



The essence of the 21<sup>st</sup> century woman: A gender-based literary study of Emily Giffin's *something Borrowed* Trilogy

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## Abstract

*The researcher brings to the fore the gender dimension of Something Borrowed Trilogy novels of Emily Giffin: Something Borrowed, Something Blue, and Diary of Darcy J. Rhone using the gender lens of England. The researcher identified the central female characters who move the plot forward, then analyzed the peculiarities of the portrayal of women vis-a-vis the society they lived in as regards the traditional characteristics of women, and probed new images and essence of a contemporary woman in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The researcher identified the central female characters of the novels and their roles to the development of the stories. The study delved onto the portrayal of women in Giffin's selected works and subjected their peculiarities to the characteristics of traditional women as discussed by England. The researcher found out that the traditional characteristics are still present in the 21<sup>st</sup> century women, but they differ in terms of presentation brought about by the changing times.*

**Keywords:** Feminist criticism; gender equality; Emily Giffin; something Borrowed Trilogy; SDG5.

## Introduction

As the old saying goes 'change is inevitable', and this change is happening through the fast-changing pace of technology as well as how people interact not just with their surroundings, but also with themselves. An image or a stereotype is not an escape of these changes. In support to this notion, Eagly et al.<sup>1</sup>, believed that there is a change in gender roles, specifically in women, in the past seven decades from 1946 to 2018. As Steve Aylett<sup>2</sup>, a British author says in his book *Shamanspace*, "A society will manufacture an image of progress and locate it in the direction it wishes to take us." Thus, it is believed that in order to see a progress, one must locate the image, and see where it takes him.

Alcoff<sup>3</sup> emphasized that many contemporary feminist theorists are having difficulty in determining the right concept of being a woman because the assumptions of most people on women "has been contaminated with misogyny and sexism." Even though feminists believe that men and women were born equal despite their differences in terms of physique and other attributes such as in emotional and psychological aspects, still, women were denied of education and other privileges that men enjoyed because they were believed to be weak, submissive, and can best function doing household chores. Valois<sup>4</sup> mentioned that, Each sex is stereotyped according to social expectation. Males are figured to be strong, rational, logical, intelligent, provider, masters, straight, brawny while females are weak, irrational, illogical, moron, receivers, slaves, sexual objects, emotional and even worse, abused, silenced and made evil in different media and literatures<sup>4</sup>.

De Beauvoir<sup>5</sup>, in her book *The Second Sex*, discredited the notion that regards women as the "other" when pertaining to their sex. She argued that the difficulty in defining what a woman is lies behind the constant branding to them as the "other." Further, Alcoff<sup>3</sup> stressed that women are usually regarded as the "object" that can be controlled in contrary to men who are usually viewed as rational beings, not being overpowered by emotions and more intellectual. In an article entitled *The Devaluation of Roles and Qualities Associated with Women* written by England<sup>6</sup>, she argued that most of the feminist decline the notion that women are inferior to men. She also noted that, The traditionally female characteristics that cultural feminists believe our culture has undervalued include nurturing, nonviolence, emotional sensitivity to the feelings of others, unselfishness, kinship with rather than domination of nature, acceptance of our physical bodies, humility, flexibility rather than rigid adherence to abstract principles, and intuition of wholes<sup>6</sup>.

The supposed traditional virtues of women are usually associated with the notion of their weaknesses whereas according to her, these characteristics are being used by people for their advantage without recognizing the efforts of women in general. Having mentioned all of those characteristics of a traditional woman and how the early feminists fought for the recognition of women in different aspects in the society, this research aimed to probe the essence of a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman as portrayed by a contemporary writer, Emily Giffin. More so, it investigated whether the virtues of a "traditional" woman changed through times by evaluating how a contemporary writer presented her central female characters.

Tagged as the “modern-day Jane Austen” in an article written by Deutschman<sup>7</sup> entitled *Belles, Books, And Candor* in a magazine called *Vanity Fair*, Emily Giffin, is considered to be one of the most sought-after American contemporary writers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Vanity Fair* has helped Emily Giffin to reach more audiences since it is one of the most famous magazines in the United States that started publishing in 1913. It is also known for publishing popular culture, fashion, and current affairs not only in the United States but also in some countries abroad. Its popularity has a great influence to its reader because of its accessibility not only in print but also in digital media.

