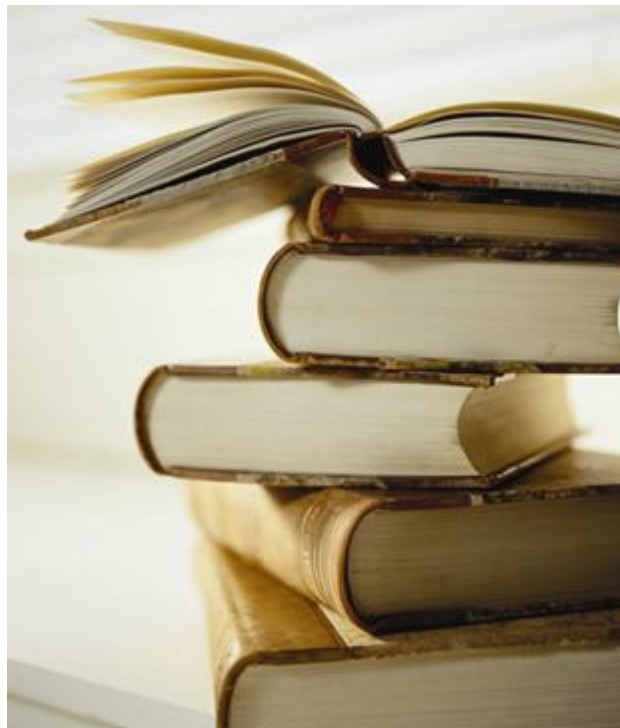


# “All normal people need both classics and trash”

G.B. Shaw

A case study on possible criteria of high literature using Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*  
and Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*.



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12 August 2010  
MA Thesis Western Literature & Culture, Utrecht University  
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## Introduction

W.H. Auden once wrote:

According to his powers each may give;

Only on varied diet can we live.

The pious fable and the dirty story

Share in the total literary glory. (Hawkins, preface)

In a world of great works of literature, literary works that are a little less great must also exist. The question then arises who decides between “good” and “bad” literature. Perhaps some works are not even considered “literature.” What qualities make a literary work certified as ‘high’ literature? To investigate these questions, one must first decide what the true meaning of literature is. The *Glossary of Literary Terms* describes literature as:

any literary *narrative*, whether in prose or in verse, which is invented instead of being an account of events that actually happened. In an expanded use, it designates also any other writings (including philosophy, history, and even scientific works addressed to a general audience) that are especially distinguished in form, expression, and emotional power. (Abrams, 99)

However, this definition is rather vague, for what is considered “especially distinguished” may be quite subjective. In her book *Classics and Trash: Traditions and Taboos in High Literature and Popular Modern Genres*, Harriett Hawkins writes about high literature. She says that she recognises that “the continuing cross-fertilisation between ‘high’ literature and popular genres inevitably enhances our understanding and appreciation of both” (Hawkins, xiv). Apart from acknowledging that there is a difference between high and low literature, Hawkins explains that this could be a positive difference. According to her one can appreciate works of great literary standard more when one is familiar with non-canonical “popular”

works. One could debate whether this also works the other way around; whether all people are able to understand even the most complicated work of high literature. But it seems plausible that in order to determine whether a work belongs to the canon of high literature, one must understand the non-canonical, low literature “counterpart”. The concept of high literature, however, versus low literature, or trash, as Hawkins also calls it, is rather vague. She begs the question of how to distinguish between high and low literature. One may wonder whether there are also objective criteria to call a particular book literature. In this introduction, I will present four theories about this subject; a theory of Pierre Bourdieu and then three possible criteria. I will also present the novels that I will use to test the possible criteria, that is to say Jane Austen’s nineteenth-century novel *Pride and Prejudice* and Helen Fielding’s twentieth century novel *Bridget Jones’s Diary*.

In his book *Distinction*, which is considered one of the most important sociological books of the twentieth century, Pierre Bourdieu undermines the idea of objective criteria in literary taste. Rather, taste is a way of distinguishing oneself: “Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed” (*Distinction*, 6). Bourdieu was a French sociologist, anthropologist and philosopher. Throughout his life, he did research on the problems that are concerned with maintaining a power system by the transmitting of a certain dominant culture. A central theme in Bourdieu’s works was that culture and education are the most important factors in defining differences between social classes. He published, for instance, with co-author Jean Claude Passeron, a book called *Les Heritiers: Les Etudiants et la Culture*, in which they analysed class bias in higher education and in his book *La Reproduction* (1970) Bourdieu argued that the French educational system was responsible for the cultural division in France.

One of Bourdieu's most important sociological terms is habitus. Habitus comes from the Latin word "habitat", which, according to the *Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's English Dictionary*, refers to the area or environment where an organism can be found (650). In sociology it can also refer to a place where a person or a thing is most likely to be found. According to John H. Scahill from Ball State University, the "habitus" literally means: "the condition (of the body); character, quality: style of dress, attire, disposition, state of feeling; habit" (par. 9). According to Pierre Bourdieu, "habitus refers to socially acquired system, embodied system of dispositions and/or predispositions" (Scahill, par. 9). It shows the connection between social structures and practical activities. It influences how people perceive the world and how they behave. It "underlies such second nature human characteristics and their infinite possible variations in different historical and cultural settings" (par. 9). Habitus is formed by upbringing and education. Bourdieu says that a fundamental part of all of society is "the struggle for social distinction" (*Pegasos*, par. 5). In his book *Distinction*, Bourdieu illustrates this with a very concrete example. A diagram shows the literal connection between the space of social positions and the space of lifestyles. Its conclusion is that literal spatial distances between people are equivalent to social distances. This means that when people from one class have a conversation, they will stand quite close to one another while people from a different class will automatically keep more distance. Bourdieu says: "The very title *Distinction* serves as a reminder that what is commonly called distinction, that is, a certain quality of bearing and manners, most often considered innate (one speaks of *distinction naturelle*, "natural refinement"), is nothing other than difference, a gap, a distinctive feature, in short, a relational property existing only in and through its relation with other properties" (*Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*, 5). Outlook, opinion, posture, way of walking, sitting, joking, insulting, bluffing, salutation, spitting, blowing the nose are all influenced by the habitus. Scahill illustrates this with the example of a President of the

United States of America, who stops at a working class pub for his campaign. When he tries to talk to the local people, it is awkward. This is because there is a “mismatch of habitus” (Scahill, par. 11). On the other hand, the upper-class president may be able to ‘read’ the situation and adjust his verbal language and body language. Bourdieu says that each person has a habitus, which is formed during years of living in the home culture. The habitus of this one person is similar to the habitus of a larger referential group or class. Scahill says that class habitus “is a collective phenomena reflecting group adaptations and adjustments to historical necessity and struggles won and lost” and that “perceiving subjects, via the organizing and classificatory principles of the habitus (individual/class) have a world of common sense, a social world that seems self-evident” (par. 12). The world is not pure chaos, which a person can choose to construct any way he wants, but it is not totally structured, resulting in “inescapable perceptions, outlooks, opinions, and rules of conduct” (par. 12). Besides the book *Distinction*, Bourdieu also wrote *Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. It examined the work of Gustave Flaubert and how Flaubert’s novels were perceived and shaped by different classes, movements, schools and authors.

According to Pierre Bourdieu, besides manners, opinions, body language etcetera, what is considered high literature also depends on the habitus of a class in society. The habitus determines whether people consider a work to be a work of literature. This is not a list of novels that are universally similar, it changes through time and differs from culture to culture and from class to class. There are no objective criteria, the canonical work is ‘just there’ as it were. Distinction between high and low literature, according to Bourdieu, is largely arbitrary. It is just a matter of belonging to a particular group or class. Taste is an instinct for belonging to the ‘right’ social group and it is not tied to intrinsic qualities of the texts.

There are, however, people who disagree with Bourdieu's opinion on taste. Some people do see differences in texts that are intrinsic rather than attribute the differences to social constructs. E.M. Forster, for example, does present, however implicit, a criterion for what then constitutes high literature, namely the use of round characters instead of flat characters. According to the *Glossary of Literary Terms*, E.M. Forster first introduced these notions in his book *Aspects of the Novel* in 1927. He said that a round character is "complex in temperament and motivation and is represented with subtle particularity; such a character therefore is as difficult to describe with any adequacy as a person in real life, and like real persons, is capable of surprising us" (Abrams, 33). They can undergo radical changes through a novel, sometimes gradually and sometimes as the result of a crisis. An example of a round character is Shakespeare's Sir John Falstaff in his play *Henry V*. Falstaff is a companion of Prince Hal, who is the future King Henry V. He is very fat, boasting with vanity but a coward within. Falstaff seems to be merely comical in the beginning, but gradually he shows more depth. His name itself is humorous, it being a pun on impotence. However, Falstaff's character is a crucial one in the play. His humour and wit are necessary for the development of Prince Hal's character. Falstaff helps the audience to relate to Prince Hal. Because of his depth and his paradoxical qualities literary critics call Falstaff one of Shakespeare's greatest creations. He really makes a transition in the play: from a flamboyant and burlesque clown to a modern and aesthetic character. A flat character is a two-dimensional character. Forster describes it as a character that is "built around 'a single idea or quality' and is presented without much individualizing detail, and therefore can be described adequately in a single phrase or sentence" (Abrams, 33). A flat character will not change dramatically, mostly it does not change at all, and stays quite stable. Sir Epicure Mammon from Ben Jonson's play *The Alchemist* is an example of a flat character. His name describes his character; a person who is blindsided by material wealth and splendour. Sir Epicure Mammon is very greedy and

obsessed with food and sex. He does not change at all throughout the play and his character has no depth. As a result, one would expect that a work of high literature contains more round, or rounder, characters than a work of low literature.

A second possible criterion for high literature is the use of morality. Morality can add more layers to a text and layerdness makes a text more three-dimensional. A work of popular, or low, literature is one-dimensional, it has no secondary function. An example of a secondary function is a novel of manners. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, a novel of manners is a “work of fiction that re-creates a social world, conveying with finely detailed observation the customs, values, and mores of a highly developed and complex society” (par. 1). The conventions of the society dominate the story of the novel. The “characters are differentiated by the degree to which they measure up to the uniform standard, or ideal, of behaviour or fall below it” (par. 2). Although a novel of manners can of course also be read for entertainment purposes, it also provides a detailed description of conventions. Moral seriousness can give a book more depth. Different kinds of morality can be discussed to show different facets of life.

A third possible criterion for distinguishing between high and low literature is the level of identification. A work of high literature must have a certain quality that another work does not have. That certain quality makes a novel worth reading over and over again. The question, however, is what the definition of this quality is. One thing that contributes to the certain quality is the reader’s identification with the characters. Identification can be used to educate readers. It makes the reader empathise, or disagree, with the characters, which makes them want to read further and, above all, to reread the novel in order to see what they might have missed. In a high literature novel, the identification of the characters is subtle, nuanced and layered.



For my thesis I will make use of two novels, namely Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*. With these two novels I will investigate whether Pierre Bourdieu's theory, that the distinction in literature is largely arbitrary, is true or that *Pride and Prejudice*, as a novel that is mostly regarded as high literature, is intrinsically better than a chick lit novel such as *Bridget Jones's Diary*. I will investigate why one novel is considered one of the most important canonical works of the nineteenth century and the other is not.

'Chick lit' stands for chick literature. In their book *Chick Lit*, editors Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young argue that the term was first used in print by novelist Cris Mazza in her 1995 anthology *Chick-Lit: Postfeminist Fiction*, although it was used for ironic purposes. However, the term "worked its way into print" and emerged more "as a type of brand name in the publishing industry" over the years (3). Fifteen years later, chick lit has a fixed definition. Literary critics regard it as "a form of women's fiction on the basis of subject matter, character, audience, and narrative style" (3). The protagonists in a chick lit novel are "single women in their twenties and thirties 'navigating their generation's challenges of balancing demanding careers with personal relationships'" (3). Ferriss and Young use a quote from Juliette Wells about chick literature: "Chick lit is certainly one of the next generations of women's *writing* but, in spite of its capacity to invoke the questions that long swirled about women's literary writing, it is not the next generation of women's *literature*" (5). While the popularity of chick literature grew, so did the criticism. Chick lit is regarded as popular literature, or sometimes as low literature, as opposed to high literature. Helen Fielding's novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* is considered "the original source" of chick lit. And, Ferriss and Young say: "Bridget Jones is a direct literary descendant of Austen's Elizabeth Bennet", which is why I have chosen to compare these novels by Jane Austen and Helen Fielding (4).

