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**HELEN FIELDING AND HER DEPICTION OF
MODERN BRITISH WOMAN**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracoval(a) samostatně a použil(a) jen
uvedených pramenů a literatury.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Focus of the bachelor thesis is a modern woman from the perspective of Helen Fielding, the writer famous mainly for character of Bridget Jones. The thesis is divided into two parts, theoretical and practical one. In the first part, there is general information needed to understand the second part. It includes biography of Helen Fielding and summaries of each Fielding's novels, *Cause Celeb*, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* and the last one, *Olivia Joules and the overactive imagination*. Theoretical part is focused mainly on Bridget Jones, informs not only about the plot of the novel, but it also provides information about creation, inspiration, form of writing and response of this particular novel. Planned sequel of Bridget Jones's Diaries is also mentioned.

Practical part analyzes 'Fielding's' modern woman. She writes books that fall within a category of so called chick lit, it signifies that main character of this books are always women. Despite this fact, the bachelor thesis is focused only on Bridget Jones.

Main aim of the bachelor thesis is to describe woman in some particular situation. In order to create this analysis, there is used mainly one printed source; Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's diary: a Reader's Guide* written by Imelda Whelehan. Information from many internet sources is added and for better imagination there is used concrete passage from Bridget Jones's Diary and also from its sequel.

The analysis is not complete at all but there are explained only these aspects which are evident from the novels, thereby there is no opportunity for describing heroine's appearance. Thereby the analysis is focused on her lifestyle, relationships with family or friends and her attitudes and opinions to elected things.

THEORETICAL PART

The theoretical part is divided into two parts. The first deals with Helen Fielding. It describes author's experience and her life; an inspiration for writing. This part also focuses on important organisation which affected author's work. The second part deals with particular novel with the bigger concentration on her the most famous novel and heroine; Bridget Jones's Diaries. Theoretical part informs about plot and main character of each novel which is written by Fielding. One smaller chapter deals with planned and expected continuation of Bridget Jones's Diaries. As conclusion of this part could be considered the chapter engaging the same features which we can find in Fielding's novels.

2.1 HELEN FIELDING

Most writers are looking for inspiration which could help them with creating their works. Helen Fielding has been inspirited by her own life and thereby we can say that her books are based on her own experiences. This is exactly the reason for introducing her life.

The author was born in 1959 in small town called Morley in West Yorkshire. Her father worked as a mill manager and mother was a housewife. Fielding has three siblings. [1] She went to Wakefield Girls' High School and after she graduated with an English degree in 1979 at St. Anne's College, *Oxford University*. She gained her first experiences when she worked as a trainee for BBC for 10years. At this time, she dealt with various programs – series of documentary movies from Ethiopia, Sudan and Mozambique for *Comic Relief*. This organization is described below in chapter "The Novel" related to Fielding's first book *Cause Celeb*. [2]

After some time, Fielding started her journalistic career. The First column called Bridget Jones's Diary appeared in the Independent on February 28, 1995. The column was published in The Independent at the first but later it was relocated to the Daily Telegraph. She became

known as an author of this column. *Bridget Jones's Diary* continued in the Independent again in 2005. [3]

Bridget Jones became very popular because as Whelehan [4] said she represented model of “everywoman” of the 1990. In the United Kingdom, it has sold over a million copies “and four million worldwide.” [5] This book was appealed mainly to women aged 20 to 30 years, but “it hit also men and women of all ages”. [6] The sequel, *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, was published in 1999 when the film adaptation of the first episode was planned. Fielding's two Bridget Jones novels place her in the tradition of comic-diary fiction, a well-established genre in England. [7]

Fielding had an important friend. During her studies at the University, she met Richard Curtis. He is known as the screenwriter for *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Notting Hill* and who cooperated with her on the script of the film adaptation of Bridget Jones's Diary. The movie was made in 2001. Richard Curtis is also co-founded of *Comic Relief*, a humanitarian organisation, further discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, for which Fielding worked for a long time. The sequel was made into a film, too. Fielding cooperated on the script of both of the movie adaptations which became very successful. The major role was portrayed by Renée Zellweger, Hugh Grant and Colin Firth. [8]

Her fourth novel was created in 2003 and it was called *Olivia Joules and the Overactive Imagination*. Contrary to the Bridget Jones, Olivia is an independent young woman longing for success. Even though this fact, she carries the same features as Bridget Jones but it has not garnered such success. [9]

Fielding has two children with Kevin Curran, an older son named Dashiell, born in February 2004, and a daughter Romy who was born in July 2006. Kevin is “a writer for Simpson” but they broke up in 2009.

She appeared in one Simpson's episode called "A Stars Is Born-Again." [10]

Helen Fielding represents new generation of female writers destroying existing stereotypes in the 1990s. The Observer, a British newspaper, proclaimed her "one of the 50 funniest acts in British comedy" for year 2003. She declared that she is working on another sequel of Bridget Jones's diary which should be released in near future. [11]

2.1.1 COMIC RELIEF

Now let me introduce an organization which is known for its humanitarian activity all around the world. For this organization Fielding worked for several years.

Comic Relief is an English organization which helps to create a new world – without poverty. It was founded on Christmas Day 1985 in Sudan because of famine which affected Ethiopia. In order to get money the organization used a typical British humour. It is not only about relief for this particular country they decide to help each country where it was needed. Comic Relief launched "two big fundraising campaigns – Red Nose Day and Sport Relief" which help with earning of money. [12]

The organization claims that the Red Nose Day is "something of a national institution." [13] It was founded in 1988 and their main idea was to earn money with the aid of smile. The institution cooperates with people in order to force them to do something funny, they (the chosen people) can do it everywhere – at their work, school, at home. We can watch it also on television when comedians and celebrities entertain the nation and the people watching this programme on BBC can contribute a certain amount of money.

Sport relief is campaign for sports lovers who can choose 1, 3 or 6 miles running marathon and thus help to cash earning. In order to raise cash they organize sports quizzes, tournaments and challenges. BBC

channel holds weekend of Sport Relief TV and also moving documentary films are projected.

