

The Precarious Existence of Jane Austen's Charlotte Lucas Across Time and Text

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Abstract: Rewritings of Jane Austen's works are produced following particular literary conventions, philosophies, creative imaginations, and interpretations, which present new readers with fresh stories featuring distinct images. The journey of her works across centuries and continents, as well as their presence in such disparate cultures and historical periods, may well attest to the similarities as well as the important differences among various peoples across the world, despite the social, cultural, and ideological differences between countries. In the American author Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009), a mash-up of nineteenth-century author Jane Austen's still-popular novel, Charlotte Lucas is indisputably in a difficult situation not only because of the socio-economic realities of her precarious existence in the novel but also because of the zombie bite she receives. Although Charlotte's decision to marry Mr. Collins is justified, the mash-up version of the novel still turns her into a zombie as if indicating a punishment for her marriage to Mr. Collins. However, in his movie adaptation, *Pride and Prejudice + Zombies* (2016), the American director Burr Steers lets Charlotte survive and remain contentedly married to Mr. Collins although she is still presented as a vulnerable figure without combat skills who needs the protection of both her husband and Lady Catherine de Bourgh. By following Linda Hutcheon's adaptation theory, particularly the process of "appropriation and salvaging" (2006), this paper aims to explore the representation of Charlotte Lucas in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and its film adaptation, *Pride and Prejudice + Zombies*, thereby contributing to the field of adaptation studies with a gender focus.

Keywords: Appropriation, Charlotte Lucas, Mash-up novel, Salvaging, Zombie Apocalypse

1. Introduction

Jane Austen's novels are arguably the most frequently adapted works in British literary history. Consequently, her reputation is supported as much by her writings as it is by the massive media industry, embracing stage and screen (Hayes, 2002). Some critics find that texts suffer greatly throughout the transition process since the quality of the adaptations falls short of the originals (Stam, 2005). However, in a Darwinian sense, adaptability enables organisms to withstand environmental changes since adaptations "help their source[s] ... 'survive'... changing environments and changing tastes..." as Robert Stam put it (2005, p. 3). In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon suggests that adaptation is "how stories evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places" (2006, p. 176). According to Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, artists reinvent and innovate by repurposing elements of preexisting works to create new and creative works: reworking, recontextualizing, or otherwise changing the original material to produce something new is the process of "appropriation and salvaging" (2006, p.8). In this vein, she views slash fiction, fanzines, prequels, and sequels as belonging to this end of the evolution: the television series and movie *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1992–1997), for instance, is referred to by Hutcheon as a hybrid case of an adaptation and a spin-off because, although the show "is ostensibly a sequel to the 1992 film [...] its first season, in fact, adapts parts of the film, adding new characters but keeping the same story elements" (2006, p. 171). Julia Sanders also notes that "[...] adaptation and appropriation have on the whole tended to operate within the parameters of the established canon, serving at times to reinforce that canon by ensuring a continued interest in the original or source text, albeit under revised circumstances, but at the same time ensuring a dynamic revival or 'repair' of the same" (2016, p.124).

While adaptations are now considered a normal practice, 'mash-up' novels as adaptations and appropriations are a real cultural phenomenon of the last decade. Mash-up novels mix the original novel with a parallel version in a different genre; in other words, they are fictional works that weave together a pre-existing literary text, frequently a classic, with a different genre, most typically horror or science fiction (Riter, 2017). The phrase 'mash-up' first appeared in the music business to describe tracks that blended two or more pre-recorded songs. Seth Grahame-Smith's novel *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009) often regarded as the publication that popularized the genre, was followed by Steve Hockensmith's additions to the series: the prequel *Dawn of the Dreadfuls* (2010) about the Bennet sisters, and the sequel *Dreadfully Ever After* (2011), about the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Darcy. Some critics now claim that the first mash-up novel by Seth Grahame-Smith "unleashed a whole new genre" (Sutton, 2010, p. 6). In these novels, the process of appropriation and salvaging Austen's themes and characters shows a light-hearted, imaginative interaction with literary tradition within the framework of the zombie subgenre, which nevertheless shows serious feminist intent. The Bennet sisters, for

instance, as warriors/zombie killers “not only break the bounds of traditional femininity, but actually reverse gender roles by protecting men from attack” (Mulvey-Roberts, 2014, p. 28). Accordingly, this alteration invites the reader to challenge societal expectations placed on women, encouraging them to define their identities beyond the restrictive norms.

