

Spring 2010

Reanimating Jane: Relevance in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Seth Grahame-Smith's *Zombies*

CharLee Colleen Toth
Regis University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://epublications.regis.edu/theses>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Toth, CharLee Colleen, "Reanimating Jane: Relevance in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Seth Grahame-Smith's *Zombies*" (2010).
All Regis University Theses. 510.
<https://epublications.regis.edu/theses/510>

Regis University
Regis College
Honors Theses

Disclaimer

Use of the materials available in the Regis University Thesis Collection ("Collection") is limited and restricted to those users who agree to comply with the following terms of use. Regis University reserves the right to deny access to the Collection to any person who violates these terms of use or who seeks to or does alter, avoid or supersede the functional conditions, restrictions and limitations of the Collection.

The site may be used only for lawful purposes. The user is solely responsible for knowing and adhering to any and all applicable laws, rules, and regulations relating or pertaining to use of the Collection.

All content in this Collection is owned by and subject to the exclusive control of Regis University and the authors of the materials. It is available only for research purposes and may not be used in violation of copyright laws or for unlawful purposes. The materials may not be downloaded in whole or in part without permission of the copyright holder or as otherwise authorized in the "fair use" standards of the U.S. copyright laws and regulations.

REANIMATING JANE: RELEVANCE IN AUSTEN'S *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* AND
SETH GRAHAME-SMITH'S *ZOMBIES*

A thesis submitted to
Regis College
The Honors Program
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for Graduation with Honors

by

CharLee Colleen Toth

May 2010

\

Thesis written by

CharLee Colleen Toth

Approved by

Dr. Daryl Palmer, Thesis Advisor

Dr. David Hicks, Thesis Reader

Accepted by

Dr. Thomas Bowie, Director, University Honors Program

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface and Acknowledgments	iv
Introduction	1
II. <i>Origins of Relevance</i>	7
III. <i>Undying Romance: The Universality of Elizabeth and Darcy's Relationship</i>	19
IV. <i>Zombies as the Visual Uncanny, Translated to the Written Word</i>	34
V. <i>Common (Burial) Ground: The Relevance Austen and Zombies Share and What That Means to Contemporary Readers</i>	47
Bibliography	55

Preface and Acknowledgments

Even before my application and acceptance into Regis University I knew exactly what I wanted to do in my undergraduate career: study literature. I feel so unequivocally lucky and am more than grateful to have spent my time at Regis University where I was able to pursue my interest in literature, but much more importantly to do so under the tutelage of professors who are so deeply knowledgeable, talented and passionate about their work. Though I would have undoubtedly followed my bliss and invested my time and my heart into the study of books and words, without the incredible English department at Regis University I would have not been able to dive headlong into a project of this magnitude and come out alive.

Whenever discussing this thesis I make sure to preface my explanation with my former ignorance of both Jane Austen and zombie cinema. When I started research I was only barely familiar with the two cultural phenomena I set out to discuss; I had never read a Jane Austen novel, and had only seen one or two zombie movies in passing. Books are my first passion, but film and music are tied for a very close second. Since the Honors Program at Regis places great emphasis on synthesis I knew that I wanted to do something that combined at least two of my interests when I was faced with the task of writing my Senior Honors Thesis. I discovered my topic while buying books for my

Austen course with Dr. Palmer, and stumbled upon Seth Grahame-Smith's adaptation of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, to which he added all the fun and excitement of zombie hordes. I asked myself first, "Why?" and second, "How would that even work?" and through the lens Regis has provided I spotted the potential for academic inquiry underneath pop culture craze, and my thesis was born.

Though I enjoyed writing this thesis and getting to the heart of Austen and zombies, without the support and guidance of my professors, peers, friends and family this would have been an insurmountable enterprise. I am indebted to my amazing professors who have challenged and inspired me over my years at Regis to become a better student of literature, all the while teaching courses that have increased my love of reading books, which I know is not an easy feat. I wish to thank Dr. Lara Narcisi and Dr. Scott Dimovitz, whose courses in Literary Theory, Modernism, Post Modernism and Contemporary Literature have changed the way I read the world, and all proved invaluable to this project. I also owe great thanks to Dr. Mark Bruhn, Dr. Janet St. Claire and Dr. Eleanor Swanson for pushing me to find myself in literature that I may have never been interested in, and in doing so challenging me to improve my analysis and writing. I want to thank Dr. David Hicks, my reader, who agreed to be a part of this project and was incredibly helpful and encouraging even though he was not always sure of where I was going with it. I especially want to thank Dr. Daryl Palmer who has been my academic advisor throughout my time at Regis, and has been the ideal advisor for my thesis project. Thank you for all of your encouragement and support over the years, and thank you for always helping me to do my best work on every project I pursue. Thank

you to my professors outside the English department as well, especially Gene Stewart who introduced me to the incredible art and expression of printmaking, a craft that ties in directly with my love of books. I also want to thank Dr. Bowie for inviting me to be a part of the Honors community at Regis and for keeping me focused; I cannot imagine Regis without Dr. Bowie to keep us all in line.

I also want to thank my family and friends, who have been there for me throughout my time at Regis and have cheered me on in my triumphs and held me up during defeats. I am grateful to have had such a wonderful group of peers at Regis, who not only provided a great community to be a part of, but were also integral to academic pursuits. Thank you for pushing me to think and work harder and for broadening my horizons outside my little English centered world. Thank you to my friends outside Regis who have become my family and who have stood behind me in my relentless academic pursuits while also providing occasional distraction. A special thanks to Paul and Christel who acted as a zombie library of sorts and helped me through the entire thesis process.

I wish to thank my family, Mom, Dad, Sting, and Greyson, for their continuing love and support, even when I chase crazy dreams, like living among the barbaric Scots. Also, thank you for letting me talk books when you would much rather be watching hockey. Finally I would like to thank Brace, who has been there for me since my freshman year. Thank you for challenging me to be a more critical thinker and expand my world view, and for making me those countless pots of coffee to make it through this daunting thesis project and ultimately keeping me from becoming a zombie myself.

Thank you for reading; this really is a product of my love of literature and the incredible education I have received at Regis University. I hope it is as academically rigorous to read as it was for me to write, and also a bit of fun to see what Austen and zombies mean to each other, and what they mean to us as readers.

Introduction

Jane Austen's novels permeate culture, her narratives and influence manifest in various forms from films and adaptations, references in art and music, and spoofs in comedy. Austen's novels, though few in number, stand out as classics because of their entertainment value, and the enduring cultural relevance of her narratives. Her writing juxtaposes social and historical issues with the intricacies of human relationships. The novels take place in Regency England, where she creates small worlds in which her heroines must struggle with their own experience of cultural expectations, how to meet those standards and develop their own individuality. So with her interest in society and culture and the significance human interaction, what has Jane Austen to do with zombies?

In 2009, 196 years after *Pride and Prejudice* was originally published, Seth Grahame-Smith combined Austen's original text with a description of a zombie attack. This re-envisioning of the classic has enjoyed its own pop-culture success. Past the apparent quirky charm of the zombie addition to Longbourn, the success of the combination offers insight into the ways in which Austen's writing is relevant to contemporary readers. Zombies, in cinema as well as literature, represent more than reanimated corpses; they are metaphors for social tension, the struggle for power, and radical shifts in culture. It is not that *Pride and Prejudice* needed zombies to regain cultural significance, but its universality made it perfect for the incorporation of elements of contemporary cinematic figures. The addition of zombies, while not undermining it

does unsettle the integrity of Austen's original work. The tropes and conventions of zombie horror as a genre highlight Austen's concern with social and cultural structures, how those structures change and the subtlety of relationships that are as pertinent now as they were in her lifetime.

This thesis will consider the relevance of Austen's work, and the addition of zombies, and what the popularity of this adaptation suggests about the works of Austen as well as what it implies about how contemporary readers approach Austen. The first chapter will examine Austen's biography and discuss the elements of her writing to tease out the foundations of her cultural significance. The second chapter addresses *Pride and Prejudice*, specifically the relationship between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy, and will consider scenes and literary techniques to make a case for why it continues to be her most popular novel. The third chapter will flesh out the ways in which zombie horror works, the conventions of zombie depiction in film and what it means to the contemporary audience. This chapter will also discuss how those conventions are applied within the text *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, with comparisons of scenes from the original novel and the corollary scenes of the adaptation. The final chapter will incorporate the discussions within the first three chapters, historical and contemporary views that apply to both Austen and zombies, further observations on the adaptation and ultimately suggest what zombies mean to Austen and what they mean to us as contemporary readers of classic literature and popular culture.

Austen's novels reflected her experience of life, isolated in the English country, in particular her sense of humanity and society, shaped by the close relationships within her

neighborhood. Austen, the daughter of a clergyman, grew up in a country parish in Regency England. Her father encouraged education, and in her childhood she was a prolific reader, and began to write alongside her siblings. Her interest in writing carried through and became her primary focus in life. Austen was one of the early female writers of the novel form, and therefore she represents a hitherto unrecognized literary and cultural perspective. The popularity of the novel as a legitimate literary form was on the rise. She was not the first to write novels and was influenced by writers like Frances Burney and Samuel Richardson. Her work, however, contributed to the proliferation of the novel as a legitimate literary form; her own literary subject matter and style became intrinsic to the way in which novels would later be written. Austen was confident in her writing, but her confinement in the county secluded her from the literary world, even after her novels gained popularity. Her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh asserts “It is probable that she never was in company with any person whose talents or whose celebrity equalled her own” (48). This isolation meant that she never had the chance to gain direct influence, but had only her own literary knowledge and innovative ideas to work with. To the novel form she introduced and highlighted the importance of feminine discourse and viewpoint in a male-dominated occupation, as well as shifting narrative scale to focus on small groups of individuals.

