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June 4, 2015

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FIVM01

# **Vampire Ethics in the Twilight Saga**

**A Generic Analysis**

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# 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 The Twilight Phenomenon

Since the Twilight series publication and later the Twilight Saga film adaptations, the vampire romance of Bella Swan and Edward Cullen has turned into a worldwide phenomenon. The author Stephenie Meyer's debut novel *Twilight* was published in 2005 and despite of a lukewarm reception it eventually reached first place on the *New York Times* best-selling list.<sup>2</sup> The Twilight series include *Twilight*, *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse* (2007) and *Breaking Dawn* (2008). As of November 2011 the series had been translated into 38 languages and sold more than 120 million copies worldwide.<sup>3</sup>

The Twilight Saga film franchise include *Twilight* (Catherine Hardwicke, 2008), *The Twilight Saga: New Moon* (Chris Weitz, 2009), *The Twilight Saga: Eclipse* (David Slade, 2010), *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn – Part 1* (Bill Condon, 2011) and *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn – Part 2* (Bill Condon, 2012). The film series has, as of today, grossed over 3.3 billion dollars in the cinema alone.<sup>4</sup>

The world of Twilight has crossed many borders and grown into a huge phenomenon with spin-offs, parodies, spoofs, academic work, press materials and endless merchandise. On Stephenie Meyer's official homepage she lists 377 different fan-sites where fans can get together and explore the world of Twilight through internet forums, blog posts, fan fiction, and different media expressions.<sup>5</sup>

I will refer to the Twilight series (the novels) and the Twilight Saga (the films) combined as "Twilight".

Regardless of what ones opinions might be concerning the quality of the product, Twilight has had a huge impact on popular culture and is shared by millions of people through the novels, films and internet all around the globe. This fact alone

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<sup>1</sup> This One-Year Master's degree thesis (60 credits) in Film Studies is based on the article "Damnation or salvation? Vampire ethics, Edward Cullen, and the Byronic hero" which was first published as a chapter in Larsson, Mariah and Ann Steiner (eds.), *Interdisciplinary Approaches to Twilight: Fiction, Media, and a Contemporary Cultural Experience* (Nordic Academic Press: Lund, 2011) 263-278.

<sup>2</sup> "Best Sellers", *New York Times*.

<sup>3</sup> Stein, *Twilight Exposed!*, 271.

<sup>4</sup> *Box Office Mojo*.

<sup>5</sup> Larsson and Steiner, "Introduction", 9-11; "Twilight Series Fansites", *The Official Website of Stephenie Meyer*.

should be enough to spark the interest of anyone interested in studying contemporary popular culture. Worth mentioning at this point is the notable tendency to overlook *Twilight* when discussing vampires in fiction, despite its immense success.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, in reviews the target audience of teenage girls is often mentioned specifically and has in many instances been used in order to belittle the films and novels.

The low cultural status of a teen girl audience is not new. In “Transitional tastes: Teen girls and genre in the critical reception of *Twilight*” Lisa Bode points out that there is a tradition of associating certain forms of mass culture with an idea of “irrational and easily seduced women”. Defining something as “cult” is, on the other hand, seen as “transgressive, resistant and masculine” which relies on an opposition to a conception of the feminine as mainstream, passive, compliant and over-enthralled.<sup>7</sup> In my discussion I will get back to how this leads to scholars attempting to exclude *Twilight* from the vampire genre.

## 1.2 Purpose and Research Questions

This thesis will address the way in which the *vampire ethics* is depicted in the *Twilight* Saga by the character of Edward Cullen. My purpose is to analyze the vampire character of Edward in accordance with the Romantic figure of the *Byronic hero*. Edward and the Byronic hero share many traits when it comes to appearance, personality, attitudes, and interaction with individuals and society at large. However, when it comes to the vampire ethics, including the indulgence of vices such as sexuality and the relationship to Christianity, they strongly differ.

Following a historic overview of the vampire genre, and a presentation of the Byronic hero in literature, this thesis will demonstrate the ways in which Edward and the Byronic hero correspond and differ using examples from the films *Twilight*, *New Moon*, *Eclipse*, *Breaking Dawn – Part 1*, and *Breaking Dawn – Part 2*. Furthermore, the

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<sup>6</sup> Larsson and Steiner, “Introduction”, 11-12.

<sup>7</sup> Bode, “Transitional Tastes”, 707-708.

progress of the vampire genre and vampire traits will be considered, with a focus on the elements of sexuality and Christianity.

My questions are as follows: In what ways does Edward share the traits of the Byronic hero and where does he diverge? What may be the motives behind these choices and what do they imply about Twilight's general intentions? Are these choices specific for Twilight or do they follow a broader trend in contemporary vampire fiction? Should Twilight be included in the vampire genre or does it differentiate itself too much from the genre's traditions? What in society might have caused the vampire fiction to partly transform?

