

HEPBURN HATCHES CHICK-LIT:  
FEEDING THE APPETITE FOR  
LABELS, LAWYERS AND LOVE

By

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STATEMENT BY THE AUTHOR

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## Abstract:

The purpose of this thesis lies in the exploration of chick-lit. Using a post-feminist lens, the thesis will examine the changes in how women are represented in the following novels, and their film adaptations: *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *Sex and the City*, and *Bridget Jones's Diary*. A majority of the focus will be on Capote's character, Holly Golightly, and the character will be compared to contemporary characters like Carrie Bradshaw and Bridget Jones. A brief history of chick-lit, romantic comedies, women's films, and past feminist movements will also be described and related to the formation of chick-lit. The progression contemporary women have made, specifically in their careers, sex-life, and relationships will also be discussed and analyzed in the previously stated texts. The primary conclusion regarding these texts depicts women as changing, but ultimately dependent on the companionship of men. The literature also reflects the contradictions surrounding contemporary women, and will be the primary focus of the thesis.

## Introduction:

As a contemporary woman I have loved watching television shows like *Sex and the City* and laughing through entertaining books, such as *Bridget Jones's Diary*. And I love getting together with my girlfriends to watch Harry finally realize that Sally is the one, or Richard Gere climb up the steps to hand Julia Roberts flowers. What I admire about chick-lit is that it depicts a woman's ability to freely talk about male troubles, financial woes, while also expressing frustrations about the inability to be the "perfect" female. But, while I watched these films and read these books I understood that there was a message being conveyed in both these media that made me uncomfortable: women need men to be happy.

The most popular, novel, and arguably the instigator of this new genre in literature, is Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Later, this novel would be turned into a Hollywood blockbuster. While Fielding's novel enjoyed success, the most sexually explicit television show yet, *Sex and the City*, made its way onto television. With both of these stories in mind, I set out to more thoroughly explore this genre. I wanted to discover what exactly the depictions of these women conveyed to contemporary society. However, I also wanted to look at the manner in which the portrayals of women have or have not progressed over time. Therefore, I chose one book from the mid-twentieth century, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, which I use as point of comparison for these contemporary depictions of women. The reason I chose this novel is the female character plays an independent and sexually active role opposite an interesting male character, much like the chick-lit characters of today.

Chick-Lit and Chick-flicks have provided opportunities for expression, freedom, and financial success for women on the page, as well as for the female creators themselves. Both Helen Fielding and Candace Bushnell have enjoyed a great deal of success through their works. This genre marks a substantial step forward in the depiction of independent and successful woman. However, while the plots in these stories may contain financially secure businesses women, the principal conflict within the stories continues to revolve around women finding happiness through men.

Third-wave Feminism (Post-Feminism) hatches chick-lit:

The many waves and histories of feminism play a crucial part in the creation of chick-lit. Women writing about independence, social liberties, body image, and a freedom from men can be traced back to specific authors, as well as distinct time periods. Perhaps the most notable time period, and the most recognized in the last forty years, comes from the sexual revolution and the women's movement of the 1960s and 70s. But, the struggle for a voice in society began long before the women's movement. Authors, such as Virginia Woolf, began the campaign for women's independence in her book *A Room of One's Own*, but even Jane Austen can be credited with a new perception for women with her creation of a witty and independent Elizabeth Bennett, in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). Women's desire to depict themselves as independent, intelligent, and independent of men is not a novel concept. However, in order to find an adequate domain for these depictions, women have often been forced into genres stigmatized by the public. For instance, "Banished from education and from public life, women writers have found

refuge in literary forms despised by men, in diaries and letters and in sentimental fiction” (Rivkin and Ryan 766). Today, women are accepted in every literary genre; however this “sentimental fiction,” used by women to create a genre untouched by men, has seen a revival through the popularity of chick-lit.

Chick-lit stems from the third-wave feminist movement rather, than the second— or first-wave. Third-wave feminism deviates from second-wave in its eschewing of the traditional feminist maxims. The division between these two waves comes from the differences in perception of how women were or were not oppressed by the patriarchy surrounding them.

In particular, they [Third-wave feminists] resented being presented as powerless victims of patriarchy. In contrast to viewing sex as a site of oppression and domination as many second-wave feminists did, third-wave feminists argued in favor of women’s sexual freedom and pleasure as signs of independence and power. (Ferriss and Mallory 2)

Third-wave feminism, also known as post-feminism, represents women who acknowledge and understand second-wave feminism while creating their own agendas. Second-wave feminism embodied women’s rights to choose marriage, abortion, careers, and sexuality. Post-feminism encompasses these issues while reestablishing a connection with traditional femininity. Angela McRobbie states in her book, *The Aftermath of Feminism*, “Elements of feminism have been taken into account, and have been absolutely incorporated into political and institutional life” (McRobbie 1). Chick-lit emerges from this post-feminist arena and represents contemporary women’s fears about feminism, and often the stigma which can be associated with past feminist movements. Women embrace the liberties feminism created through the expectation of having successful professional lives, but they don’t continue to acknowledge those inequalities

women still continue to experience. McRobbie points to the idea that in place of the feminist agenda women are offered equality in other areas. She states, “The young woman is offered a notional form of equality, concretized in education and employment, and through participation in consumer culture and civil society, in place of what a reinvented feminist politics might have to offer” (2). Chick-lit represents the cultural shift from feminism to post-feminism. Often characters will maintain successful careers while retaining “autonomous pleasures and rituals of enjoyable femininity” (McRobbie 3). In this genre the female characters incorporate ideologies of second-wave feminism through their professional lives, and reflect post-feminist concepts in their relationships with men, fashion, sex and image.

The authors of these popular novels create female characters who embody post-feminist attributes. Often second-wave feminists rejected the institution of marriage, as well as the emphasis on the way women appeared, and they stressed the importance of women’s differences from men. However, post-feminist females rediscover many of these rejections with an independence not previously seen in society. Characters like Bridget Jones represent an independent and working woman while also pursuing a love life. Bridget symbolizes the struggle most women face in attempting to abide by feminist philosophies while also trying to find a companion. She acknowledges the social stigma related to being a feminist. Susan Mallory describes this as, “Bridget, trying to stifle her friend’s anti-male ravings, says, ‘there is nothing so unattractive to a man as strident feminism’” (Chicks, Girls and Choice Ferriss and Mallory 2). Within popular culture, women are permitted to be financially successful and socially independent. However, when they express feminist attitudes they are socially ostracized. As Umminger states,

“even in a culture where many of chick lit’s readers are loathe to self-identify as feminists, they are living with feminism’s now-internalized backlash” (240). Characters in chick-lit, and women who read chick-lit, reflect the ambiguity of contemporary culture. Women want to be independent and make decisions out of their own volition, but they don’t want those desires to be associated with past feminist ideologies.