In *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009), Grahame-Smith subsumes Austen’s innovative style and focus in novels as elements of what is now a literary classic, and adds his own by injecting the story with a contemporary and popular trope, the zombie. Grahame-Smith is not a writer of novels, but rather a screenwriter and film critic, credited

with works like *The Big Book of Porn: A Penetrating Look at the World of Dirty Movies* (2005). This suggests that Grahame-Smith is not necessarily the obvious choice to adapt a work of Austen's, but his primary interest in film does suggest that he knows something about the zombie phenomenon. In interviews, Grahame-Smith refers to his reshaping of Austen's narrative as a twist on a literary classic, equating it to a filmic device to surprise the audience with an unexpected turn to enhance interest and create excitement in a narrative that has become renowned, even clichéd. The purpose of the adaptation, then, is to assimilate the two worlds: the one that pervades our contemporary pop culture and the one in which Austen lived, through the surprising and unexpected element of zombie horror.

Grahame-Smith interlaces the contemporary with the material that Austen provided. The novel uses most of Austen's original work, plot, and characters, and much of the dialogue remains, but certain plot points shift to accommodate the appearance of a zombie infestation. During an interview with National Public Radio (NPR) Grahame-Smith said,

Every page seemed to have something that was subconsciously put there by Jane Austen to be, you know, twisted into a gory zombie fest. The fact that Elizabeth Bennet is such an independently minded, well-spoken, heroic figure in the book, the fact that there is an encampment nearby Meryton of soldiers, who are seemingly there for no reason. (Grahame-Smith)

Though Austen may not have envisioned zombies as part of her work when she wrote Elizabeth and Darcy, she did include the elements necessary for a zombie plague.

Elizabeth's strength and independence make her prowess as a zombie killer seem within the scope of her original character, though perhaps a bit silly in literary terms. She is

headstrong and confident, characteristics Grahame-Smith used to the advantage of the zombie premise. Darcy, as self-assured as Elizabeth, and with the fortune and leisure to take combat training seriously, easily fits the bill as a zombie hunter as well. And in Grahame-Smith's view, the zombie plague further, gives something for the regiment of soldiers in Meryton to do. The struggle of the characters to balance the expectations of society with the desires of the individual has only slightly shifted to make room for the struggle to rid society of the zombie menace – or “unmentionables” as Grahame-Smith calls them, adapting the terminology to Austenian language and the Regency-era world she represented in her novels.

Pride and Prejudice is a natural choice for such an extreme addition to the narrative since it has already been reinvigorated by multiple editions in novel form, and has enjoyed numerous adaptations to film. Even if someone has never read the original, it is probable that he or she has seen the interaction between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy in some permutation or another. The relationship between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy exemplifies the balance between the social and the individual in Austen's writing. Not only is their eventual union made difficult by the discrepancy in their class – Elizabeth as the daughter of a country priest and Darcy, a gentleman worth ten thousand pounds – but each one also has a strong individualistic character and will not back down from any challenge to the accuracy of their perceptions and prejudices. Austen's novels are not visually descriptive, but her “landscapes are emotional and moral- what we would call psychological: they are not physical” (Clarke 6). The depth and texture of her novels are focused on the variations in emotions and interactions between people, rather than the

description of the world around them. In this way we understand the world of Austen through the lens of the social and the interactions of people, rather than the physical landscape. Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy create a rocky internal landscape, which depends greatly on the juxtaposition of their own convictions and confusion. Austen's ability to hone in on the workings of psychological struggles is what enabled her to represent the spirit of her own era, and craft a narrative that has continuing universal value. The addition of zombies plays off the psychological struggles of the protagonists, providing an *external* force that creates a visual and physical parallel to the internal conflict Austen crafted through her portrayal of Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy.

Much of what makes Austen a universal literary figure is what makes the zombie a popular figure in contemporary cinema: the identification of human emotion and anxiety in the face of change or challenges to the individual's perceptions or fears. The quickly shifting world in which Austen lived was exemplified by the rise of the novel, where in "an increasingly anonymous world in which old orders threatened to crumble in the face of new economic and political imperatives, individuals wondered how they would survive" (Braudy 33). It is in precisely such an upheaval that zombies thrive.

Origins of Relevance

The eighteenth century Enlightenment, the rise of the novel and the Napoleonic wars all contributed to the significance of Austen's narratives, as did her life as an unmarried woman. Austen, as an educated woman would be well aware of politics and enlightenment philosophies, and her life isolated in the English countryside sharpened her understanding of and interest in human character, interaction and relationships. Though she was secluded, her writing was not without influence or precedence – the writers that came before her sparked her interest in satire, morality and the psychological aspects of human interaction. She took narratives from the male-dominated outer world, their metaphors and allegories, and brought them inside to show the more intimate female-dominated atmosphere of the home and the close interactions between families. Austen endeavors to show that the battle to find a suitable husband exists in the same sphere of importance as a battle on the field. As Virginia Woolf notes in *A Room of One's Own*, “the literary training that a woman had in the early nineteenth century was training in the observation of character, in the analysis of emotion. Her [Austen's] sensibility had been educated for centuries by the influences of the common sitting room” (87). Austen's close attention to daily life and her vivid sense of character give them a universal appeal. This chapter will discuss the continuing relevance and importance of Austen's novels that stems from her ability to synthesize, the external and internal, the personal and political,

and produce narratives that allow for changes (such as zombies) while still maintaining their fundamental significance that originated in her place in history.

The era in which Austen lived was a time of social change and great political expansion. The rise of industrialism, expansion of empire and trade, and the commerce of war caused class distinctions to break down and prior social structures to cease to be completely static. Social distinctions could no longer be strictly defined. This larger social change began to shift the ways the people of the middle class acted on a personal level: according to one critic, “it is precisely when the system is breaking down...that there is most snobbery, most pretence of social importance and grandeur” (Priestly 96). This is presumably why the novels of Austen, a child of the middle class, are concerned with “comedies of snobbery, social pretense, and prejudice” (96). People no longer knew exactly where they belonged, which caused great social anxiety. Austen understood, and experienced that unease, and in her narratives turned that anxiety into comedy.

Throughout European society the Enlightenment had taken hold and brought with it new ideologies of ethics and behavior. Writing was one of the main media used to spread these ideologies: “by the early to mid eighteenth-century, the London coffee houses proliferated periodical publications with moralistic serial essays; these were followed by the moral essays of Dr. Johnson” (Tague 33). The purpose of writing was to convey morals and the essay and the novel forms extended from the university setting, giving the general public knowledge and possession of enlightenment ideas. Growing up in the late eighteenth century as an educated girl, the daughter of a clergyman as Austen was, meant that to read a book was to be taught how to live and act morally.

Johnson figured prominently in the expression of morality in eighteenth century literature, in his *Dictionary* and essays in the *Rambler*. Johnson was a dynamic writer. He wrote seriously but also “brought a sense of humor and sharp wit to illuminate his great subjects: the powerful claims of the individual conscience, the moral struggle inherent in life, the suffering in human existence, the sense of his own imperfections, the pain of religious doubt” (Meyers 39). The difference between the extreme morals of other writers and those of Johnson was that he approached them as a human, and focused not on idealism, but the reality of ‘imperfection,’ ‘suffering’ and ‘struggle.’ Johnson understood that morals were not to be found in perfection, but an internal goal to strive for while accounting for difficulty.

It is Johnson, and his realistic view, that Austen took to heart, and applied to her own novelistic endeavors. Her approach, like Johnson’s, takes a close, serious look at human relationships and society and infuses her own sense of humor. She often took his statements and put them in the mouths of characters, or adapted them into the narrative voice of her novels. In *Northanger Abbey*, for example, she “gently satirized the way people deferred to Johnson’s judgments” (Meyers 40). In doing this she shows her awareness of her digression, and her ability to discuss her personal view of morality. This shows that although Austen was a novelist of morals, she was also a satirist. She often took explicitly moral texts and turned them into satire, as in the case of Dr. Fordyce’s *Sermons to Young Women* in *Pride and Prejudice*, in order to highlight and satirize severe conservatism and religion espoused in some of the popular moral essays (Tague 34). While she was able to borrow from the didactic writing and infuse her characters

with notions of ethical cultural behavior, she also was able to question the more extreme versions of morality. As young as twelve and thirteen she was writing satirically in her brothers' publication *The Loiterer*; "parody was the family flavor, and that the Austens were proud citizens of a satirical age" (Shields 29). Her novels address society and its functions and not always in the most positive fashion, following what seems to be her familial world view. .

Her novels can be satires in themselves, as in the parody of the gothic *Northanger Abbey*, where she critiques a popular genre, as well as her own profession. Her satire is vivid because it points out the naïveté of aesthetic, picturesque language, while the novel itself is built upon the principles of aestheticism and picturesque language (Kroeber 102). Characters within novels also exist as small satires; indeed she "would have no art if the world were devoid of the likes of Lady Catherine de Burgh [*Pride and Prejudice*] or Mr. and Mrs. Elton [*Emma*]" (Curran 149). These characters Austen depicts as pointed, biting critiques of culture through personalities that mirror those that can be found in any country parish. If this ability is what pushes Austen's writing to "art," it is due to her broad knowledge of society and consideration of character and interaction. Past her stinging wit, Austen's satire shows that she had an acute sense of personality and relationships. Her novels still stand as examples of good satire, because she was able to write from within, criticizing the world in which she lived and her own medium, and also to write universally about people and culture that gave her insights that are still pertinent.

Austen finished her first novel, *Lady Susan*, at twenty years old (Shields 45). Although it is not as widely read as her other novels, it clearly points out her interests,

and talent for satire. The primary foci of the novel are the relationship between Lady Susan and her daughter Frederica, and the cultural impulse to find suitable husbands. She satirizes their search, and social conventions, through Lady Susan, an older widow who steals her own daughter's suitor. The connections of family, the development of social ties and cultural norms are concerns that string throughout her novels and create the action of the narratives. The novel takes the ideologies and morals of traditional literary genres and seeks "to record and privilege the specific details that shaped the daily, contingent lives of ordinary people" (Hunter 10). The concerns that hover around Austen's characters are dictated by the specific locality and culture in which they live and are depictions of unique individuals. Though Austen seems to write about a very narrow section of society, she maps out the social structure of her time through the individual narratives of her characters rather than creating an allegory of the whole. The focus on development and interactions between characters are part of the influence of the Enlightenment, along with morality and satire and because the humans continue to develop and relate to one another, character is another important facet of Austen's relevance.