*Pride and Prejudice* was Jane Austen's second novel and was first published in 1813.

*Pride and Prejudice* is set in the nineteenth century, but it still fascinates many readers today. Helen Fielding's 1996 novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* is an adaptation of *Pride of Prejudice*. The plot of *Bridget Jones's Diary* resembles *Pride and Prejudice*, although Fielding transfers it to the twentieth century. Fielding "admittedly borrowed much of her plot and many of her characters" from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (Ferriss & Young, 4). In *Bridget Jones's Diary*, main character Bridget Jones struggles with her career, her weight, her parents, her age and, first and foremost, her love life. In the beginning of the book, she becomes involved in a relationship with Daniel Cleaver, her boss. Eventually, he cheats on Bridget with a much younger woman. While her father has a calm and quiet nature, Bridget's mother constantly wants to marry her off to a rich and handsome man, particularly to the son of her close friends, Mark Darcy. But he seems not interested in Bridget, and she finds him arrogant and boring. There are several parallels between *Pride and Prejudice* and *Bridget Jones's Diary*. First, there is, of course, the names of the male protagonists, Fitzwilliam Darcy and Mark Darcy (after the BBC motion picture adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* with Colin Firth as Mr. Darcy, Fielding's Mark Darcy was played by the same actor in the film adaptation of *Bridget Jones's Diary*). Fitzwilliam Darcy and Mark Darcy also have quite similar characters. They are both, perceived by Elizabeth and Bridget respectively as, arrogant, proud and distant. In the end, both of them turn out to be men who do care. Furthermore, the relationship between Daniel Cleaver and Mark Darcy is loosely based on the relationship between Fitzwilliam Darcy and George Wickham. There are also similarities between the mother and father of Elizabeth and the mother and father of Bridget. The plot resembles *Pride and Prejudice*, an established classical and canonical work, of girl meets boy. However, *Pride and Prejudice* is generally regarded as high literature, and *Bridget Jones's Diary* is not. By using the three possible criteria for a high literature novel and Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus, I

will illustrate this in this thesis. In chapter one, I will illustrate the first possible criteria for a high literature novel, more round characters instead of flat characters, with examples from *Pride and Prejudice* and *Bridget Jones's Diary*. In the second chapter, I will use the two novels to provide examples of morality. The third chapter will focus on acquiring depth through identification.

## Chapter One: Round and Flat Characters

In order to make the reader respond to the characters in his or her high literature novel, an author must pay close attention to the characterisation of the characters. On the website *Learning Space* of The Open University, it is said that the term characterisation is used to describe the “strategies an author uses to present and develop the characters in a narrative” (*The Learning Space*). They want to encourage the reader to read on, make them curious. Authors do this by making the reader react to the characters: to make them identify, sympathise or empathise with them, to judge or disapprove of behaviour, their actions or values. They want their readers to ask themselves the fundamental question of what happens next and to whom did it happen. Readers only ask themselves these questions if they feel strongly, in a positive or a negative way, about the characters in a novel. Therefore, characterisation is crucial.

As I have stated in the introduction of this thesis, one way to differentiate between characters is the use of flat and round characters. Round characters are central to the story and most of the time they are presented in great detail. They are three-dimensional and undergo an important personal change. Flat characters are less dynamic. They undergo little or no change throughout the novel and they are one-dimensional. A flat character is often a caricature and they can be described in very few words.

As I will argue in this chapter, *Pride and Prejudice* includes far more round characters than *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Besides, the round characters in *Pride and Prejudice* are also ‘rounder’, so to speak. Of course there are also flat characters in *Pride and Prejudice* but they are more functional than the flat characters in *Bridget Jones's Diary*. I will first discuss the characters from *Pride and Prejudice* and then those of *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Also, I will show the function of the flat characters in both novels.

Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* provides interesting examples of round and flat characters. Elizabeth Bennet is the protagonist of *Pride and Prejudice* and a round character because she is three-dimensional and she undergoes a great personal change.

Elizabeth is the second daughter of the Bennet family and the favourite of her father, who says all his daughters are "silly and ignorant" but Elizabeth has "something more of quickness than her sisters" (Austen, 6). Elizabeth has many good qualities; she is clever, lovely, honest, witty and she can converse very well. Elizabeth shows the reader a nineteenth-century girl with a good character and the reader sympathises with her. The story is told through her eyes and therefore, the reader understands her in great detail. Jane Austen makes Elizabeth very relatable but she also shows Elizabeth's negative characteristics. Elizabeth often speaks her mind, which, together with her sharp tongue and her tendency to make quick judgements, sometimes brings her trouble. The positive as well as the negative characteristics make Elizabeth a round and a three-dimensional character.

A second reason why Elizabeth is a round character, is her great personal change. She must overcome her faulty impressions of Mr. Darcy. When she first meets him at a ball, she finds him arrogant and proud. William Lucas, a friend of the Bennet family, tries to get acquainted with him, but Darcy is quiet and clearly does not want to talk. Mr. Lucas tries to get Mr. Darcy to dance with Elizabeth, but she, who already made her mind up when she overheard his impoliteness, refuses by saying: " 'Indeed, sir, I have not the last intention of dancing, I entreat you not to suppose that I moved this way in order to beg for a partner' " (23). Later in the novel, Elizabeth is introduced to George Wickham, a militia officer. Initially, Wickham's handsome looks and his charm attract Elizabeth. He tells her that he was to inherit a lot of money and that Mr. Darcy made that impossible for him. Elizabeth, blind-sighted by prejudice, is only more convinced of Darcy's awful character. When she finds out that he also caused Bingley to leave and Jane is left heart-broken, she is determined to hate

him. Out of the blue, he proposes to her, but she passionately turns him down. Darcy, on the other hand, still finds her charming and he falls in love with her. Gradually Elizabeth comes to recognize what Darcy's true character is. She realizes that she was prejudiced and he wins her heart. As a result of her experiences, Elizabeth undergoes an important and quite radical change. When she first meets Darcy, she already dislikes him and because of her prejudice she only believes the negative things she hears about him. In the course of the novel, the dislike turns into hate and then finally into love. Elizabeth learns that making hasty judgements is wrong. The personal change of her character and the three-dimensionality make her a round character.

Another round, or dynamic, character that experiences a great personal change in *Pride and Prejudice* is Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy. Darcy is the son of a wealthy family and he has his own estate, Pemberley. He is the male counterpart of Elizabeth. The reader relates more to Elizabeth than to Darcy, mainly because the events are seen through Elizabeth's eyes but also because he is much less sympathetic in the beginning. He is haughty, snobbish and arrogant. The Bennet family are not from the same class as he is and therefore he is prejudiced against them. When they first meet at the ball, he already manages to offend Elizabeth. In retrospect, however, it may well be his silent nature that results in his arrogant posture. Although Miss Bingley and Miss Hurst, and later on Lady Catherine de Bourgh, see the class difference between them as impossible to overcome, Elizabeth actually captures his interest almost immediately. When he proposes to her, he is completely astonished by her refusal. His upper-class status and upbringing has turned him overly proud. When he proposes, Darcy says:

‘In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you’. (147)

He emphasises that she comes from a poorer family and a lower social status instead of his love for her. However, her rejection changes him, it makes him more humble. He realises he

must change his attitude and he realises that Elizabeth has been falsely informed about Wickham. In his letter he reveals the truth and also explains that he thought Jane was in fact not in love with Bingley and therefore he tried to take Bingley away from her. Furthermore, in spite of his fear for her lack of social status, he saves the Bennet family from disgrace when he forces Wickham to marry Lydia. He also continues to pursue Elizabeth while Lady Catherine de Bourgh, his aunt, disapproves. By doing this, Darcy shows that social status is not as important to him anymore. He loves Elizabeth so much that he wants to marry her nonetheless. The conflict with her has changed him. When he proposes to her she says: “ ‘You are mistaken, Mr Darcy, if you suppose that the mode of your declaration affected me in any other way, than as it spared me the concern which I might have felt in refusing you, had you behaved in a more gentlemanlike manner’ ” (150). Darcy realises that, although he finds himself to be a perfect gentleman, he is not one at all. Because of this great personal change, Mr. Darcy, too, is a round character.

A character that does not change at all in *Pride and Prejudice* is Mrs. Bennet. She is a flat character. In the first chapter of the novel, Mrs. Bennet is summarized by Austen as such: “She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news” (7). In the final chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*, it says:

Happy for all her maternal feelings was the day on which Mrs. Bennet got rid of her two most deserving daughters. With what delighted pride she afterwards visited Mrs. Bingley and talked of Mrs. Darcy may be guessed. I wish I could say, for the sake of her family, that the accomplishment of her earnest desire in the establishment of so many of her children, produced so happy an effect as to make her a sensible, amiable woman for the rest of her life; though perhaps it was lucky for her husband, who might

not have relished domestic felicity in so unusual a form, that she still was occasionally nervous and invariably silly. (297)

It becomes clear that she has not changed at all in comparison with the beginning of the novel. She has always been and she will always be a tiresome, noisy and foolish character whose only wish is to see her daughters marry a rich man. Unfortunately, because she so desperately tries to attract the upper-class people such as Mr. Darcy and Mr. and Miss Bingley because she wants them to pay attention to her daughters she only puts them off because of her lack of social manners. In the quotations above, Jane Austen uses the technique of “telling” to explain a character to the reader. These are rare examples, because Austen usually presents Mrs. Bennet to the reader by reporting her direct speech in dialogue. She forces the reader to draw their own conclusions about her morals and actions.

Austen uses Mrs. Bennet’s desperation to illustrate the necessity of marriage for young women in the nineteenth century. This is Mrs. Bennet’s function as a flat character. Mrs. Bennet’s second-eldest daughter Elizabeth, a woman in her twenties, is already considered ‘old’ when it comes to marriage. Austen shows us that in order to climb on the social ladder and financially secure herself, the best chance, or maybe the only chance, for a woman was to marry a wealthy man. Mrs. Bennet also serves as a middle-class counterpoint to upper-class women such as Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Mr. Bingley’s sister Miss Bingley. Together, they demonstrate that “foolishness can be found at every level of society” (The Learning Space). Mrs Bennet may be a flat character, but she is a very important character. She may only have one function in *Pride and Prejudice*, but her function is to show the reader the difficult position of women in nineteenth-century society.

Jane Bennet and Charles Bingley are also flat characters in *Pride and Prejudice* because of their lack of change. Jane is Elizabeth’s beautiful elder, and favourite, sister. Mr. Bingley is Mr. Darcy’s wealthy best friend. Jane and Bingley fall in love during the novel and



their love is an important part of the narrative. When they first meet at a ball in Meryton, they are immediately interested in each other. The other characters speak of them as a potential couple long before they see the connection between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. Although the love-affair between Jane and Mr. Bingley is quite central to the story, they are flat characters. They are not as carefully described by Jane Austen as Elizabeth or Darcy are. In fact, Jane and Bingley are very similar in character. They can both be described as friendly, cheerful, good-natured and quite timid. They also think the best of others. Therefore, Jane and Bingley both do not notice, and Elizabeth and Darcy do, the dubious comments made about Jane by Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst. Mr. Bingley and Jane, and their romance, is the counterpart of the characters of Darcy and Elizabeth. While Darcy is proud and arrogant, Bingley is ever friendly, even to the socially handicapped Mrs. Bennet. And whereas Jane is gentle and quiet, Elizabeth is passionate. The function of Jane and Mr. Bingley as flat characters is to show the reader true love without any difficulties from within. The difficulties that they do experience are from the disapproving people around them. Although they might object to Jane and Bingley's relationship, there is not pride or prejudice in their love-affair, in contrast with the tumultuous relationship between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. However, Jane and Bingley also show that such a quiet and good relationship without any fire can be quite dull.

