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The Contrasting Display of Emotions in *Bridget Jones's Diary*

RESUMÉ

Denne artikel undersøger Sharon Maguires romantiske komedie *Bridget Jones dagbog* (2001), og hvordan den både tematisk og stilistisk fremhæver forholdet imellem protagonistens frivillige og ufrivillige fremvisning af følelser. Endvidere udforsker den brugen af filmiske teknikker og viser, hvordan filmen taler til vores følelser, appellerer til et højt, bevidst kognitivt niveau og til et lavt, automatiseret kognitivt niveau, samt hvordan dette påvirker Bridgets egenskaber som handlende aktør. Denne læsning leder til konklusionen, at mens Bridgets krop bruges som et redskab til at producere følelser, er følelsen af forlegenhed frem for alt rettet mod publikum. Fordi hendes følelser ikke forvandles til stærkere emotioner som skam, forbliver Bridget fortsat en handlende aktør.

ABSTRACT

This article examines how Sharon Maguire's romantic comedy *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) both thematically and stylistically foregrounds the relationship between the protagonist's voluntary and involuntary displays of emotions. It explores the use of cinematic techniques, underlining how the film speaks to our emotions, appealing both to high-level cognitive processes and low-level affective responses, and how this affects Bridget's agency. The reading yields the conclusion that while Bridget's body is utilized as a site of affect, the feeling of embarrassment is primarily aimed at the audience. Furthermore, since her feelings do not transform into stronger emotions of shame, Bridget's agency remains strong.

EMNEORD

Forlegenhed, skam, affekt, handlende aktør, romantisk komedie

KEYWORDS

Embarrassment, shame, affect, agency, romantic comedy

Sharon Maguire's film *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) highlights the relationship between voluntary and involuntary displays of emotions in a particularly attuned manner. Due to the fact that the film's centers on Bridget Jones's diary, the main protagonist shares her emotions with the spectator and the rest of the world, both through self-conscious retrospection and involuntarily directness. In the opening scene of the film, a medium shot shows Bridget (played by Renée Zellweger) walking, with suitcase in hand, through snow filled streets while her own character narration discloses her pessimistic outlook on the forthcoming new year.[1] Moreover, through the character narration it becomes clear that Bridget grumbles over the fact that her mother constantly makes an effort to find her a suitable bachelor. When Bridget enters her mother's home, the audience is fully aware of her emotional baggage. Hence, the awkwardness that subsequently follows when Bridget meets Mark Darcy (played by Colin Firth), and he badmouths her ruthlessly, puts the spectator in a position where first-hand information on her emotional life influences the interpretation of the scene. In this sense, the diary format highlights the main character's emotional life, and therefore it becomes one of the film's major focal points of attention.

Narrative and formal criteria guides the spectator's understanding of the protagonist's emotions. Yet, our understanding of Bridget's feelings is not solely guided by these criteria. Another crucial aspect of the emotional impact of *Bridget Jones's Diary* is our direct, instinctive and affective responses to Bridget's displays of emotions. Research into the emotional affect of cinema constitutes whole shelves in media libraries with much literature focusing on "body genres" (Williams 1991) such as horror, melodrama and pornography. However, despite the strong reliance on the body as a site of affect in romantic comedies, little attention has been afforded the function of affective techniques in this genre. Moreover, while the notion that cinematic emotions can speak both to our high-level cognitive processes and our low-level affective responses is neither novel nor controversial, *Bridget Jones's Diary* articulates and highlights the contrast between the two processes in a particularly pluralistic fashion.[2]

Films constitute complex systems capable of communicating both emotions and sensations. In *Bridget Jones's Diary*, we follow Bridget through her soul-searching journey in both good times and in bad. The film is driven by Bridget's self-consciousness being put through a test where, seemingly, inherent uneasiness and embarrassment constitute key ingredients. Meanwhile, the main character goes through an emotional rollercoaster-ride

[1] Also known as first-person narration, see for instance *James Phelan. Living To Tell About It: A Rhetoric and Ethics of Character Narration*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.

[2] For more on high-level cognition versus automatic processes, see Greg M. Smith, *Film Structure and the Emotion System*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

in her search for happiness. In this sense, *Bridget Jones's Diary* could, arguably, be taken to epitomize Carl Plantinga's notion that the "cinema is a place to feel something" (1999, 2).

