

Book Reviews



***Android Karenina*, by Leo Tolstoy and Ben H. Winters** (review by Alan Chorney)

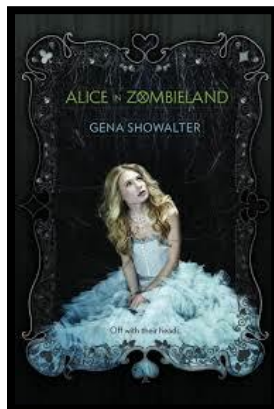
Tolstoy, L. & Winters, B.H. (Authors), Smith, E. (Illus.), & Garrett, C. (Trans.). (2010). *Android Karenina*. Philadelphia: Quirk Classics.

In three words, please: Clever, Fast-Paced, Touching

When it comes to mashups of literary classics, the tendency is to focus on horror: vampires, sea monsters, and zombies abound. Winters bucks this trend by adding, you guessed it: androids. *Android Karenina* takes nineteenth century Russian high-society and makes it high-tech. Under the Iron Laws of Robot Behaviour, robots exist to serve – but a group of revolutionary scientists, out to stop the ownership of robots, will stop at nothing until their metal companions are freed.

Android Karenina is an excellent example of how genres other than horror can be incorporated into classic literature to create appeal for a new teen audience. In this thought-provoking mash-up, Ben H. Winters adds a steampunk edge to Tolstoy's classic text. The result is nothing short of compelling.

If you like what you find in *Android Karenina*, check out other classic mashups: *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* by Seth Grahame-Smith; *Sense and Sensibility and sea monsters* by Ben Winters; or *The Meowmorphosis* by Coleridge Cook.



***Alice in Zombieland*, by Gena Showalter** (review by Sarah Nicholson)

Showalter, G. (2012). *Alice in Zombieland*. Buffalo, NY: Harlequin Teen.

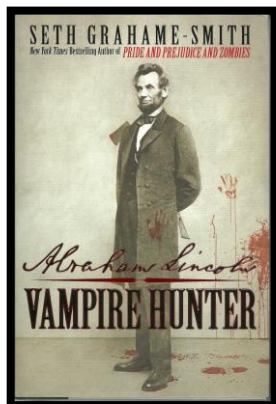
In three words, please: Funny, Spooky, Angsty

Alice Bell doesn't believe that her father can see monsters that aren't visible to anyone else, until a tragic accident leaves Alice seeing the walking dead, just like her father. What's even worse? Now they can see her, too. Alice's world gets turned upside down, forcing her not only to deal with the struggles of going to a new school, and a huge crush on the local bad boy, but also dealing with hordes of zombies and trying to avenge her family.

Fans of Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* who expect this piece to be a retelling may be disappointed that its similarities come more from the inclusion of some borrowed elements than a parallel plotline, but it's still definitely worth a look. Fast-paced and full of surprises, *Alice in Zombieland* is a great choice for fans of both zombie tales and angst-ridden chronicles of girl-meets-boy teenage relationships.

While not for everyone (especially those who don't have the patience to read the inner monologue of a teenage girl for more than 400 pages), Showalter's *Alice* brings laughs, scares, and a confident female protagonist together successfully, making a great read.

If you like *Alice in ZombieLand*, you might also want to try: *Warm Bodies*, by Isaac Marion; *Splintered*, by A.G. Howard; or *Zombie Queen of Newbury High* by Amanda Ashby.



***Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*, by Seth Grahame-Smith (review by Megan Clark)**

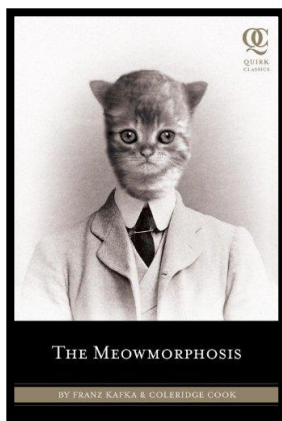
Grahame-Smith, S. (2010). *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire hunter*. New York: Grand Central Publishing.

In three words, please: Scary, Funny, Weird.

