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Adaptation, accessibility, and creative autonomy in Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones* series

By

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of
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2019

Adaptation, accessibility, and creative autonomy in Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones* series

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Though feminist scholars criticize Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones* series as they feel that Bridget's diary minimizes her work, close analysis reveals that Bridget's work is equally important to her as her relationships. The novels charts Bridget's linear progression toward autonomy and creative freedom, and her work mistakes function as ironic commentary on the creative industries. Though she critiques the entertainment industry, she validates its accessibility to a variety of audiences, particularly through adaptations. Throughout the series, Bridget documents her own life into her diary, and, in the final two novels, adapts her past diaries for a new purpose. The diary form departs from Austen's more distanced narrator as well as from the traditional scholarship on the diary, which dictates the diary as a way to work through trauma. Fielding alters the diary form, and through her use of interiority, creates a complex protagonist whose success does not make her inaccessible.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother, Susan Welch, whose love and support made it possible for me to complete this work. Thank you for encouraging me to continue learning, for showing me the value of hard work, and for supporting me in all of my endeavors. I am endlessly grateful to be your daughter. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my grandmother, Celeste Welch, who I miss greatly. I hope to always make you proud.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
CHAPTER	
I. READING THE DIARY: DIARY FICTION AND THE <i>BRIDGET JONES</i> SERIES	1
II. “NOW BACK TO THE STUDIO”: THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND ADAPTATION IN <i>BRIDGET JONES’S DIARY</i> AND <i>BRIDGET JONES: THE EDGE OF REASON</i>	21
III. “WRITING, WRITING, WRITING”: CREATIVE AUTONOMY AND THE DIARY IN <i>BRIDGET JONES: MAD ABOUT THE BOY</i> AND <i>BRIDGET JONES’S BABY: THE DIARIES</i>	42
IV. CONCLUSION	68
REFERENCES	71

CHAPTER I

READING THE DIARY: DIARY FICTION AND THE *BRIDGET JONES* SERIES

Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones* series is comprised of four fictional diaries that have received considerable scholarly attention. Among the reasons feminist scholars criticize Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones* series is that they feel that Bridget's diary minimizes Bridget's work; however, the scholars' own focus on Bridget's romantic life in the novel minimizes the diary's treatment of work. Close analysis reveals that Bridget's worklife is equally important to her as her relationships. Her career in the creative industries includes successes and mistakes, but overall the novels charts Bridget's linear progression toward autonomy and creative freedom. In fact, Bridget's mistakes, rather than being a sign of her incompetence, are actually ironic commentary on the entertainment industry and women's work within it. Even as she critiques the entertainment industry, she validates its wide accessibility to a broad range of audiences, particularly through adaptations. Throughout the series, Bridget adapts her own life into her diary, and, in the final two novels, Bridget crafts a narrative using the texts from her past diaries for a new purpose. Both in their form and their theme, the *Bridget Jones* novels present adaptation as inherently valuable. In her adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, Fielding chooses the diary form in order to show that which is not revealed by Austen's more distanced narrator. In fact, not only is Fielding's form different from Austen's, but it is also different from what the tradition of women's diaries, both fictional and nonfictional, leads us to expect. The scholarship on women's diaries focuses on the diary as either a therapeutic method of working through

trauma or as the creation of a persona for fear of an unwanted audience. In contrast Fielding's use of interiority creates an accessible protagonist whose success does not make her inaccessible.

In 1996, Fielding published *Bridget Jones's Diary*, which quickly gained popularity. The first in the series, this novel is comprised of Bridget's diary, which follows one calendar year of her life. Bridget adapts her life into her diary as she moves from publishing to entertainment news and dates her boss and later Mark Darcy, who will become her husband. Throughout the diary, Bridget is vocal about concerns with her career, including feeling undervalued, as well as her interest in adaptation, especially in the BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. Following *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Fielding published *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* in 1999. This novel shows Bridget in the following year, as she continues to work in entertainment news and date Mark Darcy, while still documenting both her mistakes and successes in her diary. Bridget works at *Sit Up Britain* as a news presenter and also pursues freelance work when she interviews Colin Firth for the *Independent*. Fielding followed *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* fourteen years later with *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy* (2013). *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy* is Bridget's diary from 2013, when Bridget is a widow and a mother of two children. Bridget begins a career in screenwriting as she attempts to adapt *Hedda Gabler* into a screenplay; she also experiments with the form of her own diary as she includes diary entries from 2012 in order to build a narrative showing what led to her decisions in 2013, including changing her career and her decision to begin dating again. Fielding follows *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy* with *Bridget Jones's Baby: The Diaries*, published in 2016. Bridget details her work in entertainment news as she is forced to navigate her workplace under a new supervisor. Within this diary, Bridget is clearly using her old diaries for a new purpose, as she constructs the narrative of her

pregnancy with her son, as audience. In Fielding's *Bridget Jones* series, Bridget adapts her life for her own reading and then later reframes her original diaries for a new purpose and audience.

Fielding's decision to adapt Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* into a contemporary narrative using the diary form reveals the unmediated interiority of the protagonist, which works to disrupt a more polished image with a more accessible female character. The diary form calls attention to the protagonist as a writer, and Bridget adapts her daily life into her diary with herself as audience. Her purpose is her own entertainment and later reading pleasure. The diary form also calls attention to how Bridget is growing as a writer through these four diaries. Writing, whether fiction or nonfiction, is among the creative industries, so Bridget's writing, even in her personal diary, is part of her career. While Bridget writes in her diaries about her work in publishing, entertainment news, print journalism, and screenwriting, she underplays these desirable fields by showing how her own work is undervalued even as she is producing new and interesting content in each of her positions. As she documents her work in these fields, Bridget also documents her own growth as a writer through these four diaries. In each of her first two diaries, Bridget adapts her daily life into her diary throughout one calendar year. The traditional form of these diaries calls our attention to how this changes in the final two novels in the series. In *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*, Bridget adapts her 2012 diary in her 2013 diary, and in *Bridget Jones's Baby: The Diaries*, Bridget uses past diaries to construct a new narrative for a particular audience. Throughout her time in the creative industries, Bridget not only moves into new areas in the field, she also establishes her own writing within her diary and grows in her ability to craft a narrative.

Though I argue that Bridget's work develops through her diaries, most scholars have not focused on Bridget's work at all. The scholarship on Fielding's series focuses primarily on the

influence and implications of the first chick lit¹ novel for contemporary feminism. Alison Case examines the function of “feminine narration” in Fielding’s novel in order to argue that an audience’s ability to connect with Bridget as a character relies primarily on this “gendered literary convention” in that the audience laughs at Bridget (more often than with her) because she seems to be out of control of her own narrative (177). Case defines feminine narration as “the exclusion of the narrator from the activity of shaping her experience into a coherent and meaningful story”; she is instead “constituted as a ‘witness’ who presents experience in a more or less ‘raw’ and unmediated way, which is then...given shape and meaning by a male ‘master-narrator’” (176). Though there is no male master narrator in *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, Case argues that the diary form creates this kind of narration, as Bridget has no control over shaping the narrative because she is writing day by day without knowledge of the future². Case is interested in point at which the narrative departs from realism; for example, one day she is making dinner while also writing in her diary or possibly taking a break to write in her diary and record events happening in real time (179). It would seem more plausible, then, that Bridget is writing these entries “after the fact”; however, this would put Bridget in full control of her narrative, which Case believes is not possible because, for Case, the humor of the novel only works because Bridget is out of control (179). The purpose of feminine narration seems to be to laugh at the female protagonist as she struggles and cannot gain control over her own narrative; Case argues that the audience is meant to both laugh at and with Bridget throughout reading her diary because

¹ As Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary* is acknowledged as the first chick lit novel. Brenda Bethman shows the ways in which the novel has influenced the German genre, *Fräuleinwunder*, and Cheryl A. Wilson discusses using the work in undergraduate classrooms.

² Alistair Brown expounds from Case’s article and agrees that Bridget is an example of feminine narration, as he focuses on the function of time and space in relation to the use of communication devices, such as letters, intranet messaging, and mobile phones.

the novel contains moments that are both “self-consciously witty” and scenes in which “unconscious comedy predominates” (180). To Case, Bridget seems authentic to her readers because of feminine narration: “[P]art of what makes Bridget seem familiar, and therefore convincing, is that her relationship to her story and her life, and our relationship to her as narrator, mirrors the lack of narrative and material agency we have come to expect from fictional women” (181). As Case’s article focuses on *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, she identifies the ways in which Bridget seems both in and out of control of her narrative, based on the ways in which her life is documented in her diary, which allows us then to laugh both at and with Bridget instead of seeing her as entirely in control of her life and how she documents it within her diary.

As Alison Case is interested in narration, Kelly Marsh and Laura Mooneyham White are interested in how Austen’s characters are adapted into Fielding’s work as well as how the narration serves to mark Bridget as either feminist or not. Marsh’s article focuses on how Helen Fielding’s preoccupation with the inauthenticity of the idea of being in control is echoed in other contemporary fiction, and in their comparison, we are able “to contextualize Fielding’s work in such a way as to account for her immense popularity but also to identify her real contribution to contemporary literature” (53). To her, Bridget is focused less on completely changing herself, as she suggests in her diary, than on justifying her actions to herself. Marsh asserts that Bridget Jones’s Diary is “the expression of the self in all its imperfection” and “does not validate traditional gender roles...[but] recalls a world free of the post-Austen myth of the perfected self” (69). Marsh’s article establishes the ways Fielding disrepects the goal of self-perfection, and offers a narrative documenting herself as she is. While Marsh is interested in how the novels’ impact is feminist because Bridget is content being herself, White believes that Bridget is less feminist than Elizabeth Bennet. White focuses on the relationship between *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and

Pride and Prejudice in order to argue “that only by distinguishing the heroine’s project from the author’s can we sort out the Austen employed as postmodern, hyperreal gesture from the Austen whose romance plots seem to be invoked as authentic ideals, either ideals that are possible of attainment (the readings from reaction) or impossible (the readings from nostalgia)” (256-257). She believes that, because Fielding uses the marriage plot found in Austen’s work as a way to drive Bridget’s narrative, the work is creating a “nostalgic desire” for “unproblematic relationships” and “stable conceptions of class and gender” (260). Fielding, according to White, “is engaged in both a reactionary and nostalgic project, shaping Bridget’s fiction to match those of Austen’s heroines” (266). White’s article focuses on the ways Fielding is using Bridget’s narrative to create nostalgia for the romance that Austen created, which has disappeared; Bridget’s interest in this romance labels her as non-feminist because of this longing for a certain idea of gender³.

While Marsh and White discuss the novel’s relation to feminism with reference to Austen’s characters and social norms, other scholars assert that Bridget is a post-feminist because of the use of a type of marriage plot. Gamble’s article focuses on the post-feminist heroine often found in chick lit; she discusses *Bridget Jones’s Diary* in relation to how most protagonists search for romantic fulfillment, which causes them to fail to create a self who is “responsible for others as well as themselves” (77). Gamble argues, that the “incompatible dialectic [of post-feminism] provides us with a way of reading a particular type of contemporary fiction that has clearly been influenced by post-feminist ideologies” (62). *Bridget Jones’s Diary*

³ Along with White, Suzanne Ferriss is interested in the adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* into both a diary and then a film, though she argues that the film is more obviously an adaptation achieving a comic narrative because of its ability to mix first- and omniscient- points of view.

then is a post-feminist novel because Bridget subscribes to societal beliefs that her end goal is to be married with a family; Gamble believes that Bridget is “confused, not liberated” because she is interested in her appearance and forming romantic relationships (65). Angela McRobbie views Bridget as a character who fantasizes about post-feminism while living in a feminist society; she argues that Bridget’s idealization of marriage and family offers the reader a break from the pressure to “escape the censorious politics [of a feminist society] and freely enjoy that which has been disapproved of” (262). Through this idealization, feminism is “invoked in order that it is relegated to the past” (262) McRobbie’s argument focuses on the idea “that post-feminism positively draws on and invokes feminism as that which can be taken into account, to suggest that equality is achieved, in order to install a whole repertoire of new meanings which emphasize that it is no longer needed” (255). McRobbie discusses the film adaptation of *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and looks at the ways in which popular texts “normalise post-feminist gender anxieties so as to re-regulate young women by means of the language of personal choice” (262). McRobbie establishes Bridget as a post-feminist protagonist who believes she is living in a feminist world, which then should normalize Bridget’s interest in romance, which McRobbie believes is her main, and possibly only, interest. Similarly, Stéphanie Genz believes that Bridget is operating in the same way but instead of picking feminism or post-feminism, she is learning to exist in both feminist and post-feminist societies at once⁴. Genz disagrees that Bridget is a “frivolous” narrator “obsessed with male approval”; instead, she believes that Bridget’s “post-feminist incarnation of the ‘new woman’ epitomizes the polysemy and divergent understanding of post-feminism as her

⁴ Like Genz, Srijani Ghosh believes that Bridget represents that there is no perfect feminist or post-feminist; instead, the chick lit protagonists are documenting life in its actuality for women in a diet-driven society.

struggles/achievements allow her to take up paradoxical subject positions along a multifocal post-feminist spectrum” (102-103). She believes that Bridget is living in a world in which “post-feminist singletons strive to achieve a unification of feminist and feminine, public and private desires, propagated by Girlie feminism that promotes femininity as the path to female empowerment” (105). Bridget Jones, then, is embracing “in-betweenness and incoherence as the site of fulfillment” (115). Genz acknowledges that Bridget is a multi-faceted woman who lives her life acknowledging that her own actions that are not entirely feminist while still craving a femininity that is associated with post-feminism; she details the ways in which Bridget is more complex than some scholars have noticed.

