The "New Woman" of the Moment

a Late Nineteenth- and Late Twentieth-Century Literary Comparison into Female Ageing and Age-Relations

Nine Florien Kijlstra

Student nr. 5613566

Utrecht University Master Thesis

One-year Master Programme in Gender Studies

Supervisor: Prof. dr. A. J. A. C. M. Korte

Second Reader: dr. K. H. A. Leurs.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

The study of human ageing and age relations often results in "good" vs "bad age rhetoric's. Similarly, studies into the construction of new types of womanhood continuously rely on one-on-one comparisons of new woman subjectivities. If age is incorporated within these studies, this tends to focus on mother-daughter relationships alone. Analysing female ageing and age-relations from a wide range of perspectives and literary genres, namely late nineteenth-century New Woman literature and late twentieth-century Chick-lit, reveals the intricate ways in which age-dynamics play a fundamental role in the construction of new types of womanhood. Research into these two historically unique, yet uniquely similar genres illustrate how female age dynamics can be potentially liberating vehicles of female identity construction at times, but more often than not ultimately endorse highly exclusionary narratives. The employability and remarkable similarity in the literary age-bound tactics of identity construction within both genres reveals "age's" efficacy as a tool of female identity construction. However, it also shows its precarious double-bind and the far-reaching inclusionary and exclusionary implications these age-tactics carry. These findings also demand a re-thinking of literary gerontological research. Age as a topic deserves the attention of a diverse field of researchers, not just the "aged". This analysis proves age dynamics are of paramount importance in various literary genres, not just within self-proclaimed works of "age-literature" alone.

Table of Contents

Introduction

The study of age is a gradually emerging yet exciting upcoming field within literary feminism. From the 1980s onwards, the field of critical gerontology established its legitimacy and started to branch out into the social sciences and the humanities, slowly creating exciting new interdisciplinary fields.[1] As early as the 1970s, researchers tried to bring the peculiarity of age and its intersections into mainstream academia and consequently feminist contributions to critical gerontology increased steadily. Despite numerous attempts, ageing continued to be a missing category within literary feminist scholarship well into the 1990s and early 2000s (Ann Wyatt-Brow 1993 quoted in King xiv).[2] Moreover, silently and perhaps unwittingly, feminist research long endorsed ageist notions in many of its academic and activist endeavours. Over the past decades, exciting feminist literary gerontological research has emerged. Jeanette King's intersectional study *Discourses of Ageing in Fiction and Feminism: the Invisible Women* (2013) offers much needed critical attention to the depiction and employment of female age and age relations in key periods in western literary and feminist history. Departing from late nineteenth-century representations and discourses surrounding female ageing, King highlights the interaction between text and context and demonstrates the influence of social and cultural discourses on the perception of female ageing and age relations within Anglo-European fiction.

Building on King, this thesis brings together two distinct historical periods and genres within feminist and literary history, namely, late nineteenth century New Woman fiction and late twentieth-century Chick-Lit. Kerstin Fest previously investigated these literary moments in "Angels in the House or Girl Power: Working Women in Nineteenth-Century Novels and Contemporary Chick Lit" (2008). In this article, Fest investigates the link between Chick-Lit and nineteenth-century novels with regard to "true" womanhood and female labour and convincingly places Chick-li in a "longer tradition of accounts of female labour" (45). Besides King, this thesis is inspired by Fest's approach, but instead places Chick-Lit in a tradition of accounts of female ageing. The aim of this thesis is to answer the following question: How do

---

[1] The term "gerontology" as it is now widely employed was first coined in 1903 by Ilya Ilyich Mechnikov, drawing from the Greek γέρων, geron, "old man" and -λογία, -logia, "study of".

[2] In 1949 Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxieme Sexe* (1949) offers a unique and rather bleak account of society's view on older women. Decades later in 1972, Suzan Sontag introduced the notion of the "double standard of ageing" - in which women suffer a "humiliating process of gradual sexual disqualification" as opposed to men - (Sontag 1972 99, cited in Calasanti et. al 2013, 2).

both genres employ female age and age-relations in their respective constructions of new woman protagonists and with what inclusionary or exclusionary effects? This will be analysed through a selection of texts that captured the spirit of these respective literary moments and that were quintessential in the construction of these new types of womanhood, namely: Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894) and Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones Diary* (1996) and *Bridget Jones's Diary: The Edge of Reason* (1999).[3] These age dynamics will be dissected through four separate themes in which the texts will be comparatively analysed in chronological order. As such, this thesis is divided into the following chapters. The first chapter presents an overview of age studies as a field and places the texts and writers in context. Thee second chapter analyses the new woman's engagement with time and temporality on both a thematic and stylistic level. The third chapter dissects the novels' construction of the protagonists' age identity. The fourth chapter presents an analysis of generational thinking focusing on mother-daughter relationships but also occasionally venturing outside of these familial bonds. These chapters are then followed by a general conclusion and discussion.

<div align="center">Theoretical Issues and Methodology</div>

"Aging is basically living in time" (Baars 2015). How we conceptualize time and construct our sense of temporality shapes how we approach human aging. Still, studies into cultural gerontology rarely incorporate this complicated construct. The second chapter of this thesis aims to locate the novels' temporal frameworks to examine how these novels' new woman characters venture within or possibly outside of these parameters. This is a vital first step in this analysis. Although time is often regarded a value-free medium of calculation and measurement, Baars points out that "this abstract and empty character also implies that its measurements can only become informative if theories or narratives have established what would be important to measure and why. Measurement is undertaken for a purpose and has practical consequences" (3). These consequences are directly felt at the level of "age's" cultural orientations, often implicitly. Thus, examining time and temporality as a first step in this analysis exposes the underlying temporal frameworks that shape these novels' conceptions and narratives about "age" as a seemingly objective and natural identity marker.

---

[3] For clarity, this thesis will refer to the distinct late nineteenth century genre of New Woman fiction in capital letters whereas the broader cultural phenomenon of the "new woman" of a given historical moment will be referred to in small case.

Fiction enables us to explore imagined worlds while it reflects and co-constructs our current social realities. Research into the social-cultural aspects of ageing and age relations is long overdue. Whereas the socially constructed nature of race, class and gender have been widely accepted, age and age relations are still too often regarded as a natural given and are frequently treated as an "et cetera on a list of oppressions, as if to indicate that we already know what it is" (Calasanti & Slevin 2006 1). "Age" could therefore be read as "the last difference, the unspoken but inevitable site of difference not only *between* subjects but also a difference *within* subjects as they are exiled from their younger selves" (Victoria Bazin and Rosie White 2006: ii quoted in Twigg & Martin 56). Analysing ageing and age-relations, however, gives rise to considerable methodological challenges. As Bazin & White point out, age-based differences occupy multiple mobile spheres of subjecthood - the self in relation to the younger self, and the self in relation to others. Thus, age and age-relations differ substantially from other subject positions such as race and gender as our relationship to age is considerably more fluid (Chivers 2003 xiii rephrased in Twigg & Martin 57). Put differently, age as a subject position is contested as we are all constantly ageing while we are likely to find ourselves moving across various stages and definitions of "age" during our lifetime. Consequently, any intersectional study of age and age relations is accompanied by the philosophical and epistemological conundrum as how to define the relationship between these differing categories and how to analyse its effects in a manner that accounts for its complexities. [4]

According to Rudolph Glitz the traditional social justice approach does not enable this complexity to flourish as "the social justice approach as commonly practiced in literary and cultural criticism does not adequately reflect the distribution of goods over the life course" (36). Most identity categories would fit the traditional social justice approach as "the welfare of one person or group can never compensate for the suffering of another" (Glitz 39-40).[5] However, Glitz rightly points out that "age groups, however, do not quite fall under this rule.

---

[4] For more information on age from an intersectional perspective, see: Calasanti, Toni, and Neal King. "Intersectionality and age." *Routledge handbook of cultural gerontology* (2015): 193-200.
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Toni_Calasanti/publication/282922751_Intersectionality_and_age/links/5bcf22014585152b144f7dd0/Intersectionality-and-age.pdf

[5] Glitz uses John Rawls' theory of "justice as fairness". In this model Rawls "limits the primary subject of justice to 'the basic structure of society, or more exactly, the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation'" (John Rawls *A Theory of Justice: Revised Edition.* 1971 Harvard UP, 1999 cited in Glitz 34).

From a diachronic perspective, after all, there is a sense in which at least some of the "different persons" whose gains and losses one is tempted to balance actually are one and the same person, namely the younger and the older selves of the same individuals" (39-40). In order to account for this identity-based age difference, Glitz argues for a "life-course-oriented expansion of the social justice approach" (39). This perspective proposes a change in our rhetorical framework. This framework moves away from studying age stigmatizations and present inequalities alone as this runs the risk of falling into a generalizing age-political agenda. Instead, Glitz argues for a "life-course engineering or planning" approach (39-40). This approach aims to uncover "the assumptions about good, well-timed, and possibly well-balanced life courses that are implicitly or explicitly promoted by our cultural narratives", recognizing the category's particular double-bind and its dependence on social context (45). Furthermore, by taking on this approach I aim to move away from a one-dimensional cumulative system in which age acts as a multiplier of other inequalities.

In order to do justice to the contextual and stylistics demands this topic asks for within my close-reading practise, I have adopted Sara Mills "feminist model of text" as articulated in her pivotal work "Feminist Stylistics" (1995). In this work, Mills aimed to "develop a model of analysis which will enable close, suspicious readings that will be replicable" in which the reader has a means of "distancing herself from naturalized reading strategies" that can easily let the reader fall in with the dominant ideology of a text (15). Her approach wishes to bridge the gap between purely content-based vs purely linguistic-based feminist literary research, for "although content analysis is important […] it needs to take place alongside, and not instead of, analysis of the language of a text in the context of its production and reception process" (15). In order to do so, Mills proposes a feminist alternative to the traditional "code model of understanding" in which language is seen as "a transparent medium which is used for the transmission of thoughts or information" (15). However, this traditional understanding of language fails to account for texts as sites of power (28).

Building on but also moving beyond discursive interrogations set up by Foucault, Mills argues that is "it is necessary to add to those general ideas about discourse a notion of gender, since it is the argument of this book as a whole that discourse is profoundly gendered (Foucault 1972)" (Mills 159). Mills expands her discursive approach by including Carter and Simpson (1989) who argue that "discourse analysis should […] be concerned not simply with micro-contexts of the effects of words across sentences or conversational turns but also with the macro-contexts of larger social patterns" (cited in Mills 159). Mills' reliance on Carter and Simpson is especially relevant for this thesis as issues of ageing are highly context and

discourse dependent. In her examination of characters in text, Mills also relies on Jonathan Culler's (1975) work on reading as "the set of skills which the reader of literature learns so that certain elements are interpreted in ways which can be predicted [..] particularly at the level of stereotypes" (160). This approach is particularly relevant for my work on age identities and generational thinking as such discourses are often fuelled by age stereotypes.

Based on these previous works, Mills represents *Feminist Stylistics* as a "move away from text-immanent criticism to a theorized concern with those factors outside the text which may determine, or interact with, elements in the text. In this sense, the term 'context' itself needs revision" (30). Mills' model considers a text's production and reception part of its context rather than just its context of production, enabling a more detailed embedment of the text as a form of discourse within other social political discourses (35).[6] For the feminist reader relying on this model, the text is not simply a container of meanings waiting to be extrapolated by the critical reader. Instead, the text itself, in its broadest sense, is a site of negotiation; "the language which is used is not in that sense fixed, but rather is a series of potentially ambiguous traces which are left and which the reader then has to interrogate" (34).[7] To aid this interrogative process, Mills suggests an interactive analytical approach between levels of context, content and stylistics. This analysis starts on the level of the word, which looks into the biases attached to generically used words; the level of phrase/sentence, which is "concerned with the way that phrases and sentences make sense in relation to their co-text, their context and the history of their usage and also the background knowledge which is needed for their making sense"; and finally on the level of discourse, interconnecting the previous items to larger ideological structures in order to see content "as something which is the negotiation of textual elements and codes and forces outside the text" (Darweesh et al. 24). Such an approach is vital in literary gerontology, for as Hannah Zielig comments: "fictional stories can be invaluable for considering the various manifestations of age and ageing. However, these stories are most insightful when they are thoroughly contextualised, when the frame of reference is accounted for and when fiction as one in a range of cultural discourses is appreciated" (Zielig 2011 quoted in Twigg et al 55-56).

In this case Mills' close-reading method resulted firstly in an elaborate analysis of the texts' socio-historical contexts approached from Mills' relational and co-constructive view. After this, I incorporated the three modes of analysis - word, phrase, discourse - within an

---

[6] See appendix *I* for a schematic overview of Mills' model.
[7] "left" in this context does not refer to a breadcrumb trail laid out by the author but rather constitutes all the traces, both textual and contextual, that influence the predicament of a text.

assembling reading approach. Based on this, I compiled the three main themes through which these age dynamics become most apparent – time and temporality, age identities, and generational thinking.

<div align="center">Situating my work</div>

Written in a time of Covid-19 lockdowns, intensive care-placement debates, and raging headlines about generational sacrifices and quarter-life crisis's, ageing and age-related issues seem to be framing our popular debates more than ever.[8] My interest in this topic grew out of both my academic interests and my personal navigation amidst these narratives. My research is heavily influenced by my subject-position as a white, middle-class Dutch, twenty-something feminist literary scholar living and writing in these times. Like many feminist scholars, I too write from my personal experience. However, it is my contestation that this particular approach should not be taken for granted when applied to ageing and age relations. Although writing from personal experience can be an extremely powerful tool, applying similar approach to ageing and age relations keeps the topic, still, locked into the shadows of feminist research. That being, investigations into female ageing are often presented as being part of the confrontational personal exploration of "the ageing" researcher. Such approaches unwittingly endorse the problematic view of age research as a field only suited for researchers "of a certain age". This further invites a view of "age" and "ageing" as if insignificant in one's personal or professional life up until a decisive moment in time where it becomes appropriate, perhaps even expected, to start thinking and writing about age. Consequently, although the afore mentioned approach to age research had and still has immeasurable value to the field, is also has its limitations. My choice to pursue this topic as a twenty-something scholar is a conscious act of resistance to the restrictive age rhetoric such research practises implicitly endorse.

---

[8] For a recent study into newly emerging ageist rhetoric amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, see Barrett, Anne E., Cherish Michael, and Irene Padavic. "Calculated Ageism: Generational Sacrifice as a Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic." *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B* (2020).

