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**(De)Construction of Gender Stereotypes in Helen Fielding's Novels *Bridget Jones's Diary*
(1996) and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (1999)**

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Abstract

This Master thesis focuses on two (anti)feminist novels *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) and its sequel – *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (1999) by an English novelist Helen Fielding. The aim of this thesis was to examine the ways in which gender identity was (de)constructed in these novels as a result of gender stereotyping which, in most cases, suggests the suppression and victimisation of women in the patriarchal society. In order to analyse the (de)construction of gender identity, in particular, continuous challenges that women have to face in the postmodern era, this thesis implements theories by the new French feminists Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous. The method of close reading together with Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and intertextual analysis of two novels were applied to explore the ways in which male and female gender roles were (de)constructed for the subversive effect. The examination of *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* through the analytical lens of Butler's gender performativity proved that a subversion of gender stereotypes arose as a result of individual's denial to conform to the norms of the society. Although femininity and masculinity were questioned in both of the novels, the study proved that the pressure to conform to heteronormativity seemed to be greater among women rather than men. Moreover, this thesis also demonstrated that the tool of irony was aimed at challenging the idea of traditional gender identity and, in particular, to mock contemporary women's quest for autonomy and self-improvement, whereas self-deprecating irony directed at Bridget revealed her failure to achieve self-perfection and feminist ideals. The intertextual analysis of the two novels partially confirmed that an intertext in *Bridget Jones's Diary* offered more plot and character archetypes than its sequel, thus resulting in more cases of subversion. Finally, the implementation of the New French Feminist theory together with aforementioned tools of literary analysis proved that although in the postmodern world women demonstrate more agency and freedom than in previous decades, their identity is still shaped by the dominance of the patriarchy.

1. Introduction

In past decades, a vast number of literary texts have dealt with the examination of female identity as a result of the stereotypical attitudes, behaviours and growing expectations of women. The emergence of the feminist movement in the nineteenth century has demanded equality as well as the redefinition of women's role in the society. Feminist literature has also been playing a crucial role in questioning the men's social, cultural, and economic superiority within the field of literature. Thus, a topicality of the issue related to the women's role in the contemporary world is predetermined by the fact that although gender stereotyping might be ascribed to both men and women, in most of the cases it is women who are victimised and suppressed in the patriarchal society.

Feminist literature is often engaged with gender and various aspects of cultural norms, values, and ideals, forming the image of women and gender role differentiation. One of the most significant aspects of the contemporary feminist literature is women's strive for personal freedom expressed through sexual liberation. That is why the tropes of choice and freedom are nowadays widely associated with young women who try to achieve sexual and social recognition. Nevertheless, the problem of women being oppressed and suppressed in the patriarchal society still remains an unsolved issue. Even the concept of feminism, highly discussed in the feminist literature, is problematic because it is said to be often confused and even misunderstood as promoting inferiority of men towards women. Thus, the questions arise concerning the construction of gender stereotypes in Western societies. Since a shift in focus from male to female perspective in contemporary literature sheds a light on social issues revealing a long history of male-dominated viewpoint, what does it disclose about the role of women? Finally, if women are allowed to express their voice in literature, what impact does it have on their identity examined on the basis of sex and gender as well as gender roles and stereotypes?

This master thesis examines two (anti)feminist novels *Bridget Jones's Diary* and its sequel – *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* written by an English novelist Helen Fielding. With its focus on female protagonist and specificity of a language used for constructing gender stereotypes, Fielding addresses various issues in the Western societies related to a modern woman's desires

for freedom, independence and even the “fate of feminism” (*Dictionary of Literary Biography* 2005).

Bridget Jones’s Diary (1996) and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (1999) are known as — newspaper columnist Helen Fielding’s (b. 1958) first effort, the bestsellers in Britain (*Kirkus Review* 2010: 1). *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (1996) and its sequel tell the story about a modern woman Bridget Jones who shares a story of her life. Bridget, a woman in her 30s with a publishing job, discusses her career, friends, the complicated family situation and relationships with men. When *Bridget Jones’s Diary* was published in 1996, Helen Fielding was praised by the readers and reviewers for the uniqueness of her characters and her narrative voice; however, Bridget, a rather coming protagonist of the novel, has been criticised for representing a typical, unmarried woman of the 1990s (*Kirkus Review* 2010). However, it goes without saying that *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* are not only important texts that tackle the issues of postmodern culture, but they also offer valuable insights regarding feminism, construction of gender identity and many others.

On the intertextual level, Fielding’s texts have been analysed in relation to Jane Austen’s classical novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *Persuasion*. According to Cecilia Salber (2001: 1), in her novels, Fielding refers to both of Austen’s “sensibilities”. For Salber, in *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and its sequel, Fielding depicts a “thoroughly modern heroine who is surprisingly reminiscent of, and at times as endearing as, Austen’s Elizabeth Bennet and Anne Elliot” (2001: 1). Such a particular choice of intertext allows Fielding to provide a humorous and ironic lens through which Austen’s themes are refracted (Salber 2001). Fielding has confessed that by linking her novels to Austen’s, she aims to draw a connection between a “youth-oriented culture” and the issues that adolescence has to face when trying to find a suitable partner: “I shamelessly stole the plot from *Pride and Prejudice* for the first book. I thought it had been very well market-researched over a number of centuries and she [Fielding] probably wouldn’t mind” (*Daily Telegraph* 1999: 20). In her interview with *Daily Telegraph*, Fielding notes:

I borrowed quite a bit from Persuasion for this book too, there’s a Benwick character and persuasion is one of the themes; Anne Wentworth was persuaded out of a relationship by her elders. Bridget is persuaded out of a relationship by - ironically enough - too many self-help books about how to improve your relations (ibid., p. 20).

The authenticity of the female voice that both Jane Austen and Helen Fielding capture in the aforementioned texts provides the ground for a feminist reading of these novels. For scholar Alison Case (2001), Bridget Jones is one of the feminine narrators who go back to the novels of Smollett and Richardson. Such narrators, as Case states, allow readers “to feel superior to them, to feel that we [the readers] understand their lives and characters in ways that they cannot” (2001: 4). Unlike in traditional diaries with feminine narrators, the diary enables Bridget to become an “unmediated and unprocessed witness to the events of her life”, thus allowing her to gain more agency (Case 2001: 180).

In addition, Kelly A Marsh (2004) has examined *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (2000) as an interrogation of the idea of self-perfection proclaimed by the American myth. Marsh (2004) juxtaposes Fielding’s and Austen’s world and suggests that in Fielding’s novels the idea of self-perfection is negated and treated ironically. For instance, born and raised in metropolitan society, Bridget imports many elements from the popular culture and believes them to be one of the most significant factors encouraging her self-change. According to Case (1999: 143), Bridget rejects the American dream of a “perfected self” and goes for “Blair-era British communitarianism” which accelerates both the success of her narrative and Bridget’s personal success. Bridget’s rejection of American myth is due to the fact that she shows that “control is a myth, and the experience of being out of control and of being forced into mutually dependent relationships is authentic” (ibid., p. 143). Case (1999) also suggests that Fielding’s narrative can be linked to the works by contemporary British writers such as Anita Brookner and A.S. Byatt; such correspondence is, therefore, crucial in contextualising Fielding’s works in the contemporary literature.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* as “chic lit” (Mabry 2006; Milestone and Meyer 2011). For example, in the article “About a Girl: Female Subjectivity and Sexuality in Contemporary ‘Chick’ Culture”, Rochelle Mabry notes that Fielding’s novels underline various problems “addressed to the growing body of women’s popular fiction” frequently known as “chick lit” (2006: 191). One of the most significant reasons why *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and its sequel can be considered as chick lit is because they depict woman’s sexual desire and allow a woman to look outside her role of a wife and/or a mother (Mabry 2006). Mabry also states that *Bridget Jones’s Diary* is controversial because of its “portrayal of women’s sexual relationship” which has been changed

by a popular culture and also by women's "sexual revolution" which took part in the 1960s (Mabry 2006: 191).

Some scholars like Angela McRobbie (2009: 39) view contemporary culture as a tool for "undoing" feminism. She claims that in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Fielding depicts women who are experiencing their social and sexual freedom, which marks the existence of a new cultural norm that can be understood in relation to post-feminism (McRobbie 2009). She draws a major focus on the analysis of the female protagonist and views Bridget as a classic post-feminist example. For McRobbie, Bridget epitomises an independent woman in popular culture who "feels incessantly self-reflexive, weight-obsessed and plagued by anxiety over finding a husband" (McRobbie 2009: 52). Her research has shown that male-dominated regimes which control contemporary women's identity are absent from Fielding's novels. However, McRobbie asserts that in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Fielding depicts a modern female protagonist from a popular culture who is experiencing her life in a society which operates on a "constant stream of incitements and enticements" and encourages capacity, success, attainment, enjoyment, and social mobility (2009: 57). For McRobbie (2009), Bridget is a classic post-feminist example. She epitomises an independent woman in popular culture who feels —"incessantly self-reflexive, weight-obsessed, and plagued by anxiety over finding a husband" (McRobbie 2009: 52); however, new opportunities for freedom and agency that the protagonist demonstrates are seen as a result of the abandonment of feminism via new "sexual contract", the concept coined by the same scholar. Finally, in her study McRobbie provides particular regulations for young women that include the following:

Occupying positions of visibility and through participation in education, employment, and consumer culture; abandoning a critique of patriarchy and relinquishing political identities, and engaging in a range of practices which are both progressive but also consummately and reassuringly feminine (ibid. p.57).

A number of authors have considered the impact of irony in constructing gender stereotypes in *Bridget Jones's Diary* rather than in its sequel (McRobbie 2009; Case 2001). The irony is an extricable part of Fielding's writings not only because it is one of the most significant character building tools, but also because it is a crucial element in constructing gender identity, and, in particular, revealing how male identities are created from the feminine point of view. It seems that Fielding uses comedy and irony to narrate Bridget's sorrows and distress, however, some

irony seems to come “at Bridget’s expense” (Case 2001: 15). Case emphasises the significance of the narrative of the novel and claims that the diary form deprives its narrator of the interpretative advantage of hindsight, that is, understanding of a situation or event only after it has happened or developed. Since Bridget is the one who narrates the story, it can be noted that the form of diary enables her not only to interpret the things in her own way but also to control her experience which also allows Bridget to seek for some “plotting” (Case 2001: 27). Finally, as the study by Case has shown, the tool of irony creates a discrepancy between Bridget’s wish to shape and at the same time to control her life, for instance, in which she encounters her potential lovers.

Although many studies have been conducted to analyse the representation of femininity and, in more rare cases, masculinity both in the novel and film adaptation of *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (see Robert F. Scott (2003); Kelly A Marsh (2004); Angela McRobbie (2009)), little attention has been paid to identifying how various literary tools can be crucial in the examination of gender stereotypes and masculinity in *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and, especially, its sequel *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*.

An underlying motive for choosing this particular topic is based on my interest in feminist literature and exploration of the ways that female identity is constructed within the discourse. The aim of this thesis is to analyse the ways in which gender stereotypes are (de)constructed in Fielding’s novels *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and its sequel *Bridget Jones’s: The Edge of Reason*, in particular, paying attention to the stereotypes imposed on women in the Western world. This study seeks to examine how the tools of intertextuality and irony are significant not only in creating but also subverting gender stereotypes. It also discusses the representation of gender as a performance of heteronormativity which reinforces the dominance of patriarchy. In my thesis, I hypothesise that *Bridget Jones’s Diary* contains more subversive elements than its sequel as a result of intertextuality.

A major theoretical framework applied in this thesis is the New French Feminist approach which is exclusively associated with the writings by Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Helene Cixous. French feminist approach is the most suitable approach to examine experiences and continuous challenges that women have to face in the postmodern era. It has to be mentioned that the object of research in both of the novels is gender stereotypes. The present thesis assesses different readings of the two novels by various researchers and critics, especially representation of

femininity predominantly in *Bridget Jones's Diary* as Fielding's sequel has attracted less attention from the critics. Having applied close reading of the two novels, together with French feminist approach, this thesis seeks to explore the ways in which both male and female gender roles are (de)constructed for the subversive effect.

2. Theoretical Framework

This section provides a major theoretical framework applied in this study – the New French feminism and also looks at gender studies which are crucial for the analysis of individual's identity from the perspective of gender. Subsection 2.1 presents a brief history of French feminism and also reviews major works by most significant contributors to the field, namely the new French feminists Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Helene Cixous. The most useful concepts in gender studies are defined in subsection 2.2, while subsection 2.3 explores Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity. Finally, subsection 2.4 discusses intertextuality as an approach to studying literary texts.

2.1 New French Feminism: Study of Works by Kristeva, Irigaray and Cixous

French feminism refers to a group of women writers in the United States who became prominent in the 1970s and 1980s in France (Weil 2006). Feminism known as "French" is barely French except the fact that it opposes Anglo-American feminism (Moi 1985). As Christine Delphy claims: "French Feminism" is "not feminism in France; that must be said at the outset (1995: 190). Feminists in France don't need to call their feminism a particular name any more than American feminists call theirs 'American Feminism' ". Delphy also asserts that French feminism is a concept that has been invented by Anglo-American literary critics. The popularity of French feminism as a literary theory has emerged as a result of "the traditional seductiveness of things French and the inferiority complex experienced by US women in relation to the sophisticated style of their continental sisters" (Weil 2006: 153). By providing an entirely new approach to looking at women, female body and desires the emergence of the new French feminism has entirely changed a prevalent idea about women in the United States (Weil 2006).