The development of character as a central point was not Austen's innovation, but something she inherited from the beginnings of novel writing. The novel as a literary form inherited the Enlightenment emphasis on the use of character focus in order to explore the "problem of personal style in literature and life" (Braudy 33). In the seventeenth century, before the emergence of novels as a popular mode, there was already a concern with the personality of literature, and how to connect it more closely to

the reader, and the writer. This concern transferred directly into the novel, where characters are defined and then set in motion to interact with other characters. Interaction in the eighteenth century was pivotal: “the health of society, then, was felt to depend above all on an infinite number of tiny ritual gestures of concern, each one of which contributed to harmonious relationships” (Monaghan 4). To portray social interactions as they actually were, Austen had to not only create vibrant characters but also call attention to every small facet of how they relate to the other characters. The innovation that Austen does offer is the shift from masculine narrative to the feminine and how the smaller world women inhabit necessitates a smaller scale attention to detail. Austen depicts such minute information, starting from the smallest gestures, and comments on society at large from the limited female point of view. The novel, overall, was concerned with reality; the novelist’s task is “to write as much as possible in the way people actually spoke or to consider situations that people might plausibly experience or might at least want to hear about” (Braudy 31). The pursuit of reality serves to push the novel away from the formality of poetry, because it relies on the inherent variability of personal interaction between characters, and though society from a female perspective was a miniature of larger social structures it represented the reality of human interactions within those structures.

The perspective of the feminine in Austen’s writing does follow an impulse to portray how people in society really act, the limitations of the female world view means that the representation of society in her novels is necessarily incomplete. Though Austen is concerned with society, she rarely acknowledges major social issues of the time, like

the Napoleonic Wars, which, when she started writing *Pride and Prejudice* at 21 years old in 1796, were looming as of the aftermath of the French Revolution. By the time she had published it in 1811 the Napoleonic wars, and England's involvement, was in full swing. The remarkable absence of any mention of these wars, especially in her earlier novels, smacks of avoidance or ignorance on the part of a novelist who writes about English society (Shields 3). In these terms, her novels tend to look less insightful, more narrowed and uninformed. However, "her main subject... polite social relationships... is one that, far from being escapist, takes us immediately to what her society thought of as being its very heart" (Monaghan 5). Austen confines her novels tightly to the worlds she crafts in country houses and estates, and she does not avoid the larger world for the sake of ease. A young woman of the English gentry, like Austen, would have had very little to do with wars and trade, but much to do with life in English society. Her choices of subject matter also direct the reader; she "deliberately left out of her picture nine tenths of life... so that we could attend to and enjoy her delicate and subtle comedy" (Priestly 95). She chose to leave war and suffering from her novels not only because she was unfamiliar with it, but also because she knew what she was doing: the violence of war would not fit with her small delicate universe. If she had forced battle scenes into her novels, no one would notice the charming wit of her characters, and the matrimonial concerns would be rendered insignificant. Austen's novels tended to look inward to the heart of England, the lives of its familiar people, rather than following the processes of war and expansion around the globe. Austen's approach to the reality of English life appears to be the reason why her works remain so popular, but her world view is not a

complete one. This could suggest why there are so many adaptations of Austen: although her novels are complete in their exploration of humanity and relationships, the addition of an element like zombies, for example, is an attempt to complete the world view depicted within her novels.

That world view is predominately shaped by her identity as a woman, and the way women had been treated historically in literature as both subjects and writers. There is a tendency to look at Austen as one of the early women involved in novels and literature, but there were several women who influenced her and the initiation of the novel as a popular form. Frances Burney, who as a female novelist influenced Austen, aligned herself with the male traditions, and focused more on her authorial self than the feminine, thus “writing her numerous female colleagues out of the canon in the process of creating a prestigious place for herself within the literary marketplace” (Schellenberg 369). Burney ran in the same circles as Samuel Johnson, Austen’s moral mentor. Johnson said of Burney that he admired her for the merit of her authorial talent (Schellenberg 356), her ability to write an engaging narrative. Though female writers were common, their work would often focus on the femininity of the author rather than the integrity of the actual work, which distinguished them from the male-dominated realm of literature. Burney simply wrote, and focused on her characters and their lives instead of her status as an “authoress.” Austen read Burney’s *Evelina* in school and Burney’s insistence on the narrative rather than her own femininity proved influential in Austen’s focus as a writer. Mary Wollstonecraft was also an eminent female literary figure during Austen’s time especially her essay about the lives and roles of women *A Vindication of the Rights of*

Woman. Shields suggests that Wollstonecraft's writings "must have offered warning rather than encouragement. Her girlhood writing both supports this harsh truth about women's lives and chafes against it" (38) – the 'harsh truth' being the limitations set by society, and the way her writing often ignores those limitations. For Austen these women were the forerunners of her chosen profession; both fought for their own reputation among men. With the model presented by Burney and her guidance as a writer first and woman second, and with the harsh lessons of Wollstonecraft's experience, Austen would have known the difficulties of female authorship, and that her own talents would have to outshine the limits placed on her. Like Burney, she was a writer first.

Though Austen's writing was decidedly feminine in viewpoint and influence she looked to writers like Alexander Pope and Samuel Richardson, whose male characters provided a sentimental ideal of masculinity that Austen infused into her own literary men in order to represent the dominant idea of maleness in her time. The man of the time was based on the Earl of Shaftesbury's "belief in the primacy and benevolence of emotions" (Kramp 27) of which Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* supplied a popular example. Austen's male characters, like Captain Wentworth in *Persuasion*, are products of this focus on sentimentality. While he "is industrious and conforms to "the Enlightenment ideal of English masculinity, Wentworth reverts to hyper-conventional chivalric behavior upon his return to England" (Kramp 129). In fact, Austen writes hybrid men, merging the practicality and industriousness of the ideal man of the Enlightenment, and the traditional male of literature that she inherits through the novel form.

Her female characters are no less dynamic, focusing on the balance of individuality and the conventions of propriety. Her narratives always focus on the heroine, “a young woman struggling to make the transition from adolescence into adulthood, and her society, which has often lost sight of the very ideals which it is teaching through its rituals” (Monaghan 12). Austen’s ladies are caught between the same ideal of sentimentality and reason as the males, while also coming to terms with their own role in society and the expectations it places on them. It is through this learning process that she demonstrates her own experience of her time.

In her narrative style of free-indirect discourse, she allows the narrative to float around multiple characters and events, while being able to focus on the thoughts of the heroine, and often inserting her own. This method displays her subtlety, and ability to create a delicacy that invites involvement with the novel and its world. Instead of deliberately stating opinions, Austen’s narratives let the reader make observations alongside the heroine. She made the issues of her own life and the landed gentry of Regency England the basis on which she builds the miniature worlds of her novel, and pushes the heroines to work through those issues with their own insights and intelligence.

Austen’s novels, for their firm roots in society and lively characters and interactions are very much concerned with the affection created between characters and the response engendered within the reader. Austen pursues a representation of reality and seeks to attract readers and wrap them into the plot along with the heroes and heroines. The novel “explored the personal world, or more precisely, the world created by the individual perception of things” (Braudy 33). The novels thereby foster the individual

perception of the reader, and instead of presenting a moral code, the reader is left to puzzle it out for his or herself. There is a problem with the interest in internal examination of the reader's self through emotions within the novel. For Austen's novels that problem occurs when the author becomes popular, because "the ultimate end of personalizing the author and touching the reader with his story is to make the author in some way a model for the reader's own self-exploration" (Braudy 35). Austen's novels continue to be relevant, and therefore so does her persona as the writer of emotional, self-investigative and socially conscious novels.

At what point can we separate Austen from her most famous characters, like Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy? Readers of fiction generally tend to avoid looking at fiction as autobiography of the author, but often that is an impossible lens to ignore completely. Austen is especially problematic because she does represent a brilliant voice within her historical context, and is now an iconic figure in early women's literature. This is also problematic because it means that her novels are read with her in mind, and what she would want the reader to take from them, instead of subjective involvement with the narrative. Characters like Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth and their ability to be relatable to readers across centuries are phenomena inextricable from Austen's persona and authorial intent. Austen existed and wrote in a unique place, which gave her an individual approach and opportunity as a writer. She was not the first female writer, so she had a tradition on which to build her own works and was the product of a swiftly changing society and culture, which made her narratives naturally dynamic. Her novels fit perfectly within the tradition, and represent a great part of the influence on the novel form's rise to popularity.

Austen's depiction of human narratives that inhabited and commented on social reality in her unique place in history became a way in which to understand the pertinent issues of her time, and the emphasis she placed on the individual within society make works that are continually relevant to readers and transcend history and culture.

Undying Romance: The Universality of Elizabeth and Darcy's Relationship

Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* continues to be her most popular novel, and the narrative that is most often adapted. The addition of zombies shows that the vibrancy and relevance of Austen's writing can withstand and even complement the most outrageous of contemporary trends while still maintaining its original appeal. All of Austen's novels, not just *Pride and Prejudice*, have stood the test of time. However, the dynamic love story between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy stands out from the rest as a classic, and it is the individuality of the characters and their complicated relationship that make it a continually relevant narrative. The couple's unlikely attraction grows despite their apparent dislike for one another, and their own happiness as individuals, as well as the economic disparity between them. They do not bend to gain each other's affection, but rather engage in a battle of wits and determination to undermine the other. A battle, perhaps, that eventually makes room for the contemporary incorporation of a zombie narrative, where the strong and prideful Elizabeth and Darcy fit the bill as zombie slayers. The unlikely and lively affection between Darcy and Elizabeth stems from the strength of their own individual happiness that eliminates reliance on the other, fostering a relationship within the realms of both individual and shared happiness, a relationship that continues to pique interest and hold significance for contemporary readers.