Even within this popular genre, writers struggle with the feminine stereotypes associated with women in literature. Women writing about literature must come to terms with their-own perceptions. Depictions of women often fall into two different categories: the angelic figure or the manipulative women. “The Madwoman in the Attic” discusses this dichotomy and representation of women: “...the images of the ‘angel’ and ‘monster’ have been so ubiquitous throughout literature by men that they have also pervaded women’s writing to such an extent that few women have definitely ‘killed’ either figure” (Gilbert and Susan Gubar 812). Even in classics like *Bridget Jones’s Diary* Bridget’s charming and uncoordinated character finds herself opposite the “stick American insect,” that stands in for the modern day version of the “monster” (Fielding 157). In Sophie Kinsella’s novel *Can You Keep a Secret*, the antagonist is Emma’s stepsister, Kerry. Kerry has a successful career and refuses to lend Emma support in her search for a profession. Even the three out of the four women in *Sex and the City* represent socially perceived female archetypes. Samantha is closely linked to the stereotypical sexual temptress, or sexually promiscuous woman. Miranda becomes the stigmatized feminist and free-speaking woman, and the character that is most closely associated with second-wave feminist ideologies. Charlotte remains the ignorant, innocent, and overly feminine woman whose romantic idealism associates with the archetypal virgin. In fact, the reason

the show revolves around Carrie comes from her ability to embody all these archetypes while not associating herself too closely with any of them. Carrie represents a post-feminist woman in that she acknowledges the various ways women can be grouped as opinionated, naïve, and sexually aggressive, without actually choosing any classification for herself.

#### History of Chick-Lit Defined:

“From the perspective of literary criticism, we can define it as a form of woman’s fiction on the basis of subject matter, character, audience, and narrative style. Simply put Chick-lit features single women in their twenties and thirties ‘navigating their generation’s challenges of balancing demanding careers with personal relationships’” (Ferris and Young Chick-Lit 3).

In the early 1990s chick-lit became the genre to replace the once popular romance novel. While sales continued to decrease for the romance genre *Bridget Jones’s Diary* emerged as the prototypical new women’s novel. According to “Rewriting the Romance,” “The Romance writers of America define romantic novels as books ‘where the love story is the main focus of the novel’” (Gill and Herdieckeroff 4). Chick-Lit became popular due to its ability to encompass the traditional plots of the romance novel while adding a contemporary feminine flare to the genre. Chick-lit deviates from traditional romance stories because it chooses to focus on women’s place in the world and within sexual relationships (Mabry 200). In the past, romance novels focused on finding the “right man” whereas chick-lit deviates from this formula by showing protagonists with multiple sexual partners before settling on the “right man” (Mabry

200). Chick-lit still hints at past plots seen in romance novels while emerging with new ways of presenting women.

Many of these novels have established themselves in the film industry as well. Candace Bushell's popular column *Sex and the City* went from column to book, from the book to a widely watched television series, and eventually one of the top grossing chick-lit films. Sophie Kinsella's first novel, *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, made its way to the big screen in 2009, and the popular *Bridget Jones's Diary* found a place on film five years after the novel's publication. As a result of these successes, filmmakers and television producers have gone on to create spin offs or sequels from these popular entities. For instance, Bushell's second novel, *Lipstick Jungle*, now has a spot on NBC's Friday night lineup and *Bridget Jones: the Edge of Reason*, the sequel to the first Bridget Jones, was quickly made into a film.

Chick-lit authors have had an enormous amount of commercial success; however, chick-lit has often been seen as critical failures by the literary community. Chick-lit reflects women's contemporary problems, but does not often acknowledge the stereotypes it continues to perpetuate. Ferris and Young recognize chick-lit as a genre, which has made "contributions to popular culture but also exposes many of the ways it replicates divisions and inequities characteristic of the early twenty-first century" (254). Many women writers struggle to dissociate their work from this genre and create a strong voice on their own. Part of the struggle comes from the lack of credible recognition chick-lit receives, the topics embodied in the genre, as well as the stigma that has always been associated with romantic fiction. In 2006, Elizabeth Merrick published an anthology of women writers under the title *This Is Not Chick Lit: Original Stories by America's*

*Best Women Writers*. The premise behind Merrick's anthology was to provide an outlet for literary work, as well as to deviate from the popular theme of shopping while dealing with male troubles. Merrick included prominent authors from the literary world such as Mary Gordon, Amy Binder, and Jennifer Egan. The publication of this anthology sparked a debate and retaliation by chick-lit authors. Lauren Baratz-Logsted challenged Merrick's anthology with her own *This Is Chick-Lit*, asking many chick-lit writers to contribute to this rebuttal. Perhaps what's most notable about Baratz-Logsted's introduction comes from the observation that this debate is not new. She quotes a letter by Charlotte Bronte criticizing Jane Austen's work, and states "Lits against Chicks is nothing new" (Baratz-Logsted 2). Women have always been criticized for writing about other women in a romantic fashion. Authors of chick-lit have been ostracized by the literary community for the way they depict female characters. Chick-lit does promote negative stereotypes and doesn't always portray women in a realistic light. However, chick-lit also promotes independent and professional women, and allows space for female writers to explore current contemporary issues, which everyday women do encounter.

Romance novels and films engendering Chick-Lit:

The principal reason chick-lit and chick-flicks are able to establish themselves easily in mainstream society comes from the various forms they mimic, specifically the romance/romantic comedy genre. Audiences view post-modern stories through familiar plots. For instance Jane Austen's novels or Shakespeare's plays are reused to create contemporary characters and stories. Further, almost all major studios have managed to

capitalize off of these tried and true plots with a romantic comedy hit. For instance, *Ten Things I Hate About You* used the plot of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* to create a romantic comedy starring Julia Stiles and Heath Ledger. The popular *Clueless* stole the plot from Austen's *Emma*, to reveal the inner-workings of a rich and preppy high school girl. The ability to take a plot, which most people know by heart, and recreate the story into something more contemporary created the chick-lit genre. Helen Fielding is typically given the credit for the creation of the genre and her book comes from Austen's most famous novel, *Pride and Prejudice*.