Chapter 1

A Brief History of Age Theory and Popular Age Perception

"Age" has occupied the human imagination for as long as humans have been subjected to the effects of time. As early as 775 BC, the ancient Greeks set up their own theories about age and ageing, ranging from physical advice for a long and healthy life, to beneficial social and intellectual past times. Within recent western history, research into human life course progression for long merely approached "age" from a medical and biological perspective. This changed considerably with the coming of the "Cultural Turn" in the early 1970s as scholars in the humanities and the Social Sciences emphasized the study of culture and meaning in its own right and argued for the abandonment of mere positivist epistemologies. Within the field of gerontology, this Cultural Turn emerged relatively late. It is only from the 1990s onwards that it fully established its presence within western gerontology (Twigg & Martin 1). Cultural gerontology attempted to provide a sociology of ageing that moved away from purely medical, social and policy-based frameworks of inquiry. Its effects are seen in the rise of numerous studies that acted to destabilize and deconstruct medical and chronological notions of the human concept of "age" and offered queer and feminist alternatives to the normativities these notions contained (Twigg & Martin 2).[9]

The joined effort of these studies enabled a far more complex and discursive understanding of human age and ageing within western cultures than previous positivist models allowed. It is now generally accepted that "old age" – and other age identities too - are defined "chronologically, functionally and culturally" (Pat Thane 98). A fixed threshold of "'chronological age' is mostly applied for bureaucratic convenience, […] ; 'Functional age' is reached when an individual cannot perform tasks expected of him or her, such as paid work; 'Cultural age' occurs when an individual 'looks old', according to the norms of the community, and is treated 'old'" (Thane 98). These levels constantly intersect and co-construct each other.

Although it remains impossible and undesirable to construct one grand-narrative about human ageing, is it generally accepted that within western-Europe from 1500 till 1850 "steps-

---

[9] Various gerontological endeavors in the field of literature include; Gullette 1988, Zeilig 2011, Worsfold 2011, Falcus 2015; in film Chivers 2003, 2011, Wearing 2007, 2013, Robinson et al 2007, Cohen-Shalev 2012, Swinnen 2013, Swinnen 2015; and history Katz 1996, Cole 1992, Thane, 2000 2003.

of-life drawings represented the [highly gendered] life course with "remarkable consistency" as an arched stairway that accords with Aristotle's principle of *akme* or prime occurring after seven periods of seven years (Covey 18; Dove 28)" (Heath 6). In this model, the chronological ages of "sixty and seventy have been used to signify "old age" in formal institutions at least since medieval times" (Thane 97). The social consequences attached to this and other age categories such as "youth" and "middle age" differed greatly depending on social markers like race, class and gender. According to Susannah R. Ottaway, the eighteenth-century permanently changed the way human age was perceived within Western-Europe as a result of vast demographic changes such "a lengthening of the life-span, earlier, more fertile marriages, and the emerging Industrial Revolution" (Ottaway 6 rephrased in Heath 8). Elderly people were gradually defined as a separate cohort in the overall population and "age" as a concept was increasingly marked by chronology rather than by functionality and fitness. As such, the concept of the elderly as societal burden grew (Ottaway 13 rephrased by Heath 8). This notion was strengthened over the course of the following century. Developments such as "medical and scientific observations, social Darwinism, and accelerated industrialization" fully established the natural process of ageing and "old age" as a "denigrated condition of dependency and deterioration" (Vertinsky 223). As such, by the late nineteenth-century ageing was no longer a philosophical journey but rather a scientific /medical issue that demanded technical solutions (Cole 5 rephrased in Heath 8).

This new medical view of ageing then, "was propagated mainly among [white] middle – class women" (Vertinsky 223). In the late nineteenth-century, women generally entered "midlife" in their late thirties or forties, ten years prior to men(Heath 10). A similar mechanism was at work in establishing "old age". By the late nineteenth-century, the establishment of the retirement age and state pension popularised systemic chronological age-determination. Yet, women were still seen to "enter old age" sooner than men. Women's functional role for society mainly relied on their ability to reproduce, as such menopause was used as its main determinant which resulted in an earlier onset of "old age" compared to men (Heath 12). Additionally, after the loss of their "reproductive value", older women were often de-sexualised and forced into the position of a neutral "man-woman" which required post-menopausal women to "relinquish their sexuality and foster reproduction in the next generation in order to be deemed worthy of midlife matrons" (Heath 20).

Age During the Fin-de-Siecle

During the fin-de-siecle, age anxiety further increased. Inspired by Darwin's Theory of Evolution, the late nineteenth-century notion of "degeneration" of the individual and ultimately the [white] human race amplified age anxieties considerably. Ageing itself was seen as a degenerative symptom as "the human body began to devolve before one's eyes" (Heath 14).[10] Additionally, the approaching end of the Victorian era instigated a shift in the ideal of femininity, moving away from the Victorian matron to the sexualized adolescent girl" (Cynthia Port *abstract*). Alongside such developments, with a growing body of women's emancipatory campaigns "the fin de siècle marked a 'battle within the sexes' ["young" women vs "old" women] as well as a 'battle between the sexes' [man vs woman] (Elain Showalter quoted in Heilmann 2000, 22). As such, a woman's age and generational stature became synonymous, according to popular media, for a woman's political views in the fight for women's emancipation. "Old woman" now carried the double meaning as the opposite of "new" and "young". This added an additional signifier to female age not previously employed in such a strategic manner. Female age relations thus played a significant role not only in the politics of female identity construction, but also in the nature of the politics of the women's movement at the time. Male and female writers alike joined in polemical debates. One such polemic centred around the article "The Revolt of the Daughters" (1894) written by B.A. Crackanthorpe. In this article, Crackanthorpe addresses tensed-up social and family relations amidst numerous strikes, amongst which daughters increasingly revolted against the traditional view of marriage and the matronly holiness of the nuclear family (Rubinstein np). The article supports the daughters' demand for "the right of the unmarried girl to be considered 'an individual as well as a daughter'" (Rubinstein np). The article spurred ongoing debate including replies from the invoked daughters. This "revolting daughters" debate slowly subsided into to the more abiding phenomenon of the late nineteenth-century "new woman" (Rubinstein np).

---

[10] The notion of "degeneration" built on the pseudo-scientific argument that if evolution of a species was possible, as was made highly plausible by the Theory of Evolution, the opposite, degeneration of a species, could also occur. This notion was fueled by theories of "practical Darwinism" or "eugenics", coined by theorists Francis Galton (Ledger Sally 73). For more information on this within a British setting see: Sally Ledger "In Darkest Hour: The Terror of Degeneration in "Fin de Siècle" Britain" *Literature and History* vol 4.2 (1995).

The New Woman and Ageing

The notion of the "new woman" is regarded to have made its official entrance into the public imagination when the term was first coined by Sarah Grand in 1894. This cultural icon, brought to life in popular print, fiction and journalism, quickly became the "harbinger of cultural, social and political transformation", epitomizing the "spirit of the fin de siècle" (Heilmann 2000, 1).[11] This spirit was defined by ideological contradictions and transitional tensions. As its cultural embodiment, the nineteenth century concept of the "new woman" became the receiving body of multiple contradicting ideological projections operating both at cultural and socio-political levels (Heilmann 2000, 2). Despite its many contradictions, the textual "new woman" mainly embodied a white middle- or high-class young woman who longed for a break with the past and demanded more intellectual, emotional, economical, legal and bodily autonomy. In its most typical form, late nineteenth century

> New Woman fiction is feminist fiction written by [and for] [white] women, and deals
> with middle-class heroines who in some way re-enact autobiographical dilemmas
> faced by the writers themselves ... [it is] a genre at the interface between auto/
> biography, fiction and feminist propaganda'' (Heilmann quoted in Pykett 135).

The genre enjoyed enormous popularity well into the early twentieth-century (Heilmann 2005, 32). The debates this literary icon and her real-life embodiments engendered shaped central aspects of British literature and culture from the Late Victorian era and beyond, with New Woman fiction enjoying a rebirth during 1970s and 80s Anglo-American feminism. Perhaps especially as a result of the genre's adaptability, New Woman fiction was not just a literary response to the changes brought about by the Victorian women's movement. The genre itself and its journalistic and visual responses functioned as agents of social and political transformation. According to Jeanette King, late nineteenth century New Woman

---

[11] The political figure of the "new woman" had been present in British and European society decades earlier however, with a small but steadily vocal body of women advocating for more economic independence and legal rights. During the second half of the nineteenth-century, women's issues such as women's right to vote and their acceptance within higher education and the labour market - discussed under the umbrella term the "Women's Question" - started to leave the domestic space and were now publicly discussed by both male and female authors in newspaper articles and journals. The popularisation of the cultural icon of the "new woman" was initiated by Grand but real-life embodiments of this figure are argued to have preceded its definition by decades.

fiction can be "credited with introducing an awareness of ageing into form where it had rarely been evident as a problem (37).

Mona Caird: Situating Author and Text

Mona Caird, a Scottish feminist journalist and prose writer, was a notorious fin de siècle intellectual and literary figure. She published seven novels and various other works amongst which numerous articles on the Woman Question. She was a vital figure in introducing the concerns of the New Woman into the public sphere and her work often touched controversial topics such as birth control, wages for housework, public childcare and single motherhood, to name but a few (Heilmann 1996, 67).

Popular press dubbed Caird the "priestess[12] of revolt" (Ellis Ethelmer (1898) quoted in Heilmann 1996, 72).[13] After her death in 1932, her name and credo gradually submerged into oblivion, until many years later when her work was rediscovered in the 1970s and 80s. Her conceptual framework on the social construction of marriage and the political dynamics of mother-daughter relationships are considered to anticipate elements of radical feminism and arguable inspired influential second-generation feminist critics like Adrienne Rich and Carol Gilligan (Heilmann 1996, 67). Her most well-known novel, *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894), tells the story of Hadria Fullerton, a young woman born in an affluent Scottish family who struggles to balance societal and familial expectations with her passion to develop her musical talent into a professional career as composer. The novel elaborately depicts the psychological and material struggles Hadria encounters as she is navigating herself through her roles as daughter, wife, mother and musical creator. Eventually, societal circumstance forces Hadria to abandon her musical aspirations, but unlike many New Woman heroines at the time, Hadria and her progressive views survive. The novel's overt political tone, philosophical pleadings

---

[12] In English, the word "priestess" although technically the female equivalent of "priest", bears a more negative connotation than its male counterpart; "'priest' refers to someone who has power and status within the established Church, whereas 'priestess' refers to someone who organizes religious ceremonies in a cult outside of the Christian faith", thus suggesting Caird's contestations as being non-Christian and immoral (Mills 112).

[13] Full article tittle: (Anon (1893) "Mrs. Mona Caird in a new character" *Review of Reviews,* 7, p. 519; Ellis Ethelmer (1898). "Caird's friend Elizabeth Sharp stressed the fact that, although Caird's writings "met with acute hostility" at the time, they contributed a great deal to "altering the attitude of the public mind in its approach to and examination of [the woman question]". Elizabeth A. Sharp (1912) *William Sharp (Fiona Macleod): a memoir,* vol. 1, p. 207 (London: Heinemann)." (Heilmann 1996, 87, footnote).

and mythological references, likely addressed white, educated, affluent middle-class or upper-middle class women. Caird additionally accompanied the novel by a short critical essay on marriage. As such, both works can be seen as argumentative pieces in the ongoing "new woman" polemic.

Female Ageing in the Twentieth-Century

Due to the efforts of first and second wave feminism Chick-Lit heroines enjoy fundamental different social realities compared to their literary New Woman predecessors.[14] Discourses on ageing steadily continued the trend initiated in the 1890s. According to Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, late nineteenth and twentieth-century "developed countries"[15] enjoyed a similar life stage framework with identical affiliated institutions:

Table 3. Life stages and associated institutions, late 19th and early 20th centuries

Life stage	Institution
Infancy and early childhood	Pre-institutional
Middle childhood	Primary school
Adolescence	Secondary school
Young and middle adulthood	Work and family
Old age	Retirement

Sources: Kohli [1986]; Mayer [2004].

Arnett, 306.[16]

Up until the 1950s, works addressing female ageing, if they did at all, still merely focussed on menopause. Although the debate expanded, the terms used to address "disorders" of the womb and hysteria remained unchanged. With the emergence of psychology in the 1945s and 1950s, motherhood, still, was deemed central to female psychology and women's life stages continued to be constructed accordingly (King 40).

---

[14] Here I employ the "feminisms as waves" metaphor as this intergenerational rhetoric is most widely used in the works referenced here.

[15] Quotation marks not present in original text. "developed countries" as a term is used here as it is used in Arnett's original article, however, the term problematically implies a distinction between developed and not /under developed countries. Its ideological implications are signified by the added quotation marks.

[16] In this table, "Middle adulthood" is synonymous for what Heath (2009) constituted as "midlife". For a critical exploration of this popular life course model in American fiction see Edelstein, Sari. *Adulthood and Other Fictions: American Literature and the Unmaking of Age*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

Similar to the late nineteenth-century discourse, within the twentieth-century older women are doubly "Other", both to man, and to younger women. Building on previously established narratives of decline and decay, youth is still considered the desirable condition. This idea was strengthened by the emergence of "youth culture" in the 1960s and 70s. During these periods, "youth" became increasingly linked with bodily appearance, and as such, "youth" and commerce became inseparable: "If to be young at this time was 'very heaven', to be old, for women in particular, was to be invisible, since the visual codes of the fashionable in all areas of cultural life were predicated on the young, immature body" (King 58). In this cultural climate, menopause continued to be a site of medical interest, heavily bearing negative implications. Ageing women who did not want to be excluded from western society could and should hold on to their youthful appearance in later life (King 59). Yet, a shift also occurred. Within 1960s and 70s popular discourse, which shared much of the essentialism of nineteenth-century medical writing, women were no longer merely defined by their reproductive function as such, but rather by sexual function and their ability to remain sexually appealing according to society's norms (King 60). Within this cultural climate, the Women's Liberation Movement was primarily a young women's movement, echoing the "battle within and between" rhetoric from the 1890s, despite numerous demands for more age inclusion by contemporary feminist writers (King 62).