And finally, a few interesting numbers – Comic Relief earns over £ 800 millions and they change life for millions of people around the world. Now they are working in over 70 countries. By this time they have been responsible for 15,786 projects and they operate 365 days a year. [14]

2.2 THE NOVELS

Helen Fielding is an author of four novels that made her famous throughout the world. Her books are full of humour and typical for its satirical view. In each of the novel is the main character woman. Rosie Richardson, Bridget Jones and Olivia Joules, are different women but with some similarities. Examples of them are included in the subchapter “The same features of Fielding’s novels”. The following subchapters briefly describe the plots of all Fielding’s ‘major novels mentioned above.

2.2.1 CAUSE CELEB

Cause Celeb was published in 1994 and it is based on her own experience with filming the famine relief attempts in Africa. At this time, she filmed documentaries for a mentioned above humanitarian organization *Comic Relief*. [15]

The heroine, Rosie Richardson publicist from London, starts dating Oliver Merchant, the host of TV show and a popular man. She is given an opportunity to go to business trip to Nambula, fictional country in Africa. After four years working as administrator of the Safila Camp, she learns that a nearby province is affected by famine. Stocks of the camp are dwindling and Rosie with Robert O’Rourke, an American doctor and her new lover, must solve this problem. She has a brainwave to approach famous people who she met through Oliver. They agree and come with Rosie to Africa to realize a television show to help the famine-torn state. [16]

Despite all the efforts, there is no optimistic ending. Many Africans die because of starvation. The help seems as a one-off matter and compassion of the British evaporates over time. In spite of the unattractive ending, there is a fulfilling end for Rosie. She finds a new better man and unties from Oliver forever. During working in Africa, she turns into a better person than she was when working with “media celebrities whose narcissism and other foibles the novel relentlessly and inventively satirizes” [17]

The novel connects Rosie’s past and present - when she returns back to London and meets her long-term love, Oliver. There are shown the differences between developed world in wealthy West and famine and war-torn state in Africa.

2.2.2 BRIDGET JONES’ DIARY

This subchapter is divided into five parts. The first one explains how Bridget Jones was created. Fielding had inspiration in another famous writer, concretely Jane Austen. With this fact works the second subchapter. Like any other writers, Fielding has her own typical style of writing which is described in the third part. Fourth part briefly detailed plot of novel and the last one deals with a huge response that this book caused.

2.2.2.1 BIRTH OF BRIDGET JONES

As the author herself said in an interview, she started to write a column about single woman and her daily worries. “**Helen Fielding:** I started writing Bridget Jones in February 1995; it was a column in The Independent which I wrote anonymously and assumed would be stopped after six weeks for being too silly. The other journalists were writing about New Labour and Bosnia as I wrote about why it takes three hours between waking up in the morning and leaving the house.” [18]

Bridget Jones’s Diary was followed with a photograph of Susan Lewis, “a secretary of the Independent newspaper, holding a cigarette

and a wine glass”. [19] It evoked the belief that Bridget Jones really existed. The Independent’s office was inundated by mails from fans.

When Fielding created character of Bridget Jones, she was inspired by her own diaries from college years, in which she counted eaten calories. Fielding’s close friends, Tracy McLeod and Sharon Maguire, were the models for two characters of the novel – Jude and Shazzer. [20]

Many incidents described in the column appeared in this book. Bridget Jones’s Diary was published in the United Kingdom in 1996. In the United States, it appeared in 1998. The total number of languages Bridget Jones was translated into is 33. Fielding became a celebrity overnight. [21]

2.2.2.2 INSPIRATION BY JANE AUSTEN

Helen Fielding declared that the creation of this novel was inspired by Jane Austen’s novel *Pride and Prejudice*. Both novels describe life of a single woman. There are many similarities; in addition to the same name of Mr. Darcy with Mark Darcy, they also have a similar character. Both of them are true love for the heroine. Also, Mr. Wickham resembles Daniel Cleaver when the both protagonists embody a wrong choice of the heroine. “Like Austen’s Elizabeth Bennet, Bridget is prejudiced against her Mr. Darcy” (mentioned the problem with Mark’s sweater in subchapter “The plot of Bridget Jones’s Diary”) Mark together with Mr. Darcy helps main heroine with problems regarding her family. [22]

2.2.2.3 FORM OF WRITING

Helen Fielding wrote her second and third novel in diary’s form. She was given an advice about the way of writing and it was to write a book as if it was for a friend. As Fielding herself said “diary is a very personal way of writing”. The author can “hide behind a persona and it also allows to write the sort of shameful thoughts that everyone has but no one wants to admit to”. [23] It could be one of the positive aspects which help to do the novel very successful. The author is very close to readers because they can better identify with the heroine. In another

interview, she explains why she does not write about herself but why she rather created a fictional persona. The reason is very similar: "If you write as yourself, you can't help but want people to like you. If you write as somebody else, you can be honest about the secret, stupid, shameful things." [24]

This novel falls into a category of so called "chick lit" Chick lit is a fiction predominantly about women of all ages and for women. This type of writing is typical for humour which is very often used. Chick lit deals with problems as "job, children, motherhood, romance, fame, living in a 'big city', dieting and much more". Authors of these books rather choose form of writing in first person. This form allows them to be more personal and authentic. The plot of these books could be very light or it could solve deeper issues. [25]

Fielding enlivens her novel by using colourful words. "Bridget's friends are singletons who suffer from the slights of 'Smug Marrieds'. The mental suffering that their boyfriends inflict on them is called 'fuckwittage'". [26] These terms are further described in the chapters entitled "Single life" and "Cultural life".

2.2.2.4 THE PLOT OF THE NOVEL

This novel is about a thirty-something single woman living in a small flat in London. The Heroine humorously describes her personal life. She writes about her career, friends, family and mostly about men. Each chapter begins with date and a list of values. It predominantly describes her weight and the number of smoked cigarettes, consumed alcohol units and ends with imbibed calories. She sometimes provides also other values; it could be a number of purchased lottery tickets or count of received Christmas cards. Typical beginning of each chapter reads "*9st 1, alcohol unit 2, cigarettes 6, calories 998 (excellent, v.g. perfect saint-style person)*" [27] It helps a reader to identify her character, she looks like aspirational woman but "passive in the face of change" [28].

Bridget Jones Diary's begins in January and with listing of her New Year's resolution and promise to break them. The main aim is to find a "functional partnership" and to improve body but there are also other resolutions what she will do or what she will not do.