Dating back to Frank Capra's *It Happened One Night* (1934) romantic comedies are not new to the big screen. However, the films begin to reflect the culture and themes surrounding the time of each film. In "Romantic Comedy and Female Spectorship," Garrett points to the popularity of romantic comedies in the early 1990s. She states, "film critic Mike Bygraves argued that Hollywood had not only '...renewed its love affair with romantic comedy' but that (on the basis of the success of *Pretty Woman* and *Green Card*) 'Romantic comedies look set to take over from the big-budget action movies of the 1980s'" (Bygraves, 1991: 30). The romantic-comedy genre encompasses people like Woody Allen who is known for creating unsettling and unusual romantic plot lines. His most recent endeavor is *Vicky Christiana Barcelona*, where he plays with the notion of traditional romance by creating a relationship involving three people rather than two. But this category also includes the famous writer Nora Ephron, who began her successful career starting with movies like *When Harry Met Sally* and *Sleepless in Seattle*, and later *You've Got Mail*, a remake of Lubitsch's film *Shop Around the Corner*. All three films depict Meg Ryan as a successful career-oriented woman who is in search of the "right

man.” And, in each film she has to start off with the wrong man before she can discover the correct one. Ephron, more so than Allen, created a popular medium that gave authors like Fielding an outlet for creating characters like Bridget Jones.

The recycling of classic author’s plots, as well as the plot lines of the woman’s film, allowed for the creation of a new genre. Chick-lit can express and explore contemporary ideas because readers are not also surprised by the plot; the story has, in many cases, already been told before but not with these contemporary women. The audience chick-lit targets relates to the imperfections the chick-lit characters have. While these female characters have attributes of the female characters in romance fiction and film, they deviate from those women in the acceptance of their deficiencies. “Readers gravitate, in particular, to the protagonist’s fallibility: these are not the flawless women of romance fiction waiting to be recognized by their ‘perfect’ man, but women who make mistakes at work, sometimes drink too much, fail miserably in the kitchen” (Ferriss 7). People appreciate Bridget Jones because she’s not the perfect weight, she can’t seem to keep a functional relationship, and remains completely clueless when it comes to public speaking. Bridget is character who demonstrates the difficulties of being a woman in the late twentieth century.

Holly Golightly helps form *Sex in the City*:

In 1958 Truman Capote created a character, Holly Golightly, who seemed out of place and quirky, and was independent while at the same time dependent on her sexuality. Many of these character’s attributes exist within the chick-lit characters of

today. For instance, Holly's flare for fashion and expensive jewelry manifests itself in characters like Carrie Bradshaw who is obsessed with designer fashion brands, like Prada or Dolce and Gabana. What differs from Holly's world of the 1940s, to Bradshaw's contemporary situation, comes from the manner in which she uses sex to exploit men, and vice versa. Golightly represents a kind of woman who would be critiqued and rejected by the Women's movement of the nineteen fifties and sixties. However, Holly's independence, fascination with men, and thwarting of feminine convention resurfaces in chick-lit. Contemporary chick-lit embraces many of the qualities that make Holly a non-traditional female for the nineteen forties, when Capote's story is set.

Holly is a character who subverts feminine stereotypes based on the way she lives; this subversion gives her an independence that is unusual for the time period of her character. For instance, the descriptions of Holly's apartment and her rejection of a family reflect this independence. The narrator describes the apartment as disorganized and un-lived in, the way a home seems when someone has just recently moved into the house. "The room in which we stood (we were standing because there was nothing to sit on) seemed as though it were being just moved into; you expected to smell we paint. Suitcases and unpacked crates were the only furniture. The crates served as tables" (Capote 28). Holly's apartment, unfinished and with easily moveable possessions, symbolizes her personality. Her bedroom covered in clothes mirrors the way in which she enters in and out of relationships. Holly's unusual style of living does not align with common feminine stereotypes of the time. She does not keep her house tidy; she hosts people who are morally suspect, and keeps unusual hours because of her work as a prostitute.

While her disorganized apartment and her work separate her from the average woman of the time, it is her separation from a familial setting that also differentiates her from the female population. Holly rejects her life as Lulamae Barnes, and the simple life of the Midwest. If she had stayed in the small town environment, she would have been the wife of Doc Golightly and stepmother of several children, but instead she embraces the life of a New York socialite. She forsakes the financial and social stability she might have found with Doc Golightly for a more erratic and impoverished life. Holly's rejection of the family and her ability to survive alone in New York City depict her as a unique woman. Holly would rather be independent than part of a family unit. The novel anticipates the push for women to enter the work force, and reflects women's desires to make their own choices.

Capote sets his novella around a pivotal historical moment, World War II. The war marks the beginning of women finding work outside of the home and beginning a lifestyle, to which they had not had access. The war allowed women to take on professions they weren't typically permitted. For instance, women started to be accepted in male-dominated professions, such as sports, music, science, and college teaching. The government even considered an equal pay bill, and began to consider protecting women's employment rights (Kaledin 19). In many ways the permission for women to enter into the male dominated workforce creates an atmosphere that sparked the Women's movement and second-wave feminism. After the war women were allowed a certain degree of sexual freedom they weren't permitted before. "A post-World War II affluence provides the material conditions to realize new forms of behavior" (Farganis 23). Holly

reflects the beginning of this change for women in her ability to be independent, as does as her interest in sex.

Holly's seeming independence, however, comes from her dependency on her sex rather than on her intellect. Therefore, Capote creates a character that reflects some change for women, while also demonstrating her dependency on men. These contradictions shape Holly into a tragic figure, rather than a traditional heroine. Her financial support comes from sexual relationships with men she doesn't care for, and payment from a New York mobster. She continues to go from one relationship to another, hoping that each time she will find some sort of financial support, with home as a secondary concern. For instance, when José backs out of his engagement with Holly because of her involvement with the mafia, her first request is "Get me a list of the fifty richest men in the world" (Capote 98). Second-wave feminism would see Holly's dependence on sex as a form of entrapment. For example, Sara Farganis states in her book *Situating Feminism* that, "In the past the problem was that by emphasizing women's bodies, practices of motherhood and beautifying the self lead to more drastic forms of sexual slavery" (33). Holly's character reflects a radical change because she can support herself and make her own choices. However, it is the particular profession, prostitution, which indicates that she has actually achieved a false freedom.

