

Female ways of representation in the teen chick lits: a study around *The Princess Diaries*.

Formas de representação feminina nos teen chick lits: um estudo em torno d'O diário da princesa.

*Alleid Ribeiro Machado*¹

Abstract: *This paper deals with female ways of representation, which appear in the contemporaneity, in books aiming towards the teenage audience, as it is going to occur in *The Princess Diaries* (2000), by Meg Cabot, for example. In this novel, we can observe the construction and the intensification around the ideal standard of beauty and behavior, which can generate issues around gender, body, and sexuality when they try to establish stigmatized standards, especially for girls under development. The idea is to ultimately bring to light the discussion around a kind of literature labeled as teen chick lit (mass literature aimed at teen female audience). Supposedly, this literature is linked to some assumptions related to the third-wave feminism and to the cultural industry which, insidiously, have conducted to the female empowerment.*

Keywords: *teen chick lit; gender; third-wave feminism; female empowerment.*

Resumo: *Este artigo trata das formas de representação do feminino que aparecem na contemporaneidade em livros voltados para o público adolescente, como ocorre, por exemplo, em *O diário da princesa* (2000), de Meg Cabot. Nesse romance, pode-se observar a construção e o reforço de ideais de beleza e de comportamento que se abrem para questões de gênero, corpo e sexualidade ao estabelecer padrões estigmatizados, sobretudo para as meninas em crescimento. A ideia é, em última instância, trazer a lume uma discussão em torno de um tipo de literatura denominada teen chick lit (do inglês, literatura de massa voltada para o público adolescente feminino) que, supostamente atrelada a alguns*

¹ Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie. São Paulo, SP, Brasil. E-mail: alleid@usp.br

pressupostos da terceira onda feminista e à indústria cultural, tem veiculado a premissa insidiosa de empoderamento feminino.

Palavras-chave: *teen chick lit; gênero; terceira onda feminista; empoderamento feminino.*

Introduction

To empower a woman means to build her up, give her power, raise awareness about her abilities and competences, to empower two or more women means to develop gender equality in all environment where they may be a minority. The concept of female empowerment is multiplying nowadays through social media, and it is not rare to come across with campaigns followed by the keywords (hashtags) #empowerawoman, #empowerwomen #heforshe #shecan #femaleempowerment, encouraging women to raise awareness of their rights and abilities and, that way, empowering their partners, mothers, friends, sisters.

The question is that the beginning of the 21st century is marked by a reality without borders, of unlimited capitalism ruled and orchestrated by the cultural industry. Adorno and Horkheimer (2002) analyze this reality in association with the arts. According to the authors, it would act towards neutralizing critical aspects of an artistic work, transforming it in a commercial object. Therefore, establishing a correlation between campaigns about gender equality, female empowerment and other feminist campaigns in social networks, such as Facebook and Instagram, and the mass literature industry, we could argue that these fights are assimilated into the editorial market by the capital in an intense and direct way, when putting into play, themes of feminism and empowerment. However, at the same time, perpetuating stigmas on gender, body and sexuality.

From the understanding of these phenomena, this study seeks to reflect about a type of mass literature that came to be called chick lit and its subgenre, teen chick lit, expression referring to the commercial literature created for the female audience. Particularly, the term teen identifies the female teenage audience - observing that such productions have been related to feminism, according to authors such as Angela McRobbie (2004), Suzanne Ferriss and Young Mallory (2006), not only because it was written by women, but mainly because it highlights protagonists who are supposedly freed from male domination.

In a more direct form, the analysis is based on the novel *The Princess Diaries*, by Meg Cabot. In this book of confidentialities, we can observe the construction and the reinforcement of ideals of beauty and behavior, which generated issues around gender when they establish stigmatized patterns, especially for girls under development. The idea is to ultimately bring to light a discussion raised by a mass literature that, linked to some assumptions of the third-wave feminism and the cultural industry, which, insidiously, have conducted female empowerment.