Over the course of the 1970s and 80s, increasingly more fiction and non-fiction works that critically covered female ageing started to emerge. Popular discourse on female ageing, however, still endorsed the idea that if a woman cannot "preserve some semblance of youthfulness through HRT or age-defying beauty products, they had better stay out of sight" (King 75).[17] Cultural popular discourses of the 1990s endorsed this view. More poignantly so, the 1990s saw an increased resurgence of the pathologisation of menopause, similarly to age discourses a century prior: "in 1899, the menopause was first identified as a specific syndrome requiring medical intervention, rather than as a natural stage in female development" (King 134). A similar view was introduced by a panel of geriatricians and pharmacologist in the 1999 […] associating menopause with a "breakdown of central control and failed [re]production (King 134-135). Popular and academic presses perpetuated the view that women were above all the victim of their (r)ageing hormones in which menopausal women are depicted as psychologically unstable and irrational, justifying their marginalization (King 135). These developments were accompanied by the rise of third-wave

---

[17] "HRT" Hormone replacement Therapy.

feminism, which in the wake of the feminism of the 1960s and 70s was anxious to distinguish itself from the movement and its perceived failures. This was expressed, among other ways, in an amplified generational mother-daughter rhetoric: "I am not like you" as opposed to the - highly generalising - sisterhood credo of the 60s and 70s, "we are the same" (King 138-39). This generational rhetoric was at times accompanied by a broader historical comparison. Rene Denfeld's hugely popular and controversial polemic *The New Victorians: a Young Woman's Challenge to the Old Feminist Order* (1995) emphasises a generational divide between young modern, "new women" and their old "Victorian" feminist counterparts. Although Denfeld's methodology and reductive notions of Victorian and first- and second-wave feminism have been heavily criticized within the academic community, her work was a 1990s bestseller. In this context, the "old woman" again became a double signifier, referring to "the inverse of both new and young" in a similar fashion as has been the case a century prior (King 139). Writers who did cover female ageing were mainly veterans of the second-wave, which despite its importance, did not necessarily close the age(ist) gab between the second and third movement.

Chick-Lit, Ageing and the New Woman of the Moment

According to Stephanie Genz:

The media has been instrumental in the construction and marketing of female subjectivities and it has urged women to leave behind their "old" self and change into the "new woman" of the moment […] In this way, the concept of the "new woman" serves as "a recurrent sales technique" that promotes and sells a protean but durable image of female selfhood (Lee, 1988,168 quoted in Genz 97).

Officially established in 1996 after the widespread popular success of the *Bridget Jones Diary* columns and novel series, Chick-Lit heralded a new literary genre depicting the complex tensions between postfeminism and third-wave feminism.[18] Although the genre rightly enjoys its own generic category and scholarship, Chick-Lit, both in form and in subject matter continues many aspects of nineteenth century New Woman fiction. As such, the Chick-Lit female protagonist is regularly linked to the New Woman phenomenon a century prior (Ragaisien 69). Chick-Lit as a genre, in the form of semi-autobiographic feminist bestseller,

---

[18] For more information on the postfeminist and third-wave tensions present in the Chick-lit genre see Glasburgh, Michele M. "Chick lit: the New Face of Postfeminist Fiction?" (2006).

addresses a similar readership as its late nineteenth-century predecessor as it "delineates the daily concerns of contemporary [white affluent] young women regarding the impact of social and cultural factors […] as well as on their perception of gender roles and self-identity", often set out in romance plots (Whelehan, 2005, 4-5 quoted in Ragaisien 69).[19] The exact nature of both the New Woman and the Chick-Lit heroine's struggles and challenges, however, are shaped by the socially and historically specific politics of identity. In *Chick-Lit, the New Woman's Fiction* (2006), Shari Benstock rightly argues that Chick-Lit "heroines bear little resemblance, for instance, to the 'new woman' of a century before" (Benstock *Afterword* in Ferriss & Young 255). Discourses on female ageing are not included in Benstock's extensive analysis, however, indicating how much more room for research this field holds. Additionally, one might wonder about the usefulness, if not permissibility of a direct comparison between both fictional heroines from a teleoscopic perspective.

<center>Helen Fielding: Situating Author and Text</center>

Based on a column in *The Independent* , the quadruple *Bridget Jones' Diary series* (1996 – 2016) became known as the literary embodiment of its time. Since its release it enjoyed cult status and widespread resonance as popular media spoke of a "Bridget Jones generation". The series firmly established the "Singleton" as a separate socio-demographic. Written by Oxford graduate and English columnist and novelist Helen Fielding, the books, regarded by some feminist critics as a postfeminist anthem, others viewed as a witty and critical depiction of modern life's contradictions. The book series, inspired by Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice,* follows the life of the thirty-something London Singleton Bridget Jones, who struggles to navigate her mother, professional career and romantic life in the modern world of the 1990s. Each novel, like the title indicates, is written in confessional diary form and covers roughly one year in Bridget's life. The first two novels of the series, *Bridget Jones' Diary* (1996) and *Bridget Jones' Diary: the Edge of Reason* (1999) cover Bridget Jones' thirty something misadventures as she sets out on a self-improvement journey to lose weight, stop smoking, find a more inspiring job and hold on to a fulfilling romantic relationship while dealing with an importunate mother and smug married friends.

---

[19] As the Chick-Lit genre and criticism progressed, various subgenres started to emerge each catering to different female demographics. For more information on this, see Ferriss and Young *Chick-Lit, The New Woman's Fiction* (2006).

As has become clear from this overview, all three texts were written and published in times in which the nature of femininity and the character of women's emancipation heavily occupied the public imagination. Despite their respective stylistic differences, both texts inspired widespread public debate and were central in shaping popular debates on the "new womanhood" of the moment. Could it be that especially within such times, the construction of new womanhoods might fall back onto seemingly more "stable" and "natural" discourses of female ageing and age relations?

Chapter 2

Time

The Deviant Temporality of the New Woman of the Moment

"Age" as a cultural concept has fundamental temporal qualities. According to McFadden and Atchley, "all gerontologist must take time seriously, and yet this difficult construct is rarely addressed by those who would understand age and aging" (preface xiii). Throughout this chapter I set out to examine the intricate temporal understandings present within *The DoD* and *BJD I & II* in an attempt to better understand how its new woman figures navigate within its parameters, or beyond. In these novels, its new woman protagonists stand in a radical dialectical relationship with dominant linear time particularly prevalent in the protagonists' rendering of subjective time and their defiant inability to adhere to strict, highly domestic temporal regulations. This despite the novels' adherence to dominant discourses of *lifetime* as linear progression and ageing as decline. Furthermore, this temporal inability is solely experienced by these new woman figures which is posed in direct comparison to the "successful" temporal management of their mothers. As such, this temporal deviation is presented as a specific attribute of new womanhood alone, not womanhood in general. Consequently, I argue that these new woman figures in particular question the naturalness of dominant linear temporal regulation, a regulatory system that stands at the root of our western understanding of life course progression and female ageing. Thus, these new woman figures open up the possibility for a fundamental re-thinking of "age's" temporal qualities.

During the industrial revolution and introduction of the railroad in the 1840s, a homogeneous, linear, chronometric concept of time became an integral part of western institutional and administrative bodies (Surridge136-137). Before then, "time had been represented as a relatively stable continuum based on Christian theories of creationism described in the biblical book of Genesis" (Murphy 10). This new notion of chronometric railway time - later called Greenwich Mean Time - would become the universal standard by which the world would set its clocks. This standard, however, synonymous to "the time of clocks and capital", grew out of domains historically dominated by (white) men (Ermarth 27 quoted in Surridge 137).[20]

---

[20] For more information on this, see Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth (1992) *Sequel to History: Postmodernism and the Crisis of Representational Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 27

Julia Kristeva in her seminal feminist work "Les Temps des Femmes" [Women' Time] (1979) on the one hand problematizes historical, linear (masculine) time, defined "as a project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding: time as departure, progression and arrival" (Kristeva 192). In opposition to this, Kristeva defines a specific female experience of time as "*cyclical* time (repetition) and *monumental* time (eternity)", dubbed Women's Time (Kristeva 191). In this distinction, Kristeva emphasizes the multiplicity of female expressions but also relies on dualistic sexual difference theory. In these texts', these new women's' critical positionings towards linear time could be interpreted as a feminine alternative to dominant masculine time.[21] In the case of *The DoD*, linear, historical time is indeed explicitly identified as masculine, a distinction, however, not established in the *BJD* novels. As a theoretical departure, Kristeva's Women's Time would fit well with some of the temporal aspects present in these texts. Yet, her concept implies a generalizing women's temporality too. Although this chapter positions these new women's temporality in opposition to chronometric historical time, this section broadens this scope by examining inter-womanly temporal distinctions too. Consequently, although Kristeva's work has been of great importance in the establishment of gendered temporal distinctions, this analysis will mainly rely on Lisa Surridge's temporal framework instead, as presented in "Narrative Time, History and Feminism in Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus*" (2005). In this article, Surridge centralizes the new woman temporality present in *The DoD* as "subjective time" in opposition to "linear, objective time". In her analysis, Surridge occasionally links these two concepts to feminine or masculine properties but these distinctions are not prioritized. Following Surridge's approach thus avoids some of the homogenizing and essentialist implications present in Kristeva's model.

Studying time in an age context brings about methodological challenges. Before discussing the new women's temporal tactics, I will first establish some of the wider temporal parameters in which this analysis takes place. This section will discuss the dominant discourses that ingrain these novels and how these impact the pre-temporal parameters in which these female characters navigate themselves. According to Baars (1997): "The causal concept of time is nothing more than the unreflected concept of time which is presupposed in generalizations about aging and the aged. It can never generate knowledge which might

---

[21] Patricia Murphy in "Time is of the Essence" convincingly argues this distinction. For more information see Murphy, Patricia. *Time is of the Essence: Temporality, Gender, and the New Woman*. SUNY Press, 2001.

explain something of the *differences* between human beings of the same age" (286).[22] As such, time and age are mutually co-constructive and an understanding of time inevitably impacts how we imagine our *lifetimes* within a larger temporal system, an understanding which fundamentally shapes how we approach human "age". [23] Additionally, as Baars (1997) indicated, our current understanding of the causal relationship between time and human "age(ing)" inevitably favors generalizations about the latter. For now, some of these wider generalizations offer an unavoidable yet fruitful entry point for the comparative study in this chapter. One of the most prominent of such generalising discourses is that all people age, as chronometric time passes, in a relatively identical manner. This life-time is divided in consecutive stages based on a person's chronological age and social position towards the associated institutional bodies (see J. J, Arnett *Chapter 1*).[24] The texts discussed here adhere to this life course model.

Additionally, the novels place their characters' life course frameworks within a general rhetoric in which the passing of time within a person's *lifetime* is synonymous to spiritual and physical decline and decay. This is in accordance with popular views on ageing that were (re)established during both respective fin-de-siecle- moments. In *The DoD,* this rhetoric is conjured by the regular use of phrases such as; "the best years of my life" (15) and "palmiest days" and the "assaults of time" (45). These phrases imply a sense of expediated finality as the optimum window for one's life is considered to cover only a part of one's entire lifetime, - young and middle-adulthood- followed by the inevitable onset of decline as time passes. This process is initiated earlier for women due to the emphasis on reproductive value (p.13 *Chapter 1*). This exact temporal pressure is echoed in *BJD I & II* as Bridget's family repeatedly confronts her with the ticking away of the biological clock: "'Bridget! What *are* we going to do with you!' said Una. 'You career girls! I don't know! Can't put it off for ever, you know. Tick-tock-tick-tock.'" (*BJD I* 11).[25] Additionally, associations of approaching decay and barrenness are conjured throughout *BJD I* through brief snippets, for example when

---

[22]Italics present in original.

[23] The co-constructive and interchangeable nature of both concepts poses challenges to the analysis of time within an age context, as it would be impossible to determine the exact order of the causal relationship without making assumptions about both concepts. In this chapter I use the linear concept of time as my referential starting point as this best suits the nature of my analysis. This approach is, however, by no means superior to other orders of investigation.

[24] These stages are: infancy/early childhood: pre-institutional- middle childhood: primary school-Adolescence: secondary school- Young and middle adulthood: Work and family - old age: retirement – ultimately leading towards death, presumably. See chapter 1, p. 18.

[25] Emphasis present in original.

Bridget's mother exclaims, she is in "the autumn of my [her] days" (*BJD I* 135). Here the human life cycle is paralleled to that of the seasonal rhythm of plants. Autumn indicates a penultimate stage, a season of possible richness but also of consecutive loss as the barrenness of winter will follow.[26] Poignantly, this metaphor does not coincide one on one as the seasons in nature renew themselves every year. Seasons of life in human existence, on the other hand, tend to signify "a one-way street that ends in death" (Tournier 9). In both respective literary moments, its female characters have to navigate these temporal discourses. Following the logic of the dominant linear temporal system, this rhetoric significantly condenses the supposedly "useful" time available to women, placing its female characters under considerable temporal pressure. This illustrates how the novels' notions of life course frameworks directly influence the temporal landscape in which these new woman characters navigate their lives.

Despite this detrimental temporal rhetoric present in both texts, these works experimentally undermine the naturalness of rational, objective linear time -with its ideological and regulatory underpinnings - in favor of a subjective and suspicious rendering of temporality. Surridge (2005) distinguishes between standard and objective (railway) time and subjective "new time" (137). In her analysis, Surridge convincingly argues how Hadria's subjective rendering of time during a train ride to Paris represents an alternative to the dominant idea of "one common temporal horizon shared by society at large" (137). Surridge in turn defines this "common temporal horizon" - and its standardized time - as one of the despotizing structures in Hadria's domestic entrapment. The train, traditionally the "ne plus ultra of masculine temporality" has quite the opposite effect on Hadria temporal experience (Murphy 169). It makes:

> "Past becoming Present, Present melting into Future, before one's eyes [..] Disjointed, delicious impressions followed one another in swift succession, often superficially incoherent, but threaded deep, in the stirred consciousness, on a silver cord: the unity of the creation was as obvious as its multiplicity […]" (206-07).

Hadria also overtly positions herself in a defiant relationship towards (masculine) Old Time as she states that: "Old Time must not make too sure of his victory" (206-207). This defiance and multiplicity open up the possibility of multiple subjective temporal experiences and so

---

[26] For engagements with this particular metaphor, see Fischer, Kathleen, and Kathleen R. Fischer. *Autumn gospel: Women in the Second Half of Life*. Paulist Press, 1995, and Levinson, Daniel J. *The Seasons of a Woman's Life: A Fascinating Exploration of the Events, Thoughts, and Life Experiences That All Women Share*. Ballantine Books, 2011.

undercuts the dominant homogenous, temporal horizon which implicitly co-constructs this new woman's despotizing life course framework.