One of the key moments in the history of French feminism dates back to 1949 which was marked by Simone de Beauvoir's publication of *The Second Sex*. Beauvoir's text is "undeniably a major turning point in the history of the twentieth-century French feminist theory" (quoted in Cavallaro, 2003: 12). Beauvoir's famous assertion "One is not born a woman; one becomes one" (1984: 32) suggests that as a result of patriarchy all individuals are gendered entities and women, especially, are seen as being "incapable of matching the norm embodied by masculinity (Cavallaro 2013: 13). Beauvoir explains: "Humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being [...] He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other" (Beauvoir 2000: 8). Nevertheless, it has to be noted that in the twentieth century, feminism in France is defined by a "history of controversies and antagonisms, in particular, those "between materialist feminists and psychoanalytic feminists (Cavallaro 2013: viii). Since French feminist theory is very vast, feminists in France are concerned with different issues: while some of them are primarily interested in psychic structures and "patriarchal colonisation of the imaginary culture", others look at social institutions of patriarchy as well as economic conditions (Cavallaro 2013: vii-viii). Cavallaro adds on the difference between two French feminism trends:

Both of these trends move away from traditional discussions toward discussions of socially constructed notions of sex, sexuality and gender roles. While feminists interested in social theory focus on the ways in which social institutions shape our notions of sex, sexuality, and gender roles, feminists interested in psychoanalytic theory focus on cultural representations of sex, sexuality and gender roles and the ways that they affect the psyche (ibid., p. viii).

The scholar Toril Moi in *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985) also discusses The French and the Anglo-American approach to feminist literary theory. Moi's study encompasses feminist literary works since the late 1960s. For Moi (1985), both strands of feminist theory, ultimately, share the determination to move beyond conventional naturalistic approaches and towards a thorough evaluation of notions such as sex, sexuality, desire and gendered subjectivity as a cultural fabrication.

In her examination of Gilbert and Gubar's *Mad Woman in the Attic* (1979) which provides an in-depth study of most significant women writers in the nineteenth century, Moi calls their study as aspiring to "elaborate an ambitious new theory of women's literary creativity" (1985: 27). However, Moi seeks for the further investigation and clarification of some notions such as

“female”, “feminine”, and “feminist” that gynocriticism and other feminist critical approaches often confuse and misinterpret. As Moi explains, the notions such as “feminine” and “masculine” have often been referred by feminists to imply “social constructs” that is “patterns of sexuality and behaviour imposed by cultural and social norms”, thus leaving the terms “male” and “female” to indicate only biological dimension of sexual difference (Moi 1985: 65). Moi goes on defining “feminine” as an embodiment of nurture, while “female” is seen as a “nature in this usage”; most significantly, for Moi, “femininity” is constructed by cultural assumptions. This study has proved that a number of feminist theorists still challenge the binary thought of masculinity and femininity which views masculinity as privileged and femininity as subordinate.

Nevertheless, one might ask what is the source of agency and power that French feminists might have over the patriarchy? Weil claims that for French feminists language has become the “ultimate tool of women’s oppression and a potential means for subverting, if not escaping that oppression” (2006: 153). Women’s attempt at speaking up, discussing “desire and the body”, “women’s erogenous zones and the possibilities of unleashing their libidinal force in writing” is what enables them to exercise more power and agency over the patriarchy (ibid., p. 153). However, since women’s desire is believed to be most repressed by patriarchal society, language for them is also seen as “patriarchal”.

For example, Julia Kristeva, one of the most prominent representatives of the psychoanalytic/linguistic strand of the new French feminism, expresses her concern about feminist politics. Kristeva conceptualises feminist struggle in a three-tier system:

1. *Liberal feminism; equality; women demand the same access to the symbolic order as men.*
2. *Radical feminism; femininity highly encouraged and praised; women’s rejection of the male symbolic order “in the name of difference”*
3. *Women’s denial of a dichotomy between femininity and masculinity* (Moi 1985: 12).

Referring to the aforementioned positions, Kristeva believes that the concept of identity is challenged as a result of a contrast between the notions of masculinity and femininity. Thus Kristeva adds: “the very dichotomy man/woman indicates an opposition between two rival entities that may be understood as belonging to metaphysics” (quoted in Moi, 1985: 13). This system suggested by Kristeva is crucial in showing the need for feminists to resist the power of

patriarchal oppression which “despises women *as* women” (ibid., p. 13). Therefore, Kristeva’s form of feminism that Moi refers to as “deconstructed” shows that women’s “political struggle” (ibid., p. 13) has not changed, however, the awareness of that struggle remains undeniable.

Moreover, Kristeva claims that although in recent decades women have more access to education and career opportunities, they are still facing various difficulties, in particular, the ones related to their identity. This is the reason why more and more women have divided identities or experience identity clash. It is because contemporary women have to balance between more responsibilities and roles: not only do they have to act on between familial and maternal responsibilities, they have professional commitments as well (Cavallaro 2003). Kristeva adds: “Women’s material and sexual independence has helped them by creating an image of autonomy, performance, and social value that gives them a certain amount of pleasure” (Kristeva 1996a: 71). Still, as Kristeva claims, in the postfeminist discourse women cannot entirely enjoy a feeling of “joyful liberation”:

‘Our life is our own’, ‘our body is our own’, but at the same time, we hear women express deep feelings of pain. The media talk a great deal about staying home, but this home often seems empty once the husband and the children are gone. Regardless of any professional or other attractions that society may offer a woman...we must acknowledge that women are suffering (Kristeva 1996a: 71).

In the aforementioned passage, Kristeva’s notion of “new maladies of the soul” is recalled (Cavallaro 2003: 38). This concept refers to the syndrome of contemporary society in which “modern men and women often appear to be impaired by two sorts of problems, the first having to do with the body and the second with a relentless desire for social and financial success” (Kristeva 1996b: 86).

Moreover, Kristeva’s focus on female identity remains one of the most debatable issues in contemporary literature. For example, Jonathan Culler (2000) asserts that literature provides political and sociological accounts that enable to reveal the factors contributing to individual’s construction of identity. Culler also claims that not only has literature “made identity a theme”, more importantly, it has created a huge impact in constructing reader’s identity (2000: 112). Other scholars like Michael Barrett (1988), has shown interest in the representation of female identity in popular fiction. In regard to feminism and its representation in popular culture, a distinction between two approaches to media texts, namely, “images of women” and “images about women” has been made (Hollows 2000: 38). Images of women deal with stereotypes created by media and are concerned with misinterpretation of women’s lives, thus supporting

patriarchal values and images (Moody 1991: 176). The second position shows how an audience is directly influenced by the media but still presents the notion of “women as images” (ibid., p. 176). Barrett’s study is significant as it shows that stereotypes imposed on women still depict them as objectified and inferior to men.

In addition, by addressing the topic of self, Kristeva also questions some feminist issues related to female body and personal identity. For Kristeva, the self is “a subject of enunciation” a speaker who takes up a subject position: “I, therefore, understand by ‘woman’ that which cannot be represented, that which is not spoken, that which remains outside naming and ideologies” (quoted in Cavallaro, 2003: 21). Thus, for Kristeva, the subject is a product of language; however, she claims that subjectivity is then unreliable and uncertain. Kristeva points out:

[A]ll identities are unstable: the identity of linguistic signs, the identity of meaning and, as a result, the identity of the speaker. And in order to take account of this destabilization of meaning and of the subject, I thought the term ‘subject in process’ would be appropriate. Process in the sense of process but also in the sense of a legal proceeding where the subject is committed to trial because our identities in life are constantly called into question, brought to trial, over-ruled (Kristeva 1989: 19).

To sum up the previously discussed aspects, Kristeva, by contributing to an understanding of identity as a social construct, deconstructs the concept of selfhood. By exploring the construction of sexual identities, she has shown a significant move away from the notion of “self” and introduced the concept of the “subject”.

The new French feminist Luce Irigaray, in order to redefine the concept of selfhood, criticises masculine models of authority which create a damaging effect on the construction of women’s identity. According to Irigaray, in Western societies gender roles have been built on sexual differences, conceptualised as “hierarchical, with one sex (the female) being inferior to, and modelled on, the male” (1985: 133). In her works, Irigaray seeks to find out how femininity and sexual difference have historically been used to suppress women; exclusively, she examines the extent to which sexual difference is implemented on both cultural and governmental level (*Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* 2016). In *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985), Irigaray makes a distinction between masculine and feminine and explains why men are treated as a superior group in the society. She asserts that the objectification of women is a result of “the feminine” being “colonised by a male fantasy”; this kind of oppression is what enables men to

perform the role of the “subject” (Russell 2013: 1). Likewise, masculine constructions of the feminine reveal a long history of the negation of female bodies. For instance, Russell points out that a woman’s body functions to satisfy and “serve the male world” (2013:1). For Irigaray such an assumption reveals “phallogentric” values of the society that can be described as follows:

[Phallogentricism] preserves the reproduction of culture in the image of a masculine morphology – a morphology sculpted and sustained through techniques of identification and attachment which institute a self-predicated upon the denigration of otherness; or, specifically, an otherness which has been attributed a feminine gender (quoted in Pottage, 1994: 16)

By challenging the notion of the body, Irigaray develops the idea about the “specificity of the body” and the “subjectivity of the subject” (quoted in Pottage, 1994: xv). She asserts that the body is an effect and a product of “symbolic inscriptions” that is constructed as a specific, “socially appropriate type of body” (ibid., p. xv). It has to be said that Irigaray aims at showing that women and femininity can be treated as independent from men and masculinity but it requires a reconsideration of linguistic and “sexual” systems and most importantly a shift in understanding the woman’s body as a positive rather than negative aspect. Jennifer Hansen observes Irigaray’s writings:

The opposites man and woman are not symmetrical but clearly hierarchical. Man alone is the paradigmatic metaphysical concept of human beings, and women are merely inferior instances of this concept. The operation of binary oppositions in culture works insidiously to shape our psyches so that we learn that man is the Universal, while a woman is contingent, particular, and deficient (quoted in Hansen, 2000: 201).

In her further discussion of the female body, Irigaray also refers to it as a “body that is structured, inscribed, constituted and given meaning socially and historically - a body that exists as such only through its socio-linguistic construction” (quoted in Hansen, 2000: 112). Since the body is seen as a construct, it reveals that female identity is not static as it is constructed by a masculine society that depicts woman as a lack. Although some critics like Dani Cavallaro (2003) view Irigaray’s connection between feminine writing and the female body as problematic in a way that it may reinforce phallogentricism, Irigaray’s encouragement of feminine writing in order to rescue women from patriarchal marginalisation is undeniable.

Just like new French feminists Kristeva and Irigaray, Helene Cixous has asserted that in the “binary oppositions promoted by patriarchal ideology” women always represent the

powerlessness, thus Cixous also speaks up for women and encourages them to write (quoted in Cavallaro, 2003: 24). In her essay “The Laugh of the Medusa” Cixous says:

[A] woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies – for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. [A] Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement (2000: 347).

This passage is significant as it implies that the right for women to write about themselves is just as important as the right to their own body and desires. Cixous follows Kristeva’s idea that a historical context is also very crucial in constructing women’s identity and asserts that “the history of writing” is “confounded with the history of reason” (Cixous 2000: 350).

Moreover, Cixous claims that the history was written by men; they commanded the laws of God and were always seen in a public sphere, while women were always absent from it, marginalised and defined as substandard. Therefore, by encouraging women to write and never stop expressing themselves, she tries to prove the significance of women’s writing –“écriture féminine”:

Write, let no one hold you back, let nothing stop you: not man; imbecilic capitalist machinery, in which publishing houses are crafty, obsequious relayers of the imperatives handed down by an economy that works against [women];...Smug-faced readers, managing editors, and big bosses don’t like the true texts of women—female-sexed texts. That kind scares them (Cixous 2000: 348).

As the aforementioned passage shows, Cixous sees writing for women as a tool encouraging and also forcing men to reconsider women’s position in a society which would also mean giving them more freedom and power. That is why she once again encourages women to liberate themselves, “break out of the snare of silence” and get “access to [their] native strength” (Cixous 2000: 351). The study by the new French feminists have proved that the history written and controlled by men has long functioned to define women as soft and existing primarily for the needs of men and children; by doing so, men succeeded in suppressing women’s voices. The only way, according to Cixous and other new French feminists, for women to change or rewrite this history is to write themselves into it.

2.2 Major Concepts in Gender Studies

Reading and interpreting literature through the lens of gender requires the knowledge of particular concepts; thus this subsection defines major theoretical terminology used in gender

studies, such as patriarchy, masculinities, heteronormativity, as well as discusses the difference between the notions masculinity and femininity and, most importantly, draws a distinction between sex and gender.

The first notion discussed in gender studies is the concept of patriarchy. According to *Merriam Webster's Dictionary Online*, patriarchy is a “social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line” (2017: 1). Patriarchy can be found in social, cultural, political and traditional figures in society. For example, a father may hold authority over women in the family as well as children. The father figure has long been known as a bread winner, the patriarch of the family and is an evidence of the patriarchal social structure. However, the notion of patriarchy is problematic because, as Allen G. Johnson (2013) claims, patriarchy creates inequality in relation to women and thus opposing patriarchy would mean attacking men. The solution offered by Johnson is to move towards an equal situation for both men and women but another challenge remains as this would indicate the need to find an alternative for the patriarchy. As a “type of social organization”, patriarchy is organised around “unequal distribution of power... not only relationships between men and women but among men as they compete and struggle to gain status, maintain control, and protect themselves from what other men might do to them” (Johnson 2005: 116). To summarise, the inequality created by patriarchy can be found not only between men and women but among men themselves.

Another key concept closely linked to patriarchy is masculinities. In *Masculinities* (1995), Raewyn Connell denies looking at masculinities as a singular concept as there is no single way to construct one's gender just like there is no singular expression of individual's gender. According to Connell (1995), while some performances of masculinities are viewed positively, others are criticised and mocked by the society. To exemplify, homosexual masculinities are traditionally disempowered, undervalued and marginalised as compared to hegemonic forms of masculinity. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as the “culturally dominant form of masculinity” (1995: 117). Men, who are associated with leadership and authority, represent hegemonic masculinity.

The question therefore arises, what is the role of women? If men occupy the position of patriarchy, what position in society do women take? Connell (1995) notes that gender structure defines some qualities and patterns of gender identity that can be characterised as either

masculine or feminine. More significantly, gender, as Connell claims, is acquired but it is not an inborn quality of an individual. For example, femininity is affirmed by its opposition of what is labelled as being masculine. Likewise, different traits such as strong-weak, violent and gentle, aggressive and passive are culturally predetermined traits creating the opposition between masculinity and femininity. That is why conforming to hegemonic qualities is crucial as it defines the individual's identity and determines if s/he is going to be accepted in the society or not.

