

## **Mashing up Jane Austen: *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and the Limits of Adaptation**

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*It is a truth universally acknowledged that a zombie in possession of brains must be in want of more brains.*

–Seth Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*<sup>1</sup>

*‘Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can.’*

–Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*<sup>2</sup>

Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) has proved sufficiently capacious to accommodate radical diversification. Adaptations are now commonplace and widely accepted. Reinventions of the novel have crossed genres, from Bollywood to P. D. James’s murder mystery, *Death Comes to Pemberley* (2011).<sup>3</sup> There are sequels, prequels, comic versions, graphic novels, romance fiction spin-offs, and even eroticised rewrites, including *Fifty Shades of Mr Darcy: A Parody* (2012) by William Codpiece Thwackery.<sup>4</sup> The two-hundredth anniversary of the novel’s publication has spurred on this endless proliferation. But perhaps the most shocking and audacious adaptation of Austen’s most cherished novel has been the highly successful mash-up by Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009), which combines the original novel with a zombified parallel version. Questions this raises are: how to account for such a successful publishing phenomenon; and should there be limits to adaptation? As we will see, there are issues around categorisation in regard to parody, adaptation, and appropriation. The zombified mash-ups actualise the horrors lurking in the margins of Austen’s novels, particularly slavery and war, at the same time as making ironic concessions to the decorum of Regency society, as in euphemisms for the zombies as

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, deluxe heirloom edn (Philadelphia, PA: Quirk Books, 2009), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. by James Kinsley and Frank W. Bradbrook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> See *Bride and Prejudice*, dir. by Gurinder Chadha (Miramax Films/Pathé Pictures, 2004) [on DVD] and P.D. James, *Death Comes to Pemberley* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> William Codpiece Thwackery, *Fifty Shades of Mr Darcy: A Parody* (London: Michael O’Mara, 2012).

‘unmentionables’ or ‘dreadfuls’.<sup>5</sup> In view of this, there is also the intriguing question of whether the readership is predominantly male or female. The book points to the versatility of Austen for a modern audience, with its gothic re-imagining and capacity for multiple interpretations, especially those relating to politics, gender, class, and war, which lurk beneath the surface of the original.

The idea for a marriage between the Regency novel of manners with zombie splatter fiction came from Jason Rekulak, the publisher at Quirk Books, an independent Philadelphia-based publishing house, which led to *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* becoming the first of a new imprint — Quirk Classics. The internet has been their primary marketing tool, with the result that sales figures have soared into the *New York Times* best-seller list.<sup>6</sup> The book has sold over one million copies and been translated into more than twenty languages. A revised deluxe edition was produced for the Christmas market, and Hollywood studios started a bidding war for the rights in the hope of turning the book into a blockbuster movie.<sup>7</sup> The following years saw a prequel, *Dawn of the Dreadfuls* (2010), about the Bennet sisters; and the sequel, *Dreadfully Ever After* (2011), on the marriage of Mr and Mrs Darcy, both by Steve Hockensmith.<sup>8</sup> Another species of the undead joined these horror hybrids with Amanda Grange’s sequel *Mr Darcy, Vampire*, which appeared in August 2009, followed by *Vampire Darcy’s Desire: A Pride and Prejudice Adaptation* (2009) by Regina Jeffers.<sup>9</sup> The vampire motif spread to a different Austen novel, resulting in Jane Austen and Wayne Josephson’s *Emma and the Vampires* (2010) and even Austen herself turning into a vampire in *Jane Bites Back* (2010) by Michael Thomas Ford.<sup>10</sup> The hideous progeny of *Pride and Prejudice* led to more supernatural creatures being introduced into the menagerie, as in Jane Austen and Ben H. Winters’s *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* (2009), and Jane Austen and Vera Nazarian’s *Mansfield Park and Mummies* (2009).<sup>11</sup> A legion of imitators applied the Austen and Grahame-Smith template to other canonical authors, with Charlotte Brontë and Sherri

<sup>5</sup> Austen and Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, deluxe edn, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> It reached third position in April 2009. See *The Readers Unauthorized Guide to Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, ed. by Skyler Collins (Milton Keynes: Lightning Source, 2011), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Confusingly, the revised edition on its title page states that it is a first edition, but undoubtedly this is deliberate in order to make it appear more ‘collectable’.

<sup>8</sup> See Steve Hockensmith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies: Dawn of the Dreadfuls* (Philadelphia, PA: Quirk Books, 2010) and *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies: Dreadfully Ever After* (Philadelphia, PA: Quirk Books, 2011). Hereafter only the sub-titles will be cited.

<sup>9</sup> Amanda Grange, *Mr Darcy, Vampire* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2009) and Regina Jeffers, *Vampire Darcy’s Desire: A Pride and Prejudice Adaptation* (Berkeley, CA: Ulysses Press, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> Jane Austen and Wayne Josephson, *Emma and the Vampires* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2010) and Michael Thomas Ford, *Jane Bites Back* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Jane Austen and Ben H. Winters, *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* (Philadelphia, PA: Quirk Books, 2009) and Jane Austen and Vera Nazarian’s *Mansfield Park and Mummies: Monster Mayhem, Matrimony, Ancient Curses, True Love, and Other Dire Delights* (Winnetka, CA: Norilana Books, 2009).

Browning Erwin's *Jane Slayre* (2010), described on the cover as *The Literary Classic ... with a Blood-Sucking Twist* (2010); Lewis Carroll and Nickolas Cook's *Alice in Zombieland* (2011); and many more.<sup>12</sup> While George Eliot seems to have escaped this fate so far, even though a mash-up for *Silas Marner* (1861) was planned, William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens have not proven sacrosanct.<sup>13</sup> *Romeo and Juliet* has been mashed with both vampires and zombies, while Dickens and Sherri Browning Erwin's *Grave Expectations* (2011) turns Miss Havisham into a vampire and Pip into a werewolf.<sup>14</sup> Other publishers, besides Quirk Books, have joined this publishing frenzy, including Simon & Schuster.<sup>15</sup> Overwhelmingly, American publishing houses have brought out these mainly British titles, with the obvious exception of vampire and werewolf mash-ups of the American author Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868).<sup>16</sup> It is tempting to read into this a postcolonial sub-text. The trend appears to have spread to historical figures, which are predominantly British, as in *Queen Victoria: Demon Hunter* (2009) and *Henry VIII: Wolf Man* (2010) produced by the same British author and publisher, though American authors and publishers have brought out biographies of George Washington as a werewolf and Abraham Lincoln as a vampire slayer.<sup>17</sup> Calling these novels mash-ups is misleading, however, since they do not combine a pre-existing text, as indicated by the co-authored titles.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Charlotte Brontë and Sherri Browning Erwin, *Jane Slayre* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2010), first published in the USA by Gallery Books, a division of Simon & Schuster in 2010; and Lewis Carroll and Nickolas Cook, *Alice in Zombieland* (New York: Sourcebooks, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> George Eliot and Paul Di Filippo's *Silas Marner vs. The Lizard Men* was projected in 2009 but has not yet appeared. In a post for 3 April 2012, it is noted that there has not yet been 'The Zombie Mill on the Floss'. See Rebecca Mead, 'A Middlemarch Moment', *The New Yorker*, <<http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/a-middlemarch-moment>> [accessed 4 August 2014].

