Rewriting Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice in Contemporary British and American Fiction

Hrkać, Barbara

Master's thesis / Diplomski rad

2019

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **University of Zadar / Sveučilište u Zadru**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:162:248076

Rights / Prava: In copyright / Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-03-28**

Image not found or type unknown

Repository / Repozitorij:

University of Zadar Institutional Repository

zir.nsk.hr

Image not found or type unknown

Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Diplomski sveučilišni studij engleskog jezika i književnosti; smjer: nastavnički (dvopredmetni)

Barbara Hrkać

Rewriting Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice in Contemporary British and American Fiction

Diplomski rad

Zadar, 2019.

Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku
Diplomski sveučilišni studij engleskog jezika i književnosti; smjer: nastavnički (dvopredmetni)

Rewriting Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice in Contemporary British and American Fiction

Diplomski rad

Studentica:
Barbara Hrkać

Mentorica:
Doc.dr.sc. Vesna Ukić Košta

Zadar, 2019.

Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

Ja, **Barbara Hrkać,** ovime izjavljujem da je moj **diplomski** rad pod naslovom **Rewriting Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice in Contemporary British and American Fiction** rezultat mojega vlastitog rada, da se temelji na mojim istraživanjima te da se oslanja na izvore i radove navedene u bilješkama i popisu literature. Ni jedan dio mojega rada nije napisan na nedopušten način, odnosno nije prepisan iz necitiranih radova i ne krši bilo čija autorska prava.

Izjavljujem da ni jedan dio ovoga rada nije iskorišten u kojem drugom radu pri bilo kojoj drugoj visokoškolskoj, znanstvenoj, obrazovnoj ili inoj ustanovi.

Sadržaj mojega rada u potpunosti odgovara sadržaju obranjenoga i nakon obrane uređenoga rada.

Zadar, 13. ožujka 2019.

Table of contents:

Introduction……...……2

1. Intertextuality in Jane Austen Sequel Writing……....4
2. Social Context of *Pride and Prejudice* and Its Historical Fiction Sequel *Longbourn*....7

   2.1. Jane Austen as a Social Novelist…….…….7

   2.2. Social Stratifications of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Longbourn*…….……..11

3. "Anticipating Pleasure" in *Pride and Prejudice* vs. „Experiencing Pleasure" in *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Eligible*……17

Conclusion……..……29

4. Works Cited……..31
5. Summary: REWRITING JANE AUSTEN'S *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH AND AMERICAN FICTION……..……...33
6. Sažetak: Inačice romana *Ponos i predrasude* u suvremenoj britanskoj i američkoj književnosti……..…….34

Introduction

Jane Austen, one of the most prominent English authors ever, was born on 16 December 1775 in Hampshire and died in 1817. Austen publishes only four novels during her lifetime: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1815). She also wrote two other novels, *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* and her brother Henry enabled its publication after Austen's death in 1817 (Southam). Austen's most famous novel, published for the first time in 1813, *Pride and Prejudice* is a masterpiece that still has tremendous influence on contemporary fiction authors. In the first decades of the 21st century, a great number of authors use works of literary canon as a foundation for their own novels. In consequence, numerous contemporary novels are written that pursue in one way or another the tradition of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Contemporary rewritings of Austen's most famous work use many intertextual references, i.e., the main plot and the characters are intertwined with various aspects of contemporary fiction. Some of these are sequels to *Pride and Prejudice*, historical fiction or simply chick-lit influenced by this 1813 classic. Contemporary texts reuse its themes mostly in the light of contemporary female experience. Some of the major themes that occupy Austen's works are concerned with the issues of the status of a young unmarried woman in Western society, prosperous marriage, wealth, money and class. Twenty-first century authors who rewrite *Pride and Prejudice* seek to explore imaginary limits of Austen's society in somewhat limitless perspective of contemporary fiction: social roles and independence of women, female sexuality, class classification, being single in the twenty-first century and finally, the question of romantic love and an adequate income.

In this diploma paper three selected novels will be analyzed: *Longbourn* (2013) by Jo Baker, *Eligible* (2016) by Curtis Sittenfeld and *Bridget Jones's Diary (1996)* by Helen Fielding. Each of these novels has been chosen due to specific reasons: *Longbourn* is a historical novel

narrated by servants who work for the Bennets in the house of Longbourn. Baker vividly shows daily struggles of servants during the period of British Regency using historical facts and realistic elements. Needless to say, a romantic story also makes part of the novel. *Eligible* is a novel set in modern day Cincinnati suburbs, Ohio. In Sittenfeld's version, Elizabeth is a magazine writer who decides to return to her family home after her father's heart surgery and discovers that the family is dealing with money issues. The last novel to be discussed in the thesis is *Bridget Jones's Diary* in which the main character's love interest, Mark Darcy, is loosely based on the main male protagonist from Austen's novel.

The aim of this diploma thesis is to demonstrate ways in which three contemporary fiction writers mentioned above rewrite Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* and what intertextual devices they employ. The paper will focus on female protagonists and draw comparisons between Austen's female protagonists and women in contemporary novels**.** Moreover, the analysis will seek to determine the shift of perspective between modern female heroines and their nineteenth century originals in terms of social class and status as well as romantic conventions and marriage. In the paper I will first focus on Austen's social engagement as a novelist and reciprocating relationship of property and propriety of the nineteenth century ruling class. Historical fiction sequel *Longbourn* (2016) is narrated from the perspective of the servant class and their unfavourable inferior position. The purpose is to establish in what ways social status and conventions affect female protagonists portrayed in Baker's *Longbourn* and heroines portrayed in *Pride and Prejudice*. I will than discuss two so-called chick lit novels, *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) and *Eligible* (2016) as contemporary rewritings of Austen's 1813 classic. The analysis will seek to elaborate on what ways romantic conventions, womanhood and women's sexuality in *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Eligible* differ from the image of women portrayed by Austen. The analysis will also try to determine if there are alternatives to conventional happy endings. Representations of female protagonists will be

mostly analyzed in the light of feminist theory, gender studies and theory of intertextuality. Various theoretical texts of the following authors will be used in this diploma paper: Sarah Gamble, Donald J. Greene, Oliver MacDonagh, Tony Tanner and others.

1. Intertextuality in Jane Austen Sequel Writing

The concept of sequel writing has become extremely popular among authors in the last couple of decades. Numerous sequel novels are published every day and it is hard to estimate the exact number of published works. *Pride and Prejudice* is no exception to the rule: the novel captures the interest of both authors and readers worldwide. As the fictional characters, Austen protagonists are the object of multiple sequels to *Pride and Prejudice*. Their lives subdue persistence across time and texts (Haugtvedt 410) allowing Austen's heroines to achieve fictional timeline that in a way conflicts their original history i.e., the history established in *Pride and Prejudice*. Various contemporary authors take Austen's 1813 novel as the basis to create their own fictional perspective on existing characters. Erica Haugtvedt argues that *Pride and Prejudice* characters are part of the phenomenon of transfictionality that "allows characters to be socially constructed through their portrayal in multiple texts" (410). Not only does this argument allow for the issue of transfictionality in *Pride and Prejudice*, but it also shows how transfictionality can function despite a time span as long as two hundred years. Haugtvedt explains that transfictionality is a popular trend in contemporary fiction alongside the related transmediality "in which storyworlds or universes are narrated simultaneously and supplementally across multiple media platforms" (411). Austen's novels are characterized both by transfictionality in terms of fictional sequels, and transmediality in terms of numerous TV shows and film adaptations. In a way, not only do sequel writings of *Pride and Prejudice* express admiration for Jane Austen as the writer, but sequels also enable timeless existence of

Austen's fictional characters. The repetition across time thus invites readers to make their own assumptions and conclusions on the possible gaps between different fictional worlds.

