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English Studies

**Femininity and Masculinity in *Bridget Jones's Diary* by
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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Aim and Approach	3
Theoretical Background	4
Previous Research and Background Material	6
Analysis	
1. Society's View of Bridget Jones	7
2. Women are Victimized by Marriage	11
3. Men too are Powerless	13
4. Homosexuals too are Powerless	16
Conclusion	18
Work Cited	19

Introduction

The Women's Movement emerged in the late 1960s. However, women started to fight for their rights before the movement emerged. Throughout history, women have been generally oppressed and repressed by the patriarchal society in which men are dominants. They were denied the right to live in the same kind of freedom as men and to get their share of education and career. Instead they were forced to stay at home and raise the family: "Women are born to suffer" (Beauvoir 602). In other words, they were silenced and locked away by the dominating gender. Marriage was considered important for women to ensure their security, but then they were forced to obey their patriarchal husbands without any objection. However, after a long struggle to gain their rights, women virtually succeeded to be treated as equal to men, especially in the western world: "Liberal feminists seek equality of opportunity; though in practice that can mean parity, at various levels, with men. They base their claims on 'sameness' or 'adequate similarity'" (Evans 47). They can now participate actively in various fields of life and enjoy their rights in the same way as men do. However, they are still considered less powerful than men in many aspects of life. It is very common nowadays for a woman to live as a single and to lead an independent life, but society puts her under a strong pressure.

For this reason feminist criticism became an important subject in modern literature. Many female and male writers portray women in their writings as angels silenced by their patriarchal oppressors, or as monsters raging for their freedom and rights (Gilbert and Gubar 78). This reflects their need for freedom from their patriarchal societies. Even modern feminist literature deals with this issue confirming women's continuous struggle for their rights. One of the modern novels concerned with feminist criticism is *Bridget Jones's Diary* by Helen Fielding, which portrays society's view of single women in contemporary western societies. Although Bridget is seen as a strong and independent woman, her worries are that she does not want to end up living alone without a man when she grows older. In her diary, the first thing she mentions is her weight and how much tobacco and alcohol she consumes every day. Furthermore, her plans are never achieved, which shows uncertainty and lack of confidence. This highlights how society's negative view of women influences and reflects women's

personality. This essay will argue that women and men act according to feminine and masculine norms on different levels. On the one hand, Bridget and her mother, who are oppressed by their patriarchal society, are influenced by their strong masculine norms in standing against their society's view of women. On the other hand, Bridget's father and Tom show strong feminine norms in collapsing and becoming dominated by their patriarchal society. As a result, not only women are dominated by the patriarchal society, the novel suggests that men too can suffer under and struggle against their oppressor.

Aim and Approach

Bridget Jones's Diary is a post-feminist novel concerned with feminism in contemporary western societies. Although, many believe that women are physically and emotionally weaker than men even in contemporary societies, the essay will prove the opposite. Beauvoir argues that women are not physically weak, on the contrary: "They can stand physical pain much better than men" (Beauvoir 602). As a result, masculine and feminine norms will be shown not to depend on gender but rather on personality and background. In fact, gender is a social construct, masculine and feminine, while sex refers to biological sex, male and female: "For some psychologists and social scientists, sex is a continuum, and gender is dichotomy" (Evans 77). For example, Tom, who is physically male, acts out a female gender role through his homosexuality. This disconnection of masculine and feminine norms from gender proves that both women and men are able to share equal roles in society. I have divided my essay analysis into four sections; each deals with one character from the novel. In each section I have used one or more specific feminist theories that are relevant to the particular character's circumstances in the novel. In the first section, I have written about Bridget as a single woman who struggles against her patriarchal society that pinpoints her as a single woman because she is supposed to be married at her age. Although she has her own career and social life, the society's view of her as a single woman affects her thoughts and feelings in a way which creates the fear of growing old alone without a man in her life. This may be seen as a kind of society oppression of her. The second part deals with Bridget's mother who is victimized and silenced by her marriage that shows her as the