Blending history, fantasy, and horror, *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire hunter* is a classic mash-up novel (if we can say that yet...). The story is based around the discovery of the childhood diary of Abraham Lincoln, a discovery that reveals the famed American president to be a man caught not only in the struggles of his nation, but also those of the underworld. The reader is guided through carefully placed historical details surrounded by a terrifying cast of vampires whose influence on the Civil War and the life of Abraham Lincoln have until now gone unseen.

More cult culture than pop culture, Seth Grahame-Smith builds a mash-up novel that caters to neither genre he bends (historical fiction nor vampire thrillers) but instead to fans of B-movies, playful alternative takes on history, and quirky narrative fiction. Rather than hold an ironic distance from his characters, Grahame-Smith manages to work in pathos and real suspense in what is ultimately a novelty novel. Not a small feat.

Not for everyone, and bound to be part of a passing fad, *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire hunter* still makes for an entertaining and strangely thoughtful read. If you like what you find, you might also enjoy: *World War Z* by Max Brooks; any number of books by Christopher Moore, the movie *Sean of the Dead*, or the movie *Independence Day*.



***The Meowmorphosis*, by Coleridge Cook & Franz Kafka (review by Megan Clark)**

Cook, C. & F. Kafka. (2011). *The meowmorphosis*. Philadelphia: Quirk Classics.

In three words, please: Funny, Interesting, Silly

I had expected the cat jokes to run dry or at least become tiresome by halfway through this novel. While they *do* overrun the first couple chapters, by

the middle of the novel the jokes are tamed in the service of educating readers on Kafka's work while poking fun at the man and the vast amount of literary interpretation that has followed in his wake.

The Meowmorphosis is a straightforward and entertaining read. It is clear the author appreciates the work of Kafka and has spent time reading and digesting the original content of *The metamorphosis*. The book is not a shallow rendition of the basic plot outline of *The metamorphosis*, which I had feared, but instead tackles both *The metamorphosis* and *The trial* while giving the reader insight into how these works have been interpreted. Cook also throws in some interesting details about Kafka's life.

In conclusion, *The meowmorphosis* is a charming and entertaining read for lovers of Kafka and cats. While the comedy is often over the top, this is a non-intimidating introduction to Kafka, and achieves the goal of both entertaining and educating quite nicely. *The meowmorphosis* is best suited to older teen readers, as the humor and philosophy can be quite complex in places.

Those who enjoy *The meowmorphosis* might want to check out other Quirk Classic titles such as: *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* by Seth Grahame-Smith; *Sense and Sensibility and sea monsters* by Ben Winters; or *Android Karenina* by Ben Winters.



***Splintered*, by A.G. Howard** (review by Danielle Hubbard)

Howard, A.G. (2013). *Splintered*. New York: Harry N. Abrams.

In three words: Creepy, Psychedelic, and Imaginative

From its first appearance in 1865, *Alice's adventures in Wonderland* has proved a goldmine for the human imagination. You only have to plug the title into Google to see for yourself the amazing array of republications, artwork, and film adaptations that have sprung from Lewis Carroll's work.

In the novel *Splintered*, A.G. Howard takes *Alice in Wonderland* and gives it a boldly modern edge for today's teen readers. Howard deftly blends Lewis Carroll's classic with half a dozen other fantasies, myths, and stories, to produce a very creepy, imaginative remix.

Alyssa, the protagonist of *Splintered*, is not a sweet little girl like Alice, but a tough skater chick with a history of mental instability running in her family. When Alyssa begins overhearing the conversations of insects, she fears she's gone over the edge, just like her mother. With the much-needed companionship of her friend Jeb, Alyssa plunges headfirst into a strange and frightening new reality, populated by familiar (and yet utterly unfamiliar) characters such as Chessie, the Red and Ivory Queens, and Rabid White the rabbit.

I embarked on *Splintered* a little skeptically, expecting at best some clever humor and cheap action, and at worst lot of cheese and cutesiness. Much to my relief, none of these fears were justified. Just like Alyssa's insects, the ominous atmosphere of *Splintered* gets under your skin and stays there. Readers should also be warned (or enticed to know) that *Splintered* contains a good dose of violence, some of it downright mad.