From the girlie movement to teen chick lit: media and consumption

In generic terms, society in the beginning of the 21st century excessively changed 66 years after Simone de Beauvoir (1949) said her most famous sentence: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”, that came to be the guiding light to feminism and to gender studies. Nowadays, it is admitted the existence of a third-wave, also known as post-feminism “that would identify more with a liberal and individualistic agenda than with more collective and political objectives, considering the main claims of equality between sexes were already met” (AMARAL; MACEDO, 2005, p. 153).

Certainly, it would not be possible to discuss in this study, given my objective, the multiple and diverse nuances of feminism – or feminisms – that are comprised in contemporary times. In fact, it is important to clarify some exponents arising within “post-feminism” in order to understand in what measure chick lits can really be considered an effective expression of a movement that brings libertarian concepts for women.

In this sense, according to Ainhoa Flecha (2010), in an article dedicated to the study of feminism in the 21st century, generally, the third-wave feminism can be classified into two ideologies: post-modern and dialogic. Thus,

Under the post-modern ideologies, we consider those that reflect about the concept of difference and those who question the binary concept (masculine/feminine) and propose the dissolution of gender categories. Both are

based on the studies made by authors as Foucault (2000) and Derrida (1998), among others. Under the dialogic ideologies, we include those that defend a feminism based on the equality of differences to be capable of including all voices, especially those traditionally absent in feminist forums (cultural groups of women, housewives, women without instruction, third world women, etc)” (our translation). (FLECHA, 2010, p. 327).²

In the studies of Flecha, we perceive a side of the third-wave feminism that is linked to the dialogic field called *girlie*, which would be a movement led by young women, disconnected from deep concepts and less academic in its origin.

The *girlie* movement started in the United States during the 80's and the 90's. One of their main leaders was Rebecca Walker (1969). According to Flecha (2010) and Karp and Stoller (1999), authors such as Walker and others inside this movement, in its essence, support a “do it yourself” feminism, based on the idea that feminism is what each woman make of it, and, therefore, there are as many feminisms as women in the world. The problem, according to the authors (FLECHA, 2010; KARP; STOLLER, 1999), is that the individualization proposed by the DIY eliminates the ability of fighting for objectives and causes that are common to women, decreasing the power and force of collective fight. Another critical point of this movement would be the exaltation of femininity as opposed to the previous model of a “good feminist”, that rejected every attitude that may refer as the “feminine” type. Thus, they defend the right to use make up, high heels, taking as a symbol of this behavior the color pink (FLECHA, 2010).

In any case, the main criticism to the *girlie* (or DIY) feminism is referred to the fact that it became a movement for consumerist young women “from middle to high class that do not know the problems faced

2 “Bajo corrientes postmodernas tenemos en cuenta aquellas que se centran en el concepto de diferencia así como aquellas que cuestionan el pensamiento binario (hombre / mujer) y proponen la disolución de las categorías de género. Ambas se basan en los desarrollos realizados por autores como Foucault (2000) o Derrida (1998), entre otros. En las corrientes dialógicas incluimos aquellas que defienden un feminismo basado en la igualdad de diferencias que sea capaz de incluir todas las voces, especialmente aquellas tradicionalmente ausentes en los foros feministas (mujeres de grupos culturales, amas de casa, mujeres sin estudios, mujeres del tercer mundo, etc.) ”

by most young women, being that they have no interest in combating social exclusion, avoiding any political project" (our translation).³ (FLECHA, 2010, p. 328).

The question that remains after what was exposed is: Why has post-feminism received such outlines? Due to liberal demands of the contemporary society, it is interesting to consider social movements, as previously said, within a context without borders of a global capitalism, thus, admitting that they are marked by a massive diffusion of information. In this scope, media or the different means of communication may be understood as regulatory centers of power (GOFFMAN, 2009) or as central instruments of its propagation. As for the third-wave feminism, it has been assimilating stereotypes linked to the feminine that are shown by numerous media, not as much to question it, but mainly to reproduce it as something that can be controlled and used in favor of women.

