Narrative Prototypes and Fandoms in Mashup Storyworlds: Comparing the Novel and the Film *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*

1. **Masoome Sehat**
   PhD Candidate in English Literature
   Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, The International Branch of Shiraz University
   ORCID: 0000-0003-3622-6514
   Email: msehat@hafez.shirazu.ac.ir

2. **Alireza Anushiravani**
   Professor of Comparative Literature and Interdisciplinary Studies, Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, School of Literature and Humanities, Shiraz University
   ORCID: 0000-0003-4021-898X. Email: Aushir@shirazu.ac.ir

3. **Laleh Atashi* *(Corresponding Author)***
   Associate professor of English Literature, Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, School of Literature and Humanities, Shiraz University
   ORCID: 0000-0002-1058-026X
   Tel: +98 917 139 2898, Email: laleh.atashi@shirazu.ac.ir

1. معصومه صحت

کاندید دکتری ادبیات انگلیسی، بخش زبانهای خارجی و زبانشناسی،واحد بین الملل دانشگاه شیراز

ارکید: 0000-0003-3622-6514
msehat@hafez.shirazu.ac.ir

2. دکتر علی‌رضا انوشیروانی

استاد ادبیات تطبیقی و مطالعات بینارشته‌ای، گروه زبان‌شناسی و زبان‌های خارجی، دانشکده ادبیات و علوم انسانی، دانشگاه شیراز

ارکید: 0000-0003-4021-898X

Aushir@shirazu.ac.ir

3. دکتر لاله آتشی (نویسنده مسئول)

دانشیار ادبیات انگلیسی، گروه زبان‌شناسی و زبان‌های خارجی، دانشکده ادبیات و علوم انسانی، دانشگاه شیراز

ارکید: 0000-0002-1058-026X
ایمیل: laleh.atashi@shirazu.ac.ir

- **Abstract**

  This article examines *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies,* a literary mashup that stands at the intersection of two engaging fandoms, each constructed around a popular storyworld. It asks how narrative prototypes, the typical exemplars within genres, shape such a mashup storyworld across media. Considering Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and zombie-based apocalyptic narratives as prototypes, this study compares the PPZ novel (2009) and its film adaptation (2016), examining their prototype affiliation. Based on the categorization of Marie-Laure Ryan's narrativity model, it investigates their spatial, temporal, mental, and formal dimensions separately. The comparative analysis demonstrates that the PPZ novel gravitates toward Austen's domestic and gender-centered prototypical core, while the cinematic adaptation aligns more closely with the conventions of zombie cinema and its apocalyptic logic. To account for this divergence, the article traces the historical formation of both prototypes and their associated fandoms, arguing that each adaptation privileges the prototype embedded in its respective medium. By linking narrative form to medium specificity and fandom formation, the study offers a framework for understanding how mashup storyworlds are shaped by competing narrative traditions.

- **Key Terms:** Prototype Theory, Mashup Storyworld, Fandom, Jane Austen, Zombies

- **Introduction**

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies (PPZ) is the first literary mashup to combine a canonical classic with a horrifying element from popular culture. Reimagining the storyworld of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* besieged by zombies, this playful adaptation successfully engaged the Janeites, Austen's fandom, from the beginning, as its announcement on National Public Radio, and accordingly, Austen's fan blogs and podcasts prompted the publisher to increase the initial print run fivefold (Losser 2013, 175). After the publication, a considerable number of comments and reviews on fan pages and online communities such as *Entertainment Weekly*, Library Journal, and The A.V. Club encouraged its expansion across media. A prequel, sequel, graphic novel, and iOS game were released within a year, and negotiations concerning a cinematic version became a hot topic among fans for a while. In 2010, Lionsgate announced that it would finance and distribute the cinematic adaptation. Having gone through three different directors, it eventually appointed Burr Steers in 2013, who directed the film released in 2016.

PPZ owed a significant portion of its success to Austen's fandom, cultivated over two centuries. In fact, in contemporary media culture, Jane Austen and "her gigantic fandom" are "highly saleable commodities" that guarantee the marketability of innovations such as PPZ (Nelson 2013, 341). However, the zombies' addition provides another crucial factor in PPZ's success, as it also attracts zombie enthusiasts, some of whom identify themselves as zombiepedia. "Swarming across a range of media," from film and television to comics, literary fiction, and various forms of online games, events, and interactions, this fandom deals with an economy "worth an estimated $5.74 billion a year" (Olney 2017, 3). Putting these together, PPZ cannot be regarded as a mere combination of two distinct popular phenomena, but rather an intersection of two large, highly engaged fandoms.