A character that reflects and symbolizes Holly's tragic situation is her pet cat. Throughout the novella the cat mimics Holly's own position in society. Holly passes on her inability to find a home, or an identity, to the cat by refusing to give him a name. She describes the cat as, "'Poor Slob', she said, tickling his head, 'poor slob without a name. It's a little inconvenient, his not having a name. But I haven't any right to give him one:

he'll have to wait until he *belongs* to somebody. We just sort of took up by the river one day, we don't belong to each other: he's an independent, and so am I'" (Capote 37).

Holly remains a tragic figure because despite all of her interactions with men of various sorts and her dreams of escaping, she does not have the traditional happy ending. Instead, her story's end is left unknown and ambiguous. The cat's story has a more conclusive, ending with, "I wondered what his name was, for I was certain he had one now, certain he'd arrived somewhere he belonged" (Capote 105). Holly's fate is nomadic, with the narrator being unaware of Holly's whereabouts. However, this reflects the character Capote set out to create, a woman who is unsettled and unsuccessful.

Holly becomes a character that embodies many feminine stereotypes, specifically in appearance, while also embracing more contemporary ideas about sex. The descriptions of her taste for fashion, cosmetics, and expensive jewelry mark her style as stereotypically feminine. For instance, one of the first descriptions of her appearance is, "...she was always well groomed, there was a consequential good taste in the plainness of her clothes, the blues and grays and lack of luster that made her, herself, shine so. One might have thought her a photographer's model, perhaps a young actress" (Capote 14). The narrator instantly notices her for beauty and form, rather than intellect. What feminists would go on to fight against is this instant judgment of a female's body. They would fight against the "...underlying assumption that the way woman look is more important than what they do" (Karolokke 8). In Holly's case the way she looks influences what she does, and therefore becomes even more important. Feminists of the Women's Movement would see Holly's dependence on her sex as a creation of a patriarchal society. However, the importance of appearance would occur in television shows like *Sex*

*and the City*. The film adaptation of this television show visually parallels the opening of Edward's *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. In *Sex and the City* the first shot focuses on a woman staring at a shoe display of a high-end fashion store. The camera then dollies out beyond the woman's face and frames her head with several designer purses. The voice-over for the movie then begins stating that women in New York have two things they want: labels and love (King, *Sex and the City*). The first shot in Edward's *Breakfast at Tiffany's* shows Hepburn staring at a Tiffany's display case in a black stylish dress. Both of these films demonstrate the importance of women appearing well dressed while looking at products that would contribute to their ensemble. The importance of fashion and love in the film *Breakfast at Tiffany's* has resurfaced in films and television shows like *Sex and the City*.

While Holly enjoys many common feminine products she also views sex in an overt and open manner. She is able to enjoy looking at men in a way that was deemed inappropriate for women. In a discussion of men with her friend Mag Wildwood, who categorizes herself as a conventional woman, Holly asserts her ability to find men attractive. She states, "Oh, balls. What's wrong with a decent look at a guy you like? Men are beautiful, a lot of them are. José is, and if you don't even want to look at him, well, I'd say he's getting a pretty cold plate of macaroni" (Capote 48). While Holly uses her feminine sex as a means of earning money, she is also aware of her ability to desire others rather than to simply be desired. The problem arises in that Holly's not actually allowed to act upon this desire without being a part of a discredited profession. Ann Kaplan refocuses this idea of desire in her discussion of the gaze. She describes the gaze as being primarily something men are allowed, and notes that even when women gaze they don't play an active role. Kaplan says, "To being with, men, do not simply look;

their gaze carries with it power of action and of possession which is lacking in the female gaze. Women receive and return a gaze, but cannot act upon it” (31). Holly represents this woman who gazes upon a male, but can’t act upon her actual desire. What she is able to act on is men’s desire, and she receives monetary compensation as a result. The chick-lit of today tries to gain control of this gaze while depicting women who step into high-powered careers. All four *Sex and the City* characters assert their desire for men, as well as for sex, without it seeming unusual. Holly’s character marks the beginning of this change of the way females can be portrayed.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of sexuality can be observed in the adaptation of this novella into a film. The film, set during the nineteen sixties, and made in 1961, places the male lead, Paul, in a situation similar to Holly’s. Perhaps in an attempt to place the characters on an equal level Paul is shown, like Holly, using people for money. He relies on a decorator throughout most of the film to provide him with housing and pocket change. The character, in the novella, never uses a woman for money and relies on finding work as a means of supporting himself. By having Paul as more of an equal to Holly there represents a shift occurring between the sexes; this equality appeals to the film’s contemporary audience. The time period of the film, the 1960s, marked a change in what sex meant. The sexual revolution forced “the push of gender equity with respect to sexual behavior” (Farganis 26). The movie marks that push for gender equity by having both characters become dependent on the other sex for money rather than only the woman.

In the film adaptation Hepburn’s image was historically important and most notable for the way in which her sexuality was portrayed. By the second scene of the film

Hepburn has already taken a man to the “powder room,” and promised Mr. Yunioshi, her neighbor, to let him take pictures in exchange for getting into the building. Unlike the novel, the film immediately emphasizes what Holly Golightly does for a living and highlights the importance of Hepburn’s image. As noted, the first scene shows Hepburn in a long black dress and pearls staring at the cases of jewelry outside of Tiffany’s. This first shot reflects Hepburn’s notable connection with fashion, as well as Holly Golightly’s obsession with appearance. At this time, “Hepburn’s image was increasingly connected to high fashion and the stylish star herself in fact often situated in relation to shopping and consumption” (Taylor 170). The scene reflects the character’s preoccupation with fashion, shown by the clothes she is wearing; and, her first interaction with anyone in the film evolves around a display case. Continuing in this vein, a tracking shot then follows Hepburn down the streets of New York. However, what is most important about this scene comes from the lack of dialogue. The audience is meant to simply admire the character the camera has put in front of them. The lack of dialogue frames the character, as well as the rest of the movie because it reflects the emphasis on Holly’s appearance, rather than on any part of her intellect. Often, this focus on image, and especially fashion, occurs in the visual representations of contemporary chick-lit, most notably in the opening to the film *Sex and the City*, as discussed previously.