angel in the house, which is another kind of oppression. However, after she breaks her marriage to gain her freedom, she becomes powerful and uses her powers over men. Her growing powers are like a storm against the oppression that she suffered from for many years. This, according to Gilbert and Gubar, makes her seem as a madwoman who stands up with rage as a way of rejecting the patriarchal domination and searching for her identity: “[B]y projecting their rebellious impulses not into their heroines but into mad or monstrous women” (Gilbert and Gubar 78). In the third section of my analysis, I continue with how Bridget’s parents’ failed marriage affected her father negatively, which reveals his feminine norms of weakness after losing his marriage and power. Lacanian theory claims that men in general own masculine norms that are symbolized by the phallus: “[T]he phallus theory is both something which symbolizes power and something which is empty of content, precisely paralleling the paradoxes of authority and mastery” (Frosh 66). However, they can lose their power and domination sometimes by revealing their feelings and emotions, which proves that men can also lose power. And finally, the last section describes Tom who as a homosexual has strong feminine norms that reveal his emotions and powerlessness. Tom is assaulted by his society that sees him as a subordinate human being.

Through my research I found many secondary sources related to this topic. However, I depended mainly on Mid Sweden University’s library, which offered a number of relevant texts. The main prominent secondary sources used in this essay are: *Feminist Literary Theory*, (Rooney 2006), *Beginning Theory*, (Barry 2009), *The Second Sex*, (Beauvoir 1989), *Feminist Literary History*, (Todd 1995) and *The Feminist Reader*, (Belsey 1997).

Theoretical Background

My main focus in this essay is on the feminist theory that can be linked to *Bridget Jones’s Diary*. Women have struggled against oppression and repression for centuries. They were seen as belonging to the subordinate gender in society who were oppressed and dominated by the male gender. This was reflected in the writings of female writers illustrating the struggle through their female characters, which is called *écriture*

feminine or feminine writing: “For French feminism, women’s desire is what is most oppressed and repressed by patriarchy” (Rooney 153). *Écriture féminine* shows rejection of patriarchy in writing from the body that must contribute to the thought, which shows differences in their texts. *Écriture féminine* was identified by a group of women who lived in France, but most of them came originally from different countries, such as Julia Kristeva, Bulgarian, Hélène Cixous, Algerian born, Luce Irigaray, Belgian and Monique Wittig, French. Furthermore, it deals with the thinking about women, their bodies and desires that come through their written language showing women’s oppression by the dominant society.

Feminist theory first emerged in France in the 1970s from the Lacanian theory of the phallus. Masculinity and femininity oppose each other; while masculinity represents power, reason and the mind, femininity represents the vulnerable and emotions. However, this establishes a masculine hierarchy over femininity: “[H]ierarchies of mind over body, reason over emotion, power over vulnerability” (Rooney 154). There is no doubt that this shows women’s struggle against patriarchy in society, which is illustrated in feminine writings. However, in her novel *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, Fielding is not only showing women’s struggle but also men’s, such as Bridget’s father after his wife left him and Tom as a homosexual. This shows that men can also be oppressed when revealing their feelings and emotions, and as a result of that the New Men’s Movement emerged claiming that men need to show their emotions as human beings: “[B]eing men, including being emotional and sensitive, enable them to interpret the feminine traits as deep masculine” (Haywood and Ghail 133). Moreover, Fielding chose her narrative medium to be through Bridget’s diary in order to let the reader know how Bridget really thinks and feels. Naturally, people and especially women reveal their feelings and emotions through their diaries, which can be considered as an example of feminine writing.

It also needs to be added that Jacques Derrida has had a great influence on French writing. He claims that women are oppressed because they are *différent* or different from men, which is evident in women’s writings. Women’s assaulted identity makes them look different than men, since men, according to Derrida, are regarded as the truth and reason and are the opposite of women who represent falsehood and emotion. This