Concerning the notion of gender, it can be stated that gender has gained a rather complex meaning after the emergence of feminism (Daugirdaitė 2000: 17-18). Previously traditional feminists claimed that there is an undeniable difference between the concepts of sex and gender and stated that while sex refers to the corporeal facts of individual's existence, gender implies conventions which determine the differences between masculinity and femininity (Felluga 2002: 1). Traditional feminists have not denied the anatomical difference between men and women, however, they emphasised the fact that behaviours of men and women differ because of social gender constructions that have "little or nothing to do with our corporeal sexes" (Felluga 2002: 1). Referring to Simone de Beauvoir (1984), gender is a social construct centred on the "natural" or biological differences between the sexes and that is why it can be asserted that an individual, for example, is not born a woman, but rather becomes one. Therefore, social, political, educational and media forces shape individual's identity which once again shows that identity is a social construct.

A clear-cut definition of sex and gender can be made. The concept of sex can be defined as "either of the two main categories (male or female) into which humans and most other living things are divided on the basis of their reproductive functions", whereas gender indicates "the state of being male or female" typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones" (Cavallaro 2003: 59). Likewise, the *Cambridge Encyclopaedia*, fourth edition, defines gender as the "social expression of the basic physiological differences between men and women, a social behaviour which is deemed to be appropriate to "masculine" or "feminine" roles and which is learnt through primary and secondary socialization" (2000:184). Thus, gender, unlike sex, is socially determined.

According to Cavallaro, the concept of gender surpasses "reductionist accounts of femininity and masculinity as conterminous with an individual's biological sex by stressing their socio-political

determination” (2003: 40). The categories of masculinity and femininity are indeed the primary societal formations around which relationships between men and women develop and practices of domination and subordination unfold (Cavallaro 2003). These categories function objectively in material power relations, such as the assignation of cultural roles and the division of labour, and subjectively. However, the categories of masculinity and femininity also depend on how male and female subjects perceive themselves and internalise various sets of symbols and standards of conduct. The distinction between the biological and the social dimensions of a person’s sexuality is assumed in French culture as it is in the Anglophone world, even though one single word, “sexe”, is used in French to designate both “sex” and “gender” (Cavallaro 2003: 40-41).

The last term discussed in this subsection is heteronormativity. Heteronormativity has been defined by Celia Kitzinger (2005) as the myriad ways in which heterosexuality is produced as a natural, unproblematic, taken-for-granted phenomenon (Kitzinger 2005). In other words, heteronormativity creates a belief that heterosexuality is an acceptable phenomenon in a society, whereas homosexuality or transsexuality is a deviation, thus other types of sexual experiences are unacceptable and deviant. According to Kristen Mayers and Luran Raymond (2010), the concept of heteronormativity refers to the ways in which heterosexuality is normalised and naturalised. Nowadays the concept of heteronormativity is associated with gender and, more specifically, queer studies, however, it is argued that its origin comes from the second wave feminism (Warner 1991). Tasmin Spargo defines heteronormativity as “the tendency in the contemporary Western sex-gender system to view heterosexual relations as the norm, and all other forms of sexual behaviour as deviations from the norm” (Spargo 1999: 73). Similarly, critics, for example, Toomey Russell and his colleagues claim that this concept creates a binary opposition between what is perceived to be normal and abnormal, acceptable and unacceptable (see Russell et al 2012). They refer to heterosexuality as “a societal hierarchical system that privileges and sanctions individuals based on presumed binaries of gender and sexuality; as a system, it defines and enforces beliefs and practices about what is “normal” in everyday life” (see Russell et al. 2012: 188).

However, Butler (1997) believes that heteronormativity is an imposition which is constituted through performance. The performativity of heteronormativity, meanwhile, is a ritual aimed at achieving the effect of its naturalisation and normalisation in the context of the body and culturally accepted norms (Butler 1997). In their article “The Normativity of the Concept of

Heteronormativity” (2015) Marcus Herz and Thomas Johansson also discuss this notion in relation to performativity and examine heteronormativity as a part of a complex system:

When we use the concept of heteronormativity, we are consequently investigating not only how sexualities are expressed and performed but also how a more extensive societal system is organized, structured, and maintained. In other words, heteronormativity not only aims at changing conditions for homosexuals but also targets the whole societal and cultural institution of heterosexuality (Herz and Johansson 2015:1011).

This definition reveals that heteronormativity can be seen as a system condemning individuals who fail to behave and fit in the societal value system. Referring to Butler (1990), since heteronormativity is strongly linked to power, it has an impact in controlling exclusion and inclusion of certain individuals in the society who accept the “natural” order of things. Such failure to conform indicates the close connection between gender and sexuality and reveal that heteronormativity is crucial in influencing the assumption of gender and sexuality as such. Therefore, it can be concluded that heteronormative attitudes are stigmatising, marginalising and oppressive of perceived deviant forms of gender and sexuality and make the expression of self-individuality more challenging as it does not conform to the norm of the society. The following subsection goes on examining the notion of gender via Judith Butler’s theory which views gender as performance.

2.3 Butler’s Theory of Gender Performativity

In her famous book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Judith Butler discusses the concept of gender performance and performativity and the relation between them. Since there are no fixed foundations for gender categories, gender seems to be performative “bringing identities into existence” not through the “expression of pre-existing reality” but actions (Butler 1990: 42). Butler claims that “the substantive effect of gender” is compelled and “performatively” produced by the “regulatory practices of gender coherence” (Butler 1990: 34). It shows that gender is performative because it “constitutes” identity it is “purported to be” (ibid., p. 34). In addition to this, a key element of gender performativity is the iteration of the act which must be understood not as a singular act but a “reiterative and citational practice” by which “discourse produces the effects that it names” (Butler 1990: 2).

Moreover, Butler uses Esther Newton's idea that "appearance is an illusion" (Newton 1972: 103). Newton asserts that while the physical body is masculine, the "inside" is feminine, and while the "inside" is masculine, the physical body or "the outside" is feminine (ibid., p. 103). Such juxtaposition suggests the discrepancy between the masculine and feminine gender and the impossibility of their union. Butler develops Newton's idea and suggests that the uniqueness of the drag performance is related to the fact that it "plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed" (Butler 1990: 103). This assumption implies a dissonance "not only between sex and performance but sex and gender, gender and performance" (Butler 1990: 137). There is no definite beginning that shows the emergence of gendered bodies because there is no "natural body" as such. This, in a way, reveals that gender is a sequence of acts, something that one does rather than one is; gender is more about "doing" rather than being and thus, the question arises about the appropriateness of the body to perform a happy/felicitous performative (Butler 1990: 25). As Butler shows, an imitation is only the expression of gender, it rejects the assumption that one sex can possibly imitate the other.

A distinction should be made between performed gender and performative gender. For Butler to say that gender is performative means "taking on a role", and "acting in some way" in which an individual "produces a series of events", whereas to state that gender is performed means claiming that "nothing is gender from the start"¹. Such divisions illustrate that the notions of performativity and performance are not synonymous; gender performance "constitutes the subject as a subject" and, as Annamaria Jagose puts it, "in this respect, performativity is the precondition of the subject" (Jagose 1996: 86). Jagose explains that gender is "performative" not because it is something that the subject deliberately and playfully assumes, but because, through reiteration, it consolidates the subject" (ibid., p. 86). By obeying social structures and various institutional powers an individual does not risk to be taken away from its gendered place. That is way Butler believes that gender is both "culturally formed" and at the same time, it is a "domain of agency and freedom" (1990: 8). Nevertheless, it is crucial to conform to gender norms as in most of the cases, individuals who reject doing so are more likely to be confronted by the heteronormative society or be exposed to violence.

¹ Butler, J. 2011. *Your Behaviour Creates Your Gender* [personal interview with Max Miller]. Accessed 20 April 2017, available from <https://www.youtube.com/cybkHStGE>

As has been previously noted, in her formulation “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” Simone de Beauvoir claims that unlike sex, gender is an aspect of identity that is acquired by an individual over the period of time (Beauvoir 1973: 301). Butler harshly criticises such distinction between gender and sex and thus she points out: “there is no recourse to a body that has not always already been interpreted by cultural meanings (1990: 8); hence, sex could not qualify as a pre-discursive anatomical facticity; indeed, sex, by definition, will be shown to have been gender all along” (ibid., p. 8). It shows that for Butler sex is “not a simple fact or static condition of the body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialise ‘sex’ and achieve this materialisation through a forcible reiteration of those norms” (Butler 1990: 1-2). It also indicates that if gender is understood as a cultural construct, while sex is understood as nature, it would mean that sexual body is only a passive receiver of a cultural law (Butler 1990: 2). In addition, Butler believes in the significance of law which forces an individual to follow heterosexual and homosexual standards for identity. As a result, an individual is not given a right to choose a gender he or she wants to enact. That is why not only sex but also gender should be perceived as a cultural construct; since sex and gender are not fixed, a subject is free to make choices related to his gender and sexuality.

In her study, Butler shows that gender is nothing else but a “social performative” (quoted in Young, 2016: 104). Moreover, gender performativity, as she asserts, is a particular strategy, illustrating parody of gender norms. To exemplify, such parodic depiction can be found in “the cultural practices of drag, cross-dressing, and the sexual stylization of butch/femme identities” (Butler 1990: 137). Young asserts that for Butler gendered performances are produced by the “discursive rules” of normative heterosexuality; such performatives derive from the “sexing of bodies” (Butler 1990: 104). Perhaps the most crucial aspect of performative gender per se is that gender is determined by the way in which it is done: “because there is neither an ‘essence’ that gender expresses or externalises nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires; since gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender creates the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all” (Butler 1990: 273).

It is important to note that “the substantive effect of gender” is compelled and “performatively” produced by the “regulatory practices of gender coherence” (Butler 1990: 34). Since there are no fixed foundations for gender categories, gender seems to be performative “bringing identities into existence” not through the “expression of pre-existing reality” but actions (Connell 2009: 42). In

the following passage Butler provides the definition of gender and explains why gender is performative:

Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender (Butler 1990: 33).

Here Butler shows that gender is a particular type of process and asserts the performative nature of gender. What makes gender performative, however, is that it “constitutes” identity it is “purported to be” (Butler 1990: 24-25), and thus, it produces identity. A key element of gender performativity is the “iteration of an act”; it means that gender performativity must be understood not as a singular act but a “reiterative and citational practice” by which “discourse produces the effects that it names” (Butler 1990: 2). Finally, Butler’s ideas about gender prove that physical bodies, as well as gender and sexuality, are all inscribed by the society. Such an idea of constant observation of individual’s physical body reminds of Foucault’s idea of panopticon where prisoners are always under surveillance (Foucault 1975: 227). Butler believes that individual’s body is seen as a prison for identity. This seems to point towards the conclusion that gender identity is performed out for observation by the society and that an individual identity is just a social construct.

2.4 Intertextuality

Intertextuality is one of the most commonly used and misused concepts in literary theory (Allen 2011). Like the cultural and modern theory of literature, intertextuality has originated from the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, a famous Swiss linguist; however, it is known that the concept itself was coined by Bulgarian-French philosopher, new French feminist and literary critic Julia Kristeva (Allen 2011).

According to philosopher William Irwin, the concept of intertextuality “has come to have almost as many meanings as users from those faithful to Kristeva’s original vision to those who simply use it as a stylish way of talking about allusion and influence” (Irwin 2004: 227). For example, linguist Michael Halliday (2003) has examined intertextuality in literature and claims that in

literature, intertextuality is shown in allusions. Halliday explains: “Intertextuality is ... the set of acts of meaning to which the given act of meaning makes allusion (2003: 361). This is usually called in literature and philology as “*allusion*” and in semiotics as “*intertextuality*” (ibid., p. 361). Theoretical considerations provided by Halliday in which he mainly focuses on allusions does not provide instances of intertextual elements in literary texts, thus his model lacks practical framework (Yazdani and Ahmadian 2013: 159). Awareness of intertextuality can be useful not only in gaining a better understanding of the primary text as such, but it is also significant in deepening reader’s mind, developing critical thinking as well as discovering multiple layers of meaning; as a consequence, a correct evaluation of intertextuality leads to better interpretations of the text (Webster 1993; Peck and Coyle 2002). A lack of careful consideration of these aspects, however, suggests a gap in the correct evaluation of the text.

Many critics have argued that there is no original literary work because there is no text that is entirely created by one, single author. For example, as has been noted by Kristeva, every single text is a compilation of pre-existent texts created and gathered together by an author (1980: 36). These texts are comprised of “a permutation of texts, the intertextuality in the space of a given text [in which] several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another” (ibid., p. 36). Every literary text, as Kristeva goes on explaining is “constructed of a mosaic of quotations” and it is also the “absorption and transformation of another” (Kriteva 1980: 66). During the moment of reading, the reader constructs a text and makes different associations and connections, which shows a subversion of the text as a static and independent totality. As a concept, intertextuality fails to present the possibility of a singular meaning, thus shattering the idea of order and stability in deciphering the meaning of the text. Following this idea, Roland Barthes states:

Any text is a tissue of past citations. Bits of code, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc., pass into the text and are redistributed within it, for there is always language before and around the text. Intertextuality, the condition of any text whatsoever, cannot, of course, be reduced to a problem of sources or influences; the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious automatic quotations, given without quotation marks (Barthes 1981: 39).

This statement shows that every text is written on the basis of another existing text and a text does not exist on its own. It also suggests the significance of text being created during the process of reading which once again emphasises that no text bears a stable and a definite meaning.

Moreover, Barthes draws a clear distinction between the notion of text and intertextuality. In “Theory of the Text”, he claims that a text is “the phenomenal surface of the literary work (Barthes 1981: 31-37, 32). For Barthes, a text is the “fabric of the words which make up the work” and which are arranged in such a way as to impose a meaning which is stable as “far as possible and unique” (1981: 32). However, the major concern that Barthes intends to show is related to the notion of stability and security (Allen 2011). While a text might be something that “secures the guarantee of the written object, bringing together its safe-guarding functions”, it may also suggest “stability and permanence of inscription, designed to correct the fragility and impression of the memory” (Allen 2011: 32).

