteenth-century fortune-hunter deceitful young rascal personified by George Wickham, whose attitude and behaviour cannot go unwatched, for in the time he lives in, people tend to abide by strict rules of moral conduct. In the twentieth century though, society does not seem to follow such a rigid pattern of behaviour, hence Daniel Cleaver's misconduct evokes some of the reasons why women have found it harder and harder to be in a substantial relationship. That is explained by the fact that in the wide set of options they have, they inevitably come across chauvinists, megalomaniacs, commitment phobics and 'emotional fuckwits', who have no real intention of being seriously attached to someone, rather than just have fun. In light of that, it is possible to affirm that the character of Daniel Cleaver only reiterates what Bauman has often remarked about the frailty of human bonds in late modern days, especially concerning intimate relationships.

By associating the character of Mark Darcy with Mr Darcy, author Helen Fielding shows that although women have conquered their freedom, their financial independence and the possibility of being extremely successful in their careers, they still dream of encountering Mr Right, who somehow resembles the sort of Prince Charming Austen created, a character that is still adored by several women worldwide up to nowadays. As Imelda Whelehan suggests, what is at stake in *Bridget Jones's Diary* is "the perplexing question: why do eminently successful women need a man to validate their charms?" (WHELEHAN, 2002, p. 60). What is proved, when Elizabeth Bennet ends up with Mr Darcy, and likewise when Bridget is granted with Mark in the end, is that in recreating the fairy-tale plot, both Austen and Fielding demonstrate that, in their different ages, people feel the need to love and be loved, for that is a basic human condition. Hence, it is comprehensible that even thirty-something career girls like Bridget Jones may have the urge to find a partner to share their lives with. However, just like Mr Bennet says to Lizzie when he gives his permission for her to get married, these remarkable, vigorous and powerful heroines could not be parted with anyone less worthy of them than Mark and Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy.

Based on everything that has been researched and discussed throughout this dissertation, it is important to highlight that since *Bridget Jones's Diary* dialogues with such a vast and monumental oeuvre as *Pride and Prejudice*, a comparative analysis of both texts provides countless possibilities of interpretation which may differ from the one presented herein. Apart from that, we may conclude that by interacting with Austen's most famous novel, *Bridget Jones's Diary* not only pays an endearing homage to the classic, but also brings to light the relevance of Jane Austen and her canon as well as it contributes to keep the writer alive by offering multiple possible revisitings to her best-known novel. All in all, it also reiterates the fact that despite the two hundred years that separate both works, some of the themes and issues approached in the former do not seem to have entirely changed as we analyse the latter.

REFERENCES

AGAMBEN, Giorgio. *O que é o contemporâneo? E outros ensaios.* Trans. Vinícius Nicastro Honesko. Chapecó: Argos, 2009.

ALLAN, Graham. Friendship, Sociology and Social Structure. In: DRAGON, William and DUCK, Steve (Ed.). *Understanding Research in Personal Relationships: A Text with Readings.* London: SAGE, 2005. p. 254-264.

AUSTEN, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1999.

AUSTEN-LEIGH, James Edward. *A Memoir of Jane Austen*. London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1882.

BAUMAN, Zygmunt. *Globalização: As Conseqüências Humanas.* Trans. Marcus Penchel. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Ed., 1999.

_____. *Identidade – Entrevista a Benedetto Vecchi.* Trans. Carlos Alberto Medeiros. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Ed., 2005.

_____. *A Sociedade Individualizada: Vidas Contadas e Histórias Vividas.* Trans. José Gradel. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Ed., 2009.

_____. *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011.

_____. Identity in the Globalizing World. In: BEN-RAFAEL, Eliezer; STERNBERG, Yitzhak (Ed.). *Identity, Culture and Globalization.* Leiden: Brill, 2002. p. 471-482.

BBC Internet Interview with Helen Fielding. 2013. Disponível em: <http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-21204956>. Acesso em: 14 mar. 2016.

BEDEN, Nadja. *Femininity and Masculinity in Bridget Jones's Diary by Helen Fielding*. Sweden: Mid Sweden University, 2011.

BERBERICH, Christine. *The Image of the English Gentleman in Twentieth-Century Literature. Englishness and Nostalgia*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

BRAY, Joe. *The Epistolary Novel: Representations of Consciousness.* London: Routledge, 2003.

BRITISH Library Article "Conduct Book for Women". Disponível em: <http://www.bl.uk/collection-items/conduct-book-for-women>. Acesso em: 14 mar. 2016.

BRITISH Library Interview with Kathryn Sutherland. Disponível em: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcWjzxFFmqY>. Acesso em: 14 mar. 2016.