Emily Giffin was listed in New York Times Best Selling Author through her first novel, *Something Borrowed* in 2004<sup>8</sup>, which later had a movie adaptation in May 2011, starring Kate Hudson, Ginnifer Goodwin and John Krasinski. *Something Borrowed* was then followed by its sequel, *Something Blue* in 2005<sup>9</sup>, *Baby Proof* in 2006, *Love the One You're With* in 2008, *Heart of the Matter* in 2010, *The Diary of Darcy J. Rhone: Prequel to Something Blue and Something Borrowed* in 2012<sup>10</sup>, *Where We Belong* in 2012, *The One and Only* in 2014, *First Comes Love* in 2016, *All We Ever Wanted* in 2018, and *The Lies That Bind* in 2020. Her books were translated into thirty-one languages and her most recent book was released in June 2018.

Even though there are a lot of contemporary writers along with Emily Giffin, her novels represent how contemporary of a writer she is because of her unconventional way of portraying her characters. As a 21<sup>st</sup> century writer, being tagged or compared to a classic writer, Jane Austen, is a huge recognition of her success as a writer. Both Austen and Giffin share the same characteristics of incorporating the daily lives of real people in their stories. Giffin also said in one of her interviews with *Journal-News* that the theme that she liked to explore was the discovery of a person's true self and that included unfortunate events such as infidelity and betrayal. She also pointed out that her characters were non-traditional having different choices than many that resulted to negative comments from readers because it made them uncomfortable, but as she added “*I'd rather have a negative reaction than none at all*”<sup>11</sup>.

Emily Giffin, according to an interview with Saffert<sup>12</sup>, said that her books are inspired by her own relationships with family and friends, thus making them more contemporary because of the real-life experiences of a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman herself. Further, she mentioned that all her stories are character-driven and that she does not write an outline before writing her stories because she loves to see how her characters evolve as the story progresses, such as *Something Borrowed* Trilogy that is about a complicated friendship between females, Rachel and Darcy.

In light of the foregoing, the researcher probes the images of a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman as compared with the traditional characteristics of women coined by England<sup>6</sup>.

## Methodology

This study used a qualitative descriptive type of analysis in probing the images of a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman using the gender lens of England<sup>6</sup> as the baseline of discussion. Qualitative type of analysis, as defined by Borderstone and Palmer<sup>13</sup>, is the analysis of “capturing details, practice, and experience of the subject as it occurs”.

Thus, it would provide meaning to subjective experiences of the research's subject. This type of analysis was seen to be applicable to this research because its aim is to interpret and identify how the central female characters were portrayed by the author through their experiences and practice in the society they belong.

This study utilized the gender lens of Paula England<sup>6</sup> as the main concept to extract the image and essence of 21<sup>st</sup> century woman as portrayed by Emily Giffin in her novels *Something Borrowed* Trilogy.

England<sup>6</sup>, in an article she wrote under Gender and Feminist Studies entitled *The Devaluation of Roles and Qualities Associated with Women*, discussed how the different types of feminists differ from one another. She started off with the claim of the Liberal Feminists that women are seen as unqualified for public roles because they are given less privilege than men. Radical and Cultural Feminists, on the other hand, said that the standards set by the society are androcentric or male-based.

She mentioned that, they see sexist bias in our notions of what qualities people need to be in important positions, and the values determining which positions are rewarded most. In this view, what is seen as valuable has been socially constructed around what is seen as masculine. Examples of traditionally male characteristics highly valued in our culture include independence, abstract rationality, and repression of emotion<sup>6</sup>.

In contrast to the traditional male characteristics who are often seen as strength are the traditional female characteristics according to England<sup>6</sup> that are undervalued and unrecognized are nurturing, nonviolent. Emotionally sensitive to the feelings of others, unselfish, valuing kinship, aware of physical attributes, humble, flexible, and intuitive of wholes.

These nine traditional virtues of women were the baseline in distinguishing the peculiarities of Emily Giffins's central female characters in her novels, *Something Borrowed* Trilogy. They were used to establish the uniqueness of the portrayal of 21<sup>st</sup> century woman in contrary to the notion that the aforementioned virtues are women's weaknesses rather than strength.

Further, they aided in discovering how a contemporary writer like Emily Giffin presented her characters unusual or usual to the characteristics of a traditional woman as mentioned by England<sup>6</sup>.

