



**Laney and Elizabeth in Contrast and in Contact: A Comparative
Analysis of *Pride and Papercuts* and *Pride and Prejudice***

Final Degree Thesis

Author: Marta Gallart Roig

Author's ID: 49263250X

Tutor: Diana Rodríguez Bonet

B. A. in English Studies

Academic Year: 2020-2021

Acknowledgements

The accomplishment of this study would not have been possible without the help of some people who I would like to thank:

- To my tutor, Diana Rodríguez Bonet for her affection and devotion;
- To my parents and friends for their moral support.

Abstract

The present Bachelor's dissertation compares the main storyline of two novels: Staci Hart's *Pride and Papercuts* (2020) and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). *Pride and Prejudice* is at the top of Jane Austen's reading list and, over time, the novel has reaped enormous success, to such an extent that today it has thousands of screen and literary adaptations. Among them, there is one of Staci Hart's most recent novels, *Pride and Papercuts*, which may be framed as a Chick Lit text. Therefore, by comparing both novels through a Chick Lit lens, this project identifies which elements of the modern retelling remain loyal to the original novel in order to form a contemporary version of the classic. Moreover, it also explores how Chick Lit's characteristics are presented in Hart's rewriting to ultimately conclude whether *Pride and Papercuts* can be considered as the new novel of manners.

Keywords: Staci Hart, *Pride and Papercuts*, Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Chick Lit, comparative analysis.

Resum

Aquest Treball Final de Grau compara la trama principal de dues novel·les: *Orgull i Retalls* (2020) (*Pride and Papercuts*) de la Staci Hart i *Orgull i Prejudici* (1813) (*Pride and Prejudice*) de la Jane Austen. *Orgull i Prejudici* es troba al capdamunt de la llista de lectura de la Jane Austen i, amb el pas del temps, la novel·la ha obtingut un enorme èxit, fins a tal punt que actualment té milers d'adaptacions literàries i cinematogràfiques. Entre elles es troba una de les novel·les més recents de la Staci Hart, *Orgull i Retalls*, la qual es pot emmarcar dins del gènere literari Chick Lit. Per tant, en comparar ambdues novel·les a través de la teoria sobre Chick Lit, aquest treball identifica quins elements de la narració moderna es mantenen fidels a la novel·la original per formar una versió contemporània de l'obra clàssica. També explora com les característiques de Chick Lit es presenten en l'adaptació de Hart per concloure en última instància si *Orgull i Retalls* es pot considerar com la nova novel·la costumista.

Paraules clau: Staci Hart, *Orgull i Retalls*, Jane Austen, *Orgull i Prejudici*, Chick Lit, anàlisi comparatiu.

Resumen

El presente Trabajo Final de Grado compara el argumento principal de dos novelas: *Orgullo y Recortes* (2020) (*Pride and Papercuts*) de Staci Hart y *Orgullo y Prejuicio* (1813) (*Pride and Prejudice*) de Jane Austen. *Orgullo y Prejuicio* se encuentra en lo alto de la lista de lectura de Jane Austen y, con el paso del tiempo, la novela ha obtenido un enorme éxito, hasta tal punto que actualmente tiene miles de adaptaciones cinematográficas y literarias. Entre ellas se encuentra una de las novelas más recientes de Staci Hart, *Orgullo y Recortes*, que puede enmarcarse como un texto Chick Lit. Por lo tanto, al comparar ambas novelas mediante la teoría sobre Chick Lit, este proyecto identifica qué elementos de la narración moderna permanecen fieles a la novela original para formar una versión contemporánea del clásico. Además, también explora cómo se presentan las características del género Chick Lit en la adaptación de Hart para concluir en última instancia si *Orgullo y Recortes* puede considerarse como la nueva novela costumbrista.

Palabras clave: Staci Hart, *Orgullo y Recortes*, Jane Austen, *Orgullo y Prejuicio*, Chick Lit, análisis comparativo.

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
1. Introduction.....	6
2. Contextualising Chick Lit	7
2.1. Origins and Critical Awareness	8
2.2. Characteristics of Chick Lit.....	12
3. Comparative Analysis	16
3.1. Overview of Austen and Hart's Works	16
3.2. <i>Pride and Papercuts</i> and <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> in Contrast and in Contact	17
4. Conclusions and Further Research.....	39
5. Works Cited	41
6. Annexes	44
6.1. Staci Hart's Interview.....	44
6.2. <i>Pride and Papercuts'</i> Characters and Their Role	46
6.3. Liam Darcy's Letter to Laney Bennet.....	48

1. Introduction

Literature is a representation of society and a means of communication with one another, so its influence on our culture is indubitable. Reading works of literature fosters and develops people's thinking, imagination, creativity and empathy, among others. Moreover, it allows readers to find an escape away from reality, to transports them into different eras and locations, or to mirror their current society by offering a greater understanding of the world they live in. Having said this, it is evident that literature has a large number of functions and it can be expressed through many literary genres. In fact, one of the most revealing literary genres of the last two decades is Chick Lit, which features "everyday women in their 20s and 30s navigating their generation's challenges of balancing demanding careers with personal relationships" (Cabot n.p.).

This bachelor dissertation sheds light on a comparative analysis between Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and Staci Hart's *Pride and Papercuts* (2020) through a Chick Lit lens. Therefore, the objectives of this project are to compare and contrast both novels' plot, setting, themes, and main characters to later explore which elements of Hart's rewriting remain loyal to the original novel. Secondly, to analyse how these elements are adapted to create a twenty-first century version of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. And finally, to study which characteristics of Chick Lit are present in Hart's 2020 rewriting. After reading both novels, it can be shown that *Pride and Papercuts* cannot be regarded as a full Chick Lit novel because some of the main characteristics of the genre are not present in this adaptation; some features in Hart's novel suggest that it can be categorised also as the new novel of manners.

This paper is structured into three main parts. Firstly, I provide a contextualisation of Chick Lit commenting on its origins, critical awareness and the genre's characteristics. Then, I present an overview of the selected works and the comparative analysis of both novels. In the conclusions, I summarise the main findings and I include a list of the cited works used for the elaboration of this project. An Annex with the online interview Staci Hart granted me, a list of the characters in *Pride and Papercuts* and their role in the novel, and Liam Darcy's letter to Laney Bennet is included at the end.

2. Contextualising Chick Lit

Chick Lit is a literary genre that emerged in the mid-1990s and is claimed to 'rewrite' contemporary romances. The term derives from the slang word 'chick' referring to young women and 'lit' as short for literature. Therefore, the target readers of Chick Lit are young women who can identify with the protagonist: a single cosmopolitan white woman in her 20s and 30s who struggles with issues of "identity, femininity, career and relationships" (Baykan 766). New forms of the genre appeared over time and still continue to appear due to the huge demand for fiction that focuses on heroines beyond the young urban-based white woman. Some of these novels are Allison Pearson's *I Don't Know How She Does It* (2002), Pepper Bashman's *Just the Way You Are* (2017), Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez's *The Dirty Girls Social Club*, Terry McMillan's *Waiting to Exhale* (1992) or V. Joy Palmer's *Love, Lace, and Minor Alterations* (2016). In fact, in *See Jane Write: A Girl's Guide to Writing Chick Lit* (2006), Sarah Mlynowski and Jacobs Farrin classify a large number of subgenres:

Teen Lit (girl juggling her issues at home and at school); Single-in-the-City Lit (young woman living in New York/London gets dumped and tries to find her way in the urban jungle); Bride Lit (young woman about to walk down the aisle, or walking behind her friend down the aisle); Mom Lit (young woman juggling life, kids, and desires); and even Hen Lit (young-at-heart woman juggling life, kids, desires and grandkids) ... Mystery Chick Lit (hip woman solving crimes); Christian Lit (not only is she trying to find a man – she's trying to find God); Multicultural Lit (everyday struggles with an ethnic slant); and Paranormal Lit (everyday struggles – except the protagonist happens to be vampire/witch). ... Gossip Lit (she knows the goods); Assistant Lit (she works for the woman who knows the goods); Plus-Sized Lit (she's no size four). (14)

The diverse subgenres expand Chick Lit's domain and keep the door open for further and in-depth academic research. Notwithstanding, Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young (2006) argue that "the overwhelming majority of chick lit continues to focus on a specific age, race, and class: young, white, and middle" (8) and that the genre avoids "serious

treatment of cultural, political, and social concerns” (8). Indeed, this statement could trigger future inquiry on the genre’s avoidance of such concerns.

2.1. Origins and Critical Awareness

The term Chick Lit was first embraced in 1995 by Cris Mazza and Jeffrey Deshell in the anthology *Chick Lit: Postfeminist Fiction*. In fact, in “Who’s Laughing Now? A Short History of Chick Lit and the Perversion of a Genre” (2006), Mazza compellingly asserts that she and Deshell were the first to employ the word ‘Chick Lit’ in print (27). However, the term was originally used to mock postfeminist attitudes, so their work does not relate to what is known today as Chick Lit. In 1996, they edited another anthology, *Chick Lit: No Chick Vics*, which deals with the theme of ‘no victims’, that is, looking at trauma that comes from outside the character. Mazza and Deshell’s anthologies are regarded as the predecessors of Chick Lit, but what caused an enormous increase in its popularity was the publication of Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (1996) in Britain. This novel, which came to life as a column in the British newspaper *The Independent* and later in *The Daily Telegraph*, became a huge commercial success. According to Gill and Herdieckerhoff (2006: n.p.), the novel reached the bestseller status and remained at the top of the list for many months. Furthermore, in 2006, the novel had sold more than 5 million copies and had been translated into 30 languages. Later, the 2001 film adaptation also became a box-office hit. Along with Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, the book written by the American woman writer Candace Bushnell, *Sex and the City* (1996), is often regarded as a second major source of Chick Lit being more prominent in the American phenomenon.