In short, DIY feminism cannot happen without the media, that broadcasts behavior paradigms for girls that wish to have their image associated with to an "independent and successful" woman. In other words, what we can perceive is that historic issues related to the women's fight for equality were gradually being assimilated by different means of communication, emptied in meaning, and transformed into a commercial demand. Feminism became something that can be attained by the own young women as long as she wants it or as long as she takes certain kinds of attitude considered "feminine".

As we can perceive, some concepts become "fashionable" and are incorporated into the feminist lexicon, in a type of agglutination of ideas and concepts that are, in its essence, opposites and unethical. These concepts propagate ways of being that create a sensation of freedom and power to the girls. They spread ideal models of which type of woman they will be, instituting, thus, identities loaded with stereotypes. Then, to assume oneself as feminist became, in simpler words, more accessible than what it was in the past. After all, a girlie is a powerful young woman

3 "Clases medias y altas que no conocen los problemas a los que se enfrentan la mayoría de las mujeres jóvenes y a las que no les interesa combatir la exclusión social, evitando cualquier proyecto político".

that can make her own choices and act following her own principles, something never before so easily dreamed in previous generations.

Since the girlie movement is led without academic restraints, but freely inspired by libertarian ideas from feminist authors such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (1977), this new ideology is being held not only by philosophers, and by anthropologists, but also by popstars, for example. Recently, the British singer Adele, in an interview with Rolling Stone (August 2015), said she is a feminist and believes that all people should be treated equally. Beyoncé, in the event of the Video Music Awards (VMA) in 2014, promoted by MTV, used the moment to leverage feminism while she presented her song “Flawless”, whose lyrics has quotes of the Nigerian writer Chimamanda. When launching her last album, self-entitled, she brought to light the issue of feminism as a model of behavior for American girls. Many songs in this album have a militant content, encouraging the idea that girls can be strong and independent, turning the idea of “women as an object” on its head. Note, for example, an excerpt of the song “Run the world”, from the discussed album:

1. *Run The World (Girls)*
2. *Girls, we run this mutha! (3x)*
3. *Girls!*
4. *Who run the world?*
5. *Girls! (3x)*
6. *[...]*
7. *Some of them men think they freak this*
8. *Like we do*
9. *But no they don't*
10. *Make your check come at they neck*
11. *Disrespect us?*
12. *No they won't [...]*

Beyoncé’s song is propagated in a context where American girls, especially black girls, demand power. The pop star arises in these verses as the spokesperson of feminist ideas. However, beside her, there is a machine that moves the fashion, beauty, and customs industry. Beyoncé

personifies many beauty standards imposed to women, but she deems herself as feminist. This may bother the more academic feminists, but is the superstar position of deeming herself a feminist valid? In any way, the artist integrates and represents the DIY feminism. Through her influence, more and more American girls will want to emulate her, including to reproduce her world view.⁴ Chick lit can subliminally deal with many situations that comprise the daily life of women, such as school, academic or professional success, etc.; marriage; divorce. Turbulent family and love relationships come into play; body related issues, such as obesity, worship to fitness or even society's pressure around motherhood. They are books about the intimate life, that have as main content the variety of dilemmas, doubts, insecurities and problems lived by women. According to Leiro (2010):

Novels of this genre highlight that women are more worried to look for a husband that can give her children than their maintenance of their professional careers. After reaching stability, the chick lit novels bring an inverted reading of the contemporary woman and transform the discomfort of those affected by mythical femininity (FRIEDAN) into an inverse relation: if women in the 50's felt "incomplete", unhappy with their limited roles of wife and mother, chick lit protagonists are feeling "unfinished" by not having husband and children. They feel the lack of not being into a legitimate structure – the nuclear/bourgeois family. The logic remains binary and oppositional.