"I will stop smoking, be more confident, and learn to programme video" [29]

Bridget spends New Year with her family, concretely she goes to visit Una and Geoffrey, family friends. This visit is misery for Bridget because of what happens there. Uncle Geoffrey has nasty crack and her mother tries to put her together with Mark Darcy. Mark is a rich, top-notch lawyer and a son of Bridget's parent's neighbours, Malcolm and Elaine Darcy, and suitable husband according to her mother. Unfortunately, Mark does not make a good first impression; he wears a terrible sweater with a big reindeer – *"what had seemed from the back like a harmless navy sweater was actually a V-neck diamond-patterned in shades of yellow and blue – as favoured by the more elderly of the nation's sports reporters."* [30] Later, it turns out that he got it from his mother for Christmas.

Helen Fielding describes new model of family in this work – 'urban family'. Bridget and her best friends discuss about their life and problems mostly by phone or in bar with glass of wine or with their favourite Bloody Mary. She considers them as her real family in London. Her friends are a big support for her; they are with her when problem appears, always ready to give her advice. Important role for Bridget play also her parents despite the fact that they do not live in London. Her mother constantly tries to find her a rich husband. [31]

Bridget has a huge problem with men. At the beginning, she is in love with her male boss, Daniel Cleaver, with whom she initially flirts via email and eventually starts dating. Subsequently, she begins to paint a beautiful future with him. She dreams about common life and about big family house full of children. However, this relationship ends as a disaster

when she finds him with another woman. She decides to change a job because of him. [32]

Her parent's marriage is in crisis, her mother finds herself a lover Julio from Portugal. Julio is a swindler who with Bridget's mother's help steals their and their friends's money. This complex family situation helps her to become closer with Mark Darcy. Bridget finds that the true love for her is really Mark and the novel ends when they lie on bed together. [33]

2.2.2.5 RESPONSE OF BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY

The character of Bridget Jones had a great response in England, predominantly on cultural life. The book, Bridget Jones's Diary, became a bestseller; it was on the first place in a sales chart for six months. Fielding won the British book of the Year award in 1997. The novel is very funny and good for reading. Some readers felt guilty because they enjoyed the book, in their words, so much. They can laugh not at her but they can laugh with her at unbelievable situations which affected her. This is the first aspect which impressed the people. [34] The second one which helped her to be a famous heroine is explained by Fielding's words: "She's not perfect. She doesn't always look fabulous. She doesn't do everything right. She's just in an ordinary job, struggling along, but you like her because she's a human being. She just wants what everyone else wants." [35] Many reviews talk about Fielding's ability to perfectly capture how women actually behave and what they really think in their thirties. [36] Some negative reactions existed, in Alex Kuczynski's review, which appeared in The New York Times in June 1998, we can read that Bridget Jones made him ill and that "Ms. Fielding constructs her heroine out of every myth that has ever sprung from the ground of Cosmopolitan and television sitcoms. To wit, that men are, in the words of one character, 'stupid, smug, arrogant, manipulative and self-indulgent.'" [37] His whole statement continues with the same, not too flattering spirit. Instead of this we can say that major opinion of this heroine was a very

positive one. This Fielding's criticism is mentioned also in the next chapter which deals with aspect of feminism in her novels.

2.2.3 BRIDGET JONES: THE EDGE OF REASON

Before she decided to write a sequel of Bridget Jones's diary, she wanted to publish book with another topic, but Fielding's book editor did not have an interest in this novel. Fielding describes how it came about Bridget Jones: The Edge of the Reason: "Everyone involved was surprised by Bridget's success; I was actually doing the column to finance the writing of my second novel, which was an earnest tract about cultural divides in the Caribbean. About nine months after I started it, I was having dinner with my book editor at Picador, moaning about how boring the Caribbean novel was. She said: "Why don't you do Bridget instead?" I said: "Okay" and that was it. When the diary came out in hardback it sold quite well but didn't get on the bestseller lists. It was only when the paperback came out that it went to No 1 and stayed there, unaccountably, for six months." [38]

Sequel of Bridget Jones Diary was created in a hotel room in Los Angeles and was published in 2001. This work is full of comedy situations, for example - Bridget is unlawfully arrested for smuggling drugs. If the first part is inspired by *Pride and Prejudice* the sequel is created on the basis of *Persuasion* written by the same author, Jane Austen. [39]

The novel is opened with a chapter "Happily even after" [40]; Bridget has a functional relationship with Mark Darcy but obstacles appear instantly. She has a quarrel with her friends because of Mark Darcy. There are a few misunderstandings which destroy their relationship. She believes that Mark is in love with his colleague, Rebecca. Bridget's professional life changes when her boss, Richard Finch, devises that "Bridget would try a new profession each week and be incredibly bad at all of them." [41] The presumption of another woman in

Mark's life is present in almost the whole book. As mentioned before, Bridget and Shazzer set out to Thailand and here they meet a stranger who slips drugs to Bridget. The only man who can help her and get her out from it is Mark Darcy. This unpleasant situation gets them together again. [42]

There is recorded a real event which affected not only Britain but also the whole entire world, "death of Diana, Princess of Wales." [43] London is affected by a huge hysteria that also touches Bridget Jones's life when her beautician decides not to return back to work.

Many women all around a world identify with this heroine. Each of them has its own Bridget Jones inside.

2.2.4 OLIVIA JOULES AND THE OVERACTIVE IMAGINATION

Olivia Joules and the Overactive Imagination is Fielding's fourth and yet also the last novel and it was published in 2003. Fielding stated in an interview that "if Bridget is the side of her, then Olivia is the person she would like to be in a fantasy world". [44] Although this fact we can find one similarity with Bridget – Olivia can not find a dreamed man. Despite the great expectations concerning this book, it did not become a hit. The reason could be that the readers cannot identify with the heroine.