<sup>14</sup> William Shakespeare and Claudia Gabel, *Romeo & Juliet & Vampires* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), David Linker, *Romeo and Juliet 2: True Love NEVER Dies* (Nook Book (ebook), 2011) and Jacob Lehman, William Shakespeare and Zeeyang Guo, *Romeo and Juliet and Zombies* (Kindle Edition (ebook), 2012). There is also the film, *Romeo & Juliet vs. The Living Dead*, dir. by Ryan Denmark (Third Star Films, 2009) [on DVD]. On the Amazon pages for Charles Dickens and Sherri Browning Erwin's *Grave Expectations* (New York: Gallery Books, 2011), there is the unintentionally ironic invitation to 'look inside', <<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Grave-Expectations-Charles-Dickens/dp/1451617240>> [accessed 7 August 2014]. Subsequent references in the main text to these co-authored mash-ups will refer only to the contemporary author.

<sup>15</sup> They brought out Charlotte Brontë and Sherri Browning Erwin, *Jane Slayre*; see note 12 above.

<sup>16</sup> Louisa May Alcott and Lynn Messina, *Little Vampire Women* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010) and Louisa May Alcott and Porter Grand, *Little Women and Werewolves* (New York: Del Ray, 2010). There have been some European titles too, including Leo Tolstoy and Ben H. Winters, *Android Karenina* (Philadelphia, PA: Quirk Books, 2010) and Franz Kafka and Coleridge Cook, *Meowmorphosis* (Philadelphia, PA: Quirk Books, 2011).

<sup>17</sup> See A. E. Moorat's *Queen Victoria: Demon Hunter* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2009) and *Henry VIII: Wolf Man* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2010), Kevin Postuppach, *George Washington Werewolf: A Novel* (Norristown, PA: Deep Kiss Press, 2011) and Seth Grahame-Smith, *Abraham Lincoln Vampire Hunter* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> See Anthony Ocasia, 'Thirty Literary Mash-ups Crazier than "Abraham Lincoln Vampire Hunter"', <<http://screenrant.com/abraham-lincoln-vampire-hunter-literary-mash-up-list-aco-180542/>> [accessed 4

Attempting to describe the mash-up in terms of more familiar and well-established categories can be problematic. For instance, Rekulak does not classify *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* as parodic, seeing it instead as ‘a sort of “enhanced version” of the original text’ with modern material.<sup>19</sup> While the meaning of ‘enhanced’ can be either ‘improved’ or ‘expanded’, the notion of parody is even less straightforward. Gérard Genette sees parody as always tied to humour, whether it be satiric or playful, whereas Linda Hutcheon disagrees.<sup>20</sup> Although Grahame-Smith’s treatment of Austen is undoubtedly comic, it is also characteristic of the generally accepted concept of parody as creating ironic distancing and self-reflexivity through dialogue with another text. Hutcheon’s statement that ‘All parody is overtly hybrid and double-voiced’ is certainly applicable to the formula of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*.<sup>21</sup> In his *Oxford Book of Parodies*, John Gross sees an overlap between parody and burlesque, the latter of which ‘fools around with the material of high literature and adapts it to low ends’, a process matching much of Grahame-Smith’s technique.<sup>22</sup> Despite transgressing Austen’s construction of the world of Regency manners, he still manages to retain many of its core values, from a sense of decorum through to the feistiness of its principled heroine, Elizabeth Bennet. Indeed, his gothicisation of Austen is appropriate in several respects, since she would have been familiar with the concept of zombies — even though the word was not used in English during her life-time — and embraced gothic parody early in her writing career.<sup>23</sup> Amongst Austen juvenilia may be found her unfinished epistolary novel *Lesley Castle*, probably written in early 1792, which parodies elements of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764).<sup>24</sup> Her link to parody is further highlighted by Amanda Grange’s dedication of *Mr Darcy, Vampire* to Catherine Morland, the heroine of Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (1818), which, in turn, parodies Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794).<sup>25</sup>

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August 2014]. Grahame-Smith’s authorship of *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*, which has been made into a 2012 film directed by Timur Bekmambetov, might have added to the confusion.

<sup>19</sup> Rekulak, e-mail to Marie Mulvey-Roberts, 10 June 2013.

<sup>20</sup> See Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 21.

<sup>21</sup> Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 28.

<sup>22</sup> *The Oxford Book of Parodies*, ed. by John Gross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. xi.

<sup>23</sup> See Linda Troost, ‘The Undead Eighteenth Century’, her EC-ASECS 2010 presidential address, *The Eighteenth-Century Intelligencer*, March 2011, <<http://www2.washjeff.edu/users/ltroost/troostzombies2011.pdf>> [accessed 1 July 2013]

<sup>24</sup> See my discussion of this in Marie Mulvey-Roberts, ‘Gothic Bristol: City of Darkness and Light’, in *Literary Bristol: Writers and the City*, ed. by Marie Mulvey-Roberts (Bristol: Redcliffe Press, forthcoming).

<sup>25</sup> 1818 appears on the title page of the first edition, even though *Northanger Abbey* was published in December 1817, nearly two decades after it was started.

Another way of classifying the novel is to consider it as adaptation. Yet Hutcheon's definition of adaptation as 'a form of repetition without replication', when applied to the mash-up, is contentious.<sup>26</sup> In the case of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Grahame-Smith uses about 85%<sup>27</sup> of what Genette terms the hypotext or anterior text, which consists of Jane Austen's words.<sup>28</sup> The textual transformation of the given or hypertext has been achieved partly by disrupting the linearity of the original. This conforms to one of the functions of parody — 'denuding or laying bare' the 'essential conventionality of literary form'.<sup>29</sup> The new material grafts onto the main body of the Austen novel a plague of zombie attacks in the Hertfordshire countryside, which the Bennet sisters, as exponents of the martial arts, seek to repel. The zombie invasion demonstrates how a contemporary popular narrative can invade a classic, not merely in terms of genre, but also metaphorically, as well as on the level of plot. Co-authorship of recent writers with classic authors is another form of colonisation. The original has not been wiped out, nor written over in the sense of a palimpsest, but inserted into a new contextual framework.

In view of this, perhaps the mash-up should be seen as closer to appropriation than adaptation. Both modes, according to Julie Sanders, carry out a sustained engagement with the original text, though appropriation 'frequently adopts a posture of critique, even assault'.<sup>30</sup> She points out that, 'as the notion of hostile takeover present in a term such as "appropriation" implies, adaptation can also be oppositional, even subversive.'<sup>31</sup> Certainly the zombie content corresponds to the language of 'assault', which Sanders is using to describe appropriation. Grahame-Smith simultaneously declares war on the novel at the same time as co-opting it. His subversion of Austen's work extends to an ironic attempt to destabilise (if not usurp) the authority of the canonical text in a kind of textual *coup d'état*. Indeed the appropriation of *Pride and Prejudice* could even include appropriating its very status as a canonical text, since the mash-up seems to be comically aspiring to the ranks of the literary canon in its own right. The deluxe edition produced by Quirk Books is presented as an heirloom and artefact for collectors, despite being digitally available. Like *Pride and Prejudice* itself, Grahame-Smith's appropriation has proved ripe for exploitation by other

<sup>26</sup> Linda Hutcheon with Siobhan O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Routledge, 2013), p. xviii.

<sup>27</sup> Grahame-Smith gives this estimate in an interview. See Paige MacGregor, 'Exclusive: Seth Grahame-Smith Talks "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies"', 1 April 2009, <<http://filmschoolrejects.com/features/exclusive-seth-grahame-smith-talks-pride-and-prejudice-and-zombies.php>> [accessed 30 July 2014].

<sup>28</sup> Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000), p. 104.