### 1.3 Previous Research on Twilight

Since Twilight reached wide popularity through its novels and films, the phenomenon has sparked the interest of academics. A rich amount of books and articles have been published in many different subjects. These scholars not only originate from film, media and literature studies but from various disciplines such as sociology, criminology, gender studies, psychology, anthropology, art theory, language, business, economics, theology, philosophy, education and cultural studies.

Some reoccurring patterns of research questions can be distinguished. The main themes are those of gender roles and feminism; identity, body and sexuality; reception, youth culture and the question of Twilight's worldwide success; the fan world and fan fiction; religious themes and the influence of Meyer's Mormon faith; how race and ethnicity is portrayed; and questions concerning markets, media and franchise. Some explore, as this thesis, Twilight's literary heritage. However, only a few scholars put vampires in a historic perspective, usually this is only briefly mentioned in the introductions.

The main themes of Twilight research become evident in academic and laymen works such as *Touched by a Vampire: Discovering the Hidden Messages in the Twilight Saga* (2009), *Twilight and Philosophy: Vampires, Vegetarians, and the Pursuit of Immortality* (2009), *Bitten by Twilight: Youth Culture, Media, & the Vampire Franchise* (2010), *The Twilight Mystique: Critical Essays on the Novels and Films* (2010),

*Bringing Light to Twilight: Perspectives on a Pop Culture Phenomenon* (2011), *The Gospel According to Twilight: Women, Sex, and God* (2011), *Interdisciplinary Approaches to Twilight: Fiction, Media, and a Contemporary Cultural Experience* (2011), *The Psychology of Twilight* (2011), *Seduced by Twilight: The Allure and Contradictory Messages of the Popular Saga* (2011), *Theorizing Twilight: Critical Essays on What's at Stake in a Post-Vampire World* (2011) and *Fanged Fan Fiction: Variations on Twilight, True Blood and The Vampire Diaries* (2013). I will present a sample of articles, books and book chapters exploring the reoccurring patterns that I have identified as well as show the wide range of research Twilight has spawned.

Concerning the question of Twilight's success, its reception and its audience Victor Fan discusses what he calls "The poetics of addiction" in terms of a negotiation between the spectator, the film, the business, and the marketplace.<sup>8</sup> In *Children's Literature in Education* Christine Jarvis examines why a romance such as Twilight has reached such immense popularity in a time where there are more powerful heroines in fiction. She suggests that the story provides "fantasy resolutions" to conflicts girls face while growing up.<sup>9</sup> Bode asks how teen culture mainly marketed towards a young female audience is used to denigrate or legitimate a certain film, how the different critical receptions of Twilight in particular define the teen girl and what this reveals about our contemporary culture.<sup>10</sup>

Studies criticizing Twilight through a feminist point of view are numerous. In the book *Seduced by Twilight: The Allure and Contradictory Messages of the Popular Saga* most chapters are written with a critical gender perspective.<sup>11</sup> When it comes to articles, Anthea Taylor demonstrates Twilight's masochistic sides and reveals the problematic link between eroticism and death.<sup>12</sup> Anna Silver talks about Twilight's gender ideology as patriarchal but places it in a wider perspective, claiming there are larger themes concerning identity and group identity, particularly the American nuclear family, and a woman's role within that family. She stresses that Twilight is "a romance

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<sup>8</sup> Fan, "The Poetics of Addiction", 30-67.

<sup>9</sup> Jarvis, "The Twilight of Feminism?", 101-115.

<sup>10</sup> Bode, "Transitional Tastes", 707-719.

<sup>11</sup> Wilson, *Seduced by Twilight*, passim.

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, "The Urge Towards Love is an Urge Towards (Un)death", 31-46.

about family and the human need for connection and community” and while feminist critique is essential it is also important not to dismiss Twilight fans as passive readers.<sup>13</sup>

Joyce Ann Mercer explores how Twilight’s construction of relationships, supernatural masculinities and girlhood appeals to girls through a Christian feminist perspective with generalizations such as “Girls do love their vampires”. Even if she sees problems in the way gender is portrayed in Twilight she seems more appreciating than critical: “At least some of today’s vampires appear to have morphed into creatures of positive moral character and objects of romantic love.” Moreover, she ignorantly claims that “although vampires usually represent dangerous desire, rarely have these creatures been treated as spiritually attractive figures”.<sup>14</sup> Many scholars demonstrate little understanding of the history of vampires in fiction, an issue I will return to.