After the publication of these two books, Chick Lit became a commercial tsunami and a market for stories for and about women dealing with everyday life and relationships was discovered. The genre rapidly rose in popularity to the extent that whole publishing lines were committed to it. As a matter of fact, 2001 is recognized as a watershed moment in the history of the genre's publishing because, in this year, Harlequin Enterprises Limited launched Red Dress Ink, an imprint dedicated exclusively to the publication of Chick Lit novels. *Writers Write* (2001) defined this company as “a women's fiction program that depicts young, single, mostly city-dwelling women coping with the pressures that

accompany a career, the dating scene and all the other aspects of modern life in America.” Following Harlequin’s lead, other publishing houses such as Simon & Schuster and Kensington formed separate Chick Lit branches. In 2005, the media magnate Warner Books (now Grand General Publishing) opened 5 Spot, a subsidiary devoted solely to Chick Lit. In a post by abcNEWS.com, Cabot wrote that publishers made more than \$71 million from Chick Lit novels in 2002. Moreover, as reported by Barnes and Noble buyer Sessalee Hensley in an interview for ABCNews.com, Chick Lit has been the fastest growing literature genre since 1998 (Lynch Cooke 17). Some popular Chick Lit books of this century include Jennifer Weiner’s *In her Shoes* (2002), Lauren Weisberger’s *The Devil Wears Prada* (2003), Pamela Redmond Satran’s *Younger* (2005), Sophie Kinsella’s *I Owe You One* (2019) or Staci Hart’s *Bet the Farm* (2021). Considering this, the publishing boom highlights the profitability of this literary genre as well as readers’ enthusiastic acceptance of it. Moreover, a significant number of original works have been adapted to TV series increasing Chick Lit’s success, such as Netflix’s original series *Bridgerton* (2020 -), which is based on the novels of Julia Quinn’s *Bridgertons Series*, or the television series *Gossip Girl* (2007-2012) inspired by the novels of Cecily von Ziegesar’s *Gossip Girl Series*.

On the contrary, the popularity of the genre has also caused a backlash, putting Chick Lit at the forefront of a debate regarding women's literature. According to Juliette Wells (2006), “to judge whether an individual work of chick lit, or the genre as a whole, has literary merit is to participate in a long tradition of discounting women writers and their readers” (48). She also argues that since Chick Lit writers and readers are almost entirely female, perceptions of the genre are conditioned by ingrained assumptions that women's writing is inferior to men's and that women favour trivial novels to literary ones. This takes us into the heated discussion about the genre's social and literary value. Readers of Chick Lit frequently regard the genre as a guilty pleasure intended to be read for escape, implying that these books are 'easy reads' or 'beach books' that provide an escape from the readers' stressful everyday life. Therefore, as reported by Harzewski (2006: 33), although Chick Lit presents itself as a literary form, it does not shy away from establishing alliances with popular entertainment. Accordingly, it accentuates the tensions between high and popular culture.

The editors of *Chick lit: The New Woman's Fiction* (2006), Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young, classified in their introduction of the book critics' reactions of the genre into two groups: those who consider Chick Lit as a fictional representation of real life, and those who judge it as an inspiring portrayal of 'the new woman', that is, "the figure of the postfeminist singleton, the young, unattached, and mostly city-dwelling woman who is caught between the enjoyment of her independent urban life and her desperate yearning to find 'Mr. Right' with whom to settle down" (Genz 99). On the one hand, critics such as Sarah Mlynowski and Farrin Jacobs praise Chick Lit by saying that it is:

Often upbeat, always funny fiction about contemporary female characters and their everyday struggles with work, home, friendship, family or love. It's about women growing up and figuring out who they are and what they need versus what they think they want. It's about observing life and finding humor in a variety of situations, exchanges and people. (10)

Another academic who speaks highly of the genre is Julia MacDonnell. She claims that Chick Lit stories are "not merely entertaining but also offering insight into how we live now" (qtd. in Baykan 769). Author Jennifer Weiner recognises that the genre is capable of more than just presenting sugary-sweet love stories and she believes that "... novels, even the ones derided as light 'n' fluffy, help [women] them think through [women's] their choices and make peace with [women's] their decisions" (qtd. in Lynch Cooke 25). Laura Miller, journalist and columnist at Slate, says in defence of Chick Lit that "... nobody else is writing as much about (middle-class) young women's work lives" (qtd. in Mazza 25). Another advocate of the genre, professor of literature Cam Tatham, decided to include Chick Lit on his syllabus because he considered that it helped readers "move beyond the too-familiar issues/questions of conventional feminism, deterritorializing views of victimizer/victimized" (qtd. in Mazza 19).

On the other hand, other critics make harsh comments on the genre. For instance, in a 2001 interview for BBC Radio 4, renowned authors Dame Beryl Bainbridge and Doris Lessing criticised Chick Lit. While the former accused the genre of being "a froth sort of thing" and argued that "as people spend so little time reading, it is a pity they perhaps

can't read something a bit deeper, a bit more profound, something with a bit of bite to it" (*The Guardian*), the latter remarked that:

It's a pity that so many young women are writing like that. I wonder if they are just writing like this because they think they are going to get published ... It would be better, perhaps, if they wrote books about their lives as they really saw them and not these helpless girls, drunken, worrying about their weight and so on. (*The Guardian*)

Anna Weinberg's criticisms goes in line with Bainbridge and Lessing, and she asserts that "inside their dust jackets covered with shopping bags, martini glasses, shoes or purses, many of these titles really are trash: trash that imitates other, better books that could have ushered in a new wave of smart, postfeminist writing" (qtd. In Ferriss and Young 9). Another critic against the genre is editor and author Elizabeth Merrick, who gives a harsh explanation of the inconsistencies she sees between 'Chick Lit' and 'real literature':

Chick lit's formula numbs our senses. Literature, by contrast, grants us access to countless new cultures, places, and inner lives. Where chick lit reduces the complexity of the human experience, literature increases our awareness of other perspectives and paths. Literature employs carefully crafted language to expand our reality, instead of beating us over the head with clichés that promote a narrow worldview. Chick lit shuts down our consciousness. Literature expands our imaginations. (9)

For all these reasons, writers of Chick Lit defend their works by often contrasting them to the 19th century British classics. In "Tradition and Displacement in the New Novel of Manners" Harzewski (2006) claims that Chick Lit is inspired by the writings of women of the past such as Jane Austen. In fact, Fielding's source of inspiration to write *Bridget Jones's Diary* was Austen's masterpiece, *Pride and Prejudice*. Additionally, she affirms that the genre "has adapted several major literary traditions, including traditional prose romance, popular romance, and the novel of manners" (31). However, with the exception of Austen, who enjoys such enduring fame in our popular culture, Chick Lit reviews scarcely mention women writers from previous generations (Wells 48).

Therefore, writers' allusions of Chick Lit novels as descendants of women's literary classics might be a mere marketing ploy.

Yet, the reactions that Chick Lit elicits and the assertions made for it by its writers do have recognisable origins in the history of women's writing, as do many of the genre's distinctive features (Wells 49). Kathrin Robinson illustrates that "anyone familiar with Jane Austen's oeuvre will immediately recognize in chick lit a kindred wit, the same obsession with choosing a mate, and a shared attention to the dailiness of women's lives" (qtd. in Ferriss 72). Chick Lit's distinguishing characteristics are the heroine's quest for the perfect romantic partner, in this case, the ideal 'Mr. Right', her growth and maturity along the story, and facets produced by consumerism such as the craze for beauty, fashion and shopping. But the genre also offers new elements like the use of humour, the confessional formula, attitudes towards sex, and the importance of career. These topics will be discussed in further detail later in the following subsection.

2.2. Characteristics of Chick Lit

The plot in Chick Lit novels revolves around love. Yet, the story differs depending on the protagonist's age and her marital status. Wells (2006: 49) speaks of three different marital status that shape the novels in one way or another. Firstly, if the heroine is single, she will enter into several relationships but only the one with the man who initially seemed to be the least desirable will turn out to be worthwhile. Secondly, if the protagonist has a boyfriend when the story starts, she will test his patience and play with a more alluring man, consequently putting the relationship at risk. And thirdly, if the heroine is in a happy marriage, she will find out that her husband has been unfaithful and they will either reconcile after some time apart or accept that the relationship is finished and start a new one. After a long and turbulent time of misunderstandings and obstacles to overcome, the novel concludes with joint declarations of affection and, most likely, with the assurance of a future marriage. This narrative, which "progresses through hostility, separation and reconciliation" (Gill and Herdieckerhoff n.p.), is undoubtedly recognised in all of Jane Austen's novels.

Since Chick Lit depicts the lives of ordinary young women and men and it speaks to readers who want to see the realities of life portrayed in fiction, the genre's characters

are “not perfect but flawed” (Ferriss and Young 3). In her article, Baykan (2014) gives a clear insight into women’s usage of Chick Lit books:

Women use these popular cultural texts in making sense of their own social experience and thus coping with their contemporary, urban lifestyles in which they are caught up in between the contemporary modern lives and the traditions that still expect them to maintain a conventional femininity. (770)

Hence, women, who are the major consumers of Chick Lit, read these books not only for entertainment but also as a guiding map. In “Singled Out: Postfeminism’s ‘New Woman’ and the Dilemma of Having It All” (2010), Genz also makes a point on contemporary women’s anxieties, claiming that:

In these complicated times, women seem to have lost their sense of direction as they are in the process of experimenting with a new set of identities, simultaneously revolving around feminist notions of empowerment and agency as well as patriarchal ideas of feminine beauty and heterosexual coupledness. (100)

So, consumers of these novels can recognise themselves in the protagonist’s character because when they are reading to escape from the stressful everyday life, they are, in reality, part of the society’s problems. Simultaneously, Chick Lit novels present a reflection of the world we live in.

Considering this, the protagonists are more self-assured and autonomous. They do not have to depend on a man for a living and they are, instead, looking for more egalitarian relationships. Chicklit.us lists that “the heroine of these books can be rude, shallow, overly compulsive, neurotic, insecure, bold, ambitious, witty or surprisingly all of the above – but we love them anyway!” (qtd. in Ferriss and Young 4). In contrast, the hero is presented as “always caring and nurturing to the heroine, helping her settle her financial and career woes” (Lynch Cooke 14) but above all he is portrayed as extremely successful and intelligent.