## Results and Discussion

The major objective of this study is to present the image and essence of the 21<sup>st</sup> century woman using the peculiarities found in the portrayal of the central female characters using the nine traditional characteristics of women coined by England<sup>6</sup> as the baseline of discussion. Alcoff<sup>3</sup> explained that there is a difficulty in identifying the right image of a woman because of misogyny and sexism. Thus, this study was made to coin new representations of women in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to know whether a contemporary writer portrayed her central female characters different from the characteristics of the traditional ones.

A 21<sup>st</sup> century woman is still nurturing. Traditionally, being nurturing is one of the roles of the archetypal mother because she gives life to a child and never stops giving unconditional love<sup>14</sup>. However, in *Something Borrowed* Trilogy, central female characters were not initially portrayed as mothers, but they still showed their nurturing characteristics in their own peculiar way. Both showed that a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman can be of different types of a nurturer.

Rachel, as a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman is a *self-nurturer*, she saw to it that she nurtured and trained herself to be better thru studying hard to make her parents proud of what she became. She is also a *friendship-nurturer*, she was always there to support not just Darcy but all her friends. More so, Darcy even regarded her as a maternal friend whom she could trust all her secrets with and the only person who gave her sound advice and never judges. Aside from these two, Rachel also expressed her desire to be a *nurturing wife* and a *mother*, especially when she started her relationship with Dex and later had a child with him.

Darcy, like Rachel, was also portrayed as a *friendship-nurturer* because as for Rachel, she would never leave her friends just to go on a date, hence, she prioritized them over her boyfriends. Darcy became a mother in *Something Blue* that made her a *child-nurturer* who always looks after the welfare of her children. Initially, all that she cared for was to stay pretty despite pregnancy, but she later realized that she wanted to be a better person for her baby, which later she found out were twins. Darcy's decision to still have the babies despite her struggles parallels with the claim of the study conducted by Gassman<sup>15</sup> that the roles of women in historical fiction novel differ from the stereotypical traditional characteristics of women because Darcy chose to be the mother and father of her children for showing that she could endure the absence of Marcus in her life. Aside from being a mother to twins, motherhood also birthed a new Darcy, responsible and selfless.

Second, a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman is still nonviolent and would choose peace over arguments, but the central female characters of *Something Borrowed* Trilogy showed that they also had the capability to voice out their opinions especially when the situation required. Thus, a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman knows how to

control her reactions but also gets confrontational when being pushed to her limits.

Rachel showed how nonviolent she is in a lot of situations in the story from the simplest to worst, such as when she stayed calm even though her head hurts when a woman was so noisy in the bus on her way home to Manhattan and when Darcy told her that she could not do better for not continuing to date Marcus. She would choose to understand and stay quiet despite being frustrated with the situation. Only when she got tired of waiting for Dex to figure out what he would do with their affair, she showed that she could react violently, too. As a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman, Rachel showed that there were things that she cannot tolerate and that included the endless waiting for Dex.

Darcy, on the other hand, was known to be frank and straightforward. There are a lot of instances in the story where she showed what she could do especially for the people she loves like protecting Rachel when she got bullied by their schoolmate, Becky. The peak of her violent reactions was seen when she found out that Rachel and Dex were cheating on her. She made sure to say everything that was on her mind out of anger and devastation.

Third, a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman is still *emotionally sensitive to the feelings of others*. The central female characters of Emily Giffin were initially portrayed as such, especially Rachel. She would hold herself back to avoid offending the people around her, but she later learned that it was not wrong to speak her truth. As portrayed by Giffin, a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman knows when to speak as long as she stands for the truth.

Rachel showed how sensitive she was to the feelings of Darcy numerous times in the story. One instance was when Darcy organized her thirtieth birthday celebration and even though she did not really enjoy the party, she still thanked her for her efforts and said that it was a blast. However, Rachel's sensitivity over Darcy's feelings ended when she had sex with Dex, Darcy's fiancé, the night of her thirtieth birthday and woke up the other day feeling unguilty about it. Further, she found herself giving a lot of reasons why she should not feel guilty about what happened, including the times when Darcy became insensitive to her feelings, too.