Another example of a flat character in *Pride and Prejudice* who does not change is Mr. Collins. Mr. Collins is a distant cousin and, because Mr. Bennet has no son, heir of the estate of Longbourn. Mr. Collins is a pompous, rude and inappropriate man who generally speaks in clichés. He irritates almost everyone by repeating the name of his patron in every sentence, the wealthy Lady Catherine de Bourgh, whom he adores. When he comes to visit Longbourn, he makes it clear that he has other motives besides becoming well acquainted with his distant family: he wants to marry one of the Bennet sisters. This would ensure that at least one daughter of the family could remain at Longbourn comfortably when Mr. Bennet

dies. In his letter, he does not ask to stay but expects he is welcome. This is typical for Mr. Collins, he expects everyone to adore him, and Lady Catherine as well, and most of the time he succeeds in offending every person he is speaking with or about. When he is informed that Jane is spoken for, he seeks out Elizabeth as his new wife. When she declines his offer in marriage he cannot understand it. Because he has more money than she has, he cannot see any reason why she would refuse him and therefore he chooses to simply not believe her refusal. And towards the end of the novel, when Lydia, the second youngest Bennet sister, elopes with Mr. Wickham, Mr. Bennet receives a letter from Mr. Collins in which he writes:

The death of your daughter would have been a blessing in comparison of this. And it is the more to be lamented, because there is reason to suppose, as my dear Charlotte informs me, that this licentiousness of behaviour in your daughter has proceeded from a faulty degree of indulgence; though, at the same time, for the consolation of yourself and Mrs. Bennet, I am inclined to think that her own disposition must be naturally bad, or she could not be guilty of such an enormity, at so early an age. (Austen, 227)

In two sentences, he manages to insult Lydia, accuse Mr. and Mrs. Bennet of being indulgent and telling on his wife Charlotte for revealing intimate details about the Bennet family. His behaviour is also an example of social prejudice in terms of rank, as he combines his utter pompous behaviour to the Bennet family with slavish civility to the more upper class Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

Although Mr. Collins does not change at all throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, his role, and his marriage to Charlotte, is vital in the story of Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. Elizabeth is surprised and worried when her best friend, Charlotte, marries Mr. Collins instead. However, Charlotte explains to her that she needs to be settled and that, being twenty-seven years old, she has to avoid the low status of an old maid. Mr. Collins's function is to show what it means to marry without love, but only for money. Charlotte is more worried about her status as an

old spinster and her income, than the existence, or inexistence in this case, of love. This was not at all uncommon in the nineteenth century; there was much pressure on young women to marry for money. Although Elizabeth is quite surprised, she does accept Charlotte's explanation and they still remain good friends. However, it shows Elizabeth what she does not want. She turns down Mr. Collins because she does not love him, which is welcomed by her father and very much frowned upon by her mother. By showing the different reactions of Elizabeth, Charlotte and also Elizabeth's parents to the marriage proposal of a man with a bad character but a good social position and enough money, Austen again shows the reader nineteenth century society. It also shows how headstrong Elizabeth is. Most women, if they refused at all, would have been humble and quiet in their refusal. Elizabeth is powerful, direct, loud and clear. She will not marry him and that is the end of it. Also, his character and the fact that he does not change, whatever is said or done by the other characters, adds a comical note to the story.

Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* has inspired Helen Fielding's novel *Bridget Jones's Diary*. There are some clear resemblances between Elizabeth Bennet and Bridget Jones, though there are also differences. First, I will give a plot summary of *Bridget Jones's Diary*. I will also explain how *Bridget Jones's Diary* echoes *Pride and Prejudice*.

Being a single woman in her thirties, Bridget worries she might die alone and get eaten by dogs and is in desperate want of a boyfriend. Bridget is not only obsessed about her love life, but also struggles with her weight, she wants to quit drinking and smoking and worries about her career. At the beginning of the novel she works in the publishing industry, but when her boss, and love interest, Daniel Cleaver, the equivalent of *Pride and Prejudices's* Mr. Wickham, cheats on her she quits and starts working as a journalist for a television station.

Bridget's mother's main goal in life, just as Elizabeth's mother in *Pride and Prejudice*, is to get Bridget to marry a rich man. Her favourite candidate for that task is Mark

Darcy, the son of her friends. Bridget's mother Pam describes him as “‘one of those top-notch barristers. Masses of money. Divorced’ ” (Fielding, 9). Bridget often visits her parents and their friends, especially Una and Geoffrey Alconbury, and is expected to turn up at middle class society activities as Turkey Curry Buffets and “Tarts and Vicars” dress-up parties.

Bridget and her friends Sharon, Jude and Tom are often plagued with questions about their, mostly non-existing, love-life. In Bridget's mind, the world is divided into ‘Singletons’, which she is too, and ‘Smug Marrieds’, by whom she is surrounded. The latter group continues to harass her with questions about her love life, especially on parties. Bridget's annoyance about this is clear when she thinks:

Oh *God*. Why can't married people understand that this is no longer a polite question to ask? We wouldn't rush up to *them* and roar, ‘How's your marriage going? Still having sex?’ Everyone knows that dating in your thirties is not the happy-go-lucky free-for-all it was when you were twenty-two and that the honest answer is more likely to be, ‘Actually, last night my married lover appeared wearing suspenders and a darling little Angora crop-top, told me he was gay/a sex addict/a narcotic addict/a commitment phobic and beat me up with a dildo,’ than, ‘Super, thanks.’ (11)

Fielding's novel describes Bridget's life during the course of a year, in which she finds two love interests. The first is Daniel Cleaver, her charming and handsome boss. In the beginning of the novel, Daniel flirts with Bridget by commenting on the length of her skirt and they e-mail back and forth during their workdays. When he asks her out on a date, Bridget is exhilarated. After a few dates, however, she realises that he may not be the right boyfriend for her after all. He seems busier with his work schedule and he does not want to fully commit to her. Eventually, Bridget discovers that he is cheating on her with a much younger, skinny model. Their relationship is passionate and exciting, but Daniel does not fulfil Bridget's idea of Mr. Right.

Bridget's second love interest is Mark Darcy. When she first meets him at a New Year's party, her mother introduces them by saying that they played in the paddling pool together when they were little. Mark is quiet and not at all interested in Bridget. Similarly to Fitzwilliam Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* --they even share the same surname-- Mark Darcy is rich, handsome and arrogant, or at least Bridget presumes that he is. He is wearing a V-neck with a blue and yellow diamond-patterned sweater, which Bridget finds horrible. She instantly dislikes him, yet she is offended by him when he does not even want to take her phone number when Pam, crazed with frustration, offers it to him. When Bridget is dating Daniel Cleaver, she discovers that he and Mark know each other and Daniel claims that Mark has slept with his fiancée. In the end, Bridget discovers that this is not the truth; in fact, Daniel slept with Mark's wife and that is the reason why he is divorced. Daniel Cleaver is the Mr. Wickham of *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Similarly to Wickham, he lies to Bridget and, just as Elizabeth is eager to believe Wickham, Bridget is eager to believe Daniel.

Mark Darcy also helps Bridget and her family by saving Pam from jail. The marriage between Bridget's parents is not going well. Her mother is going through a midlife crisis. She is restless, desperate for attention from other men and trying to find herself. She starts a new career by hosting a talk show on television. In addition to the shame Bridget feels with her mother being a better career woman than she is herself, she also has to listen to the depressed phone calls from her father, Colin. Pam does not give him any attention whatsoever and although she does not seem to want a divorce right away, Colin is very worried. The troubles in their marriage are worsened by the introduction of Julio, whom Bridget's mother has met on a holiday with a female friend. Although it is not clear that she is actually having an affair, Pam does take a close interest in Julio. Eventually, when Julio has taken her with him to Portugal, it turns out that he is a fraud. He has used her as a pawn to steal money from her and her friends.

The character of Bridget's mother now shows not only similarities to *Pride and Prejudice's* Mrs. Bennet, but also to Lydia Bennet. Mark follows Julio and Bridget's mother to Portugal and when they are back in Britain, he makes sure Julio is arrested. Finally, Pam realises what Julio has tried to do to her and although she tries to hide it, she is evidently glad to be home with Colin again. This is similar to *Pride and Prejudice's* Mr. Darcy using his influence to force Wickham to marry Lydia, in order to save the Bennet family from shame. Although it is not an elopement, Pam does run away with Julio, leaving her family in much distress. Mark travels to Portugal and uses his influences as a lawyer to have Julio arrested and save Pam from going to jail herself. By doing this, Bridget realises that he really cares about her and her family, just as Elizabeth realises that her Mr. Darcy actually cares about her and the Bennet family.

In this novel, it is more difficult to determine which people are round characters. Bridget is a round character because she experiences a personal change, or a personal realisation, rather. Bridget's problem is that she wants a proper boyfriend in a society where, being a single woman in her thirties, people do not always accept her. At the end of the novel, Bridget does begin a relationship with Mark Darcy and he does not care how much she weighs or that she smokes, drinks or makes strange comments on parties. The character of Bridget Jones may be very relatable for many women nowadays. She is the modern Millennium woman. She struggles with her weight, pretends not to smoke or drink but cannot stop, she wants a career and the perfect boyfriend. Bridget thinks that when she is living a healthy life and loses weight she will get a boyfriend. In the end, she realises that Mark does not want her to be different, he wants her to be herself and he loves her just the way she is. Bridget's change is, ironically, her realisation that change is unnecessary. As a result, however, she does not go through a great personal change, but a personal realisation. The main characteristic of a round character is that the character goes through a great personal

change. Bridget's realisation is not a great change and as a result the change is less strong. Therefore, it is more difficult to say whether Bridget is truly a round character. In addition, Bridget is not as three-dimensional as Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*. Bridget can be described in one sentence. She is a simplified version of Elizabeth Bennet. She is not afraid to speak her mind, just as Elizabeth is, but there is only one side of Bridget. Although she is rather funny, Bridget does not surprise the reader. She is, in fact, a round character because of her personal change, or personal realisation, but the change is less strong and she is not as three-dimensional as Elizabeth Bennet's.

Bridget's mother is a flat character in *Bridget Jones's Diary* because she does not change throughout the novel at all. However, her function is that she brings Bridget and Mark together. Bridget's mother never shows her emotions, is only interested in her own happiness, and finding her only daughter a rich husband, and she is very shallow. Money and looks are everything to her. In the beginning of *Bridget Jones's Diary* she is happily living together with Bridget's father, a calm and very down-to-earth man. However, she goes through some sort of midlife crisis and spontaneously goes on a holiday with a female friend of hers. There, she meets Julio and she asks Bridget's father to leave the house. He is devastated but Bridget's mother does not care. She always denies, however, that Julio is a boyfriend and says he is just a friend. In the end of the novel, Julio takes her with him to Portugal and then Bridget hears that they are wanted by the police for fraud. Bridget and her father are scared that Bridget's mother will never return but Mark Darcy goes to Portugal and with his help the police can arrest Julio. By running away with Julio, Pam shows that she is foolish and she refuses to admit any mistakes or moral responsibility.

In the last chapter, it says that Bridget  
 watched her as she collected herself and looked round the room, appraising the  
 situation. 'Well, thank goodness I managed to calm Julio down,' she said gaily after a

pause. 'What a to do! Are you all right, Daddy?' 'Your top – Mummy – is inside out,' said Dad. I stared at the hideous scene, feeling as though my whole world was collapsing around my ears. Then I felt a strong hand on my arm. 'Come on,' said Mark Darcy. 'What?' I said. 'Don't say "what", Bridget, say "pardon",' hissed Mum. 'Mrs Jones,' said Mark firmly. 'I am taking Bridget away to celebrate what is left of Baby Jesus's birthday.' I took a big breath and grasped Mark Darcy's proffered hand. 'Merry Christmas, everyone,' I said with a gracious smile. 'I expect we'll see you all at the Turkey Curry Buffet.' (304-305)

It shows that Bridget's mother has not changed at all. She is still the woman who pretends she has no emotions and she is only interested in good manners and the good impressions she has to make on people. She acts as if nothing has happened, although she probably did cheat on her husband and her lover has just been arrested for fraud. The fact that, in the heat of the moment, she still manages to remind Bridget that she should say "pardon" in stead of "what" also implies that her character has not changed at all. However, she is, in fact, partly responsible for bringing Mark and Bridget together. If she had not fled to Portugal with Julio, Bridget would not have understood that Mark was truly in love with her and that he would do everything in order to protect her and her family from shame. If he had not stepped in, Bridget's mother would have been arrested for fraud, too.