<sup>29</sup> Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Sanders, p. 9.

authors and, indeed, as outlined above, an entire industry has sprung up around it. Hockensmith's prequel and sequel provide the most direct mock tributes. These adaptations of an adaptation know their place. Even their titles are subordinate to that of the prototype, in being relegated to the sub-title as in, for example, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies: Dawn of the Dreadfuls*.

The exploitation of the classic for commercial purposes is nothing new in gothic literature. In Austen's early novel, *Northanger Abbey*, reference is made to Ann Radcliffe, whose major gothic novels, along with the work of Matthew Lewis, inspired imitations, redactions, and abridgements.<sup>32</sup> The extent to which these epiphenomena took advantage of best-sellers is demonstrated by the title of T. J. Horsley Curties's *The Monk of Udolpho* (1807), a synthesis of Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) and Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Another example is *Manfroné; or, The One-Handed Monk* (1809) written by the aptly named Mary Anne Radcliffe. Similarly, Quirk Classics and its kin have endeavoured to capitalise on the publishing success of canonical texts through the mash-up. Driven by the uncertainties of the market, many early gothic writers struggled to make a living. Even the relatively successful Sarah Wilkinson had to appeal to the Royal Literary Funds for the alleviation of her dire poverty.<sup>33</sup> Contemporary author Vera Nazarian was driven to publish *Mansfield Park and Mummies* due to desperate financial circumstances relating to mortgage foreclosure as a result of the economic collapse in America.<sup>34</sup> She started a public fund for donations to relieve her financial distress and sent out internet appeals to buy her book. Since the eighteenth century, struggling authors have often turned to the gothic novel or ghost story, in the hope of increasing book sales.

Many joined in the mass publishing phenomenon of the gothic bluebooks or short tales of terror during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These were 'literary mushrooms' growing under the shadow of the gothic novel and were invariably imitations of one sort or another.<sup>35</sup> It should not be assumed, however, that these publications are without literary merit, despite a tendency to be derivative and of an ephemeral nature. Printed on cheap paper with flimsy blue or pink covers, they were often read literally to pieces,

<sup>32</sup> See Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (1818), ed. by Marilyn Butler, rev. edn (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), p. 39.

<sup>33</sup> See Franz J. Potter, *The History of Gothic Publishing, 1800-1835: Exhuming the Trade* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 52, 113.

<sup>34</sup> See 'The Mummies and Their Author Need Your Help', 10 January 2011, <<http://www.veranazarian.com/Mummies-Help.htm>> [accessed 10 June 2013].

<sup>35</sup> Potter, p. 37.

becoming the proverbial ‘pulp’ fiction. Many did not survive the paper shortages of World War 2 and were disposed of as toilet paper.

By stark contrast, Grahame-Smith’s deluxe revised version of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is presented in a gold embossed leatherette binding designed to ‘endure for generations’ with ‘full-colour oil painting illustrations’ to convey quality and antiquity.<sup>36</sup> After having been published initially in paperback, in a reverse of the usual practice, the book re-emerged between hard covers, which Grahame-Smith jokingly suggests could also double up as a weapon in a zombie uprising.<sup>37</sup> Quirk Classics are designed to caricature the prestigious Penguin Classics, which have stood the test of time. Imitating the publisher’s trade-mark branding on the front cover, the use of traditional portraiture is deployed, only this time, blood-splattered or sufficiently decayed as to reveal a skull. The independent Chicago publisher Sourcebooks brought out *Emma and the Vampires*, whose heroine is depicted on the cover holding a bloodied sword and severed head next to the slogan ‘A Jane Austen undead novel’. This word-play alludes to the content of the hypertext, while simultaneously acknowledging the canonicity of Austen’s hypotext.<sup>38</sup> Similarly *Dawn of the Dreadfuls* has a metafictional moment when Elizabeth Bennet is asked by another character if she is famous: ‘Bennet. Hmm. It seems to me that name’s ever so important, somehow.’<sup>39</sup> Readers requiring notes for reference are advised to consult *Mansfield Park and Mummies* where annotations and appendices are provided, as if to appeal to the studious reader. The preface to Grahame-Smith’s revised edition, and afterword written by a Professor in English, imply that the book must be worthy of scholarly attention, which ironically has proved to be the case, here and elsewhere.<sup>40</sup> Such adjuncts are identified by Genette as forming part of the paratextual realm, which he regards as a threshold of interpretation. Genette locates this paraphernalia on the fringes of a text, as elements of the peritext. This controls how the text is transmitted to the reader, governing expectations regarding genre, and includes the name of the author, book title, sub-title, preface, and so on.<sup>41</sup> To assist the reader in the generic mayhem of Grahame-Smith’s novel is *The Readers [sic] Unauthorized Guide to Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2011) edited by Skyler Collins. Rather anomalously for a printed book, it is compiled from

<sup>36</sup> Quirk Books, <<http://quirkbooks.com/book/pride-and-prejudice-and-zombies-deluxe-heirloom-edition>> [accessed 10 June 2013].

<sup>37</sup> See Austen and Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, deluxe edn, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> The vampires function in a way which is virtually identical to the zombies in other Austen mash-ups.

<sup>39</sup> Hockensmith, *Dawn of the Dreadfuls*, p. 101.

<sup>40</sup> The academic is Dr Allen Grove of Alfred University, New York, USA. See Austen and Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, deluxe edn, pp. 354–57 and also Linda Troost, ‘The Undead Eighteenth Century’.

<sup>41</sup> See Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

‘high quality’ internet articles, though some are distinctly lacking in scholarship, as indicated by the occasional editorial insertion of ‘citation needed’.<sup>42</sup> Both this *Guide* and ‘A Reader’s Discussion Guide’, appearing at the end of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, are metatexts parodying the ways in which canonical texts are deemed to merit study on the teaching curriculum.<sup>43</sup>

There is certainly a place for guidance about the mash-up novel which, as far as Austen is concerned, has incongruously inserted zombies, vampires, mummies, and sea-monsters into her world. Marjorie Kehe quantified the mash-up as 60-85% of a pre-existing text mashed up with another genre, while the term itself is borrowed from the music re-mixing industry and the computer world.<sup>44</sup> The link with technology is appropriate in view of the action-packed zombie episodes, which have more in common with computer-gaming than they do with Austen’s fiction. Grahame-Smith’s strategy for aligning ‘Classic Regency Romance’ with ‘Ultraviolent Zombie Mayhem’ is demonstrated by his description of a zombie attack during a ball.<sup>45</sup>

From a corner of the room, Mr Darcy watched Elizabeth and her sisters work their way outward, beheading zombie after zombie as they went. He knew of only one other woman in all of Great Britain who wielded a dagger with such skill, such grace, and deadly accuracy.

By the time the girls reached the walls of the assembly hall, the last of the unmentionables lay still.

Apart from the attack, the evening altogether passed off pleasantly for the whole family. Mrs Bennet had seen her eldest daughter much admired by the Netherfield party [...] despite having their gowns soiled with blood and bits of brain, Catherine and Lydia had been fortunate enough never to be without partners, which was all that they had yet learnt to care for at a ball.<sup>46</sup>

Instead of watching the Bennet sisters dance, Mr Darcy, ‘a man of many kills’, observes them in mortal combat.<sup>47</sup> The conflation of the ball and the zombie attack draws together the refined and the primitive, encapsulated by Sir William Lucas’s remark to Mr Darcy in Austen’s original that dancing is ‘one of the first refinements of polished society’, to which the acerbic reply is that ‘Every savage can dance’.<sup>48</sup> Grahame-Smith’s ironic inversions

<sup>42</sup> *The Readers Unauthorized Guide to Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, ed. by Collins, pp. 50, 126.

