

The Use of Different Genres in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*

Sandra Juric

ENG K01 Literary Seminar

Bachelor Degree Essay

Autumn 2010

English Studies

Centre for Languages and Literature

Lund University

Supervisor: Anna Lindhé

Table of contents

Introduction	1
The Vampire throughout history	2
<i>Twilight</i> as a vampire novel	4
<i>Twilight</i> as a love story and fairy tale	5
The gothic elements in <i>Twilight</i>	10
Conclusion.....	16
Works Cited.....	18

Introduction

I'd never given much thought to how I would die – though I'd had reason enough in the last few months – but even if I had, I would not have imagined it like this. I stared without breathing across the long room, into the dark eyes of the hunter, and he looked pleasantly back at me. Surely it was a good way to die, in the place of someone else, someone I loved. Noble, even. That ought to count for something. (1)

This is the first thrilling and suspenseful paragraph of *Twilight* by Stephenie Meyer, the first part of a series of four books published between 2005 and 2008. Meyer's novel became an immediate sensation worldwide with over 50 million copies sold (Anna Silver, 1). The story about a girl and a vampire falling in love has become a huge success, mostly among teenage girls. As is well known, vampires have always been a popular element in literature, television and films. From books like Polidori's *The Vampyre* to cult TV-shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, vampires have proved to be interesting to people of all ages. However, *Twilight* is not a typical vampire novel where vampires are the central element of the story. At the heart of *Twilight* is in fact a love story between two individuals who seem destined to be together, but have everything standing between them. Despite the dangers ahead of them, Bella Swan and Edward Cullen, the two main characters in the book, enter a complicated and passionate relationship and become infatuated with each other. In one sense, then, the book seems to have more in common with classical love stories than with classical vampire fiction such as *Dracula*.

Is this love story the reason for *Twilight's* immense popularity among teenaged girls? From the medieval romance between *Tristan and Isolde* to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, love stories have proved to be a popular genre throughout the centuries, especially among young women. Whether it is about impossible love or a passionate affair – the love story remains popular. This essay will examine the reasons for *Twilight's* popularity especially among young female readers. Is it primary because it is a vampire story that *Twilight* has attracted so many young adult readers or is it perhaps because it draws on the love story and incorporates elements of the fairytale and the gothic? This essay will show that *Twilight* is not a vampire novel in the traditional sense of the term but rather a novel that draws on different genres. The essay will also look at what other elements in *Twilight* that appeal to teenagers, especially

young girls, and how these in combination with the use of genres, are what make *Twilight* so popular.

The Vampire throughout history

The word vampire first appeared in Eastern Europe sometime during the 18th century. Frightful tales about the dead coming to life, searching for vengeance and blood, had people living in fear. The legends spread fast and it is no surprise that they would one day become a part of literary history. According to Alan Dundes, the origin of the word “vampire” and when it first was used is not so easy to determine. Whereas some etymological theorists claim that the word has Turkish origin, others claim it a Greek, Slavic or Hungarian word (*The Vampire*, 3). People today may mostly connect vampires to Transylvania much owing to our knowledge of the famous vampire Dracula.

The vampire myth differs from region to region. Descriptions of the vampire vary and so do the reasons for its existence. One thing all the myths have in common is that the vampire is connected to the ideas people of that time had about the body and soul. In some countries people believed that the soul did not always leave the body immediately after death occurred. In Romania bodies would therefore be dug up a few years after the burial to see if decomposition was complete. If it was not, the corpse was then believed to be a vampire (*The Vampire*, 12).

In folklore, vampires are closely connected to other supernatural creatures, like witches and werewolves. The vampire was not just a “living dead” who sucked blood out of human beings. He could also take “power” from humans and animals, such as milk from nursing mothers (*The Vampire*, 21). Moreover, they could turn into animals, cause diseases and make a crop bad. As Felix Oinas writes:

Vampires are occasionally considered responsible for hardships that befall households and even whole villages: bringing on a drought, causing storms, crop failures, livestock plagues, and diseases. These beliefs are identical with those connected with the “unclean

dead” (those who have died unnatural deaths) and have been carried over to vampires.
(49)

Looking back in time it is easy to understand why people would search for a scapegoat. These events occurred during a time when diseases like cholera, plague and typhoid fever would wipe out entire villages. People had little knowledge about the true causes of many deaths, and so the solution was to blame everything on mystical creatures, namely vampires.