Darcy, in the book *Diary of Darcy J. Rhone*, mentioned a moment where she became emotionally sensitive to the feelings of Rachel. It was when Rachel did not get accepted in the cheerleading squad where Darcy became part of. She made sure to not mention about it to Rachel for her not to feel bad about not getting accepted. Darcy also showed how sorry she was to Rachel when she confessed having an affair with Marcus, the man whom she thought Rachel liked. However, as for the people around Darcy, she was seen to be self-centered for always wanting to overshadow Rachel, which she did not admit at first.

Fourth, a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman is still **unselfish** but knows when to choose herself. The central female characters of *Something Borrowed Trilogy* showed that a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman's unselfishness has its limits. Hence, there are times that a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman would prioritize and choose herself especially if it means her happiness. On the other hand, in Darcy's case, a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman also knows when to stop being selfish especially when responsibilities arise such as being a mother.

Rachel was initially portrayed as a selfless person who would choose other people's happiness at the expense of her own. She never wanted to hurt other people especially the ones she loves. However, in one of the most pivotal scenes in the story, Rachel had sex with her best friend's fiancé, Dex. At the night of her thirtieth birthday, Rachel found herself longing for someone to be with regardless of who it was. Dex accompanied her and they had a few drinks. When they were at the taxi on her way home, they found themselves kissing each other and it escalated into having sex. Things got difficult for the both after that incident, but Rachel felt unguilty about it. She initially wanted to forget everything but Dex said he could not do it because he loved her. At first, Rachel was halfhearted about their situation, but she realized that she loved Dex, too. Thus, she found herself asking Dex to cut off his engagement with Darcy. She said that would never regret telling Dex her feelings for him because for once, she chose to follow her heart.

Darcy's ways were selfish as they grew up because she always wanted to have things according to her advantage. She even hoped that Rachel would not be accepted into big universities so they could study together. However, the character development of Darcy was seen from being a selfish teenager to a selfless woman and a mother as the story progressed. These changes were evident when she chose to break up with Geoffrey because she did not love him despite his promises to give her a good life in Europe. She even recognized this change in her because if she were the same Darcy back in New York, she would have accepted Geoffrey's offer to live comfortably in Europe away from the prying eyes of the people in New York. Further, her selflessness flourished when she became pregnant and for the first time in her life, she found herself wanting to be a better person not for herself alone, but also for her child.

Fifth, a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman still **valueskinship**. This is evident in the portrayal of the central female characters from the prequel to the sequel of the trilogy. Rachel showed that she values kinship on how she strived to be her best self to emulate her hardworking parents. Further, she looked up to her parents' kind of relationship that resulted to her wanting to have the same. Darcy showed how much she values her family by making sure that her father stops cheating to prevent their family from being broken. Further, Darcy also showed respect to her parents by giving Marcus a warning to how he should interact with her father. Moreover, Darcy proved that her misunderstanding with her mother would not hinder her from giving her updates about her life.

Sixth, the 21<sup>st</sup> century women are still **aware of physical attributes** and they tend to be insecure because the standard of beauty changes as years passed by. As stressed by Gizycki<sup>16</sup>, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century news and business magazines, women are still seen as objects used to satisfy the eyes of their audiences, thus making women more insecure about their bodies. In *Something Borrowed Trilogy*, both characters were portrayed having their own strengths and abilities. Rachel was portrayed to be smart but less beautiful, and Darcy was the beautiful one who does not excel in school. It was evident in the novels that the way other people see the central female characters has a great influence into how they see themselves.

Rachel's insecurity towards Darcy's beauty was obvious even when they were at middle school. However, her insecurity overflowed and manifested when she had an affair with Darcy's fiancé, Dex. She started comparing herself with Darcy the day after she had sex with Dex thinking that Dex, too, compares her body with Darcy's. She said, "Maybe I am attractive. But I am nowhere near as pretty as Darcy, with her precise features, incredible cheekbones, bow-shaped lips"<sup>8</sup>.

Darcy's mother had the biggest influence on how Darcy sees herself. Her mother told her that she must always be beautiful because beauty would surely take her to places. She taught her how to use her beauty to her advantage. She was not wrong after all, everything went well and easy with Darcy because of her beauty, including having a good position in her PR job in New York. However, even though she seemed to have everything handed to her, she was still not contented with her beauty because she always said she was fat despite being sexy.

Seventh, a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman is still **humble**, but also **confident** of her achievements. The two central female characters were portrayed different from one another about being humble. They saw and addressed situations differently since they did not experience the same struggles. One of them was humbled by the hardships she experienced to reach that point in her life, and the other one was raised proud and egoistic because of her beauty, but later learned to be humble because of the trials she faced after leaving her comfort zone.