<sup>43</sup> *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is taught on the university curriculum at George Washington University, Washington DC as an Austen adaptation.

<sup>44</sup> See ‘Mashup (book)’, <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mashup\\_\(book\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mashup_(book))> [accessed 4 August 2014] and *The Readers Unauthorized Guide to Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, ed. by Collins, p. 145.

<sup>45</sup> Austen and Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, deluxe edn, title page.

<sup>46</sup> Austen and Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, p. 23.

<sup>47</sup> Austen and Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, p. 76.

<sup>48</sup> Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, p. 21.



satirise social and domestic activities, especially those associated with a very specific kind of femininity contained within Austen's depiction of that time. When Wayne Josephson's Emma Woodhouse contemplates giving up staking vampires, she resolves to make a needle-point sheath for her retired wooden stake. Rather than sewing, Grahame-Smith's Elizabeth Bennet may be found whittling blowgun darts in readiness for another zombie attack. In *Dawn of the Dreadfuls*, she and her sister Jane not only comb each other's hair, but after almost a week's training in 'the deadly arts', find themselves dressing each other's wounds.<sup>49</sup> Elizabeth, who has been trained in Shaolin kung fu, imagines cutting off prattling younger sister Lydia's head and it falling into an open hat box. In addition to the muddy petticoat with which she arrives at Netherfield, she has 'pieces of undead flesh upon her sleeve'.<sup>50</sup> These are examples of what Genette calls 'transmotivization', when the intentions of an original character are altered within the adaptation.<sup>51</sup> Here, everyday domestic activities have been transformed into preparations for battle and extraordinary action sequences, which betray the influence of cinema.

Both Grahame-Smith and Hockensmith are screenwriters. The modern concept of zombies originated from George A. Romero's apocalyptic film *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). Here, zombie is crossed with vampire to produce 'a ghoulish plague monster', a hybridisation reflected in Austen horror mash-ups and the various other cultural phenomena that they have spawned.<sup>52</sup> Zombie apocalypse is currently re-enacted in the streets of Bath around Halloween on the Jane Austen Day of the Dead.<sup>53</sup> The portrait on the cover of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* stares out from the event's Facebook page. Costumed zombie walks are often said to have a political anti-consumerist agenda linked to Romero's second film in his *Night of the Living Dead* series.<sup>54</sup> This is *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), the title of which is parodied in Hockensmith's prequel, *Dawn of the Dreadfuls*. In Romero's horror film, survivors find refuge from flesh-eating zombies in a suburban shopping mall, an updated version of buying ribbons and laces in Regency Bath.

<sup>49</sup> Austen and Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, deluxe edn, p. 14.

<sup>50</sup> Quoted by Emily Auerbach, 'Pride and Proliferation', in *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*, ed. by Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 186–97 (p. 195).

<sup>51</sup> Allen, *Intertextuality*, p. 107.

<sup>52</sup> Quoted in *The Readers Unauthorized Guide to Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, ed. by Collins, p. 45. Like vampires, zombies rise from the grave and bite their victims, who then turn into versions of themselves. They do not conform to their more traditional voodoo antecedents as in the early films, *White Zombie*, dir. by Victor Halperin (United Artists/Edward Halperin Productions, 1932) [on DVD], or *I Walked with a Zombie*, dir. by Jacques Tourneur (RKO Radio Pictures, 1943) [on DVD].

<sup>53</sup> In Bristol there is an interactive apocalyptic zombie chase game called '2.8 Hours Later: Asylum' started in 2010.

<sup>54</sup> This is certainly the case in Bristol which has the oldest zombie walk in the UK.

In view of this link with consumerism, it may be significant that *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* was published during the global financial crisis of 2007–08. In the USA, zombie and vampire films have been viewed as ‘competing parables about class warfare’.<sup>55</sup> According to a graph appearing on the internet, when Republicans are in power, more zombie movies are made, whereas when a Democrat is in the White House, a greater number of vampire films are produced. As S. Peter Davis explains, this is because Republicans are associated with conservatism and consumerism, while vampires are perceived as opposing conservative ideals.<sup>56</sup> Even though this survey should be approached with caution, the idea for *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* was conceived around spring 2008, when Republican George W. Bush was still in office.<sup>57</sup> Grahame-Smith, who has satirically criticised Bush in his book, *Pardon My President* (2008), regards the characters in Austen novels as zombie-like in that ‘No matter what’s going on around them in the world, they live in this bubble of privilege’.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, as social commentary, the zombie motif can be interpreted in various ways, including one which is more sympathetic to Austen’s female characters, in spite of their privileged lives. As Stephanie Merritt indicates in her *Observer* review of Grahame-Smith’s novel,

on some level the monsters are not entirely inappropriate: the society Austen depicts is highly predatory on both sides, with young girls ready to be picked off and devoured by unscrupulous men such as George Wickham, and equally rapacious women bent on capturing their often unwitting prey. It might be argued that the mash-ups only make the metaphorical literal.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Peter Rowe, ‘With Obama Election Comes the Return of the Vampire’, 8 November 2008, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, <<http://legacy.signonsandiego.com/news/features/20081108-9999-1n8vampire.html>> [accessed 10 June 2013].

<sup>56</sup> See S. Peter Davis, ‘6 Mind-blowing Ways Zombies and Vampires Explain America’, 6 September 2011, *Cracked*, <[http://www.cracked.com/article\\_19402\\_6-mind-blowing-ways-zombies-vampires-explain-america.html](http://www.cracked.com/article_19402_6-mind-blowing-ways-zombies-vampires-explain-america.html)> [accessed 10 June 2013]. In the HBO TV series *True Blood*, Season 7 Episode 5 (2014), the vampires Eric Northman and Pamela Swynford de Beaufort are at a Republican convention in the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum, where Pam says, ‘Of all the horrible things I’ve seen in the last hundred years this could be the most disturbing.’

<sup>57</sup> See Rekulak, e-mail to Mulvey-Roberts, 10 June 2013. This could just as easily be reversed, since city bankers can be equated to blood-sucking vampires, who are traditionally linked to aristocrats, while Republicans might be fearful of dishevelled zombie hordes in revolt; see Rowe, ‘With Obama Election Comes the Return of the Vampire’.

<sup>58</sup> See Seth Grahame-Smith, *Pardon My President* (Philadelphia, PA: Quirk Books, 2008), quoted by Carolyn Kellogg, ‘“Pride and Prejudice and Zombies” by Seth Grahame-Smith’, 4 April 2009, *Los Angeles Times*, <<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-et-zombies4-2009apr04,0,4685367.story>> [accessed 10 June 2013].

<sup>59</sup> Stephanie Merritt, ‘Pride and Prejudice and Zombies by Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith’, 6 December 2009, *The Observer*, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/dec/06/pride-prejudice-zombies-grahame-smith>> [accessed 10 June 2013].

Grahame-Smith takes revenge on the profligate Wickham, who has to be bribed by Mr Darcy into saving Lydia's reputation through marriage, by turning him into an incontinent quadriplegic. This can also be seen as punishment for Lydia's foolishness and lack of remorse, partly through a de-glamorising of Wickham in a deliberate undermining of Austen's more conventional happy ending for the couple.

