

The Heroines of chick lit: Projecting ‘The Modern Woman’

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Abstract:

Chicklit explains that chick lit genre reflects “the lives of the everyday working young woman” and appeals to readers who “want to see their own lives in all the messy detail, reflected in fiction today”. But some writers and critics describe it as a mere fluff or garbage and wastage of time. This present paper presents the characteristics of chicklit heroines and how their lives reflect the lives of the everyday working women, with the arguments in favour of “CHICK LIT” genre. It’s an important genre which deals with the problems of those women who are caught between the competing demands of feminism and being an independent woman. It is a via media which helps the women. It’s more like an escape, which helps the women too choose. This genre gives them a satisfaction that they are not alone with such and such problem; there are many more like them, to whom they can relate.

Key words: Chick lit, feminism, post-feminism, popular fiction.

Popular women fiction does not seem to be considered valuable and significant for its audiences, or also for the shaping of modern literature. Opinions on the quality and significance of this genre of popular fiction vary. It is often considered as unintelligent literature that lacks lustre, and that its only aim is to entertain undemanding female readers.

At the same time, however, popular fiction continues to find a large audience and receives enthusiastic response from both readers and reviewers or literary critics. Chick lit is another popular term for female fiction often mistakenly used as an equivalent of the romance literature. The term is often defined as a denotation of a fiction genre written for young, usually single, working women in their twenties and thirties. Chick Lit features female protagonists, usually in their twenties and thirties, in urban settings, and follows their love lives and struggles in business. It is also perceived as a type of post-feminist fiction, which in an unconventional way deals with female-related themes and topics. Chick Lit usually feature

an airy, humorous tone and frank sexual themes and topics. There immense popularity proves that it plays an important role in popular culture.

But Chick Lit has its defenders too, such as novelist Jenny Colgan. Of Fielding's *Bridget Jones diary*, she said, "It's a terrific book and it has sold more than two million copies. They have not all been bought by lovelorn single woman in London" (qtd in Gibbons). Jeanette Winterson, who identifies her work as "unashamedly high art", admitted she has "no problem" with chick lit. (Bainbridge). Both fans and authors of chick lit contend that the difference lies in the genre's realism. Chicklit.us explains that it reflects "the lives of the everyday working young woman" and appeals to readers who "want to see their own lives in all the messy detail, reflected in fiction today". The typical chick lit protagonist is, as a result, not perfect but flawed, eliciting reader's compassion and identification simultaneously. Heroines deploy self-deprecating humour that not only entertains but also leads readers to believe they are fallible--- like them. "The heroines of these books can be rude, shallow, over compulsive, neurotic, insecure, bold, ambitious, and witty or surprisingly all of the above, but we love them anyway!" (chicklit).

The first Chick lit emerged in this world, the *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Much of its content and idea is represented towards the postfeminist eye. The ideology and discourse depicted in the fiction doesn't match well with the feminist literary movement in the history. Chick lit embodies the experiences and everyday life of female protagonist as the representative of modern women not to call for women's right. The topics and issues which are frequently raised in the particular genre of fictions are the heroines' career life, family conflicts, and their funny lifestyles (Ferris).

Consequently, one can propose that Chick lit basically contains all aspects of women, and thus is perceived as the "work by women for women". The conventions of Chick lit genre are largely embodies female activities and issues such as their quotidian problems, quest for Mr. Right, internal family conflict and et cetera. Lots of hilarious elements were put in Chick lit fictions as the literary method to make the story "humorous and entertaining". Hence, the idea of commercial purposes in Chick lit can be seen in our era.

To analyze, most of the images or book covers associated with this particular genre of fiction are "girlish" items which are prejudicially believed to be the symbol of modern women. Stiletto shoes, cosmetics, designer handbags, and a bunch of shopping bags are frequently used as the cover of Chick lit fictions. There can be a variety of interpretations and analyses on this phenomenon. Firstly, as the cover of the book is largely influenced by the publisher for marketing purposes, and the target audiences are the modern women, one can draw an inductive analysis here that a number of modern women that are the target group of this specific literary genre associate themselves with these accessory and beauty predicaments.

The association between women and their body is also predominantly depicted in Chick lit. Women's issue about their body is portrayed clearly as a sensitive issue for women when it comes to body and physical appearance.

Conclusively, Chick lit as a literary genre may not be largely recognized as literatures by many critics in these days; however, it embraces a great extent of social implications and the aspects of women's subjectivity. Chick lit can be a jocular and mirthful escapist space for women who are facing with problems and conflicts in her everyday life. It allows women to express their desires and predilection under the regime of patriarchal and phallocentric hegemony in modern society. Much of the reflection on our daily life issues is often referred to in this particular genre. Appropriately, one cannot simply say that Chick lit is a "trashy" fiction since various social issues, such as the association between women and their body or the topic of women's identity, are chiefly alluded in this genre.

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