creates a hierarchical opposition of “men over women, truth over falsehood” (Rooney 159), which shows men as dominants and women as subordinates. Lacan, who agrees with Derrida, claims that women write with their emotions, because they suffer from the lack of the phallus that represents masculinity. This is based on Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis that boys and girls get different roles and identities according to the Oedipus complex. On the other hand, according to Susan Gubar, male writers illustrate women as subordinated and silent: “When woman does appear as a figure in a text, notes Gubar, she is generally mute, passive, or inert, an idealized object of male desire” (Johnson 20). This indicates that man’s unconscious mind believes that women are subordinated and for this reason men have the right to dominate them and use their powers over them. In her book *Man Made Language*, Dale Spender claims that writing is the man’s language that comes through thought and reality, which reflects their dominant position in society: “Males, as the dominant group, have produced language, thought and reality. Historically it has been the structures, the categories and the meanings which have been invented by males [...] In this process women have played little or no part” (Spender 143). In other words, woman’s place in general is in her home, while man contributes in more fields, which has as a result that men are allowed to reflect their speech and thoughts, which is also obvious in their writings.

Previous Research and Background Material

Bridget Jones’s Diary is a novel written by Helen Fielding and it was published in 1996. The novel has a comic style that grasps the reader’s interest. It is also an imaginative interpretation of the classic novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen published in 1813. *Bridget Jones’s Diary* was developed through the weekly published columns in *The Independent* in 1995 and was then published in *Daily Telegraph* in 1998. The novel became so popular that a sequel was published in 1998 by the name *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* based on another novel by Jane Austen, *Persuasion*. This shows that Helen Fielding is influenced by Jane Austen’s work. In 2001 a film by the same name was adapted, then the sequel was released in 2004 and a second sequel is to be released in 2011. The edition I used as the primary source was published in 1997.

In her book, Fielding focuses on Bridget's life as a single woman in her thirties who smokes and drinks alcohol, but also cares about her appearance, her career and especially her love life. The book is narrated through the first person narrator in a kind of diary. The narrative style of the book was successfully admired by many people and it received a good deal of positive press that made it a number one best seller. However, many critics argued that the novel is anti-feminist, as Bridget failed to organize and take control of her life and achieve her goals, which in reality can be achieved by contemporary women in western societies. In other words, the book presents "an image of contemporary women that contradicts all that feminists have worked to achieve" (Marsh). Therefore, critics argue that the book represents the opposite of what women can achieve in real life in terms of self-perfection.

In my work, I have noticed that Fielding is trying to prove women's place in modern western societies by showing their struggle to gain their rights and be treated as equal to men. Fielding is not only focusing on women in her novel but also on men's position as well and how men can also be seen as fragile and powerless sometimes. By this, she is trying to show that women and men can show weakness or strength in dealing with their society depending on certain circumstances they go through in their lives. This proves that both women and men have feminine and masculine norms that are unbalanced, which ultimately means that women and men are created socially equal. However, some traces of the past still influence contemporary societies' view of women, even though women in general now have succeeded in gaining their freedom and to live independently.

1. Society's View of Bridget Jones

Bridget Jones aims for independence and stability in her life. In her diary, she has certain goals in order to live independently, which have to be achieved in different ways: "I had a career [...] I was a grasshopper collecting a big pile of grass, or flies [...] ready for winter, even if I didn't have a boyfriend" (Fielding 71). As a woman, she believes that she has to look pretty and elegant to be accepted by society and especially by men. Her biggest worry is that she does not want to end up living lonely when she

gets older without a man in her life, as she believes that “single women do tend to get desperate as they get older” (Fielding 194). However, she does not want to lose her pride and independence that are part of her identity: “I am a woman of substance and do not need men in order to be complete” (Fielding 43). Bridget, who lives in a modern western society, enjoys her freedom and believes that women should have the same rights as men in living independently. Therefore, a man in her life will not make her complete but also her society will stop pinpointing her as a “Singleton”: “Maybe they really do want to patronize us and make us feel like failed human beings” (Fielding 40). In addition, she needs a man to have a company in her life that will end her loneliness: “[I]t frees the individual from loneliness” (Beauvoir 431). But at the same time Bridget does not want to lose her independence. Simone de Beauvoir, who was never married and takes a stance against marriage, argues that when “women achieve economic parity, they will no longer be obliged to marry” (Simons 95). In the twenty-first century, women are able to build a career and have an economic income, which means that marriage to them can be seen as a threat to their career and income: “[T]here’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” (Fielding 42). Many women refuse marriage thinking that it will affect their economic independence, which is something that worries Bridget and it makes her hesitate about the idea of marriage or getting into a relationship.