Pride and Prejudice was written between 1796 and 1797, which was a difficult time in Austen's life. Her romantic interest in Tom Lefroy, the nephew of a family friend, had been dashed when he left her to return to Ireland, and her sister Cassandra's fiancé had died at sea (Shields 53, 69). Though both she and her sister lost their future prospects, that loss highlighted the social concerns of the era. It is not surprising, then, that the first chapter of *Pride and Prejudice* is devoted to the importance of marriage. The first line engraves the rest of the narrative with an 18th Century reality: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (Austen 1). This opening line offers insight to the mood of the eighteenth Century. If this truth is "universally acknowledged" it is perceived as guiding more than just the small community Elizabeth Bennet finds herself in at Longbourn, and even outside of England. This universal truth therefore is inescapable, and pervades all social actions and perceptions. It is through this lens that the characters of *Pride and Prejudice* see the world.

The emphasis on "good fortune" is also important with regard to the monetary consideration that drove marriage. Indeed, if a man with a good fortune is looking for a wife, then a woman must be looking for a husband of a good fortune to meet her economic needs. This means that the "tale is that of a man hunt... the desperation of the hunt is... of economic survival: girls in a family like that of the Bennets must succeed in running down solvent young men in order to survive" (Van Ghent 21). This societal pressure to obtain the fortune and the security of matrimony illuminates *Pride and Prejudice* by immediately setting the tension that the Bennet family must resolve through

a series of hopes and disappointments when it comes to this economic, sociological struggle, within the era in which the narrative is set.

Austen's brother James Austen, in a magazine he and his siblings wrote and contributed to called *The Loiterer*, wrote a satirical article in the 29th issue which discussed contemporary changes in marriage in relation to social standing. Though it was a small publication meant for the family it shows that the Austen family was well aware of social concerns, and their writing was focused on being relevant to the society in which they lived. In the article James details the new fashion of marrying for affection, and the supposed dangers of doing so. From the point of view of the old traditions, he asserts that "marrying from motives of Affection is a very improper and absurd action, injurious to our own happiness as individuals, and detrimental to the interests of the Community." Though James Austen's sarcasm is evident, it does raise an interesting concern that must have been prevalent in eighteenth century society. The injury to happiness of individuals is interesting, suggesting that in matrimony the two parties forgo individual happiness in place of compromise that may or may not lead to a conjugal joint happiness. Either way, the happiness of an individual is sacrificed. The argument is that people who marry outside of affection do not sacrifice that happiness; since the conjugal unit is solely made to improve or maintain social standing, happiness does not come into the picture. The problem with affection is that it is assumed that one bends to the other, in order to gain that affection, due to social practices. In the case of Darcy and Elizabeth, both seem unable to get past social class, and unwilling to bend in order to gain the other's affection, making their connection implausible. Fiction writer Martin Amis

identifies our interest in their complex relationship when he writes, “Funnily enough, our hopes for Elizabeth and Darcy are egalitarian...we want love to bring about the redistribution of wealth. To inspire such a man to disinterested desire, non-profit making desire: this is the romantic hinge” (85). This hinge complicates the initial repulsion that exists between Elizabeth and Darcy because the reorganization of social class plays just as much of a role in the social atmosphere that surrounds eighteenth century romance as their affection. The hope for their eventual union despite class is resonant for readers today as it would have sparked recognition for readers in the eighteenth century who were experiencing that very same alteration in social structure.

If Austen did contextualize Elizabeth and Darcy’s relationship in the social setting of eighteenth century England, why do readers still find this novel relevant? In a world where emphasis on romantic love has displaced the financial importance of relationships and the lines of class have dissolved, Elizabeth and Darcy still manage to find a place in contemporary readers’ hearts because their romance responds to that shift. As Amis points out above our interest in their romance responds as much to contemporary political agendas as to emotional needs. Though Austen’s world is irrevocably set in the Regency Era, the implausible romance that grows between Elizabeth and Darcy responds to impulses that seem much more in line with current society. They are prideful and prejudiced based on their social standing, but it is their love and desire that unsettles the constructed social order. Perhaps the relevance of this story derives not from its attention to historical detail, but from Austen’s understanding that complex relationships are at their best when they come from unlikely places, and against social standards.

The scene of Mr. Bingley's ball at Netherfield, exemplifies the complex structures and relationships between genders that lead to love and marriage. When Bingley announces the ball, the narrator reflects that "to be fond of dancing was a certain step towards falling in love; and very lively hopes of Mr. Bingley's heart were entertained" (Austen 8). Dancing in this way is regarded as a necessary "step" towards affection. Dancing requires the male to choose a partner and ask them to dance. They also must have a working knowledge of popular dances. For females it sets up an expectation to be asked to dance. Within this complex set of approaching and accepting, leading to a dual enjoyment and happiness that can lead to affection, the Bennets "entertain" hopes to attract Bingley. Their entertainment of hopes implies a certain acceptance that, given their social standings, his heart may not be obtainable after all. However, there is much optimism, and it is with that hope that they go to the ball.

For Jane, with whom Bingley becomes infatuated, her hope is not in vain. For Elizabeth, however, Mr. Darcy's reaction to the dance is problematic. Upon Bingley's request for Darcy to dance, he replies, "I certainly shall not. You know how I detest it, unless I am particularly acquainted with my partner" (Austen 10). Darcy sets himself out as a character who will not take the first step toward affection, by refusing to dance with anyone at Netherfield, and as someone so individual that his heart is unobtainable. Not only does this mark him as unsuitable, it also displays the height of his pride. For Elizabeth it becomes a problem because he implicates her in his reasoning for not dancing, when Bingley identifies her as a worthy partner. Darcy gives his opinion, as Elizabeth overhears: "'She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*; and I am

in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men” (Austen 11). Not only does Darcy openly state that she is far below him, he also drives the point that no other men are dancing with her, meaning that she is a leftover. Darcy will not willingly stoop to her level. Austen turns this interaction in favor of the heroine, by provoking the reader to anger with Darcy, but Elizabeth, though extremely displeased, happily tells the story because “she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous” (Austen 11). Not only does Elizabeth turn his pride on its head, but she responds duly with her own individual happiness and fortitude. If dancing is indeed a most important step towards affection and happiness, one could expect Elizabeth to break down, but instead she responds with equal strength. The Netherfield ball scene is extremely important because, as it introduces the aspects of social constructs and expectations, it also represents a small scale of the interaction and problems that arise in the first part of the narrative (Monaghan 69). This is the first place where Darcy and Elizabeth spar, though not face to face, and establishes that in each other they have no hope for a shared happiness, because they are strong enough within their own individuality, contrary to the social constructs of the time.

A prevalent marker of the century in *Pride and Prejudice* is the presence of the military. The timeframe of the work places it within the Napoleonic Wars, and while Austen does not specifically reference England’s military involvement, she does place a regiment within Longbourn. The females of the Bennet family take advantage of their placement and commence their “man hunt,” as in chapter fifteen. All of the daughters except Mary go, “their eyes . . . immediately wandering up in the street in quest of the

officers, and nothing less than a very smart bonnet indeed, or a really new muslin in a shop window could recall them” (Austen 63). Here it is clear that the girls’ intention is to find a suitable male in uniform. Grahame-Smith, when discussing his zombie adaptation, mentions the regiment of soldiers that seemingly have no real purpose in the narrative, but for Austen they have a very important place in the social structure, especially for the unmarried women. The presence of the officers walking down the street, and the female quest to spot them, implies that there are not many other men around. The scarcity of men, in this time, was directly connected to the military, since men went into the service for the Napoleonic wars. Their status as soldiers would, along with an attractive gallantry, provide them with a future. The Bennet sisters respond to the social pressure attached to the need of obtaining a husband who can offer them independence.

The interests of the Bennet sisters emerge in this search for a military man, and how they view their ultimate social goal of marriage. While they are absorbed in their watch for officers, their attention can only be attracted by material things, like bonnets or muslin. This suggests that Austen regards their hunt as little more than a shopping excursion. The value of the man is not decided by the quality of his character; rather, it is invested in his rank as an officer, and therefore, in his financial status. Indeed, even Elizabeth, when she discovers the antagonism between Darcy and Wickham, she favors Wickham and “finds him very charming, very easily believes his allegations that Darcy has behaved abominably” (Wright 100). Elizabeth shows a bit of her own prejudice, in that a man in uniform, who is also closer to her in social class, is more worthy of trust than proud Mr. Darcy, though she barely knows either of the men. Her trust in Wickham

and her convictions in her own judgment serve to convince her that her dislike of Darcy is justified; solidifying all of the ways they are an unlikely couple.

Though Elizabeth's prejudice and Darcy's pride are the impetus for the beginning of the narrative, those qualities are not the whole of their characters. Though their pride and prejudice could be construed as negative "they are also necessary defects of desirable merits: self-respect and intelligence" (Wright 97). The characters of Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are attractive because of their internal disposition. If either were simply proud or prejudiced against the other it would make for a dull, short narrative. The strength of self and the intelligence that they both possess instigates the verbal and social sparring that outwardly pushes them apart, while internally drawing them nearer together. Darcy, though he has repeatedly talked about how he dislikes Elizabeth, begins to notice her face "was rendered uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes" (Austen 20). Darcy responds to the intelligence in Elizabeth's eyes, finding that is what makes her attractive, rather than simply good looks. Darcy also responds to the expressions in her eyes, not her remarks or actions, showing that he searches deeper than Elizabeth's capability of responding to social expectations, which shows in him an intelligence in looking past outward appearance. The impetus of the attraction being founded in Darcy's recognition of Elizabeth's intelligence speaks again to a more contemporary notion of romance, based not on economic status, or even social gender roles, but on equality in their power of mind.