Bridget's mother does have a function, therefore, and that is to bring Bridget and Mark together, in an unconventional, ridiculous manner that is. On the last page of the book, Bridget realizes that the secret of happiness is: "Don't say 'what', say 'pardon', darling and do as your mother tells you" (307).

Mark Darcy is also a flat character in *Bridget Jones's Diary* because of his lack of personal change. Other than Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, Mark Darcy is not particularly arrogant or proud, he only seems to dislike Bridget at first because he does not want to be



forced to ask her out. His parents talk about Bridget as much as Bridget's mother is talking about Mark. When he asks Bridget out on the date for the first time, he says:

I thought if my mother said the words 'Bridget Jones' just once more I would go to the *Sunday People* and accuse her of abusing me as a child with a bicycle pump. Then when I met you... and I was wearing that ridiculous diamond-patterned jumper that Una had bought me for Christmas... Bridget, all the other girls I know are so lacquered over. I don't know anyone else who would fasten a bunny tail to their pants ...'(236-237)

Furthermore, he thinks Bridget does not like him. In the last chapter, Bridget asks him about this and Mark answers:

[...] I didn't think you liked me much.' 'What?' 'Well, you know. You stood me up because you were drying your *hair*? And the first time I met you I was wearing that stupid jumper and bumblebee socks from my aunt and behaved like a complete clod. I thought you thought I was the most frightful stiff.' 'Well, I did, a bit.' I said. 'But...' 'But what...?' 'Don't you mean but pardon?' Then he took the champagne glass out of my hand, kissed me, and said, 'Right, Bridget Jones, I'm going to give you pardon for,' picked me up in his arms, carried me off into the bedroom (which had a fourposter bed!) and did all manner of things which mean whenever I see a diamond-patterned V-neck sweater in future, I am going to spontaneously combust with shame. (306-307)

Mark thought that after his behaviour she would not like him anymore. However, later on in the novel he does two things to show his love for her. When Bridget works at her new job as a television reporter, her boss orders her to get an interview with Elena Rossini, a woman who is accused of murdering her employer after he supposedly raped her. Mark arranges for her to be the only reporter who is allowed to interview Mrs. Rossini. Furthermore, he helps to find

Bridget's mother in Portugal and makes sure that she is not arrested for fraud. Mark is a different character in the beginning than he is in the end, but he does not go through a great personal change. He is only shy in the beginning and hesitant of asking out a girl whom his parents cannot stop talking about. Bridget does not see his actual personality because he does not show it to her, but he falls in love with her rather quickly. She just does not notice him and his actions because she is in love with someone else. Mark's function as a flat character is to show Bridget that there are men who love her just the way she is and that she does not have to change.

Bridget's closest friends are also flat characters. Sharon, or Shazzer, a feminist, Jude, a successful business woman and Tom, a gay man, represent modern society. Bridget's friends are there for her unconditionally. They give her advice about men and relationships and support her throughout the novel. Shazzer, Jude and Tom are always visible in the background but no more than that. Sharon keeps cheering Bridget up by saying that single people have much more fun than married people or "Smug Marrieds". Jude is dating a man named Jerome whom she hates one day and wants to marry on the next. Tom leaves Bridget, Jude and Sharon worried when he does not answer his phone anymore. Later it turns out he had a nose job and was afraid to show other people his bruises. They are Bridget's support group. Towards the end of April, Bridget finally reaches her goal weight. When she goes to a party, people ask whether she is ill or whether she has stopped smoking because she does not look good. Tom telephones her afterwards only to say that he is concerned about her and that she looked better before she lost the weight. Also, when Bridget thinks she might be pregnant and a blue line appears on her pregnancy test, Sharon is the one to tell her:

'Is this it?'[...] 'You,' she said, 'are a ridiculous human being. Didn't you read the instructions? There are supposed to be two lines. This line is just to show the test is working. One line means you're *not* pregnant – you ninny.' (120-121)

Her friends help her stay positive and healthy and they are very honest. However, they do not change throughout the novel. They are there as supporting characters, and no more. The function of Tom, Sharon and Jude is to represent different kinds of singles from modern society.

When looking at the exact figures of round and flat characters in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Bridget Jones's Diary*, there is not a great difference. In *Pride and Prejudice*, there are two round characters, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy, and in *Bridget Jones's Diary* Bridget is a round character. There is only one more round character in *Pride and Prejudice*. However, I do think that Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy are more round than Bridget. Bridget goes through a personal change, too, which makes her a round character but Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are more complex and more three-dimensional. Bridget is a simplified version of Elizabeth Bennet. They share the problem of being alone in a society where people would be glad to see them married. However, Elizabeth also faces class-differences. Bridget's problems are more trivial. She and Mark are from the same class and he, in fact, likes her very much but he just does not want to go out with her because his mother forces him to. Bridget's problem is that she feels that in modern society one is supposed to look skinny and have a boyfriend. Her problems are trivial and superficial. The novel focuses more on appearance and beauty issues than personal growth. Elizabeth's problems are to do with social conventions that cannot be changed easily. Furthermore, the functions of the flat characters are more important in *Pride and Prejudice*. They have a function and that is to show the reader nineteenth century society in different ways. Although they are flat, they are described by Jane Austen in more detail. In *Bridget Jones's Diary*, the flat characters are of less importance. Jude, Sharon and Tom represent modern society but their characters are described in much less detail. The flat characters in *Bridget Jones's Diary* can be described in a few words, whereas the flat characters in *Pride and Prejudice* serve a greater purpose.

## Chapter Two: Morality

In order to become known as literature, a written work must be three-dimensional instead of one-dimensional. To accomplish this three-dimensionality, the author must incorporate several layers in the novel to give the story depth. In the previous chapter I have discussed the roundness of the characters in high literature. Usually, the work as a whole also has more dimensions in its moral vision. Moral seriousness is something that can give a story more depth. Morality, according to the *Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's English Dictionary*, is “the belief that some behaviour is right and acceptable and that other behaviour is wrong” (*Collins Cobuild*, 928). It can also be “a system of principles and values concerning people's behaviour, which is generally accepted by a particular group of people” and “the moral of a story or event is what you learn from it about how you should or should not behave” (928). Insignificant or essential, every story contains one or multiple morals. In *Pride and Prejudice*, as in every Jane Austen book, morality is an important factor. However, Austen's moral views are implicit and complex. It is a moralistic view on society that is subtle, hidden beneath the surface of the plot and the morals are conveyed by irony. Through the irony in her novels, Austen's moral vision gradually emerges. Although Austen is more comical in her moral vision than she is cynical, she is by no means not serious. She acknowledges the faults of people and society itself. However, ironically, the worst character in the story, Wickham, is indirectly responsible for the love between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth. Austen uses irony to make the main characters in her story see their own faults and to be able to learn from the faults that other characters make and how their faults affect others around them.

Furthermore, Jane Austen is known for writing novels of manners. A novel of manners, according to M.H. Abrams' *A Glossary of Literary Terms* is “a realistic novel that focuses on the customs, conversation, and ways of thinking and valuing of the upper social

class” (Abrams, 200). The morality she uses contributes to the so-called novel of manners as she describes the way one is supposed to behave in the nineteenth century society with its different classes and customs. Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary* also contains a moralistic view of life, but its morals are much more straightforward and explicit. In this chapter, I will illustrate the depth in the two novels by giving examples concerning morality.

An important subject that Austen uses in her novel to illustrate morality is marriage. *Pride and Prejudice* is very much a story about the differences between lower and upper classes in the early nineteenth century. The very first sentence of the novel reads: “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife”. This can also be read ironically as a single woman must be in want of a man of a good fortune. In *Pride and Prejudice*, she tries to define which reasons for marriage are good and which are bad. The marriages of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth’s older sister Jane and Darcy’s friend Mr. Bingley are causing trouble in the different classes they come from. Their love, but also on the other hand the marriage between Lydia and Wickham and between Mr. Collins and Charlotte are used to incorporate different moral visions. However, Jane Austen uses moral seriousness in *Pride and Prejudice* in a very subtle way instead of making it quite explicit.

One kind of marriage is a marriage out of pure love, as Jane Bennet and Mr. Bingley demonstrate. The novel starts when Bingley first arrives and Mrs. Bennet’s immediately focuses on him marrying one of her daughters. In the first chapter this becomes apparent when Mr. and Mrs. Bennet exchange thoughts about the newcomer:

‘What is his name?’

‘Bingley.’

‘Is he married or single?’

‘Oh! single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!’

‘How so? how can it affect them?’

‘My dear Mr Bennet,’ replied his wife, ‘how can you be so tiresome! you must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them.’

‘Is that his design in settling here?’

‘Design! nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he *may* fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes.’ (Austen, 5)

All Mrs. Bennet can talk about is a marriage for one of her daughters to a wealthy man. Bingley seems the perfect candidate for her eldest daughter Jane, but the Bennets are not very wealthy and Bingley is. This does not seem to affect Mrs. Bennet much but it worries Mr. Bennet and it especially worries Mr. Bingley’s sister and Mr. Darcy. They do seem to like Jane for her personality but they are distraught when they discover that Bingley actually intends to marry her. Jane and Bingley want to marry each other out of pure love. It does not matter to Bingley that Jane is not from an upper-class family. However, when Mr. Darcy finds that Bingley is thinking about marrying the oldest Bennet sister, he takes him away from her. Elizabeth is furious, thinking that he does not want his best friend to marry a girl from a socially unacceptable background. Further along in the novel, Elizabeth discovers that Darcy, although he initially had doubts about the family’s social position, did know that Bingley truly loved her sister. Darcy writes to her:

I had not long been in Hertfordshire, before I saw, in common with others, that Bingley preferred your elder sister to any other young woman in the country. But it was not till the evening of the dance at Netherfield that I had any apprehension of his feeling a serious attachment. I had often seen him in love before. [...] From that moment I observed my friend’s behaviour attentively; and I could then perceive that

his partiality for Miss Bennet was beyond what I had ever witnessed in him. Your sister I also watched. Her look and manners were open, cheerful, and engaging as ever, but without any symptom of peculiar regard, and I remained convinced from the evening's scrutiny, that though she received his attentions with pleasure, she did not invite them by any participation of sentiment. (154)

Darcy admits that he honestly thought that Jane did not return Bingley's love. He thinks that Jane likes Bingley only for his money and therefore he took Bingley away from her and told him of his doubts. Bingley instantly believed him. Through this letter to Elizabeth, in which Darcy also elaborates on the true reasons for the feud between him and Mr. Wickham, he actually gains her trust. In the end, Darcy informs Bingley that he has been wrong about Jane's feelings and Bingley and Jane are married. Although their backgrounds are different and they do not always understand each other properly, Jane and Bingley are able to get married. Austen uses their story to illustrate that true love conquers all differences in class and behaviour. This moral may be the most explicit one in *Pride and Prejudice*.

The marriage of Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins is an example of a different kind of marriage, namely a marriage purely for financial reasons. Charlotte marries Mr. Collins after Elizabeth has refused his proposal. Mr. Collins, with his pompous, snobbish and extremely self-centred behaviour, does not have the most charming character a man could have.

Charlotte, however, accepts his proposal of marriage.

The stupidity with which he was favoured by nature must guard his courtship from any charm that could make a woman wish for its continuance; and Miss Lucas, who accepted him solely from the pure and disinterested desire of an establishment, cared not how soon that establishment were gained. [...] The whole family, in short, were properly overjoyed on the occasion. The younger girls formed hopes of *coming out* a

year or two sooner than they might otherwise have done; and the boys were relieved from their apprehension of Charlotte's dying an old maid. (98)

Charlotte's marriage to Mr. Collins is a great relief to her family and she herself does not mind either.

Her reflections were in general satisfactory. Mr. Collins, to be sure, was neither sensible nor agreeable; his society was irksome, and his attachment to her must be imaginary. But still he would be her husband. Without thinking highly either of men or of matrimony, marriage had always been her object; it was the only honourable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want. This preservative she had now obtained; and at the age of twenty-seven, without having ever been handsome, she felt all the good luck of it. (99)

It had, in the meantime, occurred to Elizabeth that Mr. Collins might be interested in Charlotte but she had never thought that Charlotte would accept a marriage proposal from him. When she shares this with her friend, Charlotte reacts surprised to Elizabeth's astonishment. She says:

'Why should you be surprised, my dear Eliza? – Do you think it incredible that Mr. Collins should be able to procure any woman's good opinion, because he was not so happy as to succeed with you?' [...] 'I am not romantic, you know; I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collin's character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage state.' (100)

Elizabeth wishes her all the luck and happiness in the world but secretly she cannot believe that Charlotte is actually marrying such a man.