As intertextuality suggests that any text has no origin and also no author, Barthes proclaims the “death of the author”. For Barthes, the text is “woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages (what language is not) antecedent or contemporary, which cut across and through in a vast stereophony” (1977: 160). Since it is impossible to trace the origin of the text, Barthes states that “to try to find the ‘sources’, the ‘influences’ of a work, is to fall in with the myth of filiation; the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet already read: they are quotations without inverted commas” (ibid., p. 160). To summarise previously discussed ideas, by suggesting that intertextuality reveals the lack of originality of any text, Barthes raises an issue of the authorship status in the postmodern text and treats the author as someone who recites the “already-written” information.

Literary critic Michel Foucault also declares an idea of relationality and interconnectedness of texts that the concept of intertextuality illustrates:

The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network...The book is not simply the object that one holds in one's own hands... Its unity is variable and relative (Foucault 1972: 23).

Allen links intertextuality to the notion of culture and calls it “an attempt to understand literature and culture in general” (2011: 7). He suggests that the existence of “systems, codes, and traditions of other art forms and of culture in general” is pivotal “to the meaning of a work of literature” (2011: 1). Following Foucault’s ideas, Allen also claims that intertextuality “foregrounds the notions of relationality, interconnectedness, and independence in modern

cultural life (Allen 2011: 5), which once again emphasises that as a postmodern concept, intertextuality lacks its independent meaning. Although there are various approaches to studying intertextuality, Allen (2011) asserts that on its most basic level it is a notion which refers to one text borrowing of elements of another text(s), its words, terms and/or phrases. The process of borrowing enables each text to gain various layers of meaning, therefore, when a text is read in a light of another text, it shapes the way a text is interpreted.

A scholar Tracy Lemaster (2012) notes three functions of intertextuality – comparison, dialogue and destabilisation. The function of comparison suggests a comparison in which two texts are put together; a reader has to use his or her knowledge of the original text to be able to compare and contrast original text with a text based on a primary source (Lemaster 2012: 1). Another function of a dialogue opens a conversation between two texts. Lemaster calls both an intertext and a primary book as narratives that instead of being treated as “static items” allow the engagement of a narrative conversation (ibid., p. 1). The difference between two narratives may sometimes result in the “competing dialogues” in which one is more dominant than the other. Finally, the last function of destabilisation indicates a destabilising feature of intertextuality in which reader’s understanding of the text changes because of the reference taken from a primary book or the original text. The possible reframing of the original text may reveal something new to the reader about the original “story” or change reader’s feelings about the primary book (ibid., p. 1).

Lemaster also distinguishes two forms of intertextuality. A “book in a book” form is a “brief or prolonged reference to a literary text in a second literary text” (ibid., p. 1). To exemplify, brief references might be used such as a famous character from another book might be adopted or the author might be simply providing the title from a different book. As an example of a longer intertextual reference, Lemaster uses the adoption of the storyline or a lengthy scene from another book.

In addition, critics like Philip Rayner, Peter Wall and Stephen Kruger (2004) suggest three types of intertextuality: homage, parody, and mimicry. While homage refers to a “respect for a particular text, acknowledging the power and importance of the original text by imitating it”, parody allows to “enjoy through recognition the relationship between the texts” and is highly influenced and dependent on “shared cultural knowledge” (see Rayner et al 2004: 73). Mimicry implies one medium of text which has been transformed and adopted in another medium; it is

likely that evocative power of the original text is going to be reflected in the new text (see Rayner et al 2004).

Intertextuality can have multiple effects in the text. First of all, intertextuality can create an evaluative effect for the readers (Lemaster 2011). The question asked by the readers at this stage is what influence does intertextuality create on one's comprehension and understanding of the primary book? Secondly, intertextuality can create a transformation of a prior text which results in "reflexive rereading" or reconsideration of the primary text (Lemaster 2011: 1). To exemplify, when a prior text is transformed, the author might be implicitly or explicitly changing the intertext from its original form. Finally, intertextuality can create a reinterpretation of both texts. In this case, a "simultaneous re-reading of both the primary book and its intertext" takes place (ibid., p. 1).

All things considered, as a tool of literary analysis, intertextuality is crucial for interpreting, analysing and understanding the meaning of a text. Theories of language proposed by Saussure, Kristeva, and Barthes provide different ideas on the study of language in general, thus indicating the complexity of the concept. However, all of the aforementioned critics reject the idea of text as a self-contained and a coherent unit and view it as a part of another text(s).

3. De(Construction) of Gender Identity

This analytical section focuses on the examination of how female and male identity is (de)constructed in both Fielding's novels by applying various tools of literary analysis. First of all, subsection 3.1 presents an intertextual reading of the two texts in order to analyse the subversive aspect of gender stereotypes illustrated in the novels. Secondly, subsection 3.2 looks at how irony is used to subvert the idea of stereotypical gender identity. Finally, subsection 3.3 examines gender as a performance of heteronormativity and demonstrates an ambivalent position towards femininity which reinforces the dominance of patriarchy.

3.1 Intertextuality as a Tool for Subverting Gender Stereotypes

In her novels *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, Fielding uses two major intertexts to unravel the construction of gender. Intertextual references create associations

with certain plot and character expectations and thus play a significant role in understanding the subversive aspect of gender stereotypes found in Fielding's novels. In order to examine how intertextuality contributes to the construction of gender, this subsection analyses in what ways *Bridget Jones's Diary* is a return to Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and also looks at Fielding's reference to another Austen's novel *Persuasion* in a sequel *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*. In this section, I argue that by remaking Austen's plot and character archetypes, Fielding provides a modern version of feminine and masculine identity in the contemporary society.

To begin with, *Bridget Jones's Diary* remakes a plot-driven romance in which Bridget just like Elizabeth Bennett from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is searching for a lifelong companion. Both novels are centred around the notion of an "ideal" womanhood and look at how each heroine does not follow the expectations imposed on women of their time but finally manage to overcome personal and situational flaws as they ultimately find a suitable partner for marriage. While in Bridget's society marriage comes as a result of love, Elizabeth is well aware of the fact that "happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance" (Austen 1995: 14).

It can be claimed that Austen's intertext applied in Fielding's novel is aimed at reconstructing gender identity in a postmodern world and, in particular, to show what demands and struggles contemporary women have to overcome in order to achieve self-fulfilment and to be accepted in a patriarchal society. In *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, Mr Darcy discusses the idea of a perfect and "accomplished" woman as follows:

A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address, and expressions, or the word will be but half-deserved (Austen 1995: 25).

Aforementioned aspects of an ideal womanhood in Austen's time are very different from the ones portrayed in Fielding's world. To contrast, in a "New Year' Resolution", Bridget lists some features of a perfect woman as being thin, healthy (going to a gym) with a great career and most importantly - a boyfriend (Fielding 1996: 7-8). Although Elizabeth does not fill all the aspects of what it takes to be an ideal woman, she does not seem to be struggling with her identity as much as Bridget. Bridget demonstrates growing insecurities that modern women overcome in order to achieve self-perfection. From the beginning of the novel, she shows a preoccupation with her appearance and bad habits. To exemplify, Fielding provides a detailed number of calories,

alcohol units and cigarettes that Bridget consumes per day, which highlights her disillusionment with her physical self and pathological obsession with numbers. For instance, on Tuesday 3 January section, she writes: “9st 4 (terrifying slide into obesity — why? why?), alcohol units 6 (excellent), cigarettes 23 (v.g.), calories 2472” (Fielding 1996: 14).

Moreover, it can be noted that Fielding does not define female beauty as natural. Instead, she portrays beauty as a time-consuming quality which implies her search for a redefinition of a beauty concept in the modern era. For example, in the novel Bridget makes an ironic remark on what it takes to be a woman:

Being a woman is worse than being a farmer there is so much harvesting and crop spraying to be done: legs to be waxed, underarms shaved, eyebrows plucked, feet pumiced, skin exfoliated and moisturized, spots cleansed, roots dyed, eyelashes tinted, nails filed, cellulite massaged, stomach muscles exercised (Fielding 1996: 22).

This is very different from how the concept of beauty is discussed in Austen’s novel; there is a reference to Elizabeth’s eyes as “beautiful” that Mr Darcy makes after he falls in love with her, however, Elizabeth herself is clearly not as preoccupied with the cult of beauty as Bridget. Another aspect linking both of the heroines is that they are treated as failures by their mothers. Mrs Jones parallels Mrs Bennet who desperately aims at marrying her daughter off to a wealthy man. Thus, Mrs Jones just like Mrs Bennet uses an annual family gathering (Annual Turkey Curry Buffet) as an opportunity for her daughter to meet a potential husband:

‘Oh, did I mention? Malcolm and Elaine Darcy are coming and bringing Mark with them. Do you remember Mark, darling? He’s one of those top-notch barristers. Masses of money. Divorced’ (Fielding 1996: 11).

Here an intertextual reference to Mark Darcy from *Pride and Prejudice* immediately creates some expectations about Austen’s Fitzwilliam Darcy. Mr Darcy comes from a very wealthy family and owns an estate of Pemberley. His financial well-being is treated as a significant identity marker. To exemplify, by describing the greatness of his mansion, Austen draws the parallel to Darcy’s masculine traits:

It was a large, handsome, stone building standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; and in front a stream of some natural importance was swelled into a greater, but without any artificial appearance. Elizabeth was delighted.

She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste (Austen 1995: 235).

The reference “large” and “handsome” used to describe Pemberley, also suggests Mr Darcy’s masculine strength, while “standing well on rising ground” might signal his wealth, power, and authority in his society. In the same manner, Fielding describes Bridget’s reaction when she sees Mark Darcy’s estate:

Had shock on arrival at the party as Mark Darcy’s house was not a thin white terraced house on Portland Road or similar as had anticipated, but huge, detached wedding cake-style mansion on the other side of Holland Park Avenue (where Harold Pinter, they say, lives) surrounded by greenery (Austen 1995: 117).

Fielding reuses the same scene in order to describe Mark Darcy’s masculinity. She underscores a difference between his and her class deviation. However, as she makes a reference to a prestigious area of “Holland Park Avenue” where Harold Pinter, a famous British dramatist lived, it might possibly be suggesting her focus on the prestige rather than class. By picturing Mark Darcy as a part of a high culture, Bridget feels inferior to him and hence is “shock[ed]”. There is a sense of superiority over her that Mark Darcy demonstrates. For instance, in *Pride and Prejudice* Elizabeth is insulted by Mr Darcy: “Well, she is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me” (Austen 1995: 8), whereas Fielding’s Mark Darcy harshly judges Bridget saying: “ ‘So that’s why Bridget isn’t married. She repulses men’ ” (Fielding 1996: 13).

However, Fielding subverts Elizabeth’s conservatism and turns it into Bridget’s outright confession of her feelings and emotions: she is openly discussing taboo subjects such as sex and sexuality and makes various sexual innuendos when characterising men. For instance, after Mark Darcy saves Bridget’s mother from a scandal in which she was involved with her new Portuguese boyfriend Julio, Bridget notes: “He [Mark Darcy] started to pace around the room firing questions like a top barrister [...] [I]t was pretty damn sexy, I can tell you” (Fielding 1995: 139). Here Bridget is showing urgency and frankness and thus she demonstrates far more agency to speak her mind than Elizabeth in Austen’s times. In addition, it is at this moment of Darcy’s evaluation as being “pretty damn sexy” that Bridget realises she is in love with him; in Elizabeth’s case, such realisation is delicately described by the narrator who notes: “and never had she so honestly felt that she could have loved him, as now, when all love must be vain” (Austen 1995: 169).

As the new French feminists such as Irigaray, Kristeva, and Cixous have previously noted, female identity is constructed by a masculine society and that is why it is never static. Therefore, as a result of being treated as inferior, one of the major prerogatives that women exercise is by trying to construct themselves. Bridget, who is also the narrator of her own story, defines herself in her own diary. This, in my view, is a reason why she is able to exercise more agency than Elizabeth as writing allows her to demonstrate more control over things in life. This means that since Elizabeth's identity is mainly constructed by other's view of her, therefore, she has less control in life.

Moreover, for Elizabeth who comes from a lower status in a society, marriage is the only guarantee for a financial well-being. In contrast, Bridget does not need a man to be financially secure; she is economically well-off but this is not her ultimate goal. As Sharon, Bridget's friend, points out: "We women are only vulnerable because we are a pioneer generation daring to refuse to compromise in love and relying on our own economic power" (Fielding 1996: 16). Finally, an intertextual reference to another male character from Austen's novel also has to be discussed. Daniel Cleaver's identity is cross-referencing with Austen's Mr Wickham; his identity is constructed for the sake of remaking a romantic plot in which Mr Darcy evokes the idea of a chivalrous knight and Mr Wickham, in contrast, alludes to a romantic antihero. Cleaver just like Mr Wickham is a dishonest womaniser who cheats on his partner. The first Bridget's impression of Cleaver attracts Bridget: "Love his wicked dissolute air, while being v. successful and clever" (Fielding 1996: 15). She even finds his obscene behaviour entertaining and attractive: "He was being v. funny today, telling everyone about his aunt thinking the onyx kitchen-roll holder his mother had given her for Christmas was a model of a penis. Was really v. amusing about it. Also asked me if I got anything nice for Christmas in a rather flirty way" (ibid., p. 15). Elizabeth's impression about Mr Wickham is also very positive, however, the language used to describe her admiration is very different than that of Bridget's. During Elizabeth's and Mr Wickham's encounter, she feels the "smallest degree of unreasonable admiration" (Austen 1995: 49). In the party where she meets him, Elizabeth notices Mr Wickham among other officers. She observes that Mr Wickham was "as far beyond them all in person, countenance, air, and walk, as *they* were superior to the broad-faced stuffy uncle Phillips, breathing port wine, who followed them into the room" (ibid., p. 49).

Moreover, Elizabeth feels very interested in his personality for he was “the happy man towards whom almost every female eye was turned and Elizabeth was the happy woman by whom he finally seated himself” (Austen 1995: 47). Unlike Bridget who falls in love with Daniel Cleaver’s physical appearance as much as she falls in love with some of his character traits, Elizabeth admires Mr Wickham for his gentlemanlike manners; it is he who “made her feel that the commonest, dullest, most threadbare topic might be rendered interesting by the skill of the speaker” (Austen 1995: 49). Nevertheless, since both novels end with a hero saving a heroine, it seems that Fielding does not do much subversion with Austen’s plot itself. Bridget’s case proves that even nowadays marriage for women is still treated as a significant marker of social acceptance. Therefore, it can be concluded that although Bridget demonstrates more agency and freedom of self-expression than Elizabeth, she still shows the same challenges that women have to face in the postmodern era when they fail to conform to the rules of the society.