Just like other supernatural creatures, vampires made their way into literature. Vampires in literature have developed noticeably during the 20th century. From the beginning, vampires were more similar to the old folklore myths, but as time went by the picture of the vampire changed according to the author’s preference and society. Today, vampires are associated with eternal life and mystery. Nina Auerbach states that one of the first examples of vampires in fiction is Lord Byron’s poem *The Giaour*, published in 1813 (Auerbach, 16). Lord Byron, in his turn, was said to be the inspiration for the vampire Lord Ruthven in Polidori’s *The Vampyre* from 1819. The early vampires in fiction possess both similarities and differences from the old folkloric vampire. According to Auerbach, the most significant change was that during the era of Lord Byron, vampires were portrayed as companions to humans (14). Another famous vampire novel from the 19th century is Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* from 1872, about a lesbian vampire. In 1897, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* was published, a book seen by many as the first major vampire novel. Vampires in fiction changed and Count Dracula was not a companion to humans but instead a horrible monster who enjoyed spreading fear and feeding on human blood. *Dracula* also plays a great part in film since it was the inspiration for the movie *Nosferatu* (1922), one of the most famous and frightening vampire movies of all time.

During the 20th century, several books with influences of vampires were written, but vampires did not become particularly popular again until the 1980s. With the AIDS outbreak in the early 1980s, the image of the vampire changed and vampire literature had a boost (Auerbach, 175). It was not only the function of blood that changed but also the relationship between vampires. Now vampires would stick together and protect each other (176-177). One of the books that show this is the very famous *The Vampire Chronicles*, written by Anne Rice and published between 1976 and 2003. Rice’s novels focus on the relationship between vampires,

and the vampire Lestat is frequently present as the main vampire in novels such as *Interview with the Vampire* from 1976.

Dracula was not the only vampire novel to be adapted into a movie. Several of Anne Rice's novels have also made the big screen, both the celebrated *Interview with the Vampire* and *Queen of the Damned*. Other famous vampire movies of the 1980s are *Near Dark* and *The Lost Boys*, both touching the new idea about the half-vampire (Auerbach, 168). This meant that a person would not change into a vampire until he/she had made his/her first kill and for the first time vampirism itself was not eternal (168), almost as a step towards making vampires and humans more equal.

It was in the early 21st century that the vampire trend exploded into a billion dollar industry and suddenly vampires were everywhere. With HBO's critically acclaimed TV-series from 2008, *True Blood* (based on Charlaine Harris's *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* published between 2001 and 2010), and Stephenie Meyer's *The Twilight Saga* published between 2005 and 2008, vampires have reached enormous popularity and our fascination with the living dead seems to be stronger than ever.

Twilight as a vampire novel

Twilight may not be a typical vampire novel but it still contains some of the classical vampire traits. First of all, there are obviously vampires in the novel. However, in contrast to vampire stories that contain simply evil vampires, the vampires in *Twilight* are mainly good. The Cullen family sees the desire for blood as something that can be overcome. They have a great respect for humans and, therefore, they do not drink human blood, but only animal blood. This is a major difference from the picture people may have of vampires and the way they survive. Although the main vampires in *Twilight* are good, there are those who are very similar to the older, cruel and parasitical vampires. Thought the three evil vampires; Laurent, Victoria and James are the opposites of the good Cullen family. They take pleasure in killing people and are described as very different from the Cullens, with a "catlike" manner and "disturbing and sinister" eyes (328-329). James, possibly the most evil one of them all, refers to Bella as "a snack" (331). James resembles the image of the evil vampire, hunting down his

prey just for pleasure. This range of good and evil vampires is a combination of old and modern vampire literature, and gives the book a special thrill. Vampires are suddenly attainable since they go to school, interact with humans and are a part of society. Nevertheless, the knowledge of supernatural creatures living amongst normal people is very exciting. To also have a love story between a vampire and human, as the centre of the novel, further enhances the pleasure of *Twilight*.

Furthermore, the gender roles in *Twilight* are not so different from those in old vampire tales from, for example, the 18th century, where the main vampire is usually a man who comes back to haunt a young, beautiful woman. Basically, the predator is a man and the victim is a woman. This is connected to the superiority of vampires. They are usually both physically and mentally superior to humans who they, at times, seem to consider as pets. Indeed, Bella is inferior to Edward throughout the whole novel which is shown by the fact that he frequently carries her around as if she were a small child or a pet (Silver, 125). This contributes to his power over her, not only as a vampire but also as a man. Nevertheless, the supremacy of vampires is also connected to the different genres that Meyer has combined, and which will be discussed later in the essay.