In specific terms of genre, as the author seeks to call attention, chick lit does not act as adjuvant of the women, as far as it reinforces standards that are very common inside a patriarchal social structure, approaching other types of novels, as the ones that commonly were called "harlequin". Then, where lies the difference of this type of literature in relation to that literature made for women? Chick lit ended up calling attention of cultural studies in its post-feminist ramification by

4 "In the wake of the publication and commercial success of Helen Fielding's (1996) novel *Bridget Jones's Diary*, by the end of the 1990s the category and term chick lit had become established to describe novels written by women, (largely) for women, depicting the life, loves, trials and tribulations of their predominantly young, single, urban, female protagonists".

owning characteristics that differentiate it from novels like “Sabrina”. Suzanne Ferriss and Young Mallory, in the introductory chapter of the book *Chick lit: The new woman's fiction* (2006), deals with chick lit as “A form of woman’s fiction based on subject, character, audience, and narrative style”. *While the harlequin novel would present dramas related to the feminine universe with all the load of stereotypes that are common to this universe, without necessarily being written and led by women, chick lit goes into a more interesting land in so far as it is produced inside a context of freedom of writing of the women. Nevertheless, putting into play, many times, stories with patriarchal content, and the feminine power of choice facing the most diverse circumstances.*

The crisis that chick lit novels present with an adult, urban, contemporary woman seem to reveal the remnants of a society that thinks in patriarchal terms, but quit the frontal battle with feminists and found a powerful weapon to destroy women's achievements without looking like a villain: language. By using resources such as polysemy, semantic nuances and its multifaceted nature, language becomes a fundamental piece (and this is not new) of a very intricate powerplay, given the technologies, that only through a critical device equally supported by language we may identify the nuances of power relations presented in speech (LEIRO, 2010).

For some of the post-feminism authors, such as Stephanie Harzewski (2011), within the so-called “post-modern” fiction, chick lit would not lose its relevance by supplying a portal of access to contemporary gender politics and questions with cultural value. In her book *Chick Lit and Postfeminism* (2011), the author dedicates supported literary and feminist analysis to its origins, its development and importance, according to Suzanne Ferriss (2011).

According to Sarah Gormley (201-?), even though the popularity and establishment of chick lit as an editorial phenomenon is evident; these novels "have provoked intense and oppositional responses. *For the fans [of the genre], it is claimed that chick lit reflects the experiences of contemporary young women*". However, still according to Gormley (201-?), for the detractors of the genre, “These novels are formulaic, vapid, and,

moreover, anti-feminist, firmly (re)locating women within the private sphere of hearth and heart”.

Under the studies exposed here, which seek to reflect about chick lit in terms of issues related to female emancipation, we will deal in the following title, more specifically, with teen chick lit, taking as a starting point of reflection the book *The Princess Diaries*, by Meg Cabot.

***The Princess Diaries*, by Meg Cabot, and gender stigmas**

Meg Cabot is an American author very known for *The Princess Diaries* (first book of her series, published originally in the 2000's, which is already in its 34th edition in Brazil). The author, reference in the chick lit genre, has almost 80 titles published among series for adults, teenagers and pre-teens, with more than 25 million sold copies. In Brazil, her books sold over 1.5 million copies (MEG CABOT..., 2015). In *The Princess Diaries*, we know the story of Mia Thermopolis, a young woman around 14-15 years old living in Manhattan. The protagonist of the novel lives with her mom, an artist to which

he [Mia's father] never married [...]. My mother said that happened because, at that time, he rejected bourgeois habits of a society that didn't even accept women as equal to men and refused to recognized their rights as people (CABOT, 2014, p. 35).