There is no doubt that Bridget Jones struggles against her society’s view of marriage. In other words, she is still considered as a “woman” in her society that sees her as a subordinate. Her mother and her mother’s friends always bother her with their curious questions of marriage: “How does a woman manage to get to your age without being married?” (Fielding 11). Traces of the past are still haunting the modern society. One such idea is the idea that marriage completes women. Even though women enjoy their freedom in all fields of life, the unconscious mind of the patriarchal society according to Freud still sees women as subordinates: “[T]he unconscious constantly reveals the ‘failure’ of identity. Because there is no continuity of psychic life, so there is no stability of sexual identity, no position for women [...] which is ever simply achieved” (Eagleton 354). Women are physically different to men and this cannot be changed. Furthermore, society often looks at women as the “Other” or the subordinate

gender who must be dominated by men: “Men [...] view themselves as permanently on some sort of sexual ladder with all women either above them or below them” (Fielding 72). However, many women succeed in developing their own identity and in living independently in their society, such as the character of Bridget Jones: “[O]ne [...] must be complete in oneself as a woman of substance” (Fielding 31). Nevertheless, they still cannot be seen socially equal to men as their society looks at them from other perspectives. Moreover, Simone de Beauvoir argues that “[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (Beauvoir 267). Society looks at women as the second sex, as Beauvoir claims in her book *The Second Sex*, which means that they are dominated by men and are seen as the subordinate gender. To society, the word ‘woman’ means powerlessness, which gives men positions higher up in the hierarchy and more power, as Bridget claims in her diary: “It’s typical of men to annex a global trend and turn it into male device to reject women to make themselves feel clever and us feel stupid” (Fielding 188). Therefore, even if Bridget lives independently, she is still a ‘woman’ in her society’s view which will show her powerlessness.

As a result, Bridget cannot stick to her plans. Marxism and liberalism, according to Judith Evans, do not include feminism and do not help liberating women: “Both have been said to be gender blind [...] Postmodernist feminists will not consider it possible that their failure to include women is contingent, rather than necessary” (Evans 125). This affects woman’s personality and identity and makes her hesitate in her decisions: “She is the negative of what she wants to be” (Rooney 154). In her diary, the first thing Bridget writes each day is her weight and how much tobacco and alcohol she has consumed, which is often against her plans and is seen as a sign of weakness of resistance, as she claims: “Smoking is a sign of weakness and undermines one’s personal authority” (Fielding 207). On the other hand, she cannot give up easily and surrender to her emotions. For example, she decides to leave Daniel Cleaver after she finds out about his mistress, even though she was still in love with him: “Do not ring Daniel or you will regret it” (Fielding 181). Then she finds another job to push him away from her life: “It is great when you start thinking about your career instead of worrying about trivial things - men and relationships” (Fielding 221). She is a woman of substance, as she claims, believing in focusing on her career that empowers her

independence. Although, Bridget wants to have a love affair in her life, she does not want to lose her pride and her career comes first.

