

Generation Chick: Reading *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *Jessica*,
30., and *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* as Postfeminist Novels

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Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, the novel widely considered one of chick lit's founding texts, was published in 1996, the same year that Anne Strelau travels to London to reunite with love-of-her-life Peter Hemstedt in Karen Duve's *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* 'This is not a Love Song' (2000). In 1999, Volker Hage published his now notorious *Spiegel* articles introducing the phrase "literarisches Fräuleinwunder" 'literary miracle girl'; one of the *Fräuleins* mentioned by Hage was Karen Duve.¹ Marlene Streeruwitz's *Jessica*, *30.* was published in 2004. While at first glance, these publishing events seem to have little or nothing in common, they are in fact linked through their relationship to the global phenomenon of chick lit.

In this article, I read these three novels in the context of the *literarisches Fräuleinwunder*, chick lit's generic conventions, and postfeminism, connecting them to the globalization of the book publishing industry and its effects on German-language fiction. Both Duve's and Streeruwitz's novels can be understood as a response to the Anglo-American chick lit that flooded the German-language book market in the 1990s, of which Fielding's novel is one of the best-known. I relate the German-language texts to chick lit in three ways: 1) via the literary market: both novels respond to chick lit as a global phenomenon, while also reacting to the calls for a return to storytelling in German-language literature; 2) generically: Fielding, Duve, and Streeruwitz employ similar narrative strategies (first-person narration) and themes (weight and the body); 3) the relationship of the texts and authors to feminism/postfeminism: to varying degrees, all three can be read as postfeminist novels. Final-

ly, my analysis asks why so many Germanists are hesitant to label *Fräuleinwunder* texts chick lit despite the overwhelming similarities between chick lit and the works of *Fräuleinwunder* authors. Ultimately, I argue in favor of viewing chick lit as part of *Frauenliteratur* ‘women’s literature,’ suggesting that the refusal of the label chick lit is related to a misunderstanding and devaluing of the genre.

Fräuleins and Chicks: The Globalization of Women’s Literature

In the 1990s, the German-language book market was flooded with a wave of Anglo-American literature, including popular chick lit novels (by Fielding, Sophie Kinsella, Anna Maxted, Candace Bushnell, etc.).² In response to the perception that German literature stood little chance of competing against this imported literature, prominent editors and critics argued that, if German literature was to be able to compete in the global marketplace, it would need both a new style—the so-called *Neue Lesbarkeit* ‘new readability’—as well as new content “which should not be backwards looking and focused on the German past, but more Anglo-American, more ‘global,’ more realistic” (Linklater 69); and that should follow the “American model of plot- and character-driven narratives” (Gerstenberger and Herminghouse 4).

Women writers, in particular those listed by Hage as part of the *literarisches Fräuleinwunder*, responded to this debate with texts whose prose style is “conversational and open, making frequent use of short sentences, simple plots, and a first person narrator who is usually female” (Linklater 72).³ As I discuss in the next section, Linklater’s description of German women’s writing of the 1990s and early 2000s corresponds closely to chick lit’s generic conventions. *Fräuleinwunder* and chick lit authors have also been marketed in similar ways. As Stuart Taberner has noted, the new generation of German women writers was promoted commercially at the end of the 1990s with “stylish photographs and melancholic poses,” in a process that is selling not just literature, but a “lifestyle” (*German Literature of the 1990s* 8-9). Similarly, the popular women’s magazine *Brigitte* has gained tremendous influence over the marketing of books to women readers (Karolle-Berg and Skow), thus forming a relationship between literature and consumer culture that resembles that of chick lit and its relationships with other popular culture media: “chick lit fiction not only directly references consumer cul-

ture mediums like women's magazines, other popular fiction texts, consumer products, movies, and television, but consumer culture mediums themselves publicize women's popular fiction" (Smith 8). This association is, of course, not new, but it has "grown even stronger ... chick lit authors are also furthering these associations by referring to women's magazines in their novels, crafting characters who read and respond to the advice offered by these texts, and more significantly, by critiquing this medium through their fictional representations" (Smith 26).