The heroine's independence is linked to the importance of career. Although not all the heroines may have a career, they do all have a job mainly in the service sector as a journalist, editor, advertising agent, and etcetera. However, they occupy underpaid positions which reflect today's society in which men have a better salary than women and, therefore, the heroine has to be 'saved' by the man. Despite their professional ambition, their job rank prevents them from being satisfied with the job and, consequently, they expect men to propel them into a 'happily ever after'.

In Chick Lit, we rarely find the typical heroine of traditional romance who is naïve and innocent but rather a woman who desires and has sexual experience. Both the hero and the heroine, who are in their late 20s or early 30s, have dated various people or have even been married before, a totally unthinkable act for a virtuous woman of the 19th century who could not publically show sexual interest nor be in love with more than one man. Yet, readers of today can find in Chick Lit novels characters who openly talk and jest about sex, and even a few sex scenes, neither graphic nor extensive, that satisfy the readers (Wells 50). Moreover, in contemporary Chick Lit, sex obtains another role than just love. In Mabry's words, "sex becomes a way for the woman to explore her own identity and express her own desires, rather than merely part of a single romance narrative that emphasizes traditional gender roles" (2006: 200). It may be stated that sex helps women to shape who they are by freely acting as they please.

In addition to love, career and sex, the heroine's growth and maturity is another recurrent theme in Chick Lit. In these books, readers can identify the protagonist's journey to self-discovery, but she is not alone on this journey as she has her friends to guide her. The heroine, who is ridiculed by and in front of the hero and endures struggles and misunderstandings, ultimately grows in emotional maturation. In fact, maturation is essential to start a relationship with the man who previously mocked her, so, "chick lit adheres to the convention of humiliating the heroine in front of the hero without achieving notable humour at all" (Wells 53).

The topic of consumerism is extremely prevalent in Chick Lit. Such is its presence that it is not always necessary to read the book to discover this trope. The pastel-coloured covers include material items such as high-heels, handbags, dresses, jewellery, and

lipsticks that directly hint to the protagonist's craze for fashion and beauty, in particular, and consumption, in general. The more material goods someone possesses, the higher their social status will be, and this is a practice that most Chick Lit characters take part in (Ilief-Martinescu 133). As Wells (2006) states, "writers commonly give as much attention to the obtaining and assembling of outfits as to the maintenance of faces and bodies" (62), which takes us to the concept of beauty. In Chick Lit, too stunning or too ordinary heroines do not fit. Writers need to find a balance and create a heroine who is concerned about her appearance but not excessively, and who is good-looking but not really self-accepting. Therefore, they should be "beautiful but not too beautiful" (Wells 59). Linked with the topic of consumerism there is the setting. Chick Lit novels are mostly set in cosmopolitan cities, such as New York, in order to offer readers a glimpse into "a more exciting, fast-paced, high-toned lifestyle" (qtd. in Ryan 74). In the end, these urban cities are the centre of commerce, glamour and high social status.

Furthermore, Chick Lit's narrative moves away from the typical 3rd person narrator of traditional romance novels and welcomes the confessional formula, which makes it easier for readers to relate with the protagonists. As Mabry (2006) writes it:

The move toward first-person voice in most contemporary chick novels not only strengthens the heroine's voice and increases the reader's opportunities to identify with her but also offers at least a temporary escape from the feeling of constantly being watched or controlled by a male-dominated society. (196)

Therefore, by using the subjective voice, there is an intimate space for women in which they can communicate their desires and motivations with no strings attached. As for the language employed by writers, it is mainly plain everyday language with a dash of sharpness and humour. It is then through a self-deprecating and funny voice that the heroine expresses her dilemmas concerning the different topics that have been discussed in this section.

3. Comparative Analysis

3.1. Overview of Austen and Hart's Works

Before presenting the analysis, I will provide a brief overview of the two sources that I have used in my research. The two works in question are Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and Staci Hart's *Pride and Papercuts* (2020).

Pride and Prejudice (1813) is Jane Austen's most renowned novel and, consequently, has been adapted into different media such as films or television series. Some instances are the Bollywood-style movie adaptation *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), the classic 2005 movie adaptation, *Pride & Prejudice*, the Christmas movie *Pride, Prejudice, and Mistletoe* (2018) or the so famous BBC 1995 TV series, *Pride and Prejudice*. Moreover, Austen's novel has also been rewritten by multiple authors including Shannon Hale's *Austenland*, Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009) or Elizabeth Blake's *Pride, Prejudice and Poison* (2019), among others. Austen, considered by many as the master of the novel of manners (Ruston; Swinnerton qtd. in Peterman 1940), started writing at the age of twelve. *Pride and Prejudice* is her second published work after *Sense and Sensibility*, which reached readers' hands in 1811 under the pseudonym "a Lady" (qtd. in Müllerová 33). Austen began writing *Pride and Prejudice* in 1796 when she was twenty-one but the book was refused by the publishing house and it was not until 1810 that her novel was revised to finally be put into print (Gao 384). Three years later, in 1813, *Pride and Prejudice* was published as *First Impressions* under the pseudonym "the author of *Sense and Sensibility*" (qtd. in Müllerová 33). The novel gained immediate success and nowadays it has thousands of screen and literary adaptations. Furthermore, this masterpiece has been studied by a large number of critics and from many approaches such as feminism (Chang; Fowler), historical criticism (Bulter; Wiltshire), biography (Perry), structuralist perspective (Zhang), marriage view (Gao; Schneider) or language perspective (Anderson; Wang), among others.

The literary adaptation that I have chosen to compare Austen's novel with is *Pride and Papercuts*, written by American bestselling romance fiction author Staci Hart. Hart, who considers herself an admirer of Austen, created The Austen Series, which came to life

with the publication of *Wasted Words* in 2016. As she expressed in the online interview she granted me (see Annex 6.1), such was the success of *Wasted Words* that it allowed her to keep writing adaptations based on Austen's novels. Therefore, one year later she published *A Thousand Letters* (2017), inspired by Austen's *Persuasion* (1818). The third novel that configures this series is a spin-off of *A Thousand Letters* entitled *Love, Hannah* (2017). In 2018, she adapted Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) in a novel called *Love Notes*. And lastly, her most recent work on The Austen's Series is *Pride and Papercuts* (2020).

This well-crafted modern adaptation was published in October 2020 and it narrates the love story of Liam Darcy, the creative director of the advertising company De Bourgh and Associates, and Laney Bennet, who runs the social marketing of the book bar *Wasted Words*. Among the plot's highlights there are enemies to lovers, two families in a feud, workplace romances, and light and lively banter.

3.2. *Pride and Papercuts* and *Pride and Prejudice* in Contrast and in Contact

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) is one of the most well-known period dramas of all times. The novel, set in the rural area of Hertfordshire in the world of Regency England, narrates the story of the Bennet family and the fortunes of their five daughters. Although the main love plot centres on the romantic adventure of Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy, it intersects with secondary stories, namely that of Jane Bennet and Charles Bingley, Charlotte Lucas and Mr William Collins, and Lydia Bennet and George Wickham. In contrast with *Pride and Prejudice*, Staci Hart's *Pride and Papercuts* (2020) follows a similar storyline which has been adapted to the Chick Lit genre in order to form a 21st century version of the 19th century classic. Hart's novel revolves around the enemies to lovers' story of Laney Bennet and Liam Darcy. Moreover, its principal storyline also converges with a subplot, that of Georgie Darcy and Jett Bennet.

Before delving into the plot structure, I consider it relevant to offer a compared list of characters because *Pride and Papercuts* is a rather new novel, and hence, this will help visualise the scenes better. Therefore, Table 1 presents some characters of *Pride and Prejudice* and their adaptation in *Pride and Papercuts*, as well as the roles they perform

in each novel. The reasons why some characters do not appear in Table 1 are either because they do not have a doppelganger in the adaptation or because their persona is not clearly identifiable with any character of the original novel. Nevertheless, this does not mean that those characters that are not present in the table cannot be mentioned throughout this section. Additionally, a whole list of *Pride and Papercuts'* characters and their roles is included in the Annex section.

Table 1. Characters adapted from *Pride and Prejudice* to *Pride and Papercuts*.

<i>PRIDE AND PREJUDICE</i>	ROLE	<i>PRIDE AND PAPER CUTS</i>	ROLE
Mrs Bennet	Mother	Mrs Bennet	Mother; Boss of Longbourne flower shop
Mr Bennet	Father	Mr Bennet	Father
Elizabeth Bennet (Lizzy)	Daughter	Elaine Bennet (Laney)	Daughter; Social marketer at Wasted Words
Jane Bennet	Daughter	Julius Bennet (Jett)	Son; Manager of Wasted Words
Mr William Collins	Mr Bennet's cousin; Clergyman	Collin	Comic department manager of Wasted Words
Fitzwilliam Darcy	Brother; Landowner	Liam Darcy	Brother; Creative director at De Bourgh and Associates
Georgiana Darcy	Sister	Georgiana Darcy (Georgie)	Sister; Account executive at De Bourgh and Associates
Lady Catherine de Bourgh	Aunt	Catherine de Bourgh	Aunt; Boss of De Bourgh and Associates
Caroline Bingley	Friend of the family	Caroline Bingley	Employee of De Bourgh and Associates
George Wickham	Militia officer; Gambler	Wyatt Wickham	Journalist at Forbes; Gambler

The romantic plot of *Pride and Prejudice* can be described as being “formed by diverging and converging lines by the movement of two people who are impelled apart until they reach a climax of mutual hostility, and thereafter bend their courses towards mutual understanding and amity” (Lascelles qtd. in Peterman 58). This description totally applies to *Pride and Papercuts* too. In both novels, readers encounter a heroine who finds her true love when confronted with obstacles and misunderstandings that are connected to the hero. Both couples, Elizabeth and F. Darcy and Laney and L. Darcy, overcome challenges and misjudgements established by their pride and prejudice to ultimately propel into a ‘happily ever after’. In fact, the title of Austen’s novel clearly states the two traits that will define the characters’ behaviour: ‘pride’ and ‘prejudice’. In contrast, Hart’s title includes ‘papercuts’ as a reference to ‘prejudice’. I believe that she might use this term to intensify how damaging someone’s pride can be, as well as alluding to the world of advertising that serves as the context where the lovers meet.