When Elizabeth goes against the social norms outwardly Darcy respects her and esteems her as well, even when his companions do not. Elizabeth walks the muddy road

to be with her sick sister at Netherfield, Miss Bingley comments that it “shew[s] an abominable sort of conceited independence, a most country town indifference to decorum” (Austen 32). Darcy, when asked for his opinion on whether the beauty of her eyes had diminished, says “not at all... they were brightened by the exercise” (Austen 32). Darcy looks beyond social expectations and sees Elizabeth as an individual person, and is attracted to her independence. From the reactions of the rest of the characters it is obvious that Elizabeth’s walk to Netherfield exhibited her lack of “decorum,” and a “conceited independence.” Not only does Elizabeth ignore social conventions, but her way of doing so presents an air of superiority to the other women at Netherfield. Austen also takes this opportunity to subtly satirize the women who are unable to think for themselves, and criticize Elizabeth’s self-rule because it does not follow social standards, while Elizabeth is simply being a caring sister. Elizabeth’s independence sets her apart and makes her unattractive to her peers and social superiors. Darcy, however, is intrigued by this “exercise,” the literal physical exercise she pursues, and the exercise of her autonomy. He notes, again, the brightness and life in her eyes that reflect her inner independence and intelligence. The others of the Netherfield party react negatively, presumably because her conduct opposes their own, that has been instilled in them through the universal husband-wife search of the era. Darcy is not drawn to Elizabeth because she is looking for a rich husband, but because she is *not* the type to do so.

Elizabeth is not attracted to Darcy, though she has unintentionally begun to gain his affection. She still regards him in terms of his statement at the Netherfield ball, and sees his pride as a symptom of his aristocratic standing. Between them there is a constant

aggravation caused by the disparity in their social standing, whereby Elizabeth must get past her view of the aristocracy as haughty and Darcy must accept Elizabeth as admirable, despite her gentry background (Monaghan 67). Elizabeth has a harder time than Darcy because he shows himself to be arrogant, as in the first scene at the ball. They are both aware of each other's lifestyle, and are unable to comprehend the independence and happiness that the opposing way of life affords the other. Mr. Darcy finds this problematic in that his attraction to Elizabeth is limited by his perception of her upbringing, and how it affects her, despite the independence and intelligence that he finds agreeable in her. Elizabeth is puzzled by his attentions to her: "She hardly knew how to suppose that she could be an object of admiration to so great a man; and yet that he should look at her because he disliked her, was still more strange" (Austen 45). Elizabeth senses from Darcy's stares that she has endeared herself to him, but cannot believe it, because he is so much greater than she is, in terms of class. It is telling that she muses over his admiration first; she assumes that his attentions are positive, and lean towards affection. Given their past interactions, it seems that his looks would be based on mutual dislike. In this case, if Elizabeth regarded his admiration of her as a possibility, she would have realized that he is not as haughty as he had first seemed. However, her sense of his status, and that he is inherently judgmental of her means that she believes it impossible that he should not be proud.

Darcy, though he feels affection for Elizabeth, also has difficulty moving past his prejudice against Elizabeth's social class. When he finally professes his love, he says that he loves her in spite of her class and he talks of "his sense of her inferiority –of its being

a degradation – of the family obstacles which judgment had always opposed to inclination” (Austen 167). Darcy readily admits that to love Elizabeth is a struggle, and internally he still wrestles between love for her and his prejudice against her background and family. He does not merely mention that her difference in class is a difficulty, but implies through “inferiority” and “degradation” that she is inherently lower as a person. Darcy asserts that whether she has overcome her family’s status or not, she is still lower than he is, even though his affection for her has proved her worthy in personality and mind. In terms of Elizabeth’s prejudice against his class, this speech only serves to prove her bias, and she refuses his advances. If she were to bend to his wishes, ignoring the slights to her being, she would sacrifice her own sense of self and strength. Clearly, though their first impressions may have gone through changes due to their experience of one another, they are both limited by the notions that have been instilled in them by society.

Following Darcy’s first expression of love, Elizabeth implicates him as injuring Wickham, and when he replies she does not believe him. He also admits to being the cause of breaking Bingley from Jane. He shows that his actions were positive and tells Elizabeth, “had not your pride been hurt by my honest confession... these bitter accusations might have been suppressed had I... flattered you into the belief of my being impelled by unqualified, unalloyed inclination” (Austen 169). Darcy reverses Elizabeth’s perception, showing that she is the proud one, in not accepting his honesty as evidence that he cares for her, instead of masking his feelings in order to gain her approval. He also states that she knows her accusations only come to light because he

has offended her, and had he skirted the truth she would have accepted his affection. While this may not be the case, since Elizabeth makes no claim either way, it shows that they can both sense the other's pride and how it affects their views. They also, at this point, affirm that neither is willing to back down from their own ideas or happiness. However, the interest of the characters, and the reader, is piqued, because now the attraction on Darcy's side is revealed, and Elizabeth is left to decipher her own feelings. Despite her existing perception of Mr. Darcy, she is in the position of great benefit even though it seems that initially she has ruined any feelings he had toward her by implying that he is at fault for Jane's unhappiness.

When Elizabeth takes a trip with her aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, they end up visiting Pemberley, Darcy's estate, which Elizabeth agrees to only because Darcy is not supposed to be there. When he shows up unexpectedly Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner are charmed by his house, and by his person, though all of Elizabeth's reports have been negative, "there is something of dignity in his countenance, that would not give one an unfavourable idea of his heart" (Austen 225). Mrs. Gardiner, though she knows Elizabeth does not like Darcy, manages to see him for his actions and treatment of them upon finding them at his house, rather than through the lens of class. Elizabeth, from both Darcy's treatment of the Gardiners, and their reaction to him, is given a view counter to her own from family she trusts. This shows to her, more than anything Darcy could say, an element of her own pride, and the prejudice she has harbored against him. Darcy respects the Gardiners, despite their class, and Elizabeth is shown that she is still held in regard even though she spurned his affection. She has put herself in a situation of

frustration, and is unable to know whether Darcy will renew his affections since she would not give in and accept him, which ironically interrupts her own happiness.

The center of the frustrated bond between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth reaches its height when Lady Catherine De Bourgh, Darcy's aunt, visits the Bennets to deny Elizabeth an engagement with Darcy. Up to this point, Elizabeth has been unsure of the state of his affection, and this is the first point when she realizes that he still means to become engaged to her. Though she cannot say that they are engaged, when Lady Catherine demands her promise that they will not become engaged she responds, "I will make no promise of the kind" (Austen 311). Elizabeth at once realizes that Darcy is still in love with her, and in her blunt answer to Lady Catherine, she asserts that she loves him too. If she believed that he did not love her she would not have to make the promise in the first place. Additionally, if she did not love him she would have no problem making that promise. In this short response she reveals her feelings, and though he is not present, she seals their engagement. Her thoughts show that "she still cannot quite accept that he [Darcy] would ever consent to be the brother-in-law of Wickham, even for her. Nevertheless, she refuses – with keen disdain—to promise...not to accept a proposal of marriage" (Wright 105). Elizabeth, while she still cannot get past her idea of Darcy's class discrepancy, allows herself to accept his love, and give her own, for the sake of her own happiness. She perhaps approves of his pride due to class, because he does not give it up in order to win her, but maintains his own individual ideas as she does.

Eventually, Elizabeth and Darcy overcome their discrepancies, admit their affection and become engaged. However, they do not forgo their individuality of both

characters which is evident when they discuss the beginning of Darcy's affection. When Elizabeth asks when it started, and he answers with not knowing, she asserts that it was her impertinence, and that, "you were sick of civility... disgusted with the women who were always speaking and looking and thinking for your approbation... I roused, and interested you, because I was so unlike *them*" (Austen 332). Elizabeth notes Darcy's being "roused" by her difference, essentially her unwillingness to change herself in order to please him, as other women do in terms of social constructs. She implies that she wakes him from the dull patterns of civility enforced by social rules of how to speak to and think about men of higher rank, men who would be eligible husbands. Darcy was "sick" and "disgusted" by the women who follow social constructions, implying an actual physical aversion, more extreme than aggravation by constant female attention. Darcy's opposition to the prevalent paradigm amongst the landed gentry, and attraction to Elizabeth, alludes to his progressiveness, a character who is beginning to live and adapt to social change, and it is the attraction to Elizabeth that rouses the recognition of the shift in his character. Darcy and Elizabeth are characters shifting within social change in the narrative, and therefore their romance is applicable to any time because it represents the desire of the individual overcoming society.

So are Darcy and Elizabeth in danger of what James Austen implied in his essay about affectionate marriages, the sacrifice of individual happiness? Austen crafted their characters in such a way that from the beginning of their relationship, they show that they are unwilling to change in order to please the other. In this way, though they eventually reach happiness together, they never sacrifice their individuality or their inherent

happiness. This speaks to why *Pride and Prejudice* remains a classic work, in that it expresses the ideas of love and happiness, setting down the boundaries of the era and pushing the main characters past those lines to find their own individual happiness together. In the contemporary world of equal rights and post-feminism, Austen's narratives remain relevant because the romance between Elizabeth and Darcy is based on individuality, and mutual affection, rather than an economic agreement. The zombie version of *Pride and Prejudice* may change the world in which Elizabeth and Darcy live, but it does not change the narrative power, or cultural relevance, of their relationship.

Zombies as the Visual Uncanny, Translated to the Written Word

Zombies have been a popular figure of horror cinema since George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* was released in 1968, and now have infested the pages of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Austen's novel, as discussed in previous chapters, is the product of social change and political upheaval. The way in which the romance between Darcy and Elizabeth corresponds to that shift makes it a narrative that is continually applicable. At the same time, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* fits nicely into a newer part of the representation of the walking dead, which branches from the horror genre into comedy, as well as introducing a monster that is usually visually represented to the written word. This chapter will discuss the origins of zombies, how they have manifested in film and pop culture and how the conventions established fit with the narrative of *Pride and Prejudice*. Though I will argue that perhaps the actual adaptation may not have taken full advantage of the possibilities of the pairing of Austen and zombies, both share a concern with social change, psychology of the individual and human relationships.

In the Grahame-Smith adaptation the zombie becomes the physical monster manifestation of the social anxiety underneath Austen's original narrative. Zombie narratives are based on excitement, the visual thrill of a kill-or-be-killed ultimatum, while also forcing the watcher or listener to consider their ideals, and how they would react in the face of death. Walking corpses, though they have little character development besides

the instinct to kill and eat, confront the protagonists of the story with themselves, their own fears, strengths and ideas about morality.