CARROLL, Laura; WILTSHIRE, John. Film and Television. In: TODD, Janet (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 162-173.

DHRODIA, Reshma. *Have You Met Miss Jones?* Feminism and Difference in the Bridget Jones Diaries. 2006. Master's thesis - University of Ottawa, Ottawa, 2006. 113 p.

EAGLETON, Terry. *The English Novel:* an introduction. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

FAROOKI, Roopa. *Half Life*. London: Macmillan, 2010.

FIELDING, Helen. *Bridget Jones's Diary*. London: Picador, 2001.

FINCH, Naomi. Demographic Trends in the UK. In: *Welfare Policy and Employment in the Context of Family Change*. York: University of York, 2002-2005.

FRIEDAN, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique.* Binghamton: Vail-Ballou Press Inc., 1963.

GALE, Vernon; LAMBERT, Paul; MURRAY, Susan. *Growing up in the 1990s*. An exploration of the educational experiences of cohorts of rising 16s in the BHPS – Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER). Essex: University of Essex: British Household Panel Survey, July 2009.

GOMES, Anderson Soares. Mulheres, Sociedade e Iluminismo: O Surgimento de uma Filosofia Protofeminista na Inglaterra do Século XVIII. *Matraga: Revista de Estudos Linguísticos e Literários,* Rio de Janeiro: v. 18, n. 29, p. 31–51, 2011.

GUENTHER, Leah. Bridget Jones's Diary: Confessing Post-Feminism. In: GILL, Jo (Ed.). *Modern Confessional Writing*: *New Critical Essays*. New York: Routledge, 2006. p. 84-99.

GYMNICH, Marion; RUHL, Kathrin. Revisiting the Classical Romance: Pride and Prejudice, Bridget Jones's Diary and Bride and Prejudice. In: GYMNICH, Marion et al. (Ed.). *Gendered (Re) Visions:* constructions of gender in audiovisual media. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010.

HALL, Lynda A. Jane Austen's Attractive Rogues: Willoughby, Wickham, and Frank Chruchill. In: *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal Online*. 1996. Disponível em: <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/printed/number18/hall.pdf>. Acesso em: 14 mar. 2016.

HALL, Stuart et al. (Ed.). *Modernity* – an introduction to modern societies. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

HARMAN, Claire. *Jane's Fame:* how Jane Austen conquered the world. New York: Henry Holt, 2010.

HARRIS, Jocelyn. Pride and Prejudice and Mansfield Park. In: COPELAND, Edward; MCMASTER, Juliet (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. p. 39-54.

HUTCHEON, Linda. Beginning to Theorize Postmodernism. In: HUTCHEON, Linda; NATOLI, Joseph (Ed.). *A Postmodern Reader*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993. p. 243-263.

JOHNSON, Claudia L.; WOLFSON, Susan J.. Introduction. In: AUSTEN, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. New York: Longman, 2003. p. xiv–xxiv.

KNOX-SHAW, Peter. Philosophy. In: TODD, Janet (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. p. 27-41.

LITTLEWOOD, Ian. Introduction. In: AUSTEN, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1999. p. xiii.

LOOSER, Devoney. The Cult of Pride and Prejudice and Its Author. In: TODD, Janet (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. p. 174-185.

LOPATE, Phillip. "*Against Joie de Vivre: Personal Essays*". Columbia College Forum: Modern Friendships. 2009. Disponível em: <https://www.college.columbia.edu/cct/jul_aug09/columbia_forum>. Acesso em: 14 mar. 2016.

MARKLEY, Robert. The Economic Context. In: TODD, Janet (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. p. 79-96.

MARSH, Kelly A. Contextualizing Bridget Jones. *College Literature*, Pennsylvania, v. 31, n. 1, p. 52-72, 2004.

MARSHALL, William H. *The World of the Victorian Novel.* New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1967.

MASON, Phillip. *The English Gentleman:* the Rise and Fall of an Ideal. New York: Morrow, 1982.

MCMASTER, Juliet. Class. In: COPELAND, Edward; MCMASTER, Juliet (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. p. 111-126.

MILES, Robert. Character. In: TODD, Janet (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. p. 15-26.

NILSSON, Kristina. *The Accomplished Woman* / No Changes Accomplished? A Comparison of the Portrayal of Women in Jane Austen's Pride & Prejudice and Helen Fielding's Bridget Jones's Diary. 2008. 27 p. Bachelor's thesis. Växjö Universitet, Sweden, 2008.