Hepburn created a contemporary space for the significance of women’s attire and presentation. In contrast, in *Sex and the City* fashion and appearance play distinct roles. An entire episode is devoted to Carrie’s loss of Manolo Blancs at a party, and the more recent film emphasizes fashion through a Vogue photo shoot of wedding dresses (King). However, the reason fashion and appearance play a pivotal role in chick-lit stems from

the idea of reclaiming femininity. Radical second-wave feminist groups, like the Redstockings and the New York Radical Feminists, protested against the emphasis on women's appearances. They would have seen Hepburn's sexual image as subservient and oppressive (Krollokke 8). But, chick-lit reclaims these feminine traits in a post-feminist culture. Chick-lit reflects the freedom women have to look feminine while also maintaining a certain degree of equality.

The post-feminist culture, however, has to some degree silenced feminism, and in many ways the possibility of continuing to fight for equality. Being a feminist has become unpopular and rejected in this post-feminist area. As Angelea McRobbie points out, "... the new female subject is, despite her freedom, called upon to be silent, to withhold critique in order to count as a modern sophisticated girl" (18). While characters from *Sex and the City* can rediscover their feminine attributes, as seen in films like *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, they are prohibited from embracing their professional lives and finding men who respect those professions. For instance, looking at an episode of *Sex and the City*, Miranda cannot find a date for a wedding. Each man she meets asks what she does for a living. Each time Miranda tells a man she is a lawyer in a top firm she finds herself dateless. When she finally decides to lie, and tell a man she is a flight attendant, she finds a date (Taylor). Much as Hepburn is silenced within the first scene of the film, these characters are also repressed. The women in chick-lit reflect a cultural problem: women are allowed to have successful careers, but they might have to choose between their career and their love life. And, these characters reflect the cultural opprobrium attached to expressing their frustrations with the inequalities women continue to face. As in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, there is a progression in chick-lit because of the way women are

depicted as independent, but in both the novella and chick-lit, women's struggles are silenced by the male-dominated culture surrounding the women's environment.

*Pride and Prejudice* meets Helen Fielding:

Without question Fielding owes the success of her popular protagonist, Bridget Jones, the remarkably dysfunctional, single, thirty-something woman who gets a chance at love, to Jane Austen. Austen's obsession with women finding happiness in marriage and dependence on a man remains a reoccurring theme in chick-lit novels today. Elizabeth's unique, independent, witty, and charming character has survived into today's literature, in the form of Bridget Jones. In *Pride and Prejudice* Elizabeth knows she needs to marry in order to secure stability. Elizabeth is rebellious because she wants someone that will make her happy, and that is her intellectual equal. Her mother's goal, however, is to simply find men for her daughters to marry. But, ultimately both women understand that they need men for financial stability.

Fielding uses the tension Austen created between Elizabeth and Mrs. Bennet through Bridget and her mother, and depicts a similar obsession with men through these two contemporary women. Bridget plays the witty and nonconformist daughter and constantly evades her mother's suggestions of men or petitions for blind dates. A similar interaction occurs between Elizabeth and Mrs. Bennet. Elizabeth constantly surprises her mother with her self-determined actions, and her refusal to marry a man she does not love, Mr. Collins. All four women exhibit a female preoccupation with men, and their relationships with men. Fielding defines the condition of being single in a term

continuing to be used by other chick-lit writers, “singleton.” Bridget’s life remains in a constant state of turmoil due to her inability to succeed at her career, as well as her aptitude for finding disrespectful men.

What’s most disconcerting about Bridget’s character is her lack of self-respect. The self-loathing, in Fielding’s creation differs immensely from the original Elizabeth Bennet. The most poignant example of this deviation comes from the marriage proposal in both novels. In *Pride and Prejudice* Elizabeth quickly refuses and mocks Darcy’s marriage proposal, reflecting on his ungentlemanly behavior. She states, “Had not my own feelings decided against you, had they been indifferent, or had they even been favourable, do you think that any consideration would tempt me to accept the man who has been the means of ruining, perhaps forever, the happiness of a beloved sister?” (Austen 162). Elizabeth understands that in her family’s socio-economic state a marriage proposal from a rich and well-respected man should not be turned down lightly. However, she will not sacrifice her pride by simply accepting Mr. Darcy’s proposal. While Elizabeth’s initial motivations for refusing Darcy might not be with flawed judgment, this rejection still reflects a self-respect and understanding of self-worth that is often absent in chick-lit.

Fielding recreates this scene through an interaction between Darcy and Bridget at a party. The scene in Fielding’s novel takes place on the dance floor and some bantering between the characters ensues. However, while Bridget displays some of the charm and wit with which Miss Bennet comes equipped she is less comic than Austen’s heroine. In fact, when Darcy does ask Bridget on a date she is at first speechless and then consents almost immediately. The one conflict for her character lies in the fact that Darcy is

involved with someone else, an issue quickly resolved and without great effort. What is absent in Fielding's version is the temperament and independence Elizabeth Bennet maintains. Bridget succumbs to Darcy's demands and the plot moves forward without much conflict occurring between the characters. While Bridget differs from Elizabeth Bennet in the modern freedoms she is allowed—a career, a house, the ability to choose her lovers—she becomes a more passive and submissive character for a woman of the late twentieth century. Bridget illustrates the tensions contemporary females face. Women want independence and their femininity, while also being allowed a love life. However, these entities are often in opposition with one another rather than symbiotic.

Perhaps the most interesting distinction between Austen's famous plot comes from the adaptation of the proposal scene in *Bridget Jones's Diary*. In comparison to the novel, the movie focuses more on Bridget's lack of self-esteem and her inability to differentiate between suitable and unsuitable men. While the original Elizabeth Bennet has external factors limiting her choices in life, such as her lower socio-economic status, and the lack of respect women received in the nineteenth century when pursuing careers, she remains confident and intelligent in her exchange with Mr. Darcy. Even in Fielding's novel some of this confidence remains, but once the story becomes a film that assertiveness disappears.

In the film, Bridget's insecurities become more significant, specifically demonstrated through the body language, lighting, and dialogue associated with the character. Darcy monologues extensively about Bridget's faults, but ends with the refrain for the movie, "Despite appearances, I like you very much. No I like you very much just as you are" (Maguire). This final statement, a compliment at the end of a rather insulting

speech, points to Bridget's need to hear reaffirming statements about her personality and appearances. In this scene, the character's positions also reflect the discrepancies in confidence. The camera uses low-angle shots to give Darcy a feeling of superiority while shots of Bridget utilize the high-angle technique diminishing her importance. Paralleling the camera shots, the lighting reflects the characters positions within the relationship. Bridget has soft lighting above her hair, emphasizing her feminine characteristics, while Darcy remains in sharper lighting, reflecting his masculine traits and rigid personality. The exchange between Bridget and Mark Darcy has hints of Austen's characters, especially in the depiction of Mark. But, Bridget does not represent the subversive and astute personality seen in Elizabeth Bennet. Instead, Bridget reveals her insecurities and anxieties. The ability for a woman to show these sentiments represents a change in society, but with this change comes a loss of astute thoughts, seen in characters like Elizabeth Bennet.