Mia's speech transmits, initially, the idea that her mom is an independent woman both emotionally and financially. However, the teenager herself will, throughout the story, contest her behavior - a reasonably intellectualized woman, a "bohemian artist" (CABOT, 2014, p. 45) for not corresponding effectively to the image of the independent woman that she always tried to show her daughter. Mia does not agree with her mother's somewhat careless behavior, either towards the house chores – such as going to the supermarket – or about the bills to pay – as she says in her diary, for example: “THINGS TO DO: 8. October's rent (confirm if mom deposited dad's check!!!) [...] 2. Make mom deposit dad's check” (CABOT, 2014, p. 14, 27) or

Dad repeated these words to my mom. I heard her mumbling something in return. She always mumbles when I remind her she has to deliver her painting in a certain deadline. Mom likes to work when the muses give a little help. Since dad pays most of the bills, this usually is not a big deal, but it isn't a responsible way for an adult to behave, even as a painter (CABOT, 2014, p. 51).

It is clear, thus, that Mia's father supports both, mother and daughter, even though the mother works in an art studio in order to guarantee her financial independence. What we can perceive is a new setting of patriarchy, that is, as it is important to remember, supported "[...] By the authority, imposed unconstitutionally, of men upon women and children in the family context" (CASTELLS, 2001, p. 169).

Mia's father, thus, is also framed in the paradigm of a socially desirable masculinity. He lives in Genovia, a fictional country situated between France and Italy whose inhabitants do not pay taxes, similar to Monaco, due to it also being a principality. He sees her daughter sporadically, working more as a finance provider to her – in fact, Mia has little intimacy to her dad, who she usually spends the summer vacation with in the French castle of Grandmère, her paternal grandmother, in Miragnac.

Mia's private life, exposed in her diary, reflects what the social and cultural contexts still maintain of patriarchy. Another example of that would be her father's treatment to "summer" girlfriends, that are, to him, like disposable objects:

[...] there's always a new girlfriend [...]. In the summer, when we go to Grandmère's castle in France, he always takes the lady of the hour. They were always drooling over the pools, the waterfalls, the 27 rooms, the ballroom, the wine cellar, the country house and the landing strip. One week later, he sends the woman off. (CABOT, 2014, p. 35).

This new setting of patriarchy seem to foresee exactly some type of freedom of choice and woman empowerment, at least to the point where everything is under control. These women decide where to stay and who they want to be with, they can even be in a castle enjoying

comfort and wealth. They can serve and use sex as pleasure for a season, but the final decision over who stays where and with who is from the male subject, that "a week later, sends the woman off" The power is from the man upon the woman, and

[...] so that this authority can be exerted, it is necessary that the patriarchalism surrounds all the organization of the society, the production and the consumption to the politics, the legislation and the culture. Interpersonal relationships e, consequently, the personality are also marked by the domination and violence that has its origin in the culture and institutions of patriarchalism (CASTELLS, 2001, p. 169).

Still concerning Mia's father, it's valid to point out that he is an aristocrat that rules a little country of Europe by inheritance, a man that is also frustrated, inaccessible, depressed, according to Mia's perspective, due to a testicular cancer that took away his chances of becoming a father again.

As the whole problem revolves around the lack of a male heir, which makes Mia's father obligated to make her the next heiress to the throne, the teenager will have to adapt to a new life and learn how to be a princess. The book works with the imagination of many young women because it is a fairy tale that happened to an "ordinary" girl from New York. Mia, then, will have to transform into a real princess, have etiquette classes with her strict grandmother, with who she does not have many connections with, and even to walk around with a body guard. Everything in the peak of her teenage years.

Lessons on how to be a princess.

I am not joking. I have to go straight from my algebra revision classes to the Plaza, in order to take princess lessons with my grandmother. [...] Daddy says I don't have a choice [...]. He said I have signed a commitment, so I was obliged to take princess classes as part of my duties as heiress (CABOT, 2014, p. 111).

The character did not want to take seriously the issue of becoming a princess, but she is forced to do it because she does not have any

alternative. This way, Mia goes on receiving, day after day, Grandmère's lessons: "Tomorrow, you are going to wear nylon stockings. Not mesh. Not knee-high socks. You are too grown up for mesh and knee-high socks. And you are going to wear shoes to school, not sneakers. You are going to do your hair, wear lipstick and do your nails (CABOT, 2014, p. 117). These lessons are intended to teach proper manner to the girl on how to be and how to behave.