According to Gill and Herdieckerhoff (2006), “the female characters in chick lit novels ... are invariably portrayed as employed and committed to the idea of a career” (n.p.). Laney Bennet, Staci Hart’s heroine, is no exception. She works in the advertising sector running the social marketing of Wasted Words, a book bar in New York which sells “comics, graphic novels, manga – the works, everything from brand-new releases to collector finds” (Hart 4). As a 21st century woman, she has studied to have a professional career and to become financially autonomous: “I’ve always loved art and aesthetics. If my mother had her way, I’d be running our family’s flower shop” (Hart 49). But when Wasted Words decides to hire the ad agency De Bourgh and Associates to expand the business nationally, Laney becomes aware that this decision “put my job in a precarious position” (Hart 2). Her job now is to create a campaign side by side with Liam Darcy, an ad executive and creative director at De Bourgh and Associates. His proud and sombre character is public knowledge and Laney experiences it when she meets him for the first time in a regency event hosted by Wasted Words. In their first encounter, she describes him as:

Vast darkness, a vacuum of power, and every molecule in the room raced toward him as if they were all his, simply by means of his presence. Tall and square-shouldered, a face lined by a jaw of stone, a thick crop of dark hair

to match burnished, authoritative brows. He was an anomaly. An impassive animal confined by a suit of depthless black. (Hart 7)

This description opposes his companion to the regency event, Georgie Darcy. “They were night and day, the light and the dark. The cheer and the sobriety. A juxtaposition, but somehow a whole” (Hart 7). Darcy and Georgie’s arrival to the themed night parallels that of Mr Bingley and Mr Darcy’s to the ball:

Mr Bingley was good looking and gentlemanlike; he had a pleasant countenance, and easy, unaffected manners ... but his friend Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mein ... till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased. (Austen 12)

In *Pride and Prejudice*, people attending the ball judge Mr Darcy for his physical appearance and estate of “ten thousand a year” (Austen 12). Additionally, due to his conduct throughout the night, he is regarded as proud and disagreeable. These two qualities fit with Darcy in *Pride and Papercuts*. His beast-like and imposing figure made Laney uneasy, and after overhearing Darcy telling his sister “Laney Bennet is perfectly tolerable. But she’s not like us. She’s not the kind of girl I would ever ask to dance” (Hart 16), she regards him as rude and elitist. Yet, she does not remain silent and ironically responds that “I only dance with men who think I’m sufficient or better” (Hart 16). This is one difference from the original novel. While Laney defends herself against Darcy’s accusation, Elizabeth stays quiet. Nevertheless, like Elizabeth, Laney also “remained with no very cordial feelings towards him.” (Austen 14)

Both Elizabeth and Laney’s first impression of their respective Darcy is a negative one, and it builds their prejudice against these men. Fitzwilliam and Liam slight Elizabeth and Laney, respectively, and both women act as if they are not offended even though they truly are. While Elizabeth decides to explain the incident to her friends with a light-hearted disposition, Laney tries to convince herself that “I couldn’t care less whether or not he likes me or would dance with me” (Hart 19). Fitzwilliam and Liam are prejudiced against people of lower social rank and their pride is based on rank and wealth. Liam

comes from “Upper East stock. Poor little rich kids. Elite prep schools and Ivy League colleges. They’re privileged ... their aunt runs one of the top ad agencies in New York ... They’re New York royalty” (Hart 27), and Laney is a middle-class diligent woman who has had to work hard to become who she is today. The conceited character and ingrained prejudices lead Fitzwilliam and Liam to think of Elizabeth and Laney as ‘tolerable’ and this proves their terrible manners, posing the first obstacle between the lovers.

As opposed to *Pride and Prejudice*, in *Pride and Papercuts*, misunderstandings are also linked to Liam and Laney’s contrasting ideas at work. They have to create a campaign which sells the national expansion of Wasted Words but their way of crafting the concept is totally opposed. Laney’s idea of putting the marketing weight behind the themed nights the book bar organises seems a ridiculous idea to Darcy, who does not consider Laney’s expertise in the sector, nor her current position at Wasted Words:

... she was here to observe, not to offer opinions ... “While kitschy and profitable, mixers won’t introduce the store’s concept to a city.”

“I disagree. If you’ll take a look at some of my ideas, I think –”

“While unsurprised you disagree, Miss Bennet, this isn’t the appropriate time for concept discussion ... while I’m sure on your scale it’s been a success, please forgive me if I ask that you trust the expertise of this firm and my team.”

... “I have been the sole marketer in Wasted Words for a full year, and I held the position of CCO at Connor & Cook in Dallas. I’ve helped elevate the bookstore, establishing a presence beyond word of mouth. I’ve seen what works, and I’ve seen what doesn’t, and this, Mr. Darcy, is low-hanging fruit.”

... “Duly noted. Anything else?” It wasn’t so much a question as it was a dare.
(Hart 40-41)

As it can be seen in the dialogue, he insults her by undermining her talent and holding his status over her. However, Hart’s novel is written in a dual point of view. The story moves away from the typical 3rd person omniscient narrator of Austen’s novels and uses

the 1st person confessional formula with a dual perspective, that of Laney and Liam. The 1st person narrator is an identifiable trait of the Chick Lit narrative (Glasburgh; Lu; Mabry). Adding to this, Staci Hart claimed in the interview she granted me that “we've all long wondered what in the world goes on in that man's head, and to be able to dig into the inner workings of such an enigmatic man was an absolute pleasure” (Annex 6.1). Thanks to this, the readers are aware of Liam’s feelings and struggles. He realises his mistakes and plans to apologise to Laney for the incidents at Fabio’s night and the work meeting. However, he fails to offer a proper apology as he stresses their class distinction in his speech: “You can’t deny we’re different. Our worlds don’t cross” (Hart 43).

The third challenge between Laney and Liam is Wyatt Wickham, an ex-friend of Darcy and journalist at Forbes. He visits Wasted Words to write a piece on the expansion of the shop and happens to overhear Laney and Cam, the boss of Wasted Words and Laney’s best friend, talking about her incident with Darcy at the work meeting. This grants him the opportunity to introduce Darcy as the man who made his life miserable. Laney immediately likes his temperament and invites him to the next themed party. Meanwhile, Liam cannot stop thinking about Laney and realises, thanks to his sister Georgie, that their characters are very much alike:

Laney Bennet appeared in my mind without preamble or warning, as she was in the habit of doing ... I saw something in her that I’d never seen before, some spark of rarity beneath her hard exterior. And I suppose Georgie was right again. Laney and I were much more alike than I wanted to admit ... I admired her... To rise to the occasion and meet her as an equal. Because despite our many differences, when it came to the fabric of our characters, I had a suspicion we were much the same. (Hart 55-56)

In *Pride and Prejudice*, it is Elizabeth who tells Darcy about “the great similarity in the turn of our minds” (Austen 90). As for George Wickham, Elizabeth meets him when wandering in the streets of Meryton. His gentlemanlike appearance calls the attention of the ladies, “he had all the best part of beauty, a fine countenance, a good figure, and very pleasing address” (Austen 71). Elizabeth and Wickham’s next encounter takes place at Uncle Phillip’s dinner party for the officers. When she sees Wickham, she looks at him

with admiration and regards him agreeable. There, he narrates to Elizabeth his history with Mr Darcy, which accentuates her prejudice against him. Elizabeth is determined to accept Wickham's story because her own pride and prejudices against Darcy do not let her consider any other possible version of the story. In *Pride and Papercuts*, the order of events are altered. Elizabeth waits for her date, Wyatt Wickham, at the Regency Night hosted by Wasted Words but he excuses his absence under the pretext that he was indisposed. Liam, who is not aware of Wyatt's presence in New York, takes advantage of the situation to ask Laney for a dance so that he can apologise to her for his bad manners: "Would you care to dance, Miss Bennet?" (Hart 61). Laney accepts, but Liam's plan does not succeed and, later, he confesses to the readers his initial intentions:

I'd come here tonight for her. I put on this ridiculous costume and came to this ridiculous party as a gesture, a vehicle to make my apology. And if either of us knew when to quit, it would have been a success. But in an unsurprising turn, the whole thing burned to the ground, leaving nothing but floating embers and ash. (Hart 64)

Laney infuriates when Liam fails to see and accept the success of themed nights for the marketing strategy, and "the heat between us blew away with an icy gust" (Hart 63). Adding to this, Liam maddens when Laney tells him that she had a date with Wyatt Wickham, Liam's "sworn enemy" (Hart 64). He worries that Wyatt's intentions may not be good ones and wishes to make Laney "see reason by way of my lips" (Hart 66). Little by little, readers perceive the intensity of Liam's feelings for Laney. In contrast, her feelings for Liam are still blurred though her attraction and desire for him are not unknown to the reader:

Inside my cage, a mysterious ache blossomed. "I don't know. When we were dancing, he was ... different."

"Different how?"

"I don't know. I mean, he was clever and witty, and he even smiled. But it wasn't just that. Maybe he's just too intense to get that close to. I felt like he was going to absorb me or something." I shook my head. "It sounds

stupid. But he's the human equivalent of a black hole. If he had kissed me, I would have let him." (Hart 72)

Despite the bewilderment of Laney's mind and heart because of Liam Darcy, Wyatt Wickham appears to break down Laney's preconceptions of Liam by explaining his version of the story in a very convincing and studied way. Wyatt sheds light on the reasons behind their enmity, which slightly differ from the original novel, as follows:

"Georgie and I were engaged."

... "We'd been together for a year, never had any problems. You have to understand – Liam was my best friend. We met at Columbia, a scholarship, he brought me into the group without thinking twice. I loved Georgie what felt like forever, from the first time I ever saw her. But I couldn't act on it, not without his blessing. And he gave it to me, even though he took it back in the end. Truth is, I don't think anyone will ever be good enough for Georgie, not in his eyes." He shook off the thought. "A couple of weeks before the wedding, he made sure she knew exactly what he thought about me – I wasn't good enough, and I never would be – and bolstered his campaign with three things: the lies he told to turn her against me, the threat that he'd cut her off if she stayed with me, and the lie that he'd paid me off and I'd accepted." (Hart 74-75)

Laney is not at all surprised by Wyatt's recounting of his story about Liam, and it only stresses her understanding of Liam's character: "ultimatums and control, bending everyone to his will, forcing them to their knees (Hart 75). Both Elizabeth and Laney's reaction to Wickham's narration coincide. Yet, George Wickham's story does not allude to his relationship with Georgiana Darcy. Moreover, the Columbia context is adapted for the church one, accusing Mr Darcy of denying him the living because of his jealousy and pride:

"... The church ought to have been my profession – I was brought up for the church, and I should at this time have been in possession of a most valuable living, had it pleased the gentleman we were speaking of just now."...