Chick-lits and chick-flicks, while emphasizing romance, should also emphasize the qualities women embody and the confidence they should exude. However, often the chick-lit plots pay more attention to women finding this confidence through the male companions they choose. The novel, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, reinforces the stigma of single women by questioning why many women in contemporary life are single. One character asks Bridget, "Yes. How does a woman manage to get to your age without being married?" (Fielding 11). Bridget is the quintessential example of a woman recklessly looking for love, while being critiqued by her peers for being single. This criticism surfaces in Bridget's self-image. For instance, when Bridget reflects on a former lover she thinks to herself, "Realize with sinking humiliation that reason have been

feeling smug about Peter all these years was that I finished with him and now he is effectively finishing with me by marrying Mrs. Giant Valkyrie bottom” (Fielding 165). Throughout chick-lit remains this idea that it’s acceptable for women to be single, independent, and career-oriented. But, at the end of each chick-lit story, in order for the “happy ending” to occur suddenly a tall, rich, and powerful man appears in the arms of each female character. The necessity for these characters to find men to share their life with reflects the stereotypes commonly associated with women. As Gill and Herdieckeroff point out, “The reason the heroines manage to win the hero’s heart in the end is not because they surpass in spirit or intelligence, but because they conform to the traditional stereotypes of femininity” (5). In Bridget’s case she defers to this traditional role through her constant pursuit of a man.

Post-feminism and the creation of chick-lit:

While most chick-lit plots end with the protagonist finding happiness with a male partner, some chick-lit shows an awareness of past feminist movements, in which independence and intelligence are valued in female characters. Specifically, Helen Fielding acknowledges her feminist predecessors in *Bridget Jones’s Diary*. The most poignant example of this feminist awareness stems from a dialogue exchange between Bridget and Mark Darcy. In an attempt to make small talk, Mark inquires what books Bridget has read lately. Instead of telling Mark the truth, Bridget lies and says she has been reading a feminist text that in reality one of her girlfriends was reading. The book she refers to in particular is Susan Faludi’s *Backlash*, a book that blames the media for

most of the criticism surrounding feminism. The most interesting exchange in this scene comes from the fact that Bridget has not read this particular feminist text, but Mark has. Fielding uses this role reversal as a chance to create a male character appropriate for Bridget. Van Slooten describes Mark as, "...well-read, open to feminist ideas, and would make a suitable boyfriend for Bridget because he is ostensibly not misogynistic" (42). Through this reference, Fielding situates Bridget within the feminism of the present because Bridget is aware of past feminist texts; however she remains ignorant to their content. Fielding's acknowledgement of past feminist movements demonstrates an authorial awareness that past political movements make a character like Bridget possible. Fielding also demonstrates the importance of an intelligent and educated male as an appropriate love interest for her character. This reflects Bridget's ability to maintain a stable and intelligent relationship with someone who is her equal. Fielding's recognition of past feminist movements in conjunction with a quirky and contemporary character makes Bridget a character to whom most female audiences can relate. As Angela McRobbie points out:

Bridget deserves to get what she wants. The audience is wholly on her side. She ought to be able to find the right man, for the reason that she has negotiated that tricky path which requires being independent, earning her own living, standing up for herself against demeaning comments, remaining funny and good humored throughout, without being angry or too critical of men, without foregoing her femininity, her desires for love and motherhood, her sense of humor and her appealing vulnerability. (22)

Chick-lit, including *Bridget Jones's Diary*, embodies the contradictions most modern day women face. Women are aware of the feminist movements that have come before them and appreciate the new freedoms they are allowed. Bridget wants to have a career and the ability to financially support herself. She knows that her freedom to have a career stems

from a long line of women fighting for their place in the workforce. But, she also desires companionship and the ability to express her womanhood. In order to ensure women's place in the workforce, the second-wave movement minimized female's appearances and the desire for male companionship. However, characters like Bridget, embrace their feminine side and their feminine desires, specifically in the realm of marriage. Despite Bridget's professional independence she still discovers happiness through male companionship, reflecting the contradictions that often surface throughout chick-lit.

Careers of the protagonist:

While characters like Bridget do not represent progress for women in terms of their relationships, they do show development in how women have been admitted into the workforce. Characters like Carrie Bradshaw and Bridget Jones differ from Austen's and Capote's characters because they are allowed entry into professions that have been primarily dominated by males. Holly Golightly relies on her sexual appeal and her relationships with men to be financially stable. She also uses the relationships she has with men to elevate her social status. Even in the early twentieth century women were depicted as financially dependent on men. Virginia Woolf argued in her essay compilation, *A Room of One's Own* that women need to be financially independent in order to achieve any sort of professional achievement in the world (Woolf). This financial independence would enable their success in whatever endeavor they choose. In the past, women were repressed because they had no way to support themselves; however sex appeal and beauty remained areas they could utilize for financial gain.

The careers women take on in these stories tend to be high-powered, engaging, and financially stable. For instance, the four *Sex and the City* characters take on the prospective careers of lawyer, writer, PR agent, and curator. Bridget Jones goes from working in a publishing house to a television broadcaster, and in *Can You Keep a Secret* the main character works for a marketing firm. The acceptance of women taking on high-powered careers also translates to the big screen. Movies “such as *Sleepless in Seattle*, *Runaway Bride* or *Bridget Jones’s Diary* tend to focus more strongly on the female protagonist’s attempt to balance independence and/or career fulfillment with the desire for long-term relationships” (Garrett 104). Unlike Holly Golightly, these women are able to establish their place in the professional world regardless of their romantic relationships. However, often this choice to maintain a high-powered career is met with many obstacles and other desires. For instance, in the film *Sex and the City* Miranda struggles to maintain a successful marriage, while being a partner in her law firm and mothering her child. Characters like Miranda reflect the difficulties of balancing these different relationships. Now, women can have a career, a love life, and a family, but not without being faced with many challenges.