Another sequel *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* has Austen’s *Persuasion* as an intertext. Although Bridget does not echo much of Anne’s manners but sentiments, an intertextual reference made by Fielding demonstrates recognisable images of Austen’s characters depicted in the postmodern era. In *Bridget Jones’s Diary* Fielding borrows Austen’s plot and once again focuses on the idea of marriage as an ultimate goal for women in order to gain social acceptance. While borrowing of the plot and character archetypes from *Persuasion* is less straightforwardly presented in *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, the parallel drawn between Bridget, Mark Darcy and other characters from Austen’s novels, shows a complex fusion of identities and instances of subversion.

Although Bridget is closer to Anne Elliot in age, she does not share many qualities resembling Anne Elliot who is characterised as having “elegance of mind and sweetness of character” (Austen 2012: 5). For instance, in her conversation with Captain Harville, Anne makes a remark on constancy:

‘We certainly do not forget you, so soon as you forget us. It is, perhaps, our fate rather than our merit. We cannot help ourselves. We live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us’ (Austen 2012: 232).

Bridget, in contrast, states bluntly: “[I]f we love someone it’s pretty hard to get them out of our system when they bugger off” (Fielding 1996: 233). By depicting Bridget as a forthright, rather abrupt, and judgmental in her nature, Fielding might be aiming to create a juxtaposition of

classical versus modern female protagonists. It might also be noted that borrowing elements from Austen, results in a multiplicity of roles that Bridget has. For example, in Fielding's sequel, a considerable attention is paid to Bridget's new role as a "babysitter, devoted friend, selfless daughter" (Opreanu 2011: 90). She is also depicted as a "wise counsellor" (Fielding 1996: 49), a family advisor "advising one's own father on the suspected gigolo-hiring habits of one's own mother" (Fielding 2000: 37). This leads to an assumption that an intertextual dialogue between the early nineteenth-century and late twentieth-century texts provide subverted version of masculinity and femininity. To exemplify, in *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, Mark Darcy is modelled upon Captain Frederick Wentworth - a prototype of the "new gentleman" and a well-respected naval officer, characterised by gallantry, independence, and bravery. In Austen's version, at a gathering of the Musgroves in a Bath hotel, Frederick Wentworth overhears Captain Harville and Anne talking about the relative faithfulness of men and women; moved by Anne's words he writes a letter to her as a confession of love. Likewise, at Bridget's mother's Book Club poetry reading, Mark overhears Bridget commenting on women remaining loyal to men who have forgotten them, and is moved to write her a secret note expressing his continuing regard, which he fails to give to her as he mixes it up with her father's poem "If" by Rudolph Kipling.

Since Bridget has difficulties deciphering the meaning of the poem, the attempt, however, turns out to be comic and hilarious. Bridget reads the poem while she is imprisoned in Thailand: "If you keep your head when all about you/are losing theirs and..." and interprets it as follows: "Oh My God. Oh my GOD. Do they still have beheading in Thailand?" (Fielding 2000: 249). A poem has a symbolic meaning in the novel as it brings Bridget closer to Mark Darcy just like it brings Anne Elliot together with Frederick Wentworth. Later, however, the poem becomes a source of inspiration for Bridget.

As Fielding modernises the plot of Austen's novels, she emphasises certain similarities between these two worlds – such as women's "ongoing attempts at self-refinement, and a perpetual interest in snagging a man" (Gill 2006: 85). In addition, while Austen's heroines such as Elizabeth and Anne are given only several choices in their life, Fielding's heroine has too many; for example, unlike Austen's female protagonists whose major goal in life is to marry as it is their "one cultural directive", Bridget is struggling "with conflicting social messages" (Fielding 1996: 86), thus she is expected to not only to be an independent woman with a great career but at the same time, she is obliged to find the right man, get married and have children. Therefore,

Bridget's inability to control her life does not come from sexual and economic restrictions, but from a "cultural imperative" to fit "multiple and contradictory" ideals (*Ibid.*). On the other hand, it seems that Fielding's attempt at remaking, shifting and reframing Austen's romance plot in which heroine Bridget has demonstrated her sagging commitment to feminist principles might indicate Fielding's negative reaction towards feminism.

In *Bridget Jones*, Fielding brings back the adaptation of the *BBC Pride and Prejudice* mini-series:

Just nipped out for fags prior to getting changed ready for BBC Pride and Prejudice. Hard to believe there are so many cars out on the roads. Shouldn't they be at home getting ready? Love the nation being so addicted. The basis of my own addiction, I know, is my simple human need for Darcy to get off with Elizabeth (Fielding 1996: 126-127).

Here Fielding combines Austen's plot together with her plot in which Bridget shows the same tendency to reject the original work (Austen's novel), thus choosing an inauthentic one (Television mini-series) which is culturally more appropriated. As passage shows, Bridget admits her interest in Elizabeth's relationship with Darcy, her deep involvement with a fictional character is undeniable. The following intertextual reference indicates Bridget's fascination with a physical appearance of an actor who plays Mr Darcy: "We all fell silent then, watching Colin Firth emerging from the lake dripping wet, in the see-through white shirt. Mmm. Mmmm" (Fielding 1996: 35). Bridget makes a direct reference to Mr Darcy, whom Bridget treats as an embodiment of a modern Mark Darcy:

'Fawaw, that Mr. Darcy.' I love the way he talks, sort of as if he can't be bothered. Ding-dong! Then we had a long discussion about the comparative merits of Mr. Darcy and Mark Darcy, both agreeing that Mr. Darcy was more attractive because he was ruder but that being imaginary was a disadvantage that could not be overlooked (Fielding 1996: 126).

Mr Darcy is a representative of a perfect Austenian character, while Mark Darcy is a modern version of him. Bridget goes on examining the relationship between Mr Darcy and Elizabeth and secretly identifies with them:

They are my chosen representatives in the field of shagging, or, rather, courtship. I do not, however, wish to see any actual goals. I would hate to see Darcy and Elizabeth in bed, smoking a cigarette afterward. That would be unnatural and wrong and I would quickly lose interest (*ibid.*, p. 126).

In this passage Bridget recalls Tom's commentary on a book which discusses men's obsession with football; just like football fans who see their team as "chosen representatives" (ibid., p. 126), Bridget has the same feeling about Elizabeth and Mr Darcy. Her substitution of the word "shagging" with "courtship" indicates the limitations of the reinvention of Austen's copy of *Pride and Prejudice* in which incorporation of sexual explicitness would create less interest in Austen's protagonists. However, when Bridget finds out on television that actors who were playing fictional Mr Darcy and Elizabeth had a real-life affair, she feels indignant and shocked. Bridget makes the following remark:

Darcy and Elizabeth, hideous, dressed as modern-day luvvies, draped all over each other in a meadow: she with blond Sloane hair, and linen trousersuit, he in striped polo neck and leather jacket with a rather unconvincing moustache. Apparently they are already sleeping together (ibid., p. 126).

Here Bridget expresses a kind of postmodern "crisis of representation". The difficulty to realise a relation that a copy has with the original work just like a struggle to face the fact that a fictional romance continues in a real-world creates a sense of bewilderment for her. Bridget admits: "That is absolutely disgusting. Feel disorientated and worried, for surely Mr Darcy would never do anything so vain and frivolous as to be an actor and yet Mr Darcy is an actor" (ibid., p. 126).

The complexity as well as confusion that Bridget experiences, reaches its climax in the sequel *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* when Bridget interviews Colin Firth, the real-life actor who performed the role of Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*. An audiotape transcript of the interview is provided for the purpose of authenticity; however, Fielding turns it into a comedy in which Bridget fails to separate Colin Firth from his fictional role of Mr Darcy. Rather than focusing on his acting in a thriller movie, she asks:

BJ: You know BBC Pride and Prejudice?

CF: I do know, yes.

BJ: When you had to dive into lake?

CF: Yes

BJ: When they had to do another take, did you have to take the wet shirt off and then put a dry on? (Fielding 2000: 137)

The majority of the interview consists of Bridget's questions related to Colin Firth's t-shirts and also sexual aspects that she feels curious about:

BJ: Do you think Mr. Darcy would have slept with Elizabeth Bennet before the wedding?
CF: Yes, I do think he might have.
BJ: Do you? [...]
CF: Don't know if Jane Austen would agree with me on this but—
BJ: We can't because she's dead (Fielding 2000: 143).

The discrepancy between Bridget's forthrightness and Colin Firth's embarrassment about her straightforward questions creates a comedy and laughter. Later feeling desperate to find out about Mr Darcy having "most enormous sex drive" (Fielding 2000: 142), she directs the interview to discuss a screenwriter's note on stage directions saying "imagine that Darcy has an erection" (*Ibid.*), thus rather than focusing on intellectual questions, she demonstrates her exaggerated interest in sexual aspects. Finally, as the end of the interview shows, Bridget fails in recognising the fictional versus a realistic character:

BJ: But do you think you are not like Mr. Darcy?
CF: I do think I'm not like Mr. Darcy, yes.
BJ: I think you are exactly like Mr. Darcy.
CF: In what way?
BJ: You talk in the same way as him.
CF: Oh, do I?
BJ: You look exactly like him, and I, oh, oh... (Fielding 2000: 143).

Fielding's incorporation of this intertext in which Bridget feels lost in her confusions might not only suggest her irony directed at complexities of the postmodern play but her inability to relate to traditional, Austenian characters. Based on this, the dialogue established between the novel and mini-series of *Pride and Prejudice* creates "the subversive fantasy of female autonomy, to the extent of transforming the gaze into a major structuring principle and promoting the female spectators' sympathy towards a hero "allowed to express weaknesses, doubts and emotions which the late twentieth century constructed as desirable in a man" (López 2005: 206). This, however, creates a contrast between the notion of a modern masculinity versus masculinity of Mr Darcy depicted by Austen. The interview between Bridget and Colin Firth – Mr Darcy embodies a shift in power relations in which we see Bridget demonstrating more agency as a journalist who pertains more power than her interviewee; however, since a "modern" Mr Darcy that Bridget admires in a movie is depicted as "an object of desire for the female spectator", his "narcissistic gaze by which women fantasised themselves in Elizabeth's place" reveal his character qualities that were unacceptable and unimaginable in Austen's times (López 2005: 206-207). Thus the

emphasis on a male body and sexuality creates a subversion of gender stereotypes in which modest and romantic Mr Darcy is transformed into a sex object.

3.2 Irony as a Literary Device for Changing Gender Stereotypes

In *Bridget Jones Diary* and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, the irony is used as a crucial identity construction tool. In her novels, Fielding uses irony to portray self-perfection and communicate materialistic values of her characters (Marsh 2004). In *Bridget Jones's Diary*, humour used in the novel is “ironically self-deprecating” (Ferris and Young 2008: 3-4). However, self-deprecating irony and humour are also used in its sequel. In the online interview with *Ivillage.co.uk*, Fielding herself has noted the significance of irony and satire in her the novels:

Women are so naturally funny, ironic, and self-deprecating and I think they like books with that sort of tone. I think the book touched a nerve which is something about the gap between how women feel they are expected to be and how they actually are. We are bombarded by so many media images of female perfection and conflicting roles (Ivillage.co.uk 2005).

The heroine Bridget Jones is a specimen of such a modern woman, trying to follow the demands imposed by the culture of consumption so that she could embody a female perfection. However, Fielding challenges the idea about the perfectability of woman and rather than demonstrating Bridget's devoted quest for self-perfection, undermines her wish for self-improvement. This section aims at analysing the construction and deconstruction of gender identity by means of irony and humour. First of all, it looks at Bridget as an embodiment of contemporary women's failure to achieve self-improvement. The major argument of this section is that Fielding uses irony to (de)construct gender identity and to illustrate a failure to achieve feminist ideals.

Bridget defines herself in the realm of feminism but “to understand her place within feminism as a whole” is a “struggle” as she is in “quest for self-definition” (Ostriker 1989: 58). Bridget tries to construct her identity as that of a feminist and even refers to her gatherings with friends as “our feminist ranting” (Fielding 1996: 69). For example, when Mark Darcy calls her a “radical feminist” who has a “glamorous life”, she feels an excitement and takes pride in being classified as one.

There are various instances in both of the novels when Bridget and her friends contemplate about feminist ideals. Bridget's friend Shazzer, for instance, shares her hopes for a better future for

feminists. She observes how “ten years ago people who cared about the environment were laughed at” and now everyone is aware of “the power of a green consumer” (Fielding 2000: 68). Shazzer also forecasts that “in years ahead the same will come to pass with feminism” (ibid., p. 68). She believes that a feminist future would not only change women but also men:

There won't be any men leaving their families and postmenopausal wives for young mistresses [...] or trying to have sex with women without any niceness or commitment, because the young mistresses and women will just turn around and tell them to sod off and men won't get any sex or any women unless they learn how to behave properly instead of cluttering up the sea-bed of women with their SHITTY, SMUG, SELF-INDULGENT BEHAVIOUR (ibid., p. 68).

Here Shazzer is speaking about the empowerment of women which will enable them to take control over men. By addressing the problems of men cheating on their wives, Shazzer believes that one day wives will have more agency in the family, whereas men will be dependent on them.

Although Bridget tries to live up to what she believes is to be a feminist, sometimes her efforts are pointless. For example, in her “New Year Resolution” list she adds a wish to make up a compilation “mood tapes so [she] can have tapes ready with romantic/dancing/rousing/feminist etc. tracks” (Fielding 1996: 8). Ironically, listening to feminist tracks for Bridget is a way to become more feminist. Another instance showing Bridget compelled with the idea of feminism happens when her mother decides to leave her husband for a younger man and plans to “change things a bit and spend what’s left of [hers] looking after [herself] for a change” (Fielding 1996: 33). Bridget believes that if she looks at the situation “as a feminist to see Mum’s point of view” only then she might be able to understand her. It seems that by depicting Bridget as proud of being a feminist, Fielding deconstructs her identity to mock contemporary world in which many women claim to be feminists without knowing exactly what this concept stands for and what it exactly means.