On the other hand, Bridget's friends are all "Singletons". Their relationship is very strong in supporting each other and lifting each others' morals: "I'm not married because I'm a *Singleton*" (Fielding 42). In fact, they believe in their independence to such an extent that they came up with different negative and positive beliefs to stand against their society's view, such as "fuckwittage", "inner poise" and "ice queen" in building a strong identity: "We women are only vulnerable because we are a pioneer generation daring to refuse to compromise in love and relying on our own economic power. In twenty years' time men won't even dare start with fuckwittage because we will just *laugh in their faces*" (Fielding 21). Bridget and her single friends are united to face their society's oppression and get their rights. Monique Wittig claims that: "[A] group of women united not by their essence but by their struggle" (Rooney 161). Through the language they use, women are united together to fight their struggle in society and to free themselves from the dominant powers. Female writers tend to focus on women and their struggle in society: "I am alone again, seating me opposite an increasingly horrifying selection of single men" (Fielding 212). Therefore the "Singletons" union can be seen as a powerful sign of standing against the dominant and free themselves from the patriarchal society. Here Fielding is using *écriture féminine* in revealing women's feelings and emotions of struggle: "[I]t only seems to highlight my emotional failure and isolation" (Fielding 212). Furthermore, Hélène Cixous claims that women write with their bodies and desires to unleash their powers and free themselves from oppression, which is seen as a kind of protest against society's view of women. This strengthens what Simone de Beauvoir wrote in her book *The Second Sex* about modern women writers who show their women characters being as strong as men through denying their feminine body as a sign of weakness. She claims that modern women cannot accept being dominated but rather accept the masculine norms, which make them seem equal to men in different fields of life: "Feminist literary criticism had focused largely either on revealing the blindness and misogyny of patriarchal representations of women, or on discovering an alternative female-authored tradition" (Rooney 154). Therefore, Bridget refuses to be dominated by her society and chooses to live independently, even though society criticizes her for being unmarried.

2. Women are Victimized by Marriage

Bridget's mother is another strong woman who stands up for her rights. She sees herself as victimized by her marriage which feels like a chain around her neck. She claims that her domestic life has felt like slavery and has been unrewarding or unfulfilling: "[S]he started saying she wanted to be paid for doing the housework, and she'd wasted her life being our slave" (Fielding 48). All those years of her marriage are wasted serving her family and getting nothing in return. She was not able to build herself a career or learn to live independently: "I feel like a grasshopper who sang all summer [...] And now it's the winter of my life and I haven't stored up anything of my own" (Fielding 71). As a woman who lives in the twentieth century, Bridget's mother feels that her place is not at home serving the family. Postmodernist woman refuses to be treated like slaves serving her husband, instead she searches for her freedom and independence: "She struggles with him in the effort to uphold her independence, and she battles with the rest of the world to preserve 'situation' that dooms her to dependence" (Beauvoir 468). Women in the past were not heard and were silenced by their dominant society through marriage, which erased their true identity and eliminated their role in society. In his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Frantz Fanon claims that: "[F]eminists might find it helpful to think of marriage as slavery for women, no abolitionist would think of slavery rather like marriage" (Ruthven 30). In other words, Bridget's mother proved her subordination through marriage, as she was dominated by her husband, which made her seem sometimes isolated from society, as Bridget claims: "Sometimes I think my mother is part of the modern world and sometimes she seems a million miles away" (Fielding 163). A good example portraying women as subordinates in western societies is that women after marriage have to abandon their family name and bear their husbands' family name: "She takes his name; she belongs to his religion, his class, his circle; she joins his family" (Beauvoir 429). This gives men domination in marriage and affects women's identity that makes her belong to him and makes her seem as his own property. However, women now have the right to keep their family name after marriage.

Moreover, Luce Irigaray claims that women are excluded from the act of speech and as a result, their identity is defeated by the male dominants. In other words, men oppress women by reducing their speech and isolating them in their society. Bridget's

mother was silenced for thirty-five years, but then she exploded like a madwoman against her oppressor. She tells Bridget of her oppression:

[I]t's merely a question of realizing, when your father retired, that I had spent thirty-five years without a break running his home and bringing up his children [...] and that as far as he was concerned his lifetime work was over and mine was still carrying on, which is exactly how I used to feel when you were little and it got to the weekends. You only get one life. I've just made a decision to change things a bit and spend what's left of mine looking after me for a change. (Fielding, 53-4)

This can be related to the *Madwoman* theory. Women are silenced and oppressed by patriarchal men to such a degree that they eventually rage against their oppressors calling for their right in society, which can be seen as a way of identity searching. Gilbert and Gubar claim in their book *Madwoman in the Attic*: "The initiation into conscious acceptance of powerlessness is always mortifying, for it involves the fall from authority into the acceptance of one's status as a mere character" (Gilbert and Gubar 161). Bridget's mother feels humiliated and regrets wasting her life living without a real identity. As a result, she becomes a powerful woman casting her powers over men seeking revenge for the wasted years of her life: "[S]he's discovered power. She has power over Dad [...] She has power over Julio, and the tax man, and everyone is sensing her power and wanting a bit of it, which makes her more irresistible" (Fielding 66-7). However, women physically differ from men; they cannot be considered equal to men, as they are seen as being physically weak. This is something that cannot be changed, but men take this as an advantage and use their power to dominate women. Bridget's mother accepted her husband's domination for thirty-five years, but then she was alerted by the sudden awareness that made her rage for her right and freedom in her society.