While these movies recognize women’s new liberties there continues to be an emphasis on being single, specifically demonstrated by the phrase Fielding used: singleton. The characters recognize the stigma associated with being a spinster, and continue to be engrossed in the hunt for finding a man. But, the ability to be educated, independent, and make more choices regarding their relationships allows these characters to explore the friction between the old methods and the new pleasures allotted to them (Garrett 104). These various characters continue to discover happiness through their

pursuit in finding a man. However, one attribute where they redefine feminine stereotypes comes from their desire to maintain a career.

Chick-Lit Redefines women:

Chick-lit allows women self-agency because it draws on past feminist values. In particular, this genre exposes the problems and contradictions within the arenas of romance, sex and power (Slooten 51). The women's movement made women aware of the inequalities and discrepancies they faced in a male-dominated society. However, in order to establish equality, second-wave feminism rejected many traditional feminine values that some women thought important. The characters typically seen in contemporary chick-lit are reactions to this fight. Post-feminism questions the way in which many feminine qualities were rejected, and examines more closely the lives of everyday women. The pivotal shift, however, between the two waves of feminism occurs because of the way women begin to use and portray their sex in more overt and exaggerated manners. For instance, the eighties saw the remake of the "Cinderella" story in the form of Julia Roberts playing an L.A. prostitute. By the nineties, shows like *Sex and the City* and *Ally McBeal* were premiering on prime time television, and the debate between second-wave feminism and post-feminism heightened. Second-wave feminism allowed women the ability to question their role in society, and created an atmosphere of uncertainty, where women gave themselves permission to redefine what it meant to be a woman. These freedoms allowed women, specifically within chick-lit and chick-flicks, to

express their sexual impulses; however instead of remaining independent people these women ultimately ended up in the pursuit of a man.

Characters like Bridget Jones and Carrie Bradshaw embody the struggle and the ironies of post-feminism. These women have to appear to be independent, self-sustaining, career-oriented women, who also struggle with things like diet, fashion, and romantic love. These characters reflect the battle most contemporary women face in their effort to be both professional, and pursue a romantic life. Jessica Lyn Van Slooten acknowledges this struggle in her article. She states, “Women of my generation, like Ally and Bridget, have been raised to demand equality and exceptionality, and some of us refuse to settle until we find our Mr. Darcy” (Slooten 40). These female characters, therefore, reflect the independent nature and exceptionality the women’s movement was able to establish, but they continue to have romantic and sexual desires that were not a focus of the movement. Ann Sintow reminds readers, “romance is a primary category of the female imagination. The Women’s movement had left this fact of female consciousness largely untouched. While most serious women *novelists* treat romance with irony and cynicism, most women do not” (321). Characters like Bridget and Carrie reflect the culture of the nineties and the idea that there is a need for women to be successful in a male-dominated professional world, but they also are occupied with beauty, youth, and their biological clocks (Slooten 47). These characters want to enjoy the feminine pleasures that feminism originally rejected and redefine femininity.

In both *Sex and the City* and *Bridget Jones’s Diary* the protagonists reflect the abandonment of traditional feminine stereotypes through their inability to cook. At one point in the novel Bridget attempts to cook a birthday dinner for her and her friends, the

result being inedible blue soup and orange marmalade. In keeping with the rejection of gender roles, the one edible part of the meal is made by Bridget's love interest, Mark Darcy. Again, in the film *Sex and the City*, the one scene with Carrie and Big in the kitchen involves Big cooking the majority of the meal while Carrie helps shell peas (King). At one point during the television series Carrie even jokes that she uses her oven as another storage space for her shoes (Star). These women reflect a woman's ability to reject certain stereotypical feminine roles, such as cooking, while maintaining a relationship with other feminine qualities, such as fashion.

Shows like *Sex and the City* reflect the cultural ambiguity post-feminism has created, but also the liberty post-feminism has given women in the arena of sexuality. The genre has affected the way women can express their sexuality. Characters like Samantha from *Sex and the City* demonstrate the sexual liberty women now have, as well as a cultural acceptance that women can have multiple partners before they settle on a long-term partner. Sam encourages and embraces multiple sexual partners, as well as sexual experiences throughout the show. In the episode "The Good Fight," she fights for a promotion she didn't originally receive because her boss thought she had too many sexual relationships with the men in the office (Star). Samantha recognizes the discrepancy in the treatment she receives as a woman. She points out that had she been a man, she would have been praised for her sexual conquests and given a raise; instead, she's stigmatized because women are frowned upon for sleeping with that many men. Chick-lit promotes sexual freedom in that women are as free as men to use their bodies anyway they see fit, and, more importantly, women should find satisfaction in this new freedom.

Another area where chick-lit does not revolutionize the portrayal of women, stems from the emphasis on beauty. The reason the *Sex and the City* characters epitomize the height of fashion results in a continuing societal pressure on the way women must appear. These women can reject the idea of being cooks in the kitchen, but they still must look attractive, sexy, and thin. The reason women can relate to Bridget, in particular, is due to her inability to necessarily embody all these physical attributes. For instance, perhaps the scene where readers feel the most empathy occurs when she discovers Daniel's love affair with an American. In both the film and the novel, the American turns to Daniel and says, "I thought you said she was thin" (Fielding 153). In chick-lit women are still being examined and valued by the way they appear, not only by men but also by other women. In the *Sex and the City* film the three women scrutinize Samantha for the weight she gained in Los Angeles. Sitting around Carrie's apartment the women chide her for not noticing the weight she has put on and demand an explanation. Samantha faces the criticism of three of her best friends. While these critiques seem merciless, the fact that they are stated in this candid manner remains new to women's fiction. Chick-lit allows for these women to express their anxieties and acknowledge the judgment they face by other women. The difference between the women in chick-lit and those of the pre-feminist era stems from the permission the contemporary woman has been given to share her anxieties (McRobbie 21). Bridget can express her heartbreak in her diary and Samantha can discuss her weight problems with her friends. However, these anxieties symbolize the new culture women live in, where body image has been self-imposed or defined by women. McRobbie points out that a woman is, "able to make her own choices, it seems as though the fearful terrain of male approval fades away, and is replaced instead

with a new horizon of self-imposed feminine cultural norms” (McRobbie 63). Both *Bridget Jones* and *Sex and the City* continue to highlight the importance of the way women appear, but they distinguish themselves in that their appearance is not always emphasized or judged by the men in their life, but rather the women.