However, *Twilight* possesses more differences from than similarities with traditional vampire literature. As stated previously, the main vampires are not evil; instead they have many human qualities and even a conscience which distinguishes them from old vampires. Pramod Nayar claims that Meyer creates a vampire ethos that makes the Cullens more humanlike by their ability to pass on human qualities into their vampire life. As a result the borders between the real world and the vampire world are very thin (65). Because of this, vampires and humans can form improbable relationships, although they are natural enemies because of the vampires' desire for human blood.

Twilight as a love story and fairy tale

Another trait that separates *Twilight* from traditional vampire literature is the incorporation of love story and fairy tale elements. It is commonly known that many books written about love

are about a boy and a girl meeting and falling in love. Very often there is some kind of obstacle which needs to be overcome before the main characters can reach the happily ever after. When Bella and Edward meet they are instantly drawn to each other but they can not be together because Edward is a vampire and that stands in the way of their mutual happiness. So *Twilight* follows the classical pattern in the way that Bella and Edward meet and that there is something standing between them, but there is obviously also a twist to the story since the boy is a vampire. This makes the love story far more complicated and exciting than if Edward had just been a regular boy. Because Edward is not human, their love is wrong and forbidden. This resemblance to traditional love stories such as *Romeo and Juliet* is a contributing factor to *Twilight*'s popularity. Just like Romeo and Juliet's love story ended in tragedy, so could easily the one between Bella and Edward. After all, Edward has a tremendous strength, and it is clear how dangerous he is when he tells Bella that "I could kill you quite easily, Bella, simply by accident" (271). However, what is wrong and forbidden is also exciting. It is the danger and passion that come with supernatural creatures that more or less makes *Twilight* different from other ordinary adolescent love stories. There is excitement and obsession between the characters, very much resembling that between Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's classic novel *Wuthering Heights* from 1847 (Adams, 60). In this sense, Meyer is not only combining different genres but also associating *Twilight* to classic gothic literature which will be discussed later in the essay.

The story of Bella and Edward is told through the eyes of 17-year-old Isabella "Bella" Swan. Bella describes herself as "slender" and "ivory-skinned" (*Twilight*, 9) and she considers herself to be very plain. Young women who read the book can easily relate to her character for several reasons, one of these being the fact that she symbolises the everyday girl in high school. Just like many teens, Bella feels like she does not fit in and she is very much a loner. She thinks that there is nothing special about her but, still, she is the only girl in the small town of Forks who catches the eye of Edward, a beautiful outsider who Bella is immediately fascinated by. When Bella moves to Forks to live with her father she enters unknown territory. She must adjust to an entirely new school and place which is also something that many young people experience. Her life is fairly normal with the major exception of her love interest: a vampire.

As a person, Bella is old-fashioned, which is shown when she moves in with her father and instantly takes on the role as a kind of housemaid, by taking care of him and cooking and

cleaning. Instead of acting like many other modern teenagers would, by for example rebelling, Bella instead takes on a caring and protective role towards her father. Therefore it is not a surprise that she falls for someone like Edward since he is, in fact, over a hundred years old and thus suits her manners. His gentlemanlike and, at the same time, controlling manner suits her motherly and sacrificial behaviour perfectly because in that sense they complete each other. Bella may drive her own car as any other 21st century teenager, but she is easily dominated by male characters. This is slightly odd considering the fact that she has lived her whole life alone with her mother, except for the occasional visit to her father. Maybe it is her almost non-existent relationship with her father that makes her crave male attention because she is, to some extent, left on her own now that she no longer lives with her mother.

This lack of a nuclear family in Bella's life is also important to her romance with Edward. Not only does he save her numerous times throughout the novel, starting when he saves her from being crushed to death by a car, but as Anna Silver writes: Bella is very much drawn to Edward's entire family, because they are in many ways the family she has always wanted and needed (126). In this sense, Edward does not only save her from physical danger but also from mental distress. This absence of a devoted mother and father is one of the factors that contribute to Bella's need to be rescued. She is not happy with her life and there is something missing, obviously something that can be completed by Edward and his family. Meyer tries hard to describe the Cullens as a regular American family who play baseball and are just like any other human family, argues Nayar (68). In some way they are better than Bella's own uncommitted parents, and they almost represent the perfect family. When she becomes romantically involved with Edward, Bella also gets the chance to have a family, and this further enhances the appeal of Edward.