Although the trend of rewriting Jane Austen's novels raises the interest of contemporary authors as well as readers, the concept itself is not significantly elaborated by scholars and academics yet. Consequently, it is difficult to establish the precise terminology and literary classification of the sequel writing as such. The current definition might imply several features: firstly, sequel writing is the product of contemporary literature that involves a certain borrowing of canonical texts. In "The Hybrid Novel – Highbrow Literature in a New Garb", Lidija Brtan argues that the concept of rewriting usually includes the combination of the original, i.e., classic and its sequel that mostly belongs to trivial literature and/or a different literary genre (53). Secondly, the general name for sequel novels is not equally accepted among scholars: for instance, Brtan comments that sometimes scholars use the term 'hybrid novel', while the English name would be 'mash-up novel' (53).

Despite controversial terminology, hybrid and mash-up novel might stand as synonyms as they both refer to a literary work that characterises the involvement of between seventy and eighty per cent of original novel and only twenty to thirty percent of contemporary author's incorporated material (Brtan 54). However, it is important to remember that the percentage of involvement of the original and rewritten text can change as the concept itself is quite vague and still prone to experimenting. And as consequence of experimenting within a hybrid novel, the new subtypes emerge – namely, prequels, sequels and adaptations. The main difference between hybrid novel and its subcategories is that the latter ones use the canonical texts only as the foundation for the creation of a new, different narrative. In other words, sequel writing is influenced by original version only through intertextuality.

Contemporary rewritings of Jane Austen's 1813 classic are the products of contemporary culture influenced by literary canon and intertextual devices. According to

Ljiljana Ina Gjurgjan intertextual devices seek to reconcile traditional and contemporary literature by emphasizing "understanding of the relation between language and authorship" (68). In "Types of Intertextuality" Gjurgjan argues that there are three types of intertextuality, "subversive, adaptive and transpositional" (67), and classifies intertextuality applied in contemporary literature as "adaptive" one. The very 'term' adaptive intertexuality implies that a contemporary work intertextually influenced by the great classics usually seek to achieve the greatness of its literary ancestor. Gjurgjan believes that the popularity of intertextuality among modern authors is the result of both awareness of the literary heritage and authors' contemporary "personal experience" (70).

One might argue that contemporary authors express their admiration and acknowledgment of Jane Austen by constantly rewriting her novel *Pride and Prejudice*. However, the relationship between a certain classic and its contemporary rewriting does not always imply an absolute superiority of the original. Very often, even in the case of adaptive intertextuality, sequel novels express certain criticism of its literary ancestor. Whether it refers to the representation of reality, social constructs or (traditional) values and beliefs, sequel novels reassess the classics in the light of contemporary culture and society. Gjurgjan states that as an intertextual method "questioning of the architext is methodologically most efficient" (71). By the same analogy, at least two out of three mentioned sequel novels that will be discussed in this paper confirm this characteristic of adaptive intertextuality. As the historical fiction sequel narrated from the perspective of inferior servant class, *Longbourn* casts new light on the nineteenth century English aristocracy and as such, questions the social context of Austen's novel. On the other hand, *Eligible* is a chick lit novel that adopts the whole concept of *Pride and Prejudice* i.e., theme, characters, romantic plot, and transforms it into a 21st century American version of Austen's novel.

However, contemporary rewritings are also influenced by popular culture and the sweeping changes that have taken place in the Western society since the sixties: the second wave of feminism and then post-feminism, sexual freedoms and gender equality have made an impact on chick lit heroines. While for Austen's protagonists the physical contact is reserved for one and only love, in *Eligible* female protagonists see their sexuality as something completely unrelated to romantic love. Despite the adaptiveness of contemporary intertextuality, the cultural shift between two chronologically different texts reflects the irony of different times. In support to this argument, Gjurgjan argues that "the study of intertextuality cannot be completely separated from sociology, in particular when feminist or postcolonial criticism is applied" (83). The contemporary rewritings of Jo Baker, Helen Fielding and Curtis Sittenfeld rest on the values of the original they rewrite, but at the same time shed a new perspective on the issues of the social status, women's sexuality and women's "adult role" (Gamble 71).

2. Social Context of *Pride and Prejudice* and its Historical Fiction Sequel *Longbourn*

2.1. Jane Austen as a Social Novelist

Before embarking on the comparative analysis of the historical fiction sequel *Longbourn* and its original *Pride and Prejudice*, it is important to understand the social context in which Jane Austen writes her novels. It is rather significant that she is not considered a social novelist by most of her contemporaries. Austen's work is criticized by many authors of her time, mostly due to the lack of social engagement in her novels that do not touch upon politics, law, economy and similar issues crucial for society. It seems that the general assumption is that Jane Austen is unaware of any historical events that happen during her lifetime. On the other

hand, Jo Baker's historical fiction novel *Longbourn* seeks to explore the unknown world of social class almost forgotten by Austen herself: servants. In *Longbourn*, members of middle and high class serve only as background figures while the plot revolves around daily chores, life aspirations and romantic hopes of servants in Bennet's home. In order to analyze the social aspects established in *Longbourn*, it is important to understand social constructs previously introduced in *Pride and Prejudice*. The question here is whether Jane Austen could be considered a social novelist? Thus, the aim of this chapter is to determine if there is social criticism expressed in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and establish differences or similarities between the social context of *Longbourn* and its 1813 original.

Tony Tanner firmly believes that Jane Austen could be considered a social novelist as she "does both expose and criticize the ideological assumption which ground her society and which may seem to constrain her fiction" (5-6). However, many nineteenth century novelists would strongly disagree. In 1861 Ralph Waldo Emerson criticizes Austen's writing in his journals. Emerson admits having read two Austen's novels, namely *Pride and Prejudice* and *Persuasion,* and he finds that in both novels the main issue is referred to as "marriageableness" (9). Emerson clearly sees such matter as something trivial and of no importance. On the other hand, Tanner observes the importance of marriage that represents „aspects of contemporary English social life with the imprisoning effect" (9-10). In other words, is it possible that a bad marriage also represents a way of suicide for many nineteenth century women? The matter of marriage is crucial for both Jane Austen privately as for her heroines of ink and paper. Marriage is indeed a matter of life. It is a logical need, thus, to strive towards more suitable marriage.