The most shocking aspect of this genre, especially within *Sex and the City*, comes from the freedom women are allowed in their pursuit of sex. In this post-feminism context women are permitted to have sex like men and can pursue their sex-life as independent people. The principal desire within chick-lit comes from the woman’s desire to find a man, ultimately with marriage remaining the single girl’s goal (Radner 59). However, the difference arises in women’s sexual knowledge and expressions. Radner states that a woman’s value “is now overtly and inextricably tied to the representation of a specific heterosexual practice as sexual knowledge rather than sexual innocence, represented as such within an arena characterized by the interpenetration of public and private in which a woman is always working” (59). Women act as free agents within this genre. They can have sex with whomever they desire and whenever they desire. And, they can discuss their experiences freely with their friends. As Jane Gerhard points out in her analysis of “Sex and the City: Carrie Bradshaw’s queer post-feminism”: “Women, if they so chose, can work, talk, and have sex ‘like men’ while still maintaining all the privileges associated with being an attractive women” (37). Perhaps the character that best reflects this revolutionary woman stems from Samantha in the television series *Sex and the City*. Samantha has a multitude of partners, including a woman, and freely experiments with sexual positions and fantasies. She represents the rejection of the sexually confined female. The most contemporary aspect of this sexual freedom comes

from the dissection of the sex by the other women in the show. “The tactic of show-and-tell around the women’s sex demonstrates that ‘heterosexual sex’ refers to many things besides the missionary position of feminine sexual subservience” (Gerhad 45). All the characters symbolize a progression in the way in which women can express their sexual freedoms. But, their discussion of their adventures also reflects a new communication women are permitted to have with one another. They are free to discuss sex in a more unconcealed manner. However, the contradiction within these female characters comes from the fact that “The single girl must represent desire for the masculine subject while simultaneously acting as the agent of her own desire” (Radner 66). Carrie and Bridget have to appear desirable to characters like Aden or Big and Mark Darcy or Daniel while also pursuing them out of their own free will.

In both *Sex and the City* and *Bridget Jones*, the characters’ ability to pursue men and their sexual desires create a bond with their female friends. As Gerhard points out in reference to the *Sex and the City* characters, “The friends come to want not only the good nights of sex, but also the pleasures they get from sharing it, through conversation, with that someone special who cares” (44). These women have stronger bonds with each other than most of the relationships they have with men. Again, this occurs in Bridget’s life with her conversations and bonds with characters like Jude, Sharon, and her homosexual friend Tom. These friendships revolve around conversations about sex and relationships, but they represent the inadequacies of the men in the female’s characters life. “Women’s historians have argued that these private bonds were passionate, that they involved psychological and physical intimacy, and provided support and love that women living in racial/gender hierarchies could not get from men” (Gerhard 44). When Bridget’s love life

isn't going a way she desires she immediately turns to her friends. For instance, when Daniel backs out on a weekend vacation she meets her friends for "top-level post-works crisis meeting in Café Rouge" to discuss her male problems (Fielding 67). Bridget is comforted by her friends and is left feeling justified in her anger. She even comes away from the meeting with advice from her feminist friend Sharon. "Sharon maintains men-present company (i.e. Tom) excepted, obviously—are so catastrophically unevolved that soon they will just be kept by women as pets for sex" (Fielding 67). In every popular chick-lit story there is at least one female friendship that the protagonist depends on, and turns to whenever a male character fails. These friendships allow sex to be discussed freely, but also represent the failings of the male characters in the protagonist's lives. The protagonist can depend on her friends more so than any man, which reflects the problems women continue to face in a patriarchal society. Often the friendships are the most stable relationships throughout the plot and the ones that continue to remain long after the male characters have left the story.

#### Conclusion:

"The genre has been polarized between its outright dismissal as trivial fiction and unexamined embrace by fans who claim that it reflect the realities of contemporary single women" (2 Ferris and Young).

Chick-lit may not display a progression in society for women to be completely independent of men. However, as Ferris and Young point out in the quote above, this lack of progression may be a reflection on the culture. Ultimately, chick-lit authors aim to depict the lives of every day women. And, every day women, in the twenty-first century, think about their weight, careers, fashionable items, motherhood, romance, sex, and their

desire to find a suitable partner. While most chick-lit may not be taken seriously in the literary world, it does describe the anxieties and troubles of professional women. Despite the criticism chick-lit receives, it remains a genre where women writers can publish and women's voices can be heard. Chick-lit stories and novels have the potential to give new space for the acknowledgment of women's changing lives and experiences.

Unfortunately, the clever writing style seen in Fielding's original work has been forsaken in order to produce more chick-lit novels more quickly. The problem chick-lit faces in identifying itself as a credible genre lies in what the stories, and authors, sacrifice for the sake of publishing their work. This credibility translates onto the Hollywood screen as well. If adaptations continue to reject the wit and humor of the novels, to create passive and timid depictions of females, the genre will not be able to create a respectable or honest voice for women. The ambiguity and uncertainties within post-feminism will continue to remain unclear and contradictory if women cannot express their feminine emotions. Chick-lit reflects the strong bonds women can form with each other through the friendships often depicted in these stories. But, it also examines the identity crisis women have internally, especially in regard to their personal appearance. Chick-lit establishes itself through its connection to feminism, romance novels, and women's films. As Ferris and Mallory state, the genre is rifled "with possibilities and potential" (12).

Chick-lit has the opportunity to represent the struggles and triumphs women face, but it needs to do so through a more critical lens. As a result of this thesis, I have read many chick-lit stories and novels. None of the more recent pieces lives up to the quality and humor of Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Often it seems that authors forsake

simple writing mechanics and techniques because of their ambivalence towards the literary process. There seems to be an understanding that, for the most part, as long as the authors follow the chick-lit formula, and make sure their book has a pink cover, their work will sell. In order for chick-lit to establish any sort of credibility, authors need to reconstruct their stories so that the wit and intelligence, seen in characters like Bridget Jones, reemerges in their work. Presently, it seems most chick-lit is being written as if it is about to turn into the next Hollywood film. I have always found chick-flicks and chick-lit entertaining, and I relate too many of the female characters depicted within these stories. However, what I find disturbing is what chick-lit continues to emphasize: appearance and the need for men. I understand that this is why many female writers don't want to be associated with the genre. As it stands, chick-lit provides a voice for women, but the genre will continued to be undermined without a stronger more intelligent voice for the female characters.

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