Edward Cullen is Bella's love interest and soul mate. They are instantly drawn to each other like there is almost a higher power pushing them together. From the start it is quite apparent that there is something different about Edward. His old-fashioned and charming manner and extremely good looks resemble more that of a traditional gentleman than an ordinary high school male. Edward is frequently described as "a runway model" (221) or a "godlike creature" (224) further separating him from others. Unlike Bella, Edward comes off as a mysterious character, above all because readers are given unlimited access to Bella's thoughts while Edward's mind is inaccessible and mysterious. This means that readers can relate to Bella and feel as though they are on her side, at the same time as the mystery that surrounds

Edward is enhanced. Lauren Adams states: “The books have ample mystery and suspense, as Meyer tantalizes readers with clues about Edward, his family, and the rest of their kind, some of whom prove to be incredibly dangerous to Bella” (61).

Apart from being a love story, *Twilight* also contains elements of the fairy tale. *Twilight* may not be a total fairy tale, but the elements that can be found in the novel are enough to draw likeness to fairy tales. By comparing the four main characteristics of a fairy tale in Steven Swan Jones book *The Fairy Tale: The Magic Mirror of Imagination*, it is possible to find clear similarities between the patterns of a fairy tale and *Twilight*.

The first characteristic mentioned by Jones, and perhaps the most prominent one, is the incorporation of fantasy in fairy tales (12). Fantasy is commonly known to introduce magical worlds and supernatural creatures are often a great part of the story. Vampires could therefore be said to belong to fantasy since they are unreal and, as in the case of *Twilight*, they also have other supernatural powers, such as mindreading and clairvoyance, often connected to magic. As mentioned earlier, the vampires in *Twilight* are also domesticated, and most of them are not even dangerous, even though there are exceptions. This dissociation from old, evil vampires also connects *Twilight* to the fairy tale because the novel is not intimidating, but exciting as a fairy tale can be perceived: thrilling but not too dangerous. An example from the novel is the fact that Edward is frequently referred to as a monster. At one point Bella is thinking about Edward as “The vampire who wanted to be good – who ran around saving people’s lives so he wouldn’t be a monster...” (179). This romantic way of describing Edward is sympathetic and makes the reader think of tales such as *Beauty and the Beast*, with Bella as the beautiful human girl falling for a monster whom she sees not as a dangerous creature but instead as someone who is suffering a cruel fate.

Apart from the incorporation of fantasy, another characteristic of the fairy tale genre is, according to Jones, “the confronting and resolving of a problem, by the undertaking of a quest” (14). The quest in *Twilight* is evidently Bella’s mission to find out what Edward truly is, and this is an event that is very important and dominates almost half the novel. Jones also mentions the interesting fact that the protagonist is often a young person searching for a mate (17). Obviously this also matches *Twilight*: since Bella’s search for the truth is only to get closer to Edward. When Bella moves to Forks her entire life starts to revolve around Edward,

which makes it difficult to imagine Bella existing before moving to Forks to become totally consumed by this man.

Aside from the two characteristics mentioned above, there is also a third attribute. That is when the protagonist of the novel manages to solve a problem or overcome an obstacle and reach a happy ending (17). This is something that happens twice in *Twilight*. The first time Bella must find out what Edward is hiding from her so that they can be together. The other time is when they are finally together, but there is yet another difficulty when they encounter the three evil vampires, one of whom becomes obsessed with Bella. Both times Bella succeeds in overcoming the obstacles that are between her and Edward, and manages in the end to reach the happy ending.

The fourth and final characteristic is that the main protagonist is presented in a clear-cut way and that readers are encouraged to identify with the character who is a good and ordinary person, suffering in some way (17). As previously mentioned, the protagonist in *Twilight* is very easy to relate to for young girls because she is a normal teenage girl. She is also a good person who is willing to sacrifice herself for the people she loves, as is shown when the evil vampire James lures her into thinking he has abducted her mother and Bella decides to sacrifice herself instead. Many young girls can therefore see Bella as a good role model: young, smart and compassionate.