The importance of good marriage is emphasized with the existence of bad marriage as the latter one is also portrayed in Austen's novel's: only in *Pride and Prejudice* there are a few examples of what might be considered a bad marriage. At the beginning of the novel the readers become aware of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet marriage, later in the novel we find out about Charlotte

Lucas and Mr. Collins arranged marriage and how strangely it functions. Towards the end of the novel Lydia and Wickham's marriage is portrayed as not the happiest one. However, to go back to Henry James's criticism of the novel, he claims that many great nineteenth century novelists, including himself, explore the issue of human relationships after getting married. On the other hand, he believes that Austen's writing suggests that all life problems seem to be magically resolved by the simple act of marriage. It seems, however, that this is not the case as we have already mentioned in the examples above. Therefore, there is no doubt that Jane Austen is a novelist who explores the social constructs of the smallest unions: families.

It is significant that many authors claim how difficult it is to precisely establish what the term 'society' means for Jane Austen. Tanner argues that majority of eighteenth and nineteenth century writes use the term 'society', 'community' and 'company' as interchangeable synonyms (12), and Jane Austen is no exception to the rule. James Sherry shares a similar observation in "Pride and Prejudice: The Limits of Society" when he claims that Austen has a different interpretation of society, such that does not refer to the institutional kind of society, laws and regulations. Instead, society refers to the company or companionship that "always suggests for Jane Austen the presence of other individuals with whom it is either a duty or a pleasure to mix" (611). Richard Simpson argues that Jane Austen could be considered as the most 'social' of novelists due to her interest in community. However, she could also be considered as the least social of novelists since she ignores historical events that occur at the time (Tanner 13). As a consequence, Tanner concludes that "the overall impression given by the book is of a small section of society locked in an almost – *almost* – timeless, ahistorical present in which very little will or can, or even should, change" (104).

Ian Watt takes a step further and argues that Austen's awareness of social differences among the nineteenth century classes could place her side by side with Karl Marx (11). Austen functions as the precursor of sociology due to her thorough observations of small community.

However, only in the twentieth century did Austen gain the reputation of a social novelist. Nowadays, however, her reputation greatly differs from the one she had during her lifetime. Watt claims that Austen's image as the author gradually changes “from that of a charming but inconsequential entertainer to that of a mature but morally imperative artist” (13). In other words, while many of Austen's contemporaries do not acknowledge the importance and literary value of Austen's work, an opposite image is established by contemporary literary critics, such as Ian Watt, Tony Tanner, James Sherry and many others. One of twenty century authors who also praises Austen's work is Virginia Woolf:

> Her genius is freed and active. (…) But of what is it all composed? Of a ball in a country town; a few couples meeting and taking hands in an assembly room; a little eating and drinking; a for catastrophe, a boy being snubbed by one young lady and kindly treated by another. There is no tragedy and no heroism. Yet for some reasons the little scene is moving out of all proportion to its surface solemnity (Watt 18-19).

It is interesting to observe that Woolf describes Austen's plot as the “little scene”, but at the same time acknowledges her genius as “freed and active”. In other words, Woolf admits that Austen's capacity to represent layers and issues of a small fraction of society in such a thorough and vivid manner makes her a social novelist. However, it is important to bear in mind that Austen's writing is a novelty during the Victorian era and that Austen does not expose broad issues of society as some socially engaged authors who write about war struggles or industrial problems. Instead, Austen concentrates her interest on what she knows the best: a small community of a few families and their everyday worries.

2.2. Social Stratifications of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Longbourn*

As previously stated, some authors criticize Austen for the apparent lack of interest in social and political issues of her time, while others notice her deep interest in society as a community and thus, consider Austen a social novelist. The question here is: what are the social elements that characterize the society of Austen's novels and make it so appealing to contemporary readers? Whether money is inherited or provided from the land or trade, it is a crucial element that determines a social status of Austen's characters. From the opening line of *Pride and Prejudice*, readers are instantly presented with the problematic issues portrayed in the novel: "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in a possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" (Austen 235). Readers are presented with the observations of society, i.e. community, economy or rather materialistic status of characters belonging to that community, and of course the marital status of community members. On the other hand, Baker's *Longbourn* mostly focuses on the economic status of the characters i.e. their social position. The servants of the Bennet family make a small community, one that does not include visiting relatives in a big city or attending balls. Instead, Bennet servants are busy doing their daily chores, but in *Longbourn* they are portrayed as real characters who have higher purpose than that in Austen's novel: serving the others.

In *Jane Austen, Real and Imagined Worlds* Oliver MacDonagh argues that Austen realistically describes money issues of the middle and upper-class society. MacDonagh believes that Austen's knowledge of economy and financial struggles is reflection of her personal troubles (50). At the same time, Austen moves in high social circles and has an opportunity to become a close observer of aristocracy she realistically represents in her works.

On the other hand, *Longbourn* is written almost two hundred years after the first publication of *Pride and Prejudice*. Consequently, Baker introduces contemporary views in the novel as she

criticizes social stratifications of the nineteenth century English society. Tanner observes that the servant class of Jane Austen is "absolutely inaudible and invisible" and "underpaid out of the social landscape" (14). Jo Baker, the author of *Longbourn* seems to be of the same opinion. As the title suggests, Longbourn stands for the name of property and home of the Bennet family. The novel focuses on the daily struggles of the servants in the house of Longbourn. In the author's note at the end of the novel, Baker explains her view of the protagonists:

> The main characters in Longbourn are ghostly presences in *Pride and Prejudice*: they exist to serve the family and the story. They deliver notes and drive carriages; they run errands when nobody else will step out of doors – they are the "proxy" by which the shoe-roses for Netherfield Ball are fetched in the pouring rain. But they are – at least in my head – people too (445).

Baker vividly portrays daily chores of servants throughout the book, from cleaning the dirty linen to carrying a chamber pot, but she also portrayes their dreams, hopes and struggles.

The fact that financial income is a precondition for any kind of successful social status is shown many times in both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Longbour*. In Austen's original lack of money is the main reason why Mrs. Bennet wants to marry off five daughters at all costs. However, in Baker's version lack of money is no issue for young ladies as they enjoy privileges of high rank: they buy expensive clothes, attend balls and eventually they get married prosperously. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth changes her opinion about Darcy as he explains himself in a letter. However, she does not express her feelings openly to him. Instead, Darcy proposes her for the second time and she accepts it. In *Longbourn*, the main heroine does not wait for the opportunity to happen. For Baker's protagonists lack of money means the lack of freedom, social equality and financial prosperity: their whole life is spent on pleasing the needs of the masters. A strong distinction between two worlds is also shown in the case of Mr. Bingley

deciding to leave the Netherfield Park on short notice. His departure also leaves Sarah with the broken heart, but she does not have time to overcome her sorrow as Mrs. Jane Bennet:

> Sarah's position was quite different. She did not have Jane's loveliness, or her gentleness, or her thousand pounds in the four per cent. (…) She had nothing, in short, that she could cling to; nothing that she could rely upon to entice a man away from the delights and opportunities that were offered elsewhere (Baker 192).