In *Journal of Women and Social Work* Dianne C. Carmody and Victoria E. Collins use Twilight as a case study of how popular culture promotes the acceptance of “dating violence”, as in sexual abuse, stalking, threats, and intimidation. They suggest ways in which the series can be used in social work, education and prevention.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, in “Twilight: The Glamorization of Abuse, Codependency, and White Privilege” Danielle N. Borgia writes about how Twilight promotes “inegalitarian gender roles, obsessive, codependent romantic relationships, racial hierarchies, and elitism”. She claims that the contemporary American mainstream readers would not accept the gender roles portrayed in Twilight if it was not “veiled with the cloak of the supernatural”.<sup>16</sup>

Fan culture and fan fiction is explored in diverse magazines such as *Popular Music and Society* where Rebecca Williams looks into the connection between media fandom and intertextuality through the band Muse<sup>17</sup>; in *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* where Sara K. Day talks about how women writers of fan fiction fill in the erotic gaps from Twilight in order to explore their own sexualities<sup>18</sup>; and in *Computers and Composition* where Sarah Summers uses a Twilight discussion thread as

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<sup>13</sup> Silver, “Twilight is not Good for Maidens”, 121-138.

<sup>14</sup> Mercer, “Vampires, Desire, Girls and God”, 263-278.

<sup>15</sup> Carmody and Collins, “Deadly Love”, 382-394.

<sup>16</sup> Borgia, “Twilight”, 153-173.

<sup>17</sup> Williams, “Anyone who Calls Muse a Twilight Band will be Shot on Sight”, 327-342.

<sup>18</sup> Day, “Pure Passion”, 28-48.

a case study to explore how online spaces can be used by young women to discuss the meaning and definition of feminism.<sup>19</sup> In *Fanged Fan Fiction* Maria Lindgren Leavenworth and Malin Isaksson dedicate the entire book to the exploration of the fan world.<sup>20</sup>

When it comes to religion, Georgina Ledvinka writes about Twilight's connection to the Mormons faith and sees vampires as a metaphor for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the construction of werewolves as racial stereotyping of Native Americans.<sup>21</sup> In *The Gospel According to Twilight: Women, Sex, and God* Elaine A. Heath focuses on theological aspects of Twilight while *Touched by a Vampire: Discovering the Hidden Messages in the Twilight Saga* by Beth Felker Jones similarly looks at Twilight through a biblical perspective.<sup>22</sup>

There are a few examples of research concerning Twilight's connection to the character of the Byronic hero. In Borgia's demonstration of Edward's abusive tendencies she repeatedly refers to him as "Byronic" but without going into much detail as of what this entails.<sup>23</sup> Similarly Taylor means that a female attraction to violence became recognizable in literary fiction during the 1800's, and brings up the Byronic character as someone that fuels "'mass produced fantasies' addressed to women".<sup>24</sup> Abigail E. Myers looks at the modern Byronic hero in relation to the nature of which the female is drawn to him and how far she is willing to go when it comes to self-sacrifice. While placing Edward in the Byronic tradition in literature, the focus is on Bella.<sup>25</sup>

Stephanie Mendoza writes about the differences between the traditional Byronic hero and the Byronic hero of today. She analyzes Edward Cullen in the context of Byronic literary fiction, but not so much through vampire history (although she brings up a few examples of filmic Byronic vampires who follow the tradition of Dracula). She argues that the modern Byronic hero is softer, and the Byronesque crime of getting involved in forbidden relationships (in Edward's case the interspecies relation with a

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<sup>19</sup> Summers, "Twilight is So Anti-Feminist That I Want to Cry", 315-323.

<sup>20</sup> Lindgren Leavenworth and Isaksson, *Fanged Fan Fiction*, passim.

<sup>21</sup> Ledvinka, "Vampires and Werewolves", 195-211.

<sup>22</sup> Heath, *The Gospel According to Twilight*, passim; Jones, *Touched by a Vampire*, passim.

<sup>23</sup> Borgia, "Twilight", 153-173.

<sup>24</sup> Taylor, "The Urge Towards Love is an Urge Towards (Un)death", 34.

<sup>25</sup> Myers, "Edward Cullen and Bella Swan", 147-162.



human) is not very severe and can therefore end on a happy note. Mendoza points out that each new generation adds a new interpretation of the Byronic hero, thus expanding him: “At the core, he is still Lord Byron’s Byronic hero”. She concludes that Edward fits in both with the evolution of vampires in popular culture as well as with the evolution of the Byronic hero.<sup>26</sup>

In this vast number of books and articles there are some scholars who put *Twilight* in the context of vampire fiction. However, it is mostly done as a short overview in the introduction, while only a few studies focus on the history of the genre to a higher degree.