“Yes – the late Mr. Darcy ... meant to provide for me amply, and thought he had done it; but when the living fell, it was given elsewhere.” ...

“A thorough, determined dislike of me – a dislike which I cannot attribute in some measure to jealousy. Had the late Mr. Darcy liked me less, his son might have borne with me better.” (Austen 78-79)

The fourth obstacle in the plot’s course is the De Bourgh and Associate’s policy established by Catherine de Bourgh. This policy dictates that no romantic relationship may arise between employees and clients. Liam is well aware of this barrier and realises that wanting to break the policy means that her feelings for Laney are stronger than he thought: “rules were rules, and even to consider breaking that particular rule only spoke to the depths that Laney Bennet had burrowed into my brain” (Hart 64). Additionally, considering the secondary plot of *Pride and Papercuts*, Georgie and Jett break the company’s policy. During the cocktail party organised by Georgie, Caroline Bingley, an employee at De Bourgh and Associates, tattles Liam about Georgie and Jett kissing behind the bar. An incensed Liam runs to them and commands to put an end to their relationship because of his overprotectiveness of Georgie and the agency’s policy:

“No you listen,” I snapped. “I don’t think you realize what kind of danger you’re putting her in. Her job. Her standing. Our aunt – our last living relative and the owner of the fucking company – can’t even stand your sister being in the building, never mind if she finds out a Bennet is fucking her niece.”
(Hart 156)

Liam’s argument is grounded on pride and prejudice. Once again, he stands out the inferiority of the Bennet family when compared to his family. In addition to this, he claims that their relationship poses a threat to Georgie’s reputation because of Catherine’s enmity with the Bennets. The two families have been in a feud because of Evelyn Bower, Catherine’s best friend. She ran Bower Bouquets and was arrested for mismanagement but both Evelyn and Catherine assured that the Bennets wronged her, and this is why Catherine plans to sabotage Longbourne flower shop. The incident between Georgie and Jett causes great irritation and distress in Catherine and compels

Liam to come between his sister's relationship with Jett, Laney's brother, otherwise Georgie will suffer the consequences:

Without hesitation, she answered, "Do you think I'd keep a traitor in my midst? In my *family*? She is either for me or she's against me. And if she's against me, I'll strip her of everything in my power. Seeing that bottom-feeding trash violates our company policies. As such, I could relieve her of her shares. Her position. Me. Permitting *those people* into our family in any context is a mistake, and I won't allow it."

... "Under any circumstance?"

"None in this world or the next. Tell her to make her choice and accept the consequences." (Hart 186)

After this event, the couple breaks up and Laney accuses Darcy of meddling in their relationship, prejudging him as Elizabeth does as regards the relationship between Jane and Mr Bingley. Liam's protectiveness of Georgie is through control due to Wyatt Wickham's bad intentions with his sister. Wyatt wanted to marry her because he was only interested in her money in order to satisfy his gambling addiction. In contrast, Mr Darcy argues that Jane showed no peculiar affection for Mr Bingley, who was really fond of her. Consequently, Elizabeth prejudices Miss Bingley for being the main ringleader, supported by Mr Darcy, that separates Mr Bingley from Jane after their departure from Netherfield:

That he had been concerned in the measures taken to separate Mr Bingley and Jane, she had never doubted; but she had always attributed to Miss Bingley the principal design and arrangement of them. If his own vanity, however, did not mislead him, he was the cause, his pride and caprice were the cause of all that Jane suffered, and still continued to suffer. (Austen 182)

After these series of confusions and misjudgements takes place a turning point in the story: the first proposal. In *Pride and Papercuts*, instead of a marriage proposal, Liam offers a truce proposal because of the series of misunderstandings they found

themselves involved in: “it seems the two of us have been in a state of constant misunderstanding, haven’t we?” (Hart 146). Moreover, he reveals his feelings to Laney:

“... there are times between when everything feels ... possible. Like now.” ...

“I know I’ve apologized,” he said, which was good because I couldn’t speak, “but I’ll do it again. And again, if I have to. Because this?” He turned us. “This, I like. So, I’m sorry for misunderstanding you. For underestimating you. Has proving me wrong been entertaining, at least?” (Hart 146-147)

Liam’s truce/love declaration culminates in an indirect allusion to their mutual desire to kiss: “I’ve been thinking about your unstoppable mouth for days, too” (Hart 147). However, their desire is not fulfilled because of Wyatt’s unexpected appearance at the party, which sets off all of Liam’s alarms. He is certain that Wyatt came to mark his territory: “He wants me to see him. To know he’s with you. That he’s this close to Georgie” (Hart 153). Laney refutes Liam’s perception of Wyatt’s appearance and she considers that he came to the party to see her. This leads them to a battle of egos that extinguishes the love spark created during the dance. Again, Liam humiliates Laney by calling her “a fool” (Hart 154) for believing Wyatt only came to the party looking for her. His insolence poses another obstacle between their mutual affection. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr Darcy’s marriage proposal happens while Elizabeth is alone at the parsonage in Kent. He walks in and abruptly expresses his passion for her: “in vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you” (Austen 185). Elizabeth is astonished and did not expect Darcy’s declaration because he did not show any signs of affection for her that would hint at something higher. Moreover, Mr Darcy’s proposal focuses heavily on Elizabeth’s social inferiority:

... He was not more eloquent on the subject of tenderness than of pride. His sense of her inferiority – of its being a degradation – of the family obstacles which judgment had always opposed to inclination, were dwelt on with a warmth which seemed due to the consequences he was wounding, but was very unlikely to recommend his suit. (Austen 185)

Therefore, Mr Darcy's love declaration highlights his conceited manners, and Elizabeth's respectful dismissal quickly transforms into a furious accusation, emphasising how much she dislikes him: "I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry" (Austen 188). Both Laney and Elizabeth yield to their prejudices, as well as Liam and Fitzwilliam allow their pride to guide them. Yet, Liam is not resigned to lose Laney despite the number of obstacles between them and assures that "somewhere in the depths of my heart, beneath layers of denial and expectation, I'd held a sliver of hope that maybe there was a way for Laney and me" (Hart 197). With the ad campaign coming to an end, and therefore, no longer working side by side with Laney, Liam takes the opportunity to declare his love again in a more passionate way. He buys Laney's favourite food and after a small conversation full of tension, he declares:

"... You set me on fire. I'm tortured by thoughts of you. The shape of your lips. The sound of your laughter. The sight of you flaming in anger like a struck match. How many times have I almost told you? How many nights have I lain awake, thinking of how you would taste?" I searched for her face. She said nothing. "If you can tell me you've never wished for me the way I've wished for you, I won't kiss you." (Hart 210)

His proposal is accepted by Laney sealing their love with an ardent kiss. Nevertheless, as it happened in Liam's first truce/love proposal and Mr Darcy's marriage proposal to Elizabeth, Liam fails to address his true intentions without being egoistic and putting his own good first: "I can't openly defy my aunt without losing everything. But that doesn't mean we can't do *this* for as long as we want, if no one finds out" (Hart 212). His tactless proposition leaves Laney astonished, who regards his declaration as a form of control. Furthermore, her initial acceptance of his offer turns into a fuming dismissal, assuring that "within minutes of learning your name, I knew without question that you were the last man in the world I would ever lower myself for, Liam Darcy" (Hart 215). Despite Laney's hurtful claim, the readers learn how she struggles because albeit the hatred she feels for Liam, she also wants him. Conversely, Liam's struggle involves his fight against his proud manners and even though he is in love with Laney, he accepts that "the time for Laney and me had passed" (Hart 226).

In the end, it is thanks to the letter in which Liam and Fitzwilliam apologise that they have the opportunity to explain their behaviour towards the offences that lay to their charge. Liam takes the writing of the letter as a mere apology as he has lost all hope of winning Laney's heart back. He hands her the letter (see Annex 6.3) and Laney's mind navigates between opening or burning the paper. After accepting that curiosity would kill her, she finally reads it with great astonishment and confusion as her mind has to work the problem of deciding who is lying, Wyatt or Liam:

I replayed conversations with Wyatt and Darcy both. It all made so much more sense. And where Darcy had nothing to gain and no reason to lie, Wyatt had quite the opposite ... I had been a fool, and I had behaved badly. I prided myself on discernment above all, but I shouldn't have. Because I was wrong. Wrong about Darcy, wrong about Wyatt. Blinded by vanity. Never have I seen my faults so clearly, so painfully. (Hart 236)

As Laney, Elizabeth reads several times the letter Mr Darcy handed her. She is stunned by Mr Darcy's version of the story about Mr Wickham, and judges that his account of the event concerning Jane and Mr Bingley's relationship, albeit sincere, is founded on "pride and insolence" (Austen 198). She also tries to remember her conversations with Mr Wickham and finally realises her misjudgement:

She grew absolutely ashamed of herself. – Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think, without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd.

"How despicably have I acted!" she cried. – "I, who have prided myself on my discernment! – I, who have valued myself on my abilities! Who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity, in useless or blameable distrust ... But vanity, not love, has been my folly! ... I have courted prepossessions and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment, I never knew myself."
(Austen 201-202)

After Laney's realization of her pride and prejudices against Liam, she faces Wyatt at Wasted Words, who reveals the truth after Laney confronts him and discovers his real

character. She is decided to apologise to Liam because “I wouldn’t be able to move on. Until I admitted my mistake, it would haunt me” (Hart 240). Contrary to Laney, Elizabeth dreads seeing Mr Wickham, and when she meets him at the regiment’s farewell dinner at Longbourn, Elizabeth indirectly reveals her knowledge about his lie, alarming and agitating him. Later, Elizabeth travels to Derbyshire, where she encounters Mr Darcy at Pemberley and they seem to get on with each other. Elizabeth has the capacity to reappraise her opinion about Mr Darcy and notices a radical change in him: “his behaviour, so strikingly altered ... Never in her life had she seen his manners so little dignified, never had he spoken with such gentleness as on this unexpected meeting” (Austen 242), and her feelings for him also start to transform positively.