Sarah, Baker's main female protagonist, turns her disposition into an advantage. As she does not have much to lose, Sarah decides to act on it: she quits her job and leaves the Bennet family to find her one lost love. It seems that Baker's heroine is portrayed as a brave and sensible young woman ahead of her time.

However, barriers between social classes are hard to overcome for the servants. At one point in the novel, Longourn's housekeeper Mrs. Hill becomes desperate realizing this fact: "And yet, and yet, the feeling still could not quite be quelled: there was also the fact of her, herself. Would she, at some time, have the chance to care for her own things, her own comforts, her own needs, and not just for other people's?" (Baker 144). In *Longbourn*, Mrs. Hill takes the role of Mrs. Bennet from *Pride and Prejudice*: she takes care of the household, and she also has an illegitimate son with Mr. Bennet. However, on social scale Mrs. Hill does not have any social influence. Baker, however, portrays her as a hardworking and sensible woman: the character of Mrs. Hill serves as a counterbalance to Mrs. Bennet.

Whether Jane Austen express criticism or loyalty to the late eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century England, she is still a member of the high class. The false image of social stability between different classes is constantly jeopardized and is established with "an increasing emphasis on the importance of property, in maintaining social peace and order in late eighteenth-century England" (Tanner 17). The notion of propriety is also essential one for

her: “Jane Austen is in agreement with the dominant ideology: her proper heroines need a propertied man” (Tanner 17). That propertied man also needs to have ‘propriety’, i.e. good manners and morals. In other words, the link between property and propriety is unbreakable one: if a gentleman has the land, i.e. property, then that same gentleman must have certain manners and moral that would justify his status. The social criticism of Jane Austen is focused on finding a balance between the superior social status of the high class and their inner trades.

In “Jane Austen and the Peerage” Donald J. Greene comments on Jane Austen's observations on the growth of the nineteenth century middle class and the obvious conflict between Elizabeth's low rank and Darcy's aristocratic connections. According to Greene, Darcy is the perfect example of the landlord whose manners are in accordance with his possessions (162). On the other hand, James Smith, the main male protagonist of Baker's novel, is also a member of aristocracy by blood relation with Mr. Bennet, but as an illegitimate son he has none of the privileges of high rank. He is raised as a worker instead. While his half-sisters attend balls, he waits for them outside in the cold. While young ladies enjoy the walk in the garden, he works in a field. When the Bennet family gathers around the dinner table, their half-brother serves the meal. Therefore, the servant's social status does not include harmony between property and propriety. Mr. Smith has no inherited land, although Baker portrays him as a man of high morals.

It seems that there are at least two crucial elements that form social criticism in Austen's novels: the rise of the nineteenth century middle class society and the relationship between property and propriety of the noble class society. However, Greene claims that Austen's criticism towards aristocracy is nothing less than an expression of irony (164). What Austen might consider ironical, Baker takes on a whole different level. *Longbour* shows significant differences from its 1813 original: members of the ruling class indeed lack propriety. Baker portrays all members of high class as people who enjoy privileges of their position, but these

privileges are not balanced with their inner selves. Baker reflects upon the issue from Sarah's perspective:

> Because, she thought, as she fixed the pails to the yoke, ducked into it, and staggered upright, really no one should have to deal with another person's dirty linen. The young ladies might behave like they were smooth and sealed as alabaster statues underneath their clothes, but then they would drop their soiled shifts on the bedchamber floor, to be whisked away and cleansed, and would thus reveal themselves to be the frail, leaking, forked bodily creatures that they really were (Baker 4).

Young Bennet daughters are portrayed as lazy and ignorant mistresses whose only goal in life is to attend balls and getting married. On the other hand, Baker sees the servants as completely opposite to aristocracy: they are hard-working, but they also read books and are self-educated. For Baker they are ambitious people who seek to find meaningful life in more than just serving others.

There are other differences concerning the protagonists in the contemporary novel and the original. In Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* Mr. Bennet leaves the impression of a reserved and somewhat cynical husband, but a reasonable parent figure. However, in *Longbourn,* the readers come to realize that Mr. Bennet has an illegitimate son with Mrs. Hill, the housekeeper. When Mrs. Hill asks Mr. Bennet to help their son, he shows no interest in such matter. After the fruitless discussion with Mr. Bennet, Mrs. Hill realizes his ignorance: "The scandal. Of course. He could not bear the scandal. It had been a dreadful miscalculation, she saw that now: that all of them should be unhappy, so that he should not be disgraced" (Baker 297). Later in the novel, Mr. Smith is wanted for execution, but Mr. Bennet still remains indifferent: "What would people think if I did even that? What would people say?" (Baker 350). From the perspective of servants, Mr. Bennet does not enjoy the harmony of property and propriety.

However, he is not the only one: readers also come to realize that Mr. Bingley made his fortune on sugar trade and human trafficking. Mr. Smith explains that to other servants, as he has the world knowledge: "In Africa, you can trade all that, and guns, for people; you load them up in your hold, and you ship them off to the West Indies, and trade them there for sugar, and then you ship the sugar back to England" (Baker 62).

The character of Mr. Collins also shows a significant difference from the original and a clear distinction between gentlemen and servants. While in *Pride and Prejudice* the clergyman pays compliments for the dishes that are served, in *Longbourn* Mr. Collins also expresses concern when he notices that his nieces have no other concers but attending balls. Therefore, in Baker's version Mr. Collins in not a mocking figure, but rather a man of common sense:

> It turns out that they have nothing to do in the kitchen, which is something of a concern, and a surprise, if I may say so; but I think they must have some responsibilities about the house, some actual work to do. A family of this size, with Mr. Bennet's income, I don't see how they could be idle. Or, indeed, what good it would do, to bring up a child to be of not practical use to herself or anybody else (Baker 147).

Property and propriety become interchangeable elements in what created a social ideology in the period after the French Revolution. This social construct constantly serves as a catalyst in all Austen's novels. Her focus on marriage might be read as a consequence of the established harmony between the property and propriety. On the other hand, although Jane Austen is critical of good manners and morality that the ruling class often lacks, one might notice her disregard of the lack of financial income and thus economic instability of the servant class. These are some of the issues that Jo Baker rewrites and puts her focus on in her contemporary version of *Pride and Prejudice.*

3. "Anticipating pleasure" in *Pride and Prejudice* vs. "Experiencing Pleasure" in *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Eligible*

Since we are going to analyze two titles which belong to the genre of the so-called 'chick lit novel', it is necessary to explain the term first. Chick literature is an outgrowing trend of trivial, contemporary literature that centres on young, single woman in Western urban society. The focus of the narrative is heroine's single status and her constant strive to find happiness in the romantic relationship and/or marriage. Most of chick lit protagonists can be described as "young, single, white, heterosexual, British and American women in their late twenties and early thirties, living in metropolitan areas" (Ilief-Martinescu 124). Another typical characteristic of the genre is first person narration, which is the case in *Bridget Jones's Diary*. However, *Eligible* is told from the third-person point of view.