Mia was not a role model of femininity, not on Grandmère standards. She did not use feminine accessories, such as nylon socks, or even make up, she was tall, awkward and bit her nails, her hair was messy; she was not like the other girls regarding consumerist desires, she was a Greenpeace supporter. Being different, in that sense, started to be inadequate and Mia felt obligated to mold herself into the new paradigm of behavior that was being imposed to her.

The great idea of the author resides in building a character that would not fit into the socially ideal gender, body and beauty models, which would be relatable to some readers, to then put her right into a standard and then form an empathy network with the audience.

In Meg Cabot's story, this adaptation to this new identity causes pain on Mia.

[...] It is kind of difficult, when all these beautiful, elegant people, say how we look so well wearing that and how our cheekbones come to life with that, we remember that we are feminist and environmentalist and do not believe in wearing make up or chemical products that are harmful to the planet [...]. But I don't feel happy. Not even a little bit. Grandmère is happy [...] with my appearance. Because I look nothing like Mia Thermopolis. Mia Thermopolis never had nails. Mia Thermopolis never wear make up, Gucci shoes, Chanel skirts or Christian Dior bra [...]. I don't even know who I am anymore. She is making me into somebody else (CABOT, 2014, p. 135-136).

Mia's identity crisis reminds us of the feminist draft. She needs to play a role she does not feel prepared to. The tension of the narrative lies

on her non-acceptance to her new identity, basically, linked to gender, body, behavior and beauty stereotypes.

However, the fact is that Mia will settle and fit into the “princess” standard, accepting to wear the accessories that seem to be more adequate to her new life: “Grandmère said that, when I go to dinner with them on Friday night, I must bring a gift and wear my Gucci loafers.” (CABOT, 2014, p. 183). Therefore, throughout the narrative, she is gradually changing her behavior, going from non-acceptance and resistance to a certain type of conformism. This will happen properly when Mia end up having her image published on the first page of the New York Post with the following headline: “*Princess Amelia and, in smaller print, the authentic New York Royalty*” (CABOT, 2014, p. 187).

From this moment on, Mia, who before felt rejected by the boys in her school for being “tall, a giraffe [...] no beauty” (CABOT, 2014, p. 189), sees that “suddenly, [were] very popular” (CABOT, 2014, p. 194), also starting to be hit on by the most interesting young man of the school, that invites her to go with him to a ball:

Well, here I am, sitting, wearing my new dress, my new shoes, my new nails, my new panty hose, with my legs and my armpits properly shaved, my new hair, my professionally done face, it is seven o'clock and there's no sign of Josh [...]. Thank God the intercom rang at that moment. It's him (CABOT, 2014, p. 253).

Mia, in the end, will not end up with Josh, who only wanted to take advantage of her fame. She turns around and picks another boy. Now, the protagonist can choose whom to be with. Everything starts to be right. The story does not end up in a big palace, but rather on a party where Mia finally dates Michael, her old love, the older brother of her best friend, Lilly. He, a common teenager, less popular, but who she always liked, whose predominantly quality is the intelligence, contrary to the other teenager, who was only “handsome”. The main character is already transformed, she is already a princess: “I thought that I really am a very happy girl. Things seemed so bad for a while, but isn't it funny how it all works out in the end” (CABOT, 2014, p. 281) and

there is the happy conclusion. What prevails in the end of the story is the ideal image of a woman in a girl who knows how to dress and is educated to please, who represents well the aristocratic position and a beauty standard.

For Naomi Woolf (1992), these desired paradigms of body, beauty and behavior for the feminine do not only represent the object, person or event they illustrate, but bring us deeper meanings, not always easily identified. In fact, when these images may represent empowerment and girly attitude, in a counterpart, contribute for the unworthiness of feminism, and consequently, for the reinforcement of the stigma of beauty, constructed, theoretically, social and culturally against women.