In Seth Grahame-Smith’s novel, Charlotte Lucas - in contrast to the Bennet sisters - is presented as a young woman lacking the necessary combat skills to survive in this zombie-infested environment: when she receives a fatal zombie bite, she gradually turns into a zombie and perishes. Her tragic fate reinforces the idea of women being at a disadvantage without the necessary training and education, which can be related to Mary Wollstonecraft’s ideas on education, particularly as expressed in her work “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman” (1792). Wollstonecraft critiqued societal expectations that limited women to domestic roles and denied them access to physical and intellectual pursuits. Charlotte’s fate in this context reflects the potential consequences of such constraints, where women without necessary skills face a literal life-and-death disadvantage. On the other hand, in his adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice + Zombies* (2016), American director Burr Steers allows Charlotte to live and continue to be happily married to Mr. Collins, even though she is still portrayed as a helpless victim who requires the protection of Lady Catherine de Bourgh and her husband. This portrayal of Charlotte can be interpreted as a true representation not only of women at that time constrained wretchedly under the “Cult of True Womanhood”, (a phrase coined by Barbara Welter (1992), referring to the four ideal “womanly” virtues most cherished in the Regency era – purity, piety, submissiveness, and domesticity) but also the situation of women in contemporary times. By following Linda Hutcheon’s adaptation theory, particularly the process of appropriation and salvaging, this paper aims to explore the representation of *Pride and Prejudice*’s Charlotte Lucas in each text, the mash-up novel, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, and its 2016 film adaptation, thereby contributing to the field of adaptation studies with a gender focus.

2. Zombification of Charlotte Lucas in Grahame-Smith’s Mash-up

Although Austen’s romance *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) follows the love stories of several characters centered around Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth’s intimate friend Charlotte Lucas and her choice of spouses have generated a great deal of discussion and analysis throughout literary history. While she has received recognition from some critics for her practicality and ability to make the most out of challenging circumstances, she has drawn criticism from others for settling for a marriage devoid of love and for lacking romantic ideals. As is known to all Austen fans, Charlotte is a side character depicted as a “sensible, intelligent young woman, about twenty-seven” (Austen, 2006, p.19) who is conscious of the limited possibilities she has in front of her. When Elizabeth declines Mr. Collins’ proposal, Charlotte views him as her best option for getting married and having a place of her own, disregarding the disadvantages of such a union. Charlotte unambiguously announces to Elizabeth that she has good grounds for being married to Mr. Collins despite his shortcomings as a life partner: “I am not a romantic, you know; I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins’s character, connection, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage state” (Austen, 2006, p. 140). Charlotte recognizes that Mr. Collins represents her best opportunity to own a home and raise a family, despite his numerous flaws as a life partner, thereby she expresses a pragmatic view of marriage rather than a romantic one.

Seth Grahame-Smith’s 2009 *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, as the title suggests, reimagines Jane Austen’s Regency romance as a zombie-slaying tale of love, class conflict, and martial arts set in a zombie-infested Great Britain. People carry on with their lives as usual, simply adjusting to this apocalyptic world of zombies. Now violence and zombies are a part of their everyday reality; their routines remain unchanged, with social norms, class distinctions, and the need for husband-hunting. There has been a major shift in the worldview of the Regency period as portrayed in her novel, as evidenced by the zombie theme—which emphasizes the need for martial arts training for self-defense—inserted into the middle of a list of customs normally associated with women in her day. In the mash-up novel, Mr. Darcy tries to clarify what skills a young lady needs to have to be called truly accomplished when he says:

[...] a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages; she must be well trained in the fighting styles of Kyoto masters and the modern tactics and weaponry of Europe. [...] All this she must possess, and to all this, she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading (Grahame-Smith, 2009, p. 34).