According to Ilief-Martinescu, chick lit is a product of women's post-feminist struggles to achieve independence and explore their sexuality in the contemporary, consumerist society (121). As the word itself implies, post-feminism refers to a new kind of feminism that differs from its 1960s and 1970s ancestor (Gamble 61). In her article "Growing Up Single: The Postfeminist Novel" Sarah Gamble explains post-feminism as "a view of itself which is reinforced through its consistent appeal to youth" (61). In order to prove their postfeminist heritage, it is important for chick lit authors to be born in the seventies or eighties. According to Gamble: "precisely because their postfeminist credentials rest on their identity not just as women but as *young* women who have grown up under feminism and thus accept it as an incontrovertible part of their cultural landscape" (61). By that analogy, one might conclude that both Helen Fielding and Curtis Sittenfeld can be considered postfeminist authors. However, the question we might ask ourselves is the following: how is postfeminism reflected in chick lit

novels in the first place? Also, what are contemporary heroines like in comparison to Austen's original?

Whether one believes that post-feminism represents step forward or step backwards, the truth is that the movement itself greatly differs from its precursor. Whereas the aims of feminism are to achieve independence and liberation of women, one might argue that post-feminism stands for "a teenage tantrum, a fruitless rebellion engaged in merely for its own sake" (Gamble 62). This is how Gamble comments on the connection between chick lit and postfeminism:

> The mass-produced literary genre now widely known as "chicklit" contains many of postfeminism's conventions as well as its problems: most notably, it is similarly concerned with defining the aims and aspirations of the modern young woman who has grown to maturity in a world inescapably influenced by second-wave feminism and thus sees herself as facing dilemmas which lie outside the experience of previous generations of women. However, she can also be regarded as a lamentable kind of heroine for whom happiness depends upon the most limited and hackneyed of objectives: romantic fulfillment (62).

In other words, Gamble claims that recurring issues of postfeminist ideology include the emphasis on youthfulness and a conventional happy ending achieved by romantic love and/or marriage. And Bridget Jones is no exception to that rule: as a thirty years old, middle-class single woman who strives to find the right one Bridget functions as "a parody of the modern postfeminist woman" (Gamble 63). Is seems that contemporary Western society still puts pressure on women to settle down and get married:

> Bridget! What are we going to do with you! said Una. You career girls! I don't know! Can't put it off forever, you know. Tick-tock-tick-tock. Yes. How does a

> woman manage to get to your age without being married? Roared Brian Enderby (Fielding 12).

Gamble argues that Bridget is offended by the intrusive comments of her parents' friends, but only because she is embarrassed by being single. Bridget's inability to find the partner leaves her frustrated and convinced that she is being nothing but a romantic failure:

> When you are partnerless in your thirties, the mild bore of not being in a relationship – no sex, not having anyone to hang out with on Sundays, going home from parties on your own all time – gets infused with the paranoid notion that the reason you are not in a relationship is your age, you have had your last ever relationship and sexual experience ever, and it is all your fault for being too wild or willful to settle down in the first bloom of youth (Fielding 143-144).

Indeed, it is rather significant that at the very opening of the novel the main protagonists find the issue of feminism as something embarrassing: "there is nothing unattractive to a man as strident feminism" (Fielding 20). Unlike liberation and independence that are emphasized by feminism, the main concern for the contemporary woman seems to be preoccupation and obsession with romantic expectations. As a contemporary young woman, Bridget Jones does not act as a confident, sophisticated woman satisfied with the ability of making her own personal choices, but rather as a woman who values herself "only through reference to men" (Gamble 65), a woman who is obsessed with physical appearance and romantic relationship. Gamble refers to the romantic ideology of postfeminist chick lit as "backward-facing focus" (65) that is related to the form of the novels itself, i.e. intertextual references on Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. However, Gamble admits that "Bridget does not have half the self-possession of Elizabeth Bennet" (65) and that the necessity of getting married expressed in the famous opening line of *Pride and Prejudice* is clearly an ironical comment that is misinterpreted in the

contemporary chick lit as a true necessity. This is how Gamble comments on *Bridget Jones's Diary's* references to *Pride and Prejudice*:

> Whereas Austen critiqued the institution of marriage by exposing the way in which it is tied up in societal and economic structures, its significance to Bridget – and thus, ultimately, to her diary – is merely as a romantic costume drama, a plot she wishes her own life to follow. The book is clearly meant to be read as a satire in the Austen mode: you're meant to laugh *at* Bridget Jones, not *with* her (66).

On the other hand, Raluca Sargie claims in "Intertextuality in Helen Fielding's Bridget Jones's Diary" that there is no huge distinction between Bridget Jones and Austen's heroine as "similar to Elizabeth Bennet, Bridget has a lively mind, but she is not presented as being physically attractive" (105). However, Sargie believes that the issues Bridget deals with are a consequence of contemporary lifestyle as "the modern woman has to focus a lot on her physical aspect" (105). A similar remark on how to stay young and beautiful in a contemporary world is ironically given by Bridget herself: "being a woman is worse than being a farmer: there is so much harvesting and crop spraying to be done" (Fielding 30). However, Sargie finds Bridget's issues of alcohol and cigarette consumption, as well as keeping a diet and eating unhealthy food simply as reflection of "the image of the twentieth century woman" (105).

What is more, Sargie claims that Bridget Jones and Elizabeth Bennet have one characteristic in common: they want to get married. According to Sargie, Elizabeth decides to get married primarily due to the lack of personal and economic independence (106). On the other hand, Bridget cannot compensate for her loneliness and fear of being a single woman that will end up "dying alone and being found three weeks later half-eaten by an Alsatian" (Fielding 18). However, although Austen does emphasize and criticize the economic reasons of marriage, her heroines do not decide to get married at all costs. For instance, Elizabeth rejects Mr. Darcy's

first proposal as well as Mr. Collin's despite her family misfortunate situation with inheritance. Thus, one can hardly claim that Elizabeth Bennet wants to get married at all costs. Instead, she wants to get married for the sake of love itself. In addition, Austen's heroine does not obsess about romantic relationship like Bridget Jones. Some authors believe that the reason for this is that postfeminist protagonists "portray contradictory characteristics, such as "bold", "ambitious", "witty", and "sexy" on the one hand, and then on the other, "shallow", "overtly compulsive", "neurotic" and insecure" (Rowntree, Moulding, Bryant 125).

When comparing Austen' s with contemporary female protagonists, one cannot disregard the issue of women's sexuality. Whereas in Jane Austen's novels hardly any physical contact occurs between two protagonists in love, the concept of practicing love as a physical experience changes in the new millennium. Needless to say, women's sexual freedom has a heavy influence on the women of paper and ink, i.e. contemporary chick lit heroines. As Rowntree, Moulding and Bryant claim, "the main feature that distinguishes chick lit from previous romantic fiction is a heightened address to women as active sexual players" (125). In comparison to the nineteenth century novel heroines, contemporary women have multiple sexual partners and practice sexual relations on various occasions. Unlike traditional romance fiction where the love is exclusively reserved for the hero and heroine and sex is a taboo, contemporary chick lit women experience sexual pleasure as a part of their personal growth until they settle down in a holy matrimony (125).