Rachel grew up in an unwealthy but comfortable family. She worked hard in school because she wanted to get accepted in a prestigious university and make her parents proud. Further, she graduated magna cum laude, passed the LSAT, and studied law. Her struggles did not end as soon as she passed the BAR exams because she had a lot of loans to pay, that was why she could not leave her job even though she hates it. Her humble beginning made her compassionate and sensitive with other people's feelings.

Darcy, on the other hand, grew up too proud because of her beauty. People around her almost worshiped her for being beautiful.

However, as for her, her beauty did not make her a mean person because she watched over the mean girls who bullied other kids at middle school. However, her pride always manifested whenever Rachel seemed to get ahead of her for being smart, and she would say, she would rather be pretty than smart. As for Rachel, Darcy would always win because she expected to win. Further, as the story progressed, Darcy learned her lessons and became humble after all the shortcomings that she experienced brought by her poor decisions in the past.

Eight, a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman is still *flexible*. In *Something Borrowed Trilogy*, both central female characters showed that they could explore options other than those being imposed to them by the society and its people. The flexibility of these two breaks the stereotypes mentioned by Valois<sup>4</sup> that women are weak, irrational, silenced, and many other expectations that the society imposes. Rachel and Darcy proved that being a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman in the 21<sup>st</sup> century means having the ability to decide on their own, especially during the critical moments in their lives.

Rachel, even though she was known to be timid by the people around her, showed that she could be flexible in every situation that she was in. First, she was not easily influenced by her roommate back in college about the guy she liked. Second, she made Darcy understand that it was not right to judge a person's "girliness" based on her preference of clothing. By doing so, it became evident that Rachel wanted to debunk the norm that a woman should wear dresses and act "girly" based on the society's standards. Lastly, when Rachel decided to call Dex to talk about what happened between them the night of her thirtieth birthday. Rachel did not wait for the issue to settle on its own and be forgotten, instead she called Dex to fix the problem before it could blow up.

Darcy was the one who always explored different solutions in every situation. She was not easily dictated by the people around her. This was evident when she got pregnant with Marcus and he was asking her to explore other options than having the baby because it would be easier that way. She got mad at Marcus and said that she does not believe in abortion, so she would never do it. There were a lot of things at stake if she will continue her pregnancy, such as her image, her relationship with her parents, her singlehood, and the fact that she knew that she was not yet ready to be a mother, but she still decided to keep the baby. After all the chaos that Darcy experienced, she decided to leave New York and go to Europe to continue with her life away from the people who betrayed her. She knew that life was not going to be easy, but she believed in herself that she could start anew.

Ninth, a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman still *intuitive of wholes*, but is *logical* when it comes to taking actions. In contrary to the claim of Alcoff<sup>3</sup> that women are always viewed as the ones who are controlled by the rationality of men because of being emotional, the central characters of *Something Borrowed Trilogy* both

proved that a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman does not decide easily based on limited evidence and without giving the issue a rational thought.

Rachel showed her rationality in making decisions when she had a boyfriend in law school. Their relationship was going smoothly at first until she noticed some red flags and started having intuitions that their relationship was not going somewhere beautiful because of the Joey's changing attitude. She did not decide immediately and have given it a lot of thinking until worse happened because he called her a boring intellectual, and she realized that her intuitions were right all along.

It was Darcy's nature to suspect that Dex was having an affair whenever he did not answer her calls, without actually being serious about it. Only then her intuitions grew when Darcy felt that Dex was not enthusiastic about the wedding preparations. She slept at Rachel's apartment to tell her about what she felt including the details such as they have not had sex for some time now, which was unusual of them. Darcy's intuition about Dex was not baseless at all because she later found out that the reason behind Dex's coldness towards her was her best friend, Rachel.

On top of these characteristics that are still possessed by a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman, the new and additional images of a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman found in *Something Borrowed Trilogy* are as follows:

A 21<sup>st</sup> century woman is *authentic* and is honest with her feelings. She is not afraid to be judged by other people, thus, she shows her true self. A research entitled *The Benefits of Being Yourself: An Examination of Authenticity, Uniqueness, and Well-Being*, authored by Mengers<sup>17</sup>, emphasized that authenticity and being true to oneself must be encouraged for a society to flourish and to prevent people from comparing themselves to others. This trait has been highlighted numerous times in the trilogy that made it an addition to the new characteristics of a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman.