The word “zombie” dates back to sugar plantations in the West Indies, and presumably back to an African word. The word was used in Western literature since the early 19th century in works about the new world, such as a history of Brazil written by Robert Southey in 1819. Zombies were limited to non-fiction works, histories and travel books to describe the mindless workers in Haitian fields, thought to be corpses raised through witchcraft or other unknown means. (OED). Even before zombies became monsters of non-fiction, their exotic origins smacked of the discourse of the Other. They first appeared in a fictional setting after William Seabrook’s fanciful travel book *The Magic Island* (1932) that highlighted zombies as an exotic horror, after which Kenneth Webb wrote a play called *Zombie* (1932). Victor Halperin’s *White Zombie*, also made in 1932, was the jump zombies made to film, and have since been stumbling along on celluloid. Thus, the phenomenon of the walking dead went straight from the myths about exotic voodoo culture in travel books to film, most remarkably in George A. Romero’s *Night of the Living Dead* in 1968.

Romero established zombies as formidable monsters the horror genre with this film, and because of the film’s popularity it also established the conventions of a zombie narrative. Horror as a genre was populated with many creatures that crossed the living-dead binary, such as ghosts, vampires, revenants and so on. Romero used zombies and their history and also created a particular way in which they fit into a horror narrative. *Night of the Living Dead* hinges on the dead rising from the grave from an unknown

cause, making them difficult to defeat because once you have taken care of one, more inexplicably appear. The circumstances of the film are unremarkable, just normal people in a boarded up house; “zombie cinema pursues the hapless adventures of bland, ordinary citizens” (Bishop 202). While the characters of the film may be “bland” and “ordinary,” that is what makes them relatable to a general audience. The protagonists are put in extraordinary situations and must work through them without any special advantage. This structure necessitates human invention and self-awareness, and allows viewers to put themselves in the role of the zombie slayer.

The zombie as a monster is more than a physical ambling creature: it is a symbol of fear. James Ursini links the symbolic nature to Freud’s theories of the ‘uncanny:’ “horror tends to concentrate on another type of ‘Other’ ...an ‘Other’ which is rooted in our psyche, in our fears and obsessions” (4). The Freudian term describes something which is familiar, but has been repressed to the point of becoming unfamiliar, and when it has resurfaced becomes frightening because it is at once normal and abnormal. The zombie represents this kind of extreme repression: “those who should be dead and safely laid to rest have bucked the natural order of things and have returned from the grave” (Bishop 198). That which has been repressed, literally in burial, comes back in an unfamiliar form, though recognizable, through unnatural means. The zombie also forces recognition of two other Freudian terms in direct contrast with each other, the eros and thanatos drives, that is, love and death. The zombie is often the form of a loved one in the guise of death, and the still living must battle their love instincts directed towards

familiarity, and destroy the undead creature. For this reason, though zombies are particularly two-dimensional, they drum up all of the complexities of the human psyche.

There is a decided necessity for the zombie to be a visual menace since “they do not speak, all of their intentions and activities are manifested solely through physical action” (Bishop 201). The zombie as, more or less, a rotting, walking corpse, has no means to communicate or muse on its desire for brains. Therefore, to depict its undead designs, the medium of film allows for more graphic and shocking illustration of the blood, gore and havoc wreaked by a plague of zombies. The use of zombies as a horror figure in literature is not unprecedented, but fairly unusual because the visual gore is more difficult to evoke through language. An upshot of zombie literature was started with Max Brook’s bestseller *The Zombie Survival Guide: Complete Protection from the Living Dead* (2003) that warns in its introduction, “do not discount any section of this book as hypothetical drama” and, “ignorance is the undead’s strongest ally, knowledge their deadliest enemy” (xiii-xiv). While this guide book follows the fictional accounts and convention of cinematic zombie lore, its cautionary tone emphasizes the supposed plausibility of a zombie outbreak, and the fear inherent in the metaphorical nature of the undead menace.

The shift of a zombie narrative from the screen to the page must come with a consideration of how to evoke the visual and the metaphorical function of zombies, as in Grahame-Smith’s adaptation of Austen. The struggle between life and mortality in zombie narratives evokes questions of propriety, whether to follow social conventions in the face of death, or disregard them in lieu of safety and survival. In modern zombie

cinema, this is less important than when Austen's heroines must face being ladies or zombie slayers. They must balance their internal emotional turmoil with the external necessity of survival, and the psychological struggle in the face of death. It is because of Austen's maintenance of the emotional landscape that the zombies are able to exist, filling in the visual landscape that Austen largely ignores. Since Austen's descriptions are focused on the emotional and moral, Grahame-Smith has all the room he needs to flesh out the visual landscape that exists in zombie films. The contrast highlights the unlikelihood of the pairing of Austen and ghoulish movie monsters, and perhaps that each supplements what the other lacks.

Though *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is a more comedic approach to zombies than a horror approach like Romero's films, the psychological symbolism of the monster still works, especially with the moral and social tones of Austen's original text, as well as her airy sense of humor. Elizabeth Bennet is faced with difficulty on all sides – her parents, neighbors and friends, the expectations of society; fundamentally she is a normal example of a young woman of the middle class in Regency England. In Grahame-Smith's version Elizabeth faces the same harsh tests of self and ideals, and with the zombies she is beset by reminders of mortality and her own physical fortitude. Likewise, the other characters must figure out how to balance the expectations of society, while dealing with the menace. For example, when Elizabeth goes to Netherfield to be with sick Jane, she is attacked by three zombies and defeats them. Once she reaches Netherfield, she is censured by Miss Bingley that on her petticoats there were “pieces of undead flesh upon her sleeve” and her actions, “show an abominable sort of conceited independence, a

most country-town indifference to decorum” (31). The reader wonders what Elizabeth should have done with the onslaught of zombies, but Mr. Darcy does not judge her so harshly and says her eyes were “brightened by the exercise,” and deigns to comment on her lack of niceties. Grahame-Smith, in this way, interweaves the zombie narrative and uses the already present disagreement about propriety to explain Elizabeth’s actions.

The zombie infiltration also explains away other disagreements and disparities in the novel. A significant element in the zombie film is how the protagonists deal with one another: “the one-time *protagonists* of the movie become the eventual *antagonists*; thus, the characters cannot fully trust each other” (Bishop 203). The characters, however close they may be to one another, must always be on the defense in case the other suddenly turns. This relies on the source of the zombie infection being unknown and uncontrollable, as in Grahame-Smith’s version. Darcy’s dissolution of the engagement of Bingley and Jane for his own fears of her turning; “she took ill and remained at Netherfield that I had any apprehension...I was certain that she had been stricken with the strange plague” (156). Jane’s illness and her mellowed nature convince Darcy that she is on the path to becoming a zombie, and because the source of the plague is unknown, he cannot trust that her illness is a common cold. Elizabeth’s own knowledge and skill at zombie slaying makes this explanation a clear and more than acceptable reasoning on Darcy’s part. She holds the same fears as he does, and must respect his decisions as a reaction of a fellow zombie slayer, not a move to destroy the happiness of her sister. Zombies in this novel align with the social anxieties of Regency England, and have a set of conventions and protocols that the protagonists must act on. Elizabeth’s

ability to think as an individual allows her to weigh social propriety with the necessity of zombie slaying.

The visual necessity of zombie cinema is ultimately what makes the addition of zombies to Regency literature most difficult, especially the case in the works of Austen. Austen's novels are focused on emotion, as discussed earlier, and very little time is spent on visual description. Zombies, on the other hand, have little to offer in the way of discourse, where other monsters are easily made literary. Ghosts can often interact with the living, and Dracula is pictured as an intelligent being whose ability to communicate only added to the fear he inspired. Both of these literary monsters also have successful movie careers. The zombie, however, had no literary bridge between folklore and film. Bishop suggests that "their lack of emotional depth, the inability to express or act on human desires, and their primarily visual nature make zombies ill suited for the written word" (200). Grahame-Smith, as a screenwriter rather than a novelist, must have realized this dilemma and in this narrative had to make visual zombies work in the framework of Austen's emotional landscape. In the ball scene the "unmentionables" make their first appearance:

Their flesh was in varying degrees of putrefaction; the freshly stricken were slightly green and pliant, whereas the longer dead were grey and brittle—their eyes and tongues long since turned to dust, and their lips pulled back into everlasting skeletal smiles (14).

This detailed description of the undead gives the reader a sense of their appearance that is applicable for the rest of the novel. Furthermore, it is especially apparent because Austen does not even tell us the color of the gowns the Bennet sisters wear, or the color of Darcy's hair. We know that the Bennet girls are lovely and Darcy is frequently referred to

as handsome, but past those superficial descriptions little is said about appearance. The way Elizabeth's hair curls is really of no importance in juxtaposition with the description of her character and feelings. By leaving her characters as emotional and moral sketches, Austen gives the internal and psychological more weight, while also allowing her characters to be more relatable and universal. For Grahame-Smith the lack of physical description allows him to make cinematic moves and create a highly visual monster for the psychological protagonists to combat.

A strange addition in Grahame-Smith's version is the ninja training that Mr. Bennet insists on for his daughters. Ninjas, like zombies are a fad in contemporary culture. This trendy addition skews the characters' abilities, giving Elizabeth and her sisters an uncommon advantage over the rest of the population. In Austen's original text, Mr. Bennet is less concerned about his daughters' ability to find suitable husbands, than he is about their intelligence and sense. He admires Elizabeth because she "has something more of quickness than her sisters" (5). Elizabeth tells Lady Catherine that she is less accomplished but that she and her sisters "were encouraged to read, and had all the masters that were necessary" (146). Grahame-Smith, with the insertion of zombies, used ninjas to represent this sense and quickness of mind that Mr. Bennet insists on and sees as prevalent in Elizabeth.