At the very beginning of Sittenfeld's *Eligible* readers find out that Elizabeth Bennet is no exception when it comes to practicing sexual freedom: Elizabeth is in on-and-off going relationship with a married man, Jasper Wickham. In Sittenfeld's version, Wickham is Elizabeth's old college friend who also happens to be her lover and long-desired husband. However, Jasper Wickham marries another woman, but obtains the relationship with Elizabeth. Despite Jasper being married, Elizabeth hopes that one day Jasper will file for divorce and

choose her instead. While waiting for that to happen, Elizabeth and Jasper have sex on regular basis: "They'd less often but still regularly have emotional, alcohol-fueled confrontations, always initiated by Liz" (Sittenfeld 25). Not only does twenty-first century Elizabeth Bennet practice sex (unlike Austen's original version), but she also has no trouble initiating such relations. In the course of the novel, Elizabeth meets Darcy whom she instantly dislikes, but still cannot disregard sexual tension between them. After one of many quarrels, Elizabeth proposes sex:

> "Want to go to your place and have hate sex?" Darcy squinted. "Is that a thing?" the bravado filling Liz – it wasn't infinite, it could dissipate quickly. But while it still existed, she said grandly, "Of course it's a thing." "Is it like fuck buddies?" "This isn't a sociology class. A simple yes or no will do." She added, "It's similar, but without the buddy part." (Sittenfeld 251).

However, her sexual attraction to Darcy is not motivated by her growing romantic feelings towards him – instead, she is having sexual relations with him simply because she can: "It wasn't that Liz has changed her mind about Darcy's essentially disagreeable nature; rather, she had concluded that a romp or two in his bed would neither diminish nor exacerbate his disagreeability" (Sittenfeld 257). In other words, any kind of physical experience that might express romantic feeling is considered an "anticipating pleasure" (Rowntree, Moulding, Bryant 125) for *Pride and Prejudice* heroines. On the other hand, chick lit novels change the romantic conventions into "experiencing pleasure." However, sexual freedom women achieve does not last forever for chick lit heroines: women pursue sexual pleasure only until they eventually find their future husbands (126). While the protagonists experience their sexual pleasures, the main love story that revolves around romantic fulfilment between the couple might stand for itself. In other words, sexual attraction does not imply conventional happy ending (125). However, Tony Tanner believes that for Jane Austen sexual attraction has quite a different impact: "in

this area in particular, she obviously thought that to act on first impressions could only be disastrous" (124). The society portrayed in *Pride and Prejudice* completely minimalizes any kind of physical experience and replaces it with the importance of language expression:

> Intimate physical contacts and experiences, while not denied, are minimalized. Hands may meet, though it is more likely to be the eyes which come together across a distinct social space. Faces may be turned forward, or away from, other faces, and Elizabeth is prone to a good deal of blushing (Tanner 131).

Unlike Austen's protagonists, contemporary chick lit versions of Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy portrayed in Sittenfelds' *Eligible* do not hesitate to engage into sexual activities. Despite their relationship that is exclusively physical, Darcy admits having feelings for Elizabeth:

> "It's probably an illusion caused by the release of oxytocin during sex," Darcy continued, "but I feel as if I'm in love with you. You're not beautiful, and you aren't nearly as funny as you think you are. You're a gossip fiend who tries to pass off your nosiness as anthropological interest in human condition. And your family, obviously, is a disgrace. Yet in spite of all common sense, I can't stop thinking about you. The time has come for us to abandon this ridiculous pretense of hate sex and admit that we're a couple" (Sittenfeld 296).

In the original version of *Pride and Prejudice* Darcy's love confession and marriage proposal are turned down and the same happens in the chick lit version. However, the physical attraction between chick lit protagonists cannot be denied like in Austen's classic. A shift to physical experience of love and sexual freedom has since dramatically changed and caused the "sexualization of culture" (Rowntree, Moulding, Byrant 123) where sex is constantly and directly present in everyday lives. Some believe practicing sex before marriage is a matter of adjusting to the consisting trends of society as "women in Austen's time would lose their

reputation if they were involved in a sexual relationship before marriage. Nowadays, the situation is different in the sense that young people may be ridiculed if they are still virgin at a certain age" (Sarghie 106). Even Bridget Jones believes at some point that her sexual experience is a part of her contemporary female identity: "This is the price I must pay for becoming a modern woman instead of following the course nature intended by marrying" (Fielding 119).

Although sexual activity of contemporary female protagonists challenges romantic conventions established in romantic fiction, it still does not represent significant changes in feminist terms (Rowntree, Moulding, Bryant 133). In other words, it seems that chick lit novels are "remarkably conventional in the form of the heterosexual monogamous relationship, suggesting in feminist terms that cultural shifts are neither straightforwardly progressive nor regressive" (Rowntree, Moulding, Bryant 133). In addition, Rowntree, Moulding and Bryant believe that the lack of "alternative sexual paradigms is neither anti-feminist" (134), but it clearly suggests women's aspirations for "emotionally and sexually satisfying, fun-loving, monogamous heterosexual relationship" (133). The general impression is that the late twentieth century women

> still find themselves under the spell of romance and would like to be involved in a relationship with a man like Darcy, who both in Austen's fiction and in Bridget's reality is attractive, rational, extremely helpful when needed, sensitive and in command, and who desires them passionately (Sarghie 107).

In other words, feminism has wrought significant changes since contemporary women are free to experience their sexuality, unlike their nineteenth-century ancestors. However, post-feminism is far from radical when it comes to heroines in contemporary chick lit novels: women are still hoping for the conventional happy ending. If "alternative sexual paradigms" (Rowntree et al. 134) represent a difference in feminist terms, then one might suggest that *Eligible* shows a certain deviation: while the main plot still revolves around heterosexual relationship between

Elizabeth Bennet and Darcy, the relationship between Lydia and her boyfriend Ham introduces a novelty. At some point in the novel Ham decides to change sex and eventually becomes transgender. In the original version of *Pride and Prejudice* Lydia embarrasses herself and her family by running away with Wickham, but Darcy eventually manages to arrange the marriage for the young couple to preserve the reputation of the Bennet family. In *Eligible*, Lydia's relationship again represents a certain obstacle. The transgender issue certainly involves the element of something unconventional and new in comparison to most chick lit novels. For instance, *Bridget Jones's Diary* includes elements of intertextuality based on *Pride and Prejudice* but is not that different from the original when it comes to alternative sexual relationships. In addition, Sittenfeld's chick lit also discusses some other contemporary issues, such as a single motherhood and pregnancy by artificial insemination (Jane Bennet), bulimia (Georgiana Darcy), and compulsive buying disorder (as what seems to affect Mrs. Bennet).