The concept of the post-feminist chicklit protagonist follows Bridget Jones throughout the series, as the scholarship on *Bridget Jones: Mad about The Boy* and *Bridget Jones's Baby: The Diaries* focuses on Bridget's ageing, the concept of “growing up,” and the role of post-feminism in Bridget's life. Lucinda Rasmussen argues that “*Mad about The Boy* provides an opportunity to consider ways in which the now more mature protagonist of post-feminist fiction continues to be influenced, and often silenced, by post-feminist ideology” (151). Like McRobbie, Rasmussen is concerned with the impacts of post-feminism, which she defines as “an ideology disseminated through popular media to interfere with forms of feminist expression seeking to bring about gender equality” (149). Rasmussen is concerned with the ways that Bridget, as a woman who dated primarily in a post-feminist time period, polices herself in her personal relationships. She examines reviews of *Bridget Jones: Mad about The Boy* in order to show how criticisms of the novel “are uttered in such ways as to starkly confirm post-feminist culture's tendency to resort to ageist discourse as a means to discipline women” (152). Rasmussen believes that Bridget's post-feminism is what contributes to her lack of popularity in the later

novels, as most critics expect more “mature themes” in the novel rather than the familiar issues of body image, relationships, and career found in chicklit. Rasmussen notes that Bridget “behave[s] as she has always done,” which translates to a “refusal to take Bridget seriously” (155). Bridget’s understanding of feminism mixes with her “internalization of a post-feminist sensibility,” which impacts her personal relationships as well as her career. Rasmussen believes that Bridget’s post-feminist sensibility is what ends her relationship with Roxster because post-feminism has rooted ageist beliefs in Bridget that, though she tries, she cannot quite leave behind, especially in her personal relationships. Rasmussen believes that post-feminism, and the ageism that is perpetuated within this belief, is what rules Bridget and keeps her from being able to “articulate a feminist position with substance” (160). Rasmussen’s article acknowledges the ways in which Bridget’s understandings of relationships have not changed from when she was in her 30s until now, when she is in her 50s; she is concerned with the ways in which Bridget polices herself and somehow has not been able to mature, which in turn impacts the ways in which the audience reads, and then judges, Bridget⁵.

Rasmussen believes that ageism and post-feminism impact how Bridget is viewed as a chicklit heroine in the later novels; Imelda Whelehan is also interested in ageism, though she relates it to Bridget’s inability to “grow up” even though she is over fifty years old. Whelehan examines “the representation of older female characters” in contemporary fiction in order to “reflect on how [these novels] depict ageing heroines and succeed (or otherwise) in relocating traditional relationship-based concerns of romance fiction, to focus on the needs, ambitions, and

⁵ Like Rasmussen, Christian Lenz is also interested in Bridget as an older woman, though he believes that she has not matured and to do so, must physically move because he believes that compatible partners must share a communal concept of space.

aspirations of the central characters of the ‘romance’ narrative is displaced or absent” (29). In her scholarship on fiction about older women, Whelehan looks at the discrepancies between growing older and growing up, and examines whether Fielding’s older Bridget is allowed to finally grow up in *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*. Like many other older female characters, Bridget is an “old singleton,” and Whelehan believes the only way that a reader realizes that Bridget is older is through the knowledge that she and her friends “have all achieved degrees of professional success” (41). In her view, Bridget is only able to grow up when she enters into a relationship with Mr. Wallaker, a man of her age, as opposed to Roxster, who “becomes an additional child” (42). Older women’s representation in fiction is often limited, though Whelehan argues this fiction allows women to navigate their lives without the titles of wife and mother. Because Mr. Wallaker is a man, he is not looking for a caretaker in Bridget, which allows her to grow up and into the woman that she actually is in her life. Whelehan is interested primarily in how Bridget is impacted by her relationships with others, especially her romantic partners, as Bridget’s maturity is only achieved apparently when she is in a relationship with a man her own age because he allows her to act not as a mother, but a partner. To Whelehan, Bridget is not inherently independent but rather is constantly forming herself based on her relationships with and to other people.

The scholarship predominately considers Bridget a post-feminist character because she functions within a marriage plot and does not conform to third-wave feminism, and these factors limit her ability to mature into an adult. Despite this, the *Bridget Jones’s* series has left its mark on contemporary literature through the influence of the chicklit genre and its commentary on femininity, sexuality and career in the lives of women in their early thirties, and now, in their fifties.

Bridget, who is meant to be Austen's Elizabeth Bennet, disrupts the idea of an admirable, polished female character with a woman who is problematic because she represents a form of femininity not focused on polished self-representation. If readers are interested in connecting with an imperfect character, then scholars are curious about what exactly that says about those readers. However, when scholars dismiss Bridget because she disrupts the polished image that Elizabeth Bennet represents, they are overlooking aspects of Fielding's narrative that are clearly purposeful and important to our overall understanding of Bridget as a character. This omission of Bridget's evolution as a writer is likely because most scholars have not yet been able to read the entire series as a complete narrative. Reading the entire series reveals Bridget's development from a diarist documenting her life for herself into a writer who uses her past diaries in order to construct a narrative for other audiences.

Beyond this, Fielding adapts Austen's more distanced narrative into a diary, and it is clear that she is using the form in a new way. In order to understand Fielding's choice to adapt *Pride and Prejudice* into a fictional diary, one must first look at the evolution of the diary and the scholarship on the form. Scholarship on diaries focuses primarily on the diarist and the purpose and impact of the diary as a literary text. As fictional diaries are based on nonfictional ones, the history of and scholarship on the diary are important. Diaries have been used to record family data, personal experience, and historical information throughout time; however, during the nineteenth-century, the diary seems to have substantially transformed from a space to keep records of people and events to a space in which diarists might reveal personal information in order to better understand and navigate their own experience. This change has led to scholarship, including works by Lynn Z. Bloom, Catherine Delafield, and Harriett Blodgett. Their theories adhere the transformation from the diary as record to the diary as personal; Delafield, in

particular, looks at how the nonfictional diary impacts the creation of the fictional diary, which became very popular in the nineteenth-century novel. One prevalent trend in nonfiction diaries is the consideration of audience, which later transformed into the fear of an unwanted audience, prompting the creation of a persona in the diary. The scholarship on nonfictional diaries focuses primarily on the diary as a public and private document as well as why women choose this form to document their daily lives.

In Catherine Delafield's *Women's Diaries as Narrative in the Nineteenth-Century Novel*, she focuses on the impact of the nonfiction diary and the creation of fictional diaries within the novel. In her first chapter, she looks at the purpose of the diary in the nineteenth-century. Though it is clear that the diary did not become more prevalent in the nineteenth century, Delafield focuses on this period because it marks the beginning of an inspiration for diary fiction. She identifies four diary writing traditions of the nineteenth-century, including "accounts of a household or business; the spiritual improvement or book of reflections; the family record or chronicle; and the travel diary" (9). It was not uncommon for diaries to be read publicly after the diarist's death, so diaries often worked to educate the audience on the diarist's life and the life of their family. The household accounts or family record diary served to educate the audience on the life of family members and finances, while the spiritual diary was used as an example for pious living and encouraging religious devotion. Similarly, the travel diary was used to share the movements of a person or family within their life, typically related to moving from one home to another. Each of these diary traditions share one major common theme: they anticipate an audience. The diaries of the nineteenth century are written privately in order to be read and studied publicly. This concept coincides with those writing the diary; though the diary is in no way relegated only to women, it has been classified as a feminine form because women often

write diaries. Delafield also looks into the scholarship on the diary as a feminine form, and notes that Linda Anderson has regarded the diary as “a vehicle for women’s private authorship which can challenge the historical prohibition against self-representation allowing ‘the woman to remain hidden while providing her with a place to actualize her interior’” (17). Women are often assumed to occupy the background of history because their lives have not been made public knowledge; the diary works to rectify that as it publicizes the private lives of women and makes the daily worth noting.

Like Delafield, both Lynn Z. Bloom and Rebecca Hogan examine the diary form as a public private document and consider the notion of the feminization of the diary. As she focuses on the diary as simultaneously public and private, Lynn Z. Bloom argues that “for a professional writer there are no private writings” and that “the presence of an audience, whether near or remote, requires accommodation through the same textual features that in all cases transform private diaries into public documents” (24). Bloom looks at the features in both private diaries and private diaries as public documents; though the two share some characteristics, there are distinct differences. Bloom looks at a private diary, dated from 1785 to 1812, that was used as the primary text for Laurel Thatcher Ulrich’s *A Midwife’s Tale*. What Bloom constitutes as a “truly private diary” is actually a diary that lacks a visible narrative and instead compares entries that are “short, seldom more than a hundred words,” in which the diarist does not “identify people or places or analyze events” (25). These diaries are valuable historical texts, as they often offer insight into “economic, political, social, medical and cultural” trends of the time; however, they “lack the depth and dimension of biography or autobiography” (27). They are not meant to be read for pleasure and therefore do not anticipate the need to entertain an audience. Unlike the truly private diaries, Bloom’s private diaries as public documents are “artfully shaped to

accommodate an audience” (28). The public private diary is shaped more by narrative and includes the use of prolepsis, analepsis, scene setting, and character depiction (29). These public private diaries are usually those of writers or well-known individuals and are meant for public consumption. Bloom believes that the contemporary value of public private diaries is in the diarists’ ability to “extend the boundaries of the self and the genre to leave a literary legacy for the world” (35). Diaries clearly do function in this way as they continue to be read for better understanding of culture and a person’s life at a certain time in history.

As Bloom focuses on the lack of narrative in private diaries, Rebecca Hogan is interested in why the diary is classified as a feminine form. Hogan looks at the diary as feminine form in order to look at the “congeniality of diary writing as a preferred form of autobiography for many women with an examination of what we might call the historical ‘feminization’ of the diary in the last hundred years” (95). Hogan looks at the scholarship on diaries, focusing on the duality as the diary both represents the outer life and highlights the everyday of the domestic sphere, which is usually relegated to women only (95). The diary, because of its concentration on the everyday and its lack of “a sense of the architectonics of shape or plot,” is declared feminine against the more “finished, polished, carefully constructed” masculine autobiography (96). Hogan expands Delafield’s four diary traditions into genres under the diary as a form because the diary has many different types, such as the “spiritual search,” “historical record,” and “search for self” (97). Hogan also looks at the diary as a feminine form while examining its purpose and features. The diary allows for a woman to “indulge full ‘self-centeredness’” and encourages her to be open about the “woman’s sphere” in a “private, secret, locked” diary (99). Hogan explains that if “feminine” is a “cultural signifier, standing for the construction of feminine behavior, psychological characteristics, and the like, then the diary is a feminine form” (99). The

connection to the feminine in the diary form through the “valorization of the detail, its perspective of immersion, its mixing of genres, its principle of inclusiveness, and its expression of intimacy all seem to qualify it to women life/writers” (105).

Based on the work of these scholars, it is clear that diarists wrote to educate their family and friends about their lives and to extend helpful information about family, movement, or spirituality. These traits are found in most early diaries; however, Harriett Blodgett looks at the diary of Margaret Fontaine (1862-1940) in order to see how her diary differs from the common informative diary. Blodgett notes that Fontaine’s diary stands out in the genre because of Fontaine’s lack of “circumspection” and her choice to be “communicative about her interior and private life” (156). Today, most therapists encourage the use of a diary for “self-discovery” or “self-therapy”; however, diaries of previous years focused more on documentation of information. It is clear that there is an adjustment at the end of the nineteenth-century, when the diary moves from a catalog of events to a further attempt to understand and analyze one’s life day by day. Fontaine’s diary reads more like a modern diary as it details her romantic escapades, her travels for her work as an entomologist, and her thoughts on marriage; however, as if Fontaine feared her audience, she specified in her will “that the diaries were not to be read until 1978, one hundred years from their inception” (163). Though Fontaine made great strides for her own diary and its ability to move from the previous, more common succinct daily entries, she feared her audience discovering her work during her lifetime. Fontaine’s work is the most like the fictional diary that became popular in nineteenth-century fiction; it contained sensitive information that motivated the diarist to develop a persona for fear of an unwanted audience. While it seems that Fontaine is perhaps being her most authentic within the pages of her diary, it is possible that she composed this image over time as she rewrote her diary annually (156).

Fontaine grants herself the ability to craft her diary into a narrative because she rewrites her own work; however, the “diarist cannot foresee,” so Fontaine’s work often functions as both diary and autobiography because she has crafted the narrative of her life (168). However pioneering Fontaine’s diary is in terms of the genre, it can be closely related to a fictional diary, which often contains personal information and is kept hidden in fear of an unwanted audience.

The purpose and history of the nonfictional diary enables us to better understand the function of the fictional diary. The scholarship on diary fiction includes the focus on the diary as a therapeutic method of working through trauma, the creation of a persona for fear of an unwanted audience, and the female diarist and the diary’s feminine form. Andrew Hassam, Catherine Delafield, and Lorna Martens are particularly interested in the function of the diary novel or the diary as a feature in a novel. Though the scholarship surrounding diary fiction is not very vast, we can understand how Fielding is adhering to and differing from the tradition of diary fiction through reading this scholarship.

Andrew Hassam is particularly interested in the concepts of fact and fiction and how easily “diary fiction can depart from the diary norm without disrupting the cultural values invested in it” (35). Readers open a diary novel with knowledge that it is completely fictional; however, the text still must adhere to certain diary traditions while also giving “meaning to the series of daily events that have apparently occurred fortuitously” – that is, the diary novel must have a theme that is not found in a nonfictional diary (39). Hassam focuses on certain aspects of diary fiction that clearly separate it from its nonfictional counterpart: the lack of exact dating or an abbreviated textual style throughout the diary make it easier to read and require less from its audience. Hassam is interested in such differences impact the audience’s ability to read the diary as “fact or fiction depend[ing] in the end upon the particular configuration of the text we are

reading and the way in which that configuration correlates with wider cultural values” (43). The fictional diary’s capacity to be read as if it is fact is important for its audience, who must be able to readily believe that they are reading a person’s private diary, even with the actual knowledge that they are reading a fictional text. Hassam also writes on women and diaries, particularly the ways women are often written in diaries. Women’s diaries are often rooted in the domestic “because it deals with domestic life, the domain of women, and because [the diary] is a form of writing to which women traditionally have had access” (119-20). As the diary began as a way for women to document the domestic, the diary novel is then also presumed to offer “an examination of a woman’s role in society” (120). Hassam looks at the diary as a way in which a woman may document her life in her culture and a means to attain “freedom from patriarchal discourse through writing” (121-2). In arguing this, Hassam examines diaries that feature women writing about rape, abuse, and abortion in order to show how writing through trauma, usually inflicted by patriarchal figures in the women’s lives, is often a therapeutic method by which women are able to free themselves from their oppression. Though he does not specifically address it, Hassam’s choice to include five diaries all detailing the suffering of women shows how ready an audience is to accept women’s suffering and read about her life as she works through traumatic events (147). Hassam argues that the diary “becomes a means by which the woman tries to make sense of her shifting perception of reality” (148). Though Hassam believes that women’s diaries detailing their trauma and suffering have an underlying feminist element that argues for the destruction of patriarchal figures, it is clear that the fictional diary is still often a place in which a fictional woman may detail her suffering for the pleasure of the audience.