However, breaking the silence sometimes means breaking cultural traditions. Lacan claims that women are discountable when breaking their silence. In other words, breaking the silence represents low social value: "Sometimes their speech is simply discounted, as when Lacan claims the feminists get it right about silence but don't know what they are saying" (Johnson 137). Bridget's mother broke her silence and the results

brought shame to the family: “[T]o find myself imagining my mother in bed with Julio. Consumed with repulsion at vision of parental, or rather demi-parental sex; outrage on behalf of my father” (Fielding 61). In addition to her shameful affair with Julio, she was involved with him in his criminal actions: “[T]hey [...] have defrauded a large number of people [...] out of a great deal of money” (Fielding 272). Lacan claims that sexual identities, feminine and masculine, are not actually related to women and men respectively, they rather refer to their social constructions, their gender. In other words, masculinity is a symbol of the patriarchal and the power that resembles the centre of society. While femininity means the “Other” that is considered the opposite of masculinity, which it is oppressed by the patriarchal. However, women can also have masculine characteristics by being patriarchal and powerful: “My mother has become a force I no longer recognize” (Fielding 65). Bridget’s mother’s power became as a force after breaking her silence, which she used over men.

There is no balance in female characters. Female writers show their female characters either as oppressed or overly powerful as a sign of “rage against the society which confines them” (Belsey and Moore 6). This reflects women’s oppression by the patriarchal, as Bridget’s mother after she broke her marriage: “[A]ll I’ve got to do is find someone or something to have power over” (Fielding 67). On the other hand, male writers show natural prose in their writings. Peter Barry claims that: “[T]he female writer is seen as suffering the handicap of having to use a medium (prose writing) which is essentially a male instrument fashioned for male purposes” (Barry 121). This means that women’s writing shows a kind of struggle of writing with freedom, which only exists in males’ writing: “[S]he looked frightened, as if she was going to cry” (Fielding 269). In her novel, Fielding portrays Bridget’s mother as victimized and oppressed through her marriage and then when she breaks her silence she becomes over powerful.

3. Men too are Powerless

Eventually, Bridget’s father loses all his powers and collapses. “Dad arrived at the door [...] As he sat down on the sofa, his face crumpled and tears began to splosh down his cheek” (Fielding 48). He is broken after his wife left him and is ready to forgive and

forget his wife's behavior just to gain her back and retrieve his power. In his theory, Lacan uses the phallus in determining power that is more related to masculinity, but can also be related to femininity. Furthermore, there is a fantasy of desiring the phallus "that it would bring in its wake everything connected with power and authority" (Frosh 66). In addition, Lacan claims that there is a great difference between acquiring and desiring the phallus. Both men and women can acquire the phallus that is represented in power and not related only to masculinity. For example, Bridget's father acquired the phallus during his marriage, but this disappeared with his failed marriage, which made him lose the phallus or in other words, lose his power: "Dad was devastated. Mum hadn't even told him about the TV-presentation job. It seems he is in denial" (Fielding 91). His collapse shows his desire to gain back the phallus and power. This proves that men and even women can own or lose the phallus, which is not related to masculinity or femininity rather than to how powerful a person can be seen in his or her society.