However, Charlotte's actions are not very strange for women in the nineteenth century. Her fear of becoming an 'old maid' is realistic as she is already twenty-seven, which was considered old to be unmarried, not very pretty and not from a wealthy family. Marriage is her only chance of having financial security for herself as well as her family. This may be complicating the morality of what is a good reason to marry someone. At first, Elizabeth cannot understand Charlotte, but as she explains her reasoning, Elizabeth sees that Charlotte's reason for marrying is quite logical. She still regards Charlotte as a close friend and a good person. This shows that it is not easy to determine what is a good reason to marry someone. Austen weighs several different forms of marriage to illustrate the morality of them, but she is quite mild about Charlotte's choice. Morality may not be so absolute and, also, it is about the degree of morality one can afford. In her book *The Language of Jane Austen*, Myra Stokes says that:

It is difficult to know how unreservedly the novel supports Elizabeth's verdict. She, after all, can afford to be high-minded: she is young and pretty, and can be fairly sure, despite her want of fortune, of securing a partner not too offensive to her tastes.

Charlotte is plain, poor and, at 27, an old maid. (140)

Stokes argues that it really is about how much morality one can afford to have. Charlotte does not have a choice, she cannot afford to turn down Mr. Collins' proposal. As Stokes says: "Mr. Collins represents her only alternative to a dull and mortifying dependency in the parental home" (141). What may not work for Austen's heroine Elizabeth, may work, or be in fact the only choice, for somebody else. Austen shows that there are many nuances in morality.

Elizabeth's marriage to Darcy demonstrates a third option for marriage, namely that, although they disliked each other at first, love can grow when people educate each other and, as a result, there is equality. Elizabeth and Darcy overcome their prejudice against each other. As a result, they change and it is only then that they can fall in love. In the end of *Pride and*

*Prejudice*, Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth are married. However, this is quite ironic because when Elizabeth first meets Darcy at the ball at Netherfield, he refuses to dance with her. He tells Bingley that “she is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt *me*” (Austen, 11). He finds her, yet, not handsome enough to dance with but in the end he does marry her. Darcy also fails tremendously when he asks Elizabeth to marry him for the first time in a despicable manner. He tells her:

‘In vain I have struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you.’ Elizabeth’s astonishment was beyond expression. She stared, coloured, doubted, and was silent. This he considered sufficient encouragement; and the avowal of all that he felt, and had long felt for her, immediately followed. He spoke well; but there were feelings besides those of the heart to be detailed, and he was not more eloquent on the subject of tenderness than of pride. His sense of her inferiority – of its being a degradation – of the family obstacles which judgment had always opposed to inclination, were dwelt on with a warmth which seemed due to the consequence he was wounding, but was very unlikely to recommend his suit. (147-148)

Elizabeth refuses his proposal of marriage, which infuriates Darcy. However, Elizabeth will not marry someone she despises just because he would make a socially acceptable and rich husband for her. Elizabeth is Austen’s example of why one should not marry someone they do not love.

Earlier on in the novel, Elizabeth has already declined a proposal from Mr. Collins. She says to him:

‘Upon my word, sir,’ cried Elizabeth, ‘your hope is rather an extraordinary one after my declaration. I do assure you that I am not one of those young ladies (if such young ladies there are) who are so darling as to risk their happiness on the chance of being

asked a second time. I am perfectly serious in my refusal. You could not make *me* happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who would make *you* so.’ (86-87)

Mr. Collins, at first sight a respectable clergyman and Mr. Darcy, very wealthy and handsome would both make suitable husbands where money, shelter and an agreeable social position are concerned. But Elizabeth does not accept them, which was extraordinary for a woman in the nineteenth century. It is highly probable that Charlotte, for example, would have accepted Mr. Darcy’s proposal. It would be very good for Elizabeth’s social position and the new fortune would have been beneficial to the Bennet family as Charlotte is for hers. Through Elizabeth’s eyes, she cannot do anything else than refuse him. He has always been proud and arrogant towards her, and has only spoken to her when absolutely necessary. He offended her when he refused to dance at Netherfield and Elizabeth eagerly believed Wickham’s false allegations about Darcy in the past. To her, in her prejudiced ideas at that time, he is the opposite of a compatible husband, although he is very wealthy. Austen also implies that the fact that someone is from a higher class does not make them more agreeable, as Lady Catherine de Bourgh so very well illustrates, too. Elizabeth, however, is not ignorant of her social position. She knows the financial status of her family and that she is not as pretty as Jane. But her stubborn and idealistic nature make it impossible to her to marry anyone she does not love.

Ironically, this, and her wit and intelligence, is the quality in her that Darcy finds very attractive. In contrast with his earlier words about her, Darcy “could contain himself no longer” and says “for it is many months since I have considered her as one of the handsomest women of my acquaintance” (208). At the end of the novel, Elizabeth marries Darcy after all, after he has proven to her that Wickham’s allegations are false and that Darcy’s intentions to help the Bennet family are honest and good. Furthermore, he admits that he was wrong about the love between Jane and Bingley. When Darcy forces Wickham to marry Elizabeth’s sister

Lydia he saves the family's good name and Elizabeth realises that she was prejudiced and that she was too quick to believe Wickham's opinion on Darcy. In chapter fifty, Elizabeth, not aware that Darcy will propose to her again, even begins

to comprehend that he was exactly the man who, in disposition and talents, would most suit her. His understanding and temper, though unlike her own, would have answered all her wishes. It was a union that must have been to the advantage of both: by her ease and liveliness, his mind might have been softened, his manners improved; and from his judgement, information, and knowledge of the world, she must have received benefit of greater importance. (239)

Not just Darcy, but also Elizabeth becomes aware of her own faults. Even the hero and heroine in Jane Austen's novel are not flawless. But they are now a compatible couple because they have become more acquainted with each other and, most importantly, they have educated each other. Darcy has learned to be less arrogant and proud and Elizabeth has lost her prejudice against him. Now they can marry each other for love and not, at least not in the first place, for money.

In addition, Jane Austen makes use of irony to illustrate morality. Ironically Wickham, the most villainous character in the novel, is responsible for the love between Elizabeth and Darcy. This is some sort of irony of fate. When Wickham takes Lydia with him, Darcy writes a letter to Elizabeth, revealing the truth about Wickham's past. As a result, Elizabeth understands the mistake she has made and it draws her closer to Darcy. It was necessary for both Elizabeth and Darcy to recognise their mistakes. Because they have taught each other something, their relationship has grown closer. Only then are they ready to commit to each other.

As a further example of irony, Lady Catherine de Bourgh is also in part responsible for the happy ending in *Pride and Prejudice*. When she comes to Longbourn to tell Elizabeth that

it is impossible that Elizabeth will marry Mr. Darcy, she actually gives Elizabeth hope. Elizabeth asks her why, if Lady Catherine found it so impossible that Darcy would want to marry her, she has taken the trouble of travelling so far. Lady Catherine answers that she wants the rumours to be contradicted. Elizabeth answers: “ ‘Your coming to Longbourn, to see my and my family [...] will rather be a confirmation of it; if, indeed, such a report is in existence’ ” (272). Before the visit of Lady Catherine, Elizabeth was convinced that she would never see Darcy again. However, her Ladyship is implicitly telling her that there have been rumours that Darcy is planning to propose. This brings her hope, which is the exact opposite of Lady’s Catherine’s intention. In theology, this is called “Felix Culpa”, which means “blessed fault” or “fortunate fall”. It means that God allows evil, or Satan, into his world in order for it to function as a bridge to the greater good. The Fall of Man, for instance, is sometimes regarded as Felix Culpa as it brought more good to humanity. In literature, Felix Culpa refers to a chain of events, such as the events that Wickham and Lady Catherine caused in *Pride and Prejudice*, which will eventually lead to a happier ending. This is what happens in *Pride and Prejudice*: the villains are the responsible for bringing Elizabeth and Darcy together.

Austen also shows what effects relationships and marriages have on whole families. When Lydia elopes with Mr. Wickham, the whole family is distraught and very ashamed. Their social position declines with a daughter on the run with a man who will never marry her. With her elopement, Lydia seems to have ruined her sisters’ chance of a respectable marriage. Wickham does not love Lydia, he only wants to take advantage of her. Lydia shows that she is irresponsible and foolish, although because of her young age and the influence of Mrs. Bennet on her favourite daughter she might not be the only one to blame for her elopement. She is, however, oblivious to the consequences of her actions. It does, however, also create opportunities for other characters. Darcy, determined to set everything straight,

searches the country for Lydia and Wickham and when he finds them he forces Wickham to marry Lydia. Wickham once tried to elope with Darcy's younger sister Georgiana and Darcy threatens to tell everyone. By doing this, he reinstates the social position of the Bennet family and Elizabeth is eternally grateful to him. She finally sees that he only wants good things for her and her family and she gradually begins to like and love him. On the other hand, the marriages of Jane and Mr. Bingley and Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy bring financial stability and happiness to the Bennet family as well as to themselves. Their positive acts influence other lives as well. Austen stresses that it is important to know oneself as well as the importance of being able to learn from someone else. Elizabeth only marries Mr. Darcy when their relationship is based on love and mutual respect. Only then can they be happy and, in addition, bring happiness to others.

In Helen Fielding's novel *Bridget Jones's Diary*, morality can also be found but with less depth and less three-dimensionality. The most important moral of *Bridget Jones's Diary* is quite similar to one of Jane Austen's morals: stay true to yourself. Throughout the book, Bridget desperately tries to fit in with, what she believes are, successful modern women. Women who do not drink or smoke, who are skinny, who have no problems whatsoever in their lives, who have a good relationship with their mother and, first and foremost, who have a boyfriend. Bridget believes that if she reaches this stage of utter perfection, she will live happily ever after. Gradually, she learns that becoming perfect is a lot more than just writing New Year's resolutions and when she reaches her goals they are not as fulfilling as she thought they were. When Bridget, after years of effort, finally reaches her ideal weight and has stopped smoking, people think she is ill. She writes in her diary:

Today is an historic and joyous day. After eighteen years of trying to get down to 8st 7 I have finally achieved it. It is no trick of the scales, but confirmed by jeans. I am thin. [...] It is a miracle. Rang Tom, who said maybe I have a tapeworm. The way to get rid

of it, he said, is to hold a bowl of warm milk and a pencil in front of my mouth.

(Tapeworms love warm milk, apparently. They love it.) Open my mouth. Then, when the worm's head appears, wrap it carefully round the pencil. 'Listen,' I told him, 'this tapeworm is staying.' I love my new tapeworm. (Fielding, 105)

A few days later, Bridget goes to a party thrown by one of her best friends, Jude, in a little black dress that shows off her new figure. However, when she walks in, Jude asks if she is all right. When Bridget answers that she has lost half a stone Jude replies: " 'Maybe you've lost it a bit quickly off your... face,' she trailed off, looking at my admittedly somewhat deflated cleavage" (106). As she writes later:

It continued all evening. There's nothing worse than people telling you you look tired. They might as well have done with it and say you look like five kinds of shit. I felt so pleased with myself for not drinking but as the evening wore on, and everyone got drunker, I began to feel so calm and smug I was even irritating myself. (106)

When the party ends, her friend Tom telephones Bridget and asks her if she is all right, too.

Bridget answers that she is feeling great and she asks what he means. Tom says to her:

'You just seemed, well, flat tonight. Everyone said you weren't your usual self.'

'No, I was fine. Did you see how thin I am?' Silence.

'Tom?'

'I think you looked better before, hon.'

This leaves Bridget astonished. She writes:

Now I feel empty and bewildered – as if a rug has been pulled from under my feet.

Eighteen years – wasted. Eighteen years of calorie and fat-unit-based arithmetic. [...]