Bridget Jones's Diary centers—both thematically and stylistically—on the main character's displays of emotions. This article focuses on the structures and strategies permeating the display of emotions, emphasizing the crucial role of Bridget's self-conscious character narration, as well as visual cues and subjective alterations; but also, in contrast, it focuses on the features emphasizing the body as a direct, affective site for communicating emotions through facial expressions, gestures and postures. But the aforementioned aesthetic and narrative criteria are not the only the objects of analysis, but this article will also address their proposed affect. Lastly, the article ends with a discussion of Bridget Jones and her agency as a main character, taking into account the structures and strategies permeating the film. By highlighting these diverse aspects of *Bridget Jones's Diary*, I will argue that Bridget's display of emotions does not stress feelings of shame, but rather, feelings such as embarrassment are primarily aimed at the audience.

Character Narration and the Diary Format

When Helen Fielding's novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* was published in 1996, critics praised the book for the authenticity of the narration and the genuine emotion of her voice (Marsh 2004, 52). The character narration employed in the novel stresses Bridget's first-hand, subjective perception of the world, while simultaneously offering insight into her emotional life. In the article "Authenticity, Convention, and Bridget Jones's Diary" (2001), Alison Case utilizes her research on 'feminine narration' in 19th century British literature in her interpretation of *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Drawing on her book *Plotting Women* (1999), Case accentuates that Victorian literature excludes the female narrator from "shaping her experience into a coherent and meaningful story" (176). Furthermore, Case argues that the Victorian feminine narration emphasized a "raw and unmediated" version of life, which in turn became a major part of the lead female's narrative role (177). In other words, there was a significant lack of agency for female narrators, despite their prominent position within the narrative.

In Helen Fielding's novel, there is a considerable narrative emphasis on Bridget's whimsicality and how she lets whatever is in her head come out of her mouth without considering the consequences. This display of emotions, arguably, adds to the supposed authenticity that the character narration lends to the character. Meanwhile, Case finds that the novel's diary format highlights an interesting oxymoron. While the diary format indeed stresses that Bridget authors the unfolded events, Case notes that such a construction is limited to a self-conscious retrospective account of events. But in order for the humor to work, Case says, the audience accepts substantial "violations of

mimetic consistency" (180). In this sense, the novel constructs situations where the direct experience of Bridget's consciousness is highlighted rather than a "self-consciously produced written record" (180). In other words, the novel constructs a divide between how Bridget self-consciously represents herself, in contrast to her direct experiences of the world.

Similarly, in the film, the diary format highlights a problematic formal construction of the relationship between retrospection and directness. One interesting aspect of the cinematic adaptation's approach to this issue is the fact that Bridget's diary is no longer presented through the written word, but the diary's form is instead emphasized through the use of character narration, visual cues and subjective alterations of the diegetic world. For example, in the title sequence of the film, Bridget's character narration introduces the viewer to a night in her life, while a static shot shows how Bridget reacts to having been trashed by Mark Darcy in the opening scene. As the titles begin to appear, Bridget wonders across the screen, dressed only in pajamas, moving from the couch to her unresponsive answering machine. At the same time, the frame reveals her unclean, messed up apartment. Whilst this is taking place, Jamie O'Neill's "All By Myself" is playing in the background, and then suddenly crosses over into the diegetic world when Bridget begins to mime and gesture violently as the song hits its crescendo. Simultaneously, the titles begin to roll, and lastly the title *Bridget Jones's Diary* appears in large letters next to her. In the subsequent scene, Bridget's character narration concludes that a promise has been made and that last evenings events are not to be repeated again.

There are several formal features that serve to assert the self-conscious retrospective diary format in the title sequence and the following scene. First of all, Bridget's self-conscious introduction stresses that she is aware of her non-desirable situation by comparing herself to Glenn Close in *Fatal Attraction* (Adrian Lyne, 1987). This, furthermore, stresses that she recognizes society's expectations, and is under certain social pressure to behave in a particular manner even in her private life. Thus, when the title text appears next to Bridget at the crescendo of "All By Myself", the visual cue does not only highlight the forthcoming diary format, but also sets the tone for how her innermost embarrassing moments will be put on display during the forthcoming ninety minutes. Accordingly, as Bridget unwraps her new diary, she discloses her feelings of guilt from a retrospective point-of-view. Meanwhile, a non-diegetic text appears where her personal 'guilt-statistics' are shown: weight, cigarette consumption and alcohol consumption. In this sense, the film's formal construction of the diary format echoes Case's notion of self-conscious retrospective evaluation, while offering another dimension by utilizing specifically cinematic techniques, such as self-conscious character narration and non-diegetic visual cues where different modes influence each other.