Caird further undermines this "natural" common temporal horizon through a subjectification of the chronological progression of life course as Hadria presents marriage as the metaphorical death of the female subject. In *the DoD*, during a walk in the nearby country estate of Drumgarran, Hadria and her siblings enter into a discussion about the Woman Question. Hadria laments; "what always bewilders me […] is the enormous gulf between what *might be* and what *is* in human life" (16). To which Ernest replies; "Oh, she is thinking, as usual, of that unfortunate Mrs. Gordon!" (16). Mrs. Gordon, the epitome of a young woman who "was handed over by her protectors, when she was little more than a school-girl, without knowledge, without any sort of resource or power of facing destiny, to well, to the hateful realities of the life that she has led now for over twenty years." (17). Hadria continues to describe Mrs. Gordon's disposition as the result of a "losing battle in early days" resulting in her marriage (19). Mrs. Gordon's circumstance is then described as: "She did not originally set out with the idea of being a sort of amiable cow. She once aspired to be quite human; she really did, poor thing!" (19).[27] This comically sounding comparison carries more serious under bearings. Hadria presents marriage as the metaphorical death of the female subject. This imagery is strengthened later on, as Hadria laments her own marriage: "She regretted that she had not thrown up everything long ago, rather than endure this lingering death" (330). This metaphorical expedition of death has a double function. Firstly, the metaphor embodies the stifling conditions of Hadria's domestic role as it links marriage to the onset of Hadria's spiritual death. Additionally, this premature death defies the dominant logic of a chronological life course framework, built on the objective linear time model. Instead, Hadria introduces a subjective rendering of life course progression determined by individual experience rather than by chronological age or a generalized notion of human development. This sinister symbolic reclaiming of a woman's temporality provides Hadria with a subversive agency, enabling her to reclaim (some) of her temporal control.

---

[27] First introduced in this way in 1696, "cow" referred to "a coarse or degraded woman. Also loosely, any woman, used esp. as a coarse form of address". The additional comment on Mrs. Gordon once being "quite human" implies that after her marriage she no longer possesses human faculties however, making the afore mentioned usage of this idiom highly unlikely (OED b, *cow*). https://www-oed com.proxy.library.uu.nl/view/Entry/43415?rskey=A51eLy&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid

A similar radical suspicion towards rational, linear temporality is present in the first two *BJD* novels, albeit presented in a different manner. A telling example occurs as Bridget is attempting to host her birthday party:

"Schedule:

> 6.30. Go to shop.
>
> 6.45. Return with forgotten groceries.
>
> 6.45-7. Assemble shepherd's pie and place in oven (oh God, hope will all fit).
>
> 7-7.05. Prepare Grand Marnier soufflés. (Actually think will have a little taste of Grand Marnier now. It is my birthday, after all.)
>
> 7.05-7.10. Mmm. Grand Marnier delicious. Check plates and cutlery for tell-tale signs of sluttish washing-up and arrange in attractive fan shape. Ah, must buy napkins also (or is it serviettes? Can never remember which one is common)
>
> 7.10-7.20. Tidy up and move furniture to sides of room.
>
> 7.20-7.30. Make frisse lardon frizzled chorizo thing.

All of which leaves a clear half-hour to get ready so no need to panic. Must have a fag. Aargh. It's a quarter to seven. How did that happen? Aargh.

7.15 p.m. Just, got back from shop and realize have forgotten butter,

7.35 p.m. Shit, shit. The shepherd's pie. is still in pans all over the kitchen floor and have not yet washed hair." (*BJD I* 83-84).

Firstly, the novel's confessional style invites a conflation between Bridget "the character" with Bridget "the author" and Bridget "the narrator". This unconsciously distracts the reader from the notion that if these three were really one and the same, Bridget inevitably would have written her diary in hindsight. As such, this section exposes this artificial postponement of temporal disbelief as the schedule written by character Bridget exactly mimics the other diary entries, despite being presented as a separate piece of narration. Secondly, Bridget as narrator evokes a high level of temporal control, setting-up a tight schedule of five to ten-minute intervals. Yet this narratological temporal control is simultaneously undercut when looking at *how* Bridget as a character fills her time. Furthermore, looking more closely at the temporal narration, the schedule seems to be linearly depicted. This is in accordance with the realist stylistics of the novel, stylistics which are built on a basic premise that regards time as a linear progression (Surridge 136). As the schedule is finished, however, and the "regular" diary entries resume, the time between 7.10 and 7.20 is narrated twice. Narrator and author Bridget seemingly present time in a controlled, objective and chronometric manner but subtly

hint at the exact opposite experience and documentation. These incongruities between Bridget as character, character narrator, and implied author invite the reader to take on a suspicious attitude towards seemingly objective temporal narrations and experiences. Furthermore, through these momentary temporal cracks, the experienced temporality of the supposed author and narrator is presented as inherently unreliable and subjective. Similar to the *DoD*, though through different temporal tactics, *BJD I* too disrupts the notion of one common linear temporal horizon. This temporal horizon, however, is never explicitly identified as masculine.

Through their depictions of domestic, institutionally affiliated duties, the new woman protagonists in both *The DoD* and *BJD I & II* show a fundamental subversive inability to adhere to the pre-set "time budgets", that are inherent to the dominant linear temporal system (Baars 1997, 185). Through their respective deviations, these fictional new women bring to light what (Baars 1997 185) coined "an impoverished understanding of [human]time" and establish a direct parallel between this impoverished understanding and institutional regulation (Baars 1997, 185). This inability is present solely in these new woman protagonists, whose temporal disabilities are directly juxtaposed by the temporal abilities of their mothers, presenting this deviant time mismanagement as an inherent new woman characteristic.

Baars (1997) refers to the largescale chronological management of life course as a "colonization of life course". According to Baars (1997):

> the essence of this colonization is a dominance of systemic media or categories […] over meaningfully oriented actions. […] Chronological time, a physical concept in its own right, has become entangled in the temporal regimes of the most (structurally and culturally) important institutions and organizations […] A clear example is the phenomenon of time *budgets* (185).[28]

These time budgets disclose how much time certain acts of care ought to take. For Hadria these time budgets comprise of domestic duties structured around the "ridiculous rigidity" of the late nineteenth-century "domestic scheme", where "it takes more energy to get the dinner delayed for a quarter of an hour in most well-regulated houses, or some slight change in routine, than to alter a frontier, or pass an Act of Parliament." (141). While performing her domestic role, time is described as follows:

---

[28] Emphasis present in original.

Everything was done cumbrously, with an incredible amount of toil and consideration, and without any noticeable results. Hadria, fighting against a multitude of harassing little difficulties, struggled to turn the long winter months to some use. But Mrs. Fullerton broke the good serviceable time *into jagged fragments* […] And so the weeks went by, in dreary, troublous fashion, *cut into a hundred little barren segments.*[29] The mind had no space, or stretch, or solitude. It was incessantly harassed, and its impetus was perpetually checked (30).

Hadria is struggling to come to terms with the mentally crippling nature of the late nineteenth century domestic time scheme. Although the novel implies that other women are experiencing similar struggles, these struggles are never explicitly temporalized, nor focalized. Distinctly present is Hadria's mother on the other hand, who appears to function well within this domestic temporal system and is presented as one of its instigators. [30]

Bridget Jones' temporal displacement, apart from being consistently late to her appointments, is mainly present in her domestic and semi-professional endeavors. As she attempts to host her birthday party, she finds herself in utter chaos despite a highly detailed schedule (see page 25 of this chapter). Eventually she forfeits her attempt and her friends arrange a dinner party for her at a restaurant instead. Later, Bridget wishes to reflect on her time management through a "time and motion study":

Tuesday 4 April

Determined, now, to tackle constant lateness for work and failure to address in-tray bulging with threats from bailiffs, etc. Resolve to begin self-improvement programme with time-and-motion study.

7 a.m.   Get weighed.

7.03 a.m.   Return to bed in sulk over weight. Head-state bad. Sleeping or getting up equally out of question. Think about Daniel.

---

[29] Emphasis added by author.

[30] It should be noted that the lack of explicit temporal focalization by other female characters might be limited due to the stylistics of the New Woman genre, as it is generally written from the perspective of the New Woman figure. Chapter 4 illustrates that Mrs. Fullerton is in some way negatively affected by this temporal scheme though. However, at this point in the analysis this is not incorporated as it is not manifested on the temporal level discussed here but rather embedded within a generational discourse.

7.30 a.m.   Hunger pains force self out of bed. Make coffee, consider grapefruit. Defrost chocolate croissant.

7.35-7.50 a.m. Look out of window.

7.55 a.m.   Open wardrobe. Stare at clothes.

8 am.   Select shirt. Try to find black Lycra miniskirt. Pull clothes out of bottom of wardrobe in quest for skirt. Go through drawers and search behind bedroom chair. Go through ironing basket. Go through dirty linen basket. Skirt has vanished. Have cigarette to cheer self up.

8.20 a.m.   Dry skin brushing (anti-cellulite), bath and hairwash.

8.35 a.m.   Begin selection of underwear. Laundry crisis means only available pants are vast white cotton. Too unattractive to contemplate, even for work (psychological damage). Go back to ironing basket. Find unsuitably small black lacy pair — prickly but better than giant Mummy-pant horror.

8.45 a.m.   Start on black opaque tights. Pair one seems to have Shrunk — crotch is three inches above knees. Get second pair on and find hole on back of leg. Throw away. Suddenly remember had Lycra mini-skirt on when returned home with Daniel last time. Go to living room. Triumphantly locate skirt between cushions on sofa.

8.55 a.m.   Return to tights. Pair three have hole only in toe. Put on. Hole transforms into ladder which will protrude tellingly from shoe. Go to ironing basket. Locate last pair of black opaque tights twisted into rope-like object speckled with bits of tissue. Untangle and purge of tissue.

9.05 a.m.   Have got tights on now. Add skirt. Begin ironing shirt.

9.10 a.m.   Suddenly realize hair is drying in weird shape. Search for hairbrush. Locate in handbag. Blow-dry hair. Will not go right. Spray with plant spray and blow some more.

9.40 a.m.   Return to ironing and discover stubborn stain on front of shirt. All other possible shirts dirty. Panic about time. Try to wash out stain. Entire shirt now soaking wet. Iron dry.

9.55 a.m.   V. late now. In despair, have fag and read holiday brochure for calming five minutes.

10 a.m.   Try to find handbag. Handbag has vanished. Decide to see if anything nice has come in the mail.

10.07 a.m.   Access letter only, about non-payment of minimum payment, Try to remember what was looking for. Restart quest for handbag.

10.15 a.m.   Beyond lateness now. Suddenly remember had handbag in bedroom when looking for hairbrush but cannot find. Eventually locate under clothes from wardrobe. Return clothes to wardrobe. Put on jacket. Prepare to leave house. Cannot find keys. Scour house in rage.

10.25 a.m.   Find keys in handbag. Realize have forgotten hairbrush.

10.35 a.m.   Leave house.

Three hours and thirty-five minutes between waking and leaving house is too long. In future must get straight up when wake and reform entire laundry system. Open up paper to read that convicted murderer in America is convinced the authorities have planted a microchip in his buttocks to monitor his movements, so to speak. Horrified by thought of similar microchip being in own buttocks, particularly in the mornings (*BJD I* 91-93).

 Like Hadria's temporal inability, Bridget's (mis)time management is not focalized by other female characters and it is directly juxtaposed by the perfect domestic management of her mother, Pamela, who manages to arrive at work on time while looking "put together", manages household duties with the utmost efficiency, and each year successfully organizes a Christmas Turkey-curry buffet for family and friends.

     Both Hadria and Bridget consistently find themselves unable to adhere to prefixed domestic time regimes. In both cases, the devil is in the details. For Hadria, the daily chores are done highly inefficiently and with an enormous amount of consideration and effort while only having minimal effects. In Bridget's case, a similar inefficiency is found in her personal handling of the tasks she sets herself. Her preparation schedule and "time and motion study" entries sometime only cover three minutes. Both texts' emphasis on the high amount of detail is especially telling as according to Baars (1997), this "unreflected time management, culminating in planning and measuring every action, even walks, games, or conversations" are the fundamental, problematic expressions of an impoverished understanding of human time. (185).

     This impoverished understanding of time and the protagonists' inability to adhere to this is especially present in tasks associated within the highly traditional and prescriptive domains of housekeeping, linking this seemingly personal time management with institutional regulation. In *The DoD*, household management is presented as more transfixed than the regulation of national politics. In turn, Bridget's "time and motion study" reveals that Bridget is late for work as a result of, according to her own judgement, her inefficient laundry system.

Presented as a comical figment of her imagination, Bridget anxiously links her personal "time movements" to institutional surveillance. By linking their seemingly personal time failure to regulatory governmental bodies, these new woman protagonists communicate an anxious awareness towards the controlled temporal nature of their everyday time regimens.

Ageing as a concept has inherent temporal qualities. Our understanding of time defines how we view human aging. By subjectifying temporality these new woman figures disturb the epistemological temporal foundations whose homogeneity implies a fixed and righteous progression of time and *lifetime*. Additionally, through failing domestic time budgets and by explicitly linking these to institutional regulatory bodies, these new women question the efficiency and legitimacy of the controlling temporal conditions inherent in this linear temporal system. In turn, in their respective forms, the hyperbolic registration of their actions reveals some of the temporal mechanisms that perpetuate this prescriptive system of temporal control. A system that ultimately results in the epistemological devaluation of human time. Ultimately, these figures' denaturalizing and disturbing treatments of homogeneous linear temporal conditionings and time-budgetary control radically disturb the temporal linear logic implicit in the western life course model in which aging is viewed as a chronological temporal progression of life course. As such, these new woman figures open up new ways to approach time-bound and naturalized repressive markers of female subjectivity implicit in female age and age relations. These temporal deviations are not homogeneously present in all female characters but instead are presented as inherently new womanesque. They are set in contrast to, not only dominant linear time but to other women also, most prominently their mothers. The following chapter will analyze how, amidst these temporal conditions and subversive potentialities, these new woman figures navigate and (self)construct their age identity and with what inclusionary and/or exclusionary effects.