Eighteen years of struggle, sacrifice and endeavour – for what? Eighteen years and the result is 'tired and flat'. I feel like a scientist who discovers that his life's work has been a total mistake. (107)

This is the important moral of *Bridget Jones's Diary*. She believes she must abide by the image of the perfect woman that she has created or that society has created for the modern woman. The men in her life, her boss Daniel Cleaver and lawyer Mark Darcy, are surrounded by beautiful, thin women who always know what to say. Bridget, who is not very thin or very articulate, always measures herself to them. However, in the end she finds that Mark Darcy actually finds her comments, which are often very inappropriate, very funny and attractive. He likes her as she is. Fielding says about this: "The book is really about trying too hard, trying to be too perfect, and sort of missing the point that what makes Bridget appealing is that she's fun, she's nice, she's a good friend. She's just normal and that's fine" (*Penguin.com*). Although Fielding uses humour and irony to illustrate morality, just as Austen does, the morality is much less implicit and subtle. It has less depth. There is one great moral in the story and it is quite obvious what it is.

In addition, the morality in *Bridget Jones's Diary* is quite superficial. It concentrates on physical aspects, losing weight, smoking and drinking less, instead of the focus on morality and personal growth that *Pride and Prejudice* puts across. In Austen's novel, the emphasis is on personality and on self-fulfilment. Darcy and Elizabeth learn from each other and only then can they commit to their relationship and marriage. They learn from their own mistakes. A relationship can, as a result, also bring someone new perspectives. Furthermore, it may be too easy and too trivial to say that you must always love yourself. One would not have to make any effort at all, then, and that is not necessarily a good thing. Some degree of learning from each other, thus improving oneself, is good for a relationship. As the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* illustrates, sometimes it is necessary. The moral "love yourself" can even be untrue up to a point. If a person is very overweight and their health is in danger, it may not be beneficial to say that they should be happy with themselves just the way they are. It is good if a person accepts himself as he is,



but it is not always the best for the person himself. Inward personal growth, which the morality in *Pride and Prejudice* is about, is more important than the improvement of physical features that *Bridget Jones's Diary* mainly concentrates on.

Another morality issue in *Bridget Jones's Diary* is Bridget's prejudice against Mark. When she first meets him, Bridget finds Mark arrogant because he will not talk to her, despite Bridget's mother desperate attempts to force him to take Bridget on a date. Although she dislikes him, he also offends her by declining the offer take Bridget out. When Bridget meets Daniel Cleaver, she discovers that he and Mark used to be friends. Daniel tells her that Mark slept with his fiancée and therefore they are not friends anymore. Bridget, eager to hear any story about the man who rejected her flatly, believes him and her opinion of Mark is even lower than before. However, Daniel cheats on her with another woman and Mark keeps appearing in her life. Mark saves Bridget from awkward situations and defends her when people laugh at her for her blunt comments. Everyone around her seems to think he is a good man and he is rich. It is, however, not until he uses his influence as a lawyer to save Bridget's mother from thief Julio that Bridget realises how much she likes him. She does not like him because he is rich, because he is a successful lawyer or because her mother likes him. Her prejudice against him, because her mother liked him so much and she refuses to do what her mother tells her and because of the alleged betrayal to Daniel Cleaver, has left her unable to see his true nature. At their first meeting, Mark explains later, he felt embarrassed because his mother made him wear a ridiculous sweater and he felt pressured into asking Bridget out on a date. In addition, the story that Daniel told Bridget was false, as it was Daniel who slept with Mark's fiancée.

This storyline is similar to Elizabeth Bennet's prejudice against Darcy because of his rude manners towards her and the story she hears from Mr. Wickham. However, in *Bridget Jones's Diary* there are fewer class problems. Bridget and Mark both belong to a sort of posh

modernised upper-class society. Their mothers know each other well and they like each other, in contrast to Mrs. Bennet and Mr. Bingley's family in *Pride and Prejudice*. Mark Darcy may be more intelligent, although Bridget is more blunt than unintelligent. He knows how he should behave and what to say at a party with important politicians. This is, however, more an inconvenience to Bridget and Mark than it is a real problem as it is for Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. They are not only separated by opinions and behaviour but also by a division between their classes. Although it was not impossible in the nineteenth century to marry beneath one's class, many characters in *Pride and Prejudice* frown upon it. Mr. Bingley's sisters find Elizabeth to be a very inappropriate acquaintance because of their differences in class. When Jane visits them and falls ill, Elizabeth walks to Netherfield to care for her sister. When she goes to Jane's room, Mrs. Hurst comments: "She has nothing, in short, to recommend her, but being an excellent walker. I shall never forget her appearance this morning. She really looked almost wild" (29-30). Mrs. Bingley adds: "To walk three miles, or four miles, or five miles, or whatever it is, above her ankles in dirt, and alone, quite alone! what could she mean by it? It seems to me an abominable sort of conceited independence, a most country-town indifference to decorum" (30). Although Bingley's sisters do like Jane's character more than Elizabeth's, they wished that Jane was from a better family. Miss Bingley says: "But with such a father and mother, and such low connections, I am afraid there is no chance of [a marriage]"(30).

In addition, Lady Catherine de Bourgh also shares her utter disapproval with Elizabeth's low social position. She tells Elizabeth that Darcy has been intended to marry her daughter since they were born. Lady Catherine says:

They are destined for each other by the voice of every member of their respective houses; and what is to divide them? The upstart pretensions of a young woman without family, connections, or fortune. Is this to be endured? But it must not, shall not be! If

you were sensible of your own good, you would not wish to quit the sphere in which you have been brought up. (274)

Clearly, she looks down upon Elizabeth and her position in society.

*Pride and Prejudice* includes a layer of social criticism. It is not only about personal morality but also illustrates a society in which it is a structural disadvantage to be a woman. Bridget and Mark in *Bridget Jones's Diary* are different people but they do not live in a society where being a woman is a disadvantage. The lack of this extra layer of morality is, however, not something that Fielding could prevent. She updated the story from *Pride and Prejudice* to the twentieth century, in which there is no strict class-system as there was in the nineteenth century. Bridget does experience the culture of self-improvement that is a typical problem for a woman in the twentieth century. She wants to be the perfect woman as they are portrayed in the media nowadays. In her essay "Bridget Jones's Diary: Confessing post-feminism", Leah Guenther writes:

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

According to Guenther, Bridget is confused over the "women's self-definition on the pages of glossy women's magazines" (86). However, Bridget is aware of this problem. She notes in her journal that "I am a child of *Cosmopolitan* culture, have been traumatized by supermodels and too many quizzes and know that neither my personality nor my body is up to it if left to

its own devices” (sic) (Fielding, 59). However, this problem contributes more to the comical and entertaining part of the novel than it does create a novel of manners.

When Helen Fielding was asked how she felt about the reviews of *Bridget Jones’s Diary* which said that the book was an “insult to feminism”, she answered: “I can quite see that if you're not keen on irony as a form of expression, the book might get on your nerves. It was initially written to make people laugh. If it raises some issues that strike a nerve, so much the better. Novels are there to reflect the truth in what they see, as well as to entertain” (*Penguin.com*). Where *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel of manners, *Bridget Jones’s Diary* is the novel that defined the chick literature or chick lit genre. Chick literature is written first and foremost to entertain people. It is light-hearted and humorous. It reflects how people in modern day society behave, but it does not say how one should or should not behave. Chick lit novels are designed to be relatable to modern women rather than to represent different characters and situations to illustrate moral issues. Because there is less moral seriousness in *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and the morality is more explicit and one-dimensional, the novel has less depth than *Pride and Prejudice*. *Bridget Jones’s Diary* is written purely for the entertainment of the reader and other, hidden, morals of the story are not put in intentionally. *Pride and Prejudice* is first and foremost a novel of manners and a very, although subtle and implicit, moralistic novel. It contains nuances in morality, for example Charlotte Lucas’s choice in marriage, which adds more layers to the novel. Austen weighs the morality of the choices of the women in her novel and she approaches life in a way that every point of view is taken into account. In addition, whereas Austen compares different types of marriage, Fielding only focuses on getting Bridget married. There are other marriages in *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, such as the marriage between Bridget’s parents, but they do not serve a moral purpose. In *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, there is more interest in getting Bridget married than there is interest for morality issues. The emphasis is on how to please the reader, instead of

confronting them with moral issues. Therefore, the morality in *Pride and Prejudice* has more depth and more moral seriousness than *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

### Chapter Three: Identification

A work of high literature must, first and foremost, appeal to the reader. The interest of the reader must be caught and it also must be preserved throughout the story. As I have argued in chapter one of this thesis, authors can encourage their readers to read on by using characterisation to make them identify or sympathise with the characters. In addition, a work of literature must also contain a quality of art that another work does not have. It must stand out from other works in its literary genre and have that certain quality that makes it worth reading over and over again. It has been generally accepted that Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* has that quality and it is considered high literature by many. Protagonist Elizabeth Bennet is, besides someone the reader can identify with most of the time, portrayed especially as a woman with a strong opinion who is not afraid to disobey people that are not used to being disobeyed. Austen is regarded as a progressive author by some because of her social realism and progressive thoughts about women. Elizabeth is a character readers identify with and it is only when she realises her own mistake that the reader realises it, too. Austen encourages her readers to reread the novel in order to see when Elizabeth, and themselves, have made the wrong presumptions and why. Austen uses identification in a progressive way. Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* seems, at first sight, more focussed on being recognisable to many women than on being progressive. In this chapter I will elaborate on the levels of identification from the reader to the protagonists of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Furthermore, I will illustrate the focus of Helen Fielding on making Bridget relatable to modern day readers, and therefore making her novel quite undaring, as opposed to Jane Austen's progressive writing. By doing this, I will investigate the matter of depth that this contributes to both novels.

When it comes to identification, Elizabeth Bennet seems a very relatable character at first sight. Although her position as a woman in the nineteenth century may be unfamiliar to

modern day readers, Austen's realistic approach to social conventions illustrates it very well. Elizabeth is playful, intelligent and very funny. Her wit is one of the most noticeable characteristics in *Pride and Prejudice*. She is the heroine of the story and she is the one who is given the happy ending. Readers fall in love with Elizabeth because Austen lets them see the world through Elizabeth's eyes. However, the reader can never fully identify himself with her. Although she has a nice character and the reader can easily relate to her, she makes mistakes. Her prejudices against Mr. Darcy are proven to be false. When he refuses to dance with her at the Netherfield ball, she already dislikes him for the silent and proud manners he is presenting himself with. However, one can only imagine what it must have been like for Darcy at the Netherfield ball. He and his friend Mr. Bingley are newcomers in the area and may be withdrawn in their manners to begin with. Most of the girls at the ball know of their fortune. Mrs. Bennet points this out in the first chapter when she describes Mr. Bingley as: "A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls" (Austen, 5). She does not care whether he is handsome or whether he has a nice character. He is rich and therefore he will do as a son-in-law. When Mr. Darcy first walks into the room at the Netherfield ball, he "soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien, and the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a-year" (10). After this has circulated through the entire ballroom, it is said that:

The gentlemen pronounced him to be a fine figure of a man, the ladies declared he was much handsomer than Mr. Bingley, and he was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud; to be above his company, and above being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from

having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend.” (10)

The perspective changes from Elizabeth to the entire community. Everyone in the room is just focused on Darcy’s estate and on his fortune. At first sight, Darcy seems haughty and proud, but he may be just reserved. However, this is not clear when one reads the novel for the first time. Upon a first reading, the reader will tend to share Elizabeth’s feelings, and her prejudice, towards Darcy. The reason for this is that Elizabeth does not know the truth and, as a result, neither does the reader. This changes when the reader reaches the part where Darcy reveals the truth in his letter. The reader is encouraged to reread the novel, in order to see what they missed and to see the other side of the story, that is to say Darcy’s perspective. He may have been just reserved at the Netherfield ball. He may well have been afraid that there were girls who were just after his fortune. Elizabeth is intelligent, she could have known this was the case, too. She knows that he knows that girls like herself must marry well to help their family with their financial problems. Of course, Darcy offends her at their first meeting where he should have been at least more polite to her. But she is very fast in her judgement.