Bridget Jones and the Display of Emotions

Meanwhile, the absence of these cinematic techniques often serves to emphasize Bridget's direct, unmediated encounters with the world. Moreover, the problematic relation between self-conscious retrospection and direct experiences is not only highlighted through the film's diary format, but more than anything through the main character's display of emotions. This counter relationship is primarily emphasized in scenes where Bridget's feelings are salient. These scenes, in turn, often focus on direct experiences of, first and foremost, embarrassing, humiliating and unappealing moments in Bridget's life. This becomes particularly interesting when considering the fact that the film is based on a well-known bestselling novel—arguably stressing directness through the manner of Bridget's writing style—in contrast to the formal features adapted in this film. In this sense, the question arises: how does the filmmaker utilize cinematic techniques in order to put Bridget's displays of emotions in the limelight?

The difference between communication of emotions in literature and audiovisual media has been highlighted by, among others, Amy Coplan. In her essay "Catching Characters' Emotions: Emotional Contagion Responses to Narrative Fiction Film" (2006), Coplan suggests that cinema highlights affective-responses such as moods and mimicry in a particularly striking manner contrasting our experience of literary narratives. In this sense, she argues that affective responses are "unique to our experience of audiovisual narratives" due to its dependence on "direct sensory engagement and … automatic processes" (26). According to Coplan, automatic and affective processes might induce emotional contagion when we observe others' emotions (26). Meanwhile, the notion of emotional contagion is not novel, but rather it has long traditions within the field of psychology (cf. Hatfield, Cacioppo and Rapson, 1994). During recent years, this line of thought has gained influence partly due to recent research into what the mirror neuron system can and cannot tell us. When researchers at the University of Parma discovered mirror neurons, they found that macaque monkeys' mirror neurons are not only triggered when they perform an action, but also when they perceive, smell or hear something associated with this action, such as a hand grasping for a peanut.[3] Moreover, subsequent research into mirror neurons has shown how muscle groups triggered by neural events responds to movement of other agents (Fadiga et al 1995, 2608). This, in turn, might provide insight into how emotions are simulated and how this affects our feelings of empathy (Jabbi, Swart and Keysers 2007, 1744). In this sense, the discovery of mirror neurons could, prospectively, have a particular influence within the field of film studies because of cinema's dependence on

[3] For further reading on the mirror neuron system, see for example Vittorio Gallese and Alvin Goldman. "Mirror neurons and the simulation theory of mind-reading." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*. Dec. 1998: 493-501.

audiovisual stimuli. In other words, if research into mirror neurons offers a feasible explanation of how gestures, postures and facial expressions evoke emotions, cinema would emerge as an ideal medium for this practice of communication.

However, even long before neuroscientists discovered mirror neurons, human facial expressions and body language were categorized as the most prominent, specifically cinematic, features of the medium. For example, in the 1910s, psychologist Hugo Münsterberg began theorizing cinematic specificity and the isolation of the face and body parts in space and time. In his view, "we withdraw our attention from all which is unimportant and concentrate it on that one point on which the action is focused" (2002, 177). Similarly, Bela Balázs devotes the human face substantial attention in his book *Theory of the Film* (1952). In this text, Balázs discusses human facial expressions in a broader sense; namely, as a way of communicating which is more subjective than speech (60). In his view, the 'play of features' are particularly significant because they "are not governed by objective canons" such as grammar and language. Instead, Balázs stresses that facial expressions are a form of direct communication that "speaks instinctively, subconsciously" (63). In this sense, the direct, instinctive communication through facial expressions, gestures and postures highlights an intriguing distinction between literature and cinema. This is especially relevant in relation to how *Bridget Jones's Diary*—a cinematic adaptation of a novel—handles the distinction between retrospection and directness. While the diary format occasionally provides Bridget with the opportunity to reveal her innermost feelings without experiencing inhibition, Bridget's involuntary displays of emotions are continuously highlighted through aesthetic and narrative focus. In this sense, Bridget's body is emphasizes as a direct, affective site for communicating emotions through facial expressions, gestures and postures. In particular, this becomes evident when observing the scenes where Bridget's feelings are discernable, or, alternatively, when a strong feeling of uneasiness permeates the scenes.