Final considerations

Meg Cabot's book is an example of the genre chick lit or teen chick lit, i. e., a type of literature that is produced within female authorship fiction that has as a common agenda issues related to the universe of contemporary young women. The reading of the novel allowed seeing it as a novel with a light plot, located in the mass culture, looking to show an image of well-informed, independent and cultured women.

In this sense, some feminist theoreticians linked to the third-wave feminism seek to consider chick lit as a type of post-feminist literature because it exposes women not as victims of an oppressive society of gender anymore and it is a fiction related to female experience, such as dating, beauty, profession, activism, sex, etc. The same would apply to teen chick lit.

However, this literature would be overlaid with gender oppressive content linked to the industry of consumption. As we can observe, what is interesting to teen chick lit is to present "well dressed and with good appearance" main characters that have, however, critical thinking and are aware of the reality in the cultural context that they are inserted in. The question is that the same young women also represent "a place" in which they use their voice and their actions. Either Mia, main character of *Princess Diaries*, or the other main characters of teen chick lits are, in

general, white, straight, middle to high class, in misogynistic, patriarchal contexts, as Suzanne Ferriss and Young Mallory (2006) attest. It seems that the drama faced by teen chick lit protagonists represent a gender culture that seems to be not ready for female empowerment, in addition to excluding issues of sexuality, social class and race when privileging only normative ideal standards of these categories.

For Stuart Hall (1997, p. 33), all social practices have a cultural dimension and a discursive character: “consequently, culture is one of the constituent conditions of existence in this practice”. Regarding adolescence, thinking in terms of cultural identity and constitution of subjects as social constructs (HALL, 2005), we can infer that the construction of identities is articulated to discourses shared and supported by many cultural artifacts built, often times, exactly for this type of audience. As for young women, among such artifacts, the teen chick lit novel, sharing massively an extensive array of information about a variety of subjects, also distributing ways of being and even what they should like and how they should proceed.

Therefore, when taking as an example the analysis of young Mia, we perceive that, if, in the beginning of the novel, she perceived herself as out of standards, for being tall, skinny and with big feet, for biting her nails, having messy hair and most of all, for questioning the consumerism of her school colleagues. In the end, the protagonist ends up fitting into a standard behavior, turning into a socially acceptable image in favor of a new identity: of being a “princess”. Along with that, came the success in having the boy of her dreams, the admiration of other schoolmates, the media’s approval.

Since, as we know, the reading of a novel does not end on their consumption, but unfolds in practices of a social impact, the question that underlies here is: how many girls cannot feel like Mia? After all, if a common girl can become an “independent” princess in a few months, any girlie can feel this “empowerment”, they just need etiquette lessons, adequate make up and branded clothes. It is in this sense that, among the array of possible interpretations and considerations, Princess Diaries fits

into as a commercial product which content linked to the field of fights for female emancipation acts in favor of the market of consumption.

In the end of this text, the impression we have is that the engagement proposed by the DIY feminism, in which chick lit (and its subgenres such as teen chick lit, for example) became an expression, presupposes the reinforcement of symbolic norms and moral values that are linked to forms of conduct that academic feminists have been questioning for years. In other words, a more attentive reading of this type of novel reveals a realignment of this “new female autonomy” into a society whose patriarchalism authorizes and regulates human behavior. If, on one hand, it contributes for the dissemination of the idea of female empowerment through independent and active protagonists with critical thinking, on the other hand, it reinforces stigma of behavior and beauty that act completely against the empowerment.

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About the author

Master and PhD in Languages by the Universidade de São Paulo. Post-doctoral in Portuguese Literature by FFLCH/USP, with financing of the Foundation for Support to Research of the State of São Paulo (FAPESP). Member of the

Group of Studies of Literature of Feminine Authorship (USP/CNPq) and the group of research of Relations between Literature and Journalism of the Center of Lusophone and European Literatures and Cultures of the Universidade de Lisboa (CLEPUL). This study is part of a post-doctoral research financed by CAPES along with Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie.

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