Another obstacle between Laney and Liam is Catherine de Bourgh’s meddling in their possible relationship. When Laney goes to Liam’s office to apologise, she encounters Catherine instead, who looks at Laney with hate. As it happens in *Pride and Prejudice*, Catherine asks Laney whether her nephew and she are together. Laney denies and Catherine makes her promise to never see him, but after realising that she longs for Liam, she answers that she will not make such a promise, unnerving Catherine:

“Obstinate, headstrong girl!” she snapped. “I will ask you once more before things end badly – are you with my nephew? ...

So I answered with a weary voice, “I’m not.”

The sigh she released must have weighed twenty pounds. “And will you promise to never see him?”

Just like that, I caught fire again. She couldn’t take what I’d given her – she needed more. The vision of him rose in my mind like a giant. He wore the expression on his face when I’d walked away from him the last time, and I lost myself in the pain and longing in his eyes as he’d traced my face with his gaze as if to commit it to memory. And the answer was clear.

She would get no comfort from me. “I will not.”

Her nostrils flared. “He is not yours to have, and he never will be ...” (Hart 241-242)

Catherine cannot stand the Bennets being around their family because of the enmity with Mrs Bennet. While this is the reason behind her hatred to the Bennets in *Pride and Papercuts*, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Lady Catherine de Bourgh wants to stop any possible love connection between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy because, according to her, “Mr Darcy is engaged with *my daughter*” (Austen 335). She plans to unite their estates to enlarge their fortune. However, Lady Catherine explains Mr Darcy their unfriendly encounter. As a result, he is given hope and takes it as an opportunity to recover Elizabeth’s heart, which has already won back.

In *Pride and Papercuts*, Liam learns of Catherine sabotaging Longbourne flower shop together with Caroline Bingley’s help. The latter unintentionally informs on Liam after he returns from a trip with his sister Georgie: “She’s been using her network to poach the Bennet’s business, their employees. Word is, she managed to clean out their offices in little more than a week” (Hart 247). Liam, shocked for not believing Laney’s accusation of Catherine, confronts his aunt and stops the sabotage, just as Mr Darcy helped with Lydia’s elopement:

“Regarding the Bennets – you will call off your dogs. Effective now, they are officially off-limits.” ...

“You will remove yourself from Georgie’s relationships, and you will never, ever threaten and intimidate a woman connected to me by even the loosest terms ...” (Hart 250-251)

In the end, both heroine and hero experience a process of growth and maturity that “makes [them] a better and mature person after dramas of struggles and loss” (Lu 107). The protagonist’s growth and maturity is a motif permeating not only Chick Lit but also Jane Austen’s novels. Throughout this process, Laney is helped by her friend Cam and her twin brother Jett, who is Laney’s confidant: “he was the human equivalent of my diary” (Hart 219). As for Austen’s heroine, she relies on Jane after Charlotte agrees to marry Mr Collins, an act that upsets Elizabeth: “her disappointment in Charlotte made her turn with fonder regret to her sister, of whose rectitude and delicacy she was sure her opinion could never be shaken” (Austen 125-126). Therefore, to reach emotional maturation, Liam amends his mistakes and consents Georgie and Jett’s relationship after

realising that he was too overprotective with her and that Jett's feelings for Georgie were real, just like Mr Darcy does with Jane and Mr Bingley. As for Laney, she finally apologises to Liam for "being selfish and vain and *wrong* – not just about Wickham, but about you" (Hart 258), and their mutual apologies and declaration of love unite them to a 'happily ever after' that culminates with Liam's proposal of marriage:

"I wonder if you've always known that I love you," he said, taking my hand.
"Have you realized that I was empty until you? That my life wasn't a life at all – it was four blank walls with no windows. I didn't know until the day you forgave me. I didn't know. Not until you. I know that I should wait. I know the responsible thing to do would be to wait the recommended year, have a long engagement, plan and prepare for the future. But I've done the responsible thing my entire life. I've planned and prepared. I've done what's expected of me. But when it comes to the unexpected rightness of you, I don't want to wait for our future. I don't need time to know that I love you. For all of my certainty, I know this certainty above all – there is only you. There will only ever be you. Marry me, so we can start our future now. Marry me, because I will never be more sure than I am right now that I belong to you, and you belong to me. Marry me, so we can begin forever now."

His eyes were touched with hope and fear – I saw them through a well of tears, driven to spill down my cheeks by my teeming heart.

Marry him, marry him, marry him, it whispered.

I had no words but one, the most important one, and it slipped out of me in a breath.

"Yes." (Hart 270)

After having explained the misunderstandings and obstacles that Laney and Liam overcome to become a happily engaged couple, and which have been compared to those of Elizabeth and Mr Darcy, this proves how both novels follow a love plot structure that applies not only to romantic novels but also to the Chick Lit genre. Nevertheless, a major difference between the love plots of both novels is the portrayal of the heroines'

sexual desire and their level of sexual experience. In Jane Austen's time, a strict code of conduct regulated women, who were supposed to be virtuous, meek and submissive. In Elizabeth's words:

That loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable – that one false step involves her endless ruin – that her reputation is no less brittle than it is beautiful, – and that she cannot be too much guarded in her behaviour towards the undeserving of the other sex. (Austen 275)

The virtue of women signalled their degree of respectability and reputation within society and this is why they "showed no interest in sex outside of marriage and admitted only very obliquely to pleasure within marriage" (Wells 51). Elizabeth is an innocent woman who is "not one and twenty" (Austen 162) and has not experienced love nor sex before in her life. In contrast, "contemporary chick lit often presents the heroine in sexual relationships with men other than the narrative's intended hero, but without 'punishing' her or questioning her actions" (Mabry 201). It can be observed that Laney falls under the category of Chick Lit heroines. Although her age is not mentioned, readers can guess that she is roughly in her thirties. Moreover, she has dated, kissed and experienced some kind of affection with other men during her teenage years and adulthood. For instance, there is a passage in which she recalls an experience with an ex-boyfriend:

... considering my teenage years. "Brandon Ellis."

"Listen, Brandon Ellis deserved a bloody nose for kissing you. I'll die on that hill!"

"He's not wrong," Kash added. You weren't the only girl he was kissing."

"What if it'd been me in that dark hallway last night?" Both of them flinched, wearing matching expressions of disgust.

"Kissing Jett?" Luke asked.

I groaned. "No. Not kissing Jett, dummy. Kissing somebody else, someone I wasn't allowed to kiss." (Hart 174-175)

As perceived in the example, Laney comments with her brothers Luke and Kash one memory of her past relationship with Brandon Ellis. So, in this literary genre heroines openly talk about their love life. The topic is not taboo. In *Pride and Prejudice*, displays of affection between a man and a woman are hardly ever perceived, and passages where they open their hearts to each other far away from the so repeated 'agreeable' happen once the marriage proposal has been pronounced. However, readers learn of the characters' feelings thanks to the third-person omniscient narrator, typical of traditional romances (Mabry 196). In chapter twelve, the narrator uncovers Mr Darcy's feelings for Elizabeth: "she attracted him more than he liked" (Austen 59), and his feelings grow over time from attraction to "ardent love" (Austen 275). Elizabeth's realisation follows a similar path which goes from hate to love. Elizabeth is resolved to hate him and tells so to her friend Charlotte when Mr Darcy asks Elizabeth to dance:

Charlotte tried to console her.

"I dare say you will find him very agreeable."

"Heaven forbid! – *That* would be the greatest misfortune of all! – To find a man agreeable whom one is determined to hate! – Do not wish me such an evil." (Austen 89)

Despite her resoluteness to despise him, her feelings for Mr Darcy gradually change: "hatred had vanished long ago ... The respect created by the conviction of his valuable qualities ... had for some time ceased to be repugnant to her feelings; and it was now heightened into somewhat of a friendlier nature" (Austen 253). Eventually, her hatred is transformed into love: "'I do, I do like him,' she replied, with tears in her eyes, 'I love him. Indeed he has no improper pride. He is perfectly amiable'" (Austen 356). As for *Pride and Papercuts*, instances of affection and sexual tension are illustrated not only through the characters thoughts but also through kissing and sex scenes narrated by either Laney or Liam. To illustrate this, when Laney kisses Wyatt after the first truce/love failed proposal, she realises how her feelings for Liam increase, while those for Wyatt decrease:

I experienced the kiss as if from some distance, noting things I should have been too distracted to note. Like his limp hand on my hip. Or the fervency

with which he kissed me, mismatching my enthusiasm double. Or the way his lips felt. Because they felt *wrong* ...

When placed side by side, there was no comparison. Wyatt paled next to Liam.

... I was thinking about Darcy while Wyatt kissed me ...

Again, nothing. No flip-flopping stomach or squeeze in my heart when both had been present dancing with Darcy. (Hart 150)

The only sex scene present in the adaptation takes place at the end of the story once the marriage proposal has been stated and accepted by Laney. Its description is not graphic nor extensive and represents the union of their love. In this particular case, Laney does not use sex to explore her identity, as most Chick Lit heroines do (Mabry 200). Instead, the sexual act between Laney and Liam can be enclosed within the romance narrative, which stresses stereotypical gender roles.