This position explains its parodic appeal. The mashup depends on readers' and audiences' familiarity with both Austen's narrative world and the conventions of zombie fiction to convey its comic effect. As Linda Hutcheon notes, parody both "acknowledges" and "ironizes" its source (2000, 26), and PPZ operates precisely through this double movement. The humor emerges not only from the juxtaposition of two incompatible genres but from the audience's prior knowledge of each storyworld. In other words, the fact that ensures PPZ's marketability also enables engagement. Bringing together two fundamentally different narrative traditions from two distinct genres is the fundamental characteristic of PPZ. It places itself between two pillars; Austen's novel which represents a prototypical instance of Regency-era domestic fiction, centered on gendered negotiation within a structured social hierarchy and zombie narratives that belong to the horror genre and are typically concerned with social collapse, dehumanization, and collective threat. These pillars function as what cognitive theory would describe as prototypes, "typical exemplars" that shape how subsequent texts are perceived (Thon 2016, 18). Thus, from this perspective, PPZ can be approached as a storyworld situated between two prototypical poles.

Noticing this point, this article asks a central question: how does a mashup text draw on two competing prototypes, and how do different media forms negotiate that tension? It investigates whether the novel and the film adaptation of PPZ maintain a balance between their Austenian and zombie-based origins, or whether they gravitate toward one of their prototypical cores. To address this question, the first part of the discussion relies on Marie-Laure Ryan's narrativity model proposed in *Avatars of Story* (2006). Through this approach, spatial, temporal, mental, and formal dimensions of the PPZ novel (2009) and film (2016) are investigated in relation to their respective source traditions to determine their degree of proximity to each prototype.

The analysis demonstrates that the two adaptations do not negotiate this hybridity in the same way. The novel remains closer to Austen's narrative model, preserving its social framework while integrating zombies into the background. The film, however, aligns more strongly with the conventions of zombie-apocalyptic cinema, restructuring the narrative around conflict, survival, and spectacle. To explain this divergence, the second part of the article situates both prototypes within their historical development and examines the formation of their fandoms. This reveals that each prototype is strongly associated with a particular medium: Austen with the novel form and zombies with cinema. This association, which navigates how PPZ is reinterpreted, is the logic behind each PPZ's inclination.

By bringing together prototype theory and intermedial analysis, this article contributes to adaptation studies in two ways. First, it demonstrates that culturally dominant exemplars navigate narrative structures and their development. Second, it shows that media platforms are not neutral vehicles in the process of storyworld expansion. In the case of PPZ, the novel reproduces Austen's limitation, whereby gender discrimination is foregrounded at the expense of normalizing certain forms of social otherness, whereas the film reverses this emphasis in line with the conventions of apocalyptic cinema, where the portrayal of hypersexualized women for the male gaze is a common practice. These findings suggest that, despite innovations in storytelling, different forms of otherness are perpetuated in the contemporary culture industry.

Literature Review

PPZ merges Austen's Regency-era romance with the zombie apocalypse. Some early critics dismissed this blend as a "shameless attempt to boost sales" (Looser 2013, 185). Others, however, praised its "playful yet coherent narratives" for challenging genre boundaries (Ryan 2014, 13). As

time passed, the playful integration appealed to a wide readership, and its marketability enabled it to expand rapidly across media. As a result, it engages more academic discussions.

Investigating how Austen's established popularity created fertile ground for such success, Camilla Nelson (2013) argues that the cultural status secured through early twentieth-century cinema and television adaptations made this phenomenon possible. According to her, Austen's fandom increases the marketability of innovations like PPZ, turning them into "highly saleable commodities" (Nelson 2013, 341). Referring to early negative reactions, she contends that zombies in PPZ initially appear to function as a "populist rebellion against the oppressive cultural authority of Jane Austen's work," yet closer examination reveals a reinforcement of Austen's canonical standards (Nelson 2013, 339). She further argues that Grahame-Smith's superficial use of Eastern aesthetics, such as Elizabeth's "meditation to Buddha," reproduces orientalist stereotypes, echoing the colonial undertones often associated with Austen's work (Nelson 2013, 347).