In “Fearless Vampire Kissers: Bloodsuckers We Love in *Twilight*, *True Blood* and Others” the sociologist Bernard Beck claims that the popularity of the vampire genre started with Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, which is far from true. *Dracula* only established the way we perceive vampires today while there were several vampire cycles previous to 1897. Furthermore, he writes that most vampires depicted in popular culture since *Dracula* have been deadly monsters while the erotic, alluring and humane vampires of today is a new development. However, since the turn of the century 1800 the vampire has been far from a one-dimensional monster, they can be anything from horrifying to alluring to tragic to humane.

In addition, Beck states that the vampire genre was oriented towards a male audience in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while the new wave of vampire fiction is “created by and for women” so “they are of doubtful interest to male audiences”, which is difficult to agree with. Not only does it assume that men solely consume culture with male protagonists, and ignore any other audiences besides a heterosexual one, it also corresponds with the naive assumption that horror is exclusive for men while romance is exclusive for women.

The article concludes with the simplistic notion that the social insight we can gain from vampire stories shows “the importance in a male dominated and male administered society of reserving our womenfolk to ourselves”.<sup>27</sup> This is a perfect example of a scholar who, through generalizations and ignorance of the vampire genre’s

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<sup>26</sup> Mendoza, “From Dawn to *Twilight*”, 9-24.

<sup>27</sup> Beck, “Fearless Vampire Kissers”, 90-92.

history, analyses contemporary cultural expressions through his own sociological views connected to the specific time, devoid of context or complexity.

Lydia Kokkola analyses *Twilight* through a genre perspective in “Virtuous Vampires and Voluptuous Vamps: Romance Conventions Reconsidered in Stephenie Meyer’s ‘*Twilight*’ Series” and argues that the story combines conventions from related but slightly different genres. Nevertheless, she only discusses adult romance, teen romance and traditions within children’s literature, excluding the vampire genre. Vampires are merely touched upon when she mentions Bella Swan’s character as following the underlying tradition of the “voluptuous vamp” or *femme fatale*, which is a far-fetched idea. Kokkola claims that Bella, even though she is not a vampire at the time, tries to seduce Edward on numerous occasions according to the vamp persona. However, Bella’s motive for her unsuccessful attempts is not bloodlust, power or revenge, but love; something the *fatale female* is hardly known for. By turning into a vampire Bella becomes beautiful as a vamp, but this only happens in the last film/novel and is not sufficient to be identified as a *femme fatale*.<sup>28</sup>

By overlooking the vampire genre, as Kokkola does, or picking out certain parts while ignoring others, as Beck does, much of what could be understood in their studies are lost and the conclusions become partial or imprecise. However, by looking at the characteristics of Edward Cullen through a genre perspective and taking the entire history of vampire fiction into consideration I will show how *Twilight* fits within the vampire genre.

#### 1.4 Genre Theory

When film is organized and in various ways referred to, for example in advertisement and broadcast schedules, it is commonly done so according to its genre. In *Film Genre: From Iconography to Ideology* Barry Keith Grant describes genre as “commercial feature films which, through repetitions and variations, tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations”.<sup>29</sup> A genre has recognizable traits, recurring structures,

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<sup>28</sup> Kokkola, “Virtuous Vampires and Voluptuous Vamps”, 165-179.

<sup>29</sup> Grant, *Film Genre*, 1-2.

and can both satisfy and surprise us according to expectations which can be accomplished through types of character, narrative construction, what emotion it evokes, style, conventions, iconography, setting, theme, and actors.<sup>30</sup>

However, genre is not as clear-cut as it sometimes appears. In many instances art cinema and experimental film borrow elements from genre films and introduces them in a different context.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, popular genre films may combine various elements from multiple genres, which can break off from conventions as well as fuse in a way that over time becomes natural. A film with aliens set in space that uses comic elements can still be considered a science fiction, and a scary movie with lots of action can still be part of the horror genre. Repeated variations within a genre can eventually turn into subgenres. According to Rick Altman, genres can both be firmly identified as well as evolve according to a fixed and identifiable trajectory.<sup>32</sup>

Not only do genre conventions give audiences the tools to understand, discuss, compare, evaluate, and critique a certain film; genre also provides a broader understanding of the relationship between commercial cinema and popular culture which proposes an idea of what context a certain film is best placed in order to analyze it.<sup>33</sup>

There is a tendency in film studies to restrict the discussion to textual analysis and not look at the context, which can result in a narrow understanding of the text. The film medium has been around for merely 120 years while literature has a much longer history that stretches back thousands of years. Film genres often derive from literary genres and are therefore better understood if the entire history of the genre is taken into consideration,<sup>34</sup> that is, analyzing commercial cinema as *The Twilight Saga* through a longer tradition of popular culture and development of vampire fiction.

Grant presents three different levels that can be used in order to understand genre in the cinema: the *generic system* which is the relation of individual genres to each other and to the production circumstances, *individual genres* that defines

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<sup>30</sup> Grant, *Film Genre*, 1-2; Vajdovich, "I'm with the vampires, of course", 245-246.