O' BRIEN, Karen. *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

OPREANU, Lucia. Miss Jones Meets Mr Darcy: Twenty-Century Avatars of Jane Austen's Protagonists in Bridget Jones's Diary. *Annals of Ovidius University Constanta*, Romania, v. 22, n. 1, p. 83-96, 2011.

PAGE, Judith W. Estates. In: TODD, Janet (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. p. 97-108.

REIS, Carlos; LOPES, Ana Cristina M. *Dicionário de Narratologia.* Coimbra: Livraria Almedina, 1990.

RENDE, Natalie. *Bridget Jones, Prince Charming, and Happily Ever Afters*: Chick Lit as an Extension of the Fairy Tale in a Postfeminist Society. Illinois: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, spring 2008.

ROGERS, Katharine M. Dreams and Nightmares: Male Characters in the Feminine Novel of the Eighteenth Century. In: TODD, Janet (Ed.). *Men by Women.* New York: Holmes & Meier, 1981. p. 9-24.

RUSSEL, Gillian. Sociability. In: COPELAND, Edward; MCMASTER, Juliet (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. p. 176-191.

SALBER, Cecilia. Bridget Jones and Mark Darcy: Art Imitating Art... Imitating Art. In: *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal Online.* Winter 2001. Disponível em: <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol22no1/salber.html>. Acesso em: 14 mar. 2016.

SANDERS, Julie. *Adaptation and Appropriation.* London: Routledge, 2008.

SCOTT, Walter. *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

SHIELDS, Carol. *Jane Austen.* New York: Penguin Putnam, 2001.

SMITH, Caroline J. Cosmopolitan Culture and Consumerism. In: CAIN, William E. (Ed.). *Literary Criticism and Cultural Theory in Chick Lit.* New York: Routledge, 2008.

SUTHERLAND, Kathryn. Jane Austen on screen. In: COPELAND, Edward; MCMASTER, Juliet (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. p. 215-231.

_____. Jane Austen's Juvenilia. In: *Discovering Literature: Romantics and Victorians*. British Library. Disponível em: <http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/jane-austens-juvenilia>. Acesso em: 24 mar. 2016.

_____. Jane Austen: Social Realism and the Novel. In: *Discovering Literature: Romantics and Victorians*. British Library. Disponível em: <http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/jane-austens-social-realism-and-the-novel>. Acesso em: 24 mar. 2016.

_____. Female Education, Reading and Jane Austen. In: *Discovering Literature: Romantics and Victorians*. British Library. Disponível em: <http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/female-education-reading-and-jane-austen>. Acesso em: 24 mar. 2016.

TODD, Janet. The Romantic Hero. In: TODD, Janet (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. p. 150-161.

VASCONCELOS, Sandra Guardini T. *Literature and Cinema*: Images of Femininity in Pride and Prejudice. Sao Paulo: USP, 2001. p. 10-15.

WALDER, Dennis. Reading Pride and Prejudice: Introduction. In: WALDER, Dennis (Ed.). *The Realist Novel:* Approaching Literature. London: Routledge, 1995.

WHELEHAN, Imelda. *Helen Fielding's Bridget Jones's diary:* a reader's guide. New York: Continuum Contemporaries, 2002.

_____. Sex and the Single Girl: Helen Fielding, Erica Jong and Helen Gurley Brown. In: PARKER, Emma (Ed.). *Contemporary British Women Writers*. Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004.

_____. *Overloaded:* Popular Culture and the Future of Feminism. London: The Women's Press, 2000.

WIDLUND, Lina. *In Search of a Man*: A Comparative Analysis of the Marriage Plot in Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice and Helen Fielding's Bridget Jones's Diary. Sweden: Södertön University College, 2004.

WILLIAMS, Raymond. The English Novel. In: WALDER, Dennis (Ed.). *The Realist Novel:* Approaching Literature. London: Routledge, 1995.

WILT, Judith. Jane Austen's Men: Inside/Outside "the Mistery". In: TODD, Janet (Ed.). *Men by Women*. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1981. p. 59-76.

WILSON, Jennifer Preston. One Has Got All the Goodness, and the Other All the Appearance of It: The Development of Darcy in Pride and Prejudice. In: *Persuasions:* The Jane Austen Journal Online. Winter 2004. Disponível em: <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol25no1/wilson.html>. Acesso em: 14 mar. 2016.

WILTSHIRE, John. *Recreating Jane Austen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

WOOLF, Virginia. *The Common Reader*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1953.

YAFFE-BELLANY, David G. The Difficulty of Finding Anything to Do: Two Conceptions of Time in Pride and Prejudice. *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal Online.* 2013. Disponível em: <http://www.jasna.org/essaycontest/2013/highschool-3.html>. Acesso em: 14 mar. 2016.