On the other hand, when Bridget's father collapses through his crisis, his feminine norms rise, which makes him lose his power. "While men, of course, come out of Lacan's writings better advantaged than women, none the less Lacan shows men too are powerless, since the fullness of signification, which the phallus also represents in Lacan's work, is not attained by either men or women" (Berry 126). As I mentioned in the previous section how Bridget's mother showed masculine characters in casting her powers over men, her husband loses all his powers after she left him: "It was my father, speaking in a weird, disconnected voice, almost as if he were a dalek" (Fielding 90). It is obvious that Bridget's mother was dominated by her husband's masculine norms and when she freed herself, her feminine norms decreased, which in return increased her masculine norms. For example, when she decides to leave her husband, she asked him to leave the house, as her husband claims: "[S]he wants me to move out for a while, she says, and ...and...He collapsed in quiet sobs" (Fielding 48). In contrast, her husband owned strong masculine norms and used his domination and power over his wife. However, his feminine norms took over his masculine norms after losing his power over his wife.

Bridget's father in addition reveals his emotions during his crisis. He turns to his daughter to lean on and express his feelings and emotions: "When someone loves you

it's like having a blanket all round your heart, and then when it's taken away...’ and he burst into tears” (Fielding 72). As a man, it seems odd to express his emotions and feelings to his friends, as men are supposed to be strong in controlling their emotions. However, men are human beings and they also go into crisis in the same way as women do and need to reveal their feelings: “Dad was crying. I think Dad is having a nervous breakdown” (Fielding 220). However, society considers them strong as stones with no emotions: “Men have demanded (as some women) that men should get in touch with their feelings” (Haywood and Ghail 127). As a result, The New Men’s Movement emerged during the last thirty years calling for their rights: “They spoke of the burden and emotional damage of being men, thus focusing upon the negative attributes of the male role as *oppressed* rather than that of *oppressor*” (Haywood and Ghail 128). The focus has gone too far on women’s rights and their role in society; the mother raising her children keeping the father away working to support his children. Moreover, men take great responsibilities and risks that at the end they should never complain or collapse as they are symbolized with power and patriarchal privileges. After all, Bridget’s father spent his thirty-five years of marriage supporting his family and in the end his wife leaves him forgetting his hard work outside his home that at the end he should not reveal his pain and emotions.

There is no doubt that Bridget’s father’s fault is that he should have shown more care and love to his wife. In his book *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, John Gray claims that women need love and attention from their husbands. They need to feel valued and feel that they are the centre of their homes. Bridget’s mother felt neglected and ignored in her home. Furthermore, she was subordinated and dominated by her husband: “Let him bloody well have his own way as usual” (Fielding 47). She regrets the day she was married, as this marks the beginning of her miserable life seeing herself as a slave serving everyone and not getting any appreciation or love in return. In fact, her husband did not realize her suffer and struggle until she left him after thirty-five years: “Just as men need to learn the art of listening to fulfill woman’s primary needs, women need to learn the art of empowerment” (Gray 145). In fact, it is also Bridget’s mother’s mistake in accepting to continue living with her silence, which she regrets at the end: “It was my mother, on the doorstep in floods of tears [...] ‘I want a career,’ she said” (Fielding 71). As a woman in the twentieth century, she should have cared about

her education and started building up a career to be treated equally with her husband. Women in the twentieth century can enjoy their freedom and participate actively in society, which gives them more value in society.

4. Homosexuals too are Powerless

Tom is a male character in *Bridget Jones's Diary* who sees himself as an oppressed homosexual in his society. He knows that his homosexuality is considered queer: "Tom has a theory that homosexuals and single women in their thirties have natural bonding; both being accustomed to disappointing their parents and being treated as freaks by society" (Fielding 27). He stands between the male and female gender, because he "simply can't be bothered to relate to the opposite sex" (Fielding 38). This gives him an unstable position in society that confuses him. Moreover, he is one of the "Singletons" in Bridget's friends that represents more femininity than masculinity, which makes him seem oppressed by his society: "Tom was so depressed and traumatized and so weird" (Fielding 265). He knows that his status as a homosexual is sometimes seen as queer and is not really accepted by society, even though homosexuality has become acceptable in modern societies: "A critique of the masculinist norms of the culture in which women and gays both suffer must reinforce the feminist assault on the hierarchical binary oppositions" (Todd 133). Women and homosexuals both own strong feminine norms that make them seem powerless and assaulted and as a result, they fall under the power of the hierarchical masculinity. In other words, it is the patriarchal society that encourages and strengthens masculinity's power over feminist aspects of identity. In his phallus theory, Lacan claims that the phallus is the symbol of power that when it is castrated it will represent a lack of social power and social identity: "[T]he phallus becomes a burden to the man" (Frosh 78). Therefore, homosexuality is the castration of the phallus when the homosexual ends up owning feminine characteristics, such as Tom, which means that he is seen as the "Other" or the oppressed in his society which stands in opposition to masculinity.