As some Austen readers might find such re-writing a distasteful send-up of the novel and be repelled by the zombie gore and general mayhem, initially Quirk Classics were reluctant to publish *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* for fear of alienating Austen fans, whose most devoted constituency are the Janeites.<sup>60</sup> This designation first appeared in George Saintsbury's 1894 introduction to a new edition of *Pride and Prejudice*. Traditional readers of an Austenite delicate disposition are unlikely to welcome graphic descriptions of beheadings, cannibalism and mass murder, despite concessions to the mock propriety of rarely mentioning the 'Zed word'. Besides the already mentioned 'unmentionables', euphemisms include 'the sorry stricken', 'the manky dreadfuls' and 'the de-graved dreadfuls'.<sup>61</sup> *Dawn of the Dreadfuls* opens with one of these creatures rising from the dead during a funeral:

WALKING OUT [*sic*] in the middle of a funeral would be, of course, bad form. So attempting to walk out on one's own was beyond the pale.

When the service began, Mr Ford was as well behaved as any corpse could be expected to be.<sup>62</sup>

But when Mr Ford sits up in his coffin, it is apparent that he has joined the ranks of the undead. So too, in a canonical sense, has Jane Austen. One might wonder if Grahame-Smith and his imitators were inspired by Mark Twain's notorious admonition of Austen when he wrote, 'Every time I read *Pride and Prejudice* [*sic*] I want to dig her up and beat her over the skull with her own shin-bone!'<sup>63</sup> This statement resonates with the opening of Hockensmith's sequel *Dreadfully Ever After*, where Mr and Mrs Darcy are fighting off a zombie attack. Elizabeth launches into 'a tottering collection of old bones' and kicks off an arm, which she then uses as a bone-club to swipe off the head of an unmentionable from its shoulders.<sup>64</sup> The undead in states of semi-decay regularly climb out of graves to launch attacks on the living, littering Hockensmith's and Grahame-Smith's zombified Neo-Austen novels with body parts.

<sup>60</sup> See *The Readers Unauthorized Guide to Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, ed. by Collins, p. 7.

<sup>61</sup> Austen and Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, deluxe edn, pp. 34, 182, 221.

<sup>62</sup> Hockensmith, *Dawn of the Dreadfuls*, p. 9.

<sup>63</sup> Letter to Joseph Twichell (13 September 1898) quoted by Devoney Looser, 'The Cult of *Pride and Prejudice* and its Author', in *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*, ed. by Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 174–85 (p. 176).

<sup>64</sup> Hockensmith, *Dreadfully Ever After*, p. 9.

Once bitten by an unmentionable, humans are afflicted by a plague which gradually turns them into zombies. A case in point is Charlotte Lucas who, by the time she has married Mr Collins, is three-quarters dead, a state unnoticed by her husband. Marriage, for Charlotte, has been accompanied by the gradual onset of zombification. Moreover, zombies have no respect for nuptials. In *Dawn of the Dreadfuls*, a finger with a wedding band is found amongst zombie droppings. Nevertheless, Lydia Bennet insists, 'I'd still rather be an unmentionable than a *spinster*' [emphasis in original].<sup>65</sup> In *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, the Bennet sisters resolve to protect Hertfordshire from its enemies, mainly zombies, until such time as they are 'dead, rendered lame, or married'.<sup>66</sup> Clearly, the zombie trope can accommodate a range of approaches to marriage and spinster-hood, subjects which are the focus of intense interest in *Pride and Prejudice*.

In the novel, Mr Bennet is put under pressure by his wife to agree to his second daughter Elizabeth's marriage to the odious Mr Collins, who will inherit their family estate. As Austen reveals, the reason for this is because Mr Bennet has not made adequate provision for his wife and daughters after his death. Grahame-Smith, however, rehabilitates the lethargic father through his efforts to train his daughters as warriors so that they can defend themselves against 'the unmentionables'. By contrast their mother's focus is on marital rather than martial arts. She fears that these masculine pursuits will detract from the marriageability of her daughters: 'The business of Mr Bennet's life was to keep his daughters alive. The business of Mrs Bennet's was to get them married.'<sup>67</sup> In *Dawn of the Dreadfuls*, real horror arrives for Mrs Bennet when her daughters are banned from attending a spring ball because the hostess discovers that they are training in the deadly arts. A family friend Lord Lumpley, intent on seducing the eldest and most beautiful daughter Jane, comes up with a solution. To help the girls regain social acceptance, he suggests that Jane act as his bodyguard. To preserve her reputation, he provides her with chaperones. This may be seen as transcultural adaptation, through which authors import different cultural values into an existing fictional world.<sup>68</sup> Here it functions to satirise the notion of 'the weaker sex'. As Hockensmith and Grahame-Smith demonstrate, women in the novel not only break the bounds of traditional femininity, but actually reverse gender roles by protecting men from attack.<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth tries to normalise this social aberration by telling her sister, 'You must simply think of yourself as a special sort of

<sup>65</sup> Hockensmith, *Dawn of the Dreadfuls*, p. 33.

<sup>66</sup> Austen and Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, deluxe edn, p. 254.

<sup>67</sup> Austen and Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, deluxe edn, p. 15.

<sup>68</sup> See Hutcheon with O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 147.

<sup>69</sup> A woman takes charge in the active defence of men against zombies in Romero's *Day of the Dead* (United Film Distribution Company/Laurel Entertainment/Dead Films/Laurel Day, 1985) [on DVD].

governess [...] And of Lord Lumpley as a particularly naughty child.’<sup>70</sup> Younger sister Mary, who is renowned in Grahame-Smith’s version as ‘the most accomplished hapkido master in England’,<sup>71</sup> tries comforting the horrified Mrs Bennet at the prospect of Jane’s new employment by pointing out that ‘Lady Catherine de Bourgh herself served as personal guard to the Duke of York during the Black Country Campaign’.<sup>72</sup>

The matriarchal Lady Catherine, who has ‘a personal guard of five-and-twenty ninjas’ is, like Elizabeth, a redoubtable zombie antagonist.<sup>73</sup> As Merritt notes, in ‘the Austen adaptations, it is the women who are bold and quick-witted enough to take on the monsters, a nice reversal of the passive victim role traditionally handed to young women, in horror as in history’.<sup>74</sup> The active agency of Austen’s heroine is put to the test by Grahame-Smith through a deadly confrontation with opponent Lady Catherine, who disapproves of Elizabeth marrying her nephew, Mr Darcy. Crossing swords, Elizabeth and Lady Catherine engage in aerial combat, which evokes the special effects associated with Asian cinema: ‘After several minutes of flying about’, the adversaries attack ‘one another with force that would have sent legions of lesser warriors to their graves’.<sup>75</sup> The clash of these two powerful personalities, who break out of the restrictions governing their traditional gender roles, is literalised through mortal combat for comic effect.

Metaphorically, these female warriors may also be seen as trained in class warfare. Zombies represent fears of the untamed rabble from the lower classes and the chaos lying beneath the relatively ordered surface of Austen’s society. The zombie apocalypse not only explodes the tinder-box of class conflict, but also points to the war being waged on Continental Europe. Austen’s novels are full of military figures, who serve little purpose as soldiers, apart from bolstering marriage hopes, as in Lydia’s elopement with George Wickham, an officer in the regiment. The presence of war lurks around the edges of Austen’s novels, but is brought to the fore in the mash-ups. Throughout her life, Austen lived under the shadow of war, from the American Revolution through to the Napoleonic Wars. Her brothers were involved in naval engagements with the enemy, and the first husband of her cousin Eliza de Feuillide was guillotined during the Terror of the French Revolution in 1794.<sup>76</sup> Responding to the criticism that Austen failed to acknowledge the great events of the time in

<sup>70</sup> Hockensmith, *Dawn of the Dreadfuls*, p. 140.

<sup>71</sup> Austen and Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, deluxe edn, p. 23.

<sup>72</sup> Hockensmith, *Dawn of the Dreadfuls*, p. 141.