One example of the latter occurs when Bridget attempts the art of public speaking. In this scene, Bridget presents her publishing company's latest novel at a large release venue. In the speech that follows, Bridget ventures into a lengthy monologue on the reasonable excellence of the novel presented. When delivering this speech, a number of features highlight Bridget's nervousness. First of all, Bridget's voice trembles, and she stutters occasionally. Moreover, her physical gestures could be described as erratic as she nods excessively in an effort to assess the audiences' understanding. Despite that these gestures might standalone highlight Bridget's nervousness, other factors such as spatiotemporal closeness could add to our feeling of her predicament (Eder 2006, 70). In this case, the spectator is moved closer to Bridget as the salience of her embarrassment increases in a highly attuned manner. At the outset of the scene, when the crowd fails to notice Bridget, she

is being framed in a long shot while nervously tapping the microphone. When she finally manages to catch the audiences' attention, which is revealed through frequent eyeline matches, the framing goes from a medium shot to a medium close-up, settling on a close-up for the larger part of the scene. While the camera moves closer and closer to Bridget's face, the action taking place increasingly triggers uneasy feelings. Meanwhile, Bridget begins to blush as she smiles nervously and attempts to restore her credibility. While the character narration does add to her obvious confusion, by repeating the wrong name of the author she is about to present, there is no casual commentary offered on the specific emotional situation.

But how does the audience make sense of Bridget's feelings in this scene? Researchers utilizing a cultural starting point in their explorations of emotions would stress Bridget's embarrassment primarily from the point-of-view of the social history and how her embarrassment is evaluated within the cultural context (Oatley & Jenkins 1996, 77). For instance, the highly skeptical looks from the audience, revealed through eyeline-matches, illustrates the crucial role of the cultural context. Also, by commissioning an iconic writer such as Salman Rushdie to act in the audience, the cultural expectations on Bridget's behavior are emphasized. Meanwhile, theorists stressing an evolutionary starting point would argue that Bridget's physical reaction "signals to others a sense of remorse for the transgression" (77). According to psychologist Robert Levenson (2003), emotions, among them embarrassment, are signaled through facial expressions that are associated with certain physiological reactions. In his study, Levenson finds that the physical reactions to embarrassment include blushing and coloration; something that he in other studies argues is widely culturally convergent (Levenson, Ekman and Heider 1992, 972).[4] In the public speaking scene in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, the main character's blushing cheeks could thus indicate her nervousness and her embarrassment. While emotions are expressed through multiple modes such as position, voice, touch, posture and so on, Paul Ekman, and other researchers within empirical psychology, has shown how facial expressions are particularly "reliable markers of emotion" (Matsumoto et al 2000, 225).[5] Interestingly, the aesthetic choices made by the filmmaker highlights Bridget's facial expressions to a great extent throughout the film. By closing in on the main characters face as she slowly begins to blush, and at the same time situating her in a cultural context where her actions are not expected, the

[4] For more on facial expressions and cultural convergence, see the article on the Minangkabau from Indonesia. Robert Levenson, Paul Ekman and Karl Heider. "Emotion and autonomic nervous system activity in the Minangkabau of West Sumatra". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 62. Jun 1992. 972-988.

[5] For more on facial expressions and emotions, see David Matsumoto, Dacher Keltner, Michelle N. Shiota, Maureen O'Sullivan and Mark Frank. "Facial Expression of Emotion", eds. Michael Lewis and Jeanette M. Haviland-Jones. *Handbook of Emotions*. New York, Guilford Press, 2000. 211–234.

filmmaker stresses both physical and cultural aspects. Both of these factors, most likely, inform our understanding of Bridget's predicament in this scene.