There is a conflict between Bridget’s feminist ideals and the reality in which she is treated unfairly by men. For example, Daniel Cleaver treats her as an object of a sexual desire rather than a life-long partner. Bridget remembers: “As he started to undo the zip he whispered, ‘This is just a bit of fun, OK? I don’t think we should start getting involved’ ” (Fielding 1996: 23). The reference to the denial of “involvement” clearly indicates that for Daniel sexual relationship with Bridget does not define her status of his girlfriend, whereas Bridget looks at it as a bond between two partners and even sees him as a potential future husband. Like Gilbert and Gubar’s

“madwoman in the attic” Bridget bursts out in anger and declares: “ ‘That is just such crap’ [...] ‘How dare you be so fraudulently flirtatious, cowardly and dysfunctional? I am not interested in emotional fuckwittage. Goodbye’ ” (ibid., p. 23). This passage shows that an ability to stand for herself arouses a sense of triumph in Bridget, however, she still feels self-contradictory.

At the same time as she declares how “great” it was and that “you should have seen his face” she laments: “But now I am home I am sunk into gloom. I may have been right, but my reward, I know, will be to end up all alone” (ibid., p. 23). This statement brings Irigaray’s idea about the objectification of women which she believes to be a result of the “colonisation of males’ fantasy”. Hence, being reduced to the sexual object results in Bridget’s loneliness and isolation, which makes her question feminist ideals. Later Sharon explains about a “commitment problem”, enabling men to exercise their power over women: “It’s the three-minute culture. It’s a global attention-span deficit. It’s typical of men to annex a global trend and turn it into a male device to reject women to make themselves feel clever and us feel stupid” (Fielding 1996: 97).

Fielding also subverts the idea of a female perfection by depicting Bridget’s preoccupation with her body image. Inability to control certain aspects of life, such as age, causes much distress to single women like Bridget. For example, when she realises that her birthday is coming soon, she becomes hysterical rather than happy and starts “scanning face in mirror for wrinkles and frantically reading *Hello!* checking out everyone’s ages in desperate search for role models” (Fielding 1996: 44). Her fears of getting old are far from existential; she is concerned about “fighting long-impacted fear that one day in your thirties you will suddenly, without warning, grow a big fat crimplene dress, shopping bag, tight perm and face collapsing in manner of movie special-effect, and that will be it” (ibid., p. 44). Ironically, having realised that Jane Seymour is forty-two, Bridget chooses her and Joanna Lumley as her role models, thus revealing insecurities about her own age and physical appearance. As Bridget is terrified with the idea of getting old, she brings up the story of Jesus:

Oh God. What to do Wish had not been born but immaculately burst into being in similar, though not identical, manner to Jesus, then would not have had to have birthday. Sympathize with Jesus in sense of embarrassment he must, and perhaps should, feel over two-millennium-old social imposition of own birthday on large areas of globe (ibid., p. 44)

It is a juxtaposition of these two identities that create a comic effect on the readers. That is why rather than showing sympathy to her, readers laugh at her own comedy. It might be noted that to some extent Bridget tries to challenge patriarchy which has long ascribed the role of women within a domestic sphere. For example, when she decides to cook “the shepherd’s pie with Chargrilled Belgian Endive Salad, Roquefort Lardons and Frizzled Chorizo [...] followed by individual Grand Marnier soufflés” for the first time in her life, she feels full of enthusiasm and happiness about herself and even hopes to “become known as brilliant cook and hostess” (Fielding 1996: 46). As the following passage shows, a birthday preparation turns out to be a failure:

Aargh. Doorbell. Am in bra and pants with wet hair. Pie is all over floor. Suddenly hate the guests. Have had to slave for two days, and now they will all swan in, demanding food like cuckoos. Feel like opening door and shouting, ‘Oh, go fuck yourselves’ (Fielding 1996: 47).

Here Fielding seems to be mocking contemporary women having to juggle the multiplicity of roles in their life. As she depicts Bridget without proper cooking skills, self-deprecatory irony and humour diminish criticism on her identity. In addition, as Bridget’s first diary entry reveals, she is on a constant quest for stability but the pressures from society create an ongoing conflict within her own self. As soon as *Bridget Jones Diary* opens with Bridget’s “New Year’s Resolutions”, irony and satire are applied as significant identity characterisation tools. The following are Bridget’s New Year goals which she names in capital letters as “I WILL NOT”:

Drink more than fourteen alcohol units a week. Smoke. Waste money on pasta-makers, ice-cream or other culinary devices which will never use; book by unreliable literary authors to put impressively on shelves; exotic underwear, since pointless as have no boyfriend. Behave sluttishly around the house, but instead imagine others are watching. Spend more than earn [...] Have crushes on men, but instead form relationships based on mature assessment of character (Fielding 1996: 7).

Personal ambitions that Bridget lists tell a great deal about her character flaws: not only does she smoke and consume too much alcohol, constantly gets involved in questionable relationships with men but also as a part of a consumer society spends too much money on goods. As her next day diary entry suggests, Bridget undermines her wish for self-improvement and hence she confesses: “9st 3 but post-Christmas. Alcohol units 14 (but effectively covers two days and 4 hours of party was on New Year’s Day), cigarettes 22, calories 5424” (Fielding 1996: 10).

The irony of self-perfection continues as Bridget finally manages to achieve her goal of losing weight and quits smoking but her self-confidence is suddenly diminished by her friend's reaction:

'God, are you alright?' asked Jude when I walked in. 'You look really tired.'
'I am fine' I said, crestfallen. I've lost seven pounds. What's the matter?"
'Nothing. No, I just thought...'
'What? What?'
'Maybe you've lost it a bit quickly off your... face', she trailed off, looking at my admittedly somewhat deflated cleavage' (Fielding 1996: 58).

Later her friend Simon also expresses shock and concern about her drastic change in appearance:

'Bridgiiiiiiiiit! Have you got a fag?'
'No, I've given up.'
'Oh, blimey, no wonder you look so...'
'What?'
'Oh, nothing, nothing. Just a bit... drawn' (ibid., p. 58).

As evident in the dialogue cited above, Bridget's attempt to gain assumingly a perfect physical appearance results in futile efforts. Still, rather than following her goals, Bridget gives up on herself and wallows in self-pity: "Now I feel empty and bewildered – as if a rug has been pulled from under my feet" (ibid., p. 58). Her disappointment is so overwhelming that she even "feels like a scientist who discovers that his life's work has been a total mistake" (ibid., p. 58). Here Fielding uses self-deprecatory humour and irony to illustrate Bridget's weaknesses. Instead of demonstrating persistence, she describes a self-absorbed unhappiness over a failed diet. Multiple hyperboles are used to express her disappointment:

Eighteen years – wasted. Eighteen years of calorie – and fat-unit-based arithmetic. Eighteen years of buying long shirts and sweaters and leaving the room backwards in intimate situations to hide my bottom. Millions of cheesecakes and tiramisus, tens of millions of Emmenthal slices left uneaten. Eighteen years of struggle, sacrifice and endeavour – for what? (ibid., p. 58)

As shown above, exaggerated statements contain a self-deprecating irony, which not only triggers laughter but emphasises the failure of self-improvement. Still, Fielding not only uses irony to portray Bridget and other female characters as overly concerned with their body image, she implies the absurdity of a modern consumer society. To exemplify, before preparing for "Priest-Law Society Dinner Party", Bridget goes shopping in order to "solve figure problems in short term" (Fielding 2000: 38) and even gets a gym appointment hoping to undergo some change. She feels envious for Rebecca – a new Mark Darcy's girlfriend who has "things like a baby giraffe"

and “smoothly moves on to DKNY chinos” (Fielding 2000: 27). A unique syntax used by Fielding invokes a rich imagery in reader’s mind, which creates a humorous juxtaposition between the physical images of Rebecca and Bridget. By illustrating such an absurd attempt at self-improvement, it seems that Fielding also aims to depict women as victims of the consumer society, who follow the latest trends and by doing so, struggle to reach the unrealistic image of what they assume to be a female perfection.

In order to exemplify another instance of a self-deprecating irony directed at Bridget, the scene at the Turkey Curry Buffet should be recalled. As Bridget notices Mark Darcy dressed in a “diamond-patterned sweater and bumble-bee socks” (Fielding 1996: 12-14), mocks Mark for his ridiculously emasculate appearance but as she meets him later in a publishing party dressed in an elegant suit, she is the one who is mocked:

Sulkily grabbing a handful of passing sate sticks and shoving them into my mouth. As I looked up I saw a dark-haired man in suit straight in front of me. ‘Hello, Bridget’ he said. I nearly opened my mouth and let all the sate sticks fall straight out. It was Mark Darcy. But without the Frank Bough-style diamond-patterned sweater. ‘Hello,’ I said through my mouthful, trying not to panic (Fielding 1996: 100).

Fielding uses a detailed description to illustrate Bridget embarrassment as she fails to present herself in a sophisticated and an elegant manner. This might also indicate that for Bridget, a self-deprecating humour enables her to diminish a strong feeling of shame and awkwardness.

During every stage of her relationship with Mark Darcy and Daniel Cleaver, she consults her (girl)friends for possible solutions. When Daniel has left her “hanging in air” for two weekends after their sexual intercourse (Fielding 1996: 60), she considers Sharon’s advice to “tell him what I [Bridget] thinks of him” (Fielding 1996: 60) and Tom’s suggestion to remain an “aloof, unavailable ice-queen” (Fielding 1996: 64). It ironises the concept of relationships between Bridget and her lovers, since being unable to keep her relationship matters in privacy, she shares even the slightest details about her boyfriends.

As Bridget seeks to find strength to face relationship issues in her life as well as achieve self-improvement, she looks for her answers in the media. In *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and its sequel, Bridget and her friends are constantly discussing and sharing information found in the *Cosmopolitan* magazine and self-help books. Media has encouraged women to change into a “new woman” thus leaving the “old self” (Lee 1988: 168). For example, Bridget calls herself a

“child of *Cosmopolitan* culture” and admits: “I have been “traumatized by super-models and too many quizzes and know that neither my personality nor my body is up to it if left to its own devices” (Fielding 1996: 36). As she admits to not being able to “take the pressure”, it is ironic as she refers to her own diet and hopes to “cancel and spend the evening eating doughnuts in a cardigan with egg on it” (ibid., p. 36). Moreover, the *Cosmopolitan* becomes a significant source of information for Bridget that she naively accepts without critically evaluating its content: “When I got back I called Jude but she started telling me about a marvellous new oriental idea in this month’s *Cosmopolitan* called Feng Shui, which helps you get everything you want in life” (Fielding 1996: 134). Being introduced to the Chinese philosophical theory of Feng Shui she immediately tries to implement it:

Extraordinary. After spoke to Jude could not face shopping or similar light-hearted things. Thought this might be the perfect time to do the Feng Shui so went out and bought Cosmopolitan. Carefully, using the drawing in Cosmo, I mapped the ba-gua of the flat. Had a flash of horrified realization. There was a wastepaper basket in my Helpful Friends Corner. No wonder bloody Tom had disappeared” (ibid., p.134).

This, ironically, signifies a desire for harmonisation and creation of a better environment. In addition to the *Cosmopolitan* magazine, Bridget aims at achieving self-improvement through self-help books which in the late twentieth century were considered to be the “postmodern cultural improvement” (McGee 2005: 11). Although self-help books are “based on one’s own resources as well as efforts to achieve goals without relying on the help of others (Malatesta 2014), Bridget is still highly dependent on her friends and constantly consults them about her relationships. Mark Darcy, in contrast, finds self-help books threatening and tells Bridget:

What Men Want? Beyond Co-dependency with a Man Who Can’t Commit? Loving Your Separated Man Without Losing Your Mind? You do realize you’re building up the largest body of theoretical knowledge about the behaviour of the opposite sex in the known universe. I’m starting to feel like a laboratory animal! (Fielding 2000: 59).

Satire of self-help books continues in *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*. Ultimately, rather than finding a secret of self-perfection and individual improvement without the help of others, she realises the conflicting nature of these philosophies. Bridget wonders: “Surely it cannot be that reading self-help books to improve my relationship has destroyed the whole relationship?” (Fielding 2000: 215). As Jo Gill notes, the line between spiritual guidance and self-help books is “nothing if not blurred” (2006: 87); for Bridget, self-help books function as a “new form of religion which helps people to “find another set of rules” (Fielding 2000: 60). As soon as Daniel

starts ignoring Bridget, it makes her feel “so unattractive” that she immediately thinks about a self-help book as a solution for her issues, a significant tool helping to “centre herself more” (Fielding 1996: 20). Ironically, Bridget also believes that “appropriate” self-help book should be “Eastern-religion-based” (ibid., p. 20) but she does not have a well-reasoned argument to explain her choice perhaps hoping that Eastern theology is spiritually more enriching than the Western one.

Among self-help books, however, she also lists various diet books such as the F-plan, the Hay Diet, the Scarsdale Diet and the Anti-Cellulite Raw-Food Diet, and Scarsdale Vegetarian Diet (Fielding 1996: 42). Bridget notes: “I realised it has become too easy to find a diet to fit in with whatever you happen to feel like eating and that diets are not there to pick and mixed but picked and stuck to, which is exactly what I shall begin to do once I’ve eaten this chocolate croissant” (ibid., p. 42). Therefore, rather than carefully applying information listed in the book, once again with a self-deprecating irony she presents her failure to achieve self-improvement. When she finally schedules forty-seven self-help books in a dustbin, Bridget “feels like entire life’s work has been a failure” (Fielding 2000: 215). This moment is crucial in the novel as her decision to reject reading self-help books may imply her self-confidence and readiness to embrace a new self, however, since, at the end of sequel *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, Fielding portrays Bridget going back to reading them, this once again proves her endless attempts at self-improvement.

Ironically, when Mark Darcy asks Bridget during the Chicken Curry Buffet about the recent book she has read, she does assume that self-book *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* cannot be considered as “proper book” and that Mark Darcy “[is] ready to accept himself as a Martian quite yet”, instead, trying to impress him she mentions a “five-hundred-page feminist treatise” called “Backlash” (Fielding 1996: 13). This clearly shows Bridget’s superficial view of feminism. Since she has never read this classic of feminism, she is not aware of dangers discussed by Faludi that contemporary women face as a result of a commercial culture distorting feminist notions of self-determination and improvement. Ironically, by her attempt to present herself as a well-read feminist, she once again embodies these victimised women of consumer generation that Faludi describes in her work.