Chapter 3

New Woman Age Identities and the Politics of Appearances

"One should never trust a woman who tells one her real age. A woman who would tell one that would tell one anything." — Oscar Wilde *A Woman of No Importance,* act 1. (1893)

Oscar Wilde's expression is telling, not for what it reveals about women's own relationship with ageing but about how society views that relationship. Till this day, within western societies a woman's age remains contested, ambiguous and conflicted terrain. This chapter examines the construction of female "age identities" through a chronological and thematic character comparison between the late nineteenth-century and late twentieth-century new woman protagonists, Hadria and Bridget. Based on the representation of their "age identity", my argument here will be twofold. On the one hand, I will argue that both works employ age-related physical markers to externalize these new women's respective internal conditions, which in turn play an important role in these new women's defiant positionings towards the pervading "motherhood myth" that ingrains both story-worlds. On the other hand, I will argue that these specific externalization tactics have strong exclusionary implications for older women but also for women overall, as they play into phobic representations of the ageing female body, enforce an "ageing-well" rhetoric and indirectly endorse highly reductionist and exclusionary beauty myths. Kaufman & Elder Jr. refer to the concept of "age identity" as "the subjective evaluation of a person's age" (170).[31] For their sociological study, based on previous sociological work by Rossi (1980), Kaufman and Elder Jr. distinguish between five dimensions of age identity: "'subjective age'; the age other people think you are, also called 'other age'; 'desired age'; 'desired longevity'; and lastly 'perceived old age'" (171). As this analysis deals with fictional characters rather than real-life respondents, I have converted these dimensions by zooming in on both protagonists' age presentation within both story-worlds.

Within the texts, both new woman protagonists deal with unique social circumstances. Yet, one particularly pervasive myth ingrains both social worlds, the "motherhood myth". Within these text, the respective reworkings of this "motherhood myth" shape a substantial part of the protagonists' newness and positionality as both Hadria and Bridget place themselves in oppositional and at times internally conflicting stances towards the maternal

---

[31] For studies into this topic see Coupland & Coupland, 1994; and Giles, & Henwood, 1991.

expectations preached by this belief system. First appearing at the end of the 18th century, the image of the "good mother" changed the way motherhood was perceived.

> The Industrial Revolution took work out of the home […] Men were assigned to take care of what was happening outside the home, and women were entrusted to take care of the home, that is, to become good mothers creating warm nests for their children and for their husbands coming home from exhausting work (Forma, 1998, p. 37; Rich, 1976/1997, pp. 51-52) (Tamar Hager 39).

As such, women were supposed not only to give birth to their children but to love and take care of their children and cater to their and their husband's needs as angelic maternal figures (Hager 39). This western notion of "good motherhood" and the accompanying "motherhood myth" preached the belief that "motherhood is eternally fulfilling and rewarding, that it is *always* the best and most important thing you [women] do, that there is a narrowly prescribed way to do it right, and that if you don't love each and every second of it there is something really wrong with you" (Douglas & Michaels 4)[32]. This myth is perhaps most famously criticized by Betty Friedan in her pivotal work *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) but criticism of this belief system predates the second wave as feminists in the late nineteenth century engaged with this topic too, amongst whom Mona Caird.

In the *DoD*, Hadria defiantly positions herself towards the late 19th century motherhood myth. Hadria's positionality towards this type of motherhood is strongly conveyed through the construction of Hadria's age identity. Caird employs physical age markers present in the depiction of Hadria, and women she identifies with to externalize the suffering and subjugation of women who are forced to adhere to the oppressive doctrines of the late nineteenth-century maternal ideal.[33] These highly physical representations are embedded within an ableist, ageing-well and youth-oriented rhetoric playing into phobic representations of the ageing female body while implicitly endorsing a highly reductionist beauty ideal. Caird directly parallels the distinct subjective age (non-youth) with a particular outward subjective appearance (non-beauty) as she externalizes the mental and physical strain of marriage crippling her new woman protagonist. As Hadria's marriage progresses she begins to lose her physical vigor: "She found what see had feared, that her strength had

---

[32] Emphasis present in original text.

[33] Caird's seminal essay "Does Marriage Hinder a Woman's Self-development?" included at the end of the novel further conveys this critical viewpoint.

departed, and she was fatigued instead of invigorated, as of yore", additionally described as "nerve-weariness" and fatigue" (*DoD* 152-153). Later in de novel during which approximately eight to ten years have passed - making Hadria approximately thirty years of age - Hadria finds herself in a similar down stricken mood. During a conversation with friend-turned-romantic-interest, professor Theobald, a discrepancy between Hadria's "subjective age" and "other age" occurs:

> Prof. Theobald: "'Well, as things are, a young woman, a beautiful woman'"
>
> Hadria: "'you recall an interesting memory', She said"
>
> Prof. Theobald: "'Ah, that is unkind'. Her smile checked him" (199).

Although presented in an innocent and flirtations manner, this discrepancy reveals that Hadria, when inhabiting this state of nerve-weariness and fatigue, does not consider herself young nor beautiful. This externalizing mechanism is consistently repeated throughout the novel.

Caird takes these age-bound externalization tactics further as Hadria shares her sense of struggle with the "poorer members of the congregation" (321). Wives and weary mothers are described as "*their faces* seamed with the ceaseless strain of child-bearing, and hard work, and care and worry. *In their prematurely ageing faces,* in their furrowed brows, Hadria could trace the marks of life's bare and ruthless hand, which had passed so heavily on those whose task it had been to bestow the terrible gift" (321-22).[34] High-class women are not spared from the system's wrath either, as their appearances reveal: "And the same savage story was written, once more, on the *faces* of the better dressed women: worry, weariness, apathy, strain; these were marked unmistakably, *after the first freshness of youth* had been driven away, and the *features began to take the mold* of the habitual thoughts and the habitual impression" (321).[35] This passage is particularly telling. These instances reveal how physical, or rather facial markers associated with ageing – wrinkles, faces painted with the marks of hardship - are used to externalize women's struggle and subjugation within an exploitative maternal system. A system that according to Hadria, "represents a prostitution of the reproductive powers" rather than a naturally fulfilling fate (238). Despite the productive deconstruction of motherhood as inherently natural and fulfilling, Caird's emphasis on bodily

---

[34] Own emphasis.
[35] Own emphasis

vigor and strength is problematic in its own right. The negative parallels between suffering, social subjugation and physical and mental decline imply that when residing outside of these negative parameters, Hadria and other women alike would feel strong and invigorated. This in turn implies a "correct" bodily state for women in more beneficial social conditions. Such notions fall into an ableist rhetoric and endorse phobic representations of the unsmooth and unpleasantly-looking female body. These parallels leave little room for a more positive view on physical and mental dimensions of difference as these externalization tactics negatively politicize deviations from this "correct" or "pleasant" bodily state.

Furthermore, by emphasizing the loss of strength in combination with the late nineteenth century dominant rhetoric of ageing as bodily and mental decline, the novel parallels Hadria's and other women's impaired mental and physical states with pre-mature ageing. This endorses an ageing-well rhetoric. Here, the use of the word "prematurely" indicates that there is a right time, or way to age and that forced or pressured motherhood has the opposite effect. Additionally, "youth had been driven away", indicating an involuntary departure of this life-stage brought about by child-rearing. This vocabulary establishes a clear detrimental relationship between social hardship and premature ageing externalized in physical decline.

Poignantly, these outer forces are most prominently negatively externalized on women's faces. Needless to say, lifestyle inevitably influences the state of the human body and hardships undoubtedly impact physiological processes. The repeated emphasis on women's facial features carries exclusionist implications, however. It has become clear that these passages strongly attack the supposed naturalness of the good mother role for women. In doing so, the work implicitly defies what Naomi Wolf (2013) termed the late Victorian "beauty myth". According to Wolf, Victorian and late Victorian images of female beauty resided in their fertility: "the Victorian woman became her ovaries, as today's woman has become her 'beauty'. Her reproductive value, as her 'aesthetic' value of her face and body today, came to be seen as a sacred trust, one that she must constantly guard in the interest of her race" (193). Fertility in turn was linked to certain bodily shapes, such as a "fuller" body and wide hips presumably but these appearances continued to be viewed through an "ovarian determinism" (Wolf 174). The representations in *The DoD* attack the late Victorian beauty myth based on fertility and instead hold a woman's reproductive powers accountable for age-based images of non-beauty. Yet, in doing so, these representations establish an equally limiting "beauty myth" as alternative as these descriptions heavily rely on the aesthetic value

of women's face, so implicitly aligning itself with the notion that a woman's face is indeed her sacred trust. In turn, Caird's emphasis on facial signs of ageing alongside an "ageing-well" rhetoric constructs a feminine ideal in which a woman's desired state is synonymous to youth, a strain-less face and physical vigor, characteristics which are all driven away once women are pressured to adhere to the motherhood myth. All in all, Caird leverages ageist and ableist body politics to combat women's maternal oppression. Furthermore, as the late nineteenth-century fertility beauty ideal implicit in this motherhood myth are deconstructed, Caird re-aligns herself with a beauty myth that has proven to be equally as insidious.

In *BJD 1 & II,* the conditions of the "motherhood myth" have changed significantly. The influence of motherhood on a woman's position within society remains persistent nonetheless. Douglas and Michaels (2005) identify the contemporary version of the motherhood myth as the "new momism": "a set of ideals, norms, and practices […] that seem on the surface to celebrate motherhood, but which in reality promulgate standards of perfection beyond your reach", representing "good motherhood" as a mixture of selflessness and professionalism (5). On the one hand this ideal emphasizes agency and choice and appears more progressive than the so-called "feminine mystique", as women work outside their homes, are no longer subservient to men, can pursue their ambitions and make their own money. This ideal still implies, however, that the only 'enlightened' and truly fulfilling choice a woman can make is simultaneously the one that most strongly proves you are a 'real woman'", namely becoming a mother (Douglas & Michaels 5). These notions are the golden standard Bridget has to navigate in *BJD 1 & II.*

It is within this social environment that female characters are divided into two groups; those who have succeeded according to the "new momism" ideal, before passing the threshold age of thirty and those who have not. It is exactly within this anxious dualistic classification system that Bridget's "subjective age" and "other age" play a pivotal role. For Bridget, the outward projection of a youthful, or non-old "subjective age" - and through that "other age" - image is a fundamental tool to positively establish her social identity as a Singleton new woman amidst a pervasively "new momistic" and youth-orientated society. However, by focusing on age markers associated with physical appearance, similarly to *The DoD*, these mechanism endorses the exact ageist underpinnings present in the validatory system of the contemporary beauty ideal, which presents the aesthetic value of a woman's face and body as her existential imperative.

Within the novels, Bridget refers to the women (and men) who have succeeded according to the new momism ideal by the general term "smug marrieds". Women who have not (yet) abided by this system, including Bridget, are amongst other ways, referred to as "spinsters", "re-treats" ("women over thirty are just walking pulsating ovaries"), "old girls", or as her mother would say; "an old woman who can't get married" (*BJD* II 13, *BJD II* 46). [36] Bridget's relationship to the "new momism" ideal is one of anxiety and indulgence as she navigates her own singlehood. On the one hand she wishes the "whole undignified situation" of biological clock anxiety was not happening. She simultaneously imagines herself in a highly new momistic fashion, as "Calvin Klein-style mother figure, poss. Wearing crop-top or throwing baby in the air, laughing fulfilledly in advert for designer gas cooker, feel good movie or similar" (*BJD* 1 116). While indulging in the maternal fantasies spurred on by this ideal, Bridget also attempts to counter its derogatory treatment of single women over thirty as "second-rate citizens" (*BJD II* 88). She does so most prominently by defiantly self-identifies as a Singleton: "Single girls who […] with their own incomes and homes who have lots of fun and don't need to wash anyone else's socks" (*BJD I* 42).[37] It is within this term that "Age dropping" is most prominently present as the use of the term "girls", referring to "young or relatively young women" indicates [38] Throughout the novel, Bridget is also continuously presented as being well-liked by younger characters, surrounding her character with an "Age-Dropping" aura of youthfulness. These "Age Dropping' tactics increase Bridget's social status as within a "youth-oriented, image driven Anglo-European culture, visible signs of aging, particularly for women, will soon be markers of declining status" (Rosen 25). Bridget's "other age" firmly stigmatizes her thirty-something singlehood but Bridget employs her self-proclaimed "subjective age", and so hopefully eventually also her "other age" also, to battle these allegations and to improve her social status.

---

[36]OED "**Spinster**" (n): A woman still unmarried; *esp.* one beyond the usual age for marriage, an old maid". Often used in a derogatory manner.
https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/186771?redirectedFrom=spinster#eid

OED, **"old girl".** 1. *colloquial*. Without necessarily connoting age: a woman, *spec.* one's mother or wife. Used either disrespectfully or (occasionally) as an endearing form of address". In these texts Bridget is neither wife not mother from the person calling her this. This colloquial is then also directly paralleled with "single girls over thirty". These instances combined make its intended use as a form of disrespectful pejorative endearment more likely. To read the term in context see (*BJD* 1 40).

[37] "Singleton" is used as a positive antonym to the notorious "spinster".

[38] OED, *girl* (n) 2a.

Poignantly, although Bridget attempts counters the age-related pejorative stereotypes as a result of her unmarried and childless status through "Age-Dropping", Bridget, and her fellow Singleton friends alike re-enforce the exact ageist implications embedded in these stereotypes as they redirect similar age-related insults to their offenders. In response to the emergence of the "re-treat" term, Sharon wishes the writer who coined the term would go "prematurely bald" (*BJD II* 40). Additionally, "smug marrieds" are described as "smug, prematurely aging, narrow-minded morons" (*BJD II* 42). Ironically, instead of subverting the larger youth-orientated and ageist cultural framework, Bridget's new woman endorses the exact ageism she falls victim to herself. In her treatment of unlikeable characters, she overtly re-establishes negative age-stereotypes by deeming older-looking people inferior, diminishing their humanity, perpetuating phobic representations of older-looking women and men. Simultaneously, Bridgit re-enforces the exact ageism implicit in her own treatment by giving in to this youth-adoration as she attempts to lower her "subjective-" and ultimately 'other age".