When comparing *Twilight* to the four main features listed by Jones, it is clear that the novel can be related to the fairy tale because it fulfils all the main features. But what is it about fairy tales that attract readers so much, and especially young girls? It is generally known that fairy tales, just like fantasy fiction, are a way for readers to escape the real world. Indeed, *Twilight* presents a tempting world, filled with romance and excitement, and therefore the perfect way to escape reality for young girls. Meyer has not only skilfully combined several genres, she has also managed to portray the characters and their language in a way that is very appealing to normal teenagers and that readers can recognise. Meyer also succeeds in captivating the spirit of young lovers in a very tantalizing way. Even though Bella and Edward barely kiss at times, these moments are enough to tease the readers and make them long for more romance. When describing their first kiss it is almost as if Bella is high on drugs:

Edward hesitated to test himself, to see if this was safe, to make sure he was still in control of his need. And then his cold, marble lips pressed very softly against mine. What neither of us was prepared for was my response. Blood boiled under my skin, burned in my lips. My breath came in a wild gasp. My fingers knotted in his hair, clutching him to me. My lips parted as I breathed in his heady scent. (247)

This is a very captivating way of describing a kiss. However, by mentioning Edward's never ceasing lust for Bella's blood, it is obvious that their happiness is under constant threat. Edward must persistently fight his lust if he is to be with Bella. This constant oscillation between danger and romance is connected to the gothic elements in the novel.

Bella's low self-esteem is very suitable for her passive part in *Twilight* and is a characteristic feature that connects her even more with the average adolescent teenage girl. At one point she criticizes her own appearance. This gives Edward a chance to again step in and save Bella, this time by raising her self-esteem, telling her that she is "the opposite of ordinary" (184). This time Edward is virtually saving Bella from herself by taking on the superior role as the strong male figure that is more knowledgeable than she is. Edward is described as a "Greek god" (180) and his behaviour is many times on the verge on parental. At one point in the novel he orders Bella to drink her soda, sounding more like a father than a potential boyfriend (Silver, 125). What is so interesting about this is the fact that Edward's behaviour comes across as natural and appropriate because Bella desperately needs to be saved by someone. It is her unsecure behaviour that constantly allows her to be dominated. Considering the fact that the novel is read by many young girls, it can therefore be argued that Bella's behaviour is inappropriate, considering the indications that can be perceived about a young woman's manners.

The gothic elements in *Twilight*

Apart from the fairy tale and the love story elements mentioned earlier, *Twilight* also contains several gothic elements. The plot of a classic gothic novel is a young woman being trapped by a wicked man and rescued by another (1) as stated by Donna Heiland, author of *Gothic and Gender: An Introduction*. Very often a woman is running away from someone evil and ends

up in a dark and frightening place where she tries in vain to escape, and is eventually saved by a man. There are elements of horror that in combination with emotional anxiety are also exciting. The presence of gothic elements is important to the development of the plot and to the understanding of *Twilight's* popularity; because the gothic elements combined with love story and fairy tale elements are what set the novel apart from the traditional vampire novel. Heiland also argues that not all gothic stories are the same, but that they usually resemble the traditional plot (2). This statement suits *Twilight* perfectly, since the novel is not entirely a gothic novel, but instead as mentioned above, a combination of different genres with the gothic as one of them.

As formerly mentioned, *Twilight* takes place in Forks, a small town in the Olympic Peninsula, known for its gloomy and rainy weather, and once described by Edward as “one of the most sunless places in the world” (254). Straight from the beginning of the novel the atmosphere is slightly gothic as Bella describes her first morning: “Thick fog was all I could see out my window in the morning, and I could feel the claustrophobia creeping up on me. You could never see the sky here; it was like a cage” (10). This obscure mood remains throughout the novel, with dark woods, endless rain and black skies. Setting this gothic tone so early in the novel creates suspense that lingers through the whole book, and that, in combination with the supernatural creatures, is one of the great thrills of *Twilight*. Not only is this environment important to the story, since it gives a somewhat eerie tone at times, it also facilitates vampires' life among people: Meyer's vampires do not die in the sun, but instead they sparkle “like thousands of tiny diamonds were embedded in the surface” (228). This is demonstrated by Edward in one of the few scenes in *Twilight* where there is actually sun and not a constant cover of clouds. It is the day that Edward and Bella finally confess their feelings for each other. This small town with almost no sun at all gives these dangerous creatures an opportunity to fit into the everyday life of ordinary people. Apart from vampires there are also several mentions of werewolves, another treacherous creature associated with danger and dark woods. At one point Edward warns Bella about entering the woods alone, claiming that “I'm not always the most dangerous thing out there” (168).