On the other hand, I would argue that the genuine feeling of embarrassment is primarily directed at the audience. During the two minutes that this scene lasts, the increased emphasis on Bridget's facial expressions highlights a direct experience of her embarrassment. This becomes particularly evident when noting the contrasting formal structure in relation to the opening of the film. Moreover, when Bridget nervously presents the novel there seems to be a discrepancy between Bridget's own reaction in the film and the audiences' reaction in the cinema. When an audience member laughs at the public speaking scene, I believe that the reaction is based on a feeling of nervousness derived from Bridget's facial expressions and gestures, but also fright for how she handles herself in the cultural context as such. Moreover, this incongruity between the main character's emotions and the audiences' reaction, I would argue, reoccurs throughout the film. Another moment highlighting this discrepancy occurs when Bridget is invited to her mother's house for a costume party with the theme tarts and vicars. In this scene, the rest of the guests are wearing proper apparel when Bridget shows up scantly dressed in a bunny suit. When Bridget notices that the theme of the party has changed, her shocked facial expression freezes. While framed in a close-up, Bridget smiles in a strained fashion, and laughs nervously as she interacts with her mother and uncle. In contrast to the public speaking scene, emphasis is consistently put on Bridget's face and her mimicry. In *How Emotions Work* (1999), Jack Katz analyzes the dynamics of laughter in a case study of a 'fun house'. According to Katz, a certain tension is created when a person's body is in, for instance, an awkward position. In this sense, Katz says, the individual in this position asks for release. What happens when tension is moved to laughter is that "the metamorphosis of a potentially negative possibility, the danger of showing that one is awkwardly, even perhaps a bit cruelly, not 'with' another who needs release" turns "into positive gales of laughter" (111). In this sequence, the rest of the guests are shown either in medium close-ups or medium shots. Instead of closing in on the surroundings, emphasis is put on the body, primarily in the form of Bridget's face, gestures and postures. Bridget's physical predicament is stressed throughout the scene, and the guests at the party do not relieve Bridget by laughing, but rather stress her embarrassed state by gazing at her casually. Moreover, Bridget remains in the same posture throughout the scene, almost as if the onlookers' gazes freeze her up. Drawing on Katz's research, the tension created in this scene prompts interaction between the film and the real life audience, resulting, most likely, in the utilization of laughter as a tool to 'release'. In this sense, the combination of emphasized facial expressions and the spatiotemporal construction of tensions speaks to the audience in a direct, automatic manner. Moreover, Katz notes that laughter lies between the physical and the cultural, which in turn stresses the argument that our

understanding of Bridget's facial expressions and feelings is constructed by the dynamic relationship between directness and self-consciousness—the physical and the cultural.

In this sense, I would argue that *Bridget Jones's Diary* does not utilize traditional affective strategies or aesthetic distortions—such as sound effects, swift cutting, startle effects or affective brutality—but instead the body becomes the primary affective tool (Dadlez 2010, 127). With regard to this, one must not neglect to mention the increasing on emphasis on the embodied mind and the topic of affect within contemporary neuroscience. Antonio Damasio, for instance, has famously stressed the crucial role of emotions in our cognition, proving a link between our minds and our nerve cells (2010). In this sense, Damasio highlights the embodied mind and the error of the Carthesian divide between body and mind. The cognitive film theorist Torben Grodal (2009) draws heavily upon Damasio's research and suggests that the cinematic experience is embodied. In Grodal's view, "the senses are designed to pick up information which may in turn prompt actions that implement the preferences of agents, as expressed in their emotions" (146). Likewise, attention has been afforded the notion of the embodied mind from the field of phenomenological film theory, stressing the affects of synesthesia—stimulation of our senses—within the cinematic experience (cf. Sobchack 1992). Consistently, a large number of scenes stress Bridget's awkward body language, including her facial expressions, through aesthetic choices. In this sense, the filmmaker highlights how our cognitive and sensory understanding of the body can provoke feelings in a very instinctive manner.

Bridget Jones – Shameful or Confident

As I have shown, the film centers on Bridget Jones feelings, both from a narrative and an aesthetical point-of-view. Moreover, the diary format stresses the main characters retrospective, self-conscious side, while scenes highlighting, for instance, embarrassment focus on direct, bodily communication of the main characters feelings. While these aspects highlight how Bridget is presented, the analysis does not take into account the implications of the films structures and strategies for Bridget Jones and her agency as a character. Much has been written about *Bridget Jones's Diary*, and especially about Bridget's inability to control her life and the dependence on superficial ambitions: marriage, thinness and consumption. In the film, Bridget's nervous smile, stuttering voice and uncomfortable gestures speak when her words do not suffice, and in this sense this emphasis might, arguably, stress how she is not able to control herself to a fulfilling degree. In this manner, a number of critics have pointed out that Bridget epitomizes the

negative cultural stereotype about middle-aged single women.[6] Drawing on the film's structure and strategies, the critique posits an interesting question: how does Bridget Jones as a character feel in situations where she loses control?