Like *The DoD*, within *BJD I & II* physical age markers take center-stage. Poignantly, here too this manner of externalization re-installs a highly problematic contemporary version of the western beauty myth in which a woman's bodily and facial aesthetic value is paramount in the determination of a woman's social value. This myth is driven by the belief that contemporary "women must want to embody it [beauty] and men must want to possess women who embody it" (Wolf 18). This feeds competitiveness between women as presumably "strong men battle for beautiful women, and beautiful women are more reproductively successful" (Wolf 18). According to this system, the most beautiful women are more reproductively successful and thus better at finding a partner. Consequently, beauty is indirectly bound to a specific timeframe, a woman's highest reproductive window, deeming women who pass this stage as less apt for reproduction, and consequently less beautiful. In this light, looking old is synonymous to looking badly, implying the opposite to be true also, in which youth is synonymous to looking great, or as Bridget's mother would say: "'Bridget! You look dreadful, you look about ninety!'" (*BJD I* 81). The ageist intricacies of this beauty ideal are subtle but insidious, binding age and physical appearance into a negative double bind of attraction and implied fertility. The second novel wittily reveals the anxious competitive climate this beauty myth creates. During a wedding of one of Bridget's friends Bridget is talking to Rebecca, her romantic rival. Rebecca asks Constance, a little toddler Bridget befriended, who she thinks is older while all are subjected to the observing eye of Mark Darcy, both Bridget's and Rebecca's love interest:

Who do you think is older, me or Mark?' Rebecca was saying. 'Mark', said Constance sulkily, looking from side to side as if planning to bolt. 'Who do you think is older, me or Mummy?' Rebecca went on playfully. 'Mummy,' said Constance disloyally, at which Rebecca gave a tinkly little laugh. 'Who do you think is older, me or Bridget?' said Rebecca, giving me a wink. Constance looked up at me doubtfully while Rebecca beamed at her. I nodded quickly at Rebecca. 'You,' said Constance. Mark Darcy let out a burst of laughter (*BJD* II 84).

In this passage, Rebecca competes with other women for the best, or youngest - "other age", a verdict ironically to be passed by the youngest of all, a toddler. Although the passage ridicules Rebecca by turning her own game against her, the implications of the verdict preached by the albeit highly unreliable judge, endorse the importance of a youthful appearance in a woman's quest for a romantic partner and ultimately social status. In this case, the end result favors Bridget yet the nature of the innocent-looking game works against her quest for social validation as a woman's "desired age" is still associated with being young.

Although Bridget still ventures within the beauty myth's ageist parameters, her character occasionally reflects on the exact anxieties this detrimental system fuels: "the trouble with trying to go out with people when you get older is that everything becomes so loaded. When you are partnerless in your thirties, the mild bore of not being in a relationship […] gets infused with the paranoid notion that the reason you are not in a relationship is your age (*BJD* 1 143-144). This passage reveals how the beauty myth intricately re-enforces the new momism and vice versa. In both cases a woman's reproductive ability covertly takes center stage in the construction of her social value which is ultimately signified by her facial and bodily attractiveness. Based on this, it is not only paramount for Bridget to appear youthful in character, but also in appearance as this maximizes her chances to find a romantic partner.

From a psychological perspective, physical youthfulness also functions as means to project Bridget's genuine or performed contentment with her Singleton status. According to Robert Agnew, levels of attractiveness, in line with normative standards of beauty, impact how people read someone's personality, indicating that "unattractive people are seen as […] less happy" amongst other negative associations (285). In order to convince society of the fulfilment of the Singleton lifestyle, despite deviating from the "new momistic" ideal and the anxieties Bridget experiences herself, the Singleton ought to avoid looking old, synonymous to looking unattractive to avoid radiating an unhappy appearance. As such, Bridget wishes to

project youthfulness, beauty, and ultimately happiness to add cultural capital and social validation to the Singleton's underdog position within a highly new momistic and Cosmopolitan culture.

Both works reveal the important role age identity plays in the construction of new types of womanhood in the face of the persisting motherhood myth, or variations thereof. *The DoD* employs the physical externalization of age identities to denaturalize the oppressive system of forced/pressured motherhood and externalizes the suffering of women deemed to live within an exploitative maternal system. This ultimately aids Hadria's validation as a new woman fighting for more autonomy. *BJD I & II* also employ similar externalization mechanisms, relying on physical age markers too to create a tactical link between internal states and external appearances. *BJD I & II* employ "subjective" and "other age" to, on the one hand improve Bridget's social status as a Singleton figure, while on the other hand lowering the social status of her adversaries by paying those perpetrating age stigma's back in their own coin.

Although effective in their argumentative case for the socio-political establishment of these new woman figures, the exclusionary implications of the age dynamics employed in these texts are twofold. Firstly, these dynamics perpetuate stigmatized and phobic representations of deviating or older-looking bodies and growing older in general and still (re)-install youth as the desired state above other ages. Secondly, such mechanisms re-validate respective versions of the "beauty myth", deeming a woman's physical and facial appearance a woman's most valuable social determinant. Ultimately, as the groups of texts have illustrated, physical embodiments related to ageing are strongly embedded in other prescriptive social systems too. Although Wolf argues that the beauty ideal shifted from an adoration of female fertility to an emphasis on facial and bodily aesthetics, this analysis has shown that these two separate beauty ideals are closely intertwined within both literary moments. Approaching this entanglement from an age perspective offers unique insights. Age impacts women both internally and externally, the exact subtle interaction present in these two beauty ideals alternating and co-establishing female fertility and facial and bodily appearances. Looking at female age identity markers thus enables a new, possibly more nuanced perspective on the complicated dynamics that are at work within the highly prescriptive systems of female identity construction present within the interactions between the respective versions of the western "motherhood myth" and the "beauty ideal". Like Oscar Wilde's quote, these texts' representations and deployments of age-identity reveal more than just female ageing itself.

Chapter 4

Generational thinking

Mothers, Daughters and Political Pre-Determination

Karl Mannheim, in "the Problem of Generations" (1970) describes generations as "nothing more than a particular kind of identity of location, embracing related 'age groups' embedded in a historical-social process" (382). Mannheim considers a generation to be a social creation but also notes that it "is ultimately based on the biological rhythm of birth and death" (381). This implicates a link between generational cohorts and people's "life course". A link commented on by Schuman & Scott who state that Mannheim indeed seems to indicate that the age of twenty-five marks "the terminal point of major generational formation" (Schuman & Scott 359). However, in his work Mannheim emphasizes that: "to be *based* on a factor does not necessarily mean to be *deducible* from it, or to be implied in" (381). Building on Mannheim's seminal theory, Schuman and Scott note that "only where events occur in such a manner [fast enough and radically enough] as to demarcate a cohort in terms of its socio-historical consciousness, should we speak of a true generation" (359). The constitution of a generation is thus inherently linked to the formation of a specific social-historical consciousness. These various semantic perspectives reveal some of the complexities accompanying this concept which appears to be based on social differentiation and biological age factors simultaneously. Taking mother-daughter relationships and the consequent depictions of female generational sacrifice as a starting point, I will argue that the female generational relationships presented in *The DoD* and *BJD I & II* endorse a highly restrictive generationally deterministic feminist discourse, transfixing life course stages with a woman's political generation.

Studying generational discourses brings about numerous challenges. Although widely applied within mainstream feminist discourses and research, as an organizing principle generational discourses are prone to eradicate connections, difference and diversity amongst social groups. Feminist generational discourses of the "waves" often rely on heteronormative mother-daughter bonds, binary gender norms, dominant linear temporality and progress idealism, as each new wave presumably heralds a "new" and "better" feminism that radically

breaks with the "old".[39] Nonetheless, in line with Winch, Littler & Keller (2016), I still consider it fruitful to study the construction and mobilization of generational consciousnesses within feminist texts, albeit with care and nuance for such an analysis can reveal the intricate ways in which power dynamics operate to include, exclude, oppress or reward different groups of women in the emergence of new womanhood's, specifically regarding female age relations. I am aware that by departing from a mother-daughter relationship I run the risk of endorsing the highly essentialist and problematic notion that all female past-future dialectics are shaped through a heteronormative maternal model. Nonetheless, I have chosen to follow this approach as these familial female age relations are most prevalent in the texts that I am analyzing here. Additionally, from a socio-historical perspective, *The DoD* responded to a discursive cultural framework that was heavily embedded within such essentialist presumptions. Similarly, sexual difference theory surged in popularity during the 1980s and 1990s (Gill *Abstract*). Mother and daughter relationships thus offer a helpful entry point to examine generational discourses from a specific gendered perspective while taking both works' socio-historical embeddings into account.

Heilmann describes female generational sacrifice as: "socialized into abjection by their mother, daughters are offered up to the Minotaur- the patriarchal family and its cult of woman sacrifice- to emerge from their ordeal as the willing executioners of the next generation of women" (*New Woman Strategies* 214 quoted in Goodman np). Within the *DoD*, female generational sacrifice is presented as a "multigenerational exchange" in which the children must sacrifice exactly because the mother has done so too (Goodman np). Over time, this multigenerational exchange becomes a historically continuous patriarchal system of female oppression which insidiously restrains consecutive generations of women into a patriarchal system of domestic caretaking. The mother-daughter rhetoric presented in Caird's *The DoD,* problematizes the gendered injustice found in this sacrificial model and dissects how this oppresses women through intergenerational "life-course engineering". In doing so, Caird represents the mother and new women daughter conflict as the result of a patriarchal system, defying ageist stereotypes. As the novel progresses however, Hadria's generational rhetoric becomes increasingly more militant ultimately endorsing a highly restrictive age-dependent deterministic political rhetoric (Ardis 8 quoted in Goodman np).

---

[39] Numerous feminist and queer theorists have criticized this generational model, amongst whom: Elisabeth Badinter 2012; Lee Edelman 2004; Corinne Maier 2009; Sam McBean 2015; Nina Power 2012.

Hadria observes: "A mother disappointed in her children must be a desperately unhappy woman. She has nothing left; for has she not resigned everything for them? But is sacrifice for ever to follow on sacrifice?" (26). Hadria further problematizes the expected sacrificial devotion by referring to this system as a "hereditary vendetta" in which "the duty of vengeance is passed on from generation to generation" (185). Over time, this sacrificial system compels women to demand vengeful compensation for their suffering experienced earlier in life. A compensation that has to be paid by the daughters, coercing them into a generational cycle of sacrifice and revenge. In an attempt to break free from this hereditary system, Hadria radically, and defiantly repositions herself towards her mother's expectations. Goodman (2018) convincingly links this radical repositioning with Adrienne Rich's concept of "Matrophobia; the fear not of one's mother or of motherhood but of *becoming one's mother"* (Rich 240).[40] The mother becomes to embody that which the New Woman daughter wants to escape. Rich encourages daughters to hold patriarchy responsible rather than the mother figure herself. As the instances above illustrate, in *The DoD* - which according to Heilmann "reads like a fictional exposition of Rich's theory from the perspective of a daughter", Hadria foregrounds patriarchy as the main enemy rather than her mother, Mrs. Fullerton (Heilman 2006 81). [41] For Hadria, her mother is both victim of and complicit in the endorsement of this patriarchal system of oppression A contradiction both Hadria and Algitha deeply lament: "Ah if mother had only not sacrificed herself for us; how infinitely grateful I should feel to her now! (227). In this approach, Caird rejects contemporary fictional approaches that were keen to attribute a mother's conservative behavior to personality alone, so playing up highly misogynistic and ageist representations of new woman mother figures.[42]

As the novel progresses, the age-related negative double-bind of Caird's approach becomes more prevalent however. As the story progresses and Hadria's outlook on life becomes increasingly more destitute, her generational rhetoric grows more militant. In its militancy, emancipatory progression takes the shape of generational evolution: "We are not free from the shades of our grandmothers […] Only I hope a little […] that we may be less of

---

[40] Emphasis present in original text.

[41] Throughout the novel, Hadria's mother is solely addressed as "mother" or "Mrs. Fullerton". This seems to be due to stylistics as the novel continuously addresses other both important and appreciated characters within Hadria's life by their surnames too. Yet, at the same time, for a contemporary reader this also creates a more distant, possibly less identifiable portrayal of this female character.

[42] Numerous popular New Woman protagonists, such as Florence in George Egerton's 1893 New Woman short story Virgin Soil", attributed their mother's conservatism to personal failure rather than the result of a misogynist oppressive system.

a hindrance and an obsession to our granddaughters than our grandmothers have been to us" (311-312). By presenting feminist progression in terms of generational evolution, Caird places the construction of late nineteenth-century new womanhood in a "positivist generational model" in which each new generation improves upon the one that came before (Mannheim, "the Problem" 281 quoted in Henry 5). In doing so, Caird maintains an allegiance with the masculinist idea of progress but reconfigures this into a matrilinear feminine future, however utopian and generalist. Branching out to non-matrilinear generational relations, for the formation of this next generation of young women, Hadria "shall warn every young woman I come across to beware, as she grows older […] The hope of the future lies in the rising generation. You can't alter those who have matured in the old ideas. It is for us to warn" (327-28).[43] This political stance significantly undermines the possibility for women's political self-determination and endorses an age-based deterministic notion of political female pre-destination. According to Hadria's resolution, a woman's socio-political orientation is transfixed within a limited life-course window, a woman's youth. This notion denies women of a higher chronological age the chance for intentional political identification. Additionally, this resolution generally assumes that young women will gladly accept the feminism preached by the previous generation. Where Mannheim makes a distinction between *based on* life course factors but not necessarily *deductible from* or *implied in,* Caird strongly establishes a fixed age-based determinant in the formation of a generational socio-historical consciousness. This ultimately endorses a restrictive rhetoric of feminine political pre-determination. In this, Caird continues the popular "old" vs "new" trend ignited by the debate surrounding the "Revolt of the Daughters'".

Similar to the *DoD*, intergenerational female discourse plays a fundamental role in the establishment of the1990s new woman figure of Bridget Jones. Here too, the notion of generational feminist progress shapes Bridget's social reality. As such, believing in the make-ability of each new generation is firmly established as the popular opinion within the novels. Bridget too self-identifies as the pioneering "urban generation" (*BJD* II 2).[44] This generational discourse of progress is in turn endorsed by and embedded within a age-based generational political determinism, most prominently established in the relationship between Bridget and

---

[43] This theory has also been implied by Mannheim in his sociological studies of generations. Studies that used generations to predict future behavior met with mixed success. For more information on this and on studies on this subject see Schuman & Scott.