Lorna Martens’s research on fictional diaries focuses on German fiction in the early twentieth century and, like Hassam, focuses on the suffering and feminist themes of women’s

fictional diaries. She argues that the main diary “themes are the ‘women’s problems’ of marriage, divorce, pregnancy, and prostitution, as well as the question of education and careers for women. Whether a novel has an explicitly feminist message or not, whether the heroine is an articulate advocate of women’s rights or an overburdened housewife, the authors always raise the larger questions of women’s opportunities and women’s roles” (175). Even though the novel’s protagonist may not be well equipped with the language to convey her problems with society in her diary, Martens believes that there is always an underlying message about the mistreatment of women in a diary of a woman’s life. Martens evaluates multiple German fictional diaries, documents the constant suffering of abortion, prostitution, and abuse, and relates it to her belief that the diary of 1900 is not unlike “Catholic confessional and Protestant self-scrutiny” (173).

The purpose of the diary at the turn of the century was to examine one’s life, so diary novelists are able to use this form to show women’s inner thoughts and the effects of society on women individually and generally. Catherine Delafield feels similarly to Martens, writing that:

The diary offers an escape, an imaginary addressee, which in turn becomes oneself and an opportunity to reflect on the “narrative occasion.” The diary purports to immediacy and accuracy from its daily composition, non-retrospection and lack of revision. It is a repository without judgment or value system and it is a genre made safe for women’s performance by its privacy and by its role as the source of routine record. The dailiness of female experience which has made the diary a feminine form exonerates the editor/author of the hybrid text of the novel from accusations of triviality and the editorial process elevates the experiences of women to a status of influence which they are not accorded in real life. (56)

Delafield, Hassam, and Martens focus on the diary as a form in which a woman may finally openly express herself without fear of judgment. The form offers a chance to embrace that which has been labeled trivial, as most aspects of women's lives have been, and present women's lives as significant and worthy of note. Whether a diarist intends to make a larger statement within her private diary, there is an overarching demand for the audience to note the ways in which women's lives are impacted by the patriarchal society in which they live, which Martens believes is inherently feminist.

According to the scholarship on diary fiction, working through women's suffering and trauma are the main focus and reason for writing a diary. This scholarship is primarily concerned with the ways in which the diary novel is making a larger statement about women's roles and treatment within a society by focusing on women's trauma. Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones* series fits into the history of diary fiction while also challenging certain elements of the genre in order to show that women's suffering and secrecy do not have to be at the forefront of a woman's private writing. Fielding's choice to use the interiority that is made available through the diary reveals the inner workings of the mind of a woman who appears, for the most part, to be successful in various areas of her life. Through the diary form and its interiority, Fielding is able to move past a focus on trauma and secrecy in order to show Bridget as a successful woman whose success does not make her inaccessible to her audience. Fielding is breaking from the trends to show a happy, successful woman writing about her daily life as it truly is in her diary.

As Fielding has adapted Austen's narrative into the diary form, most readers have likely focused on those elements that obscure Bridget's. However, it is clear that Bridget's adaptations of her daily life into her diary in the first two novels foreshadow Bridget's later adaption of her diary to craft a new narrative for an intended audience. Bridget's diaries as well as her work in

the creative industries lead her to an eventual creative autonomy as a self-employed writer. In *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, Fielding provides ironic commentary on the creative industries while foregrounding Bridget's interest in adaptation, and in *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy* and *Bridget Jones's Baby: The Diaries*, Fielding continues this critique while establishing Bridget as a master of her own narrative as she adapts her old diaries for a new purpose.

CHAPTER II

“NOW BACK TO THE STUDIO”: THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND ADAPTATION IN *BRIDGET JONES’S DIARY* AND *BRIDGET JONES: THE EDGE OF REASON*

In her *Bridget Jones* series, Fielding uses the diary form to reveal Bridget’s unmediated interiority as a way to offer ironic commentary on the creative industries and women’s work within them. Fielding establishes this critique as Bridget moves from publishing to television news to journalism in the first two novels. In *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, Bridget moves from a job in publishing to television news. *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* details Bridget’s work on a television entertainment news show, *Sit Up Britain*, as well as her part-time work in journalism. Bridget’s diaries allow for an insider look at the creative industries, allowing Fielding to highlight the sexism and devaluation of women’s work. While providing this commentary, Fielding also establishes Bridget’s interest in adaptation, which develops throughout the novels and leads Bridget into freelance journalism. Through the diary form and the content of Bridget’s diaries, Fielding establishes a critique of the creative industries as well as establishing Bridget’s interest in adaptation, which leads her to a desire for creative autonomy in her career.

As Bridget opens her diary, Fielding deconstructs the idea that working in publishing makes Bridget a “literary whizz-woman” when she includes her desire to “improve career and find new job with potential” in her New Year's Resolutions (206, 3). Mark Darcy, and Bridget’s family friends, view Bridget as a “career girl” with a “glamorous” life in publishing, though she often does not realize that people view her this way (11, 206). Fielding uses Bridget’s

unmediated diary entries to provide ironic commentary on the publishing industry, deconstructing its glamorous image, as well as the idea that those who work in publishing are dedicated to great art. At Una and Geoffrey Alconbury's New Year's Day Turkey Curry Buffet, Mark, having been told about Bridget's exciting life in publishing, asks if she has read any good books recently. After the fact, Bridget writes her thoughts on this interaction in her diary: "Oh, for God's sake. I racked my brain frantically to think when I last read a proper book. The trouble with work in publishing is that reading in your spare time is a bit like being a dustman and snuffling through the pig bin in the evening" (13). Bridget feels that working in publishing has destroyed any enjoyment she had in reading literary works recreationally. While Bridget does read self-help books, she does not disclose this to Mark, instead choosing a book that she knows he expects her to have read. Fielding is aware of how publishing appears to certain people, so she shows how Bridget edits her responses to Mark in this conversation. Although she is able to construct an answer for Mark, in her diary Bridget is open about how she is afraid that her job lacks potential, as well as her fear that she is undervalued.

When Bridget describes her work at the publishing company, she focuses less on her actual assignments and more on how she interacts with her coworkers, as well as showing that she is often not working while she is at her job. Perpetua, whom Bridget describes as "slightly senior and therefore thinking she is in charge of me," acts as her penultimate boss, so she assigns Bridget most of her work within the company (16). The brief mentions of Bridget's actual work are limited to a "press release for Perpetua" and "catalog copy for Perpetua" (77, 110). Because Bridget does not like her job, she does not devote space in her diary to it. However, she does mention her constant fear of being caught not working while at she is at her desk. Though she is afraid of being reprimanded, Bridget spends her time at her job working on her curriculum vitae

and messaging with her boss, Daniel Cleaver, through their intranet messaging system. When Bridget first receives a message from Daniel, she “instantly thought he had been able to tap into the computer and see that I was not getting on with my work” (20). However, instead of criticizing Bridget, Daniel sends her a flirtatious message that acts a catalyst for their entire office romance. While the intranet messaging system seems to be a means of quick communication for the entire office to use, Bridget is still afraid of Perpetua seeing her using it. Because of her fear, she is quick to hide her message from Daniel so that Perpetua cannot admonish her for not working: “*Aaargh*. Perpetua just walked past and started reading over shoulder. Just managed to press Alt Screen in nick of time but big mistake as merely put CV back up on screen” (22). As she has been working on her CV, “in preparation for improving her career,” Bridget exposes the fact that she has not been working to Perpetua (19-20).

Though she fears others discovering that she is not working, Bridget clearly documents that no one is really working in this publishing company. When Perpetua notices Bridget messaging at her desk and editing her CV in the same moment, she threatens to give Bridget more work; with a “nasty smirk,” she says, “I’d hate to feel you were being *underused*” (22). The work that Perpetua could give Bridget would most likely be her own, as Bridget documents that Perpetua often “dump[s] all her work on to me and spends the entire time in full telephonic auto-writer to Arabella or Piggy, discussing the half-million-pound Fulham flat she’s about to buy with Hugo. ‘Yars. No. Yars. No, I *quite* agree. But the question is: Do you want to pay another thirty grand for a fourth bedroom?’” (58-9). While she is threatening Bridget because she is not working, Perpetua is also not working and instead spends her entire workday on the phone discussing her real estate plans. Instead of working, as Bridget notes, Perpetua “obnoxious[ly]” spends “forty-five minutes on the phone to Desdemona, discussing whether yellows walls would

look nice with pink-and-gray ruched blinds or whether she and Hugo should go for blood red with a floral frieze” (100). Though Perpetua manages Bridget and her work, it seems that, because Perpetua is also not working, Bridget does not feel compelled to constantly be working.

As Perpetua avoids her work by giving it to Bridget, Bridget also notices that Daniel Cleaver spends the majority of his workday messaging her and taking personal calls. Daniel and Bridget exchange copious messages throughout the day, leading Bridget to write that she “[c]annot imagine respected boss did stroke of work” (23). Throughout the following weeks before they become a couple, Bridget says that “[f]rantic messaging continued” and this goes on until they actually develop a relationship, meeting outside of work hours (26). Also, as Bridget discovers, Daniel’s workday does not consist of only messaging her; he also receives multiple phone calls throughout the day from other women. When Daniel is in a meeting in Croydon, Bridget overhears Perpetua answering the phone and learns that he has “all these bloody girls ringing him up” (25). Daniel, like Perpetua and Bridget, actually spends most of his workday not working but making personal phone calls and connections.

Throughout Bridget’s time at the publishing company, Fielding uses Bridget’s narration of her daily life in her diary to undercut the image of the “literary whizz-woman” that Bridget’s friends and family have created (206). Whereas we might think that Bridget’s work at a publishing house would be very busy, because that is clearly what her peers believe, she reveals that no one in her office is working. As she “look[s] around the office as [they] all tap away and wonder[s] if anyone is doing any work at all,” it clear that Bridget’s actual experiences with both of her bosses confirm this belief (26). As Bridget acknowledges that no one is working, Fielding undercuts the glamorous image that accompanies a job in publishing. As Bridget opens her diary with the hopes of improving her career, she expresses discontent with being undervalued and

without potential. If Bridget, as well as her coworkers, are not working, then it is clear that there would be little potential or value placed in their current positions. Because of this, and her failed relationship with her boss, Bridget takes the opportunity to move from publishing to a career in television news.

Through her mother, Bridget gains an interview at *Good Afternoon!*; however, it quickly becomes clear that a researcher job in current affairs for a television news program is not exactly what Bridget believes it to be. After Bridget's interview is scheduled and then rescheduled, she waits forty-five minutes for a meeting with Richard Finch in which she agonizes over the current political news and her own opinions on "Tony Blair's leadership" she has developed in order to show that she will be able to perform the job of a current affairs researcher (170). However, instead of the one-on-one interview that Bridget, and we, expect, Richard has his assistant, Patchouli, bring Bridget to the conference. When she first sees Richard Finch, Bridget describes him as a "plump, middle-aged man with curly blond hair, a denim shirt and huge red spectacles ... jiggling up and down at the end of the table," "holding up his fists like a boxer" (171). Bridget describes Richard as combative. As he shouts from his position at the head of the table, Richard attempts to instigate conversation on a topic that he thinks will make an interesting piece on *Good Afternoon!* He says, "I'm thinking Hugh Grant. I'm thinking Elizabeth Hurley. I'm thinking how come two months on they're still together. I'm thinking how come he gets away with it. That's it! How does a man with a girlfriend with looks like Elizabeth Hurley have a blow job from a prostitute on a public highway and get away with it?" (171). As Bridget notes in her diary, Richard basically encourages his employees to help him "work out how he could get away with sleeping with a prostitute himself" (171). Through this interaction, Fielding shows that the leaders in entertainment news programs are motivated not by what is nationally and

internationally relevant, but by what is flashy, sexy, and will elicit a response from their audience.

Even as she notices this behavior, Bridget is able to generate content on demand, which is why she gets her new job at *Good Afternoon!* When Richard finally notices Bridget, he asks, “How does a man with a beautiful girlfriend manage to sleep with a prostitute, get found out and get away with it?” (171). Because of her communication skills and ability to quickly assess what a person in power wants from her, Bridget is able to respond, “[I]t was because somebody swallowed the evidence” (171). Though she says that this is the only response she could think of, Bridget is able to make Richard laugh by appealing to his interest in lewd punch lines, which shows that she is able to quickly assess and respond appropriately to the situation. Bridget thinks rapidly in the moment, and she will be able to use this skill on air just as she can when in the conference.