Another prevalent Chick Lit characteristic present in the adaptation is the importance of career. Laney applies to Chick Lit theory because she works in the service sector. As regards the heroine at work, Wells (2006) claims that the protagonists of Chick Lit novels “languish unappreciated in low-level positions” (54). However, Laney does not consider her job unsatisfactory but rather places it as “Best Job Ever status” (Hart 2). Consequently, she does not need Liam to save her from her low job rank since she enjoys her day-to-day at Wasted Words. Nevertheless, he does encourage her to reconsider what she really wants. Laney’s anxieties regarding work are related to the family business. The Bennets own a flower shop which “had been passed down the female line” (Hart 29) for generations. Since she is the only female child in the family, she is the expected heir of Longbourne. Yet, she “didn’t want to grow flowers – I wanted to draw them” (Hart 29). Mrs Bennet does not accept Laney’s decision and feels disappointed with her:

When you were a little girl, I always imagined you would be a miniature of me. That you’d love what I loved, see things the way I see them. But instead, you went in a direction all your own. I’m proud of you, Elaine. But I’m still

mourning that dream that you'd carry on the tradition. Longbourne has always been a family affair, and to have you and Julius missing from our business isn't easy for me. That's all. (Hart 106)

In the end, Catherine's sabotage forces Laney to temporarily leave her job at Wasted Words to help out with the family business. During that time, she realises that "working for Longbourne, felt *good*" (Hart 219) and her short stay serves as a spiritual guide to consider the intriguing mystery posed by her mother: "What do you want, Elaine?" (Hart 179). But it is the hero who guides her to her final decision. He opens her eyes by telling her the truth and solving the mystery: "he told me I wanted to work at Longbourne ... that what I wanted was my family, but I'd been too stubborn to admit it" (Hart 266).

In Jane Austen's time, women did not have access to professional studies. Their only possible 'career' was marriage, otherwise they would become spinsters or governesses. Austen perfectly reflects the urgency to get married in the ironic first words of the novel: "it is a truth universally acknowledge, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (Austen 5). The idea of marriage as a means of survival is very present in the female characters, especially Mrs Bennet, whose eagerness to marry off her five daughters is stratospheric and not vain: "If I can but see one of my five daughters happily settled at Netherfield ... and all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for" (Austen 11). In Hart's adaptation, Mrs Bennet's desire to see all their children married remains loyal: "Jett and I were the oldest. Dusty, old spinsters, if our mother was to be believed. If Mrs. Bennet desired anything, it was seeing her children married and breeding" (Hart 6). Laney is not the stereotypical Chick Lit heroine who fears to be a 'singleton' for the rest of her life and who desperately looks for Mr Right, but is rather carried away by the situation and, with a touch of wit and self-deprecating humour, accepts that her heart has been broken more than once, accentuating 21st century women's anxieties as regards relationships:

I sighed, still – and probably forever, since I was being dramatic – annoyed. "Who even cares? I shouldn't even be surprised about anything but being dumb enough to get my hopes up. What's one more thrown onto the pile of worthless men who've crossed my path? Maybe we can have a bonfire. Or

have a Viking funeral for my love life. Push it out into the ocean and shoot flaming arrows into it until it catches fire.” (Hart 73)

Liam and Fitzwilliam do not fall in love with Laney and Elizabeth, respectively, for their outstanding beauty but rather for their mind, wit and pleasant personality. As Wells (2006) argues, “in being beautiful but not too beautiful, chick lit’s heroines are the direct descendants of Austen’s” (59). She also adds that “wit and good temper more than elevate [the heroine] her above her more glamorous but less likeable romantic rivals” (59). So, even though Chick Lit and Austen’s heroines are less physically attractive, in both novels there is a reference to the intriguing look of Laney and Elizabeth’s eyes that calls the heroes’ attention. The first time Liam sees Laney, he “couldn’t find anything particularly remarkable about her – except her eyes” (Hart 12). As Liam, Mr Darcy regards Elizabeth’s feature “uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes” (Austen 24). Additionally, in *Pride and Papercuts*, allusions to beauty and clothes are given through Liam’s narration. For instance, he describes Laney’s outfit and appearance at the cocktail party from his own perspective as follows:

She was blinding in her beauty, wearing a dress black as pitch, threaded with gold, just enough to catch the light every once in a while, gleaming over the curves of her body. I’d never seen her in a dress this short, and coupled with her gold heels, her legs seemed to go on forever. Her face, small and determined as ever, though tonight, her lips were crimson and her eyes lined with smoky kohl. (Hart 153)

Although Wells (2006) asserts that “a heroine who is completely free of care about her looks and happily self-accepting is nowhere to be found in chick lit” (59), instances in *Pride and Papercuts* that show the heroine’s preoccupation for appearance are non-existent, a pattern also perceived in *Pride and Prejudice*. Notwithstanding, the fact that Liam Darcy offers descriptions like the one above suggests that Laney cares about her looks. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen’s descriptions of characters’ dresses are scant, and normally uses them to satirize the characters such as Lydia Bennet. Moreover, she includes few shopping scenes too, which are essentially limited to minimal purchases.

For instance, the day the Bennets await Jane and Elizabeth's arrival in Hertfordshire, Kitty and Lydia spend their money on unnecessary purchases. Lydia states:

"... you must lend us the money, for we have just spent ours at the shop out there ... I have bought this bonnet. I do not think it is very pretty; but I thought I might as well buy it as not. I shall pull it to pieces as soon as I get home, and see if I can make it up any better" ...

"I am glad I bought my bonnet, if it is only for the fun of having another bandbox!..." (Austen 211-213)

Concerning *Pride and Papercuts*, there are no shopping scenes but the craze for consumerism and materialism can be perceived when Laney lists items that Liam has bought for her: "Liam had surprised me this afternoon with a new dress – a sky-blue empire-waisted shot-silk affair – as well as a chemise, stays, a petticoat, silk stockings, and matching shoes" (Hart 264). Another example is Laney's diamond engagement ring, which has an "ostentatious size" (Hart 269). Finally, the theme of consumerism can also be illustrated in the covers of books, but *Pride and Papercuts'* title page does not reflect this trope, yet it does include a pastel-coloured title and silhouette of the protagonists, Laney Bennet and Liam Darcy.

4. Conclusions and Further Research

There is much of Austen in the Chick Lit genre but in *Pride and Papercuts*, Staci Hart manages to perfectly redefine the classic without leaving the reader indifferent. As she confirms in the interview she granted me:

Pride and Papercuts is the closest to any of the original works – this particular story just didn't feel like something I could go off script with ... The book was written with the novel open next to me for reference. (see Annex 6.1)

I believe that Staci Hart remains true to the Bennet family and brings a fresh newness by offering the long-awaited perspective of Mr Darcy. Her heroine and hero are Elizabeth and Mr Darcy in themselves, albeit modernised. As previously shown, the adaptation follows the same plot structure as the original novel, being careful to the smallest detail. As a matter of fact, the misunderstandings and obstacles between the protagonists lead them to a journey of self-discovery turning the hatred between each other into love. Hence, they manage to overcome their pride and perceived prejudices to ultimately propel into a 'happily ever after'.

However, it may be said that Laney is not fully the stereotypical Chick Lit heroine. She is flawed and struggles with issues present in modern society, yet she shows no need of desiring a higher social status which can be achieved by buying fashionable outfits and items and expensive shiny jewellery. Additionally, she is not desperate to find a rich 'Mr Right' either. Laney does not feel ashamed of her low social status, but is rather proud and grateful for what she has. Moreover, she does not need a man to save her because she is an independent and financially autonomous woman. That being said, Laney and Liam run into their perfect partner in an unexpected moment, and together they mature in an environment of hostility and finally realise that they complement each other.

Being Staci Hart's *Pride and Papercuts* a retelling of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, I may conclude that Hart's story could be considered as the 'new' novel of manners. While Austen, the acclaimed master of the novel of manners, depicts the costumes and attitudes of the 19th century landed gentry, Hart recreates contemporary society through a heroine and hero who deal with issues related to love, career and identity.

Since Chick Lit is a literary genre that is widely criticised by critics for both its “gendered nature” (Baykan 768) and its social and literary value, it would be interesting to see the direction Chick Lit takes as a female narrative. My research focused on comparing a modern adaptation and the classic through a Chick Lit lens taking into account the principal storyline of both novels. Therefore, future research could examine the romantic subplot of *Pride and Papercuts* with those of *Pride and Prejudice*. This would shed further light on how Hart’s novel has been adapted, as regards romantic relationships, to form a 21st century version of Austen’s novel. More in-depth research could be conducted studying the female characters from a postfeminist perspective because in Chick Lit texts readers can perceive contemporary women’s attitudes that reflect today’s society.

5. Works Cited

- Anderson, Walter E. "Plot, Character, Speech, and Place in *Pride and Prejudice*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 30.3. 1975, pp. 367-382.
- Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. England, 2014.
- "Bainbridge Denounces Chick-Lit as 'Froth.'" *The Guardian* 23, Aug. 2001.
- Baykan, Burcu. "Woman's Reading and Writing Practices: Exploring *Chick-lit* as A Site of Struggle in Popular Culture and Literature." *International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities*. 2014, pp.766-773.
- Bulter, Marilyn. *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*. Oxford, 1975.
- Cabot, Heather. "'Chick Lit' Fuels Publishing Industries." *abcnews.com* 7, Jan. 2006.
- Chang, Hui-Chun. "The Impact of the Feminist Heroine: Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature* 3.3. 2014, pp. 76-82.
- Ferriss, Suzanne, and Mallory Young, eds. *Chick lit: The New Woman's Fiction*. New York, 2006.
- Ferriss, Suzanne, and Mallory Young. "Introduction". *Chick lit: The New Woman's Fiction*. 2006, pp. 1-13.
- Ferriss, Suzanne. "Narrative and Cinematic Doubleness: *Pride and Prejudice* and *Bridget Jones's Diary*." *Chick lit: The New Woman's Fiction*. 2006, pp. 71-84.
- Fowler, Marian E. "The Feminist Bias of *Pride and Prejudice*." *The Dalhousie Review*. 1977, pp. 47-64.
- Gao, Haiyan. "Jane Austen's Ideal Man in *Pride and Prejudice*." *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 3.2. 2013, pp. 384-388.