Marie Mulvey-Roberts (2014) also acknowledges PPZ's thematic proximity to Austen, but from a different perspective. Referring to the Gothic, a prominent fictional mode during Austen's era, she argues that PPZ "actualizes the horrors lurking in the margins of Austen's novels," a fact that complicates the classification of mashup as a genre (Mulvey-Roberts 2014, 20). As a pioneering example, PPZ resists being defined as parody because the zombie-inflected Gothic elements "embedded in the atmosphere of the novel" disrupt its satirical functioning, a defining feature of parody (Mulvey-Roberts 2014, 25). Similarly, it does not fit conventional definitions of adaptation, since "over 80 percent of the original novel is untouched," and Austen is credited as coauthor. It also fails to align with the definition of appropriation, as Mulvey-Roberts clarifies. Appropriation typically "involves critique or subversion" of a narrative, while PPZ glorifies the

status of Austen's original in canon and desires to gain a similar position within fandom. In other words, despite its humorous style, PPZ elevates the cultural significance of its original text; thus, it cannot be considered appropriation. Ultimately, PPZ's playful homage to Austen and its satirical environment stop Mulvey-Roberts from arriving at a definitive classification of the mashup genre.

Like her, Maria Clara Pivato Biajoli (2016) claims that the zombie theme is merely embedded in Austen's work. Considering the novel and film as parts of a storyworld, she explains that although PPZ appears as "a new approach to the Austenmania," it is more faithful to Austen's "text and style," particularly its ironic tone regarding standards on women's lives (Biajoli 2016, 4). Ki (2022) also argues that the concept of "zombies" is central to the socio-economic anxieties of *Pride and Prejudice*. For Ki, "Austen's focus on poverty" aligns with the dynamics in PPZ, where "untrained lower-class individuals become zombies, while the gentry class turns into militant defenders of social order" (Ki 2022, 7). Following Austen's satirical fashion, she believes, PPZ challenges unresolved class tensions and offers mutual understanding as a solution.

Xinyu Cai (2017) also situates PPZ in relation to its Austenian source, but focuses on the female protagonist. The depiction of Elizabeth as a female warrior reflects a negotiation between qualities traditionally coded as masculine, "aggressiveness and impulsiveness," and those associated with femininity, "patience and gentleness," a reminder of Austen's portrayal of Elizabeth (Cai 2017, 90). Her insistence on marrying for love marks Austen's Elizabeth as a protagonist who challenges patriarchal expectations. By reimaging her as a warrior and accordingly translating social defiance into physical action, PPZ makes this resistance more tangible (Cai 2017, 99). This reinterpretation, as noticed by Michelle L. Rushefsky (2024), recalls long-standing critiques of Austen for normalizing colonial and racial hierarchies in the background

of her stories. Regarding zombies as symbols of the laborers, Elizabeth's empowerment does not stand outside structures of inequality. As a feminist slayer whose authority depends on her eradication of the undead, she perpetuates their otherness.

Since its emergence, PPZ has provided academia with a multifaceted venue for various discussions. Some studies focus on its commercial success and the role of fandoms in it, while others offer social commentary, notably on gender. Although comparisons to Austen's storyworld, whether explicit or implied, are evident throughout these conversations, little attention has been paid to Austen's novel as a prototypical navigator for constructing its narrative logic. Similarly, the impact of zombie-based narrative, as a second guiding prototype, has not been investigated. This study fills both gaps by examining the interaction of these two prototypes through a comparative analysis of the PPZ novel and its cinematic version. In doing so, it also highlights the importance of the media on prototypes' influence.

- **Methodology**

Prototype theory, first articulated within cognitive linguistics, challenges the classical understanding of categories as fixed entities defined by specific features. Drawing on the fuzzy boundaries between categories, this theory explains that one recognizes members of a category through their shared "overlapping clusters of features rather than identical attributes" (Lakoff 1987, 17). Therefore, human cognition perceives exemplars with more overlapping features, or "prototypes," as "more central and natural than others" (Rosch 1978, 34). For instance, in the bird category, a robin is perceived as more representative than a penguin. In other words, based on prototype theory, categories are organized by "the degree of representativeness of category members," and around their idealized examples (Rosch 1978, 36). Similarly, readers rely on

"schemata and prototypical models to recognize and interpret narrative forms" (Herman 2009, 85). As narratives are constructed based on "fuzzy boundaries," and our understanding of them is determined by "typical exemplars rather than clear boundaries consisting of atomic features" (Thon 2016, 18). In this way, prototypes establish our expectations regarding character types, plot structures, and thematic inclinations within narratives. It means that our perceptions of them are "embedded in cultural belief systems" (Lakoff 1987, 69). As a result, studying prototypes and their impact on narratives can explain how they reproduce ideological and cultural patterns.