However, as she quickly learns and documents in her diary, the fast pace of television news often does not even leave her to time to think, much less think and form a considered response. As Bridget soon realizes, most of her coworkers, including her new boss, do not prepare for the news segments on *Good Afternoon!*, which leads to segments being cut or shortened because no segment is entirely planned out prior to being on-air. One of Bridget’s first assignments for *Good Afternoon!* is to interview “Dole Youths,” students who have degrees but cannot find jobs. Richard’s assignments are limited to his half-formed ideas, which he shares insists that his employees develop for the show. When he pitches the idea, he says, “Bridget, you’re Dole Youths Clampdown. I’m thinking the North. I’m thinking Dole Youths, loafing about, live down the line” (187). Richard, who does not even know where the Dole Youths are located, tells Bridget that the “OB crew [will be] outside Boots in the shopping center, live at

five-thirty. Get me six Dole Youths” (187). When Bridget and the camera crew arrive in Manchester, she quickly realizes that there are no young people just “loafing about” as Richard imagined (187). Instead, Bridget must stop people to ask if they are unemployed, and when she cannot find any Dole Youths, she takes out £20 notes and pays six young adults to claim to be unemployed. Ten minutes before the segment is set to start, Bridget is ready, but at 5:30, she hears “the signature tune bonging and crashing, then Richard yelling, ‘Sorry, Manchester, we’re dropping you” (188). When Richard cuts the segment, Bridget has lost over £120 trying to ensure that she would be able to interview “Dole Youths,” as Richard wanted, and she learns that her determination to make Richard’s ideas work for television will not always mean that she is guaranteed to actually go on air.

Even after the Dole Youths segment is cut, Bridget does not become discouraged; however, when she is humiliated during the Lewisham Live Action Special on Emergency Services, she begins to reevaluate her work in television. The entire staff, as Bridget writes, discredits Richard’s segment on emergency services, because he is “turned down by every Accident and Emergency unit, Police and Ambulance force in the Home Counties” (194). However, when he does finally get the chance to film a fire station, he assigns the interview to Bridget with the instructions: “I want you on-camera. I’m thinking miniskirt. I’m thinking fireman’s helmet. I’m thinking pointing the hose” (194). Richard’s idea for the segment is based on general ideas and not an actual plan, and when Bridget cannot create the vision that Richard has in mind, he wraps the segment early and Bridget does not even have time to interview the firefighter. Bridget describes the plan for the segment: “The idea was that when they cut to Lewisham I was going to slide down the pole into shot and start interviewing a fireman” (194). She follows this with what actually occurs while the show is live: “At five o’clock as we went on

air I was perched at the top of the pole ready to slide down on my cue. Then suddenly in my earpiece I heard Richard shouting, ‘GO, go, go go, go!’ so I let go of the pole and started to slide. Then he continued, ‘Go, go, go, Newcastle! Bridget, stand by in Lewisham. Coming to you in thirty seconds’ (194). Bridget, having already slid down the pole partly, panics and tries to pull herself back up the pole, leading Richard to ask, “What the fuck are you doing? You’re meant to be sliding down the pole, not climbing up it. Go, go, go” (194). Richard’s repeated use of ‘go’ confuses Bridget, and when the segment has actually played on air, Bridget becomes the joke of her office, with everyone repeating her last statement: “And now back to the studio.” Richard blames Bridget for the failed segment, calling her “shambles,’ ‘disgrace,’ and ‘bleedin’ bloody idiot,’” but it is clear that she is not the only person at fault (195). Richard built the entire segment around rough ideas and never communicated an actual plan to Bridget. When she is on live television, Richard does not give effective or useful directions, meaning that he is just as, if not more, responsible for the failure of the interview.

Just as Fielding uses Bridget’s experiences with Richard to critique the people in powerful positions in the creative industries, she also uses Bridget’s experiences to show the sexism in the industries. During the Live Action Special on Emergency Services, Richard creates a sexual image that he desires Bridget to fulfill while she is interviewing the Lewisham firefighter. He tells her to wear a “miniskirt” and “fireman’s helmet” while pointing the hose, which sexualizes Bridget even as she is meant to be conducting an interview (194).

Richard frames Bridget’s interviews in order to foreground sexual messages.

Richard’s reframing of the news is not limited to objectifying Bridget but also affects the presents of all women in the news. Richard suggests that Bridget reframe her interviews in order to skew coverage of women. When Richard assigns Bridget the Elena Rossini trial verdict,

Bridget writes that Rossini is a “children’s nanny accused of murdering her employer after he allegedly subjected her to repeated rape and effective house arrest for eighteen months” (210). Richard tells her how he wants her to approach the interview: “The Isabella Rossellini trial. Verdict expect today. We think she’s going to get off. Get yourself down to the High Court. I don’t want to see you climbing up any poles or lampposts. I want a hardheaded interview. Ask her if it means it’s OK for us all to murder people every time we don’t fancy having sex with them” (209). Beyond misremembering Elena Rossini’s name, Richard wants Bridget to reframe Rossini’s story in a way that discredits her labels her a murderer instead of showing her as a victim of abuse at the hands of her employer. However, because Richard’s view of the case is uninformed, Bridget does not stick to his instructions. Bridget grabs “a few newspapers” that will give more detail to her prior knowledge of the trial (210). She rejects this sexist reframing of female victims in favor of showing the truth of their case more objectively.

While waiting for Elena Rossini to leave the High Courts, Bridget leaves to go to the shops for food and offers to purchase food for the others reporters as well, on the condition that the cameraman come to get her if Rossini comes out. While we might assume that Bridget would watch vigilantly for the verdict to be announced, it is clear that Bridget is not prioritizing her work and instead is focusing on the camaraderie that she is building with fellow reporters. While in the shop, Bridget meets Mark Darcy and learns that Rossini has “come out and gone,” so she has “missed the interview” (211). Mark reveals that, as Rossini’s lawyer, he advised against any interviews, so no one was allowed to interview her. While we might have assumed that Bridget is at fault because she left her position, it is of no importance because no one was allowed an interview. When Bridget voices her fear that she will be fired, he tells her to, “[g]et your cameraman ready, I’ll see what I can do for you” (211). Though running into Mark is a

coincidence, Bridget is able to interview Rossini because Mark knows that, in contrast to most entertainment news reporters, Bridget will not manipulate the interview for another purpose. Bridget's ethics and honesty keep her from following Richard's instruction, and instead, as Mark knows she will, she interviews Rossini in an ethical, truthful way. In her next diary entry, Bridget writes about the interview: "'And a *Good Afternoon!* exclusive,' it says. '*Good Afternoon!*: the only television program to bring you an exclusive interview with Elena Rossini, just minutes after today's not guilty verdict. Our home news correspondent, Bridget Jones, brings you this exclusive report'" (212). Bridget's flexibility and resilience allow her to succeed even when she feels that she is failing, and her attempt at autonomy when she takes control of the Rossini interviews allows for Bridget to finally accomplish something significant in her new position.

As Bridget has new work experiences that she details in her diary throughout the novel, Fielding also establishes Bridget's interest in literary adaptation. In her diary, Bridget frequently writes about her interest in adaptation, including the film and television versions of *Oliver Twist*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Clueless*, a modernized adaptation of Jane Austen's *Emma*. Bridget watches these adaptations with her friends, as they drink wine and eat special snacks. Their shared love for the Mr. Darcy character clearly illustrates that adaptation is both accessible and popular. Bridget connects with her friends over the reimagining of literary classics. As Fielding establishes Bridget's interest in adaptation, she also acknowledges that her own work in the *Bridget Jones* series is contributing to the trend of literary adaptations.

Fielding also uses Bridget's interest in adaptation to champion the validity of adaptation in all forms. When Bridget is invited to the literary launch of *Kafka's Motorbike*, we can infer that this work is also likely an adaptation involving the work of novelist Franz Kafka. As they are at the launch of a literary adaptation, the conversation primarily revolves around this topic as

well. Perpetua believes that television adaptations are “disgraceful. All it means in this day and age is that a whole generation of people on get to know the great works of literature—Austen, Eliot, Dickens, Shakespeare, and so on—through the television” (86). Perpetua believes there are “hierarchies of culture” and that literature by authors such as Jane Austen and Charles Dickens should be more revered than more recent literature and especially adaptations that reframe literature in a new context (87). When Bridget voices her own enjoyment of adaptations, Perpetua asserts that those who feel “the moment when the screen goes back on *Blind Date* is on par with Othello’s ‘hurl my soul from heaven’ soliloquy” are less intelligent and cannot appreciate literature in its original form (87). When Bridget, who likes television adaptations and dating shows like *Blind Date*, voices her opinion, Perpetua quickly silences her, and she invites others to do the same when Mark Darcy and his date, Natasha, join the conversation.

Though like Natasha and Perpetua, Mark finds humor in Bridget’s views, it is clear that he also agrees with her belief that an adaptation is as valuable as the original work. When Mark calls Bridget a “postmodernist,” he is poking fun at her. However, there is truth in what he says because Bridget, unlike Perpetua, does not believe in a hierarchy of culture; for her, the original literary work and its adaptation into any form both hold artistic value. While Natasha states that she resents the “arrogant individualism which imagines each new generation can somehow create the world afresh,” Mark and Bridget both acknowledge that each generation does reform classic literature for their own understanding and enjoyment (88). Fielding establishes the value that Bridget and Mark clearly place on adaptation, including its accessibility to a broad audience, and this holds true for her own work in the series.

Fielding continues her critique on the creative industries in *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, as Bridget works in television news and also explores her interest in print journalism.

While in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Bridget works at *Good Afternoon!*, it seems that the show undergoes a name change, as Bridget refers to the show as *Sit Up Britain* in the next novel. Fielding continues to foreground Bridget's interest in adaptation as she conducts an interview with Colin Firth for the *Independent*. Her decision to interview Colin Firth stems from his role as Mr. Darcy in the BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. Through this interview and the opportunity it offers to work from home, Bridget realizes that her goals now include autonomy in her career. While Fielding continues her critique in *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, she also uses Bridget's interest in adaptation to establish her desire to eventually work for herself.

Bridget opens the second novel with a description of the *Sit Up Britain* office, which clearly illustrates how the television show approaches news. Bridget describes a "hideous open-plan office littered with the telltale remnants of bad daytime TV—here an inflatable sheep with a hole in its bottom, there a blowup of Claudia Schiffer wearing Madeleine Albright's head, there a large cardboard sign saying: 'LESBIANS! OUT! OUT! OUT!'" (7). Bridget acknowledges that these pieces are signs of "bad" television, but Fielding uses these specific examples to illustrate the ways in which television news often limits women to sexual objects only. The inflatable sheep with the hole in its bottom is illustrative of how men, when women are not available, might engage in sexual activity with the animal; this image functions to dehumanize women and make them equal to animals. The blowup of Claudia Schiffer wearing Madeleine Albright's head creates the question of what Albright, a diplomat and the first female United States Secretary of State, looks like under her clothes, which limits her value to her body and signifies that her work in the United States government is virtually meaningless. Likewise, the sign encouraging lesbians to get "Out! Out! Out!" plays on the idea of coming out and transforms it into a command that lesbians should leave because they are not welcome; based on the previous signs,

likely they are not welcome because they hold no sexual value to men (7). While we might assume that *Sit Up Britain* would value serious news, it is clear that they focus primarily on making the news humorous, primarily with jokes that are sexist and juvenile. Through these examples of previous shows on *Sit Up Britain*, Fielding comments on the sexism within the creative industries as women are repeatedly valued only by their bodies and their relationships to men.

Bridget's first interview for the year begins on a story on the New Labour Women. Richard's idea for the interview includes Margaret Beckett receiving a makeover from Color Me Beautiful (8). Instead of following Richard's ideas, Bridget plans to "ring Labour press office" and "read papers to brief self about New Labour policy" (8). However, her research does not go far because Richard moves her from the Labour women to a fox-hunting story. Bridget is upset about being moved to a story that she views as less important, mainly because the fox-hunting story focuses on the aristocracy's opposition to proposed restrictions or banning of the sport. She believes this is a class issue as well as an animal rights issue, and she is upset about being assigned a story that she believes is unessential, so Bridget voices her opinion to her interviewee, Sir Hugo. Because Sir Hugo feels that his rights have been infringed upon, he says, "It's supposed to be a free country. Once they start telling us we can't even bloody hunt on a Sunday where will it end?" (12). Bridget disagrees, and compares his right to hunt foxes to "keeping slaves" and tells him that if he wants to hunt, he should "shoot them then ... humanely. And chase something else on Sundays" (12). To retaliate, Sir Hugo suggests they conduct the interview on horseback. While Sir Hugo rides with ease, Bridget's horse will not move from his spot, and, when he finally does, "wheel[s] round ... and start[s] reversing at the cameraman" (13). Bridget's work moves from her hope for a story on the New Labour women to a

“mortify[ing]” fox-hunting story (13). While Bridget’s interview does not go according to plan because she does not agree with the subject matter and does not actually know how to ride a horse, neither matters because Sir Hugo and Richard are not concerned with presenting facts at all in the interview.

Though Bridget describes the ways in which she fails in the interview, she also mentions how Sir Hugo and Richard Finch are using the interview to satisfy their own interests and humiliate Bridget. When Bridget angers Sir Hugo and he calls Richard to complain, he threatens him: “Finch, you total arse... What have you sent me... some bloody little pinko? If you think you’re coming out with the hunt next Sunday...” (13). Richard clearly has created this interview opportunity with Sir Hugo in order to secure himself a place in their Sunday hunts, and when he has to admonish Bridget for not treating Sir Hugo correctly, he cannot defend the interview as “a top political story” and instead must threaten Bridget’s job (12). When Bridget agrees to change her attitude and finish the interview, Sir Hugo does not focus on creating a professional interview in which he may argue in favor of foxhunting. Instead, he gives her a difficult horse to ride because he believes the “stallion might teach [her] what’s what,” and when Bridget cannot ride the horse, he uses the opportunity to “[launch] into a bellowing pro hunting advertisement” (13). Sir Hugo uses the entire interview to satisfy his own interests and humiliates Bridget in the process. While Richard only schedules the interview with Sir Hugo because of his desire to join the hunt, the reader respects Bridget’s ethics because the story on the New Labour women would have been a better, more news-worthy piece.