<sup>31</sup> Grant, *Film Genre*, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Altman, *Film/Genre*, 6.

<sup>33</sup> Grant, *Film Genre*, 1-2.

<sup>34</sup> Grant, *Film Genre*, 4.

individual genres and their common elements, and *individual films*, which is the reading of individual films within the context of the genre.<sup>35</sup> In this thesis I will focus on the last category of individual film placed in its generic context.

The production of genre films involves many individuals and is extensively a collaborative effort; something which has led to the understanding that genre film expresses a contemporary culture regardless of the film's time frame and setting.<sup>36</sup> We can distinguish cycles of genre popularity over time, for example the musical boom of the 1930's and the death of the western genre in the 1970's. Likewise, genre can develop and adapt its traditions in accordance to specific production situations, such as the horror film's incorporation of the atomic threat in the 1950's.

The same goes for vampire fiction. It has never been a static genre but developed by changing its conventions thus reflecting and conforming to its time of production. When succeeding it has reached popularity while at other times it is ignored or reduced to comic relief characters, for example in the spoof films of Abbott and Costello.

Twilight is a crossover between the vampire genre and the romance genre. Some scholars view them as mainly romances with vampire elements. For instance in the Introduction to *Interdisciplinary Approaches to Twilight: Studies in Fiction, Media and a Contemporary Cultural Experience* Mariah Larsson and Ann Steiner asserts that "it is not correct merely to categorize Twilight as vampire fiction. The texts are, perhaps first and foremost, romances"<sup>37</sup>, whereas I argue that Twilight follows and develops the vampire genre according to our specific time, as has been common when genres evolve. As Altman puts it: "That a new genre should be born in an expanding culture hardly provides cause for surprise. More important is the way in which this genre develops out of the coupling of two genres previously thought diametrically opposed".<sup>38</sup> Twilight is not an isolated case of vampire and romance crossover, but part of a contemporary trend that has given rise to a cycle of vampire popularity in its new romantic form.

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<sup>35</sup> Grant, *Film Genre*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Grant, *Film Genre*, 5-6.

<sup>37</sup> Larsson and Steiner, "Introduction", 15-16.

<sup>38</sup> Altman, *Film/Genre*, 5.

Since its first emergence, the vampire genre has had strong sexual undertones and depicted a controversy between paganism and Christianity. Later, the vampire's inner struggle between right and wrong was added. From the very first vampire poem, "Der Vampir" by Heinrich August Ossenfelder written in 1748, the clash between paganism and Christianity has been evident. Likewise, it includes sexual elements that persisted as an important thread throughout the history of the genre. These themes are constant but are used in a variety of ways and to various ends. The religious and sexual aspects are so strongly connected and so suggestive of the qualities of the vampire persona, that I argue here they amount to a *vampire ethics*.

Christian antagonism towards vampires existed prior to the creation of the fictional vampire. In the eighteenth century it was very much apparent throughout Europe in the handling of individuals whom were assumed to be real vampires. Vampires were regarded the enemies of Christianity and could therefore be warded off by Christian iconography, and the authors of vampire literature duly incorporated this conflict into their works. As to the persistent sexual themes, they could stem from earlier mythological creatures, the *incubus* and *succubus* who instead of sucking blood sucked energy. The incubus is a male demon who rapes women, while the succubus is a fornicating female who steals men's seed and souls. The sexual theme in stories about these creatures is evident, an element that later defined the vampire.<sup>39</sup>

Looking at *Twilight* through a textual analysis the story might appear to differ from previous vampire conventions. In this thesis I will contextualize the Edward character by placing him in the popular culture of vampire fiction in general. I will show how *Twilight* actually follows a tradition of constant change in vampire fiction, while still staying true to reoccurring and recognizable traits of the vampire genre.

## 1.5 Method and Source Material

In *Vampyrer: En kulturkritisk studie av den västerländska vampyrberättelsen från 1700-talet till 2000-talet*, Anna Höglund points out that there are many scholars from various disciplines who write about the vampire. Within these works there is a trend to

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<sup>39</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 55–56.

use the vampire character and the vampire story as a complement to other subjects the scholar sets out to examine. Höglund means that this trend has caused the vampire research to suffer from a lack of history since many of these scholars have little understanding of the vampire genre. When scholars imagine that a certain work of vampire fiction is the result of specific conditions and phenomenon in the so called real world without elemental knowledge of vampire traditions it may result in far-fetched conclusions.<sup>40</sup>

Some scholars pick out certain parts of vampire history to confirm their hypothesis while others overlook the vampire genre completely. Rather than doing a textual analysis of this sort I will undertake a *contextual analysis*. By applying genre theory I will focus on the development of vampire fiction in order to better understand the specific element of the vampire ethics in Twilight.