Viewing "narrativity (or 'storiness') as a scalar property," Marie-Laure Ryan is one of the narratologists who applies prototype theory to literary studies (2006, 7). Storyworlds, according to Ryan, are "mental constructs shared by the author and audience, where narrative gaps are actively bridged by the imagination of the recipient" (Ryan 2014, 94). Recipients understand them by integrating "fictional information with their understanding of the actual world," and when a storyworld's rules do not match the actual world, they "fill in gaps" by extrapolating details from "adjacent possible worlds" (Ryan 2014, 95). Throughout this process, the audience can not only understand but also enjoy the complexity of mashup storyworlds such as PPZ. As Ryan states, the apocalyptic atmosphere of this Regency-era storyworld creates a "hybridized narrative that enriches the audience's interpretive experience" (Ryan 2014, 95). It invites the audience to recall information from two distinct storyworlds, each from a different genre.

Genres, due to their resistance to rigid definition, are best understood through their "hard core composed of prototypical members" (Fishelov 1991, 123). The hard cores of PPZ are Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and the zombie apocalyptic world, each of which is crowded with various forms of narratives and academic discussions. To examine how the PPZ novel and its movie react to these two distinct hard cores, this study relies on Marie-Laure Ryan's narrativity model.

Concerning the fuzzy boundaries between narratives, Ryan proposes a model for their examination that moves beyond fixed features and rigid standards. Her framework identifies eight "salient characteristics," organized under three dimensions (Thon, 2016, 29), as such:

Spatial dimension

A narrative must construct a world populated by individuated existents.

Temporal dimension

2. This world must be situated in time and undergo significant transformations.

3. These transformations must be caused by non-habitual physical events.

Mental dimension

4. Some participants in the events must be intelligent agents who possess mental lives and respond emotionally to states of the world.

5. Some events must consist of purposeful actions undertaken by these agents, motivated by identifiable goals and plans.

Formal and pragmatic dimensions

6. The sequence of events must form a unified causal chain and lead toward closure.

7. At least some of the events must be asserted as factual within the storyworld.

8. The narrative must communicate something meaningful to its recipient (Ryan, 2006, 7).

As a mashup, PPZ invites an exploration of its narrativity through comparison with its prototypes. Drawing on Ryan's model, this study undertakes such a comparison to identify their prototypical intentions. The first section examines the narrativity dimensions of the PPZ novel and its film adaptation in relation to their two prototypes, Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and zombie apocalyptic narratives. It begins with spatial and temporal dimensions, proceeds to mental dimensions, and concludes with formal and pragmatic dimensions, thereby providing a clear and systematic comparison. The second section of the study allocates to the results derived from this analysis.

- **Comparing the PPZ Novel and Movie Regarding Prototype Alignment**

PPZ sits between two prototypical cores in modern media culture: *Pride and Prejudice*, a prototype instance of Regency-era romance domestic realism focusing on gendered social negotiation, and zombie storyworlds, a prototypical element within apocalyptic storyworlds. To explore whether the PPZ novel and its movie balance these prototypes or lean toward one, this paper uses Marie-Laure Ryan's narrative model. By analyzing their spatial, temporal, mental, and formal aspects, as proposed in this model, it examines how both versions of this mashup storyworld preserve features linked to their respective prototypes.

Concerning spatial and temporal dimensions in Ryan's model, PPZ reveals a clear divergence between the novel and its cinematic version in terms of prototype affiliation. In the novel, the storyworld remains firmly anchored in the Regency-era England depicted in *Pride and Prejudice*. It preserves the exact locations of Austen's narrative, and, as in Austen's storyworld, these estates function as markers of social hierarchy. Aristocratic figures such as Darcy inhabit expansive, prestigious estates open to visitors, while aspirational figures like Mr. Collins take pride

in residing near Rosings Park, in proximity to Lady Catherine, an aristocratic authority. A similar alignment can be observed in the temporal dimension.

The narrative is situated in the same historical period and undergoes analogous transformations, the features associated with temporality in Ryan's model. Set within the same social atmosphere and governed by similar conventions, the central transformation lies in the journey Elizabeth and Darcy undertake toward mutual understanding, mirroring Austen's original. As Nelson notes, "Elizabeth and Darcy frequently engage in deadly combat with each other, as well as with the zombies, only to discover that they are equally matched" (2013, 345). Moreover, the "non-habitual physical events" that Ryan identifies as central to narrative progression remain largely unchanged in the PPZ novel. As Seth Grahame-Smith himself acknowledges, "approximately 85 percent of Austen's original text remains intact"; he inserts zombies in the plot with "little changes here and there" (Biajoli 2016, 6-7). Thus, Austen's narrative events are preserved, and the zombie's presence functions as a backgrounded thread.