Unquestionably, well-mannered women should be skilled seamstresses, embroiderers, musicians, and readers but they also need to be competent warriors. Charlotte Lucas, therefore, is in a precarious situation not only

because of the socio-economic realities of her existence in the novel but also because she lacks the necessary martial arts training to defend herself against any zombie attack, which often happens in this zombie-apocalyptic universe. According to this depiction, women are expected to be strong enough to fight against zombies and thus survive independently of men, inverting the stereotypical gender structures of the nineteenth century that created the image of women as weak, powerless, and in need of defense (Gilbert and Gubar, 2000).

In such precarious circumstances, Charlotte is twice as vulnerable and thus, desperately sets her sights on Mr. Collins as a suitable candidate to establish her own home and, in other words, to survive under the protection of her husband and his patron Lady Catherine de Bourgh. The fact that "Charlotte seemed to flatter Mr. Collins with an almost unnatural attentiveness," (Grahame-Smith, 2009, p. 94) while the Bennets are dining with the Lucases, is indeed an indication of her scheme to turn all his affections towards herself, by engaging him in every chance she gets. After Charlotte receives the proposal from Mr. Collins, as she has hoped, she expresses her practical and unromantic expectations from marriage, but at the same time, she confesses to Elizabeth that she has been "*stricken by the plague*" (Grahame-Smith, 2009, p.103, original emphasis). As Charlotte relates, she is caught alone and unarmed during her Wednesday walk to Longbourn when she encounters an upturned carriage under which a zombie grasps Charlotte's leg and sinks its teeth into it. As they both understand, the zombie bite she receives will soon seal her doom; yet, she wishes to spend her "final months [as] happy ones" (Grahame-Smith, 2009, p.103) as a married woman. Charlotte's preference for dying married rather than being remembered as a single girl, even on her deathbed, foregrounds the patriarchal expectations the Regency had of women: to pass their entire lives being dependent on a man, first as daughter and later as wife (Pool, 1993). Charlotte is salvaged from Austen's novel but undergoes a significant transformation in the mashup leading to her zombification and eventual demise.

In Grahame-Smith's mash-up, the central theme of the zombie and women who must marry to survive are analogous due to their shared status as the living dead. Modern Euro-American ideas about zombies and the living dead, popularized by the grotesque films of George A. Romero, have their roots in the religious and spiritual systems of various West African communities, as well as in African-American and Caribbean folk traditions. The idea that death is not an end but rather a change in form is one of the most basic principles of many African belief systems. In his work, John S. Mbiti explains that a person transitions gradually from the Sasa (life) period into the Zamani (death) period upon death. This individual will exist in a state Mbiti refers to as "the living-dead" for an extended period (1969, p. 25). As a literary representation of Mbiti's explanation, caught between a living and dead existence, Charlotte remains in between two states for a short period. Even though they are no longer physically alive, the living dead are still human beings because they can reunite with their loved ones and serve as a conduit for communication between the world of the living and the world of spirits and gods, since they speak both human and spirit languages (Mbiti, 1969, p. 83). However, Charlotte's situation precludes any such communication. According to Amanda V. Riter, Grahame-Smith further degrades Charlotte by "altering Charlotte's narrative to punish her for the decision to marry Mr. Collins with a level of grotesqueness that Collins could never dream of achieving" (2017, p. 89). Hence, Charlotte's zombification seems to be a penalty for her marriage to Mr. Collins, even though her choice to wed him might be reasonable in patriarchal societies, in which women are raised to operate more as domestic servants rather than as companions for men.

The parodic portrayal of Charlotte on the day of her wedding indicates that Charlotte is not regarded as an accomplished young woman in Regency England society, neither when she is alive nor when she is a zombie, due to her impoverished circumstances. In this scene, despite her best efforts to conceal them from anyone, Charlotte is already exhibiting the first indications of transformation. Elizabeth immediately notices that "Her skin had taken on a slight pallor, and her speech seemed a trifle laboured" (Grahame-Smith, 2009, p.114). Grahame-Smith does not hesitate to give details about some of the physical changes, such as the decomposition Charlotte experiences while turning into a zombie. To illustrate, in the dinner scene with Elizabeth, Charlotte is described as hovering "over her plate, using a spoon to shovel goose meat and gravy in the general direction of her mouth, with limited success" (Grahame-Smith, 2009, p. 125). Such details of Charlotte's transformation into one of the undead serve to create humor. In the same dinner scene, "one of the sores beneath her eye burst, sending a trickle of bloody pus down her cheek and into her mouth. Apparently, she found the added flavor agreeable, for it only increased the frequency of her spoonfuls" (Grahame-Smith, 2009, p. 125). The signs of her zombification are also evident when she is "stuffing handfuls of crisp autumn leaves in her mouth" (Grahame-Smith, 2009, p. 126) in the garden, and later at Lady Catherine's tea party, she is "drooling a third cup of tea onto her lap" (Grahame-Smith, 2009, p. 132). After Charlotte's zombification process begins, her speech deteriorates just as her body decays. Finally, the reader learns about Charlotte's tragic end through Mr. Collins'