<sup>73</sup> Austen and Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, deluxe edn, p. 141.

<sup>74</sup> Merritt, ‘Pride and Prejudice and Zombies’.

<sup>75</sup> Austen and Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, deluxe edn, p. 327.

<sup>76</sup> See Paul Poplawski, *A Jane Austen Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1998), p. 9.

her fiction, Marilyn Butler in *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975) says that the ‘crucial action of her novels is in itself expressive of the conservative side in an active war of ideas’.<sup>77</sup>

In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen comes closest in a fictional context to hinting of political unrest and bloodshed. This is prompted by Catherine Morland’s comment, when she says, ‘I have heard that something very shocking indeed, will soon come out in London [...] more horrible than anything we have met with yet [...] It is to be uncommonly dreadful. I shall expect murder and every thing of the kind.’<sup>78</sup> Eleanor Tilney, not realising that Catherine is referring to a ‘horrid novel’, asks for more information about ‘this dreadful riot’, having already expressed the earnest hope that the government will seek to prevent it. Her brother Henry mischievously compounds her misunderstanding by saying, ‘Government [...] neither desires nor dares to interfere in such matters. There must be murder; and government cares not how much.’ He then goes on to reveal that the source of the horror lies merely in gothic fiction:

My dear Eleanor, the riot is only in your own brain. The confusion there is scandalous. Miss Morland has been talking of nothing more dreadful than a new publication which is shortly to come out, in three duodecimo volumes, two hundred and seventy-six pages in each, with a frontispiece to the first, of two tombstones and a lantern — do you understand? — And you, Miss Morland — my stupid sister has mistaken all your clearest expressions. You talked of expected horrors in London — and instead of instantly conceiving, as any rational creature would have done, that such words could relate only to a circulating library, she immediately pictured to herself a mob of three thousand men assembling in St. George’s Fields; the Bank attacked, the Tower threatened, the streets of London flowing with blood, a detachment of the 12<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons, (the hopes of the nation,) [*sic*] called up from Northampton to quell the insurgents, and the gallant Capt. Frederick Tilney, in the moment of charging at the head of his troop, knocked off his horse by a brickbat from an upper window.<sup>79</sup>

*Northanger Abbey* was written circa 1798–99, during the period of the French Revolution, when it was feared that the effects would spread to Britain.<sup>80</sup> 1819, the year after its publication, was marked by real rather than imagined horror. Between 60,000 and 80,000 people had gathered at St Peter’s Field in Manchester to demand reform of parliamentary representation. The meeting ended in the Peterloo Massacre, in which around fifteen citizens were killed and 400–700 injured by a cavalry charge. Many of those trying to flee were

<sup>77</sup> Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 294.

<sup>78</sup> Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. by Butler, p. 107.

<sup>79</sup> Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. by Butler, pp. 107–8.

<sup>80</sup> The novel was then entitled *Susan* and underwent revisions over a number of years.

blocked by a line of fixed bayonets. Rioting followed and troops fired on a crowd. Clearly Henry's complacency proved wrong. There *was* cold-blooded murder, blood on the streets of Manchester instead of London, and the 'government care[d] not how much'. Comparisons can be drawn between zombie mayhem and the way in which people were cut down by sabres in a frenzied bloody massacre carried out by members of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry, who were out of control. The Austen mash-ups can be seen as reflecting the violence of her era, which included the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution (1793–94) and the Napoleonic Wars, in which her family were involved. Yet, as Butler points out, Austen's novels 'do not mention the French Revolution and barely allude to the Napoleonic Wars'.<sup>81</sup>

By contrast, there is direct acknowledgement of war in Grange's *Mr Darcy, Vampire*, when Elizabeth and Mr Darcy decide to spend their honeymoon in war-torn Europe, rather than the Lake District. They go and visit Darcy's uncle, Count Polidori, who belongs to 'an older branch of the family'.<sup>82</sup> Grange borrowed the name from vampire author John Polidori, whose novella *The Vampyre* (1819) is set partly on the Continent. Darcy, we are told, used to own a town-house in Paris, which was destroyed in the French Revolution. Elizabeth fears for their safety on the trip and that the temporary truce with the English will be broken. She asks Darcy if the wars with France will ever end; his response, 'Everything does eventually', hints at a first-hand knowledge acquired from his longevity as a vampire.<sup>83</sup>

Another indication that Mr Darcy is a vampire relates to his reluctance to consummate the marriage. This could be a comment upon the implicit but unseen sexuality in Austen's novels. Grange's novel echoes Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series (2005–08), in which vampire Edward Cullen withholds sexual gratification from his girlfriend Bella Swan for over three volumes because of fears that vampires and humans are incompatible. Mr Darcy is concerned that the sexual act will turn Elizabeth into a vampire. Both heroines are visibly dismayed at being sexually rejected. Although the reason is fairly obvious to Grange's reader, not least from the title of the novel, it takes Elizabeth longer to catch on. The formula of sexual expression and restraint, which worked so well for Meyer, has now been utilised by Grange for a predominantly young female readership. Austen's novel was even marketed by HarperCollins with the trademark red and black *Twilight* design on the front cover, as it is

<sup>81</sup> Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, p. 294.

<sup>82</sup> Grange, *Mr Darcy, Vampire*, p. 57.

<sup>83</sup> Grange, *Mr Darcy, Vampire*, p. 115.

said to have informed Meyer's first novel in the series, *Twilight* (2005).<sup>84</sup> The use of the brand was a targeted attempt to entice *Twilight* readers to read *Pride and Prejudice* as a romantic co-text. The ploy was extended to other classics which influenced Meyer, notably Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.<sup>85</sup> The branding and cross-fertilisation of genres are part of a marketing continuum on which the horror mash-ups sit at one extreme. These textual equivalents of the body-snatcher have also vampirically created a new art-form through generic hybridity.

Now, consequently, writers from the past have assumed an almost ghostly presence within the modern mash-up. In a blog entitled, 'I Write with Dead People: How to Collaborate with a Corpse', Ben H. Winters, co-author of *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters*, insists that co-authorship between the living and the dead is nothing new. But what is markedly different here is how the mash-up has enabled the modern text to vampirise the original with new textual blood. Winters cites numerous Sherlock Holmes stories written since the death of Arthur Conan Doyle, as well as Margaret Mitchell's posthumous collaborations with at least two sequels to *Gone with the Wind* (1936). In support of his assertion that 'Writing with the deceased is not as easy as it sounds', he provides guidelines. Rule No. 1 is 'Pick a really famous dead person' and rule No. 2 prescribes, 'Pick a really famous book.' But he cautions, 'Even when you are working with a super-famous dead person, do not let them pressurise you into doing one of their lesser novels.' He goes on to confess, 'Confidentially, when Austen and I started collaborating, she wanted to do *Persuasion and Sea Monsters*, because it's got lots of boats in it. I had to sort of gingerly explain that people don't read that one so much anymore.'<sup>86</sup>

Austen certainly knew about seafaring, as she kept up a correspondence with her two brothers, Francis and Charles, who were sailors. She spares her readers details of maritime horrors, such as floggings, blood-soaked decks, and men losing life and limb under cannon fire.<sup>87</sup> Charles was involved in the Battle of Camperdown (1797) as a Lieutenant and later was promoted to Captain. Francis, who eventually rose to Admiral of the Fleet, narrowly

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<sup>84</sup> See Glennis Byron, 'Branding and Gothic in Contemporary Popular Culture: The Case of Twilight', 31 December 2010, *The Gothic Imagination*, <<http://www.gothic.stir.ac.uk/blog/branding-and-gothic-in-contemporary-popular-culture-the-case-of-twilight/>> [accessed 9 June 2013] and *The Twilight Mystique: Critical Essays on the Novels and Films*, ed. by Amy M. Clarke and Marijane Osborn (Jefferson: North Carolina: McFarland, 2010), p. 35.