Unlike the novel, the PPZ movie significantly detaches from Austenian spatial and temporal structures. While it gestures toward Regency-era England through costumes and mise-en-scène, its storyworld is no longer organized around the locations that structure Austen's narrative. Spaces such as Pemberley, Darcy's estate, are omitted, while locations such as Rosings Park and Netherfield are transformed from symbols of aristocratic authority into fortified compounds designed to withstand apocalyptic invasion. In addition, the film introduces entirely new spatial configurations with no equivalent in the novel, including an underground zombie-detection site, large-scale battlefields, the "In-Between," and, most significantly, St. Lazarus Church, where zombies demonstrate their capacity for coexistence through ritualized religious practices, and eating pigs' brains, "in communion as the blood of Christ to quench their appetite"

for humans' brains (Steer 2016 00:59:40). These additions, alongside the transformation of existing spaces, fundamentally reshape the spatial dimension of the film, distancing it from its Austenian prototype.

Aligned with these spatial transformations, the "non-habitual events" that Ryan associates with the temporal dimension are also reconfigured. Rather than structuring events around Regency concerns such as courtship and social negotiation, the film organizes its temporal progression around an apocalyptic crisis. Zombie films "generally address contemporary fears and anxieties" (Nelson 2013, 340). To meet this expectation, the PPZ film employs the parodic potential of its hybrid storyworld to declare how colonial discourse and enduring ideological divisions, constructing Western nations as civilized and human in opposition to dehumanized others, can culminate in catastrophic conflict, reminiscent of the ultimate battle imagined in bible. As Jamie Russell states, "the zombie is, above all, a symbol of our universe turned upside-down (quoted in Biajoli 2016, 5). With the inclination of the PPZ movie to its zombie's prototypical pillar, this theme is foregrounded and is clearly expressed in the film's central non-habitual event.

The sequence, in which Wickham appears as the spokesman of the undead proposing a "coexistence between humans and zombies" (Steer 2016 00:59:40), and ends with Darcy's violent interruption, functions as the primary non-habitual physical event in the PPZ movie. As Ryan suggests, such events "propel the narrative forward" (2006, 7). With no equivalent in the novel, this scene operates as a narrative climax, marking a transition from diplomacy to inevitable warfare, and its influence on Elizabeth drives the central transformation of the film. Although the movie's central transformation still involves Elizabeth coming to trust Mr. Darcy and turning away from Mr. Wickham, echoing *Pride and Prejudice*, it is no longer grounded in moral reinterpretation. Instead, it emerges from the roles these characters occupy within an apocalyptic

conflict. Wickham is reconfigured from an Austenian figure of personal deception into a representative of the undead, while Darcy's identity becomes inseparable from his role as a military commander. This shift displays not only the film's spatial–temporal realignment with the zombie-apocalyptic prototype but also the corresponding transformation of characterization and the mental dimension to highlight this alignment.

Regarding the mental dimension, as defined by Ryan, the PPZ novel and film likewise demonstrate a clear shift in their tendency towards their fundamental prototypes. In the novel, this dimension closely follows that of *Pride and Prejudice*, preserving Elizabeth Bennet's subjectivity as the central organizing principle. Nineteenth-century literature often "worked in tandem to trivialize the female experience," classifying women as either "monsters (transgressive) or saints (obedient)" (Rushefsky 2024, 4). Within this context, Austen's Elizabeth seeks authenticity while remaining aware of the social risks of transgression. As Biajoli states, Austen employed romance to disguise "more critical levels of meaning regarding society," and biased standards on women (2016, 4). Retaining this focus, the PPZ novel further complicates Elizabeth's subjectivity by adding martial competence to her characterization. As she navigates her role as both warrior and woman, she experiences a dual anxiety: striving for recognition in a wartime context while fearing the social consequences of her deviation from gender norms in a Regency-era storyworld. This tension intensifies the feminist complexity of her characterization and reinforces the novel's alignment with Austenian narrative priorities.

By contrast, the PPZ film aligns the mental dimension with the conventions of apocalyptic cinema. Rather than deepening Elizabeth's subjectivity, the film introduces her as a secondary figure. Nearly ten minutes into the narrative, following an extended introduction of Darcy, Elizabeth appears alongside her sisters within a genteel domestic setting. Accompanied by

lighthearted music, the scene cuts into the sequence of preparations for a ball, where the sisters conceal weapons beneath their gowns. Through the interplay of romanticized music and stylized visual emphasis on feminine attire, Elizabeth is presented as an eroticized spectacle, aligned with the male gaze of mainstream cinema. Focusing on the beautiful, "deadly Bennet sisters," it accompanies their representation "with sexual tension" (Biajoli 2016, 7). Moreover, women in apocalyptic narratives are often positioned in "reproductive or emotional roles that stabilize male heroism rather than drive survival narratives themselves" (Vint 2007, 103). In accordance with this tendency, the PPZ film shifts focalization toward Darcy as the central heroic agent. While the novel grants sustained access to Elizabeth's interiority, the film privileges externalized action and spectacle in which Colonel Darcy emerges as the primary hero, and Elizabeth as his hypersexualized counterpart. Consequently, the psychological depth of Elizabeth's subjectivity is diminished, and the nuanced feminist implications present in the novel are significantly reduced.