Defining Chick Lit

The term chick lit is generally used to refer to Fielding's 1996 bestseller *Bridget Jones's Diary*, its sequel *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, and Bridget's successors such as Sophie Kinsella's *Shopaholic* series. When used in this sense, chick lit is defined as a "form of women's fiction on the basis of subject matter, character, audience, and narrative style. Simply put, chick lit features single women in their twenties and thirties 'navigating their generation's challenges of balancing demanding careers with personal relationships'" (Cabot in Ferris and Young 3). For this type of chick lit, tone is very important. As Rian Montgomery, who runs a website dedicated to chick lit, points out: "Chick lit is told in a more confiding, personal tone. It's like having a best friend tell you about her life. Or watching various characters go through things that you have gone through yourself, or witnessed others going through" (Montgomery). This type of chick lit focuses on a heroine who, typically, is "not perfect but flawed, eliciting readers' compassion and identification simultaneously ... chick lit's often criticized investment in fashion and cocktails, from this perspective, is not simply superficial but a reflection of consumer culture" (Ferris and Young 3-4).

If we compare these definitions of chick lit to descriptions of texts by *Fräuleinwunder* authors, we see many similarities:

writers concentrate on the self, the realm of the private, and the importance of decisions that influence relationships, family and friendships. All write about the body, sex and love, and about what this old-fashioned concept might mean. Love offers a possibility ... of stability and identity in a global society characterized by mobility and homogeneity (Linklater 71).

Such similarities are not accidental, as the above discussion of marketing demonstrates. Scholars have also pointed out that *Fräuleinwunder* literature, and Duve's novel in particular, is directly indebted to Fielding's work (Taberner, *German Literature of the 1990s* 18; and Plowman, "Normalizing" 145). Duve's novel can further be seen as part of the chick lit subgenre referred to as bigger girl lit, consisting of books that "feature a fat heroine not only looking for love and a better life but also peace with her body" (Frater 235).

While the desire to compete with Anglo-American fiction in a globalized marketplace explains the similarities to be found between Fielding's and Duve's novels, Streeruwitz's text, while also reacting to chick lit, does so for different reasons. As she noted in an interview with the website "Plastikmädchen," her goal in writing *Jessica*, 30. was to examine the "Problem des 'Gesellschaftseinstiegs' für junge Frauen" 'problem young women have in getting launched in society' (Eismann). For this reason, Streeruwitz's novel, while borrowing from the commercialized chick lit described above, can also be related to the original coining of the term chick lit as a title for an anthology of experimental women's fiction published in 1995. One of that anthology's co-editors, Cris Mazza, defines her use of the term chick lit as "fiction that transgressed the mainstream or challenged the status quo" ("Chick Lit" 33), or "alternative fiction" with a "non-commercial or non-traditional narrative" ("Editing Postfeminist Fiction" 108). One defining characteristic of the fiction included in her anthologies was thematic, and can be best described as the writers' use of what Mazza defines as their postfeminist (as opposed to feminist) perspective. As she puts it in her essay "Chick Lit and the Perversion of a Genre":

The fictions we had compiled were ... overwhelmingly emancipated. Liberated from *what?* The grim anger that feminists had told us ought to be our pragmatic stance in life ... Liberated to *do what?* To admit we're part of the problem. How empowering could it be to be *part* of the problem instead of just a victim of it?" (31, emphasis in the original).

In other words, chick lit as defined by Mazza is non-commercial fiction that escapes what she sees as the victim stance promoted by second-wave feminism.

Bridget, Anne, and Jessica: Textual Analyses

One question that I thus raise and attempt to answer in this essay is whether Streeruwitz's and Duvé's novels *Jessica, 30.* and *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* can be considered chick lit novels. If the answer to this question is yes, then a second and related question is: which type? Certainly, the characteristics of Streeruwitz's title character suggest that the novel can be read as popular chick lit: she is thirty, holds a precarious job with a women's magazine, has a relationship with a married boyfriend, and jogs to work off the previous evening's "Schoko-Maple-Walnut Orgie" 'chocolate-maple-walnut orgy' (Streeruwitz 20). Jessica's breathless inner monologue also seems at first to align *Jessica, 30.* with the popular form of chick lit. Compare, for example, the following excerpts from *Jessica, 30.* and *Bridget Jones's Diary*:

... Alles wird gut, ich muss nur die Praterhauptallee hinauf- und hinunterrennen und dann ist wieder alles gut, dann kann ich das Schokoeis von heute Nacht und das Essen von Weihnachten vergessen und dass ich nicht geschlafen habe, wegen dem Gerhard, obwohl ich das gar nicht will und es gar keinen Grund gibt, den so ernst zu nehmen, aber beim Laufen dann, dann brauche ich an nichts zu denken.