<sup>85</sup> Meyer has indicated that *Romeo and Juliet* influenced the second in the series, *New Moon* (2006) and that *Wuthering Heights* informed the following novel *Eclipse* (2007); see Byron, and Clarke and Osborn. A relevant gothic parody of the Twilight series is Blaine Hislop's *The Cullens* published by Wheelman Press, in 2013.

<sup>86</sup> Ben H. Winters, 'I Write with Dead People: How to Collaborate with a Corpse', 6 November 2009, *The Huffington Post*, <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ben-h-winters/i-write-with-dead-people\\_b\\_347365.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ben-h-winters/i-write-with-dead-people_b_347365.html)> [accessed 10 June 2013].

<sup>87</sup> Austen does have a callous account of the death of Richard Musgrove at sea in *Persuasion* (1817).



missed the Battle of Trafalgar (1805). The younger Charles was posted to Bermuda, where he intercepted ships illegally transporting slaves between the British West Indies and America's Southern states. From Jamaica, he records his achievement 'in crushing the slave trade'.<sup>88</sup> Prior to this, in Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), Sir Thomas Bertram voyages to Antigua, where he owns an estate. On his return, the family's poor relation Fanny Price questions him about slavery, only to receive 'a dead silence!'<sup>89</sup> A link between slavery and the dead may be found on another Caribbean island, Haiti, through the figure of the zombie. Val Lewton's *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943) is a film adaptation of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). Informed by Haitian voodoo, it draws on the Caribbean origins of Bertha Mason, the mad-wife of hero Edward Rochester, and on the idea of people being turned into zombies in Haiti to work as enforced labour on sugar plantations. Undoubtedly, the zombie serves as a fitting metaphor for the state of enslavement. The film from which Grahame-Smith's adaptation evolved, Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*, was released in October 1968, the year of the Civil Rights Act, and is a critique of the legacy of slavery, with its lynch mobs, race riots and assassination of black leaders, most notably Martin Luther King, who was murdered six months earlier.<sup>90</sup> Within British culture, the association between zombies and race goes back to 1819, when the word was first used in English, two years after Austen's death.<sup>91</sup>

Racial aspects, however, are not a feature of the type of zombification that Grahame-Smith chose to depict. Instead, he selected the brain-eating variety, originating in the film *The Return of the Living Dead* (1985), directed by Dan O'Bannon. The cannibalism of brain-eating zombies figuratively tears apart and consumes the anterior text. The designation 'mash-up' has destructive connotations, while its intrinsic hybridisation partakes of the monstrous. For Grahame-Smith and his imitators, monstrosity is performative, a feature of content as well as form. The zombie apocalypse symbolises the invasion of the Austen canon by a different kind of reader. While it could be said to be 'a truth universally acknowledged' that most readers of Jane Austen tend to be female, in general the readers of zombie literature are assumed to be male.<sup>92</sup> So who is reading *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*? When he first signed up Grahame-Smith's book, Rekulak assumed it would appeal mainly to readers of

<sup>88</sup> Quoted by Brian Southam, 'Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers: Francis and Charles in Life and Art', *Persuasions*, 25 (2003), 33–45 (p. 38).

<sup>89</sup> Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), ed. by Claudia L. Johnson, p. 136.

<sup>90</sup> Rehan Hyder drew my attention to the last line before the credits: 'That's another one for the fire'. This evokes the torching of black bodies by white lynch mobs.

<sup>91</sup> Robert Southey first used the word 'zombi' [sic] in his *History of Brazil* (1810–19); see Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 212.

<sup>92</sup> Austen and Grahame-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, deluxe edn, p. 13.

horror and zombie fiction. This expectation is reflected in the marketing for the 2009 revised edition, which boasts ‘30% more zombies’. But now he says, to his surprise, that the book has been ‘much more popular with Austen fans than with horror fans’, including those ‘excited to re-experience the classic novel in a different way’.<sup>93</sup> To bring the two together has similarities with the earlier fusion between so-called male and female gothic writing (represented respectively by Lewis’s horror and Radcliffean terror) as in Curties’s *The Monk of Udolpho* though, according to Dale Townshend, this novel is ‘neither strictly male nor strictly female Gothic’, but ‘ought to be read more as a masculine disciplining and vanquishing of the feminine than any fictional hybrid transgressively formed by the suturing of the two gendered modes’.<sup>94</sup> This could also be applied to Charlotte Dacre’s racially controversial *Zofloya* (1806). Dacre dedicated her first novel, *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer* (1805), to Lewis and based her poet pseudonym Rosa Matilda on names from *The Monk*, a novel which combines revolutionary-derived horror with Enlightenment pornographic elements. Grahame-Smith, who has previously published books on both pornography and horror film, seems an unlikely Austen aficionado, for as the back of the paperback declares, ‘*Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* transforms a masterpiece of world literature into something you’d actually want to read.’<sup>95</sup> In Ford’s *Jane Bites Back*, Austen has been reincarnated as a vampire, who runs a book shop in Upstate New York, where Grahame-Smith’s mash-up turns out to be one of her best-sellers. Initially, ‘Part of her bristled at the notion of someone taking *her* novel and inserting new, decidedly unorthodox text into it, and she’d briefly considered visiting some unpleasantness upon the author’ [emphasis in original], but eventually her irritation is replaced by amusement and she even recommends the book to customers, though she feels that ‘receiving royalties from it would be nice’.<sup>96</sup> Grahame-Smith endorses the book on the outside cover as ‘sharp-witted’ and ‘sharp-fanged Jane Austen’, along with the caveat ‘(and I’m not just saying that because she spares my life in chapter 6)’.

So why did *Pride and Prejudice* become the ur-text for this recent trend in horror hybridity? It was chosen most probably because it is so wildly inappropriate, despite

<sup>93</sup> Jason Rekulak, e-mails to Marie Mulvey-Roberts, 10 and 13 June 2013.

<sup>94</sup> Dale Townshend, ‘T. J. Horsley Curties and Royalist Gothic: The Case of *The Monk of Udolpho* (1807)’, *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*, 4 (June 2008), <<http://irishgothichorrorjournal.homestead.com/HorsleyCurtiesGothic.html>> [accessed 10 June 2013].

<sup>95</sup> Conversely David Moody endorses *The War of the Worlds Plus Blood, Guts and Zombies* (New York: Gallery Books, 2010) by H. G. Wells and Eric S. Brown as ‘A mash-up book that’s actually worth reading!’, 4 June 2011, *Coscom Entertainment*, <<http://coscomentertainment.com/tag/simon-and-schuster/>> [accessed 10 June 2013].

<sup>96</sup> Ford, *Jane Bites Back*, p. 45.

