

A Comparative Study
between Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and
Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*

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This thesis examines the identities of Elizabeth Bennet and Bridget Jones in terms of nationalism, feminism and the familial relationship, by making a comparative study between Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in the eighteenth century and Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* in the twentieth century. It also clarifies Bridget's role as a 'bridge' in the story.

The first chapter analyzes some similarities in terms of plots and some characters, and differences in style and in the role of women, between the two novels.

The second chapter surveys Elizabeth and Bridget's nationalism. Elizabeth's world looks restricted and narrow; however, its limitation creates her well-defined position as an observer. Nationalism for Elizabeth and Austen is formed by patriotically supporting England in opposition to France. On the other hand, Bridget's world looks unfixed and varied because of its multiculturalism. Her openness to diverse media ironically emphasizes her limitedness and self-indulgence. Bridget's attitude toward oriental culture and American culture is caused by her antipathy towards America and ethnic minorities; however, her identity is unbalanced between England and America. She tries to keep her antagonistic identity by satirizing other social classes and fails in her self-establishment because she limitedly uses the concept of "we".

The third chapter examines the heroines in terms of feminism. Elizabeth achieves a triumph over a male and the upper class as a woman in the middle class. *Pride and Prejudice* is often recognized as a feminist text. This suggests that the 'Womanpower' in British new nationalism influences the heroine's character through the strong figures of British women who can 'join the battle' against an enemy. This figure makes the readers imagine the complete victory of females in the future. On the other hand, there is a coexistence of the antagonistic feminisms in *Bridget Jones's Diary*. The views about the power of women are varied in Fielding's period and the feminist movements in America have an influence on the inconsistent feminisms. This makes Bridget's

feminism look weak and flexible.

The fourth chapter discusses the positions of the heroines in terms of the relationship with their family. Elizabeth depends on the Bennet family and the change of the British social system after the French Revolution enables the family to mix with the Darcy family in the upper class. It also preserves Elizabeth's identity as a single woman in the middle class. On the other hand, Bridget's identity in relation to the family hesitates between the traditional family and the third world style family. The feminist movements in America emphasized the concept of the third world style family and brought the third world feminism to England.

In terms of nationalism, feminism and the family, Elizabeth's inconsistent identity is fostered by the attitudes of the patriotic people in England who battled against France. On the other hand, Bridget's identity is formed by her feeling toward America. However, Bridget has three kinds of imbalance regarding her identity: between nationalism and cosmopolitanism; feminism and antifeminism; and an idea of the traditional family and that of a new family. This shows the complexities of the multicultural society in the modern period and her self-contradiction.

However, these contradictions are solved by post-modernism and post-feminism. Bridget reflects the figure of a woman who worries about her inconsistent state in the modern period. The happy ending of *Bridget Jones's Diary* changes Bridget's inconsistency into a neutral position as a 'bridge'.