When associating *Twilight* with the gothic genre, there is one part of the novel that is important to consider. As previously stated, while reading about the passionate and forbidden love story between Bella and Edward, it is easy to draw a parallel to a classic novel with gothic traits: *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë. The novel is one of several other classics

that is mentioned in *Twilight* and read by Bella. Lauren Adams claims that if the inexperienced reader fails to see the connection, Meyer actually brings the comparison up herself, by mentioning the novel in the beginning of *Twilight* (60). *Wuthering Heights* is well-known for its portrayal of both the good and bad sides of love, and the passion and hurt that can arise from strong love. Just like the passionate relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine borders on obsession, so does the relationship between Edward and Bella. Edward being the tormented hero infatuated with a girl he should stay away from resembles Heathcliff and his passion for Catherine. Edward tells Bella that “You are the most important thing to me now. The most important thing to me ever” (240). Bella describes being away from Edward as a “physical pain” (248) suggesting, at times, that they are almost as one person, regardless of their obvious differences. This is similar to Catherine’s feelings for Heathcliff, described by the famous words: “Nelly, I am Heathcliff!” (*Wuthering Heights*, 77). Just like Catherine and Heathcliff are nearly inseparable, so are Bella and Edward. Bella is repeatedly dazzled by Edward’s gaze and Edward is stunned by Bella’s scent, creating this mutual state of dependence where it is as though they are living in a bubble, where just the two of them exist. This kind of love may not be what many young girls reading the novel have experienced, thus making it even more fascinating and desirable.

It is said that the line between love and hate is thin and indeed, in the beginning of the novel Bella believes that Edward hates her. The passion Edward instantly feels for Bella is so strong that it borders on hate when he first meets her. Edward later on confesses that he was so stunned by her that he could not understand what was happening to him and thought of Bella as “some kind of demon” because of the power she instantly had over him, just by her pure existence (236). At a point in the novel Edward describes Bella as being “his brand of heroin” (235) a somewhat odd comparison considering the fact that he is referring to a young girl. He is so obsessed with Bella that he spends the nights in her room watching her sleep. Bella, unaware (at first) of his presence, whispers his name repeatedly in longing. According to Nayar this implies “the stalker theme of the traditional Gothic where the heroine is chased through labyrinths and lonely rooms” (71). The relationship is always on the verge of danger because of Edward’s true nature. As already stated, he is the superior one, and the thing about Bella that attracts him is something that she cannot control: the power of her “floral smell” which Edward finds “mouth-watering” (267). At any time he could kill Bella by accident, or if his lust becomes too strong. Bella is willing to take that chance and her approach towards this is that she would rather die than live without him. Nayar writes that this makes Bella “the

teen of the traditional Gothic, her sexuality drives the male insane with lust and she is in serious danger of being ‘hurt’” (71). This is one of several other signs of the passion in Bella and Edward’s relationship.

Like stated previously, Bella is frequently rescued by Edward. From the point where he saves her life in the beginning of the novel, he becomes somewhat of her own personal guardian and seems not only to save her life in real life, but also in her dreams. In fact, chapter seven entitled “Nightmare” starts off with Bella having a very emotional dream with gothic influences. She dreams that she is in the forest and hunted by someone. As already mentioned, the gothic plot usually involves a woman being hunted, and this is exactly what happens to Bella in her nightmare. Bella dreams that she is in “the blackest part of the forest” (113) where there are three men present of whom only one appears to be visible and another man is just a disembodied voice. Suddenly one of the men, Jacob Black, transforms into a wolf and Bella is terrified and paralyzed with fear. She is at last saved by the third man, Edward. This dream is very important since it reflects Bella’s subconscious and at the same time gives readers a clue about what is to come later on in the novel. Yet again, the gender roles in *Twilight* are reflected through Bella’s dream. Just as in the rest of the novel she is paralyzed by fear when being in dangerous situations. It is almost as though she is waiting for someone to rescue her, and indeed, this time she is surrounded by no less than three men, all fighting for her.