In fact, the addition of the zombies, without the ninja nonsense, adds a cinematic element to the communication and relationship between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth. Both Darcy and Elizabeth are accomplished zombie killers, and therefore their conflicts are physical as well as verbal. Even from their first meeting at the ball, when Darcy slights

Elizabeth by calling her tolerable, Elizabeth “felt her blood turn cold... the warrior code demanded she avenge her honor...She meant to follow this proud Mr. Darcy outside and open his throat” (13-14). This version of Elizabeth takes her strength as a female to an extreme point. Austen’s Elizabeth was certainly irritated but remained composed, Grahame-Smith’s version dives for her knife. The pride of both Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth is what initially fuels the conflict between them. Elizabeth’s quickness to action aligns with the emphasis put on the visual and the cinematic progression of the zombie scenes.

In this particular scene just as Elizabeth grabs her knife to take Darcy to his untimely and prideful end, a horde of zombies crashes the ball. As Elizabeth and her sisters form the “pentagram of death” the other ball-goers, including Darcy look on: “Mr. Darcy watched Elizabeth and her sisters work their way outward, beheading zombie after zombie as they went” (14). This scene sets up the physical action of the novel, where the pride and social delicacy of Austen’s original is juxtaposed with the bloodlust and warriors of Grahame-Smith’s cinematic take. While it sets up the discord between Darcy and Elizabeth, it also showcases the zombie-killing skills of the Bennet sisters. The original posed the difficulty for Darcy and Elizabeth in overcoming their cultural prejudices and their independent ideas.. This scene juxtaposes that initial struggle with the psychological difficulty inherent in zombie slaying.

The relationship between Darcy and Elizabeth remains much the same throughout the novel, with the additional impropriety of her warrior approach and Darcy’s reputation as an exceptional slayer. In the original Elizabeth and Darcy discuss their faults in the drawing room at Netherfield:

‘I have faults enough, but they are not, I hope, of understanding...my temper would perhaps be called resentful.—My good opinion once lost is lost forever.’

‘*That is a failing indeed!*—cried Elizabeth. ‘Implacable resentment *is* a shade in a character, but you have chosen your fault well.—I really cannot *laugh* at it. You are safe from me’ (Austen 51).

Elizabeth’s reaction here is subtly ironic, in that the reader knows that her opinion of Darcy has been lost, and at this point has little chance of returning. There is also a slight flirtiness to the exchange: Darcy admits his fault and Elizabeth teases him, instead of reassuring him of his perfection. She subtly admits to him that she has the same fault, and does not hide her disdain. In the Grahame-Smith version the conversation is changed:

‘No,’ said Darcy, ‘I have faults enough, but they are not, I hope, of understanding. My temper I dare not vouch for, I have taken many a life for offenses which would seem but trifles to other men.’

‘That is a failing indeed!’ cried Elizabeth. “But you have chosen your fault well, for it is one which I share. I too live by the warrior code, and would gladly kill if my honour demanded it. You are safe from me’ (Austen, Grahame-Smith 46).

Aside from the editing of Austen’s original punctuation, this exchange takes on a completely different character. Darcy still reveals his fault as being his temper and judgment, but he connects it to the zombie plague. Elizabeth responds ironically, but this time it is that she declares him safe. Though he may be safe from her judgment about his faults, she still has the temper, and is planning to avenge her “honour” after his comments at the first ball, so really he is anything but safe.

Past the tiresome ninja references to the warrior code and her honour, Elizabeth still admits to Darcy that they are the same. Though she despises him, the sparks of their romance are already palpable in their verbal battles. Even with these beginning steps toward romance, she cannot give up her negative first impression of Darcy. At the

culmination of Darcy's feelings, when he admits his secret admiration, the authorial voice muses, "in spite of her deeply rooted bloodlust, she could not be insensible to the compliment of such a man's affection, and though her intention of killing him did not vary...she was somewhat sorry for the pain he was to receive" (149). Like her prejudice that she is unwilling to waiver from, she will not forget the insult that Darcy made at their first meeting and along with that the vengeance she has planned for him.

When Elizabeth sees Pemberley, and his kindness and generosity combined with his combat skills, she begins to rethink her plan for vengeance. Upon the visit to Pemberley and Darcy's unexpected arrival, Elizabeth realizes that "whenever she did catch a glimpse, she felt an excitement greater even than the thrill of confronting the Devil's legions" (210). Elizabeth realizes that Darcy is of interest to her, though by comparing him to the zombies she expresses ambivalence, but not direct violence anymore. In Austen's original, in this same scene, Austen says of Elizabeth that

whenever she did catch a glimpse, she saw an expression of general complaisance, an in all that he said she heard an accent so far removed from the hauteur or disdain of his companions, as convinced her that the improvement of manners... had at least outlived one day (Austen 229).

The original is clearly more concerned with Elizabeth noticing a change in Darcy, rather than immediately recognizing a change in her own feelings, and a reassessment of the pride she assumes is a part of his character. However, in both cases, Elizabeth does begin to change the way she views Darcy. She is confused and is surprised by his civility to herself and her uncle and aunt, the Gardiners. Her feelings are not immediately of affection, but of surprise and uncertainty: "hatred had vanished long ago... the respect created by the conviction of his valuable qualities, though at first unwillingly admitted,

had for some time ceased to be repugnant to her feelings” (212). Elizabeth’s headstrong prejudice against Darcy only ceases to exist when she sees real evidence of his goodwill and kind character. She already knows him to be a great warrior and of great consequence for his social standing, but it takes her knowing that he is truly a good person to change her opinion. Elizabeth’s pride had been hurt by his insult, and convinced her of his ill breeding despite his class. Seeing him in his own environment and showing kindness to her aunt and uncle, just the people she would expect him to slight, makes her realize that her hatred and plans for vengeance were based on false first impressions. However, Elizabeth’s emphasis on her own strength means that she is unable to ignore these traits of Darcy’s, and allows her anger to continue to take hold on her. She realizes that, in addition to their love for zombie slaying, they are more similar than their apparent status and character would suggest.

Their similarity comes full circle at the end of the novel, and when the unlikely pair discards their prejudice and allow affection to take hold. When Elizabeth pushes him to answer where his affections for her first began it remains the same as the Austen version, that she is different from other women. The zombie angle adds a new dimension: “I knew the joy of standing over a vanquished foe... the gentle ladies who so assiduously courted you knew nothing of this joy, and therefore, could never offer you true happiness” (311). Elizabeth cites the same “impertinence” that fueled Darcy’s affection, but also the physical manifestation of her liveliness in her slayer abilities. These abilities allow Darcy to see in her what he knows to possess in himself as a fellow zombie slayer, and recognize that it is a quality that is not likely to be found in the ranks

of upper class women. Combined in Elizabeth is strength and stubbornness that matches Darcy's own pride and, of course, prejudice, making them seem an unlikely pair, but their eventual romance stems from the discovery of their similarity. The independence and happiness that made them a successful couple in the original is augmented by their ability to wrestle with the psychological upset of zombies, and surprising but not unnatural turn as successful zombie killers. The relevance of Austen's narrative, in Elizabeth and Darcy representing the product of a changing social and emotional landscape, lends itself to a zombie narrative because they adapt to the new scenery, and easily become figures of external action that mirrors their internal strength.

Common (Burial) Ground: The Relevance Austen and Zombies Share and What That Means to Contemporary Readers

Seth Grahame-Smith, when adapting a classic novel with zombie mayhem, had thousands to choose from, but chose Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. There could be a tendency to regard it as a meaningless pop culture move, a way of trying to make Austen's work relevant to contemporary audiences and commodify it with a current trend. Zombies are big, in cinema and video games, branching over into mock survival guides and books of poetry, among other things. But really how could one say that Ms. Austen is not a big pop culture figure herself? Almost two centuries after its publication *Pride and Prejudice* has been made into several Hollywood hits, a Bollywood film and has been a central element in films about contemporary relationships, like *You've Got Mail* and *Bridget Jones' Diary*. This is not even touching on her other novels that have their own slew of films and adaptations. Austen does not need any help to be relevant. Why choose *Pride and Prejudice* then? Grahame-Smith has asserted that Austen "subconsciously" wrote it just for the purpose of zombies. Though she may not have prefigured something like a horde of the undead, Austen did write Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy's romance in a way that fits nicely with a contemporary twist because of her adept hand at writing complex, dynamic characters who continue to represent one of the most celebrated love stories in literature.

Elizabeth Bennet represents Austen's usual approach to her novels: a single girl who exists in the middle class and is starting to discover herself while also being thrown into the marriage pool with awareness that marriage is the highest achievement for a young woman. She must struggle with staying true to herself while actively searching for a potential husband. What makes Elizabeth stand out among Austen's heroines is her particularly strong will. She is not an ideal: "literature is crowded with mere dream figures we are asked to accept as real heroines. Real women are much better, altogether more satisfying... and Elizabeth Bennet is one of the first and best of them in fiction" (Priestly 98). The novel form, when Austen was writing, was only beginning to rise in popularity, and the novel was often a tool to convey morals and ideals. Women as "dream figures" in her time were somewhat allegorical then, written in order to convey the correct set of morals a proper lady should possess, without much attention to the flaws of character. Elizabeth Bennet can be said to be one of the first real women in literature because the entire novel is based on her supposed flaws of character, and those flaws are not necessarily negative. She is proud, strong willed, and unwilling to give up on her first impressions of Mr. Darcy. Elizabeth's mental, as well as physical, strength makes her an improbable heroine, but it is that realism in her character that makes her, as Priestly says, more satisfying as a character.

The moralistic tendencies of the era play into the narrative, and combined with her realism, they become less about idealism. Her novels tend to emphasize the paradox that in actual cultural situations morals can be deceiving, and that truth can be found in real circumstances. Austen does not spare anyone in her moral evaluation: "the breeding

of the well bred is revealed as every bit as bad as that of the low born... the assessment of human nature is acute, unforgiving, even cruel” (Quindlen 101). If *Pride and Prejudice* were presented as an essay on society, it would be harsh, and for people of her time, difficult to swallow. Since Austen wrote directly about the types of people she lived around, in the middle class, it is easy to suppose she knew someone like Lady Catherine De Bourgh, or Mrs. Gardiner, and that her sketches are not caricatures, but the types of people she would see at local balls or parish meetings.