... Everything will be fine, I just have to run one more time up and down the Prater main street, and then everything will be fine again, then I can forget the chocolate ice cream from last night, the Christmas dinner, and that I haven't slept because of Gerhard, even though I don't want to think so much about him and there's absolutely no reason to take him so seriously, but I don't need to think about anything while running. (Streeruwitz 5)

But then I do think New Year's resolutions can't technically be expected to begin on New Year's Day, don't you? Since, because it's an extension of New Year's Eve, smokers are already on a smoking roll and cannot be expected to stop abruptly on the stroke of midnight with so much nicotine in the system. Also dieting on New Year's Day isn't a good idea as you can't eat rationally but really need to be free to consume whatever is necessary, moment by moment, in order to ease your hangover. I think it would be

much more sensible if resolutions began generally on January the second. (Fielding 13-14)

In both passages, the narration carries the reader along in a rush; there is no pause, rather a flood of words sweeps the reader into the protagonist's consciousness.

Jessica is also Bridget's sister in that she, like Bridget, "knowingly absorbs glossy magazines and self-help newspeak and attempts to live up to their strictures whilst seeming to be aware that this traps her in a cul-de-sac of self-absorption and body dysmorphia" (Whelehan 31). Thus, for example, Jessica is able to slide from an analysis of her generation's avoidance of political issues to contemplating whether she should get highlights in her hair, in the space of a few jogging steps (or, in textual terms, a few pages):

aber wahrscheinlich ist es nur ein Ausweichen, ein feiges Ausweichen ins Private ... wenn man die Jungen anschaut, die frisch von der Wirtschaftsuniversität kommen und dann überhaupt nur über Mode schreiben wollen, aber wahrscheinlich ist wirklich alles nur eine Generationsfrage und laufe ich jetzt hier als Ally-McBeal-Klon herum und sehne mich nach dem richtigen Mann ... ich könnte mir gut eine blonde Tönung machen lassen, ich habe keine roten Pigmente, aber ich lebe zu wenig außen, ich muss mehr von außen leben, nicht immer dieses Innen so wichtig nehmen.

but it's probably just a detour, a cowardly detour into private life ... when one sees the young ones, who are fresh out of business school and who only want to write about fashion, but probably it's all really just a generational question and here I am running around like an Ally McBeal clone, yearning for the right man ... I should think about a blonde rinse, I don't have any red coloring, but I don't think enough about the external, I should do it more, instead of always thinking about my inner life. (Streeruwitz 20-21, 27)

Comparing Jessica once again to Bridget, we find a similar slippage from awareness of the enforcement of norms to acceptance of the same norms, as Bridget reflects upon a hard day's work of date preparation:

Surely it is not normal to be revising for a date as if it were a job interview? ... Since leaving work I have nearly slipped a disc, wheezing through a step aerobics class, scratched my naked body for seven minutes with a stiff brush; cleaned the flat; filled the fridge, plucked my eyebrows, skimmed the papers and the *Ultimate Sex Guide*, put the washing in and waxed my own legs ... Ended up kneeling up a towel trying to pull off a wax strip firmly stuck to the back of my calf while watching *Newsnight* in an effort to drum up some interesting topics about things ... Wise people will say Daniel should like me just as I am, but I ... know that neither my personality nor my body is up to it if left to its own devices. (Fielding 51-52)

In both novels, the first-person narrative is presented as a direct feed from the protagonist's consciousness. For Streeruwitz, choosing inner monologue was a means to represent not just Jessica, but her generation. As Streeruwitz explained in an interview: "Es geht darum, diese Generation, der Jessica angehört, auch in der Form zu erfassen. Der Text ist schneller, ist atemloser" 'the point was to capture Jessica's generation in the form as well. The text is faster, more breathless' (Kleiser 19). This would seem to align *Jessica*, 30, with Bridget and her sisters, as popular chick lit novels are almost always written in a similarly breathless tone.

There are, however, important stylistic differences between the two texts that suggest that Streeruwitz's novel may rather need to be classified as chick lit in Mazza's sense. The most striking feature of her prose is Streeruwitz's use (or non-use) of punctuation in *Jessica*, 30. Specifically the lack of periods in her text places it squarely in the chick lit as alternative fiction camp. The lack of periods and the use of the inner monologue tend to preclude the reader's identification with Jessica, an identification that popular chick lit fosters. Textually, then, Streeruwitz's novel alternates between the two types of chick lit, conforming to and deviating from elements of both forms.