Bridget demonstrates an issue discussed by Kristeva that contemporary women have to face – although she celebrates sexual and material independence which enables her to exercise a great deal of autonomy, she is still under the power of patriarchy. In *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, Bridget contemplates about taking the role of the mother. For example, when she is imprisoned in Thailand, her biggest fear is to miss the years of motherhood: “I’m stuck here for the rest of my childbearing years for something I didn’t do” (Fielding 2000: 256). Later being told that she will have to spend ten years in prison she says: “If I am here for ten years, I will never be able to have any children. Unless I take a fertility drug when I get out and have eight” (Fielding 2000: 251). Her thoughts turn into a fantasy where she imagines herself having a child in prison: “I could get the assistant to the British consul somehow to impregnate me. But where would I get hold of folic acid in jail? The baby would grow up stunted” (ibid., p. 251). Here, in my view, irony aimed at Bridget is used to imply a return to woman’s traditional role of a mother. It does not seem, however, that Bridget desires to have a child; instead, faced with a situation that might be threatening her role of a mother, she wants to have one. Therefore, Fielding seems to be emphasising the anxiety in single, unmarried and childless women caused by the society’s negative view of them.

It is, however, only in *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* that Bridget’s ideals of feminism become questioned by her friends. Bridget complains: “Shaz was accusing me of being obsessed with men when I was supposed to be a feminist” (Fielding 2000: 16). This implies that as a “real feminist” Bridget is not supposed to openly reveal her affection to the opposite sex. As the following passage shows, Bridget still chooses friendship over her principles: “It was all turning into a hideously unfeminist man-based row when we realized it was ridiculous and said we’d see each other tomorrow” (ibid., p. 16). This passage, according to Rocío Montoro, is crucial as it reveals that the novel itself is “symptomatic with a rather oblique understanding of feminism of these heroines” (2012: 118). Therefore, it could be concluded that both Bridget and her friend tend to assert a slanting idea of feminism.

As both of the novels have shown, Bridget’s construction of her identity is based on a society’s view of women as sexual objects and that is why her preoccupation with body and general appearance were much emphasised. Since her attempt at achieving self-improvement was ironically diminished, and rather than embodying feminist ideals at the end of the sequel she returned back to a romantic relationship, this proves her superficial view of feminism and

impossibility of achieving feminist ideals. To sum up, it can be claimed that irony enables Fielding to subvert the stereotypes about contemporary women's quest for autonomy and female perfection.

3.3 Gender as Performance of Heteronormativity

Bridget Jones's Diary and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* prefigure Butler's concept of gender performativity. In both of the novels femininity and even masculinity are questioned as a result of diversion from traditional gender stereotypes, however, the pressure to conform seems to be greater among women rather than men. This section examines the representation of gender as a performance of social conventions that constitutes identity and argues that in her novels Fielding demonstrates an ambivalent position towards femininity which reinforces the dominance of patriarchy and heteronormativity.

In both of the novels, Fielding depicts Bridget as a prototype of a modern woman with a career. Although Bridget is economically independent and is able to make independent choices in her life, there are certain anxieties that have an effect on her identity. She feels pressure from her relatives to engage in a heterosexual relationship:

'So, come on, then, Bridget! How's yer love life!' quipped Geoffrey, giving me one of his special hugs, then going all pink and adjusting his slacks.

'Fine.'

'So you still haven't got a chap. Durr! What are we going to do with you!'

'Stand up straight, darling,' hissed Mum.[...]

'So what are you going to do about babies, Bridget?' said Una.

Fielding 1996: 152).

As can be seen from the above conversation, even at her family gatherings, she is receiving uncomfortable remarks on her status:

'Bridget! What are we going to do with you!' said Una. 'You career girls! I don't know! Can't put it off for ever, you know. Tick-tock-tick-tock.'

'Yes. How does a woman manage to get to your age without being married?' (Fielding 1996: 12)

A sarcastic remark on Bridget's biological clock ticking years is a reminder of her still being unmarried and childless. This creates uneasiness in Bridget and at the same time makes her feel disgruntled, thus she comments:

Oh God. Way can't married people understand that this is no longer a polite question to ask? We wouldn't such 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 (Fielding 1996: 33).

Here Bridget's irritation may signify her criticism of the society's imposition to live according to the rules of heteronormativity that might contradict individual's own values and ideals. Before her first date with her boss Daniel, Bridget spends a great amount of time beautifying herself, which is a common practice among women aimed at attracting a sexual partner. Referring to Butler's theory, Bridget is performing her gender which constitutes her identity. By iterating various acts such as waxing her legs, shaving her armpits, plucking her eyebrows, exfoliating and moisturising her skin, dying the roots of her hair, tinting her eyelashes, filing her nails, massaging cellulite, and exercising her stomach muscles (Fielding 1996: 22), she constructs her femininity. In other words, she performs various acts that are socially ascribed as feminine. There is still a sense of struggle with the body image that Bridget demonstrates. She feels "completely exhausted by an entire day of date-preparation" and reveals the challenges that women have to overcome as they perform their gender:

Sometimes I wonder what I would be like if left to revert to nature — with a full beard and handlebar moustache on each shin, Dennis Healey eyebrows, face a graveyard of dead skin cells, spots erupting, long curly fingernails like Struwelpeter, blind as bat and stupid runt of species as no contact lenses, flabby body flobbering around. Ugh, ugh. Is it any wonder girls have no confidence? (ibid., p. 22)

In the aforementioned passage, by iterating her gender, Bridget at the same time is questioning femininity. For Bridget, the act of assuming gender is "the whole performance" (ibid., p. 22), which has to be maintained merely for the sake of self-confidence. As has been noted by Susan Bordo (1993), the regimes of makeup, dieting, and dress enable women and also men to sculpt their bodies into shapes in order to show their submission to prevailing social norms. These practices attach the production of "appropriately gendered bodies" and also other aspects of "bodily identity" which is a "subject to social normalization" (Bordo 1993: 1). Bridget challenges the idea of producing gender as an easy practice, thus she notes: "Ended up kneeling on a towel trying to pull off a wax strip firmly stuck to the back of my calf while watching *Newsnight* in an effort to drum up some interesting opinions about things. My back hurts, my head aches and my legs are bright red and covered in lumps of wax" (Fielding 1996: 36). When she tries to show

conformity to feminine norms, through ironic undertone she reveals the challenges that contemporary women have to face when trying to follow these norms. Since women's beauty is not treated as natural but a time-consuming work, it may indicate the subversion of femininity as requiring no physical or mental exertion.

As has been previously discussed in this thesis, the new feminist theorists like Irigaray have argued that the role of a woman is traditionally associated with motherhood and that since ancient times the identity of a woman has been stereotypically linked to the role of a mother. In contrast, men have long been associated with subjectivity, while women – with objectivity. Such assumptions are, as Irigaray argues, the myth constructed by patriarchy to restrict and silence women. In both of the novels, Fielding shows the return to this tradition and depicts Bridget having fantasies about her role of a mother. The following passage suggests Bridget's desire to constitute motherhood and to follow heteronormativity, thus she imagines: "Daniel carrying the baby in a sling, Daniel rushing home from work, thrilled to find the two of [them] pink and glowing in the bath, and, in years to come, being incredibly impressive at parent/teacher evenings" (Fielding 1996: 63). As their relationship ends, she still fantasises about motherhood but this time it is Mark Darcy whom she imagines to be a potential father: "Wonder what Mark Darcy would be like a father (father to own offspring, mean). Not self. That would indeed be sick in manner of Oedipus" (Fielding 2000: 4). It suggests that Bridget, in a sense, illustrates a stereotypical femininity as she identifies herself with the role of a mother.

Referring to Butler's theory, gender illustrates individual's learnt performance of the gendered behaviour which has no origin but is used to denote masculinity or femininity. While, for instance, Bridget has appropriately iterated gendered behaviour which is associated with femininity, her heterosexuality is not questioned. On the other hand, her gay friend Tom's identity is questioned because he constitutes his identity not only by identifying himself with the same sex but also by failing to follow learnt performance of gendered behaviour. For Bridget, Tom seems to be occupying a position of in-betweenness and his homosexuality constitutes him as "the other": "Girls are so much nicer than men (apart from Tom but homosexual)" (Fielding 1996: 117). Bridget's mother, to exemplify, fails to accept the existence of homosexual people in the society:

Mum had been to church and suddenly realized in a St Paul-on-road-to-Damascus-type blinding flash that the vicar is gay. 'It's just laziness darling,' was her view on the whole

homosexuality issue. 'They simply can't be bothered to relate to the opposite sex. Look at your Tom (Fielding 1996: 25).

The reference to “laziness” and a failure to “relate to the opposite sex” implies Mrs Jones’s negative and even a derogatory view on homosexuality. As a voice of a homophobic society, she has a prejudice against homosexual people:

'Mother,' I said. 'Tom has known he was a homosexual since he was ten.'
'Oh, darling! Honestly' You know how people get these silly ideas. You can always talk them out of it (ibid., p. 25).

As Tom’s case shows, he has rejected to perform gendered behaviour imposed on him by normative heterosexuality since his early childhood. That is why his otherness, or as Butler calls it “abjection”, is alarming even for Bridget: “Frankly, I am quite worried about Tom. I think taking part in a beauty contest has started to make him crack under the pressures we women have long been subjected to and he is becoming insecure, appearance obsessed and borderline anorexic” (Fielding 1996: 131). An irony is used here to mock Tom’s attempt at constituting himself as a beauty star, which results in his iteration of feminine behaviour. Tom’s case also recalls Beauvoir’s famous claim that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (Beauvoir 1984: 32) which explains his rejection of heteronormativity.

Tom’s identity reinforces feminine qualities to such an extent that his sexuality is questioned even by his own partner. For example, after Tom’s rhinoplasty, his boyfriend abandons him. Bridget notes: “When, however, Creepy Jerome saw him after the operation he was so repulsed he said he was going away for a few days, bugged off and hasn’t been seen or heard of since” (Fielding 1996: 134). Tom’s decision to do nose plastic surgery to enhance feminine qualities results in him feeling “depressed and traumatized and so weird” (ibid., p. 134) because his partner leaves him.

Moreover, Fielding also shows that the assumptions of normative heterosexuality as a prevailing ideology become a force dictating hegemonic standards for individual’s identity. Since Tom publicly shows that he is a gay, his identity is discriminated by heterosexuals. Bridget recalls how trying to “cheer himself up”, Tom “let off rockets from the roof terrace into the garden of the people below who [he] says are homophobic” (Fielding 1996: 131). Such behaviour epitomises Tom’s attempt at rebelling against homophobic society and at the same time illustrates his

weakness and a lack of power. Ultimately, he realises that discrimination is a result of his sexual orientation but feels unwilling to follow the hegemonic standards of society.

To refer to Butler's ideas, dominant ideals imposed by men and heterosexuality, underline their power over specific groups such as homosexual people who are considered as outsiders or, to use Butler's terms, the abjects. Thus, Tom embodies a failure to acquire the phallus, a symbol of power and instead is treated as "queer", "the other" and "the abject". Nevertheless, there is a sense of criticism of heteronormativity and also patriarchy that Fielding discusses in relation to female identity. By depicting Bridget's mother Pam and her struggles to rebel against patriarchy, Fielding sheds light on gender issues and questions the role of femininity and masculinity in contemporary society. At the beginning of the novel, Pam refers to herself as "Germaine sodding Greer and the Invisible Woman" (Fielding 1996: 30). The reference to Australian-born English feminist and writer who supported women's sexual freedom emphasises Pam's view of herself in marriage: not only does she feel the suppression of her own sexuality, but she also expresses her dissatisfaction with her physical and emotional isolation. The role of women as reduced to housekeepers does not satisfy Pam and that is why she tries to free herself from the chains of marriage.

In one of the passages, Tom shares his "theory" that both single women and homosexuals share the same "natural bonding" because they are "treated as freaks by society" (Fielding 1996: 20), it becomes clear that this happens due to the denial to conform to the roles of their society. However, in Pam's case it is different because by rejecting to conform to her roles of a wife and a mother, she rebels, as Irigaray calls it, against male "subjectivity". For example, when Pam announces to her daughter "I'm going out to get *laid*" (Fielding 1996: 30) and goes out to meet a new boyfriend, she rejects her role of a wife to celebrate her sexual freedom: "[S]he started saying she wanted to be paid for doing the housework, and she'd wasted her life being our slave" (ibid., p. 30). A reference to slavery might imply Pam's view of marriage as a patriarchal institution designed for the subjugation of women; however, when she says "our slave" she also shows that motherhood is also a form of slavery.

Referring to Beauvoir's ideas, refusal to be treated unfairly by her husband results in postmodern woman's strive for independence. Thus, she confesses: "Darling, it's merely a question of realizing, when your father retired, that I had spent thirty-five years without a break running his

home and bringing up his children” (Fielding 1996: 33). Here a striking difference between mother and daughter identities can be noted. While Pam seeks for liberation in her marriage, Bridget, on the other hand, finds the traditional role ascribed to a woman as most alluring and desirable.

Moreover, while previously the new French feminists like Irigaray and Kristeva have noted that women’s identity is defeated by a male-dominated society which silences them, Pam tries to regain her identity and speaks up for herself: “ ‘I feel like the grasshopper who sang all summer,’ [...] ‘And now it’s the winter of my life and I haven’t stored up anything of my own (Fielding 1996: 41)’ ”. Pam feels suppressed in marriage and believes that professional achievement may restore her identity. She confesses: “I’ve never had a career all my life and now I’m in the autumn of my days and I need something for myself” (Fielding 1996: 72). Hence, witnessing significance of education and career among women in the twentieth-century, Pam finds a job as a TV presenter which might signify her attempt at achieving equal partnership in marriage and also being equal to men in her society. It is crucial to note that career possibility enables her to exercise more agency over her husband:

Dad was devastated. Mum hadn’t even told him about the TV-presenter’s job. It seems he is in denial and has convinced himself Mum is just having an end-of-life crisis and that she already realizes she has made a mistake but is too embarrassed to ask to come back. (Fielding 1996: 50).