In the article "Singled Out: Postfeminism's 'New Woman' and the Dilemma of Having It All" (2010), Stéphanie Genz's highlights how the academic discussion on the character Bridget Jones has centered on her as a postfeminist icon whose interest in introspection and so-called "prefeminist concerns"—such as the desire to marry—might signify a slide from a political feminism to a lifestyle feminism (101). In Genz view, the critique leveled against postfeminist fiction such as *Bridget Jones Diary*, but also television series *Ally McBeal* (1997-2002) and *Sex and the City* (1998-2004), constructs a juxtaposed relationship between feminism and femininity (102). Postfeminism has been identified as both as a 'backlash' against women—in Susan Faludi's sense of the word (1991)—but also as a multidirectional phenomena that should not be dismissed easily. This daunting issue permeates the academic discussion of Bridget Jones, and substantial efforts have been made to label Bridget as either feminist or antifeminist. Less, however, has been written on how the cinematic adaptation approaches Bridget's self-conscious feelings and how aesthetic and narrative structures affects her agency as a character.

To Genz, this antifeminist reading ignores that Bridget is a complex contemporary heroine being "simultaneously bewildered and confident" (102). These two attributes, I would argue, permeate the aesthetic construction of direct scenes emphasizing instinctive feelings. The public speaking scene, discussed at great length previously, and its aftermath might indicate how Bridget reacts to the feeling of uneasiness and perhaps also embarrassment. While Bridget does have a sullen expression after her speech, she does not express a feeling of shame, neither verbally nor through other modes. In this regard, it is important to distinguish between feelings of shame and feelings of guilt. While the two states are closely related, there are distinct differences. According to *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*, guilt concerns "feelings of culpability especially for imagined offenses or from a sense of inadequacy". In other words, guilt is a feeling that is based on a feeling of responsibility for ones actions. Moreover, there is more than one type of guilt; in this case, I would argue that Bridget's guilt is based on a feeling of embarrassment or unworthiness. Shame, on the other hand, is more closely connected to our emotions. In *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*, shame is described as "a painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt, shortcoming, or impropriety". In the book *Shame and Desire: Emotion, Intersubjectivity, Cinema* (2007), film

[6] See for example Carol K Oyster, Mary Zeiss Stange, and Jane Sloan. *The Multimedia Encyclopedia of Women in Today's World*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. 2011. 71-75. In this recent book, Bridget Jones's Diary is discussed in the chapter on "Antifeminism" and is criticized for epitomizing the second element of antifeminism; a dismissal of the feminist past.

scholar Tarja Laine notes that shame is a feeling that "arises out of the tension between how the individual wants to be seen and how she or he is" (67). In this sense, guilt is related to what we do, but shame is related to what we are. In this scene, Bridget fails to deliver a proper introduction, but seems to maintain a dash of dignity by not having cracked completely. Similarly, there is no particularly salient emotion in the scene describing the aftermath. As mentioned, Bridget does have a gloomy facial expression, and her gestures signal disinterest. In *The Philosophy of Motion Pictures* (2008), cognitive philosopher Noël Carroll argues that cinematic emotions are especially clear-cut given the incentive to in fact communicate emotions and feeling states to the audience. Accordingly, Carroll argues "characters are intentionally fabricated in such a way that they wear their feelings and their thoughts on their sleeves" (174). In this sense, if Bridget's reaction to her failure indeed were shame, the filmmakers would have attempted to highlight this to a greater degree. Moreover, I would argue that Bridget's reaction could be described as guilt because she is confident enough to accept that her failed attempt at public speaking is something she *did*, and not what she *is*.

Instead, I would argue that the cigarette at Bridget's fingertips insinuates that her failed public speaking counts as yet another setback in her strife for self-improvement. Considering this in relation to the analysis of the formal construction of the diary format and the opening scene, this continuous feeling of guilt becomes even clearer. The frequent use of subjective alterations and visual cues highlights this notion. For instance, one scene shows how the iconic Piccadilly Circus displays Bridget's 'guilt-statistics', and numerous other scenes feature non-diegetic texts appearing when she has different setbacks. Therefore, when Bridget gives in to her urges, in the form of a cigarette, the film connects two separate feelings of guilt together. Furthermore, this could be described as a motif that is continuously highlighted by the narrative as the main character takes two steps forward, and one step back.