Grahame-Smith's ironic assertion to the contrary that 'it was just ripe for gore and senseless violence', and waiting to be taken apart.<sup>97</sup> Indeed Austen herself 'lopt & cropt' [*sic*] the first version of her novel.<sup>98</sup> The critical reception of Grahame-Smith's parody has drawn in commentators colluding with the spoof: 'Jane Austen isn't for everyone. Neither are zombies. But combine the two and the only question is, Why [*sic*] didn't anyone think of this before? The judicious addition of flesh-eating undead to this otherwise faithful reworking is just what Austen's gem needed.'<sup>99</sup> Another reviewer sharing in the joke comments, 'Such is the accomplishment of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* that after reveling [*sic*] in its timeless intrigue, it's difficult to remember how Austen's novel got along without the undead.'<sup>100</sup> The irony of this observation points towards the ever-increasing legion of alternate-Austen fans created by gothic Neo-Austenite writers, who may never actually read any of the original novels. For them, the experience of Jane Austen's fictional world could be one in which games of Crypt and Coffin or Stricken and Slayers are played at social gatherings in between fending off vampires and zombies.

Is the horror mash-up therefore a tribute to Jane Austen, an act of aggression expressing the hatred of which Mark Twain has been accused, or a device to annoy Janeites? Its inter-textuality may be seen as a re-enactment of Harold Bloom's anxiety of influence envisioned through an Oedipal struggle between contemporary and classic author. With katana in hand, Elizabeth Bennet is hacking and mutilating, not just zombies, but *Pride and Prejudice* itself. There will always be those who prefer the adaptation to the original. Despite Linda Hutcheon's reminder that the adaptive text should not be denigrated as automatically inferior to the first, it is possible that reading a mash-up risks tarnishing readers' appreciation of the parenting text.<sup>101</sup> While this is an unavoidable risk when reading any adaptation, it is ironic that 'What begins as a gimmick ends with renewed appreciation of the indomitable appeal of Austen's language, characters, and situations', and that this should be at the expense of massacring the original.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>97</sup> *The Readers Unauthorized Guide to Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, ed. by Collins, p. 2.

<sup>98</sup> Quoted by Janet Todd in 'Criticism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*, ed. by Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 134–149 (p. 137). I am indebted to Kerry Sinanan for this connection.

<sup>99</sup> Quoted by Hockensmith, *Dawn of the Dreadfuls*, p. i.

<sup>100</sup> Donna Bowman, 'Pride and Prejudice and Zombies: Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith', 16 April 2009, *A.V. Club*, <<http://www.avclub.com/articles/jane-austen-and-seth-grahamesmith-pride-and-prejud,26559/>> [accessed 10 June 2013].

<sup>101</sup> See Hutcheon with O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. xiv.

<sup>102</sup> Bowman, 'Pride and Prejudice and Zombies'.

Yet divergences in discourse, taste, and propriety are all part of the mash-up experience. The spirit of Austen's irony has been preserved by some of her co-authors, as well as through their publishers' marketing departments. Many have waged aggressive publicity campaigns, some of which have been rather tongue-in-cheek. This has included incorporating blatant nepotistic endorsements written by other mash-up authors from the same publishing house.<sup>103</sup> In advance of the publication of Hockensmith's *Dawn of the Dreadfuls*, Quirk Classics may have been the first publisher to offer free chapters of a forthcoming book in the form of electronic serialisation.<sup>104</sup> The clash between the classic novel and the horror genre has proved a commercial success. The merging of the old and the new not only exploits the brand of the classic, but also subverts its canonical status through a postmodern collision of high and low culture. This democratising complies with parody as a mode of reconciling us with the 'rich and intimidating legacy of the past', and might account for some of the success of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, whose projected print-run for the first edition of 12,000 was increased to 60,000 copies, even before it had rolled off the press.<sup>105</sup> The momentum created was due to what Genette calls the epitext, consisting of the publicity announcements, endorsements, interviews, and so on, which operate outside the text, acting as a threshold to help form readers' expectations.

The mash-up novel has been an extraordinary cultural phenomenon, which raises questions about its subversiveness and whether canonical fiction ought to be sacrosanct from such tampering. As we have seen, the very nature of its hybridisation brings it closer to appropriation than to either adaptation or parody. The mash-up is a continuation of the early history of gothic publishing, not least through its novel approach to the polarisation of male and female gothic writing. Rekulak's rather unexpected discovery that *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* appears to be read mainly by Austen rather than zombie fans puts a different perspective on the readership. Through its violent yoking together of incompatible elements, the mash-up throws light on the parenting novel, as well as on the host text. Grahame-Smith and his followers have revealed what is implicit or marginalised in Austen's novels, at the same time as adhering to some of the conventions demanded by Regency fiction.

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<sup>103</sup> Amanda Grange, 'bestselling author of *Mr Darcy, Vampire*' has written the back-cover endorsement of Austen and Josephson's *Emma and the Vampires*, as 'witty and entertaining!' Both novels are published by Sourcebooks.

<sup>104</sup> See 'Pride and Prejudice and Zombies's Prequel offered in Free Advanced Chapters', 15 March 2010, *The Independent*, <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/pride-and-prejudice-and-zombies-prequel-offered-in-free-advance-chapters-1921967.html>> [accessed 10 June 2013].

<sup>105</sup> W. Jackson Bate, quoted by Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 4.

For the first few years, this publishing phenomenon experienced a rapid proliferation. Lev Grossman's provocative comment might have presaged an alarming future for purists, when he asked, 'Has there ever been a work of literature that couldn't be improved by adding zombies?', had it not been for indications that the trend, which peaked between 2010 and 2012, is now petering out.<sup>106</sup> Ever since Grahame-Smith's pioneering mash-up first appeared, the joke has been wearing thin. Yet *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* has managed to keep reinventing itself. In 2010 it reappeared as a graphic novel that pledged not to stint on the gore.<sup>107</sup> In the same year, the novel was given a new lease of life through the release of a video game. Two years later, the adaptation re-appeared as an interactive ebook.<sup>108</sup> Merchandising, in the form of a calendar, book of postcards, and the inevitable t-shirt, has co-opted the Jane Austen heritage industry, and next there is the long-awaited film.<sup>109</sup> Clearly the zombie plague infecting and mutating the pages of *Pride and Prejudice* has gone viral in every sense.

### Notes

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<sup>106</sup> Lev Grossman, interview with Seth Grahame-Smith, 2 April 2009, *Time Entertainment*, <<http://content.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1889075,00.html>> [accessed 4 August 2014]. This hybridisation has even spread to material culture as in Phil Davison, *Twisted Stitches: 30 Corrupt Cross Stitch and Embroidery Designs* (London: Fil Rouge Press, 2011), described as 'the craft equivalent of *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies*', <<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Twisted-Stitches-Corrupt-Embroidery-Designs/dp/0956438210>> [accessed 10 June 2013].

<sup>107</sup> Marvel Comics brought out a version of the novel in 2009.

<sup>108</sup> This was published in 2012 by Quirk Books and PadWorx Digital Media.

<sup>109</sup> Shooting is set to begin in September 2014 and copies of the book are on sale at the Jane Austen Centre in Bath.

Pride and Prejudice is an 1813 romantic novel of manners written by Jane Austen. The novel follows the character development of Elizabeth Bennet, the dynamic protagonist of the book, who learns about the repercussions of hasty judgments and eventually comes to appreciate the difference between superficial goodness and actual goodness. A classic piece filled with comedy, its humor lies in its honest depiction of manners, education, marriage and money during the Regency era in Great Britain. Introducing Jane Austen to New Audiences (via Zombies) It's certainly not everyone's cup of tea, but it has to be said that Seth Graham Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is a hit with some readers, and it may have one big distinct benefit; it introduces people to Jane Austen's work who probably wouldn't have found her otherwise. During the course of our Internet perusals this week, we came across a blog by Rebecca Thorne who explained perfectly what drew her to *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, and from there, onto original Jane Austen novels. Always a controversial subject among Austen fans is that of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. Now its author Seth Grahame-Smith is in hot water again, only this time with his publisher.