Duve's novel also works with the generic conventions of both types of chick lit, in addition to containing characteristics found in bigger girl lit, a subgenre of chick lit. The specific generic conventions that *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* shares with popular chick lit are the use of first-person narration and the focus on Anne's struggles with

her weight. Both *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* employ first-person narration. Both texts also begin with a type of confession:

Mit sieben Jahren schwor ich, niemals zu lieben. Mit achtzehn tat ich es trotzdem. Es war genauso schlimm, wie ich befürchtet hatte. Es war demütigend, schmerzhaft, und völlig außerhalb meiner Kontrolle. Ich wurde nicht wiedergeliebt; es gab nichts, was ich tun konnte, um das zu ändern, und bei dem Versuch, selbst nicht mehr zu lieben, wurde ich beinahe verrückt ... Alle anderen hatten Freunde und Sex, sie hatten Berufe, gingen auf Parties und Reisen, und freuten sich fünf Tage lang aufs Wochenende. Also ging ich ebenfalls mit Männern ins Bett und mit Frauen in Bars, scheiterte in diversen Jobs, langweilte mich auf Festen und woanders und schnitzte mir sonntags mit einem Kartoffel-schälmesser Muster in die Oberarme. (Duve, *Liebeslied* 7)

When I was seven I swore I'd never fall in love. When I was eighteen I fell in love anyway. It was just as bad as I'd feared. It was humiliating, painful and totally beyond my control. My feelings were not returned, there was nothing I could do about it, and my own attempts to fall out of love again nearly sent me round the bend ... All the other girls had boyfriends and sex and careers, they went to parties, they travelled, and they spent five whole days looking forward to the weekend. So I went to bed with men too, and I went to bars with women, I failed to make the grade in various jobs, I was bored out of my mind at parties and elsewhere, and I carved patterns on my upper arms with a potato-peeling knife on Sundays. (Duve, *Love Song* 1)

Similarly, Fielding's text opens with a list of Bridget's New Year's resolutions, from which we learn that she has so far been unsuccessful in finding love and building a career. Thus we see in the "I WILL NOT" column: "Allow in-tray to rage out of control. Fall for any of following: alcoholics, workaholics, commitment phobics, people with girlfriends or wives, misogynists, megalomaniacs, chauvinists, emotional fuckwits or freeloaders, perverts" (Fielding 2), while in the "I WILL" column, we find: "Improve career and find new job with potential... Form functional relationship with responsible adult" (3). In both cases, the opening pages serve to draw the reader

into the narrator's life, while also establishing the narrative focus of the novels.

While the narrative structure of *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* parallels that of *Bridget Jones's Diary*, the thematic focus on the heroine's weight creates an even stronger resemblance between the two texts. Just as Bridget begins each diary entry recording her current weight, focusing in many of the entries on exactly what she ate, so, too, do Anne's musings about her weight and diets structure her narrative (see Caemmerer 114; Marven 164; and Plowman, "Was will ich denn?" 57-58). Both Bridget and Anne obsess about their weight and display an unhealthy relationship to diets and food:

Meine Mutter, meine Schwester und ich machten die Mayo-Diät ... Am zweiten Tag aß ich morgens drei harte Eier und eine halbe Grapefruit, mittags drei harte Eier und eine halbe Grapefruit und abends ein halbes Hähnchen ohne Haut. Nach all den Eiern schmeckte das Hähnchen einfach super, man wurde sogar beinahe satt... Immer hungrig zu sein, war so anstrengend ... (Duve, *Liebeslied* 88, 123)

My mother, my sister and I went on the Mayo diet ... On the second day I ate three hard-boiled eggs and half a grapefruit for breakfast, three hard-boiled eggs and half a grapefruit for lunch, and half a chicken with the skin removed for supper. After all those eggs the chicken tasted wonderful, you even felt almost full ... It was such a strain being hungry all the time ... (Duve, *Love Song* 71, 101)

I realized that I have spent so many years being on a diet that the idea that you might actually need calories to survive has been completely wiped out of my consciousness. Have reached point where believe nutritional ideal is to eat nothing at all and that the only reason people eat is because they are so greedy they cannot stop themselves from breaking out and ruining their diets. (Fielding 224-25)