The reader sympathises with Elizabeth still when her opinion of Darcy deteriorates when she talks to Mr. Wickham and he tells her Darcy has mistreated him in the past. Wickham tells Elizabeth about Mr. Darcy’s father being his godfather, and although Darcy’s father was very kind, his son Fitzwilliam did not like Wickham. After the death of the late Mr. Darcy, Wickham would be provided for but he did not receive any money. Wickham claims this is because of the young Mr. Darcy. During this story full of lies, Elizabeth exclaims that Darcy should be publicly disgraced for his shocking actions. Wickham answers: “ ‘Some time or other he *will* be – but it shall not be by *me*. Till I can forget his father, I can never defy or expose *him*.’ ” (65). Elizabeth, as well as the reader, does not know that Wickham is not telling the truth and she, in fact, “honoured him for such feelings, and thought him handsomer



than ever as he expressed them” (65). Her prejudice against Darcy makes her blind to other interpretations of the story. She does not check with others whether the story is true or not but chooses to believe Wickham. Because the man who she finds very attractive speaks ill of the man she already dislikes, she is very much eager to believe him. She does not doubt Wickham’s motives for a second. Of course she could not have known that Wickham was lying and it may be understandable that she wants to believe him after Darcy’s proud behaviour towards her. Although it would be more difficult in the nineteenth century to check the sources of an accusation, Elizabeth could have been more reserved in her judgement. Even when Elizabeth wonders how a charming, friendly man as Mr. Bingley can be Mr. Darcy’s best friend, Wickham convinces her easily by saying that:

Mr. Darcy can please where he chuses. He does not want abilities. He can be a conversible companion if he thinks it worth his while. Among those who are at all his equals in consequence, he is a very different man from what he is to the less prosperous. His pride never deserts him: but with the rich he is liberal-minded, just, sincere, rational, honourable, and perhaps agreeable, -- allowing something for fortune and figure. (67)

Elizabeth’s antipathy towards Mr. Darcy reaches its climax when he proposes to her. One cannot blame her for turning Darcy’s marriage proposal down, considering the abominable manner in which he presents it, but she does not realise that it is his way of reaching out to her. Darcy actually cares about Elizabeth but his proud manners prevent him from communicating it correctly. From his point of view, he is trying to communicate his love for her as well as trying to help her, as he of course is also aware of her social and financial position. This is why he is furious that she turns him down and he is not able to understand it. In his opinion he is doing Elizabeth a favour. The reader, however, cannot know this upon a

first reading because it is only Elizabeth's point of view that is shown. When they reread the novel, they are more able to see other, such as Darcy's, point of views.

The real surprise for the reader, and for Elizabeth, comes when Elizabeth receives a letter from Darcy in which he tells the truth about what happened between him and Wickham. Only then does she, and the reader with her, start to realise that she has made a mistake. Elizabeth has been too full of herself and has thought too much of her own wit. Her wit is, in fact, one of the most beloved features of Elizabeth Bennet in the opinion of readers of *Pride and Prejudice*, but it is her wit that makes her unable to see the truth, namely that all her assumptions about Darcy were built on her prejudice. After she has read the letter, she contemplates why she believed Wickham:

As to his real character, had information been in her power, she had never felt a wish of inquiring. His countenance, voice, and manner had established him at once in the possession of every virtue. [...] She could see him instantly before her, in every charm of air and address; but she could remember no more substantial good than the general approbation of the neighbourhood, and the regard which his social powers had gained him in the mess. (160)

Elizabeth realises that she believed him too hastily and only because she found him charming and because people in the neighbourhood spoke well of him. She was too focused on his looks and charm and could not see what his true character was. Elizabeth feels very ashamed and feels that she has been "blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd" towards Wickham as well as Darcy (162).

‘How despicably have I acted!’ she cried; ‘I, who have prided myself on my discernment! I, who have valued myself on my abilities! who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity in useless or [blameable] distrust. How humiliating in this discovery! yet, how just a humiliation! Had I been in

love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly. Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment I never knew myself.' (162).

This is a very important moment in *Pride and Prejudice*. Elizabeth realises that she has made a huge mistake. The moral of this scene is that one should not be prejudiced against someone, positively or negatively. Maybe the reader cannot fully identify with Elizabeth because she makes mistakes and her most favourite characteristic is the cause of her dismay. However, Austen uses the situation with Elizabeth to convey morals to the reader. Besides making the character of Elizabeth easy for the readers to sympathise and identify with in the beginning, she adds a different, and subtle, layer to the identification. She can also teach her readers something.

In addition, Austen was sometimes regarded a quite progressive realist on a political level. In the early nineteenth century, the time of Jane Austen and *Pride and Prejudice*, it was not really possible for a young woman such as Elizabeth to be independent or provide for herself. They could not enter politics or apply to university and many occupations were unavailable for women. The occupations that were open to women did not pay very well and the working conditions were often bad. Therefore, most women such as Elizabeth could only increase their fortune by, besides inheriting it if she had no brothers, marrying a wealthy man (*Pemberley.com*). If a woman did not marry a man of fortune, she would have had to live with her parents, for it would have been unheard of in the nineteenth century for a young female who has never been married to live by herself (*Pemberley.com*). As Lady Catherine de Bourgh says: "Young women should always be properly guarded and attended, according to their situation in life" (165). In addition, although Darcy and other men of great fortune might

be afraid of gold diggers and greedy women who are only after their money, it was rather foolish for a woman in the nineteenth century to marry without somewhat of a guarantee of a considerable income, as Lydia does. There was no health insurance, no social security, pension regulations or compensation for unemployment (*Pemberley.com*). Elizabeth would have been wise to accept any proposal, considering the financial state of her family. As Mr. Collins points out to Elizabeth: “Your portion is unhappily so small, that it will in all likelihood undo the effects of your loveliness and amiable qualifications” (88). After she declines Mr. Collins’ offer, Mrs. Bennet tells Elizabeth: “But I tell you what, Miss Lizzy – if you take it into your head to go on refusing every offer of marriage in this way, you will never get a husband at all – and I am sure I do not know who is to maintain you when your father is dead” (91). And as Colonel Fitzwilliam tells Elizabeth: “[...] there are not many in my rank of life who can afford to marry without some attention to money” (143). This illustrates that not only women were affected by the need to marry well: it was important for men, too. Austen illustrates the reasons and the need for women as well as men in the nineteenth century to marry well but her heroine in *Pride and Prejudice* still refuses.

Although Elizabeth’s refusal to marry for money may be a bold and progressive act for the nineteenth century, it is difficult to determine whether Austen was really progressive or conservative from a political point of view. *Pride and Prejudice* contains elements of both. Although there are troubles throughout the novel, in the end all ends well. Austen’s heroines do always marry at the end. Elizabeth is independent as she waits until she finds a man she truly loves but in the end the novel is conventional in its all’s well that ends well when the girl marries the boy. Besides it being difficult to determine whether Austen was really politically progressive in her novels, one may wonder whether it matters. Nowadays, the reader can never fully relate to the political situation in the nineteenth century. It is not the politics in *Pride and Prejudice* that make the novel worth reading again and again, simply because we

can never fully understand the political climate. It is too long ago and nuances in political situation are the first thing that is forgotten after a certain period of time passes. In fact, ironically, Jane Austen being labelled as a progressive or feminist writer is a result of twentieth and twenty-first century thinking.

On the other hand, Austen's idea of an ideal marriage couple is a couple that thinks alike and shares the same morals and values. Elizabeth wants to marry someone who is her intellectual equal, someone who can handle her and who can stand up to her. She cannot cope with the unintelligent and weak Mr. Collins. Austen is for equality in marriage, which is again a progressive idea for the nineteenth century. Although Austen redefines the gender roles in marriage, she is both conservative and progressive in her writing. The heroines in her novels are strong-willed and independent women, who, despite the strains of society, break free, make mistakes, regain themselves and live happily ever after. The end of *Pride and Prejudice* may be conservative--Elizabeth settles down with Darcy--but Austen also shows the alternative throughout the novel. Elizabeth refuses two marriage proposals from men who would have been able to ensure the future of her family and she is the only one who does not let the class difference between her and Lady Catherine de Bourgh prevent her from telling her how she really feels about her. In addition, Elizabeth needs to be headstrong in order to see and get what she really wants. Her independence and wit is what really appeals to Darcy. It might get her into trouble in the first place, but in the end she, ironically, marries the one whose disposition caused all the trouble in the first place, and the one who solves all her problems as well.

Everything in Jane Austen's novels is based on balance. Lydia, the silly girl, marries Wickham, the selfish man. Mrs. Bennet, who thinks the world revolves around her, is married to Mr. Bennet, who, although he loves her, thinks the world should revolve around anything but Mrs. Bennet. Elizabeth is prejudiced, Darcy is proud and they both have to realise this

before they understand that they are, in fact, a very compatible match. Therefore, there also seems to be a balance between progressive and conservative features. But overall, Austen is not afraid to stand out and to add quite radical morals and values to her novel and by doing this she adds more layers and depth to it. In *Pride and Prejudice*, nothing is clear-cut, there is always an underlying feature, which makes the novel interesting.

Whereas readers can never fully identify with Austen's heroine Elizabeth Bennet, Helen Fielding's protagonist Bridget Jones is created to be identified with. Fielding wanted to object to the culture of self-improvement, as she says in an interview with *Penguin.com*. She says: "The idea of getting up at five and whizzing from the gym to the board meeting, of getting your bottom down to size and suddenly deciding your soul needs work. I think it's rather a joyless way of being for women, but it seems to have infected us on a global scale. I think that's what people latched on to most" (*Penguin.com*). Modern readers identify with this culture as it is very familiar to all young Western women. Fielding imagines women giving *Bridget Jones's Diary* to their boyfriends saying that if they want to understand the mind of women, they should read it (*Penguin.com*). In the beginning of the novel, Bridget makes a list of New Year's resolutions. She vows that she will not, for example:

Drink more than fourteen alcohol units a week.

Smoke.

Waste money on: pasta-makers, ice-cream machines or other culinary devices which will never use; books by unreadable literary authors to put impressively on shelves (sic); exotic underwear, since pointless as have no boyfriend,

Spend more than earn.

Have crushes on men, but instead form relationships based on mature assessment of character.

Fall for any of the following: alcoholics, workaholics, commitment phobics, people with girlfriends or wives, misogynists, megalomaniacs, chauvinists, emotional fuckwits or freeloaders, perverts.

Sulk about having no boyfriend, but develop inner poise and authority and sense of self as woman of substance, complete *without* boyfriend, as best way to obtain boyfriend. (Fielding, 2)

On the other hand, she vows that she will:

Reduce circumference of thighs by 3 inches (i.e. 1 ½ inches each), using anti-cellulite diet.

Not go out every night but stay in and read books and listen to classical music.

Go to the gym three times a week not merely to buy sandwich.

Form functional relationship with responsible adult.

Learn to programme video. (3)

Bridget's New Year's resolutions are recognisable for many women. Her list reflects the pressure of modern society on women to be perfect, i.e. lose weight, live healthily, be a successful career woman, and, first and foremost, to be completely independent of men.

Although Bridget is actually looking for her Mr. Right, she feels that she must be independent of men before she can commit to someone. Very recognisable, too, is that Bridget's promises are already broken on the first of January. She writes in her journal: "9st 3 (but post-Christmas), alcohol units 14 (but effectively covers 2 days as 4 hours of party was on New Year's Day), cigarettes 22, calories 5424" (7). Her diet of that particular day includes, among others: "14 cold new potatoes, 2 Bloody Marys (count as food as contain Worcester sauce and tomatoes), [...] 12 Milk Tray (best to get rid of all Christmas confectionery in one go and make fresh start tomorrow)" (7). For most people, especially women, this will be a familiar situation, too. Bridget attempts to find excuses for her broken promise that she will lose

weight and stop drinking and smoking. In addition, Bridget starts to date Daniel Cleaver, who, in fact, embodies almost all things that were in her New Year's resolution that said what kind of man she should not date. He is a workaholic, a commitment phobic, he secretly has another girlfriend, he is a chauvinist and a pervert. As Fielding says in her interview with *Penguin.com*, she wants to object to the culture of self-improvement. Fielding does this by using the character of Mark Darcy, who makes Bridget realise that she is a good person just as she is and that she does not have to change for him. Mark is a successful lawyer, he is handsome and friendly. He is the perfect man that Bridget is looking for, although she does not see that in the beginning of the novel. Bridget feels that in order to be desirable for men she has to be the perfect woman for him, but Mark does not want her to be perfect but to be herself. Her attempts to be the perfect woman by improving herself, her failing to do so and her secret wish for a man who takes all her worries about herself away are recognisable to many women nowadays.