When Richard calls Bridget into his office after the interview with Sir Hugo, Bridget plans to “give Richard Finch what for about journalistic integrity” (14). However when Bridget arrives at work the next day, Richard is in a meeting with his superiors in which they decide that

Bridget should “try out a different profession, then fuck it up in an outfit” each week in what Bridget calls a “demeaning scheme” (25). Bridget voices these concerns to Richard, telling him that she is “serious professional journalist and will not consider prostituting [herself] in such a way,” which results in him threatening to reconsider what her “value was to the program, if any” (25). Bridget’s experiences with sexism in the creative industries are encompassing in her diary, and even though she admits to “trying to be very win-win about” having to wear “tiny shorts” on air, it is clear that she is uncomfortable with being limited to an object instead of valued because of her ability to do her job (25). Through Bridget’s experiences with her own objectification, Fielding exposes the ways that female journalists are often used as sexual objects on television shows in order to satisfy the men in positions of power who believe that sex and the objectification of female news presenters is what their viewers want. Bridget defends herself against Richard and tells him that it is “not in the terms of [her] contract to be humiliated on screen” and that she will not participate in segments that objectify her (25).

As punishment for Bridget’s determination to no longer be humiliated or objectified on *Sit Up Britain*, Richard begins assigning Bridget stories that will never be used in the show. He first assigns her to find “a Middle England, middle-class voter, fifty plus, own home, who is in favor” of European or single currency (63). When Richard returns to speak to Bridget, she says, “I have got you your Middle-England voters who are pro. Three of them, actually” (64). Richard then responds, “Oh, didn’t anyone tell you?... We’ve dropped it. We’re doing bomb scares now. Can you get me a couple of Tory commuters from Middle England who can see the IRA’s argument?” (65). Bridget’s research on the single currency, though somewhat stilted as she was only asking her family and friends to participate, is useless because Richard has assigned her a fruitless search. Instead of then correcting himself and giving her actual work, he assigns her a

second impossible task. Bridget then spends “three hours in wind-whipped Victoria trying to manipulate commuters’ opinions in direction of IRA to point where began to fear immediate arrest and transfer to Maze Prison,” only to return and have Richard laugh at her attempts (65). When she arrives, he says, “You didn’t really think you were going to find anyone, did you? Sucker!” (65). Because Bridget will not allow Richard to humiliate her, he instead punishes her with stories that will never amount to being actual news on *Sit Up Britain*. Because of this treatment, Bridget resolves that she has “got to, got to find another job” so that she will not have to tolerate this treatment any longer (65).

Because her work is undervalued, Bridget becomes interested in freelance work, especially for the *Independent*. Tom encourages Bridget to think about doing journalism on the side, such as “interviews in [her] spare time” (66). Bridget sees that she would be interested in leaving a job in which she must function in a hierarchy and constantly try to please her superiors for a job where she can “sit at home on sofa with laptop on knee” (66). When Bridget has the option of selecting anyone she would like for her interview, she chooses Colin Firth, whom she became interested in after his work in the television adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. Bridget’s interest in adaptation is clearly established in *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and continues to influence Bridget’s work life. Though catching her flight does not go smoothly, Bridget is more troubled by Michael from the *Independent* constantly calling her in order to ensure that she will make her deadline. Michael, as Bridget writes in her diary, calls for frequent updates on her progress, and she realizes that being freelance is not an escape from a hierarchy and that she must still answer to a superior. Bridget finds the constant phone calls and doubts about her abilities unhelpful, and she blames her lack of work on these, while in reality, she is daydreaming about her interview and listening to it repeatedly in order to relive the experience. Her procrastination ends in a

“deadline cris[is],” though Bridget clearly believes that if Michael had not continued to contact her, she would have been able to motivate herself and craft a narrative from the interview (136). Bridget has little experience with actually crafting a narrative so far in her career, and this first opportunity to do so prove challenging.

Because Bridget does not meet her deadline, the *Independent* prints the transcription of the interview instead of a descriptive article with a clear narrative. Throughout the interview, Bridget cannot refrain from asking about the BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* when she should be talking about Colin Firth’s new film, *Fever Pitch* (also an adaptation). Bridget is more concerned with interviewing Mr. Darcy than Colin Firth, so she focuses more on his role in *Pride and Prejudice* instead of his new film. Additionally, Bridget asks questions that she wants to know the answers to, such as his favorite color and pudding as well as if he is still dating his current girlfriend. While Bridget’s interview does come across to the *Independent* as unprofessional, it does not matter because Bridget asks the questions that she wants to know the answers to, and she is not alone in this interest. The article elicits multiple letters in response, meaning that those who are reading Bridget’s interview either find it hilarious or informative because they, like Bridget, want to know if Mr. Darcy would “have slept with Elizabeth Bennet before the wedding” (142). Though the editors of the *Independent* have added bracketed descriptions of the actions and sounds during the interview to make fun of Bridget, this actually serves the humor of the interview. When Colin Firth reveals Andrew Davies’s direction that he should “[i]magine that Darcy has an erection,” Bridget says, “Mmm” followed by a “(Long pause)” and then “(More pause)” (143). Though the editors mock Bridget by illustrating the silence during the interview, they also highlight Bridget’s reaction to Colin Firth’s statement—a reaction that is likely shared by the readers of the interview. Bridget’s interview, while not

entirely conventional, is a success because Bridget's natural humor shines through the transcript, even when the *Independent* adds parenthetical descriptions that might serve to poke fun at Bridget rather than add humor to the piece.

Though Bridget admits that she is upset about the transcript, she does include the entire interview in her diary because, while unconventional, it is exactly the type of interview that Bridget would want to read. Bridget is not alone in her interest in interviews like hers, because she is asked to "have another go at a celebrity interview as they got quite a few letters after the Mr. Darcy interview" (329). Bridget's shared interests with others means that her questions are the questions to which the audience wants to know the answers. It is clear that Bridget's work, while not exactly what the *Independent* expected, resonates with her audience.

Bridget continues her work at *Sit Up Britain* and documents the issues that arise, especially in relation to stories with which she does not agree. When Richard's ideas for a new breakfast news show that features the *Sit Up Britain* team's morning meeting, which once consisted of "an argument about which of our presenters was going to cover the lead story; and the lead story was about which presenters were going to be presenting the BBC and ITV news," Bridget is open that she believes is a poor idea. He argues that the news is "[b]oring, boring, bloody boring" because his superiors agree with Bridget (179). It is also in this meeting that Bridget notes her and her coworkers' belief that Richard is on cocaine, which is why he is "jumping around the room chewing and shouting at everyone" (179). As Richard loses his grip on what the news at *Sit Up Britain* should look like and begins an addiction to cocaine, Bridget takes this opportunity to defend the news during their meetings. Bridget asserts that the news is not boring because "we're just seeing the launch of the first Labour government for...several years!" (79). Whereas Richard wants to feature new and interesting stories on *Sit Up Britain*,

Bridget believes that the news should be truthful to its viewers. Even when Patchouli agrees that popular news items are “so, like, five minutes ago” and the team begins brainstorming Human Interest pieces, Bridget has at least made it clear to Richard and her other coworkers that she believes their news coverage should focus on the Labour government and the Bosnian Serbs instead of in-office arguments and the sexualization of news presenters (180). With this newfound confidence, Bridget voices more of her ideas for *Sit Up Britain* after she realizes that she can work without a superior to direct the majority of her actions.

After Bridget is falsely accused of smuggling drugs in Thailand, which lands her in a Thai jail for ten days, Bridget returns to work as normal; however, Richard uses her personal life as a source of humiliation. Bridget describes Richard as “coming down from some drug-induced frenzy” when he greets her with, “What’ve we got in the bag, then? Opium, is it? Skunk? Have we got crack in the lining? Have we brought in some Purple Hearts? Some E for the class? Is it poppers? Is it some nice speedy speed? Hasheeeesh? Some Rokeycokey cokey?” (275).

Ironically, Richard attempts to humiliate Bridget for her drug scandal while he is clearly high on cocaine. Bridget’s description of Richard in what is clearly a drug-induced monologue is clearly cause for concern because she and her coworkers can see that he is not functioning rationally.

Bridget refuses to engage with Richard while he is high, and after he continually discredits her she finally defends herself against him. When Richard insinuates that Bridget is at the police station for drugs and not because of a threatening stalker, Bridget says, “That, I’m afraid, is like the kettle calling the frying pan dirty bottom. Except that I haven’t got a dirty bottom because I don’t take drugs. Not like you. Anyway, I’m not coming back. Bye” (283). Bridget’s decision to quit is based on the ways he has humiliated and denigrated her as well as the fact that he seems to suffer no consequences for showing up to work under the influence of drugs. Her decision to

quit is also, in part, because she now knows that she can work outside of television news, especially because she was able to pursue work in print journalism through her connections with the *Independent*. These experiences, as well as Bridget's newfound desire for autonomy in career, allow her to feel confident in defending herself against Richard as well as confident in her own abilities that could help her get a new job within the creative industries.

Fielding uses Bridget's experience to provide ironic commentary on the creative industries, especially in relation to the sexism and devaluation of women's work within the industry. Throughout her diary entries, Bridget does not explicitly state what she contributes to *Sit Up Britain*, instead focusing on how she must daily defend herself against the humiliation and sexism that Richard allows to pervade the office. After Bridget quits her job at *Sit Up Britain*, Cinnamon Productions, which produces *Sit Up Britain*, sends Bridget a letter detailing her contributions to the show. In their letter, they detail that Bridget was responsible for "68 percent of the fun 'And finally' end of program items on *Sit Up Britain*" (329). Because of her work on the show, the chief executive reveals that, as they are "reorganizing the staffing on the show" after Richard's suspension, they want to invite Bridget to "rejoin the team, either promoted to assistant producer or in consultatory capacity, providing a flow of ideas on a freelance basis" (329). Bridget's work is obviously valuable to Cinnamon Productions, even though Richard Finch has attempted to devalue it. While Fielding uses Bridget's experiences to comment on how women's work is sexualized and devalued within the creative industries, she also highlights the contributions of Bridget's work on *Sit Up Britain* to the show's success. Her interview with Colin Firth clearly establishes that Bridget, even though still learning how to craft a narrative from an interview, has potential that can be honed in on through practice.

In the first two novels of the *Bridget Jones* series, Fielding provides commentary on the creative industries as Bridget moves from publishing to television entertainment news to print journalism. Fielding also establishes Bridget's interest in adaptation, which leads her to her eventual interest in working freelance to gain creative autonomy in her career. While commenting on the creative industries, Fielding also emphasizes the value of adaptation as equal to that of the original work. As Bridget adapts her life into her diary, it is clear that her interest in adaptation is what leads her to pursue freelance work and eventually to pursue creative autonomy. To create a landscape page, you just rotate the page using the "Orientation" option in the Layout Tab. This will put your page number at the bottom of the page. If you would like to print a hard copy and have the page number similar to the portrait pages, we can help you make those changes.

CHAPTER III

“WRITING, WRITING, WRITING”: CREATIVE AUTONOMY AND THE DIARY IN

BRIDGET JONES: MAD ABOUT THE BOY AND

BRIDGET JONES’S BABY: THE DIARIES

Bridget’s career moves from journalism to television in the first two novels in the *Bridget Jones* series, and, in both, Bridget’s experiences serve to critique the creative industries. In the second two novels, Bridget works in television news and moves into screenwriting, and Fielding continues this critique. In *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*, which is set five years after the loss of Bridget’s husband, Bridget is breaking into screenwriting. *Bridget Jones’s Baby: The Diaries* takes the reader back before Bridget’s marriage when she is still working in television news. By showing us Bridget as self-employed in the third novel, Fielding makes sure that the reader sees Bridget as autonomous even when she backs up to depict her at *Sit Up Britain* in the fourth novel. Bridget’s autonomy is also evident in her handling of both narratives. In *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*, she reframes sections of her 2012 diary for a new purpose in her 2013 diary. As she begins to adapt *Hedda Gabler* for a screenplay, she is also adapting her past work for a new purpose. In *Bridget Jones’s Baby: The Diaries*, Bridget also reframes parts of her old diaries and adds material with a particular new audience in mind. The chronology, content, and form of these two novels establish Fielding’s critique of the creative industries, Bridget’s autonomy, and Bridget’s increasing skill in adaptation.

Fielding chooses to close Bridget's narrative in *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* with Bridget and Mark happily together again; however, when *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy* begins, Mark Darcy has died, and Bridget is left to care for their two children. In order to understand Bridget's decision to change careers while in her fifties and her ability to do so, it is necessary to acknowledge Bridget's privileges that allow her to make this change from journalism to screenwriting. After Mark's death, Bridget discovers that he arranged "financial details [and] insurance policies" that help his family to stay in their home, his children to go to good schools, and Bridget to take time off from a paid position (34). This also allows Bridget to explore an area of work that she has always dreamed of: throughout the first two novels, Bridget believes that working from home would allow her to be creative and to achieve more in her career. Now, as she does not have to hold a job, Bridget is able to devote 2012 to writing her screenplay, *The Leaves in His Hair*, without fear about money and the welfare of her children. In 2013, when she is waiting for a production company to purchase her screenplay, Bridget need not worry about when she will be paid again. Whereas at an earlier point in her life Bridget had to work in order to live comfortably, she is now able to explore career opportunities without fear. Another reason that Bridget is able to move from journalism to screenwriting is because of her connections through her friends, who are the top people in their respective fields. Through Talitha, Bridget connects with Brian the Agent and moves from journalism to screenwriting. Bridget's ability to network with others in the creative industries continues to benefit her and allows her to change careers with ease even after she has been inactive in her career for seven years. Acknowledging Bridget's privileges that aid in her success in screenwriting allows us to better understand how she is able to continue her work in the creative industries.