[44] For more elaborate examples of this topic in the novel, see the interchange between Natasha, Bridget, Perpetua and Mark in *BJD* I page 102.

her mother, Pamela. A relationship that, like in *The DoD,* is defined by female generational sacrifice in the name of domestic duty. When Pamela attempts to step out of her prescribed domestic role, Bridget heavily stigmatizes her mother in matrophobic fashion and endorses a pre-determined rhetoric of generational female emancipation. Pamela is dissatisfied with the state of her marriage, disenchanted by realities of her domestic life and feels highly underappreciated for the personal sacrifices she has endured. In light of this, she decides to temporarily separate from Bridget's father: 'Let him bloody well have his own way as usual […] I'll be alright on my bloody own. I'll just clean the house like Germaine sodding Greer and the Invisible Woman'" (*BJD* I 47).[45] Unlike Mrs. Fullerton, Mrs. Jones is in the position to alter her situation. Bridget's mother belatedly starts her personal journey to no longer compromise her own ambitions for the sake of an unfulfilling marriage. This is the exact vision modern women like Bridget are, supposedly, pioneering for. After separating from Bridget's father, Pamela takes a new lover and starts a career in television for "'I've never had a career all my life and now I 'm in the autumn of my days and I need something for myself'" (*BJD I* 134-135). She later confesses to Bridget that "'to be honest, darling, having children isn't all it's built up to be. I mean, no offense, I don't mean this personally but given my chance again I'm not sure I'd have . . . '" (*BJD II* 196). Poignantly, Bridget heavily condemns her mother for defying modern conventions. She ascribes her mother's behavior to it being phase. She further describes her mother as being ignorant, selfish, coquettish, power-drunk, sexually promiscuous and the "most impossible woman in the world" (*BJD I* 305). Furthermore, instead of applauding her mother's decision to no longer compromise her own happiness for the sake of others, Bridget wishes her mother would adhere to the highly traditional, domestic and stereotypical vision of female elderly life: "Bloody Mother. Wish I had a normal round mum like other people, with grey hair, who would just make lovely stews" (*BJD II* 34).

According to Ramon-Torrijos, the conflict between Bridget and her mother "reflects the generation gap existing between second and third wave feminism" (Maria del Mar Ramon-Torrijos 109 in *Culture and Power*). In this light, Bridget's discomfort and derogatory treatment of her mother's personal endeavors indicates that this radical "female pioneering" is only accepted when executed by (younger) women of a certain feminist generation and that "older" women should not venture outside of their domestic roles as supporting mothers and

---

[45] Germaine Greer (*The Female Eunuch 1970*), the "Invisible Woman" possibly references her work on *The Change. Women, Aging and the Menopause* (1991).

wives. According to these remarks, women of a higher age exploring their sexuality, professionalism and self-determination ought to "act their age" and should not be a hindrance to the personal ambitions set out by their new woman younger daughters. Those who do, are stigmatized and ridiculed. All "new women" can pioneer but older women of a previous feminist generation should not. In *BJD I & II*, although different in form to *The DoD* and the generational militancy present in Hadria's resolutions, these representations likewise create a restrictive age-bound rhetoric which transfixes women into a prescriptive framework of emancipatory generational determinism.

Mrs. Jones is a notorious and controversial character. Notwithstanding, as a character the motivation behind her "radical new ways" reveals some of the insidious age - related prejudice and anxieties that shape the realities of many ageing women within contemporary western society. Poignantly, the gravity of these anxieties, for example her experience of feeling invisible, are undermined as the novels continuously represent Mrs. Jones as a matrophobic "object of mistrust, suspicion, and misogyny in both overt and insidious forms" (Rich 116). Apart from the afore mentioned adjectives used to describe her character, a telling example of this occurs in *BJD I* as Mrs. Jones is threatened with a criminal offense after her new lover embezzled funds. In the end, Pamela escapes prosecution. Bridget responds to this by saying that "I would have been in the least surprised if she's got herself off by giving him [the police officer] sexual favors in the interview room" (BJD *I* 281). Such treatments continue in the second novel. Here Pamela has resigned her career and has again taken up her main role as housewife and supporting mother. Still, Bridget describes her mother as inherently alien, quite literally: "like a spaceman turning up in the house of commons" (*BJD II* 2). These representations endorse the derogatory treatment of postmenopausal women as sexually promiscuous, as victims of their raging hormones and lusts, and as inherently Other thus supposedly justifying their marginalization. Poignantly, Bridget's dis-identification towards her mother is only momentarily broken as she credits her mother for her matchmaking skills: "Have finally realized the secret of happiness with men, and it is with deep regret, rage and an overwhelming sense of defeat that I have to put it in the words of an adulteress, criminal's accomplice and G-list celebrity: 'don't say 'what', say 'pardon', darling, and do as your mother tells you" (*BJD I* 307). On the one hand, this seeming moment of appreciation places Pamela in the highly traditional, desexualized role of matronly matchmaker. On the other hand, the ironic, even sarcastic, tone of this final line of the novel

simultaneously undercuts Bridget's motherly praise in favor of a snarlier comment on her mother's behavior.[46]

Notwithstanding, the novels' highly ironical tone critically dissect its narrator author too. Gamble (2006) prefers such a critical reading of Bridget's character as she argues that "you are meant to laugh at Bridget Jones, not *with* her" (Gamble 66).[47] Such a critical observation of irony within the novel can, in theory, reveal how Bridget's vision of new womanhood is ingrained with a highly patriarchal understanding of motherhood. However, as the final sentence of the first novel indicates, this irony is additionally used to re-enforce this exact ageism further. Additionally, this stigmatization at the expense of Bridget's mother is also invited by the novels' co-textual framework. The dedicatory page of the first novel immediately establishes Bridget's mother as the main object of dis-identification as Fielding dedicates the work: "To my mum Nellie, for not being like Bridget's" (np). The second novel continues this rhetoric of generational difference and dis-identification further. After the first novel's success and the resonance it found amongst its readership - with women identifying as the "Bridget Jones Generation" - the second work in the series dedicates itself to "all the other Bridget's" (*BJD* II np). In the first novel, readers were invited not to identify with Bridget's mother. By the second novel, readers were invited to identify with Bridget Jones. Additionally, the novels further invite readers to dis-identify with other chronologically older female characters also. Most prominently Bridget's older female colleague Perpetua, who is described as snobbish, a "stupid old fartarsebag" (*BJD* I 100) and the "nosiest woman in the world" (*BJD* I 196). Poignantly, the only elderly female character who is not subjected to direct stereotyping is Mrs. Elaine Darcy, Bridget's future mother-in-law, who is also the most absent. Thus, it is my contestation that with regard to age, a critical, ironical interpretation of Bridget's behavior would be highly unlikely. Rather, such representations endorse the stigma that the only "good" "older" women are those who remain invisible. This derogatory treatment of "older women" coincides with the steadfast linear increase of ageist stereotypes within Anglo-American culture observed over the last 200 years (Reuben et al 4).

Within both genre's generational discourses function as a double-edged sword. Embedded in their respective contexts, both genres employ remarkably similar generational discourses to distinguish their new woman protagonist from other women, especially their

---

[46] For a study into contemporary female reader response to BJD 1 & II see Hannah Engler. *Poptimist Feminism: Contemporary Women Reading Bridget Jones' Diary*. Diss. 2017.
[47] Italics present in original text.

mothers. Ultimately, examination into the specific age-bound dynamics present in these generational discourses illustrate that both texts perpetuate more so than question reductive and highly prescriptive narratives of female generational difference and political pre-destination. In their respective ways, both groups of texts ultimately confine women to highly prescriptive emancipatory generational politics, whether through Hadria's belief in age-bound political pre-determination, or Bridget's discomforted, ageist and highly matrophobic treatment of her mother when she momentarily breaks with the prescribed generational behaviors set out for women of her age.

Both genres exposed these generational dynamics through an engagement with female generational sacrifice. In *The DoD,* generational sacrifice and the consequent generational dis-identification is overtly problematized and presented as the result of this patriarchal system of female oppression. *BJD I & II* on the other hand, does not explicitly problematize the oppressive and political nature of this sacrificial system. Instead, these works heavily stereotype Bridget's mother on a personal level, presenting her as the ultimate matrophobic figure of dis-identification, a rhetoric also immediately established in the novels' dedicatory sections.

Conclusion and Discussion

Female age and age relations do not need to occupy the centre of the narrative to have their influence felt. As such, this study calls for a wider analysis of (female) ageing within literature and for studying age relations in all texts, not just those works that advocate themselves as "stories about ageing". It is my conviction that especially within these circumscribing margins the discursive power of age and age relations is at its most revealing, and often sadly its most marginalizing. Overall, the aim of this thesis was not to compare late nineteenth century and late twentieth century new woman subjectivities one-on-one as either "good" or "bad" representations of female ageing. Rather this analysis wished to expose the similarities or differences in these texts' respective age discourses and their inclusionary or exclusionary implications as they construct these respective new woman figures. Written approximately one hundred years apart, these texts illustrate that female ageing and age relations play a substantial and highly identical role in the construction of literary new womanhood's. This in spite of these texts' differing stylistics.

Although at times potentially subversive in their treatment of dominant temporal discourses, my findings have shown that these works ultimately deploy female ageing and age relations in a highly marginalising manner. If present at all, the potentially subversive representations are most prominent in the new women's disturbance of linear temporality, as described in chapter two of this thesis. This subversive potential with regard to age is not substantially continued in the novels' handling of other subjects, however. Age relations are numerous times used to undermine and undercut restrictive beliefs systems, but while doing to these dynamics also create new exclusionary tensions themselves. Chapter three illustrated how both genres similarly employ age-bound externalisation tactics to aid their respective new woman's cause. The widespread influence of these works has shown that these tactics have been highly effective. As a flipside to this efficacy, however, these representations result in phobic representations of "other looking" bodies and stigmatizes natural processes of female ageing while heavily endorsing oppressive beauty myths. Chapter four has shown that both protagonists' mother - daughter relationships are shaped by a system of female generational sacrifice. *The DoD* explicitly problematizes this sacrificial system and the patriarchal oppression this enforces, ascribing the rift between mothers and daughters to patriarchal ideology rather than personal failures of character. In doing, this works avoids the perpetuation of ageist female stereotypes. In *BJD I & II*, on the other hand, this matrilineal relationship is not as explicitly politicized and ventures on the highly personal instead. As a

result, Mrs. Jones becomes a heavily stereotyped figure of dis-identification. Poignantly, despite these respective differences, both groups of texts ultimately endorse a highly repressive age-based deterministic model of political female subjecthood.

Female ageing and age relations occupy multiple scales. Like a distorted mirror, depending on the viewers position these visions change constantly. Like so, depending on the perspective of inquiry age relations can hold both inclusionary and exclusionary significations. These significations span both thematic but also inter-thematic scales. As the chapter on Time has illustrated, these new women's experimental temporalities expose the ideological underpinnings of the linear temporal foundations that implicitly underly western models of life course progression, and so ageing. These temporal deviations are presented as inherently new womansque and are directly juxtaposed to their mother's functioning within the dominant domestic temporal system. However, read from a generational perspective, these mother-daughter temporal distinctions carry different connotations. On the one hand, Bridget' and Hadria's new womanly defiance of colonizing temporal conditions holds liberating potential for all women as they disrupt the natural validation of a linearly and objectively defined life-course model, as in this model women age faster and with more negative consequences. On the other hand, juxtaposing Hadria's and Bridget's temporality directly to their mothers' simultaneously re-enforces a generational rhetoric of difference problematized in chapter four. This cross-signification reveals the double-edged character of "age" as a discursive concept and identity marker.

As has been shown throughout this thesis, these texts are both comparable but also vastly different. Comparable in how they use highly identical age dynamics, such as both new woman's deviant temporalities, their strikingly identical externalisation tactics, and in how they depict their arduous mother-daughter relationships shaped by female generational sacrifice and the highly deterministic generational rhetoric's these depictions endorse. Different too, for example in their respective tones. *The DoD* explicitly politicizes its new woman struggles, whereas *BJD I & II* describes these in more personal and ironical tones. Yet, despite *BJD I & II* ironical tone, the specific age dynamics used, and in turn their inclusionary and exclusionary implications, to a large extend coincide. The specific circumstances and goals for which these dynamics are employed, however, differ. These differences come as no surprise, as both texts respond to different social realities. The co-existence of the novels' similarities alongside their respective differences exemplifies the

flexibility and employability of age-relations within different stylistic environments and contexts.

Furthermore, formalistically, these works belong to two separate genres, New Woman literature and Chick-Lit. Both genres address an identical intended audience, namely white, middle-class or upper-middle-class heterosexual women. Although the intended audiences are similar in demographic, this does not mean that my consequent interpretation of these works may regard these audiences as necessarily like-minded. In order to account for differences in genre, intended audiences and tone, I relied on both contemporary reader response studies, such as Engler's reader response study of *BJD I & II,* and combined these with previous studies on the novels' contemporary receptions and publication practises. Due to practical reasons, my analysis of *The DoD* relied mostly on the latter of the two. Previous studies often did not extensively incorporate issues of female age-relations however. As such, I paired these studies with findings presented by cultural gerontology studies into popular attitudes towards age and ageing at the time to best inform my interpretations of the age dynamics here at work.

Additionally, within my reading practise Mills' feminist mode of textual analysis has proven to be highly effective not only in exposing the gendered nature of discourse but also for analysing ageing. In combination with Glitz' life course engineering approach, these models function as useful points of navigation within age's many double-binds and intersections. However, age as an identity marker differs considerably from gender, especially considering its fluid nature and vast temporal dimensions. Thus, in order to better account for these age-bound characteristics a modification of Mills' model would be desirable, most ideally creating a model of literary enquiry catered specifically towards age as a category of subject formation, a category still too often considered an etcetera. This would be a fascinating topic for future research and might take the shape of an incorporation of both Glitz' theory on life course management, as well as Baars' work on time, ageing and colonization of life course.

To continue, it might be insightful for future literary age inquiries to incorporate a reader response study too. For example, building on "Fiction and the Cultural Meditation of Ageing" (2011), a project set up by Philip Tew, Dr Nick Hubble, and Dr Jago Morrison at the Brunel Centre for Contemporary Writing.[48] Mills aims to provide a replicable tool for literary

---

[48] For more information on this project see: https://www.brunel.ac.uk/life/library/Special-Collections/Fiction-and-the-Cultural-Mediation-of-Ageing

inquiry but in practise academic readerships often approach texts differently compared to a work's implied non-academic readership. Incorporating both a blind and guided reader response study - in the latter case providing for example a brief overview of an age-related model for literary inquiry - critically positions our academic feminist reading practises in relation to a non-academic context. This could be especially relevant for works that enjoy widespread mainstream and academic interest. Additionally, such a study could shed light unto how readerships interpret female ageing and age dynamics in comparison to groups that have been provided some navigational markers. Such a study could include women from different age groups too, possibly revealing whether, and if so, how, a woman's age influences women's age-bound reading practises. This would connect multiple aspects of Mills' context of production and context of reception with a direct content analysis. Such a study critically reflects on the implication present in both academia and perhaps also outside of it, that age only occupies the imagination of "the aged", while simultaneously bridging the gap between academic and non-academic reading practises. Ultimately, I am hopeful that once age is no longer confined to its prescribed disciplines of care that we might truly start to understand and appreciate the intricate workings of a phenomenon shared, celebrated and dreaded by many people alike.