In the historic overview I will raise works that are part of the literary canon of what is usually seen as art, as well as works that are part of the so called mass culture. My selection depends on the significance the piece has had on shaping the vampire character and how it has influenced the way we see vampires today. In this part I will mainly refer to Höglund's thesis on vampires in fiction. Her thorough study of the vampire genre's development identifies trends by examining them in their social and cultural circumstances, thus placing them in a historic context which is beneficial for my study.

I will then present the Byronic Hero, with references to literature studying his fictional persona, and base my analysis of Edward Cullen's Byronic qualities on my observations in the Twilight Saga. By basing my analysis on the Twilight films rather than the novels, visual aspects of Edward's portrayal can be taken into consideration. Apart from the added visual element, which I will examine further, the outcome is not significantly affected since the issue of vampire ethics do not much differ between the films and the novels.

Using various articles, books, interviews and anthologies relevant to the subject I end with a discussion on possible implications of why some traits remain while others

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<sup>40</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 11-12.

are transformed and argue that the genre follows a contemporary trend in genre development. Likewise I will discuss the latest vampire cycle in the context of contemporary society.

## 2. Vampire Fiction: A Historical Overview

### 2.1 Early Influences and the 1700's

The vampire as a fictional character was shaped during the vampire craze in the eighteenth century. The common belief in the existence of actual vampires and the presumed cases of real vampire appearances affected people across Europe regardless of their social status. Church, science, philosophers, and academics alike took an interest in these cases, and used or discussed them as part of their own specific agendas.<sup>41</sup>

The first evidence of vampires in literature is to be found mainly in the poetry of the late eighteenth century. Poets were influenced by the existing currents of Romantic horror and generally retained the specific elements of the Gothic genre. Instead of imitating their literary predecessors, as in the early eighteenth century, these authors embraced individualism, personal feelings, and the ability to fantasize as sources for the creative process. During the Romantic era, the vampire character was fashioned as a mysterious figure very different from the undead monsters of folklore that tormented its fellow villagers. Instead they made him into an unconstrained, romantic outsider who went his own way despite public disapproval. The vampire was also a fatal character whose love led to destruction.<sup>42</sup>

Early 18<sup>th</sup> century literary trends tended to invalidate the unexplainable through rational scientific arguments. That trend turned towards the end of the century into a desire to learn and understand as much as possible of the unexplainable. The authors found themselves in an experimental phase where dreams were a main inspiration following the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764, which is seen as the first gothic novel. Authors wanted to extend the limits of the established norms; one way to put that into practice was to explore vampires and other supernatural creatures. Other trends included a strong interest in folk poetry and a celebration of Greek literature. The vampire turned into a lucrative choice of theme based on these trends. From late 18<sup>th</sup> century the core themes included rebellion and estrangement. The genre became more and more popular with the common people as the consumption of

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<sup>41</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 46–51, 56.

<sup>42</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 33, 53, 85–86, 94, 99; see also Williamson, *Lure of the Vampire*.



literature grew. At the same time the authors of the genre were seen as prestigious artists as the vampire character fitted well in to the literary climate. The use of the vampire was relatively done in similar ways as the authors had common sources of inspiration. The authors were also few and very much aware of each other's works.<sup>43</sup>

From its earliest roots, vampire fiction has had a series of recurring motifs and traits. Some of these are rooted in old folklores and myths. Death and blood are two important recurring themes. Vampires are seen as the dead who for various reasons turn into bloodthirsty monsters and haunt the living.<sup>44</sup> To avoid this, many were buried with a stake through their chests to stop them from rising again. The fear of vampirism embodied in these early conceptions was used by the Church in order to impose its fundamental values on society. The Church therefore changed some of the typical vampire traits and gave them more religious connotations that are still very much in evidence in the vampire genre today. For example, the destruction of the vampire became a religious rite; crucifixes and holy water bestowed protection; and drinking the blood of a sinner strengthened the power of the Devil, while taking Communion afforded the communicant protection.<sup>45</sup>

## 2.2 The 1800's

Besides their roots in folklore and the influence of Christianity, vampire traits were shaped in the development of vampire literature. Details in significant works go on to affect subsequent literature. While some of these traits are still current, others are somewhat forgotten.

All vampires share a thirst for blood; the bloodsucking unites and defines them. In *The Giaour* (1813), Lord Byron introduced the empathetic aspect by portraying a vampire who the readers could sympathize with. Samuel Taylor Coleridge presented the first female vampire in *Christabel* (1816), who became the archetype of the fatale female. Besides instigating the Byronic hero in *The Vampyre* (1819), John Polidori created many important traits that are still common today, among them the vampire's

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<sup>43</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 63, 85, 89-90.

<sup>44</sup> Twitchell, *Living Dead*, 13.