letter – a narration which furthermore emphasizes, with its patriarchic provenance, Charlotte’s silence and marginalization as a zombie and woman in the narrative.

Mash-up novels are adaptations that heavily emphasize their relationship to their canonical source texts; one cannot avoid comparing the adaptation to the source and - because of their close relationship - the parodic elements of the mash-up novel are often highlighted. While parody is commonly associated with rewriting that seeks to ridicule its source, it can also be understood as “repetition with a critical distance which marks difference rather than similarity” (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 6). Charlotte’s gradual zombification, death, and the subsequent suicide of Collins in his last letter to Mr. Bennet is a clear example of the Hutcheonian process of appropriation and salvaging. Mr. Collins also ends his life by hanging from “a branch of Charlotte’s favorite tree” after Lady Catherine offers to carry out “the customary beheading and burning” (2009, p. 241): the novel never explains why Mr. Collins commits suicide. However, these kinds of appropriation should be seen as transformational processes that give rise to new meanings and narratives. To illustrate, it turns out that towards the end of the novel, in the scene where Lady Catherine confronts Elizabeth with rumors about Elizabeth’s engagement to Darcy, she confesses that she has been inviting Charlotte for tea over the previous few months so that she can add a special serum to her drink, “which would slow – or even reverse – the effects of the strange plague” (2009, p.129, 291). In Austen’s novel, Lady Catherine is portrayed as an inconsiderate, class-conscious character who looks down on others, while in Grahame-Smith’s mashup novel, she appears as a former zombie warrior trying to develop a treatment for individuals exposed to zombie bites. While Grahame-Smith appropriates the themes, characters, and structure of Jane Austen’s book by repurposing and modifying them to suit the zombie apocalypse, he subverts the fate of Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Collins, killing them both.

3. Charlotte Lucas’ Survival in Steers’ Film Adaptation

In his adaptation, *Pride and Prejudice + Zombies* (2016), Burr Steers follows the formula for a zombie horror story when writing the screenplay, bringing the post-apocalyptic world of Regency England to life on screen and incorporating an extra prologue and a final zombie attack into Grahame-Smith’s mash-up novel. Unlike the mash-up novel, moreover, Steers lets Charlotte survive and remain contentedly married to Mr. Collins even though she is still portrayed as a defenseless individual in need of Lady Catherine de Bourgh’s and her husband’s protection. In this sense, Steers’ movie adaptation is also an example of Hutcheon’s process of appropriation and salvaging, which is apparent in the director’s alterations from the original narrative of Grahame-Smith’s mash-up. As is clear in these words, the director Steers states unequivocally what he intended to achieve in his adaptation: “For me, it was reinterpreting Jane Austen” (Whittaker, 2016) instead of Grahame-Smith’s zombie-apocalyptic universe. This is an obvious attempt at “an appropriation of the story that results in a radically different work” (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 100). As Sanders also asserts, “No appropriation can be achieved without altering in some way the text which inspired that adaptation” (2015, p. 209). Since Steers’ creative interpretation of the source text intensifies the issue of class conflict and gender roles, it may be considered more complex than Grahame-Smith’s mash-up as shall be discussed soon. Nevertheless, despite significant deviations from the original text, Steers’ story of Charlotte Lucas blends in perfectly with Jane Austen’s romantic and social dramas since her story continues to resonate with readers today.