Olivia Jones is considered to be a spy novel - a designation used by author herself. She lives in high society thereby there is so-called branding – inclusion of famous fashion brands to the novel. [45]

In spite of a tragic accident – death of parents, which affected heroine, Olivia is an ambitious young woman with good job position. She works as a journalist writing for society column Sunday Times but she wants to work as a real journalist. To find true story she goes on a business trip to Miami. At the party, she scrapes acquaintance with Pierre, film producer in Hollywood. Pierre introduces himself as French. Olivia's (over)active imagination suggests her that he is a terrorist. It should be noted that Pierre speaks with very unconvincing French

accent. She believes that he is not a producer but Usama bin Ladin himself and she decides to follow him. Olivia travels around the world to uncover his secret. Later, she succeeds and discovers that Pierre is really a terrorist. When she returns back to England she begins to cooperate with CIA which hires her as a secret agent. Olivia and Pierre travel to Sudan where she discovers dangerous plan. Pierre and his companions want to attack the Academy Awards but Olivia with help of Scott, also a secret agent and later her lover, prevent from this tragedy. Olivia's dreams come true and she starts working for CIA.

Olivia bears striking resemblance to James Bond but not with such a good story which Bond certainly has. [46]

2.2.5 THE THIRD SEQUEL OF BRIDGET JONES

As it was mentioned before, Helen Fielding plans to publish the third sequel of Bridget Jones Diaries. The novel should be published in autumn 2013, the title is not known because the book is still in progress. It will not be the same Bridget as we know her, Fielding declared that her life was moved to another phase, therefore Bridget's life have to change too. Another thing which Fielding divulged is: "I'm having a lot of fun, and it's very funny and it's making me laugh." [47] Even if we meet with 'new' Bridget, this statement promises that it will be a big fun for readers again. What we know is the name of the third sequel of movie adaptation, working title is Bridget Jones's baby and the expected premiere should be later in this year. Main role will be played by the same well-known actors, Reneé Zelweger as Bridget, Colin Firth as Mark and Hugh Grant as Daniel. [48]

2.3 THE SAME FEATURES OF FIELDING'S NOVELS

As it is obvious from the second chapter which deals with the summaries of all the novels, Fielding's main characters have one and the same element. All of them are young women living in England and

working for media. Also, everyone met two men in their life. At the beginning of the book, they do not have any boyfriend but they fall in love overtime. Always, the first loving man is a wrong choice for them and the man is expressed as a bad lot who hurt heroine's feelings. Rosie Richardson, Bridget Jones and also Olivia Joules have to cope with this unpleasant situation. After the settlement the right man appears and he is on the contrary shown as a true love.

In two books we can find another identical feature, namely Bridget Jones and Rosie Richardson. Both of them engage in their body. It seems after Rosie's arrival to Africa, she recalls "what happened to my generation of women? Who doomed us to spending our entire lives wishing we were half a stone lighter? I was not anorexic, bulimic or anything else you could put in a textbook but I still managed to see everything I ate as an indulgence and eating it an act of weakness." [49] Next resemblance of Bridget Jones might be seen when the 'wrong man' and the 'right man' meets. Oliver (former lover) and other celebrities fly to Nambula where he is confronted with Rosie's new life and new suitor. This situation reminds the same scene when Daniel comes to Bridget's apartment when she is with Mark.

PRACTICAL PART

The practical part of the thesis deals with an analysis of modern woman in the Fielding's depiction with focus on Bridget Jones only. The thesis is concentrate on dominate part of Bridget Jones's life, each part is explained in one particular subchapter. Practical part is divided into five subchapters – “Single Life”, “The Body”, “The family, class and society”, “Cultural Life” and “Reference to feminism”, two of them are accompanied by supplementary subchapter – “Phenomenon of singletons” and “Postmodernism”. The analysis is made on the basis of specific situation which are outlined in the Theoretical part. The determination is supported by citation from the book. Mostly it relies on the first part, Bridget Jones's diary but chapter “The body” also works with the sequel, Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason. The end of this part concentrates on feminism which is an integral part of each analysis regarding Bridget Jones.

3.1 MODERN WOMAN

Fielding writes predominantly about women living in modern world and solving everyday problems. Even though woman is present in each of Fielding's book, this thesis is focused mainly on her Bridget Jones's Diary. The character of Bridget Jones has been chosen because she represents a typical modern British woman, which is the theme of this thesis. Another reason is also that she is known all around the world and many female readers have fallen in love with her for her authenticity and credibility. Many of them have found themselves in this heroine. It is possible to say that Bridget Jones has become a symbol of later 1990s in England. As mentioned before, the diary's form helps to get better into Bridget's character and describes her positive and negative aspects. It allows a more thorough study of Fielding's depiction of modern British woman.

Modern woman is a woman who lives in a modern society. The society has more than one meaning but for the purpose of the thesis we should take into the consideration the following explanation stating that the society is a community of people living in a particular country or region and having shared customs, laws and organization. [50] In view of the fact that this thesis is about a modern woman, we should add that it is also a community of people living together in the current time.

3.1.1 SINGLE LIFE

Right in the first chapter of the novel Bridget Jones's diary is emphasized that more than 30-year old Bridget is still single. This fact is the first thing that is known about Bridget and so we pay the attention to it in the first place. Fielding said that "single women today, sort of in their thirties, are perhaps a new type of women". [51] Should be noted that 'today' is the turn of the millennium, which is more than 10 years back. Bridget Jones's Diary underlines a new "social trend – more and more people are living in single households." [52] At the beginning it is important to say what exactly the singletons mean. One definition speaks about "a single woman in her early 30s who at times is either an empowered, confident, content, feminist professional; and another exaggeratedly defines it as an insecure, self-image-loathing, job-hating, fool-acting (where men are concerned) whiner who will "end up all alone, half-eaten by an Alsatian." [53] Alsatian is a breed of dog that looks like a large wolf often used as a guard or guide dog by the police. These dogs are also called German shepherd dog. [54]

It is not voluntary attitude entirely; Bridget and her friends are hankered "to get themselves paired off". [55] She is looking for a perfect man. As a justification Bridget uses a gossip or she reveals discontentment of married which she considers as "smug". "Smug marrieds" are all couples who live in happy relationship with arrogant behaviour because they feel or they are superior. All smug marrieds start

conversation with typical question: "Why aren't you married yet?" No wonder that the question is very unpleasant for singletons. [56]

The fact that she is still alone and cannot find a man creates enormous pressure on her psyche but she tries to deal with it. She decides to change her own, at the beginning of the book we learn that Bridget is no longer worries about having no husband. "I WILL NOT sulk about having no boyfriend, but develop inner poise and authority and sense of self as woman of substance, complete without boyfriend, as best way to obtain boyfriend." [57] This is one excerpt of Bridget's New Year Resolutions which is supplemented by a list of types of men for which she will be careful.