Tom, as a homosexual, loses his masculine hierarchy role. According to queer theory, one person of the homosexual pair has to lose his masculine identity and take a

feminine identity that makes him lose his hierarchy and power: “[I]t is possible to reverse the hierarchy within such pairs” (Barry 138). Judith Butler claims that in heterosexuality, the pair owns what is called ‘self’ or the natural gender identity that rejects the ‘Other’ or homosexuality. “The ‘Other’, in these formulations, is as much something within us as beyond us, and ‘self’ and ‘Other’ are always *implicated* in each other [...] As basic psychology shows, what is identified as the external ‘Other’ is usually part of the self which is rejected and hence projected outwards” (Barry 130-40). She claims that ‘self’ and ‘Other’ are tied together, but the ‘Other’ that is part of the ‘self’ is seen as external and is rejected by the ‘self’. Therefore, homosexuality is rejected by society and it is seen as a queer relationship, described as the ‘Other’, which also means ‘different’. This worries Tom and makes him feel insecure, as he starts feeling at the end that he has become the ‘Other’ and is rejected by his society: “I know we’re all psychotic, single and completely dysfunctional” (Fielding 265). Even Bridget starts to consider him the ‘Other’ by thinking that: “[T]aking place in a beauty contest has started to make him crack under the pressures we women have long been subjected to and he is becoming insecure, appearance-obsessed and borderline anorexic” (Fielding 258). She starts to get worried about Tom, seeing him losing his masculinity and power that is also assaulted like her own identity. Tom’s homosexuality reinforced his feminine norms and left a negative effect on his sexual identity. As a result, Tom faces a lack of self-confidence. For example, his relationship with his partner Jerome is unbalanced; one day they are together, the next day Jerome leaves him: “Jerome saw him after the operation he was so repulsed he said he was going away for a few days, bugged off and hasn’t been seen or heard of since” (Fielding 264- 5). Also, he is worried about his looks and especially his nose. Therefore, he operates it secretly since he is embarrassed: “Tom had secretly had the operation [...] but was too embarrassed to tell us” (Fielding 264). This proves his lack of confidence: “[H]e was having a crisis of confidence” (Fielding 253). Homosexuality forms two identities; a new identity along with the old one which together produce a lack of confidence. As a result, homosexuals are seen as the oppressed subordinates in society, who have lost their ‘normal’ sexual identity.

Conclusion

Bridget Jones's Diary is a good example illustrating women's position in contemporary societies. Bridget Jones faces her society and proves that women can enjoy their freedom in having the right to live independently. However, wanting a man in her life does not mean that she cannot manage her life alone, it rather means that she needs a partner to share her life with without losing her independence. Furthermore, society affects her thoughts and puts her under a pressure that as a woman she should be married. Her mother, who wants to find her daughter a proper man, contradicts herself and decides to live her life without a man to gain her freedom and power. However, her sudden impulsive rage for freedom led her to make mistakes that she regretted at the end. Men on the other hand, can also be seen as weak sometimes depending on certain situations they go through, such as Bridget's father after losing his marriage and power and Tom who is oppressed for being homosexual and owning strong feminine norms. This proves that both women and men have the capacity to take the burden in their lives to such an extent that in the end they collapse. This is how Fielding portrayed women in her novel; strong personalities, standing against the patriarchal and seeking independence and freedom in their lives. What is more is that she portrayed some male characters with feminine norms that show them to be fragile during crisis. As a result, Fielding shows that women and men can be considered socially equal in contemporary modern societies. In fact, women form half of the society and play an important role in many fields of life.

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