In terms of Ryan's formal and pragmatic dimensions, PPZ similarly demonstrates a decisive divergence between its novelistic and cinematic forms. In the novel, the sequence of events adheres closely to Austen's causal structure, culminating in a coherent and socially resolved closure. Although the inclusion of zombies introduces elements of comic dissonance, it does not disrupt the underlying narrative logic. In contrast, the film substantially alters this structure. The addition of a two-sequence prelude, an extended war sequence, and a post-closure zombie attack reshapes the narrative arc. While the film initially gestures toward Austenian closure through the marriage of Elizabeth and Darcy, this resolution is immediately destabilized. "Zombie narratives rarely feature happy endings… they are one of the few mainstream genres that regularly adhere to the convention of the nihilistic ending" (Nelson 2013, 342). In line with this convention, the film

replaces Austen's stable closure with an open-ended structure driven by ongoing threat. Embedded within the closing credits, a sequence shows that the marriage gets interrupted by a zombie attack.

As this analysis demonstrates, the PPZ novel aligns primarily with the Austenian prototype, while the film gravitates toward the zombie-apocalyptic model. In following their dominant prototypes, each PPZ narrates its story in line with its preferences, but it simultaneously mirrors the ideological tendencies of its preferred prototype's traditions. While the PPZ novel foregrounds gendered otherness to follow Austen's model, it normalizes zombie otherness in its background. This narrative choice is a reproduction of what Austen's works are usually criticized for. Edward Said, Austen's postcolonial critic, charges her with "foregrounding domestic and gendered conflicts while leaving colonial others unspoken" (Said 2014, 84), while Raymond Williams, one of her earliest critics, criticizes her works for naturalizing "the stability of the gentry while effacing the laboring poor" (R. Williams 1970, 115). In sharp contrast to its novel, the PPZ movie foregrounds zombie otherness as a dominant theme, inclining towards the opposing prototypical pillar. Parodically, it depicts zombies as metaphors of colonized people to exploit the zombie genre's capacity for questioning the imperialist ideologies that have constructed and sustained the divisions between the West and the rest since the eighteenth century. However, this shift comes at the cost of Elizabeth Bennet's struggle for equality. Due to "the anxiety of a possible hyper-masculine world," zombie films usually define their female characters by "their relationship to the men in their lives" (Langsev 2024, 2). Following this tradition, the movie's Elizabeth is an idealized feminine figure who serves as emotional support for the hero, Colonel Dary.

- **The Logic behind PPZ's Disparities Regarding Their Prototypical Tendency**

As discussed, the PPZ novel and its cinematic version treat their prototypes differently: the novel favors Austen's storyworld, while the film tends to convey the atmosphere of its zombie

prototypical core and simultaneously perpetuates the otherness for which such narratives are traditionally criticized. To explain the logic behind these differing inclinations, this part of the paper investigates the historical trajectory each prototype has undergone to reach its current position in popular culture, where each possesses a dense central core around which a large fandom is constructed. This approach continues the study's reliance on prototype theory, which follows a "genealogical" line of genre development by examining the impact of founding figures on subsequent narratives (Fishelov 1991, 123).

The entry of zombies into popular culture and the emergence of their fandom began in the 1930s. However, the zombie figure itself is "part of the history of colonialism" (Lauro 2015, 7). Originating from "the religious practices of vodun (often referred to as voodoo)," it forms an integral part of the belief system of the colonized people of Saint-Domingue (modern-day Haiti) (Langsev 2024, 1). Interpreting zombification as "a moral or social punishment," these communities mobilized against French colonial rule, culminating in the first successful revolution against it (Hoermann 2017, 162). During the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), the fear of transformation into zombies compelled collaborators with colonizers to confess their betrayals, while others underwent "purification rituals" to obtain forgiveness (Hoermann 2017, 163). While Vodou practitioners employed ritual practices as "healing mechanisms and as forms of resistance against colonial domination," imperialist discourse framed them as irrational and superstitious in travel narratives and ethnographic accounts of Haiti (Krautkrämer 2023, 466). Subsequently, zombies appeared in Western literature to describe individuals "devoid of free will, enslaved through supernatural means" (Dendle 2007, 45). William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* (1929), which depicted the first fictional zombies, reduced Haitian Vodou practices to "exotic superstitions" to articulate "colonial anxieties of self and other in its depiction of zombies"

(Krautkrämer 2023, 470). Such an interpretation paved the way for early zombie cinema, but changed dramatically soon after (T. Williams 2003, 12).