Lives of men and women are perceived quite differently. In terms of courtship, Bridget follows advice that she reads in various manuals or finds tips by her friends. They have opinion that courtship is a controlled conflict and matter of strategy. Bridget and her friend have more deeply entrenched values about gender and relationships. Women shall be deemed themselves as "service engineer" of relationship. [58]

There are two types of single women – bachelor and spinster. Spinster is seen as an unattractive woman who is single for her shortcomings, whereas being a bachelor is voluntary. Being single is not choice for Bridget and her female friend, that the term spinster is more appropriate for them. At the beginning of the Bridget Jones's Diary there appears a notice, which tells us about Bridget's fear from death in alone. Spinster is not very flattering term, thereby Bridget and her friends Shazzer and Jude coin a new notion – singleton. [59] This concept becomes commonplace immediately. Many sources speak about the phenomenon of the singletons. One of the sources which speak about this phenomenon is Guardian. This topic will be further discussed in the following subchapter.

Sometimes Bridget wholeheartedly hates that she is still single but there are also times when she enjoys it. Bridget, Shazzer, Jude and Tom

mostly celebrate their singleton in a bar: “*Yes! Hurrah! Singletons should not have to explain themselves all the time but should have an accepted status - like geisha girls.*” [60] As Tom further explains these expressions of enthusiasm could cover disappointed of her private life.

“Shut up Bridge. | You’re drunk. You’re just trying to escape from your yawning emotional hole into drunk.” [61]

This is a very emotional part which confirms what is evident in the whole book and what about I have already mentioned. Even if she tries to camouflage it, the fact that there is no husband in her life very annoys her. It is affected by constant questioning on her private life and her love life. For example Geoffrey Alconbury, a family friend, asks her in each meeting: “*How’s your love-life, anyway?*” [62] Bridget considers the questions inappropriate and thinks in her own.

Oh God. Why can’t married people understand that this is no longer a polite question to ask? We wouldn’t rush up to them and roar, ‘How’s your marriage going? Still having sex? Everyone knows that dating in your thirties is not the happy-go-lucky free-for-all it was when you were twenty-two and the honest answer is more likely to be, ‘Actually, last night my married lover appeared in wearing suspenders and a darling little Angora crop-top, told me he was a gay/a sex addict/a narcotic addict/a commitment phobic and beat me up with a dildo, than ‘super, thanks.’” [63]

Bridget presents her opinion that the question, what she constantly hears, is not only inappropriate but also unethical. It is obvious that she is blushing for her unmarriageable situation; and this is the question in which is Fielding interested. People need to feel bad even if they choose to be single not because of them but because of society in which they live. [64]

3.1.1.1 PHENOMENON OF THE SINGLETONS

Thirty something single women suddenly become media celebrities. This group of women appeared with the Bridget Jones Diaries. The woman obsessed with her body who weights herself three times a day. She works in a media, which represents a dream work of many women. She smokes several cigarettes a day and drinks too much. Bridget is the woman who has not got a husband but desperately longs for him. [65]

“The number of unmarried woman has increased. | Office for National Statistics forecasts that 25 per cent of all women will be single by the year 2020.” [66] These women are grown up in the year typical for big changes. They had better opportunities than their mothers; they “would have lost their virginity after the establishment of the Sex Discrimination Act, gone to college under a female Prime Minister” [67] They have possibility to do dream job, earn their own money and build a wonderful career. In the pursuit of career they sacrifice their private life. Bridget Jones desires to have a child, many of successful women opt not to have them or they wait or like Bridget they have a hankering for them.

Successful and single women love their life; love their career and their independence. Although they have not got a man or child, it is their choice. Of course, Bridget Jones is a prototype of modern single woman who caused madness around the singleton. It is good to explain that being single is not only about counting calories and flirting with the male boss via email. [68]

3.1.2 THE BODY

This chapter could easily have been called Obsession with the body because there is no doubt that Bridget is really obsessed with hers. As mentioned before in the characteristics of Bridget Jones's Diary, each entry of the novel begins with charting her weight. These data cover "the gap between Bridget's and the reader's assessment of her worth." [69] Even if readers have never seen Bridget (Helen Fielding does not pay attention to describing Bridget's appearance) every one of them can imagine how she looks like in reality. The novel is written in first person and this form of writing does not need any description of physical details. Indeed - every effort of this description could have sounded rather odd. [70]

The entries of each chapter also insinuate that Bridget, with her British size 12, despite her belief, is "slimmer than the national average and certainly not fat by any definition except for that of Hollywood or the fashion industry." [71] Vision of her overweight is composed in Hollywood which creates trends and also in her ambition to be a movie star. From the entries we also understand that even if she has a standard figure, she is not satisfied with her body.

Bridget and her female friend see themselves as career women who are able to control their destiny but according to Whelehan the only thing which they can control are their own bodies. This particular control is performed by "monitoring its intake of calories, cigarettes, alcohol, and fat units." [72] This obsession of counting calories and daily weighting is very close to "the specter of eating disorders". It could be wrong impulse for women who are equally obsessed with their body. The fact, that Bridget's desire for a perfect body (and also desire for a perfect appearance) is unhealthy, is confirmed by the scene when she is imprisoned in Thai jail and she is preparing a list with "*good things about being in jail: 1. Not spending any money. 2. Things have really gone down*

and have probably lost at least half a stone without even trying. 3. Will be good for hair to leave it without washing such as have never been able to do before as hair too mad looking to go out of door.” [73]

Fielding describes in humorous way that for women the bodily perfection is more important than other preferences. Bridget has never reached her ideal self, indeed she reaches an ideal figure but instead of word of praise she heard comment on her illness only. Throughout the novel Bridget sets goals but reader can realize that she had never fulfilled them.