Rachel knew that her life would be put on spotlight when she decided to pursue her relationship with Dex, but she still chose what would make her happy. For once, she showed that she was also capable of fighting and prioritizing for her own feelings than the others. She was able to make people realize that the Rachel they knew was far from the real Rachel who was always timid and shy. Darcy, on the other hand, proved that it was never too late to showcase a person's true self. Her realizations made her recognize not just her wants, but also her own identity as a woman.

Further, a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman showed that she is a *decision-maker*. Rachel and Darcy proved that being a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman in the 21<sup>st</sup> century means having the ability to decide on their own, especially during the critical moments in their lives.

This finding is different from the result of the research conducted by Profeta<sup>18</sup> entitled *Gender Equality in Decision-Making Positions: The Efficiency Gains*, that women are less portrayed to be decision-makers worldwide. The trait of being a decision-maker was added as a new characteristic of a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman because it was proved to be under-represented before, but Emily Giffin highlighted this characteristic in *Something Borrowed* Trilogy.

Rachel's decision is one of the most pivotal moments in this trilogy. Her biggest decision in this trilogy was when she decided to continue her relationship with Dex despite knowing the possible results of her action. She made the people around her know that it was not selfish to choose herself first because she had been prioritizing other people's happiness before hers for such a long time already.

Darcy was able to decide for herself when she chose to stay with Marcus when she got pregnant even though her mother did not want her to. Unfortunately, Marcus did not become a good partner to her, and he even told her to abort the baby because he was not yet ready to be a father. Darcy then realized that it was time for her to make decision not just for herself, but also for the child she was carrying. She then decided to leave New York and went to London to have a new life.

Moreover, a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman is *independent*, thus she relies on herself more than other people when it comes to finances and providing for herself in general. Adams<sup>19</sup> discussed the development of women's independence stating that 21<sup>st</sup> century women are more independent as compared to women in the past. She argued that 21<sup>st</sup> century women already have the strength to be independent and self-supporting. More so, she added that being independent adds to the confidence of a woman to work while being a mother, daughter, sister, aunt, and wife.

Rachel showed how independent she was when she went to law school on her own and applied for different loan to sustain her studies. She did not bother her parents when in terms of financial support in her studies. In addition, Darcy showed her independence when she decided to raise her children alone without the support of Marcus. After deciding to leave New York, she managed to have a new life in London supporting herself.

## Conclusion

The study proved that the works of Emily Giffin, particularly the *Something Borrowed* Trilogy, are great examples that stories in the 21<sup>st</sup> century involve diversity in terms of leading a story based on genders and sexes. Vyomakesisri<sup>20</sup> supports this, that the representation of women in literature evolves through time from past to present. Further, she added that women in literature continued to gain equality by transforming into new images that they desire to be regardless of gender. Thus, the chosen texts in

this study proved not just the involvement of women but the leading of these characters to the progress of the stories. The success of these involvements was evident based on the success of the books' readers' reception. The chosen books were shown to have had successful reception in terms of reach and sales.

The study was also successful in identifying peculiarities in the portrayal of the female lead characters to the traditional characteristics of a women coined by England<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, these peculiarities do not just compliment the traditional characteristics, but show the diversities and new ways of how women were being portrayed in modern literary works. The research proves that the modern portrayal of women in the modern literary works has developed and evolved in new ways that were related and sometimes far different from the traditional characteristics of a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman. The complexity of a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman was greatly showed in the discussion of the second objective by dealing with 21<sup>st</sup> century problems, culture, and norms. The research provides a bird's eye view on how 21<sup>st</sup> century women see themselves, how they react to their society and situations they are in, and how the society sees and treats them.

Since this research is only limited to *Something Borrowed* Trilogy, it is recommended that future researchers include all the books written by Emily Giffin to greatly define how she, as an author, portrayed the image of a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman.

Further, using the same theory conceptualized by England<sup>6</sup>, it is recommended that future researchers study works written by other contemporary female authors other than Emily Giffin.

Lastly, since the novels analyzed in this research are written by a female author, it is recommended that future researchers consider studying works written by contemporary male writers using the same theory by England<sup>6</sup> to identify if there are similarities or differences on how both genders portrayed the image of the 21<sup>st</sup> century woman.

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