As an independent writer, Bridget is able to accomplish most of her adaptation without the pressure of a boss or production company. Bridget complains about her bosses and deadlines in the first two novels, while acknowledging her desire to work independently on her own writing. As a screenwriter, Bridget is finally able to work on her own terms during her first year of adapting *Hedda Gabler*. When she begins to track the writing of her screenplay, Bridget documents its progression in her actual diary entries; however, over time, she limits the documentation to the number of words written, listen in her brief overview of the day's calories, alcohol units, and minutes spent thinking about various activities. In June of 2012, Bridget writes that she has "started [her] *Hedda Gabbler* screenplay" (66). Throughout the rest of the year, she notes the number of pages she has written for her adaptation in her diary. On July 10, she has ten pages of her screenplay written, 25 pages on July 26 and 45 on August 16 (67, 69, 75). In August, Bridget begins to document her screenplay in acts with half of the screenplay finished on August 23, 2.25 acts being finished on August 27, and 2.5 finished on September 5 (76, 77, 89). Bridget's ability to write more than half of her screenplay adaptation of *Hedda Gabler* shows that working autonomously is actually beneficial for her. While Bridget can and does meet her deadlines both in television news and in screenwriting, she clearly desires a work life in which she is allowed to progress at her own pace. Bridget's journey to becoming an independent, self-motivated writer is shown through her dedication to writing in her diary daily over multiple years. It is clear that Bridget can commit to writing. *Hedda Gabler* is a four-act play, and Bridget adapts more than half of the play in just over one month. Bridget clearly understands her own work process and is able to flourish during this time of independent writing because there is no boss to answer to or company to please.

While she writes the majority of her screenplay without the pressure of an agent or strict deadlines, Bridget begins to struggle with her self-esteem and ability to meet deadlines comfortably when she begins working with Brian and later, Greenlight Productions. When Talitha presents Bridget with the opportunity to have an agent so that her screenplay can be made into a movie, Bridget accepts as she resolves to “finish screenplay. Have just got to do the ending. Oh, and the middle bit. And sort out the start” (185). Though Bridget has clearly written more than half of the screenplay already, she suddenly doubts that it is good enough to present to an agent unless she reworks the entire screenplay. Her nerves seem normal; however, Bridget knows the value of an agent and the possibility of having a production company purchase her screenplay, so she stays up all night and the next day “writing writing writing” before emailing Talitha her finished copy of *The Leaves in His Hair* (189).

While Bridget works to make sure that her screenplay is up to standard for an agent to review, Fielding offers ironic commentary on the subject of agents and their role in the film business. The day after Bridget sends Talitha *The Leaves in His Hair*, she documents her phone call with her new agent, Brian, in her diary. Her screenplay is over fifty pages meaning that Brian would not be able to read it carefully and respond helpfully to Bridget in less than twenty-four hours. However, even if this were possible, in the phone call he never tells Bridget that he has actually read her screenplay. Bridget, excited by the agent’s call, asks, “Do you like it?” and “Have you read it?” (189). However, Brian can only respond with, “I think it’s fascinating and I’m going to get it out to appropriate people immediately. So you can let Sergei know that straight away and it’s a pleasure to meet you” (189). Brian the Agent is more concerned with Bridget telling Sergei, Talitha’s friend, that he has called Bridget and sent out the screenplay than he is with actually representing Bridget to multiple production companies. Brian is more

interested in impressing Sergei than representing a client whose work he believes in and supports; it remains unclear whether Brian has even read *The Leaves in His Hair* at all. Fielding uses Bridget's interaction with Brian to show that the process of getting an agent is built less on the actual value of a screenplay and more on satisfying others' own self-interest as well as impressing people that are in higher positions.

Bridget's interactions with Brian the Agent illustrate that agents within the creative industries are focused primarily on selling screenplays rather than maintaining artistic integrity. As Brian is focused less on Bridget's work, he does not investigate how Bridget is adapting *Hedda Gabler*; instead, he sends the screenplay out as a "romcom" – "romantic comedy" – when it is clearly a tragedy, and he hopes that Bridget will follow the company's demands instead of arguing for her vision for the adaptation. Brian is focused primarily on pleasing Sergei, and even Bridget, but shows little interest in the work itself. When Greenlight Productions "want[s] to take out an option" on Bridget's script, Brian almost entirely disappears from Bridget's diary (11). Brian encourages Bridget to comply with all of Greenlight Production's requests because "[t]hey're not going to want a first-time writer who's difficult. You've got to find a way to go along with what they want" (12). Brian expects her to comply with all of the company's demands because it is now her responsibility to maintain that relationship. Brian cares more that her film makes it through preliminary meetings and is accepted in order to impress Sergei than he cares about the value of Bridget's adaptation of *Hedda Gabler*. Even when Bridget calls him and asks why Greenlight Productions is insistent on *The Leaves in His Hair* being set on a yacht, Brian details the situation and encourages Bridget to make it work: "'So what do we do?' Brian said cheerfully. 'We make *Hedda Gabler* work on a Hawaiian yacht, right?'" (269). Brian does not care about the artistic value of Bridget's work; instead he is more focused that she makes money

from the screenplay so that he will also make money by working as her agent. Brian is not interested in aiding in Bridget's work as an artist, and it is clear that he is not looking for value in her work either. Through Brian's emphasis on Bridget's acquiescence, Fielding shows the lack of value for artistic integrity in the film business.

While Brian clearly cares very little about Bridget's artistic integrity, Bridget still manages to maintain a sense of artistry attached to her work, which is shown in her attempts to continue to work with Greenlight Productions and in her desire to adapt Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse*. As she does not realize that Brian has not read her screenplay and that he is not concerned with her artistic vision, Bridget never feels that she is not valued as an artist. Instead, although Brian is not competent in his job, markets the screenplay incorrectly, and encourages her compliance to production changes, Bridget is able to succeed because of her resilience. While perhaps Bridget should have done more research, or at the least reread *Hedda Gabler* before writing her screenplay, Brian never mentions her errors because he is not familiar with Ibsen's work and has no plans of auditing her screenplay for accuracy. However, it is possible that Brian's shortcomings are what allow Bridget to remain resilient and to see her work on the adaptation of *Hedda Gabler* as a success even when she is fired from the crew. Because he never tells her that she needs to work more or that her adaptation is not accurate, Bridget's passion for adaptation never diminishes and instead she plans an adaptation of Woolf's novel while also working on *The Leaves in His Hair*. Bridget's resilience and determination in her own career, as well as her passion for adaptation, lead her to success, even when her agent is not invested in the value of her work.

Bridget's determination is supported by her adaptability when Greenlight Productions options her work. Prior to the meeting, Bridget attempts to prepare; however, she only actually

plans how to defend her adaptation's purpose when she is in the lobby waiting to be called into the meeting:

The important thing is that this updating is a feminist tragedy. The key narrative thread is that Hedda, instead of just being independent like Jude, settles for a dull, unattractive academic, who stretches his budget to buy them a house in Queen's Park. Then, disappointed by the intellectual honeymoon in Florence, because she really wants to go to Ibiza, and disappointed by the rubbish sex, because she really wanted to marry her hot alcoholic lover, she comes back to find self also disappointed by the dingy, rainy house in Queen's Park and eventually ends up shooting herself and...Gaah! (255)

Through this description, it is clear that Bridget approaches the adaptation not as a former English major arguing the continuing relevance of classic literary texts, but as she would an adaptation that she would like to watch on her own television. She compares Hedda to her friend Jude, who is an extremely successful single woman. Through this comparison, it is clear that Bridget is focused on her character of Hedda being accessible to an audience, and in this case, Bridget's intended audience is herself and her friends. The desire to go to Ibiza and the disappointment at rubbish sex are physical and emotional elements that Bridget and her friends would discuss the next day after watching a television adaptation. As Bridget is preparing for her meeting, she should be preparing for a more formal audience, one that focuses less on relating to characters and more on the necessity for the story to be remade for a new, younger audience. However, while it seems that Bridget should prepare differently and plan for the correct audience to whom she must pitch her idea, Greenlight Productions is not concerned with Bridget's knowledge or presentation of her ideas.

During the meeting, Bridget trades texts with Roxster and Chloe when we would think she should be discussing the adaption of her screenplay into a film. As the exploratory meeting begins, Bridget's phone begins quacking, prompting her to apologize and reach into her bag "to pull out the phone, wipe off a bit of squashed banana and turn it off" (257). By turning it off, Bridget actually just sets her phone to 'vibrate' in case "Roxster, I mean Chloe or the school, texted" (257). Despite the fact that Bridget is devoted to creating an adaptation of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, she cannot separate herself from her personal relationships long enough to give the meeting her full attention. Throughout the meeting, her phone vibrates with texts from Chloe about Billy's sickness and picking up Mabel at Cosmata's house along with messages from Roxster about what she is wearing and how the meeting is going. Bridget responds to their messages in turn between questions about the Hedda character and which actors are best suited for the roles. As she details this scene in her diary, the underlying important meeting interspersed with sexy messages from Roxster and stomach virus warnings from Chloe make the situation hilarious as Bridget tries to juggle the meeting and her personal life simultaneously. While it would seem that Bridget's lack of preparation and her inability to focus would negatively impact her, in reality, Greenlight Productions is just as unprepared.

Bridget's descriptions of the meeting also include the team members' shortcomings and lack of professionalism. During the exploratory meeting, Greenlight Productions has not entirely planned for the meeting, which is apparent in their inability to agree on what to tell Bridget about the script. As it is an exploratory meeting, clearly the purpose is to brainstorm on how to improve the screenplay and how to best adapt it to film. However, the team has not met together beforehand, which is clear in the way that they bounce ideas off of each other without actually telling Bridget anything about their ideas. Imogen opens the meeting by telling Bridget that they

think “the whole tone and the updating of the Hedda story is great” (257). George, who manages the project, interjects with, “The Hedda *character*,” indicating that the team—meaning he—believes that Hedda, as a character, is the only redeeming part of the screenplay and that she is the only element worth keeping throughout the process of possibly making *The Leaves in His Hair* into a film. The team throw out ideas that Bridget must make work, including setting the movie on a yacht in Hawaii. Clearly, Greenlight Productions has not researched Ibsen’s *Hedda Gabler*, which means that Bridget has to defend Ibsen’s original setting: “Realizing this might be a crucial juncture, I gathered my courage, and added: ‘Although, it is meant to be more Norwegian. So like, in November, all dark and miserable in a dark, depressing house in Queen’s Park’” (258). Even though Bridget defends the setting of her adaptation, Greenlight Production insists on the Hawaiian yacht location and quickly moves on to suggest famous actors for the film that Bridget feels is pointless because they are “bandying about incredibly famous people, who would have absolutely no interest in being in [her film] at all” (260). Greenlight Productions is clearly overshooting for the film by planning for extremely well known actors to play in an unknown writer’s film. As their plans are not fully formed and Bridget’s artistic intention is not highly valued, Bridget’s meeting with Greenlight Productions highlights their shortcomings just as often as Bridget details her own.

While Bridget and Greenlight Productions are both shown being not fully devoted to the adaptation of *The Leaves in His Hair*, Bridget still remains triumphant because she is willing to make her screenplay meet the production team’s demands as she wants her work to be successful. When Bridget defends Hedda’s suicide by reminding the production team that the play is “not a romcom, it’s a tragedy,” she writes that she “immediately regretted [her] presumptuousness” (260). However, Bridget’s presumptuousness is actually her commitment to

her own work, which she views as an adaptation of Ibsen's play. While she does defend her adaptation, Bridget is also willing to work with Greenlight Productions's plans for the film. When George demands, "No Kate Hudson shooting herself. It's a comedy. It's a comedy we like," Bridget is horrified (261). In her diary, she details her thought process: "*The Leaves in His Hair* is not a comedy. It is a tragedy. Had the tragedy in my writing somehow inadvertently come out as comic? The fact that Hedda Gabbler shoots herself is fundamental. But, as Brian said, in the movie business, artistic integrity has to go together with pragmatism and..." (261). Brian encourages her to be pragmatic just so that she will agree with Greenlight Productions's requests so that her screenplay will be adapted to film. However, Bridget's ability to remain flexible in response to the production company's requests when needed helps her remain successful in her work on her adaptation. When George demands that Hedda's character not die, Bridget uses her skill of adaptation and proposes to write the ending like *Tom and Jerry* because "terrible things happen to both Tom and Jerry. I mean, more Tom—he gets flattened, her gets electrocuted, yet somehow," Tom still lives (262). The use of humor in this scene allows Bridget to succeed; obviously, it is not possible for Hedda to die and come back to life, but she is able to use a ridiculous comparison to a cartoon and convince Greenlight Productions to keep Hedda's death in the adaptation. Bridget's ability to use George's request and adapt it to fit the *Hedda Gabler* storyline in some way shows that she is flexible and determined to make her screenplay work while retaining some of her artistic integrity which leaves Bridget triumphant despite the fact that neither she nor the Greenlight Productions team are prepared for their meetings. Bridget's flexibility and determination to write a screenplay stems from her own love for television adaptations, which is what ultimately inspires her to even attempt to write an adaptation of *Hedda Gabler*.

Throughout the first two books, Fielding establishes Bridget's interest in adaptations of classic literature into film and television, which leads her to pursue a career in film adaptation in *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*. In her diary, Bridget plans to, "Start writing my *Hedda Gabbler* adaptation in order to have professional adult life again" (49). Her adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* begins as a personal project; Bridget gives herself no deadlines or consequences if she does not write. Instead, the goal is simply to do what she loves, which is to write and to adapt a character she relates to and feels she understands into a modern time because she feels that the story is as relevant currently as it was when Ibsen wrote the play in 1890. Bridget believes that the play "is really very relevant because it is about a girl living in Norway—which I am going to translate to Queen's Park—who decides 'her dancing days are over' and nobody lovely is going to actually marry her, so goes for someone boring—like grabbing the last seat when the music stops in musical chairs" (66). Bridget also believes that in some ways her own "dancing days are over" because she is single with two children without a stable career. Bridget adapts the play because she believes that "*Hedda Gabbler* is really very relevant to the modern woman because it is about the perils of trying to live through men" (23). Even as Bridget has interesting plans for her adaptation of *Hedda Gabler*, she clearly has not reread the play before writing her adaptation. As she feels that adaptation is as relevant as the original text, Bridget chooses to write the *Hedda Gabler* screenplay in an effort to move to a different career because it mixes her desire to go back to her work in the creative industries and her personal interest in literary adaptations.