Austen’s honesty is surprising, especially as a woman, who was only expected to marry and act as a dutiful wife, as we know from her expressions of the social atmosphere in writing. Austen was undoubtedly influenced by Samuel Johnson. His essays were acute and called to attention the discrepancies in culture, aiming to teach people how to live morally in real life, rather than setting lofty examples. Austen employs the same observation and instruction, though “in modern times, it is often agreed, readers tend to appreciate Austen despite her didacticism rather than because of it” (Collins 148). Though contemporary readings of Austen may tend to skim over Austen’s moral coaching, *Pride and Prejudice* is a more seamless incorporation, because the characters are learning right along with the reader. Elizabeth Bennet learns lessons that apply as much to the strong-willed women of contemporary culture, as those in the Regency period. Her prejudice and conviction prefigure the fortitude of today’s women who have grown from feminist tendencies, which when faced with Grahame-Smith’s zombies, are what makes her a perfect zombie slayer.

Johnson, as Austen's ethical mentor, may have also anticipated the zombie slayer inherent in Elizabeth's character in his fifth essay in *The Idler*. He advocates the forming of a female army in the face of the Napoleonic wars. As the soldiers leave for battle he says, "the tear stole into my eyes, not for those who were going away, but for those who were left behind" (24). During the Napoleonic wars thousands of men were shipped out to fight against the French, and women were left to themselves, wives without husbands and young ladies without suitors. Activities that previously required a lady to have a male chaperone were now events that women attended to alone. If the "two hundred thousand ladies" of England were capable enough to "walk in the mall without a Gallant; go to the Gardens without a Protector" (25), what makes them incapable of joining the men for battle? Johnson argues that "the prejudices and pride of man have long presumed the sword and spindle made for different hands, and denied the other sex, to partake the grandeur of military glory" and that "we, who allow them [women] to be Sovereigns, may surely suppose them capable to be soldiers" (25). Johnson points out that there is a shortage of military power in England that is needed to fight Napoleon, and that perhaps the assumption that women are unsuited to be useful soldiers is a prejudice that does England harm. The reign of Queen Elizabeth I, though more than a century before Johnson's writing, is not far from the English consciousness, and she was unarguably very successful as a monarch in times of war.

Johnson goes on to say that a ladies natural duties fit perfectly into combat:

If the hair has lost its powder, a Lady has a puff. If a coat be spotted, a Lady has a brush. Strength is of less importance since fire-arms have been used; blows of the hand are now seldom exchanged; and what is there to be done in the charge or retreat beyond the powers of a sprightly maiden (25).

These ideas express the practicality of female soldiers, and that a woman in combat would be as natural as the female in the home, and sometimes more suited to the needs of battle than men. He points out that the face of battle has changed with the invention of fire arms, and that the energy and skills of young women fit with the quick pace of battle. Though Johnson's essay may be light in tone, and obviously his advice was not taken, his thoughts anticipate the quick mind and athleticism of Elizabeth Bennet and her eventual role as a zombie killer, trained in martial arts.

Though in concept and convention Austen and zombies unexpectedly complement each other, the execution of the Grahame Smith adaptation does not realize the full potential offered by the combination. The ninja training given to Elizabeth and her sisters discussed in the last chapter does more to detract from the narrative and call attention to clichés, and does not add any of the contemporary flare the zombies offer. Reading about the Bennet sisters' trips to the "Orient" becomes tired within the first chapters, because it has little to do with the zombie mayhem that is promised in the title and tag lines. It also ignores a Romero convention, the regular people battling against the odds that would have clearly reflected the Austen convention of people working against the established structures of society.

In addition to the ninja references, the language used to emulate the dialect of Regency England is clumsy and tedious to read. Grahame-Smith said in an interview that he referred to zombies as "unmentionables" because "they're quite English, and as a result, they tend to euphemize things. And one of the things that they euphemize is the name zombie itself. So they call them anything from unmentionables to the sorry stricken

to the manky dreadful” (NPR). He implies with “quite English” that the way Austen writes her characters is extremely concerned with the propriety of language and actions. While much of the book is about adhering to social norms, the joy in Austen’s writing is that often “we get a sense of this society, this universe, with its inhibition, its formality, it’s echelonized emotions...most clearly, perhaps, in its language” (Amis 85). Austen cares less about how proper her heroines are when they speak than that they convey their emotions in the most expressive way possible. Elizabeth says to Darcy when he proposes, “I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry” (170). Given the disparity in their class standing Elizabeth is being far from proper, and her feelings are never euphemized. For this reason Grahame-Smith’s attempt to write the additions to the book in period language makes for cumbersome reading, “zombie” would have fit just as well, if not better, than unmentionable, and this is the case for all the authorial insertions, not just the ones about zombies. One of the most difficult, and most repeated, is Elizabeth’s insistence on avenging her “honour,” when the word honour at that time, especially referring to a woman, most certainly would be taken to mean her chastity, or virginity. (OED) If Darcy has really harmed Elizabeth’s “honour” Grahame-Smith has changed the narrative in drastic ways. Though the contemporary reader can decipher that she really means her pride, or sense of warrior’s honor, rather than her virtue, the attempt to assimilate zombies into Austenian language made something that could have been fun and amusing rather difficult to get through.

Despite the clumsiness of the language of the novel, the best-seller status of the combination holds cultural and literary significance. The visual nature of zombies and the

popularity of Grahame-Smith's version of the novel nod to the importance of the visual in current entertainment, and the frequency of Austen film adaptations. Austen does not concern herself with the visual, but for modern readers hearing the name Elizabeth Bennet calls up images of Greer Garson or Kiera Knightley. The zombie version takes that same impulse of contemporary culture to make the written word relevant through vibrant visuals, to give Longbourn a physical landscape, in this case crawling with corpses. Elizabeth Bennet, still coming to terms with herself as a woman and the expectations of society, has now taken up the role of a defender of life, facing her fears head on. Though now, after going through waves of feminism, women are more independent and marriage is no longer the ultimate accomplishment, women still struggle to find the balance between individuality and meeting societal expectation.

Readers love Elizabeth because she is a woman that represents change, both personal and social, and the relationship between her and Mr. Darcy is entertaining and meaningful because it does not fit into the social standards. They are a couple who respond to ordinary social conventions in extraordinary and individual ways, and eventually join together under their own terms. Their emotional shift in the Grahame-Smith adaptation is juxtaposed with the visual shifts of the zombie menace that have their own psychological struggle underneath the visual action. The conventions of the resistance of a zombie horde mean that Darcy and Elizabeth are ordinary people fighting extraordinary odds, which enhances the elements leading up to their extraordinary romance. For these reasons it is evident that contemporary readers do not need help

understanding Austen: we have simply begun to relate to Austen in different ways,
modified by the social changes and interests of our time.

Bibliography

- Amis, Martin. "Force of Love: Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen." *A Truth Universally Acknowledged: 33 Great Writers on Why We Read Jane Austen*. Ed. Susannah Carson. New York: Random House, 2009. 83-89. Print.
- Austen, Jane, and Seth Grahame-Smith. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. Philadelphia: Quirk Classics, 2009. Print.
- Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Deluxe ed. New York: Penguin, 2009. Print.
- Austen-Leigh, James Edward. *The Memoir*. Project Gutenberg e-book. *Project Gutenberg*. Web. 17 Jan. 2010.
- <http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk_files=222726&pageno=1>.
- Bishop, Kyle. "Raising the Dead." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* (2006): 196-205. Web. 1 Oct. 2009.
- Braudy, Leo. "Varieties of Literary Affection." *The Professions of Eighteenth Century Literature: Reflections on an Institution*. Ed. Leopold Damrosch. Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1992. 26-41. Print.
- Clarke, Susanna. "Why We Read Jane Austen: Young Persons in Interesting Situations." *A Truth Universally Acknowledged: 33 Great Writers on Why We Read Jane Austen*. Ed. Susannah Carson. 1st ed. New York: Random House, 2009. 3-8. Print.

Hunter, J. Paul. "The Novel and Social/Cultural History." *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth Century Novel*. Ed. John Richetti. 4th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. Print.

Johnson, Samuel. "Idler No. 41." *Idler* (1759). *Samuel Johnson's Essay: Idler 41*.

Readbookonline.net. Web. 15 Oct. 2009.

<<http://www.readbookonline.net/readOnline/29922/>>.

Johnson, Samuel. "Idler No. 5." *Idler* (1758). *Samuel Johnson's Essay: Idler 5*.

Readbookonline.net. Web. 15 Oct. 2009.

<<http://www.readbookonline.net/readOnline/29972/>>.

Kramp, Michael. *Disciplining Love Austen And The Modern Man*. New York: Ohio State UP,

Monaghan, David. *Jane Austen Structure and Social Vision*. London: The Macmillan, 1980. Print.

Meyers, Jeffrey "Samuel Demands the Muse: Johnson's Stamp on Imaginative Literature." 39-49. *Antioch Review* 2007. *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. Web. 16 Dec. 2009.

Preistley, J.B. "Austen Portrays a Small World With Humor and Detachment." *A Truth Universally Acknowledged: 33 Great Writers on Why We Read Jane Austen*. Ed. Susannah Carson. 1st ed. New York: Random House, 2009. 95-99. Print.

Schellenberg, Betty A. "From Propensity to Profession: Female Authorship and the Early Career of Frances Burney." *Eighteenth Century Fiction* 14.3/4 (2002): 345. *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. Web. 16 Dec. 2009.

Shields, Carol. *Jane Austen*. New York: Viking, 2001. Print.

Tague, Gregory F. *Ethos and Behavior: The English Novel From Jane Austen to Henry James*. Bethesda: Academica, 2008. Print.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own, and Three Guineas*. Ed. Morag Shiach. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. Print.

Woolf, Virginia. "Jane Austen at Sixty." *A Truth Universally Acknowledged: 33 Great Writers on Why We Read Jane Austen*. Ed. Susannah Carson. 1st ed. New York: Random House, 2009. 259-68. Print.