Steers’ additional prologue foregrounds the importance of combat skills—particularly martial arts knowledge—for survival in this post-apocalyptic world of zombies. As opposed to the Bennet family get-together in the original text, the movie opens with a long shot of Colonel Darcy (Sam Riley) crossing the Hingham bridge on horseback while in voice-over Elizabeth Bennet (Lily James) informs the audience about the recent growing zombie threat in the neighborhood. After the zombie attack in Mrs. Featherstone’s house, Mr. Bennet (Charles Dance) narrates, also in voice-over, the saga of zombies and their attacks in England, aided by the cardboard illustrations of a tunnel book called “An Illustrated History of England: 1700-1800” (PP+Z, 2016). According to this narration, those bitten by zombies—also known as unmentionables—gradually transform into zombies themselves. So, in stark contrast to the customary sewing and knitting expected of women at that time, (Welter, 1966, p. 165), the five Misses Bennet are presented alongside the father cleaning their weapons. The motif of the Bennet girls as warriors proficient in combat is unequivocal from the outset. As Stephanie Merritt (2009) also asserts, in “the Austen adaptations, it is the women who are bold and quick-witted enough to take on the monsters, a nice reversal of the passive victim role traditionally handed to young women, in horror as in history.” Charlotte Lucas (Aisling Loftus), however, is presented in the adaptation as plain, unremarkable, and getting close to the age of 27, which in the prejudices of the time was old for a woman (Pool, 1993). In line with the patriarchal lifestyle of Austen’s Regency era, she is already a burden to her family and friends due to her lack of marriage prospects as much as her combat skills.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar contended that readers who interpreted Austen as consenting to the constraints placed upon her by her society were unable to recognize a consistent subversive element in her writing: “It is shocking how persistently Austen demonstrates her discomfort with her cultural inheritance, specifically her dissatisfaction with the tight place assigned women in patriarchy” (2000, p. 112). Gilbert and Gubar (2000) perceive the love story in Jane Austen’s novels as a calculated satire that covers up deeper, more socially critical meanings, much as Austen herself covered up her writings with blotting paper when she wrote about subjects other than her family. As Sanders also notes, “It has become abundantly clear in the discussion of adaptation and appropriation that these processes are frequently, if not inevitably political acts” (2016, p. 123). In Steers’ film adaptation, reinterpreting Austen’s text, during the first zombie attack after the prologue, Charlotte reminds the audience thus of the precarious position of all women subjugated by patriarchy: “Zombies or no zombies all woman must think of marriage, Lizzy” (PP+Z, 2016). In the same scene, while the Bennet sisters fight back with their death-dealing katanas, Charlotte has made herself scarce, no doubt in fear of being bitten. This sharp contrast between Charlotte Lucas and the Bennet girls offers a subtle critique of gender norms. While the combat skills of the Bennet sisters challenge conventional gender roles, the portrayal of Charlotte highlights the persistence of patriarchal expectations even in this post-apocalyptic vision of Regency England. This situation is reminiscent of the fact that still today some unprivileged young girls are deprived of the right to access the necessary education, thereby facing vulnerabilities that impede their survival, protection, and participation in public life (Adichie, 2014).

The scene where Charlotte informs Elizabeth about her decision to wed Mr. Collins leads to a development not in the source text: she requests Elizabeth be her chaperone overnight at Mr. Collins’ rectory before she is “presented to Lady Catherine”, (PP+Z, 2016), a noted zombie warrior. To persuade her friend, Charlotte speaks of her dread at the idea of such a meeting: “She is said to be quite imposing and the thought of facing her without you makes me deathly nervous so” (PP+Z, 2016). Charlotte’s reluctance might not simply be due to her Ladyship’s high social status, representing power and authority but also to Charlotte’s lack of possible cultural defense that combat skills might provide. As Camilla Nelson (2013) also notes, because of her poor circumstances, Charlotte is continuously disparaged by Mrs. Bennet and other side characters throughout the mashup, making her seem worthless to the outside world. The already cruel attitude of the people of Meryton seems to undermine her self-confidence, thereby leading her to conform to the patriarchal expectations of her society. Grahame-Smith portrays Charlotte as a zombie with a singular focus, devoid of reason and emotions; in contrast, Steers exhibits empathy towards this character by allowing her to survive. By doing so, Steers is appropriating and salvaging Grahame-Smith’s mashup as the source text, but at the same time, he remains loyal to *Pride and Prejudice* in which the narrow range of possibilities for women is at the heart of Austen’s criticism.