So what are the consequences of this aesthetic and narrative structure for Bridget's agency as a character? Despite both aesthetic and narrative emphasis on Bridget's involuntary displays of emotions—through both her interaction with other characters and the emphasis on affective, direct communication of emotions— Bridget never breaks down publicly. To exemplify, the scene where Bridget discovers Daniel Cleaver's adultery largely echoes the previously analyzed formal structure; emphasizing direct, instinctive feelings, albeit with a stronger focus on Bridget's emotions. In this scene, Bridget walks in to Cleaver's bathroom and discovers his mistress, while the close-up focuses on Bridget's face in a similar manner as other emotionally striking scenes discussed previously. While Bridget pants heavily, and her facial expression expresses shock, she does not break into tears neither does she display any other strong emotions. Instead, she

subsequently returns to her couch, reiterating the two steps forward, one-step back structure of the narrative. In her couch, she does not sob, but watches *Fatal Attraction* whilst smoking and rolling her eyes at the film. In the subsequent scenes, she confronts Daniel Cleaver through a highly voluntary display of resentment. In this sense, I believe the distinction between guilt and shame is a crucial one, because Bridget manages to overcome her guilt by not letting her feelings transform into a stronger emotion of shame. Hence, this highlights that her agency as a character remains strong despite the contrasting relation between self-conscious retrospection and direct, affective communication of feelings.

Retrospection and Directness – Contrasting Entities?

Drawing on this analysis of Bridget's displays of emotions—which the film inevitably centers on—the question arises whether retrospection and directness are highlighted as contrasting entities. Even though concepts such as perception, emotion, motor-action and cognition are intrinsically intertwined and crucial to our understanding of cinematic emotions, weight within film studies has been put on high-level, sophisticated cognitive processes rather than affective responses. In this study, I have attempted to articulate a pluralistic account of cinematic emotions, emphasizing both cinematic techniques dependent on our sophisticated, high-level cognitive capacities as well as the ones dependent on our direct, affective capacities.

This becomes particularly interesting in relation to the display of emotions because of the way the film constructs a contrasting relation between Bridget's self-conscious retrospection and affective, direct displays of emotions. For instance, this opposition is emphasized in the cinematic construction of the diary format. While Bridget's self-conscious retrospection is communicated through character narration, visual cues and subjective alterations in the diegetic world, the absence of these techniques underlines Bridget's direct experience of the world. But the way *Bridget Jones's Diary* utilizes cinematic techniques in order to highlight Bridget's display of emotions adds yet another layer to the opposition structure. As I have shown by analyzing the aesthetic choices made by the filmmaker, the film strongly focuses on the main characters displays of emotions. Moreover, I have suggested that *Bridget Jones's Diary* primarily focuses on Bridget's body as a direct, affective site for communicating emotions through facial expressions, gestures and postures.

When analyzing Bridget's display of emotions, the question of its proposed affect becomes central. Drawing on this analysis, I would suggest that the feeling of embarrassment is primarily aimed at the audience. In this sense, the scenes emphasizing a direct, affective experience of Bridget's feelings do not center on strong emotions such as shame, but rather they highlight feelings of embarrassment that the audience attempts to escape. It is not only the

question of affect that becomes central as a result of the utilization of cinematic techniques in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, but the agency of the main character also inevitably becomes a topic of discussion. In this paper, critique against the narrative construction of the character is measured against the aesthetic choices made by the filmmaker and the utilization of affective cinematic techniques. As I have argued, the film stresses how Bridget resists breaking down publicly, showing how she utilizes voluntary displays of emotions when she is actually hurt. In this sense, she does not subside to feelings of shame, but is more confident than she gets credit for being.

To summarize, I find that a number of narrative and aesthetic aspects in *Bridget Jones's Diary*—such as the diary format in contrast to the close-ups on facial expressions and the emphasis on body language—stresses the contrast between Bridget's self-conscious retrospection and involuntary displays of emotions. By focusing on this aspect of *Bridget Jones's Diary*, I show how this contrast is constructed and intensified throughout the film, reflecting on the proposed affect on the audience as well as its impact on Bridget's agency as a character. In doing so, I suggest that while Bridget's body is utilized as a site of affect, her agency as a main character remains strong because her feelings do not transform into stronger emotions of shame.

CV

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