While Bridget's lack of research on the original play may seem like a shortcoming on her part, Greenlight Productions does not research Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* at all until they hire a "proper screenwriter" to work on the project (317). Bridget does not discover that she has

misidentified the author or misspelled the play title until Saffron acknowledges the error in a meeting: “This might just be me, but isn’t *Hedda Gabler* actually spelt with an *o*? *Gabler*? Not *Gabbler*? And isn’t it by Ibsen, not Chekhov?” (353). While Bridget pretends that her errors are intellectual irony, the fault also falls on Greenlight Productions because none of the team have identified her errors; George and Imogen have not read Ibsen’s original work and so do not notice Bridget’s mistakes. This is also clear in their persistence to change the themes and genre of the play from a tragedy to a romantic comedy. Clearly, the production team has not valued Bridget’s work as an adaptation because they are not focused on recreating the original work; instead, they want to create a new version in which only Hedda, the character, remains and Ibsen’s original plot is left behind. However, Greenlight Productions fails when they hire Saffron, who rewrites the majority of the screenplay and loses Bridget’s voice in the process. Bridget’s creation of the Hedda character is what George originally views as the best element of the screenplay. When Saffron rewrites the entire screenplay, not only do Greenlight Productions lose Ibsen’s original work, they also lose Bridget’s version of Hedda. As Greenlight Production makes it clear when they invite Bridget back into the production, without Bridget’s Hedda there is no screenplay.

Clearly, Bridget’s creativity and personal voice are the screenplay in a positive way and when it is lost, George is forced to rehire Bridget to rewrite the screenplay’s heart, and when that is lost, George is forced to rehire Bridget to rewrite the screenplay as it once was in order to keep the Hedda character as Bridget intended. After she is fired, George calls Bridget and tells her, “[W]e don’t want you to lose your voice” (355). Though Bridget does not understand and wonders, “What was he talking about? I hadn’t lost my voice? Had I?” clearly there is an element that Bridget brings to the screenplay that is lost when Saffron takes over the script (355).

When Greenlight Productions realizes that Bridget's voice is what makes this adaptation work, George calls Bridget and asks her to come back to the team: "OK, OK. We think you're a genius. Once this trip is over I'm going to be in the office all the time, all right? You just need to put back the special Hedda voice we love so much into all the Hedda lines when Saffron's finished with them" (356). Bridget's creativity and her commitment to making Hedda work, no matter what Greenlight Productions want, shows her willingness to be creative and her ability to adapt the screenplay according to what they want from the final version. Through the final days of writing *The Leaves in His Hair*, Bridget goes through the screenplay "finding all of Hedda's lines in the rewritten version and putting them back to the way they were in the first place. Which is actually quite fun!" (399). Even as Bridget's original vision is not the version to make it onto the screen, she is a part of the production of *Thy Neighbor's Yacht*, which started as her own work. Bridget's voice and creativity are what allow her to remain successful in her new career.

While *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy* shows Bridget develop into an autonomous screenwriter, *Bridget Jones's Baby: The Diaries* takes the reader back to Bridget at *Sit Up Britain*, though she has moved from presenter to producer. The final novel in the *Bridget Jones* series displays Bridget as entirely autonomous in her writing, as she uses her old diary entries to craft the narrative of her life while she was pregnant with Billy. The diary is set in the time of Bridget's pregnancy; however, the reshaping of the diary occurs at a later point in Bridget's career, when she has reached creative autonomy. Though Bridget addresses this narrative to Billy, she continues to document her relationships and her career in order to show Billy that "things have a habit of turning out all right" (3). As Bridget shapes the narrative of her pregnancy, she uses "excerpts from [her] diaries and other bits and pieces," which include diaries

from two years as Bridget's pregnancy begins in June of one year and ends in March of the next, an introduction, an analepsis to a previous point in her life, and her own statements to Billy which are blended with the older entries (3). Bridget's ability to include several entries from separate points in time shows that she has transformed into a more autonomous author who adapts her life into a carefully crafted narrative. While the novel is set chronologically between *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* and *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*, Bridget's writing and the creation of the narrative occurs after *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*. Having seen this autonomous Bridget, we recognize her power as a narrator, but also, more surprisingly, we are prepared to recognize her autonomy even when she is working within the power structure at *Sit Up Britain*.

In *Bridget Jones's Baby: The Diaries*, the depiction of Bridget's work is reminiscent of her work in *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, as plenty still goes wrong. While on-air, Bridget maintains a conversation with Miranda, a presenter on *Sit Up Britain*, while she is presenting the news. As Julian the floor manager is calling, "Thirty seconds to air," Bridget whispers, "I can't believe he'd leave like that and assume I was wanting a relationship and babies" into Miranda's feed (35). Even as the show is seconds from beginning, Bridget is telling Miranda about her weekend with Mark Darcy instead of briefing her on last-minute news topics. However, instead of ending in disaster because she is not prepared, Miranda is able to quickly "[click] into her crisp newsreader voice" and move from their conversation about Bridget's life to news on binge drinking (36). Behind the scenes, Bridget and Miranda still discuss their personal lives between the "BONG[s]" that signal the opening of *Sit Up Britain*, which Bridget describes as implying "that *Sit Up Britain* minions were scouring for news, antlike, all over the hot spots of the world, when in fact everyone was just arseing around talking about sex in the office" (35-6). Though

she is not entirely focused on the show and instead is discussing her personal life while filming, Bridget is not the only employee who is not prioritizing *Sit Up Britain*.

Bridget is now in a position of authority, and she is responsible for multiple other employees who, unfortunately, are not entirely focused on making the show run smoothly. Miranda is equally responsible for the mistakes, conversing with Bridget through an earpiece while she is also presenting the news. Because of this, there are seconds of live television in which Miranda is “looming up on the screens all over the studio and indeed the world” saying, “And anyway, fucking our ex doesn’t count” (35). Because she is not entirely focused on presenting the news, *Sit Up Britain* viewers catch her unprepared and in the middle of a conversation that is not suitable for daytime television. However, even as she is unprepared, Miranda is able to slip into her newsreader voice and assume professionalism. As the show continues, Miranda and Bridget continue speaking through the earpiece even after Miranda has cursed on air. As she announces the headlines, she also continues her conversation with Bridget: “And finally: What makes men gay? A new finding points to the womb environment” (36). She continues, “What makes fuckwits fuckwits, more like’ ... thinking the clip had started when it hadn’t, quite” (36). While it might seem that Miranda is unprofessional and not suited for a job in which she presents the news, it is not entirely her fault that *Sit Up Britain* runs a little chaotically. Along with Miranda, Bridget introduces Julian the floor manager in this section, as he counts down for Miranda to go live on television. While Miranda misses her cue and does not seem concerned about how viewers see her, Julian does not manage the floor well, as he confuses the man who is presenting on the “gay gene in the womb” with Sir Anthony Hopkins (37). Bridget attempts to help by directing him to someone she believes is Hopkins, but the fault lies mainly with Julian, who neither knows who the guests are nor attempts to familiarize himself

with them before the show begins. As Bridget attempts to direct Julian to Sir Anthony Hopkins while also telling Miranda to spread out the opening for this segment, the scene manages to fall into place as the actual Sir Anthony Hopkins “loomed up behind Miranda, doing his Hannibal Lecter flesh-eating face” (38). Though Bridget, Miranda, and Julian the floor manager fail to keep the show running as smoothly as possible, *Sit Up Britain* produces a live show that presumably manages to cover each of its headlines effectively. As Fielding critiques the fast pace of live television, she also shows that Bridget’s flexibility is what allows her to maintain control throughout *Sit Up Britain*’s production.

In the first two novels, Bridget offers an unmediated account of her life that includes detailing mishaps in her workplace, and Bridget maintains this realistic picture in *Bridget Jones’s Baby: The Diaries*. At *Sit Up Britain*, even when she proclaims that she controls the majority of the show, she is not afraid to reveal that she is, in part, responsible for any lapses in the show. Bridget is not concerned with the show being perfect; instead, she is focused on making sure that what is scheduled to happen actually happens. When Richard Finch appears in the control booth to admonish Bridget and Miranda for talking “between the effing bongs,” he says that the show is in “total fucking shambles” (37). While Richard believes that the show is disorganized and chaotic, Bridget appears to be in her element, as she never documents her stress or fear into her diary entries. It seems that Bridget manages to run the show well, despite multiple mishaps, because she only becomes concerned about how the show runs when Richard introduces the new network controller, Peri Campos.

At this point in her career, Bridget feels more in control and is perceived as such by her boss, Richard Finch; however, when Peri Campos is hired to make staff cuts, Bridget is again made aware that her job is expendable. After Bridget quits her job at *Sit Up Britain* in *Bridget*

Jones: The Edge of Reason, Cinnamon Productions asks her to come back because she has contributed “68 percent of the fun ‘And finally’ end of program items” (288). When she first details her work life in *Bridget Jones’s Baby: The Diaries*, Bridget has moved up in her company from a news presenter to a producer, meaning that she “controlled the WHOLE THING from the glass studio gallery” (35). This promotion allows for her company and Richard Finch to see Bridget as necessary for the production of *Sit Up Britain*, so he no longer threatens her job whenever she makes a mistake during the production of the show. However, as Bridget realizes, when she is not entirely autonomous in her career, there will always be a person with more power to threaten to fire her.

Bridget’s primary concern when Peri Campos comes to *Sit Up Britain* is the possible termination of her job based on imperfections in the show; however, it becomes obvious that “staff cuts” really means replacements of older staff who Peri no longer deems necessary or useful. Richard introduces Bridget to Peri and her systems analysis team, as they will observe *Sit Up Britain* “for the next four weeks, looking for where our staff cuts can most effectively be made,” which Peri refers to as “pruning,” which “brings a rush of blood to [her] teeth” (38). Peri is an obvious threat, which Bridget voices in her diary as the fear that she is to “be fired and replaced by young people in man-buns” (38). Even though Peri threatens her throughout the novel, Bridget is not the first person to be terminated from *Sit Up Britain*. In her diary, Bridget documents who has been fired in Peri’s five months at *Sit Up Britain*: “June on Reception (seventeen years at *Sit Up Britain*). Harry the driver (eighteen years at *Sit Up Britain*). Julian the floor manager. Yes, he kept forgetting to tell us we were on air, and couldn’t tell ‘camera right’ from ‘camera left,’ but he’d been studying the difference for twenty years” (120). Peri is firing those who have worked at *Sit Up Britain* for over 15 years and replacing them with much

younger people who are no better than those they are replacing. Though she does not state it directly here, it is clear that Peri is acting unethically on ageist views that older employees are not as valuable as younger employees.

While Peri's ageism seems to stem from her own youth, her sexism in the workplace seems misplaced as she is a woman in charge, which should be a positive sign. However, Peri Campos, as Bridget describes her in her diary, resembles the descriptions of Richard Finch in both *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*. Just as Bridget describes Richard Finch as a boss who screams out sexist remarks throughout meetings, she details Peri Campos in mostly the same way. While we might believe that a woman in a high position in the creative industries is an advancement, Fielding uses Peri Campos to shed ironic commentary on the sexism that remains pervasive in the creative industries, even when women fill positions previously held only by men. Though it would seem that Peri would be understanding because she is also female, instead she views Bridget's pregnancy as an effort to keep her producer position as *Sit Up Britain*. Peri is unafraid to voice this opinion to Bridget: "HR is familiar with employees getting pregnant when their jobs are in jeopardy. Though usually employees whose jobs are in jeopardy are too old to get pregnant. Anyway, don't think you can get away with any bullshit" (120). This statement confirms that Peri's ageism and sexism are influencing her staff cuts and that Peri is not concerned with ethics, which she proves through treatment of employees of *Sit Up Britain* and also through the news segments that she schedules for the show.

As Bridget documents in her diary, Peri Campos prunes the *Sit Up Britain* team in her first five months before implementing a new headline format that seems to undermine the understanding that the show presents hard-hitting news. Before she introduces the new format, Peri tries her new idea for segments among the regular headlines. Fielding uses this trial as ironic

commentary as Miranda introduces *Sit Up Britain* as the “hard-hitting news show that makes you [sit] up” followed by a new story on “[F]asciators! Are they the new earrings?” (90-1). The royals’ clothing does not seem synonymous with “hard-hitting” news, which Miranda admits when she tells Bridget that the item is “rubbish” (91). Throughout the following months, Peri Campos finally introduces the new headline format to the entire *Sit Up Britain* team. When Bridget arrives to a meeting late, she walks into the office to “find Peri Campos conducting a meeting for the entire *Sit Up Britain* staff. ‘It’s wet, it’s see-through and without it we’d DIE! Water!’ she was yelling, strutting in front of a smart board while the youths in their man-buns sat up attentively at the front and the old guard sat sulkily at the back” (125). As Bridget notes, Peri shouts at her staff as she proposes headline ideas and expects them to quickly catch on and perform the actions that she describes, which is not at all unlike the actions of Richard Finch as Bridget describes in *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*. However, Peri’s new format does not sit well with the team because the lead-ins are so vague. When Peri prompts, “They’re small, they’re fiercely powerful, their potential killers and they’re ALL OVER YOUR HOUSE!” she is met with three possible answers: ants, vacuums, and vibrators (125). While the answer Peri seeks is batteries, she reveals that only those who “have any sort of tenuous handle on today’s news” would be able to anticipate the answer, but it seems clear that in actuality the dangers of batteries is not classified as hard-hitting news (125). As Bridget and the other staff at *Sit Up Britain* make it clear that they do not like the new format, Peri focuses on the “dated and boring” nature of *Sit Up Britain*, which she has attempted to fix by firing older employees and updating the headline format. However, she sees Bridget as the main “dated and boring” element at *Sit Up Britain* because of Bridget’s commitment to content that she sees as valuable as well as her unwillingness to abandon her morals and ethics in the workplace.