<sup>45</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 37-40.

fear of sunlight, the unnatural strength, ability to revive and heal itself in moonlight, and the custom of leaving bite marks on the necks of the victims.<sup>46</sup>

As we can see, a change in the vampire persona took place in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The authors did not so much depict it as a monster without personal identity, but as a real character with thoughts and feelings. The vampire turned more human.<sup>47</sup> According to Kevin Jackson there were four main types of vampires in this century: the unseen force, the *femme fatale* or vamp, the folkloric monster, and the doomed, aristocratic hero-villain.<sup>48</sup>

Towards the 1820's the vampire's popularity and its esteemed status changed into something ignoble and cheap for the masses and no longer perceived as part of the prestigious arts. Instead of having the sublime elements of terror the genre turned out to be associated with the more vulgar horror, seen as plain and with low literary value. The vampire theme was used as long as it gained the authors to later be abandoned and frowned upon.<sup>49</sup>

Elizabeth Caroline Grey, the first female writer of vampire fiction, was the first to combine scientific subjects with a vampire theme in *The Skeleton Count, or The Vampire Mistress* (1828), which focused on questionable aspects such as astrology, mesmerism, and the occult. She also coined the vampire's ability to hypnotize and picked up the ritual of killing the vampire with a stake, along with the enraged mob of yore. Science, and specifically the unexplored parts of science, became a main theme and continued being a significant part of any horror related literature until this day. Malcolm Rymer continued in Grey's footsteps with *Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood* (1847) but added a few new elements of his own such as the vampire's eastern European origins, the habit of resting in a coffin, invulnerability, the ability to transform its victims into new vampires, the ability to change into a wolf, and the vampire's arrival to urbanized areas by shipwreck from a far-away land. He added a stronger sexual tension between the vampire and its victim, stronger sexual indications throughout the bloodsucking ritual, as well as the vampire's habit of visiting its victims

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<sup>46</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 65–66, 83–84.

<sup>47</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 121–122.

<sup>48</sup> Jackson, "There will be Blood", 50–51.

<sup>49</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 85, 96.

in their sleep. In addition he introduced recurrent characters such as the skeptical scientist, and the devoted vampire hunter with his healthy respect for the bloodsucking creature. His stories also amplified the general tone of decadence and decline.<sup>50</sup>

During this period vampire literature persisted but appeared in different forms. The British story papers “Penny dreadful” were a particularly popular form of publication, aimed specifically at the working class. The works written through the 19<sup>th</sup> century were extremely successful and many vampire traits that we see as essential today were introduced. It would take until 1872 until the vampire theme would once again be taken up by a more acknowledged author: *Carmilla* by Sheridan le Fanu.<sup>51</sup>

Twenty five years later Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* was published which has had unprecedented affect upon the vampire genre. According to Jackson, in 2009 there had been more than 150 feature films with Count Dracula as the main character and countless other movies, television dramas and novels where he puts in an appearance. In *Dracula* Bram Stoker combined many of the elements created by earlier nineteenth-century writers, imbuing these traits with the enduring status they possess in popular culture today. The characters that were formed and the material that was used in *Dracula* have later turned into archetypical traits in the vampire genre.<sup>52</sup>

### 2.3 The 1900’s

In early 20<sup>th</sup> century numerous authors followed in Bram Stoker’s footsteps. Mainly short stories of vampires were written during this time and not so many novels were published in the genre. During the 1920’s and 30’s a modernization of the vampire character took place where authors broke the boundaries of how the creature was to be depicted. The vampire could now be a sweet old lady, a creature from outer space, descend from other dimensions or be invisible. Nature could be vampire-like through flowers or bloodsucking leeches and snails. This period also saw an amplified humanization of the vampire through more sympathetic attributes.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 111-112, 118–120.

<sup>51</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 98, 103, 108.

<sup>52</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 277; Jackson, ”There will be Blood”, 50.

<sup>53</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 280-282, 284-286.

The American horror fiction pulp magazine *Weird Tales* published a great deal of stories of the fantastic. The vampire became one of the most popular characters and was used in many new ways. During the 1940's magazines like *Weird Tales* increasingly lost popularity. Even so a few short stories of vampires were still written through the decade. Presenting the vampire as a humane creature became even more common, in some stories the vampire was also used as a metaphor for the horrors of war.<sup>54</sup>

By the 1950's *Weird Tales* ceased to exist. The vampire character was instead used in science fiction and the new forum of comics. In the 1960's the vampire entered the world of fantasy literature as well as comical literature. Stories from films and TV were also adapted as literature. By the end of the decade the vampire novel became popular once again and in the 1970's this form dominated the market. During this period the authors challenged the established norms of the accepted by portraying an increasing levels of violence and eroticism. In 1976 Anne Rice's *Interview with a Vampire* was published which transformed the entire vampire genre. No other author has influenced the vampire literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century as much as Rice. She turned the conventions around by placing the vampires in focus while humans obtain secondary roles. Her novels also return to and develop the romantic traditions established before *Dracula*.<sup>55</sup>

