

## Jane Gets Vamped

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I used to think Jane Austen and vampires didn't have much in common. I've been teaching weekend film courses on each of those topics since I came to Pacific in 1999.

Vampires won me over decades ago when I first saw Barnabas Collins in "Dark Shadows," that low-budget, oddly appealing Gothic soap opera from the '60s. Who can forget Barnabas stalking young beauties while eyeing the cue cards or dodging low-hanging microphones? As for my love of Jane Austen, shared by so many readers, Austen's in a category all her own, endlessly fresh, endlessly entertaining.

In 2009, Austen World and Vampire Planet collided. It's hard to miss the press vampires have gotten through Stephenie Meyer's "Twilight" series and HBO's "True Blood," and in April, "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies" appeared, followed by "Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters." Sure enough, vampires (having let the

less subtle monsters test the waters) soon emerged from the shadows in "Mr. Darcy, Vampire," and then "Vampire Darcy's Desire," followed by — horrors! — "Jane Bites Back," with Austen herself as a vampire.

What on earth is this all about? Why vampires in Austen, and why now? Well, vampires are endlessly adaptable, which is why they're so hard to kill. And Austen's novels are endlessly adaptable, as anybody knows who has seen "Clueless," "Bridget Jones's Diary," or "Lost in Austen." Vampire tales touch on our deepest fears and desires — our fear of death, of the dark, of the unknown and our desire for power, for excitement, for eternal life.

Austen may not tap into our deepest fears (except for folks with muslin-phobia), but she most certainly treats readers to their hearts' desire: love.

So if vampires are popular and Austen is popular, and both are renewable literary

resources, why not double your pleasure and combine them? For my money, despite the new Austen vampire titles out last fall (all of them fun in various ways), vampires and Jane Austen had already made each other's acquaintance in "Twilight." Love isn't a new theme in vampire tales, but Meyer captures the sort of door-opening-gentlemanly-meet-your-parents kind of love one finds in Austen, something that strikes a warm, familiar chord. It's love that's about family, about connections, about mutual respect, about staying together, even if one

half of the couple involved happens to be, well, dead already. The only thing better than the happily-ever-after that Austen grants her most deserving characters is Meyer's happily-forever-after. With vampires, true love truly never dies.

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*Professor Amy Elizabeth Smith teaches literature, creative writing, and professional writing at Pacific. She would love to lead a Jane Austen tour to England or a vampire tour to Romania — or both!*

*Interested? Let us know at [pacificalumni@pacific.edu](mailto:pacificalumni@pacific.edu).*

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*Illustration by Visual Arts major Christine Strain '10*