The crucial question concerning chick lit versions of *Pride and Prejudice* is whether a conventional happy ending still involves marriage and getting married. Are there any other roles for woman apart from those of being involved in a romantic relationship? Sarah Gamble argues that modern chick lit heroines live for the living itself and do not "make any particular point regarding female access to independence". They are employed, financially secured women who live on their own, go to social events and practice sex not because they want to make a statement, but simply because that is what women do, just like in the case of Bridget Jones. Gamble believes that reason for this stem from the fact that contemporary women forget the history of feminism as they live in a world where "feminism is no longer an acknowledged presence" (69). Women clearly neglect the struggles their mothers and grandmothers had to achieve opportunities for the equality of sexes. The irony for contemporary chick lit heroines lies in that fact that "the clock is ticking, both for them and for the postfeminist ideology they embody" (70). While Elizabeth Bennet gets engaged in *Eligible*, Bridget Jones engages in

romantic relationship with Mark Darcy, but there are no indications of marriage. As Fielding does not want her heroine to settle down yet, Bridget Jones remains confused with her life choices and aspirations. Gamble concludes that "Helen Fielding evokes all the problems of the postfeminists generation without proposing a solution" (67).

Regarding this issue, Gamble claims that this 1996 chick lit "surely cannot represent the final verdict on the postmodernist novel, which has continued to investigate alternatives to the conclusion of the romantic plot" (71). Gamble also mentions another novel belonging to the genre, Jennifer Weiner's *Good in Bed* (2001). The main protagonist is overweight Cannie Shapiro, who has deep anxieties about her relationships and a self-destructive fixation on her father who does not express enough affection. However, during a one-night stand, as the title of the book suggests, Cannie gets pregnant and this changes the focus of the narrative "from a semi-imaginary and idealized father-figure to the ever-present figure of the mother" (Gamble 73). Eventually Cannie gets involved in a romantic relationship with another man, but he remains "a shadowy figure throughout the book" (75) as the focus of Cannie's female identity becomes her mother role and the growing bond between her and her new-born daughter. Therefore, Gamble claims that it is possible for postfeminist chick lit novels to explore alternatives to conventional romantic plot and female roles "by going beyond romanticism and happy-ever-after endings in order to create heroines who are responsible for others as well as themselves" (77).

In the light of the argument that postfeminist chick lit novel needs to search for alternatives other than romantic happy ending, we can again turn to Sittenfeld's *Eligible*. The main protagonist greatly differs from Fielding's heroine Bridget Jones or Weiner's Cannie Shapiro. Firstly, Elizabeth's decision not to settle down or have children is motivated by her personal choices and not unfortunate life circumstances. She realizes this upon returning to her hometown: "It was generally less shocking to Liz that twenty years after high school she was

still her essential self, the self she'd grown up as, unencumbered by spouse or child, than that nearly everyone else had changed, move on, and multiplied" (Sittenfeld 76).

However, Elizabeth is firmly aware that she does not have a wish to embrace the mother role as Cannie Shapiro does in *Good in Bed*. Moreover, she openly admits this on several occasions:

> Believe it or not, I do understand why people have kids. For most of my life, I assumed I'd be a mother, and I'm sure it is rewarding, when they're not having tantrums. But the older I've gotten, the less I've wanted it for myself. Watching Jane go through her insemination process was the clincher. I like my life now, there's stuff I want to do in the future that isn't compatible with having kids, and it's not even a big, tortured decision. It's a relief (Sittenfeld 274).

Unlike Elizabeth, Jane Bennet is a forty-year old yoga instructor who wants to have kids, and before meeting Chip Bingley, she decides to have insemination treatments and get pregnant. Another female protagonist who decides to get involved in a relationship due to the motifs of potential motherhood is Charlotte Lucas. In Sittenfeld's contemporary version of *Pride and Prejudice* Charlotte is a successful business woman who decides to move in with Bennet's cousin Willie Collins, a famous "technology savant" (49) who is wealthy, but childish and self-centered. However, Charlotte decides to get involved in a relationship with Willie not due to his financial situation, but because of the romantic fulfilment that her life lacks. Unlike Austen's Charlotte Lucas, who is worried about her economic position, Charlotte's contemporary version is more concerned with less material aspects of marriage. Money is simply not an issue for *Eligible* heroines as most of them have successful careers and are therefore financially secured.

However, stable financial situation does not imply that Sittenfeld's protagonists do not want romantic relationship and/or marriage. Indeed, the title itself is indicative as *Eligible* stands for the reality tv show where an eligible bachelor, in this case Chip Bingley, is to select a wife from the group of more than twenty single women. More precisely, as Liz explains to

Jane who has not seen the show, "he was the guy being lusted after by twenty-five women" (Sittenfeld 7). Another protagonist who manages to have both love and career in Sittenfeld's *Eligible* is Kathy de Bourgh, who happens to be a famous feminist and "the leader of second-wave feminism" (320) that Liz interviews for her magazine *Mascara*. Kathy de Bourgh is one of the most influential women Liz admires, "she'd been rereading *Revolutions and Rebellions*, the classic work in which Kathy de Bourgh chronicled her time in the women's movement from the early sixties on" (Sittenfeld 109). During the interview with Kathy, Elizabeth asks her all kinds of questions about feminist movement and tendencies in popular culture. However, the responses to these questions are not explicitly written by the author, except the one that regards the issue of marriage. When asked why she married when she was sixty-seven years old and what is her opinion on marriage, Kathy de Bourgh replies:

> There's a belief that to take care of someone else, or to let someone else take care of you – that both is inherently unfeminist. I don't agree. There's no shame in devoting yourself to another person, as long as he devotes himself to you in return (Sittenfeld 319-320).

In Sittenfeld's version of *Pride and Prejudice* Catherine de Bourgh becomes Kathy, whose function in the novel is simply to express a feminist point of view on marriage. Although *Eligible* protagonists clearly tend to find love and be romantically involved, this is not the only concern they have: Elizabeth is represented as a successful journalist writer and Jane is willing to adopt a mother role. And finally, when it comes to the question of marriage, a contemporary version of Elizabeth Bennet decides to take advantage of her social independence and equality by proposing to Darcy: "I want to know, will you marry me? Will you do me the honor of becoming my husband?" (Sittenfeld 495). The couple becomes engaged but not married yet. For the protagonists of *Eligible* love is not a matter of calculation, but rather personal choice.