Here the shift in gender roles can be noted. The reference to father’s devastation, denial and embarrassment indicate subversion of patriarchy: “Dad arrived at the door with a neatly folded copy of the *Sunday Telegraph*. As he sat down on the sofa, his face crumpled and tears began to splosh down his cheeks” (Fielding 1996: 30).

Pam’s success continues as she gains more self-confidence and takes a better care of herself. With envy does Bridget observe her mother performing her own gender: “She was sitting in front of the mirror in an expensive-looking coffee-colored bra-slip, mascara-ing her eyelashes with her mouth wide open [...] She looked stunning: skin clear, hair shining” (Fielding 1996: 38). The feminine beautification makes a woman viewed as a beautiful object and since Pam is getting ready to date a younger Portuguese man for physical pleasure and new adventures, she uses her body as a tool revealing her sexuality. Bridget wonders: “How come she gets to be the irresistible sex goddess?” and observes that “she was so suffused with lust that she had lost sight of, well,

everything” (Fielding 1996: 34). There are several moments in the novel showing how Pam almost becomes revolutionary and declares her autonomy: “You only get one life. I’ve just made a decision to change things a bit and spend what’s left of mine looking after me for a change” (Fielding 1996: 33). The following passage implies a subversion of gender stereotypes in which Bridget observes supremacy that her mother demonstrates over her father:

I know what her secret is: she’s discovered power. She has power over Dad: he wants her back. She has power over Julio, and the tax man, and everyone is sensing her power and wanting a bit of it, which makes her even more irresistible (Fielding 1996: 38).

Here for the first time in the novel, there is a mention of a woman demonstrating “power” over men and not vice versa. When Bridget comments on her mother having “a power over Julio”, it might signify her femininity and her power of a female sexuality that she shows. The power that Pam exercises, illustrates her masculine rather than feminine qualities because power is a feature of patriarchy and patriarchy is initially associated with men. Therefore, Pam becomes both patriarchal and also alien to Bridget as she “has become a force [her daughter] no longer recognize[s]” (ibid., p. 38).

In relation to phallocentrism which suggests the supreme masculine power and a lack of the feminine one, it can be observed that Bridget’s father has acquired phallus in the domestic sphere after his marriage. However, as a result of a complex marriage, not only has he lost the power in his household, eventually, the loss of power has resulted in his identity crisis:

There was a muffled sob. Dad was crying. I think Dad is having a nervous breakdown [...] ‘It’s . . .’ he broke down again. ‘It’s the thought of her going with that greasy beperfumed bouffant wop, and all my friends and colleagues of forty years saying ‘cheers’ to the pair of them and writing me off as history (Fielding 1996: 113).

The aforementioned quote indicates that for Bridget’s father, his wife’s decision to break the marriage produces a destructive effect on his identity. In terms of masculinity, an emotional display for men is usually considered unacceptable as it is a feature of femininity. Since the father figure is depicted in both of the novels as constantly sobbing, it might ironically suggest digression in gender roles and the breakdown of patriarchy. It is crucial to note that Bridget becomes as a mediator between her mother and father; it is she who provides moral support to her parents when they want to consult her about the relationship issues. For example, in *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, Bridget is the only one trying to “boost [her father’s] own esteem”

and encouraging him to take a “period of calm distance before discussing things with Mum” (Fielding 2000: 29). Bridget’s father seems to lose his power completely as he tries to “mask [his] pain” about his wife’s boyfriends; he becomes an alcohol addict and ends up in rehabilitation (Fielding 2000: 271-272). Here Fielding once again emphasises a subversion of gender roles where the notion of hegemonic masculinity is challenged. It is not the only instance in the novel when masculinity is subverted. There is also another moment when Bridget’s boss Daniel Cleaver known for his wealth and success tries to engage in a sexual relationship with Bridget but she rejects him: “When I looked back, Daniel had his head in his hands. I realized he was sobbing” (Fielding 2000: 226). At this point Bridget is faced with Daniel Cleaver’s emotional breakdown:

“I’m sorry, Bridge. I’ve been promoted downstairs. Perpetua’s got my job. I feel redundant, and now you don’t want me. No girls will want me. Nobody wants a man at my age without a career” (Fielding 2000: 226).

It is the first and the only time in the novel when Daniel Cleaver breaks down; he feels “redundant” not only because he loses his position at work but perhaps because his job is assigned to a woman, thus suppressing his masculine power. Daniel himself states that “nobody wants” such a man. Since he fails to engage in a sexual activity with Bridget, this might signify his failure to express his manhood through sexual intercourse. On the other hand, rather than offering him some comfort, Bridget bursts out in anger: “And how do you think I felt last year? When I was bottom of the pile in that office and you were messing around and making me feel like a retreat?” (ibid., p. 226). Since after this encounter with Daniel, Bridget leaves him, this suggests another instance of subversion in gender roles as this time Fielding portrays Daniel’s failure to conform to masculine norms. Therefore, it points towards the conclusion that Fielding challenges both genders in her novels.

In *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* the theme of identity crisis continues. As Bridget longs for a sexual intimacy, she confesses “feel[ing] flash of envy at easy of gay sex” who “shag each other immediately just because they both feel like it” (Fielding 2000: 65). Later when Bridget is surrounded by her friends, she points out: “Love being single as you can have fun with all different people and life is full of freedom and potential” (Fielding 2000: 153) but as soon as she is left on her own she demonstrates the effects of stereotyping which show women’s fear of staying unmarried and childless: “Nothing is ever going to work out so might as well just accept

am always going to be alone and never have any children” (Fielding 2000: 174). In one of the most controversial moments in the novel Tom, disregarding his sexual orientation asks Bridget if she wants to have a baby with him. This may suggest his wish to help Bridget to gain her desired role of a mother which would banish her feeling of being an outcast; as she rejects Tom’s proposal, Bridget comments “he sort of sensed the way I’m feeling” (Fielding 2000: 175). Just like Bridget, Tom feels alienated because he does not embody stereotypical masculinity.

There is a moment in the novel when Bridget starts questioning her sexual identity. This happens when she is imprisoned in Thailand after she is accused of cocaine trafficking. She “is woken by something sucking her neck” that she later realises to be a “Lesbian Ring”:

They all started kissing and groping bits of me. [...] Obviously I felt violated, part of me could not help but feel it was so nice just to be touched. Gaaah! Maybe I am a lesbian? No. Don't think so (Fielding 2000: 252).

Nevertheless, it is only at the end of the novel that Bridget feels complete. As soon as she is back in a relationship with Mark Darcy she declares to have finally “found [a] way to live peaceful, pure and good life” (Fielding 2000: 327). Fielding shows that women cannot achieve self-fulfilment on their own and only by accepting the norms of the society and treating heterosexuality as a natural order of things, they can attain self-realisation. Moreover, she also shows that femininity is still viewed as the other in a patriarchal society and the role of women still remains within a domestic sphere. For example, although in the sequel Pam asserts “life is for living” (Fielding 2000: 61) and rejects her husband, ultimately she returns back to him because she believes that what she does is “right” (Fielding 2000: 300). Here Pam also reasserts her role of a wife and Bridget even recalls the moment of a mother-daughter bond: “For once in her life she actually listened. When I’d finished she put her arms round me like a mum and gave me a big hug” (Fielding 2000: 298). As for the first time in the novel Bridget’s parents travel for holidays and Bridget no longer suffers from being a singleton, she concludes: “everyone is happy and at peace” (Fielding 2000: 328). Therefore, it can be concluded that in the discussed novels by subverting the notions of masculinity and femininity, Fielding has illustrated the challenges that women and also homosexual people face when they fail to perform their gender roles according to stereotypes. As the study has shown, female identity is still constructed in relation to masculine power and dominance, and although women are given more freedom to exercise their agency, they still see themselves and are seen in the shadow of men.

4. Conclusions

This Master thesis has examined in-depth the ways in which gender stereotypes were (de)constructed in Fielding's novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* and its sequel *Bridget Jones's: The Edge of Reason*. The major focus of this study was on the subversion of stereotypes imposed on women in the Western societies. It also sought to explore how the method of close reading, the tool of intertextuality and the use of rhetorical devices such as irony and humour were crucial in depicting the subversion of gender identity. Finally, this thesis has thoroughly discussed and analysed how the denial to conform to gender roles challenged patriarchy and also illustrated a subversion of men's and women's roles.

Addressing the postfeminist condition, the new French feminists argue that women are never entirely free as their identity is always shaped and reshaped by the patriarchy. They also assert that despite their rights to educational and professional opportunities, women, nevertheless, face considerable difficulties as they are still treated as the "Other", the "Abject". That is why women are strongly encouraged to reposition themselves by destabilising narratives of the masculine culture, narrating their own experience and thus speaking up for themselves. The analysis showed that the new French feminism with its focus on female narrative was crucial in interpreting how women try to exercise more freedom and agency as well as gain more control over their lives. It was revealed that through a symbolic art of writing, female characters such as Bridget and her mother Pam partially managed to gain more autonomy and create the ways to (re)define themselves.

Moreover, the thesis demonstrated that an intertextual dialogue between the nineteenth-century and late twentieth-century texts provided an updated version of masculinity and femininity. The analysis of Bridget as an embodiment of a modernised heroine from Jane Austen's fiction proved that Bridget was more capable of exercising freedom than Austen's female protagonist. Fielding showed that in the contemporary era both female and even male identities are still greatly defined by a domineering culture of patriarchy. The analysis of male characters Mark Darcy and Daniel Cleaver revealed a surprising shift in modern understanding of masculinity; contemporary masculinity was perceived as an object of desire for women. The analysis of the hypothetical statement partially confirmed that an intertext in *Bridget Jones's Diary* offers more plot and character archetypes than in its sequel, thus resulting in more cases of subversion.

The use of irony as a literary device for subverting existing gender stereotypes demonstrated that irony was used to mock contemporary women's quest for autonomy and self-improvement. The thesis also proved that self-deprecating irony was aimed at depicting Bridget's failure to achieve self-perfection, her superficial view of feminism and impossibility to achieve feminist ideals. Bridget's obsession with the body image confirmed the ongoing insecurities of contemporary women. Therefore, with a rather vague idea of feminism, she proved herself to be an anti-feminist rather than a feminist heroine.

Finally, the analysis of *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* through the analytical lens of Judith Butler's gender performativity proved that a subversion of gender stereotypes arose as a result of individual's denial to conform to social norms. Although femininity and masculinity were questioned in both of the novels, the study demonstrated that the pressure to conform to heteronormativity seemed to be greater among women rather than men. The examination of the concept of otherness in relation to Bridget and her homosexual friend Tom's as well Pam's rebellion against patriarchy and her subsequent surrender to male dominance, showed that identity is a social construct, which reinforces the dominance of patriarchy and heteronormativity.

The new French feminism together with various tools of literary analysis enabled this Master thesis to explore the subversive nature of gender identity, in particular, the identity of a woman constructed in relation to masculine power and dominance. (Anti)feminist reading of Fielding's novels revealed that although women in the postmodern world are given more freedom to exercise their agency, they still see themselves and are seen in the shadow of men. Since recently the third sequel *Bridget Jones' Baby: the Diaries* (2016) was released, it would be worthwhile to analyse the stigma of a single motherhood depicted in this novels. The future study might also include a comparative approach to the analysis of gender stereotypes in all three sequels by Helen Fielding.

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Santrauka

Lyčių stereotipų (de)konstravimas Helenos Fielding romanuose „Bridžitos Džouns dienoraštis“ ir „Bridžita Džouns. Ties proto riba“

Šiame magistro darbe nagrinėjami du (anti)feministiniai anglų rašytojos Helenos Fielding romanai *Bridžitos Džouns dienoraštis* (1996) ir *Bridžita Džouns. Ties proto riba* (1999). Pagrindinis šio darbo tikslas - išanalizuoti, kaip šiuose romanuose (de)konstruojamos lyčių tapatybės, atkreipiant dėmesį į egzistuojančius vyrų ir moterų stereotipus, kurie pastarąsias dažniausiai sumenkina ir pabrėžia jų viktimizaciją patriarchalinėje visuomenėje. Siekiant išsiaiškinti, kaip šie lyčių stereotipai (de)konstruojami ir kaip jie nurodo besitęsiančius moterų sunkumus bei jų diskriminaciją postmodernistinėje visuomenėje, darbe remtasi prancūzų feminisčių Julijos Kristevos, Luce Irigaray ir Helene Cixous teorijomis. Lyčių stereotipų (de)konstravimo būdai ir lyčių tapatybės subversijos atvejai analizuoti pasitelkiant atidaus skaitymo metodą, pritaikant intertekstualumo bei Judith Butler lyčių performatyvumo teoriją.

Analizuojant abu romanus per Judith Butler lyčių performatyvumo prizmę, įrodyta, kad lyčių stereotipų subversija atsirado dėl asmens atsisakymo paklusti visuomenės normoms. Nors abiejuose romanuose kvestionuojama tiek moteriškumo, tiek vyriškumo samprata, įrodyta, kad spaudimas paklusti heteronormai labiau jaučiamas tarp moterų nei vyrų. Taip pat įrodyta, kad ironija, kaip svarbi meninės raiškos priemonė, Helenos Fielding romanuose naudojama norint pabrėžti besikeičiančią tradicinių lyčių stereotipų sampratą ir pasišaipyti iš šiuolaikinių moterų autonomijos bei saviugdos siekio. Į save pačią nukreipta Bridžitos ironija atskleidė jos negebėjimą pasiekti saviugdą tikslų ir feministinių idealų.

Abiejų kūrinių analizė iš dalies patvirtino, kad dėl gausios intertekstų panaudojimo *Bridžitos Džouns dienoraštyje*, jame pateikiama ir yra daugiau lyčių stereotipų subversijos pavyzdžių nei šio romano tęsinyje. Galiausiai, pritaikant naujojo prancūzų feminizmo teorijas kaip svarbiausią darbo tyrimo metodą bei kitus jau minėtus analizės įrankius, įrodyta, kad nors postmodernioje visuomenėje įžvelgiami pozityvūs pokyčiai moters socialinio vaidmens klausimais, tačiau moterų tapatybė vis dar išlieka kontroliuojama patriarchalizmo.