The first person narrative and the form of the novel as a diary contribute also to the identification. Fielding had been given advice to write the novel "as if you were writing for a friend. The diary form's very good for that, very direct and intimate" (*Penguin.com*). Bridget writes in her journal almost everyday and she always begins with stating her weight of that day and the number of cigarettes, alcohol units and calories she has had. Sometimes Bridget adds other things to her list. In February, for example, she counts the number of times she went to the mailbox to see whether she has received cards for Valentines Day yet. In the spring she counts how many lottery tickets she has bought, which she is temporarily addicted to. When her friend June tells Bridget that when someone has called her but she does not know who it is, she can call the number 1471 and find out. As a result, Bridget starts calling 1471 multiple times a day. Bridget also updates her diary during the day, sometimes even



twice in one minute. On the sixth of February, for example, Bridget has not heard from Daniel, whom she is dating by then. Her diary entries are as follows:

9.30 a.m. Humph. Daniel does not seem to be here yet.

9.35 a.m. Still no sign of Daniel.

9.36 a.m. Oh God, oh God. Maybe he's fallen in love in New York and stayed there.

9.47 a.m. Or gone to Las Vegas and got married.

9.50 a.m. Hmmm. Think will go inspect make-up in case he does come in.

10.05 a.m. Heart gave great lurch when got back from loos and saw Daniel standing with Simon from Marketing at the photocopier. The last time I saw him he was lying on his sofa looking completely nonplussed while I fastened my skirt and ranted about fuckwittage. Now he was looking all sort of 'I've been away' – fresh faced and healthy-looking. As I passed he looked pointedly at my skirt and gave me a huge grin.

(44)

Samuel Richardson used such a technique called “writing to the moment” in his novels *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarderd*, for example. John Zaixin Zhang writes about this in his article “Free Play in Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela*”. He quotes George Sherburn as he explains writing to the moment as: “In order to bring back ‘all the delights’ of the absent presence, Richardson initiates the technique of ‘writing to the moment’ - ‘a technique that transcribed emotional tensions instantly as they arose and not (to use a later phrase) when they were recollected in tranquility’ ” (Zhang, 308). Zhang argues that this particular technique illustrates the preference of imitating spontaneous speaking. Zhang says that “for the classicist, spontaneous speech (the spoken word) is much more vigorous than a speech pondered upon at a later stage (the written word ready for delivery)” (308). The fact that Fielding uses Richardson’s technique contributes to the identification of the reader with Bridget. Fielding makes the reader part of the story, as if they were there with Bridget in the

room waiting for Daniel. Fielding said about this: “A diary is an outlet for your most private thoughts, a very personal way of writing. And that feeling of peeping behind a curtain at someone else’s life is good for a reader” (*Penguin.com*). It also adds to Bridget’s great humoristic qualities as an ironic heroine.

Bridget’s main goal in life in *Bridget Jones’s Diary* is finding a man, which is not really a progressive or feministic goal. She really tries to be single and be happy at the same time. She despises the ‘smug marrieds’, who constantly ask about her love-life when she is single. Bridget wants them to stop asking inappropriate questions, she would never ask how their marriage was going in return, but she does not do this by convincing them she is happy on her own. She is only able to answer the questions about her love-life with a smile when she has a boyfriend. Then, she can finally answer that her love-life is going well. She tries to be independent, but actually her only focus is to find Mr. Right, start a relationship and get married. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet would rather be alone and living with her parents than marry someone that she does not love. Bridget would rather have a boyfriend, although she tries to be a happy single.

Helen Fielding emphasises the fact that Bridget Jones is first and foremost “just normal and that’s fine” and that the novel *Bridget Jones’s Diary* “was initially written to make people laugh” (*Penguin.com*). The humorous character of Bridget attributes to her relatable qualities. Fielding created her to appeal to modern day women and to be identified with. The way that Bridget tries to improve herself and how she fails to do this are relatable to many young women. Also, the diary structure of the novel contributes to the level of identification. Fielding stayed as close as possible to women in modern society. As a result, the novel stays on the safe side. The reader identifies with the protagonist very well, which is a good quality for a novel to have. But by making everything in the novel as relatable as possible, it can also become quite unsurprising. It helps to preserve the status quo in which women think that the

only thing that will make them happy is a relationship with the perfect man. Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*'s heroine Elizabeth Bennet is also a relatable character, but not to the same extent as Bridget Jones. The reader can never fully relate to Elizabeth. When Elizabeth realises that her prejudice against Mr. Darcy has been very wrong and that she has made a huge mistake in believing Mr. Wickham's story, she is very ashamed. She has been too fast in her judgement of Darcy and the reader cannot fully identify with her because of her mistakes and the fact that her most beloved asset, her wit, is the cause of her dismay. Although Elizabeth Bennet may not be as relatable as Bridget Jones, Austen uses her heroine as an example of what happens when you are prejudiced. By doing this, Austen adds another layer to the story, namely morality. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the reader identifies with Elizabeth on a first reading right away. When she realises her mistake it makes not only Elizabeth but also the reader wonder how it is possible that they did not see it before. There is a certain quality in *Pride and Prejudice* that makes the reader want to go back and reread the novel, trying to see what they have missed. The subtlety with which Austen achieves this contributes to the depth in her novels. Elizabeth makes mistakes but the reader can learn from these mistakes and use them to take a closer look at their own faults and their own values. In *Bridget Jones's Diary*, the reader is introduced to Bridget's faults immediately. As a result, one can identify with her, too, but the reader, like Bridget herself, is not encouraged to do something about their shortcomings. Instead, Fielding tells us that we are fine as we are and it is not necessary to do anything. This is a form of escapism. Life will not automatically be perfect if you stop worrying about it certain situations. Fielding makes it easy for her readers; she offers them an escape. Austen, however, forces her readers to think about their own morality and encourages them to improve themselves. Austen does not let her readers get away easily, she wants to influence them. Therefore, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* has more depth than Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

## Conclusion

In a world where there are works of high literature, there must also be works of low literature. But one wonders what qualities make a work of literature considered high literature. In order to do this, one must define the true meaning of literature, which is a very difficult task. Literature is an abstract concept, of which everyone thinks that they will understand it completely but no one can give a definition of in less than three sentences. A work of literature is said to be a distinguished written work, which is vague but also subjective. Harriet Hawkins says that in order to understand high literature, we must also appreciate the lower counterpart and that the understanding of both brings us more appreciation (Hawkins, xiv). The question is, how one distinguishes high from low, or popular, literature. According to sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, distinguishing oneself happens through taste. Taste is something that makes a person belong to a certain social group. The habitus, a socially acquired system of dispositions, is responsible for a group's dispositions. Literary taste, Bourdieu argues, is also attributed to the habitus. He says that because of this, distinction in literature is largely arbitrary and there are no objective criteria. Taste is not tied to the intrinsic qualities of the text.

According to E.M. Forster, the use of round characters in a written work does constitute high literature. A round character is three-dimensional, undergoes a great personal change and, as a result, a round character has depth. When comparing Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* to Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, one can see that Austen's novel contains more round characters and that they are also 'more' round. In addition, most flat characters in *Pride and Prejudice* have a function, whereas the flat characters in *Bridget Jones's Diary* have not. Protagonist Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy are both round characters. They are three-dimensional characters and they go through a significant personal

change. They must overcome their prejudices about each other and admit that they were wrong in order to be able to have a good relationship. They both must learn something before they can grow. The flat characters in *Pride and Prejudice* do not change at all but they do serve a moral function. Flat character Mrs. Bennet illustrates desperation when the necessity of marriage for young women is concerned, Jane Bennet and Mr. Bingley represent true love without troubles, at least not from within, and Mr Collins's character marrying Charlotte Lucas functions as an example of a marriage that is purely for money. Helen Fielding's novel *Bridget Jones's Diary*, being a rewrite of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, contains but one round character. Only Bridget goes through a personal change, and in fact it is more a personal realisation than a drastic personal change. She realises that, in order to have a boyfriend, she does not have to become someone she is not, Mark Darcy loves her just the way she is. Bridget is a round character, but her personal change is less strong and she is more one-dimensional than Elizabeth Bennet, of whom she is a simplified version. In addition, the function of the flat characters in *Bridget Jones's Diary* is to be humoristic rather than that they serve a moral function.

Another criterion for a work of high literature is that it must have depth and multiple layers. One way to achieve this is through moral seriousness. In Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, the morality is important but subtle. Austen also uses irony to convey the morality in her novel and the morality that is used contributes to the novel of manners. In *Pride and Prejudice*, there is always a deeper meaning beneath the surface which gives the story more depth. One subject that Austen uses to illustrate morality is the notion of marriage. She weighs different forms of marriages: Jane and Bingley's pure love, Lydia's elopement with Wickham, Charlotte's marriage for money and Elizabeth's intellectual marriage as well as love. Furthermore, Austen illustrates that morality is not absolute and that some people can not afford to marry someone out of pure love only. Money was an important factor, too. Jane

Austen shows the reader nuances in morality. In *Bridget Jones's Diary*, there is also morality but it has less depth. The moral is straightforward from the beginning: one should love oneself and stay true to oneself. In addition, the morality is quite superficial as it is all focussed on appearance rather than psychological morality and personal growth. In a relationship, people can educate each other and as a result they can experience personal growth. Furthermore, it may be trivial to say that to love yourself will solve all problems. *Bridget Jones Diary's* main focus is intended to be recognisable and to make people laugh. It is a chick lit novel rather than a novel of manners and the emphasis is on how to please the reader rather than to confront them with morality issues.

Another third possible criterion for high literature is that it must possess a certain quality that makes readers want to reread the novel. Jane Austen is regarded by some as an innovative author because of her social realism and progressive thoughts. *Pride and Prejudice's* protagonist Elizabeth Bennet is relatable, but the reader can never fully identify himself with her. The reader only experiences Elizabeth's point of view. They travel with her as she makes mistakes and when she realises this the reader is surprised as well. They are encouraged to go back and upon a second reading, the reader can see different layers in the story, for instance Darcy's perspective. Austen, again, uses this to convey morals to the reader. She adds a different layer to the identification; she educates her readers. The identification is subtle and layered. Although it is of less importance, Austen was also quite politically progressive. Elizabeth turns a marriage proposal from men down, twice, which may be a bold act for the nineteenth century, but it is difficult to determine whether it really shows political progressiveness. One also wonders whether it matters, because the reader can never fully relate to the political situation in *Pride and Prejudice*. Austen being labelled as progressive is more a result of modern ways of thinking. Austen's idea of an ideal marriage is a union between a couple who share the same morals. It is based on equality and balance,

which is quite a progressive thought. The protagonist in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, however, is created to be identified with by modern women. The culture of self-improvement contributes to this. In addition, by using the diary form and using Samuel Richardson's 'writing to the moment' Fielding made Bridget as relatable as possible. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the reader identifies with Elizabeth Bennet right away and later wonders why they have not seen the mistakes she has made. They are encouraged to reread the novel. In *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Bridget's faults are introduced immediately. The reader can identify with her, too, but they are not encouraged to do something. Austen tries to leave an imprint on her readers, to make them think about their own morality and to improve themselves whereas Fielding provides her readers with a possibility to escape all responsibilities.

According to Pierre Bourdieu, distinction in literature is largely arbitrary. He argues that the reason why people regard one work as high literature and another as trash is the notion of habitus. As a result, there should be no difference in value of high literature canonical work such as *Pride and Prejudice* and a popular culture chick lit novel such as *Bridget Jones's Diary*. I think, however, that this thesis proves that there are differences. To Jane Austen's novel is much more layered, it has more depth than *Bridget Jones's Diary*. It is not meant only to entertain, but there is a subtlety, a depth, that is always beneath the surface. The round characters, the moral seriousness and the progressiveness and identification all contribute to this. It may be difficult to determine precisely what the criteria for high literature are, as they are often implicit and subjective. In this thesis I have tried, however, to illustrate that Pierre Bourdieu is wrong and that there are also differences between high and low literature. Although it surely can be enjoyable to read either high literature as *Pride and Prejudice* or low literature like *Bridget Jones's Diary*, and it may even be necessary to get acquainted with both forms in order to form a decent opinion about literature, one could

probably never convince me that when I ask for a Jane Austen novel in a bookshop, it is entirely well-grounded if someone will point to the chick lit section.



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