Influenced by Seabrook's image, the 1930s movies introduced zombies to mass audiences. However, their fandom was consolidated with George A. Romero's trilogy. In 1968, Romero, widely regarded as the father of modern zombie cinema, directed *Night of the Living Dead*, the first film in his influential trilogy, establishing the foundational prototype for modern zombie narratives. Departing decisively from earlier representations rooted in Vodou and colonial discourse, the film redefined the zombie as a "flesh-eating ghoul driven by primal instincts" (Boon 2011, 5), transforming it into a vehicle for social critique. He later consolidated this metaphorical usage in *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) and *Day of the Dead* (1985), forming a trilogy that came to define the genre's thematic and aesthetic parameters. While Romero's innovative use of "claustrophobic settings, practical effects, and ensemble-driven narratives" elevated the visual and narrative language of zombie cinema (T. Williams 2003, 12), his "methodical editing style, marked by sharp contrasts between frenetic action and unsettling stillness," intensified the chaotic atmosphere of his films (Christie and Lauro 2011, 75). More than any formal innovation, however, his enduring legacy lies in establishing a tradition of metaphorical zombie usage in response to social and political conditions.

Following Romero's model, many zombie films have depicted anxieties surrounding nuclear annihilation, civil unrest, institutional collapse, and the fragility of social order after World War II, marking this period as the Golden Age of zombie cinema. Therefore, as the Cold War drew to a close and existential fears receded, the cultural conditions sustaining this trend shifted. Consequently, zombies, "long regarded as the great unwashed of horror cinema," fell out of favor with mainstream audiences by the end of the century (Russo 1985, 120). This decline allowed

zombies to circulate through more marginal cultural forms. With the advent of new technologies in the late twentieth century, they expanded their fandom through diverse media, including Michael Jackson's 1983 music video *Thriller* and the 1990s Capcom video game *Resident Evil*.

Zombies' absence from the big screen was brief, as "the turn of the new millennium" ushered in a renewed "renaissance of zombies" (Olney 2017, 7). Post-9/11 concerns surrounding terrorism, national security, and social fragility prompted zombies' return to cinema and television. Zombie narratives of this period expanded the prototype's boundaries by questioning the distinction between human and monster and confronting audiences with ethical dilemmas concerning human rights under extreme conditions. While some narratives articulate anxieties related to "digital surveillance, artificial intelligence, and the loss of privacy" (Christie and Lauro 2011, 78), others present zombies as symbols of globalization and pandemic fear (Christie and Lauro 2011, 59). This wide range of representations suggests a growing consensus: zombies resonate with contemporary audiences because they embody both modern anxieties and desires. This adaptability enables them to traverse genres and enter literary mashups such as *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009); however, their core remains most strongly rooted in cinema.

Parallel to the rise of zombie fandom in media culture, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* has undergone a significant historical trajectory. Emerging in the late eighteenth century, a period that coincides with the early Western encounters with the zombie figure, the novel has expanded across multiple media forms. Frequently described as "Britain's greatest love story" (Todd, "Preface" 2013, iv), it is considered the work that launched Austen's literary career and the text for which she was most highly esteemed by her contemporaries (Mandel 2013, 53). Published anonymously as "by a Lady, the Author of *Sense and Sensibility*," it quickly achieved success. Early reviews praised its "complexity of characterization" (Markley 2013, 96), deemed it "superior

to all the publications of the same kind" (qtd. in Todd, "Criticism" 2013, 138), and noted its sustained public appeal in contrast to more ephemeral fiction of the time (qtd. in Erickson 1996, 125).

Since its publication, the novel has been regarded as a successful exemplar of "the genre of popular feminine romance" and "fashionable Regency fiction" (Todd, "Preface" 2013, xiv), thereby assuming a prototypical role. Its continued republication, particularly through Richard Bentley's *Standard Novels* series (1833), gave it a "new lease of life" (Southam 1968, 22). Its accessibility and alignment with prevailing social sensibilities made it suitable for family reading throughout the nineteenth century, embedding it deeply in cultural memory and anticipating its "phenomenal success in the twentieth century" (Mandel 2013, 55).