Many readers find the mashup genre appealing because of its functional ambiguity, which is the basis for some irony and humor in these works. Like Grahame-Smith, the director Steers takes up Austen’s satirical character Mr. Collins, a man destined to inherit Mr. Bennet’s estate but who, in Austen’s world, cannot help but make himself look foolish. Yet, in this zombie-infested apocalyptic environment, Charlotte Lucas does not hesitate to marry him – believing “marriage is the only way to negotiate some limited form of freedom across the repressive discourses of her time” (Nelson, 2013, p. 346). Just as it is difficult to explain Grahame-Smith’s transformation of Charlotte Lucas into a zombie and the subsequent loss of her life and Mr. Collins’ suicide, we cannot explain why Steers prefers to give Charlotte a chance to live. In Steers’ adaptation, George Wickham (Jack Huston) receives the zombie bite instead of Charlotte and becomes the zombie king seeking to rule over both the living and the dead, which represents a patriarchal yearning for control and power. This narrative shift highlights how the patriarchal desire for supremacy transcends traditional societal boundaries, even extending into fictional worlds like that of zombies. On the other hand, being “the angel in the house,” (2000, p. 23) in Gilbert and Gubar’s terminology, Charlotte remains alive and content but at the same time silent and invisible until the end of the film. This major alteration in the plotline of Grahame-Smith’s novel, while being another example of the process of appropriation and salvaging, thus foregrounds the continued existence of gendered norms and traditional power dynamics in our contemporary times.

4. Conclusion

The success of Grahame-Smith’s mash-up novel, *Pride and Prejudice, and Zombies*, augmented by Burr Steers’ 2016 movie adaptation of the same name, demonstrates Austen’s contemporary adaptability. Modern readers and audiences can both enjoy its gothic reimagining while appreciating the potential for various interpretations, especially those relating to politics, gender, class, and war. Conventional scholarly readings of Austen typically focus on several distinguishing characteristics, such as her lack of political realism, or her narrow focus on specific

social castes – specifically the rural middle classes and the landed gentry (Voigts-Virchow, 2012). However, in addition to their value in modernizing literature, adaptations address a variety of political, social, and cultural issues by rewriting literary works and demonstrating a part of cultural negotiation (Sanders, 2016). As Amanda V. Riter argues, “No matter the media, the goal of mashups is usually always to make commentary on the source through the additions” (2017, p. 88). Likewise, André Lefevere asserts that “all rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way” (2003, p. xi). This means that rewritings are produced for the ideological demands and needs of a specific time, which manifests itself in the literary system. Therefore, when applying Hutcheon’s process of appropriation and salvaging on Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, the Regency period novel transforms into a zombie mashup, which subsequently evolves into a film adaptation, which opens up opportunities for deeper explorations of gender roles, agency, and societal critiques in literary and cinematic adaptations.

By reimagining Charlotte’s fate and role within the zombie genre, both the mashup and its film adaptation underscore the pervasive notion, embracing various ages, periods, and societies, that for women, marriage is often seen as a salvation. Charlotte’s transformations in each text serve as poignant examples not only of this enduring theme but also for the continued societal pressure on women to conform to traditional gender roles, even amid extreme circumstances. Katherine Sugg argues that “contemporary apocalyptic fictions narrativize the conjunction of two central ‘crises’: late liberal capitalism and twenty-first-century masculinity” (2015, p. 793). Megan A. Armstrong also notes how the zombie genre has a significant tendency to “...stabilize gender roles in a time when “traditional” gender roles have been increasingly destabilized” (2023, p. 811). In the context of the zombie-apocalyptic universe in *Pride and Prejudice, and Zombies*, Charlotte’s vulnerability is further compounded by her lack of martial arts training. Unlike characters such as Elizabeth Bennet and her sisters, who are depicted as skilled warriors capable of defending themselves against zombie attacks, Charlotte lacks the necessary combat skills to protect herself and lead an independent existence. Although significant progress has been made toward gender equality in modern times, women continue to feel compelled to adhere to gender norms for survival, highlighting the enduring influence of patriarchal structures. Hence, Charlotte Lucas remains an important and complex character not only for any evaluation of zombie literature but also for subsequent cinematic adaptation, since her story continues to resonate with readers today.

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