- Genz, Stéphanie. "Singled out: Postfeminism's "New Woman" and the Dilemma of Having It All." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 43.1. 2010, pp. 97-119.
- Gill, Rosalind, and Elena Herdieckerhoff. "Rewriting the Romance: New Femininities in Chick Lit?" *Feminist Media Studies* 6.4, 2006.
- Glasburgh, Michele M. *Chick Lit: The New Face of Postfeminist Fiction?* 2006, North Carolina U, Master's thesis.
- "Harlequin Launches Red Dress Ink". *Writers Write*. 30, Nov. 2001.
- Hart, Staci. *Pride and Papercuts*. Shirely, Jovana ed., Unforeseen Editing, 2020.
- Harzewski, Stephanie. "Tradition and Displacement in the New Novel of Manners." *Chick lit: The New Woman's Fiction*. 2006, pp. 29-46.
- Ilief-Martinescu, Alina. "Postfeminist Fiction in Chick Lit Novels." *Gender Studies* 14.1. 2015, pp. 119-137.
- Lu, Yingru. "Chick Lit: Themes and Studies." *Comparative Literature: East & West* 21.1. 2014, pp. 103-112.
- Lynch Cooke, Maureen. "The Great Escape: Modern Women and the Chick Lit Genre." 2007. Boston College U, Dissertation.
- Mabry, Rochelle A. "About a Girl: Female Subjectivity and Sexuality in Contemporary 'Chick' Culture." *Chick lit: The New Woman's Fiction*. 2006, pp. 191-206.
- Mazza, Cris. "Who's Laughing Now? A Short History of Chick Lit and the Perversion of a Genre." *Chick lit: The New Woman's Fiction*. 2006, pp. 17-28.
- Merrick, Elizabeth, ed. *This Is Not Chick Lit*. Random House, 2006.
- Mlynowski, Sarah, and Farrin Jacobs. *See Jane Write: A Girl's Guide to Writing Chick Lit*. Quirk Books, 2006.
- Müllerová, Jitka. "Jane Austen at the Edge of Romanticism and Victorian Era in *Pride and Prejudice*." 2016. Masaryk U, Bachelor's thesis.

- Perry, Ruth. "Home at Last: Biographical Background to *Pride and Prejudice*." *Approaches to Teaching Austen's Pride and Prejudice*. Ed. Marcia McClintock Folsom. New York: Modern Language Association. 1993, pp. 46-56.
- Peterman, Anthony Joseph. "Jane Austen and the Critical Novel of Manners." 1940.
- Ruston, Sharon. *Romanticism*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007.
- Ryan, Mary. "Trivial or Commendable?: Women's Writing, Popular Culture, and Chick Lit." *452ºF: Electronic Journal of Theory of Literature and Comparative Literature* 3, 2010, pp. 70-84.
- Schneider, Matthew. "Card-playing and the Marriage Gamble in *Pride and Prejudice*." *The Dalhousie Review*. 1993, pp. 5-17.
- Wang, Juan. "Appreciation of Literary Language of *Pride and Prejudice*." *4th International Conference on Education, Language, Art and Intercultural Communication (ICELAIC 2017)*. Atlantis Press, 2017, pp. 630-635.
- Wells, Juliette. "Mothers of Chick Lit? Women Writers, Readers, and Literary History." *Chick lit: The New Woman's Fiction*. 2006, pp. 47-70.
- Wiltshire, John. *Jane Austen and the Body*. Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Zhang, Jinhua. "An Analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* from Structuralist Perspective." 2020, pp. 86-92.

6. Annexes

6.1. Staci Hart's Interview

1. What motivated you to adapt Jane Austen's novels?

I have always loved her works, and Emma was one of my favorites, as well as the movie adaptations and spins (like Clueless). So I had an idea to write a matchmaker, decided to make it a spinoff of Emma, and that was that! Wasted Words was so wildly popular, I was happy to write adaptations for more, including Persuasion, Sense and Sensibility, and Pride and Prejudice.

2. How was the planning of Pride and Papercuts? On what did you inspire to create the new setting and the characters?

Pride and Papercuts is the closest to any of the original works – this particular story just didn't feel like something I could go off script with. I plotted out all the details, using the 2005 movie adaptation as a benchmark for story beats, as it held close to modern pacing. The book was written with the novel open next to me for reference. Adapting characters I love so deeply was both a fangirl moment and a terrifying one. There were very big shoes to fill!

3. How was the process of writing Pride and Papercuts? Did it take you long to finish it?

I wrote, edited, and published the novel in three months, which was a whirlwind.

4. Did you ever consider writing the ending of the novel away from the typical happy ending?

Never. As a lover of genre fiction, I need that happy ending, or I leave feeling unsatisfied.

5. Is there any specific reason why you decided to include both Laney's and Liam's point of view?

All of my novels are written in dual point of view, but Darcy in particular was a special treat to write. We've all long wondered what in the world goes on in that man's head,

and to be able to dig into the inner workings of such an enigmatic man was an absolute pleasure.

6. Is there any autobiographical trait reflected in the story?

Only in that I am Lizzie Bennet, heart and soul. We could be the same person, and as such, writing her was very fun.

7. Have you ever had any difficulty in publishing your work because of your gender?

No, but having self published in the romance genre, there are few boundaries we face in terms of getting our books out into the world. Ours is a community of fierce women, and I'm so happy to be a part of it.

8. Have you ever published any work using a pseudonym?

This is actually a pseudonym! Hart is an abbreviation of my last name.

6.2. *Pride and Papercuts'* Characters and Their Role

PRIDE AND PAPER CUTS' CHARACTERS	ROLE
Mrs Bennet	Mother; Boss of Longbourn florist
Mr Bennet	Father
Elaine Bennet (Laney)	Daughter; Social marketer at Wasted Words
Julius Bennet (Jett)	Son; Manager of Wasted Words
Marcus Bennet	Son
Kash Bennet	Son
Luke Bennet	Son
Maisie	Marcus' wife; Daughter of Evelyn Bower
Lila	Kash's wife
Tess	Luke's wife
Ivy	Employee of Longbourn
Olive	Ivy's daughter
Liam Darcy	Brother; Creative director at De Bourgh and Associates
Georgiana Darcy (Georgie)	Sister; Account executive at De Bourgh and Associates
Catherine de Bourgh	Aunt; Boss of De Bourgh and Associates
Evelyn Bower	Best friend of Catherine de Bourgh; Mrs Bennet's greatest enemy; Boss of Bower Bouquets
Caroline Bingley	Employee of De Bourgh and Associates
Wyatt Wickham	Journalist at Forbes; Gambler
Cam	Boss of Wasted Words; Laney's best friend
Tyler	Cam's husband
Fabio	-

Cooper	Investor of Wasted Words
Rose	Runs the day-to-day of Wasted Words
Collin	Comic department manager of Wasted Words
Ruby	Cashier at Wasted Words
Beau	Bartender at Wasted Words
Harrison	Bartender at Wasted Words
Greg	Bartender at Wasted Words
Annie	Greg's fiancé
Brandon Ellis	One of Laney's ex-boyfriends

6.3. Liam Darcy's Letter to Laney Bennet

"Laney,

First, don't worry – I have no plans to repeat the admission you found so repulsive when we last spoke. I write this without the intention to hurt you or to humble myself by dwelling on things I can't have. I wouldn't have asked you to read this if my character didn't demand that I write it. And I'm sure something I say will offend you – it's my way, isn't it? – so I can only tell you in advance that I'm sorry.

I was accused of two offenses – the first that I played some part in keeping Jett from Georgie, and the second that in defiance of honor and humanity, I ruined Wickham and Georgie along with him.

I have seen my sister in love many times, and each time destroyed her in some small way – in Wickham's case, ruined completely. And so I watched her with Jett, noticing instantly that I hadn't seen her so happy since Wyatt. I watched Jett too, and though he seemed charming and true, we'd all been fooled before. I didn't trust him, and I didn't trust Georgie, and in that, I was wrong. I was misled by that error, and I hurt them both. I wanted to find his faults, but not because I wished it. Only because I wanted proof of my suspicions – that he wanted her money and would break her heart.

I have always been protective of Georgie, but after Wickham, I am incapable of restraint.

There is, of course, the matter of your family. The situation with your mother and my aunt grew to a proportion I couldn't have anticipated. Catherine is my only living family besides Georgie, and this company is my legacy. But Catherine has the power to strip me of both my title and my family. In my frustration, I've said many things to you that I didn't mean, not the way I wielded the words – like weapons designed to cut to the bone – but the situation with your family couldn't be ignored. Your standing and status matter, though not to me. To Catherine.

As I said, I won't deny my wishes to separate my sister from your brother. But Georgie's happiness is my purpose, always. On learning the depths of her feelings, I told

her I would support her, and I would have. But it's our aunt who stands in their way, not me.

On the matter of having damaged Wickham, I can only refute it by laying out the truth of what happened between us all. Wyatt was once my closest friend, and though he knew Georgie then, it wasn't until she started at the firm that he sought her out. It never felt right, the two of them. I know now that it was because lies clung to him, only visible in glimpses – a slip of his mask, a moment when he thought no one was looking – but Georgie loved him and was happy. Any attempt to talk her about my suspicions resulted in a fight. When they got engaged and he refused to sign the prenup I had drafted, there was no more trusting Georgie's heart.

So I did some digging, hired an investigator. And I learned the truth for myself.

Wickham had developed a gambling addiction, one that put him into six-figure debt. I believe he loved my sister, but addiction changed him. His 'business trips' were spent in Atlantic City, his debt spread out over a dozen credit cards and a handful of bookies. His rush to get married came on the heels of threats to his person from the people he owed. He claims I paid him to leave, and I did pay him, in a sense – I gave him the money to clear his debts. Not that he cared – I'd cut off his access to the coffers, an offense he'd never forgive. But I never threatened him, and I certainly never threatened Georgie. When presented with the truth, Georgie made up her own mind.

This is why I believed he was using you – partly because he uses everyone and partly because I suspect he has designs on revenge. I don't know if you're aware, but he's been in contact with Georgie, asking to see her. And I can't imagine he has noble purposes.

This is the truth as I know it, and if you haven't already rejected it, I hope you'll absolve me of these two accusations – I won't ask for anything more. I should have told you all of this the moment I learned what he'd accused me of, but I wasn't master enough of myself to know what I could or should say. I don't know what lies he's told you, but my only hope is that you're now aware of who you're dealing with. If he hurt someone else I care for, I wouldn't forgive myself if I didn't try to stop it.

If your hatred of me makes this letter valueless, please talk to Georgie. She'll tell you everything.

You won't hear from me again. But know I wish you all the happiness in life, Laney.

– Liam Darcy.” (Hart 233-235)