Another scene when the gothic elements shine through in *Twilight* is when Bella is in Port Angeles with her friends and ends up getting lost on her way to a bookstore. The situation shifts fast from a comfortable shopping spree with her girlfriends to abandoned streets with no people. It is getting dark when she finds herself on the outskirts of the city and bumps into a gang of four young men who “were too grimy to be tourists” and “laughing raucously and punching each other’s arms” (136). This minor description is enough for readers to understand that these men are dangerous and that something awful might happen since Bella is alone in an unfamiliar place. Bella tries to stay focused but after noticing that she is being followed by two of the men, she starts to panic. She “listened intently to their quiet footsteps” (138) while trying to find her way back. Undeniably, there are elements in this chapter that draw parallels to the traditional gothic plot where the woman is exposed to danger. When Bella finds herself surrounded by the four men she is terrified knowing that she does not stand a chance against them. Right at that moment there are suddenly headlights around the corner

and a car speeds toward the group. As quick as lightning Edward is there to save her from the would-be rapists.

The end of *Twilight* is possibly the most gothic sequence in the whole novel. Just when Bella and Edward are on their first official date, Meyer, yet again, abruptly shifts the mood in the novel from pleasant to highly suspenseful when the Cullens and Bella run across three unknown vampires. One of them, James, proves to be a tracker who is “absolutely lethal” with “a brilliant mind and unparalleled senses” (349). James immediately becomes obsessed with hunting down Bella, forcing the Cullens to protect her. As mentioned before, unlike the other vampires in the novel, the three strangers embrace their evil nature, and therefore resemble more the old traditional vampire. By pretending to have kidnapped her mother, James lures Bella into a trap, leading her to be alone with him in an abandoned dance studio. There, in “the long, high-ceilinged room” (387) she is trapped and tries to escape in vain. Unquestionably, this is almost identical to what Heiland mentions about the usual plot of gothic novels. Bella is the young woman trying to run away from the evil man, James, and is eventually saved by a good man, Edward.

The gothic aspects in *Twilight* are very important for several reasons. Since the novel belongs to young adult literature it is this presence of different genres combined together, that sets it apart from other novels written for young adults. These gothic elements in the novel are both suspenseful and at times frightening, for it is as Heiland writes; that gothic elements entertain and terrify us at the same time (2). The gothic environment creates suspense throughout the whole novel, but it never overshadows the other genres used by Meyer. It serves merely as entertainment, and just as the love story and fairy tale parts contain relatively sexist gender roles, so does the gothic part, portraying the woman as a constant victim.

These love story, fairy tale and gothic elements presented above are a great part of the appeal of *Twilight*, but this is also something that has received a fair amount of criticism mostly concerning the way the female protagonist is portrayed. The important question is why did Meyer not choose to create a more independent and modern female protagonist, instead of following the traditional gender roles that love stories, vampire novels and fairy tales usually seem to have? Jones writes that while heroic legends are dominated by strong male characters, the fairy tale is dominated by female protagonists (64). A female is not portrayed as a heroine, supporting society and protecting the weak in the way that a male often is. Instead she is

endowed with delicate female qualities, as the caring mother or good daughter. Indeed, all of these qualities suit Bella's character perfectly. Another important factor to take into consideration is the fact that Stephenie Meyer is a Mormon. Therefore it is not so strange that she writes a novel that contains conventional values, since it is commonly known that Mormons are very old-fashioned.

Therefore, it is not so strange that Bella is portrayed the way she is, because it is usual that women often assume an inferior position in certain literature, for example fairy tales. This is shown in both vampire literature and in various love stories. As Rita Felski quotes Simone de Beauvoir: "Woman is the Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Snow White, she who receives and submits" (97). This suggests that a woman usually plays a passive role and this description goes well along with that of Bella. She is frequently described as though she is hypnotized by Edward and that his smile affected her tremendously by "stopping my breath and my heart" (211). She is so spellbound by him that she can barely function around him. Just looking Edward in the eyes takes her breath away and she is quick at giving herself up to him. Even though Bella is the main character and protagonist of the story, she is, as previously mentioned, no heroine in the usual sense. She cannot save anyone by using her strength; instead all she can do is sacrifice herself for the ones she loves.