Fielding denotes that women all around the world excessively care about themselves because of society and media pressure. “Being woman is worse than being a farmer – there is so much harvesting and crop spraying to be done: legs to be waxed, underarms shaved, eyebrows plucked, feet pumiced, skin exfoliated and moisturized, spots cleansed, roots dyed, eyelashes tinted, nails filed, cellulite massaged, stomach muscles exercised. The whole performance is so highly tuned you only need to neglect it for a few days for the whole thing to go to seed. Sometimes I wonder what I would be like if left to revert to nature – with a full beard and handlebar moustache on each shin.” [74]

Glossy magazines show the trend that women have to pamper themselves and, as Bridget presents, the spoiling is very hard work. Glossies along with television have a huge pressure to girls that they “can get nowhere without styling.” [75]

The biggest lesson was for Bridget when Mark Darcy said that he loves her because of her, that he loves Bridget Jones with her real behaviour and without any pretence. [76] She considers that she could be loved even if she is not a model-thin which is typified in one mentioned above scene when Bridget comes back from the jail. It describes that a perfect figure is not too much important as media presents or even it means nothing. [77] There is important lesson not only for Bridget but it could be message for all female readers of Fielding. [78]

Bridget is trying to loose weight using various types of diets in order to get her fancy figure but it is very difficult to keep it. Many times, she does not last out and she is eating something 'forbidden' after such disappointment pangs of conscience follows. From this we can deduce another disconcerting question. Bridget should esteem her health despite that she risks it at the expense of some diet. Bridget's unhealthy lifestyle can exert influence to female readers. [79]

Academics have discussed if it is possible that chick lit books can affect real women especially their perfection of their body. According to the study "published in the journal *Body Image*" heroines obsessed with their body have actually influence on female readers' bodies. Concretely they research concluded that "scholars and health officials should be concerned about the effect chick lit novels might have on women's body image." The researchers did not work directly with *Bridget Jones's Diary* but it relates also with this particular book. In the case that the book is about slim heroine, readers fell "less sexually attractive" and in the similar case as we can find in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, the readers more focus on their bodies after reading the book. The academics hope that this research could work as "intervention tool" for better body esteem for teenage females because girls are the most risk group of readers which could be easily swayed. [80]

3.1.3 THE FAMILY, CLASS AND SOCIETY

Bridget lives surrounded by many people - her parents, friends, co-workers, former lovers, and current boyfriend. All of them live in the middle-class living in the town. Their behaviour is governed by the unwritten rules of urban convention. The convention means “needing to be introduced and knowing about each other’s backgrounds, professions, and marital status.” [81]

Bridget is strongly confirmed that men and women are completely different in all their motivations: women love other activities than men. Women can shop all day and men can spend all day watching television especially sports channels. Even these, one might say, prejudice are logged in the Fielding’s book. The other general assertions are pictured, “where women want commitment and men want casual liaisons”. [82]

Bridget and her friends - Shazzer, Jude and gay-friend Tom - just long for the commitment. The men are perceived actively to deflect romance and they are called “emotional fuckwitage”. This term describes any thirty-something man with the main intent of avoiding a functional relationship and who yearns for flirts only. Fielding’s words which we can read in glossary written for Bridget Jones’s Diary, extend slightly this ‘definition’.

Emotional fuckwittage: Annoying behavior by fuckwits, e.g. saying will ring then not ringing, shagging others then not calling them, being in relationships with others then saying it’s not a relationship, going out with people for twelve years whilst insisting they don’t want to get too serious, refusing to go on mini-breaks, etc. etc. [83]

Bridget sees her family as a burden rather than support. At first, it seems that her family and friends have not changed since she was a child but everything was turning in the other way. It became apparent that her mother is having an affair with a stranger. At this time Bridget has the impression that her mother is in all respects better. She has better job as a daytime presenter and has two men. This part of the plot revealed

more recent trend that more and more marriages end with failure, or going through a crisis. Even Bridget lives in another city with trying not to engage in her parent's life; this fact very worries her. Fortunately, she has friends who help her in this difficult time. [84]

Her family and close surroundings "symbolize the pull of tradition where being single is definitely seen as a period of transition between adolescence and marriage" [85] Bridget Jones represent group of people who are outside of this tradition. She is living in the huge city far away from hometown. This is a generation which do not has opportunities to find friend elsewhere than at work. Bridget's friends are her alternative family.

Bridget Jones can symbolize a "postmodernism", of course not in its exact definition.

3.1.3.1 POSTMODERNISM

This term is applied to literature, art, music, theatre, architecture, philosophy and criticism and it was "popular in the west in the 1980s and 1990s." [86]

The term "represents a departure from modernism and is characterized by the self-conscious use of earlier styles and conventions, a mixing of different artistic styles and media, and a general distrust of theories." [87]

From the philosophical point of view postmodernism is hard to define because the definition could infringe its assumptions "that no definite terms, boundaries, or absolute truth exists." [88] Postmodernism is characterized as reaction of current and valid discoveries of scientific or objective. Basically it is an attempt to understand and explain reality. Each individual has a different specific understanding. This means that everyone can explain the reality in other way. Postmodernism deals with persuasion that perception of reality is subjective, it depends just on the person himself. Postmodernists do not recognize the well-established traditions specific group of people; also they do not take into

consideration cultural habits. Instead they “focus on the relative truths of each person”. [89] Most important thing for postmodernists is interpretation; they think that interpretation is everything. Reality is created by individual through “our interpretation of what the world means for us individually”. [90] Postmodernism works with experiences of concrete people and, of course, they are aware that the result, which occurred just through the experience, is only relative, “rather than certain and universal”. [91]

Postmodernism is ‘post’ because it denies the existence of any ultimate principles, and it lacks the optimism of there being a scientific, philosophical, or religious truth which will explain everything for everybody - a characteristic of the so-called ‘modern’ mind. In the postmodernism we meet with paradox. They must be aware when their all result or assumption put under their sceptical opinion, “it must realize that even its own principles are not beyond questioning.” [92]

“The references to postmodernism in Bridget Jones’s Diary reflect the dilution and generalization of the term as it is absorbed into popular parlance.” [93]

In a simplified way we live in a society where truth is relative and politics is not about policy but about image. Our civilization is only a negligible part of a global world without any national boundaries or ethnic identities.