The major difference between the two characters, however, is that while Bridget begins and ends at more or less the same weight (ending with a net gain of 2 pounds), Anne only gains weight, weighing in at the end of the novel at 262 pounds. The large difference

between their ending weights is what makes Duve's text an example of the subgenre of chick lit known as bigger girl lit, which Allison Umminger defines thus:

Although Bridget Jones is ... a normal-sized woman ... many of the protagonists who populate the novels she inspired are of a different build. Fat. Not 129 pounds, "fat-with-quotes-around-it" but genuinely obese... [with a] hyperconsciousness that the real relationship that must be mastered is one with their bodies and self-image. (240)

Umminger also notes that thinness in bigger girl lit is tied to both romantic and financial success (with the exception of Jennifer Weiner, whose work features larger heroines who do not need to lose weight to find love or career success [240]). Jane Green's *Jemima J* thus ends with Jemima's weight loss also leading to success in love and career:

Jemima Jones is now a voluptuous, feminine, curvy size 10 who is completely happy with how she looks ... And Jemima Jones is no longer lonely ... fairy tales can come true, and just like Jemima Jones, or Mrs. Ben Williams as she's known outside of the glossy magazine where she now works, if we trust in ourselves, embrace our faults, and brazen it out with courage, strength, bravery, and truth, fate may just smile upon us too. (373)

Duve's heroine also believes that successful weight loss is a prerequisite for success in other areas, claiming "Wenn ich erst schlank war, würde mein richtiges Leben beginnen" (*Liebeslied* 181) 'Once I was slender my real life would begin' (*Love Song* 154) and that "Die Liebe ist nichts, auf das ich noch hoffen kann" (*Liebeslied* 268) 'Love is not something I can hope for' (*Love Song* 231). Additionally, Anne's romantic encounter with Peter Hemstedt (the man whom she has loved from afar for years) is marred by her loathing for her body:

Hemstedt nimmt mich wieder in seine Arme und wiegt mich sanft hin und her. Einen riesen Riesentümmler wiegt er da in seinen Armen. Ich möchte nicht wissen, wie das aussieht. Das ist das Schlimmste: Wenn du fett bist, kann nichts mehr schön oder zart oder romantisch sein, an dem du beteiligt bist. Nichts. Nie. Dein Anblick versaut alles. (*Liebeslied* 280)

Hemstedt takes me in his arms again and rocks me gently back and forth. He's rocking a huge giant dolphin in his arms. I don't want to know what it looks like. That's the worst of it: if you're fat nothing you do can be nice or loving or romantic. Nothing. Ever. The sight of you spoils it all. (*Love Song* 242)

Despite its similarities to both chick lit and bigger girl lit, *Dies ist kein Liebeslied*, like *Jessica*, 30, also deviates from some of chick lit's generic conventions. These differences include a humor that is not as light-hearted and self-deprecating as the dominant tone in chick lit; instead, Duve writes with a very black sense of humor. The novel also refuses the traditional happy ending of chick lit, while in terms of bigger girl lit, it takes the focus on weight and the body to grotesque extremes.⁵ Unlike Streeruwitz, whose textual deviations from chick lit's generic conventions take place at the formal level, Duve's text is formally very similar to chick lit, but differs at the thematic level. These are not significant differences, however. Rather, Duve's text is chick lit in the same way that authors such as Marian Keyes and Anna Maxted are – that is, writers who combine the use of chick lit's style (first-person narration, good storytelling, easy-to-read prose) with a focus on serious subjects such as alcoholism, domestic violence, and eating disorders.

Conclusion: Postfeminism and the Postfeminist Novel, or Are the *Fräuleins* Chicks?