Even though *Twilight* has been criticised, looking at the novel's popularity this seems not to have had any negative influence on how young adults regard the novel. Instead it is extremely popular and has turned into a million dollar industry. How come young adults, particularly women, seem not to notice this criticism and question what is written in the novel? According to Lauren Adams, the fact that a younger woman is involved with an older man is nothing new, but given that many vampire novels are written by women and from the perspective of the girl (such is the case in *Twilight*) there must be something that explains the woman's desire for an older, experienced and dangerous man (58). No one can know for sure, but one reason can be the fact that the inferior role that many women seem to have, is so strongly established that readers are used to it and do not react. After all, love stories and fairy tales are known to attract females, so there must be something in them that readers enjoy and that makes them look beyond the sexism that these tales usually contain. Jones writes:

We can categorize these issues of fairy tale themes as falling into three major categories of human experience: the psychology of the individual, the sociology of the community,

and the cosmology of the universe. In other words, fairy tales can be seen as telling us about our own feelings and psyches, as instructing us how to conform to society's expectations and as offering spiritual guidance about how to see our place in the cosmos.
(19)

This means that fairy tales bring up questions and problems that an ordinary human being might have. The heart of *Twilight* may be a love story, but the novel also deals with other themes, such as parent-child relationships, adolescence, finding acceptance among schoolmates and other matters that concern teenagers. It can then be argued that the fairy tale elements in *Twilight* attract young readers for several reasons, all featured in the four characteristics mentioned previously. There are supernatural creatures that add excitement to what many young people may perceive as an otherwise dull and uneventful life and at the same time distinguishing *Twilight* from other adolescent novels. There is a thrilling search for the truth that leads to an even more exciting revelation. Add a sympathetic and ordinary girl as the protagonist, who reaches the happy ending and ends up enjoying herself at something as ordinary and adolescent as a high school prom, and the plot in *Twilight* is presented as a sort of modern fairy tale.

Conclusion

Looking back in history, it is clear that vampires have been present for many years because they fascinate people in different ways. They have been popular in literature and the image of vampires has changed through the years in different ways. *Twilight* represents a new sort of vampire fiction where vampires and humans interact in an entirely new way, very different from the usual image of the relationship between human and vampire. *Twilight* has also reached worldwide popularity in a way that is both fascinating and impressive. There are several different reasons behind *Twilight's* immense popularity. First of all, the novel is primarily a love story, a genre generally known to appeal to females. However, *Twilight* also has elements of the fairy tale and gothic genre, further separating the novel from traditional vampire fiction and forming a winning and entertaining combination. These three genres are combined very skilfully, creating a novel that contains many of the features that attract young readers, specifically young girls.

Apart from the use of different genres, there are other things about *Twilight* that answer for the novel's popularity. Meyer has created two very sympathetic characters that complete each other and also represent what the reader might desire. The use of a sympathetic, ordinary protagonist, falling in love with the hero of her dreams, is surely the wish of many girls. In addition, drawing parallels to classic literature such as *Wuthering Heights* and *Romeo and Juliet*, also gives the novel a feeling of classical passionate love affairs.

There may be criticism directed toward *Twilight* regarding the gender roles and the portrayal of Bella, but this has not had any negative influence on the popularity, suggesting that readers may not be interested in any deeper analysis of the characters, but are pleased with the old-fashioned gender roles that apparently are still very much appealing. Nevertheless, Meyer has proved that love stories between supernatural creatures and humans, conservative manners, and traditional roles are a winning concept in a modern vampire story.

Works Cited

Primary Sources

Meyer, Stephenie. *Twilight*. London: Atom, 2007. Print.

Secondary Sources

Adams, Lauren. "Bitten." *Horn Book Magazine* 86.1 (2010): 58-64. *Literary Reference Center*. EBSCO. Web. 26 Nov. 2010.

Auerbach, Nina. *Our vampires, Ourselves*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995. Print.

Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. New York: Bantam Dell, 1983. Print.

Dundes, Alan. *The Vampire: A Casebook*. Wiscconsin: The University of Wiscconsin Press, 1998. Print.

Felski, Rita. *Literature after Feminism*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003. Print.

Heiland, Donna. *Gothic and Gender: An Introduction*. Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2004. Print.

Nayar, Pramod. "How to Domesticate a Vampire: Gender, Blood Relations and Sexuality in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*." *Nebula*. 7.3. (2010): 60-76. Nebula Press—DOAJ. Web. 29 Nov. 2010.

Silver, Anna. "Twilight is Not Good for Maidens: Gender, Sexuality, and the Family in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* Series." *Studies in the Novel* 42.1/2 (2010): 121-138. *Literary Reference Center*. EBSCO. Web. 29 Nov. 2010.

Swann Jones, Steven. *The Fairy Tale: The Magic Mirror of Imagination*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995. Print.