Electronic tools are an integral part of Bridget’s or every modern woman’s live; whether it is mobile phone or email, she cannot imagine her life without these communicational aids. Our lives are governed through television or computers, which helps to eliminate certain boundaries. As Whelehan said Bridget Jones is good example of “such cultural promiscuity”. She got into high society because of Mark Darcy and as he himself comments she is “clearly a top post-modernist” [94]

3.1.4 THE CULTURAL LIFE

Introduction of this chapter is focused on the cultural background. The period of time when Bridget Jones's Diary was published, is well known under the term "Nineties", the decade from 1990 to 1999 in the 20th century. [95] The decade is known as a period of peace and prosperity for Western nations but Third World must have dealt with problems such as genocide, civil wars or AIDS. For this period is typical breakdown of the Soviet Union and emergence of new technologies – the most progressive - Internet. [96]

Specifically, it was the year 1995 when, according to Whelehan, young single and ambitious women were getting into the foreground. At this time group called Spice Girls emerged. With this group was also born the concept of 'Girl Power'. This new concept also includes the use of 'girl' instead of "woman" and means that "girl power was about self-assertion and grabbing opportunities". [97] Emergence of Spice Girls and their subsequent huge success triggered new idea of modern woman with contradictory image compared to the 'older version'. This new image shows that woman "can achieve real power just so long as she obeys some of the rules of engagement – most crucially that 'femininity' must never be sacrificed to power." [98] 'Ladette or new lad' are terms we call these 'new women'. Many shows dealing with this topic originated in this period of time in Britain. The shows offer close-up view to the life of these "girls" and how they actually behave "when they are together; in reality, it relied on puerile sexual humour". [99] These television programs shows that women spent their time talking about nonsense with glass of wine or with any other alcohol drink in their hand. It shows to their self-sufficiency and equivalence. Whelehan even claims that these programs are "a celebration of the range of choices and freedoms for young single women in the 1990s." [100] Except the programs of this format there were created also TV series about young single people, for example *Friends*.

These TV series describe dark side of living with several people in one flat but Helen Fielding has managed to create a character which is more humane and more credible than these young single people from New York. [101]

Bridget is not fan of culture as such; rather than going to the theatre or ballet she goes to the bar with friends. Her cultural life is blunt, her interest focus rather on popular lifestyles magazines such as Hello or “self-help manuals” [102] Bridget herself is aware that her cultural life is not really rich when in New Years’ Resolution mentions *I will not go out every night but stay in and read books and listen to classical music.* [103] Rather than reading books that helped to extend knowledge she wonders about “Cosmo sex quizzes or John Grey’s Mars and Venus books”. Her everyday worries is only about choosing suitable clothing or making a perfect make up and hone flirting strategy. She is able to think about appropriate clothing for several hours. Good example of one of these worries appears on Tuesday 4 April when she is preparing for a journey to work.

“7.55 a.m. Open wardrobe. Stare at clothes. 8 am. Select shirts. Try to find black Lycra mini-skirt. Pull clothes out of bottom of wardrobe in quest for skirt. | 8.35 a.m. Begin selection of underwear. | 8.45 a.m. Start on black opaque tights. Pair one seems to have Shrunk – crotch it three inches above knees. Get second pair on and find hole on back of leg. Suddenly remember had Lycra mini-skirt on when returned home with Daniel last night. Go to living room. | 8.55 a.m. Return to tights Pair three have hole only in toe. Put on. Hole transforms into ladder which will protrude tellingly from shoe. Go to ironing basket. | 9.05 a.m. Have got tights on now. Add skirt. | 9.40 a.m. Return to ironing and discover stubborn stain on front of shirt. All other possible shirts dirty. | 10 a.m. Try to find handbag. | 10.35 a.m. Leave house.” [104]

She is aware of her cultural milieu and knows that she is perfect consumer of every new trends which appeared in “glossy magazines and aspires to them whether it be Feng Shui or mini breaks.” [105] She cares more about her appearance than material security.

Fielding describes superiority of society when subjects are depicted as a category. Bridget does not say wine but she rather uses the brand of wine. For example, when she woke up after spending night on drinking with her friends and she evaluates the previous night in her diary. “After first bottle of Chardonnay was just about to broach subject of constant mini-break frustration when Rebecca suddenly said ‘How’s Magda?’ [106] Magda is Bridget’s married friend who has two children and her whole life revolves around them. This attitude explains “the kind of lifestyle Bridget leads” [107] when each individual desires to be part of bigger commodity by buying the suitable labels and brands which are modern at this time. Some farcical scenes appeared “as Bridget's awkward introduction to Mark Darcy, her foolish appearance at a tarts and vicars party and her disastrous dinner party near the close of the novel.” [108] These situations are based on the fact, that current mass media have a huge influence on women and their attitudes. Bridget is aware of the impact of mass media. When she is preparing for a date and after completion of procedure related to these preparations, she proclaims:

“My back hurts, my head aches and my legs are bright red and covered in lumps of wax. Wise people will say Daniel should like me just as I am, but I am a child of Cosmopolitan culture, have been traumatized by supermodels and too many quizzes and know that neither my personality nor my body is up to it if left to its own devices.” [109]

“Such a passage is characteristic of Fielding's satirical method in that, though filled with pop culture references and delivered in Bridget's

blithe, self-deprecating voice, it nonetheless highlights the physical and emotional difficulties inherent in meeting the demands of an image-conscious society that privileges youth and beauty.” [110]

Helen Fielding incorporates into her novel an elections but it seem that Bridget Jones boycotts them. She is interested in Tony Blair because of his appearance rather than a political function. Even though she wanted, she did not participate in the elections. It is possible to say that Bridget does not feel interest in political events, this fact is confirmed when she makes a discovery that Mark Darcy is a Tory. Should be mentioned that Bridget inclines to Labour party. She declared:

“The point is you are supposed to vote for the principle of the thing, not the itsy-bitsy detail about this per cent and that per cent. And it is perfectly obvious that Labour stands for the principle sharing, kindness, gays, single mothers and Nelson Mandela as opposed to braying bossy men having affairs with everyone shag-shag-shag left, right and centre and going to the Ritz in Paris then telling all the presenters off on the today programme.” [111]

This declaration indicates not only her ignorance but lack of seriousness too. As previously mentioned; the only event which really touched her; is the death of Princess Diana and consecutive scandal with photographers of popular press. Bridget Jones is woman who is able to spend the evening watching television.