I turn now to the question of feminism and postfeminism, and the ways that the novels' relation to both (but in particular postfeminism) helps to determine whether these texts can truly be defined as belonging to the genre of chick lit. Both Mazza's alternative anthologies and popular chick lit are clearly labeled and received as third-wave or postfeminist fiction. Mazza herself defines postfeminism in the following way: "the logical *next* stage of feminism: time to look closely at ourselves, to admit our weaknesses as well as celebrate strengths; to *honestly* assess what we've *helped* make ourselves into, rather than only blaming the patriarchal world ... and to explore *all the other facets and types of experiences* besides our oppression. Time to stop saying: 'Give me a voice because I've been a victim,' and instead say 'Listen to me, dammit, because I have something important and interesting and new to say!'" ("Editing Postfeminist

Fiction” 111, emphasis in the original). Popular chick lit is also defined by many as postfeminist insofar as it is “one legacy of 20th-century feminism, its failures and triumphs equally intact” (Blank). As Hanne Blank notes in her discussion of chick lit: “Caught between the rock of having our insecurities commodified and sold back to us and the hard place of having just enough autonomy, education, and economic clout to participate in the cycle, it’s little wonder that today’s Chick Lit is a literature of feminine dissatisfaction” (Blank). Both Mazza and Blank define chick lit as postfeminist in the sense of being something that comes after or reacts to feminism, specifically to second-wave feminism.

Both postfeminism and chick lit can also be seen as complementary to third-wave feminism (despite the protests of third-wave feminists that the distinction lies in the fact that the third wave is truly feminist, while postfeminism could better be defined as anti-feminist [see Braithwaite 335]). In particular, an important distinction between second-wave feminism and third-wave or postfeminism is that both third-wave and postfeminism emphasize “individualized accounts” that “grapple with how to combine some version of feminist politics with the lived messiness of real life” (Braithwaite 336). As a postfeminist literary genre, chick lit abandons the collective, activist projects of the second wave for these individualized accounts of the messiness of real life. This turn to the individual has led critics to claim that “postfeminist fiction fails to move out of the protagonists’ personal sphere and relate the process of confession to a wider context of female discrimination and social inequality” (Genz 137).

This latter point is where Streeruwitz’s novel moves beyond chick lit. As an author, Streeruwitz, in contrast to most chick lit writers, has always claimed allegiance to a feminist project that can best be defined as belonging to the second wave of feminism. As Streeruwitz put it, describing her first novel *Verführungen* (*Seductions*, 1996), “Man weiß ... nicht, wie das private, das heimliche Leben aussieht. Das ist für Frauen, die ja immer ins Private abgedrängt werden, das Politische. Man muß ihnen eine Stimme verschaffen” ‘One does not know what private home life looks like. That becomes political for women, as they are always forced into the private sphere. One must create a voice for them’ (Quoted in Schrecken-

berger 136). With Jessica, however, Streeruwitz created a character who embodies the post-*Brigitte*-Generation, a.k.a. a third-wave or post-feminist generation. The tension that arises from the combination of a postfeminist title character (Jessica) and form (chick lit) with the author's second-wave sensibilities results in a text that reveals the tension between second- and third-wave feminisms, especially in the final chapter, which depicts Jessica's evolution from the "Ally-McBeal-Klon" of the first chapter to a revenge-seeking critic of patriarchy who links the Iraq war to male sexuality:

aber die letzten Kriege haben die sexuelle Repression wieder instand gesetzt, mit diesem Krieg jetzt, da wird die Prüderie zurückgeholt, der ist ein Ventil wieder, der ist die Entlastung vom nächtlichen Funktionierenmüssen im Bett, damit schlagen die Männer wieder zurück ... wenn einer den Schwanz nicht hochkriegt ... da gehen sie lieber in den Krieg, als zu einem date.

but the last wars have again restored sexual repression, with this war now, prudery has returned, the men strike back with the failure to function in bed at night ... when men can go longer get it up ... they would rather go to war than on a date. (Streeruwitz 225)

If the Jessica of the first chapter is a model postfeminist Bridget-type "child of *Cosmopolitan* culture," (Fielding 52) the Jessica of the third chapter embodies an older anger, that of Streeruwitz's generation of second-wave feminists. In this respect, *Jessica*, 30., while it can in many ways be defined as chick lit (in both senses), also ultimately refuses that label insofar as it returns to a second-wave project.

In contrast, Duve's text can more clearly be defined as postfeminist according to Sarah Gamble's definition in her article on post-feminist novels (her term for chick lit). Writing about *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Gamble notes that Fielding's novel "reflect[s] a postfeminist ideology in the sense that [it] locate[s] [its] action in a world in which feminism is no longer an acknowledged presence" (69). *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* also reflects a world without feminism, containing only one fleeting reference to the women's movement. The novel offers no structural analysis of Anne's situation, implying instead that it is family dynamics that caused her eating disorder.