Conclusion

Each of the three contemporary rewritings of *Pride and Prejudice* under discussion in this paper is narrated from a woman's point of view. However, contemporary female protagonists show different characteristics: Baker's heroine Sarah is a young woman who seeks to achieve personal growth by work and self-education. As a servant, Sarah is aware of her unfavorable social position, but she is still determined enough to take control of her life. Both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Longbourn* have something in common: the main protagonists are independent, intelligent women who strive for more than just social connections or marital status. Austen's protagonists achieve the harmony between the property and propriety by suitable marriages. In *Longbourn*, Sarah creates her own happiness by acting on her own. On the other hand, chick lit heroines show contradictory characteristics as they tend to be independent, but at the same time seek personal fulfilment in romantic relationships. Bridget Jones seems to be completely obsessed with romantic expectations. She does not possess the self-reflection and personal independence of Baker's or Sittenfeld's heroines; and in this respect she is a far cry from female protagonists portrayed in Austen's novels. In *Bridget Jones's Diary*, post-feminism is the concept of no special meaning for the main heroine, and the emphasis is on the romantic relationship only. Readers thus do not laugh with Bridget, but they laugh instead at Bridget's unconventional and desperate attempts to find love. Finally, in *Eligible* the main heroine balances somewhere in between: Elizabeth admires the famous feminist Katy de Bourgh, and even acts on her independence by proposing to Darcy. However, readers also find out that Elizabeth used to have an affair with Jasper Wickham who manipulated her with the false marriage promises. Sittenfeld's heroine, however, changes throughout the novel just like Austen's heroine, and turns into a self-conscious and independent woman.

In *Longbourn*, Austen's Bennet family functions only as the background while the plot revolves around their servants. Baker's critique of different social stratifications is especially reflected in the role of woman. However, the social criticism of Baker's version would lose its significance without direct references to Austen's classic. On the other hand, *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Eligible* both belong to trivial fiction and the genre that is influenced by post-feminism. Protagonists in *Eligible* are successful, financially secured women who do not share the same concerns with their nineteenth century counterparts, at least when it comes to social status: their aspirations for romantic relationships are motivated for the sake of love itself. However, reading *Eligible* without any previous knowledge of Austen's 1813 classic would not really function, as the novel would certainly lose a notion of playfulness. On the other hand, *Bridget Jones's Diary* does not have many allusions to *Pride and Prejudice* and can function as a work of fiction which completely stands on its own.

These three rewritings of *Pride and Prejudice* revive the fictional characters of Austen's classic. Two chick lit novels portray Austen's protagonists in the contemporary setting and from the contemporary woman's point of view. *Longbourn*, however, is a historical fiction, but it is published in the twenty-first century and as such the novel expresses contemporary views on the nineteenth century social stratifications. The selected novels draw on Austen's tradition, but at the same time articulate social criticism, changed perspective of romantic conventions and female independence gained in contemporary society.

4. Works Cited

Austen, Jane. "Pride and Prejudice." *The Complete Novels of Jane Austen*. Edited by Wordsworth Editions, Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2004, 233-473.

Baker, Jo. *Longbourn*. New York: First Vintage Trade Edition. 2013.

Brtan, Lidija. "The Hybrid Novel – Highbrow Literature in a New Garb." *Književna smotra*. Vol. 46. No 179(1), p53-62. 2016.

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

Gamble, Sarah. "Growing Up Single: The Postfeminist Novel." *Studies in the Literary Imagination*. Fall 2006, Vol. 39 Issue 2, p61-78. 18p. *Ebscohost*. Accessed 3 November 2017.

Gjurgjan, Ljiljana Ina. "Types of Intertextuality." *Studia Romanica et Anglica Zagrabiensia*. Vol. 53, p67-85. 2008.

Greene, Donald J. "Jane Austen and the Peerage." *Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Ian Watt, Engelwood Clifs: Prentice Hall, 1963, pp. 154-165.

Haugtvedt, Erica. "The Victorian Serial Novel and Transfictional Character." *Victorian Studies*, Spring 2017, Vol. 59 Issue 3, p409-418. 10p. Ebscohost. Accessed 19 April 2018.

Ian Watt. *Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Engelwood Clifs: Prentice Hall, 1963.

Ilief-Martinescu, Alina. "Postfeminist Fiction in Chick Lit Novels." *Gender Studies (1583-980X*). Dec 2015, Vol. 14 Issue 1, p119-137. 19p. DOI: 10.1515/genst-2016-0008. *Ebscohost*. Accessed 3 November 2017.

MacDonagh, Oliver. *Jane Austen: Real and Imagined Worlds*. New Heaven ; London : Yale University Press, 1991.

Rowntree, Margaret; Moulding, Nicole; Bryant, Lia. "Feminine Sexualities in Chick Lit." *Australian Feminist Studies*. Jun 2012, Vol. 27 Issue 72, p121-137. 17p. DOI: 10.1080/08164649.2012.648259. *Ebscohost*. Accessed 3 November 2017.

Sârghie, Raluca. “Intertextuality in Helen Fielding’s Bridget Jones’s Diary.” *Scientific Journal of Humanistic Studies.* Nov 2010, Vol. 2 Issue 3, p105-107. 3p. *Ebscohost*. Accessed 3 November 2017.

Sherry, James. “Pride and Prejudice: The Limits of Society.” *Studies in English Literature (Rice).* Autumn 79, Vol. 19 Issue 4, pp. 609. 14p. *Ebscohost*. Accessed 2 November 2017.

Sittenfeld, Curtis. *Eligible.* New York: Penguin Random House. 2016.

Southam, Brian C. “Jane Austen, English Novelist.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jane-Austen Accessed 18 November 2018.

Tanner, Tony. *Jane Austen*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. 1986.

Woolf, Virginia. “Jane Austen.” *Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Ian Watt, Engelwood Clifs: Prentice Hall, 1963, pp. 15-24.

5. Summary: REWRITING JANE AUSTEN'S PRIDE AND PREJUDICE IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH AND AMERICAN FICTION

This diploma paper sets out to explore contemporary rewritings of *Pride and Prejudice* in British and American literature. The paper analyzes three selected novels, especially focusing on their feminist protagonist and representations of women's experience, in the light of feminist theory and theory of intertextuality. The paper draws a comparison between Jane Austen's 1813 classic and the selected contemporary novels: Jo Baker's *Longbourn* (2013), Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) and Curtis Sittenfeld's *Eligibile* (2016).

Key words: *Pride and Prejudice*, intertextuality, feminist theory, chick-lit, sexuality, women's experience

6. Sažetak: INAČICE ROMANA *PONOS I PREDRASUDE* U SUVREMENOJ BRITANSKOJ I AMERIČKOJ KNJIŽEVNOSTI

Cilj ovoga rada je istražiti suvremene inačice romana *Ponos i predrasude* u suvremenoj britanskoj i američkoj književnosti. U radu su analizirana tri izabrana romana s posebnim naglaskom na njihove ženske likove i prikaz iskustva žene, a sve to s gledišta feminističke teorije i teorije intertekstualnosti. Rad prikazuje usporedbu između klasika autorice Jane Austen iz 1813.godine i izabranih, suvremenih romana: *Longbourn* (2013) autorice Jo Baker, *Dnevnici Bridget Jones* (1996) autorice Helen Fielding i *Eligibile* (2016) autorice Curtis Sittenfeld.

Ključne riječi: *Ponos i predrasude*, intertekstualnost, feministička teorija, chick-lit, seksualnost, žensko iskustvo