In the twentieth century, several developments consolidated the novel's fandom. During the World Wars, it functioned as a form of escapist and "therapeutic" reading (Todd, "Criticism" 2013, 147). Radio adaptations, including BBC broadcasts, extended the reach in the 1930s and 1940s. After World War II, its inclusion in educational curricula and the global spread of English increased its readership and led to a "substantial rise" in translations (Dow 2013, 127). Taught widely in both original and translated forms, it became "an integral component of English literary and cultural heritage" (Dow 2013, 135). Film and television adaptations further expanded its audience, including the 1940 film, BBC serials (1980, 1995), and Joe Wright's 2005 adaptation.

In the digital age, *Pride and Prejudice* has continued to evolve through new media. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012), a YouTube adaptation, exemplifies interactive storytelling by engaging directly with audiences. This adaptability has fostered the production of numerous fan works, including novels, interactive fiction, and games. The text has also crossed genre boundaries, inspiring reinterpretations in detective fiction, science fiction, and contemporary settings, with

PPZ among the most prominent examples. Despite all these transformations, *Pride and Prejudice* remains primarily identified as a novel by Jane Austen. On Amazon.com, more than 564 books are "available under the category of Austen sequel" (Biajoli 2016, 2). This number of literal adaptations means that while its adaptability has enabled cross-genre expansion, its core medium remains the novel.

As discussed, both of PPZ's prototypical foundations are medium-bound. The core of zombie narratives has been constructed through their most influential cinematic representations, while *Pride and Prejudice* originates in the literary domain of the novel. This distinction helps explain the divergence between the prototypical inclinations of the PPZ novel and its film adaptation. According to prototype theory, narratives are understood through their resemblance to their most salient exemplars. As a fan narrative situated at the intersection of two influential and enduring fandoms, PPZ is read as engaging with these foundational storyworlds. With this logic, each creator aligns the text with the dominant prototype of its medium: the novel gravitates toward Austen's literary model, while the film draws more heavily on the conventions of zombie cinema.

- **Conclusion**

Considering that PPZ's reimagination of *Pride and Prejudice* within a zombie storyworld does not occur in isolation, this paper examines its relationship to Austen's work and apocalyptic narratives as its guiding prototypes. To achieve this, it draws on prototype theory, which explains how individuals classify concepts based on their best exemplars. This theory is particularly applicable to adaptation studies because, in adaptations, particularly parodic ones, the source narrative functions as the exemplar around which a cognitive and cultural environment is formed, with authors and audiences operating as recipients. Tracing a genealogical line between narratives,

prototype theory scrutinizes the relationship between an adaptation and its origin to illustrate how adapted works interpret their sources before reimagination. This dynamic is especially evident in PPZ, because it is shaped by two prototypes drawn from entirely distinct genres. Moreover, as genres function as sedimented cognitive categories, prototype theory also clarifies how a genre's "founding figures," the writers and texts that have shaped it, play a significant role in interpreting new narratives (Fishelov 1991, 123). Accordingly, this framework illuminates the internal tensions within PPZ as an integrated reinterpretation viewed from different perspectives.

Focusing on PPZ as a literary mashup structured around two culturally sedimented prototypes, this study compares the 2009 novel and the 2016 film adaptation to examine how each engages with its source storyworlds. Drawing on the narrative dimensions proposed by Marie-Laure Ryan, the analysis concludes that the PPZ novel adheres more closely to Austenian conventions, whereas the film aligns with zombie-based apocalypse. In accordance with their respective prototypical proximities, both adaptations also reproduce the ideological limitations historically associated with their dominant models. In the novel, the prominence of the Austenian paradigm foregrounds gendered otherness while comparatively normalizing zombie otherness. In contrast, the film reverses this hierarchy by centering undead alterity as its primary concern and reshaping the female protagonist to conform to the conventions of apocalyptic cinema, where she functions primarily as the hero's beloved within a spectacle-driven narrative.

To account for these divergent inclinations, the second part of the study offers brief historical overviews of the zombie figure and *Pride and Prejudice*, alongside an examination of the formation of their respective fandoms. This exploration demonstrates that the core of each fandom is medium-bound. Despite its expansion across multiple media, Austen's storyworld is

perceived as a novel, whereas zombies are fundamentally associated with apocalyptic cinema. Consequently, each version of PPZ gravitates toward the most dominant prototype within its medium. These findings support Marie-Laure Ryan's claim that, in transferring content across media, narratives "reorganize their story elements to perpetuate specific forms of otherness depending on the medium" (Ryan 2006, 143). The study thus contributes to media studies by demonstrating that media are not neutral vehicles of storytelling; rather, they shape narrative representation through the influence of entrenched prototypical models.

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