Finally, both *Jessica*, 30. and *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* can be clas-

sified as chick lit or postfeminist novels in that they also investigate “alternatives to the conclusion of the romantic plot” (Gamble 71). While both of Fielding’s *Bridget Jones* novels end with a traditional heterosexual coupling (Bridget with Mr. Darcy), they do not (in contrast to the film versions) end with marriage. Gamble argues that later postfeminist novels, such as Jennifer Weiner’s *Good in Bed*, differ from the earlier novels in that they offer conclusions for their heroines that diverge from the traditional romantic endings of earlier chick lit novels. *Jessica*, 30. and *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* both end with their heroines alone:

da lernt man sich durchschlagen, ja, ich bin angeschnallt, und jetzt mache ich die Augen zu, und das ist zu angenehm, das ist richtig geil, wenn der aufsetzt, dann wache ich von alleine auf, und...

that’s how one learns to persevere; yes, I’m buckled in, and now I close my eyes and it’s quite comfortable, it’s really great, when the plane lands, I’ll wake up alone and... (Streeruwitz 255)

Vorsichtig stehe ich auf und schlüpfe hinein [in her pajama pants – BB]. Dann gehe ich leise ins Schlafzimmer zurück, ziehe mich wieder an und packe meinen Koffer. (Duve, *Liebeslied* 283)

Carefully, I get up and put them on [her pajama pants – BB]. Then I go quietly back into the bedroom, get dressed and pack my bag. (Duve, *Love Song* 244)

Through their endings, both Streeruwitz’s and Duve’s novels illustrate Gamble’s claim that postfeminist novels “are beginning to consider aspects of modern female experience other than the cundrum of combining work and romance” (77). In this way, they can be viewed as conforming to some of the generic conventions of chick lit texts, while simultaneously pushing the boundaries toward redefining the postfeminist novel.

My conclusion that Duve’s work can be defined as chick lit is one that many other Germanists are not willing to draw. Thus Peter Graves calls the classification of *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* as “chick lit with [...] grime” a “backhanded compliment” (“Novels” 27), and Hester Baer argues against classifying texts by *Fräuleinwunder* authors as chick lit, pleading instead for a reappropriation of “a femi-

nist conception of *Frauenliteratur* for the 21st century” and inclusion of these works in that category (85). In similar fashion, Taberner claims that compared to Fielding’s novel, *Dies ist kein Liebeslied* offers a “brutal realism” that “interrupts the superficial harmonies of the globalized consumer culture and subverts the marketing deception of postfeminism, that is, its false promise that the self can be continually re-invented with the help of fashion” (*German Literature of the 1990s* 19).

The problem with these arguments is that Graves, Baer, and Taberner all rely on a very narrow definition of what chick lit is, failing to take into account that while Fielding’s novel may be one of the genre’s founding texts, it does not define the genre as a whole. As Caroline Smith notes in the conclusion to her book on chick lit: “The boundaries of the chick lit genre ... have become decidedly blurred as more and more writers produce books that experiment with the literary conventions that early writers, like Fielding and Bushnell, established” (137). Streeruwitz’s and Duve’s texts can thus be seen as participants in that experiment. I would further argue that our concept of *Frauenliteratur* should be expanded to include chick lit as these texts can also be viewed as “the attempt to write through the lens of female experience” (Baer 70). Expanding our notion of *Frauenliteratur* to include chick lit along with the *Fräuleinwunder* texts and other more overtly political texts would allow Germanists to contribute to the project of “defin[ing] chick lit as part of a broad, diverse literary tradition” (Farr 211).

Notes

1 See Hage, “LF” and “Ganz”. Also see: Biendarra; Graves, “Fräuleinwunder”; Müller; Taberner, *German Literature of the 1990s*; Taberner, “Introduction”; and essays in Nagelschmidt, Müller-Dannhausen and Feldbacher. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

2 See Taberner, *German Literature of the 1990s*; Taberner, “Introduction”; and Finlay.

3 For more on chick lit’s global reach and infiltration into the German book market, see Donadio; Freuler.

4 Duve’s first novel, *Regenroman ‘Rain’* (1999), also depicts a character suffering from an eating disorder. Martina, the main character’s wife, suffers from bulimia, and her purging episodes are described in grotesque detail.

5 See Duve *Liebeslied* 151 and *Love Song* 127.

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