Works Cited

Primary Materials

Caird, Mona. *The Daughters of Danaus.* The Project Gutenberg E-book. Reprint of first edition by Bliss, Sands and Foster, London (1894).

Fielding, Helen, *Bridget Jones's Diary: The Edge of Reason.* Project Gutenberg E-book pdf. Format (1999).

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

Secondary Materials

Agnew, Robert. "The Effect of Appearance on Personality and Behaviour: 'Are the Beautiful Really Good?'" *Youth and Society* vol. 15, no.3 1984, pp. 285-305.

Baars, Jan. "Concepts of Time and Narrative Temporality in the Study of Aging". *Journal of Aging Studies* vol. 11, no. 3. (1997): 283-295.

Baars, Jan. "Critical Turns of Aging, Narrative and Time". *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life*, vol.7, no. 2 (2012): 143-165.

Baars, Jan. "Time in Late Modern Aging." *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology. Routledge, New York* (2015): 397-403.

Benstock, Shari "Afterword the New Woman's Fiction" in Ferris, Suzanne and Mallory Young. *Chick –Lit: The New Woman's Fiction.* Routledge, 2006.

Calasanti, Toni M., and Kathleen F. Slevin. *Age matters: Re-Aligning Feminist Thinking*. Routledge, 2006.

Darweesh, Abbas Deygan & Hussein Huwail Ghayadh. "Investigating Feminist Tendency in Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale" in Terms of Sara Mills' Model. A Feminist Stylistic Study" *British Journal of Linguistics, vol.* 4, no.3 (2016): pp. 21-34. file:///C:/Users/Florien%20Kijlstra/Downloads/Investigating-Feminist-Tendency-in-Margaret-Atwood---s----The-Handmaid---s-Tale---_2.pdf

Douglas, Susan, and Meredith Michaels. *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined All Women*. Simon and Schuster, 2005.

Engler, Hannah. *Poptimist Feminism: Contemporary Women Reading Bridget Jones' Diary*. Diss. 2017.

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

Fest, Kerstin. "Angels in the House or Girl Power: Working Women in Nineteenth-Century Novels and Contemporary Chick Lit". *Journal of Women's Studies,* vol. 38, no 1. (2008), pp. 43-62. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00497870802525549?casa_token=NIiPd4xZD5gAAAAA%3AZ3mziBxfA_dejqqaF0M8uLLo4qC3wcdQW57gSWD7PRdKIUxTBGE0v71jSmzOnJZPeGNli8irJORU2rk&journalCode=gwst20

Gamble, Sara. "Growing up Single: The Postfeminist Novel *Studies in the Literary Imagination. vol* 39, no. 2: pp. (61-78).

Genz, Stéphanie. "Singled out: Postfeminism's "New Woman" and the Dilemma of Having it All." *The Journal of Popular Culture. Vol.* 43, no.1 (2010):97-119. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1540-5931.2010.00732.x?casa_token=eyIUqprkV6UAAAAA:OlhUqAEe46c5nt-oSC7_t12PmKfC5K9GNTMefWTh0wyy2qlO9J9EWa9Wg8n12W4Y4bolAywBzxusWqSeng

Gill, Rosalind, and Christina Scharff, eds. *New femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*. Springer, 2013.

Glitz, Rudolph. "Ageing and Identity as a Problem for Social Justice" *Frame vol. 30, no.*1 (2017): pp. 31-46.

Goodman, Lesley. "The Shades of Our Grandmothers: New Women, Old Mothers, and Generational Conflict" *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies.* Vol. 14, no.1, (2018). https://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue141/goodman.htm#note3

Hager, Tamar. "Making Sense of an Untold Story: A Personal Deconstruction of the Myth of Motherhood." *Qualitative Inquiry* vol. 17, no.1 (2011): pp. 35-44.

Heath, Kay. *Aging by the Book: the Emergence of Midlife in Victorian Britain*. Suny Press, 2009.

Heilmann, Ann. "Mona Caird (1854-1932): Wild Woman, New Woman and Early Radical Feminist Critic of Marriage and Motherhood" *Women's History Review. Vol.5, no.1* (1996): pp. 67-95.

Heilmann, Ann. "The New Woman in the New Millenium: Recent Trend in Criticism of New Woman Fiction" *Literature Compass*. vol. 3. no. 1 (2005) pp. 32-42.

Heilmann, Ann. *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism*. Springer, 2000.

Henry, Astrid. *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism*. Indiana University Press, 2004.

Kaufman, Gayle, and Glen H. Elder Jr. "Revisiting Age Identity: A Research Note." *Journal of Aging Studies*. Vol.16, no.2 (2002): pp. 169-176.

King, Jeanette. *Discourses of Aging in Fiction and Feminism: the Invisibly Woman*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2013.

Kristeva, Julia. *The Kristeva Reader*. Columbia University Press, 1986.

Ledger, Sally. "In Darkest England: The Terror of Degeneration in "Fin De Siècle" Britain." *Literature and History*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1995) pp. 71. *ProQuest*, https://search.proquest.com/docview/1303912688?accountid=10978.

Mannheim, Karl. "THE PROBLEM OF GENERATIONS." *Psychoanalytic Review*, vol. 57, no. 3 (1970): pp. 378. *ProQuest*, https://search.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/problem-generations/docview/1310157020/se-2?accountid=14772.

McFadden, Susan, and Robert Atchley, eds. *Aging and the Meaning of Time: A Multidisciplinary Exploration*. Springer Publishing Company, 2006.

Mills, Sara. *Feminist Stylistics*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Mulley, Graham. "A History of Geriatrics and Gerontology." *European Geriatric Medicine*. vol.3, no.4 (2012): pp. 225-227. https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S1878764912001179?token=A08BF1FBA682 B7C4EA7E1076B0356A6BB4E8DD1B09DE6DB8362BEA3BFA38E60C27E644EB2 EC0E9B8AEE3EACECD3598E0

Murphy, Patricia. *Time is of the Essence: Temporality, Gender, and the New Woman*. SUNY Press, 2001.

Nash, Kate. "The Cultural Turn in Social Theory: Towards a Theory of Cultural Politics"
    Sociology. Vol. 35, no.1 (2001): pp. 77-92.
    https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249825791_The_'Cultural_Turn'_in_Social_T
    heory_Towards_a_Theory_of_Cultural_Politics.

Pykett, Lyn. "Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman: Representations of the Female Artist
    in the New Woman Fiction of the 1890s" in *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman
    Question* ed. Nicola Diane Thompson, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Ragaisien, Irena. "Chick Lit as the New Woman's Fiction: Inscriptions in Marian Keyes's
    Novel *Watermelon*" *Literatura. Vol* 50, no. 5 (2008): pp.69-75.
    http://chickculture.com/Ragaisiene.pdf

Ramon-Torrijos, Maria del Mar. "The Construction of Female Identity in Popular Culture:
    Bridget Jones' Postfeminism" in *Culture and Power: Identity and Identification* ed. by
    Angel Mateos-Aparicio Martin-Albo and Eduardo de Gregorio-Godeo. Cambridge
    Scholars Publishing, 2014.

Ng, Reuben, et al. "Increasing Negativity of Age Stereotypes across 200 Years: Evidence
    From a Database of 400 Million Words." *PloS one*. Vol 10, no. 2 (2015): e0117086.

Rich, Adrienne. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. WW Norton &
    Company, 1995.

Rosen, Christine. "The Democratization of Beauty." *The New Atlantis.* Vol. 5 (2004): pp. 19-
    35.

Rubinstein, David. "The Revolt of the Daughters and the New Woman": 1894: English
    Women Protest. *OpenEdition Books,* Presses Universitaires Francois-Rabelais.
    https://books.openedition.org/pufr/4403

Schuman, Howard, and Jacqueline Scott. "Generations and Collective Memories." *American
    Sociological Review* (1989): pp. 359-381.

Snyder, R. Claire. "What is Third-Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay." *Signs: Journal
    of Women in Culture and Society*. Vol. 34, no.1(2008): pp.175-196.
    https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/588436?casa_token=mTZ9ZWLqG
    rsAAAAA%3ARstMh7X7tjO69d16XBPf0IZMNe-

hh2zmvpc9KZ1bVGUuTNiASVQhgzeV7oIm0Cm4d5V-pQeyqNLN&journalCode=signs

Surridge, Lisa. "Narrative Times, History, and Feminism in Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus*". *Women's Writing* vol. 2, no. 1 (2005):pp. 127-142.

Thane, Pat. "Social Histories of Old Age and Aging". *Journal of Social History*. Vol. 37, no.1 (2003) pp. 93-111.

Tournier, Paul. *The Seasons of Life*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012.

Twigg. J & W. Martin, ed. *"The Field of Cultural Gerontology: An Introduction" in The Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology*, edited by J. Twigg and W. Martin, (2015) pp.1-15.

Vertinsky, Patricia A. "Stereotypes of Aging Women and Exercise: A Historical Perspective." *Journal of Aging and Physical activity*. Vol.3, no. 3 (1995): pp. 223-237.

Wells, Juliette "Mother of Chick Lit? Women Writers, Readers, and Literary History" (47-70). in Ferris, Suzanne and Mallory Young. *Chick –Lit: The New Woman's Fiction.* Routledge, 2006.
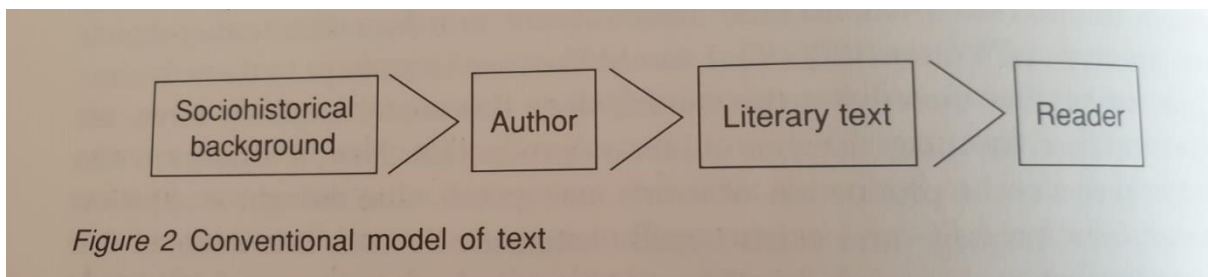
Wilde, Oscar. *A Woman of No Importance,* act 1. (1893)

Winch, Alison, Jo Littler, and Jessalynn Keller. "Why Intergenerational Feminist Media Studies?" (2016): pp. 557-572.
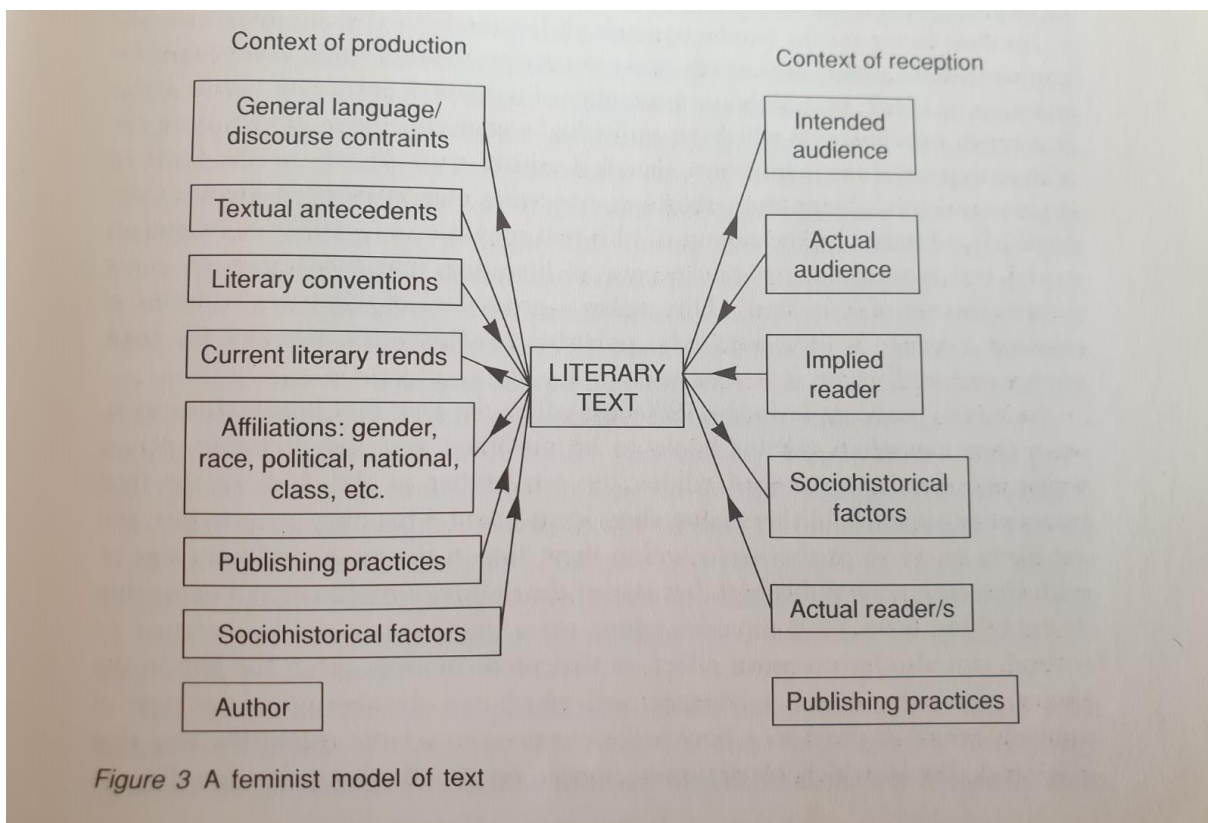
Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women*. Random House, 2013.

Appendix

Appendix I: Sara Mills feminist model of text compared to the traditional model.

Figure 2 Conventional model of text

Mills, Sara. *Feminist Stylistics*. London: Routledge, 1995, p. 28

Figure 3 A feminist model of text

Mills, Sara. *Feminist Stylistics*. London: Routledge, 1995, p.31