While there is the constant threat that she might be terminated from her job at any misstep, Bridget does not strive for perfection, mainly because she acknowledges that, in such a fast-paced environment, perfection is not possible. Instead, Bridget attempts to produce *Sit Up Britain* in the way that she always has, while still striving to meet Peri's new demands. At the same time, Bridget's autonomy shows in the ways she stands up to Peri Campos. When Peri insists *Sit Up Britain*'s content needs "tension," "action," and "suspense," Bridget cannot make household items sound dangerous, so she makes them ridiculous (125). She attempts to turn news stories "into Peri Campos riddle-me-ree headline" but she applies the format to unthreatening news items: "'They're slimy, they're creepily silent—and they're lurking in your arugula—frogs!' 'They're hexagonal, they suddenly change their form and they gouge out your eyes—umberellas!'" (137). Peri Campos's style is not unlike Richard Finch's, and as with Richard, Bridget struggles with adapting to Peri's methods because doing so means she must sacrifice her own understanding of what is news-worthy. Though Bridget confesses throughout her diaries an avid interest in tabloids and popular culture, she also shows that she is equally aware of national and international news stories. While it might seem to Peri Campos that Bridget cannot complete the new headline format because she does not understand it, Bridget makes it clear that she believes that the news should not be made up of riddles that work to scare *Sit Up Britain* viewers.

Beyond Bridget's ability to make Peri's headlines ridiculous, she also refuses to allow unethical values to be spread via *Sit Up Britain*. Her pregnancy and personal life inspire her to speak up when Miranda interviews the new Minister for Families, who projects a traditionalist message with which Bridget does not agree. However, instead of waiting for the interview to finish and confronting the Minister for Families off-air, Bridget argues with him via Miranda's

earpiece. When the Minister for Families states that “if we want to give children the best chance in life, the right structures need to be in place: strong and secure traditional families, two confident and able parents, an ethic of responsibility instilled from a young age,” Bridget says that “something inside [her] snapped” (148). Bridget believes that the Minister’s sense of understanding of what the dating world is like now is not accurate because he has been married for fifteen years. Through Miranda, Bridget argues that dating is “a war! Men are totally self-obsessed and bonkers. Have you any idea how HARD it is to get someone to even TEXT you after you’ve slept with them...” (148-9). Though Peri states that Bridget has “gone mad,” in reality she refuses to let someone make exclusionary, traditionalist statements on *Sit Up Britain* (149). At this moment in the novel, Bridget is unsure about the paternity of her baby and is speaking to neither Mark nor Daniel, so she feels that the Minister for Families is targeting her indirectly in his speech. As she cannot hold herself back from speaking, Bridget proves that her understanding of ethics extends beyond how just she is treated to those who are watching *Sit Up Britain*, and this indirect confrontation builds Bridget’s courage to face Peri directly when she treats Bridget wrongly.

Throughout Peri Campos’s time at *Sit Up Britain*, Bridget documents that she believes her job is under constant threat, which culminates when Bridget finally must defend herself against Peri Campos. During the broadcast, Peri wraps up the interview with the Minister for Families because of Bridget’s interactions with him, and she expects the crew to quickly move into the segments on eggs. However, as the team is not able to move as quickly as Peri would like and no one has boiled the egg prior to the broadcast, this segment quickly turns into a disaster when the egg breaks in Miranda’s “hand and oozed over her cream suit” as Jordan, the floor manager, attempts to steer the “eggspert” onto the set (149). Though it is clear that Bridget

is keeping the team moving while on air as she “free-associate[s] into the feed” until everyone is in their place and Miranda can return to the script, she still turns to find that Peri is blaming her for all of the mistakes.

As Peri calls Bridget into an immediate meeting, she berates her: “She’s late, she’s disorganized, she spends the whole time in the loo and she’s fucking up my show: Bridget Jones!” (155). Even though Richard tries to defend Bridget because he sees her as the “backbone for *Sit Up Britain*,” Peri has decided that she can demote Bridget to more grueling work, going “through the tabloids, and the gossip mags, ... you’re going to come up with some scary, sexy stories that are going to make people actually sit up and either scream or wank but not fall asleep” (156). Beyond the fact that Bridget does not agree with Peri’s format for *Sit Up Britain*, she refuses to give up any form of autonomy that she had as the producer of the show. Though Bridget does not voice a disagreement with being demoted, she refuses to let Peri separate *Sit Up Britain* from its “long history of serious news reporting” (156). Though Peri tries to use Bridget’s past reports, including the Live Action Special on Emergency Services in Lewisham, to prove that she is not reporting serious news, it is clear that Bridget’s promotion from presenter to producer has coincided with her ability to reject her own humiliation at the hand of her superiors. In response to Peri’s insinuation that Bridget is as frivolous as the news that appears on *Sit Up Britain*, Bridget resigns from her job in order to maintain the autonomy that she feels she deserves in her job as well as protect her pride because she values her work.

Throughout her work at *Sit Up Britain* in *Bridget Jones’s Baby: The Diaries*, Fielding shows Bridget as an autonomous producer who resists Peri Campos’s authority. Before Peri arrives, Bridget views herself and her work on the show as entirely in her own control, and it is only after her arrival that Bridget is reminded that her job is both under other levels of authority

and expendable. Throughout her diary, Bridget constructs a narrative for Billy, and, in relation to her work, she shows herself as believing that she's in control, losing her idea of control, and gaining her autonomy by standing up to those who attempt to regulate her. She aims to show Billy that "if you keep calm and keep your spirits up, things have a habit of turning out all right" (3). Though Bridget endures more than just her stresses at work during her pregnancy, her struggles with autonomy in her career are prevalent in the narrative that she constructs from her past diaries. As she makes her circumstances work for herself when she stands up to Peri Campos, Bridget proves that things do turn out all right if one sticks to one's principles. Bridget's ability to remain flexible allows her to succeed in most areas of her career; however, Bridget's success against Peri is entirely because she refuses to abandon her ethics. Peri is forced to concede to Bridget when Mark asserts that Bridget's somewhat forced resignation from *Sit Up Britain* is "not ethical," so Bridget is offered her job as well as maternity leave (185-6). As Bridget documents throughout her diary, her striving for autonomy is part of what allows everything to "[turn] out all right" (3).

As we interpret Bridget's actions in *Bridget Jones's Baby: The Diaries* as a move toward professional autonomy, it is clear that Fielding has shown us an autonomous Bridget in *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy* so that we may recognize Bridget's authority here. However, Bridget's autonomy in both novels is also clear in the way that she adapts her previous diaries for a new purpose. In *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*, Bridget uses part of her 2012 diary in her 2013 diary in order to "show how [she] got [herself] into the current mess" (39). While she is adapting Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* into a screenplay, Bridget is also adapting her 2012 diary for a new purpose within her 2013 diary. Though she does not explicitly say for whom she is writing, it is clear that Bridget is toying with adaptation within both her professional and

personal life. She divides the diary into five sections, which includes a prologue from April of 2013. The following section is divided into four parts, with part one being her 2012 diary, part two beginning with January 2013, part three is June of 2013, and part four is August until the end of 2013. Between parts two and three, Bridget includes a divider that details where she starts writing from her present in April 2013, which is noted by “back in the present moment” (245). The prologue, set in April, is Bridget’s current day and where she begins writing the novel. She then goes back to her 2012 diary. Bridget’s 2012 diary includes certain days and not every entry, so it seems that she chooses certain entries in order to craft the narrative of how she began her new career in screenwriting as well as started dating again. Bridget then includes the beginning of her 2013 diary until the present day, which is marked as such. She then seems to continue to write in her diary on a fairly daily basis until December of 2013. Based on Bridget’s organization of her diary and the use of much of her 2012 diary, it is clear that she is learning as she is adapting her own work for a new purpose.

It is also clear that she uses what she has learned in her reshaping of past diaries in *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy* and continued her work, because in *Bridget Jones’s Baby: The Diaries*, Bridget’s ability to craft a narrative with an audience in mind shows that the autonomy she gains in 2013 has only expanded into her work beyond that. In this novel, Bridget uses “excerpts from [her] diaries and other bits and pieces” in order to craft the narrative of her pregnancy with Billy (3). Bridget uses an introduction in which she speaks directly to Billy and states her goal for the narrative, which is what she hopes he may learn from her life. She includes an analepsis, which flashes back to show how she and Mark broke up five years before the diary entries occur. Throughout the diary, she periodically comments on past events from the present, which are usually directed to Billy through the narrative. Bridget shows herself as entirely

autonomous in her ability to adapt her previous diaries with a clear new purpose in such a successful and seamless way. She has learned how to craft a narrative with an audience in mind. While she is learning how to successfully adapt previous works in *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*, Bridget has mastered the skill in *Bridget Jones's Baby: The Diaries*.

In the final two novels in the *Bridget Jones* series, Fielding establishes Bridget as an autonomous writer who adapts her own diaries for a new purpose, while also using Bridget's experiences to critique the creative industries. Through the content based on Bridget's work, Fielding critiques the creative industries. In *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*, Bridget navigates a production company as she attempts to adapt *Hedda Gabler*. However, as the company focuses primarily on their own vision instead of Bridget's, it is only Bridget's flexibility and determination, as well as her literary voice that allows her to succeed as she pursues screenwriting and adaptation as a career. In *Bridget Jones's Baby: The Diaries*, Fielding shows us Bridget back at *Sit Up Britain* as she struggles to maintain control when Peri Campos is hired to make staff cuts. As the creative industries constantly change, Bridget is accustomed to being flexible; however, it is her dedication to ethics and commitment to her own autonomy that allow her to continue to flourish under Peri Campos. Along with the critique on the creative industries, Fielding gives us Bridget's narratives out of order so that we are more aware of Bridget's autonomy in the workplace, but also in her crafting of her own narrative. In *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*, Bridget reshapes her 2012 diary for a new purpose and includes it alongside her 2013 diary as a means of learning about adaptation. As Bridget uses parts of her diaries and includes new sections in *Bridget Jones's Baby: The Diaries*, she has a firm grasp on adaptation and understands how to use her own voice in a new way for a new purpose with an intended audience in mind. Through the chronology, content, and form of both *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*

and *Bridget Jones's Baby: The Diaries*, Fielding uses Bridget's experiences to critique the creative industries while also developing Bridget into an autonomous author with a talent for adaptation.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

In her *Bridget Jones* series, Fielding uses the diary form to establish Bridget's growth from a diarist adapting her daily life for her own enjoyment into a writer who uses her past diaries to craft a narrative for a new audience, while also using Bridget's experiences in the creative industries to undercut the glamorous images of publishing, television news, print journalism, and screenwriting. Reading the novels as a complete series, it is clear that Fielding uses Bridget's early experiences in her career and diary writing to trace her transformation as she achieves creative autonomy in her personal and professional writings. The previous chapters demonstrate Bridget's growth as she moves through careers in the entertainment industry while also improving her own writing within her diaries. Fielding's adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* into the diary form also illustrates the accessibility achieved by adaptation as older literature is reimagined for a new, modern audience. Fielding's use of the diary form to display Bridget's journey to creative autonomy as well as validate adaptation shows how the diary novel has evolved over time.

While the scholarship on diaries focuses primarily on how the diary gives women a place to vocalize injustice and process trauma, Fielding uses the form to allow Bridget growth in her career. Though it is possible that Bridget writes in her diary when her husband dies, Fielding chooses to return to Bridget's diaries five years after his death when she has resumed working and dating. Fielding's work deviates from the trends of the diary novel, demonstrating that the

form is not limited to the expected women's trauma. Instead, the diary may show the interiority of a female character who is concerned with her career and her ability to achieve success.

Bridget's diary never offers a look at the trauma of losing her husband or her grief in the following years; instead, Fielding focuses on Bridget's own determination for her success in both her career and her relationships.

The scholarship on the *Bridget Jones* series often focuses on the impact of the first chick lit novel and the implications of the novel for contemporary fiction. While most scholars seem unsettled at the possibility of an unpolished female protagonist being adapted from the admirable Elizabeth Bennet, it is clear that by acknowledging Bridget's work and her creative growth as documented in her diary, we may see the ways in which Bridget is also admirable. When the scholarship focuses all on how Bridget documents her relationships in her diary, there is clearly an element to her development that is missing. Bridget's career is as important to her as her relationships, and she continually documents her work in the creative industries in each of her diaries. The complete series is evidence that Bridget's writing offers a multifaceted look into how she adapts her life into her diary. Bridget selects what she wants to include, and as both her career and her relationship comprise most of the diary, it is clear that Bridget values both of them. Bridget does place equal value on her career and her relationships, and Fielding's use of interiority creates an accessible protagonist whose success does not make her inaccessible.

This refocusing of Fielding's work raises more questions to be considered. Most of the scholarship on Fielding's series is concerned with Bridget as feminist or post-feminist, and a new focus on Bridget's progress through hierarchical workplaces to eventually become her own boss emphasizes Fielding's interest in the ways women conduct themselves when in positions of power. Also, as an adaptation itself, the *Bridget Jones* series has been adapted to film, and

Bridget's work is complexly altered for this new audience. The films navigate point of view in a new, often complex way, including overlaying Bridget's thoughts over scenes or using typography to represent her interiority. It is also worth noting that *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy* has not yet been adapted to film, perhaps because the films are addressing the series in the same way that literary scholarship has, leaving her career and work as a mother unexamined.

Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones* series disrupts the history of the diary form in order to transform the focus of women's interiority from trauma to growth. While the scholarship focuses primarily on the novels' implications for contemporary fiction, it is clear that the *Bridget Jones* series transforms the definition of what makes a woman admirable. Through Bridget's interiority, we may see her development throughout the series as she navigates the creative industries in order to achieve creative autonomy. The novels chart her linear progression towards autonomy and creative freedom, which is most effectively achieved through the diary form. Bridget's work in her first two diaries foreshadows her later ability to use her past diaries for a new purpose when she adapts them for a new audience. Fielding shows Bridget's desire and effort for creative autonomy while also acknowledging that Bridget's interiority, which is achieved through the diary form, is what makes her accessible and admirable.

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