3.2 REFERENCE TO FEMINISM

As mentioned before, many readers entertain the view that Bridget Jones becomes symbol of women in the 1990s. (Elizabeth Gleick) They argue that they experience the same suffering and the same problems like this particular heroine. This is not the only way how to comprehend character of Bridget Jones. Some critics maintain that Bridget is “a vulgar caricature of a helpless, marriage-obsessed single woman.” [112] Concretely Alex Kuczynski from New York Times wrote that “Bridget is such a sorry spectacle, wallowing in her man-crazed helplessness, that her foolishness cannot be excused.” [113]

The most discussed point of view is unquestionably the feminist one. Many feminists all around the world identify with the fact that Bridget is a single, independent woman who can do virtually anything.

“*Feminism* is the belief that woman should be allowed with the same right, power and opportunities as men and be treated with the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state.” [114] “The issue of rights for women first became prominent during the French and American revolutions in the late 18th century. In Britain it was not until the emergence of the suffragette movement in the late of 19th century that there was significant political change. A ‘second wave’ of feminism arose in the 1960s, with the emphasis on unity and sisterhood.” [115]

Some affirmative views on feminism are recorded in the book. One of the nearest-to-feminism quotes in the book is when Shazzer shouts:

“one in four households are single, most of the royal family are single, the nation’s young men have been proved by surveys to be completely unmarriageable, and as a result there’s a whole generation of single girls like me with their own incomes and homes who have lots of fun and don’t need to wash anyone else’s socks.” [116]

One aspect of feminism is more than evident in this sequence; each woman on this planet can stand on their own feet without need for any man. Also Shazzer makes it clear that there is nothing strange to be single and more than thirty years old even if society does not agree.

When we think about feminism according to Bridget Jones we speak about so-called Third way of feminism. Third way of feminism is not concerned only on one group of women; it is global view of feminism. It presents that feminism is not only phrase from dictionary but that it is also kind of lifestyle. [117] This type of feminism relates with new comprehension of modern women 'girlie' which is further explained in the chapter "The Cultural life".

Some American critics compare Bridget Jones with Ally McBeal. Ally is counterpart of Bridget; she is lawyer in Law Company in Boston. In this company she works with her former boyfriend and his wife. [118] Both heroines are obsessed with trivialities and represent today's women who are in contrary to older feminist conviction and despite this fact both of them present feminist point of view. Norah Vincent, one of the critics who also compares Bridget with Ally, claims that Bridget is really a product of feminism: "Bridget Jones is living out exactly the farce for which her precursors set the stage. After all, is it any wonder Bridget is a spoiled princess when she grew up on the feminist belief that women should and must have it all?" [119] As a counterpoint of this argument we are able to find some aspects of anti-feminism. Bridget owns many self-help book and guides as *Men are from Mars, Women from Venus* and is governed by certain conventions that were set by women's magazines. [120]

As it is obvious Fielding inserted in her books classic feminist aspects also the so-called post-feminism but also anti-feminist ones.

4 CONCLUSION

The main aim of the bachelor thesis was to describe and analyze Bridget Jones in order to introduce modern woman in the way how Helen Fielding describes it in her works.

The thesis is divided into two parts for this purpose. The first, theoretical part provides information that is needed for the second, practical part. Author's life, plot of novels is information which complements the second part and helps to understand some of the situations on which the practical part concentrates. Opposed to the practical part; the theoretical focuses not only on Bridget Jones's Diaries but also on other Fielding's novels in which is main character always a woman.

Practical part presents Bridget Jones as the symbol of each thirty-year old modern women but also as the character who batters down a certain bounds of literature with the main female character. Modern woman is presented as independent woman living in a big city and is also typified as not very successful, not 'thin' by general assumption, with family which is deemed to be amiss rather than for benefit and without husband This woman is not very interested in political scene and she cares mostly about her appearance rather than important event regarding country in which she lives or the world. Her life is controlled by fashion and lifestyle magazines, it is her guide how to 'correctly live'. When she deals with men, she primarily guides by advice which she read in the manuals concerned with interpersonal relationships. Bridget Jones also presents woman who is feminist at least from a small part.

Contribution of this study is, that despite the mentioned 'shortcomings' the modern woman could be in fact happy.

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Picture 1. Lemondrop. Q&A with Helen Fielding, author of 'Bridget Jones's Diary'. [online]. [Retrieved 23 April 2013]. Available from: <http://www.lemondrop.com/2009/10/23/qanda-with-helen-fielding-author-of-bridget-joness-diary/>

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7 ABSTRACT

The bachelor thesis describes modern woman created by writer Helen Fielding, who is famous for character of Bridget Jones. The main aim of the thesis was to engage with this particular heroine and predominantly on the basis of Bridget Jones's Diary prepare a study about her behaviour, attitudes and her life in general.

The thesis is divided into several parts. The theoretic parts deals with author's life, experiences which inspired her in the creation of her work and it also engages in description of each of her novels. The practical part describes Bridget's attitude towards certain things, her opinions and also analyses relationship with her friends or family.

8 RESUMÉ

Tato bakalářská práce pojednává o moderní ženě očima spisovatelky Helen Fielding, která proslula postavou Bridget Jones. Hlavním cílem práce bylo seznámit se právě s touto hrdinkou a převážně na základě knihy *Deník Bridget Jones* vypracovat studii o jejím chování, zvycích a celkově o jejím životě.

Práce je rozdělena do několika částí. Teoretická část pojednává o životě autorky, o jejích zkušenostech, které ji inspirovaly při tvorbě, ale také se věnuje popisu všech jejích knih. Praktická část popisuje Bridgetin postoj k určitým věcem, její názory a také rozebírá vztah s jejími přáteli či rodinou.

9 APPENDICES



Picture 1. Helen Fielding



Picture 2. Fielding with former companion Kevin Curran.



Picture 3. Fielding in Simpson's episode.



Picture 4. Example of New Year's Resolution from poster of the movie adaptation.



Picture 5 .Sharon Maguire, an inspiration for Shazzer.



Picture 6. The main representatives of the movie adaptation, Colin Firth, Renée Zellweger and Hugh Grant.(from left)