Meanwhile the film medium saw the light of day. As early as 1896 Georges Méliès produced *Le Manoir du Diable*, which is widely considered the first horror film. In this early production a bat is seen transforming into a bloodsucking vampire who is warded off by a crucifix. The silent era continued depicting the vampire in over 40 films during the coming years. The most significant work would be *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* (1922) directed by F. W. Murnau based on Bram Stoker's *Dracula* which was followed by a burst of *Dracula*-themed adaptations. Bela Lugosi starred in the first horror film with sound: Tod Browning's *Dracula* from 1931. The

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<sup>54</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 283, 291-292.

<sup>55</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 280, 294, 299-301, 309-310.

Dracula craze corresponds with the depression era, as David J. Skal puts it: “America’s worst year of the century would be its best year ever for monsters”.<sup>56</sup>

In *The Changing Vampire of Film and Television: A Critical Study of the Growth of a Genre* Tim Kane identifies three film cycles from 1931 to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Kane calls the time between 1931 and 1948 “The malignant cycle”, referring to filmmaker’s experimental tendencies that introduced a mix of vampire elements still in use today. These include the lesbian *femme fatale* (inspired by Sheridan le Fanu’s *Carmilla*); the vampire’s immediate death following exposure to sunlight; as well as influences from the ongoing World War.

“The erotic cycle” stretched from 1957 to 1985 and began with a vampire revival through the British production company Hammer Films where color was introduced and emphasized by very red blood baths. An explosion of vampire films followed which were, as with the vampire literature of the time, highly erotic on the verge of pornographic while also having a tendency to present romantic connection between vampires and humans. This includes Jean Rollin’s numerous productions and Werner Herzog’s *Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht* (1979). Another new trend was the fuse of erotic vampires with the challenging of society norms through Blaxploitation films like *Blacula* (William Crain, 1972).

The vampire film lost much of its appeal by the end of the 1970’s and the beginning of 1980’s due to its inability to adapt to its specific time. However, a third cycle arises in 1987 which Kane identifies as “the sympathetic cycle”.<sup>57</sup> The vampire appears in many so called *teenmovies* of the late 1980’s. This period, which has been ongoing until present time, is marked by the humane vampire’s increased permission to tell his or her own story, including the popular film adaptation *Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles* (Neil Jordan, 1994) of Rice’s novel. This development has led to great changes in the vampire character while still maintaining much of the traditional elements.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 282, 288-289; Skal, *The Monster Show*, 115.

<sup>57</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 289-291, 293, 297, 301-304; Kane, *The Changing Vampire of Film and Television*, 21.

<sup>58</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 305, 310-311.

## 2.4 The 2000's

In the new millennium the vampires raised from its coffin once again with a great increase in vampire publications which reached immense popularity. The bloodsuckers of today continue and develop the trend of the humane vampire, as well as embodying the monster-like vampire of earlier literature. In addition, the humane vampire character is more varied than in previous works of fiction.

Most notable is the entry of the vampire in *paranormal romance*, mainly targeted toward a teenage audience. *The Vampire Diaries* series (1991-1992, 2009-2014) by L. J. Smith is an early example of this trend which later was adapted into an ongoing television series (*The Vampire Diaries* 2009-). Charlaine Harris' *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* (2001-2013) and Richelle Mead's *Vampire Academy* (2007-2010) followed and were adapted into the popular television series *True Blood* (2008-2014) as well as a not as successful film adaptation (*Vampire Academy*, Mark Waters, 2014). However, none has had as profound impact on popular culture as the Twilight phenomenon.<sup>59</sup>

Clearly, the vampire as a fictional character is an evolving creature who developed over time through social and cultural change and in influential works of literature and film. The fact that Twilight follows some traits but differs on other accounts is thus not necessarily a break with tradition, but a continuation of earlier developments. The key is to locate where it differs, identify patterns, and understand what those patterns might imply.

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<sup>59</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 310-312; Borgia, "Twilight", 1.

### 3. The Byronic Hero

#### 3.1 Lord Byron

The Byronic hero is a character based on the life and writings of Lord Byron.<sup>60</sup> His lifestyle and personality have proved to be a longer-lasting source of inspiration than his writings. As a major phenomenon in the English Romantic movement, the character had a profound influence on Western literature in the nineteenth century.<sup>61</sup>

In 1816 Byron's ex-lover, Lady Caroline Lamb, published the Gothic novel *Glenarvon* in which she used the character of Ruthven Glenarvon to satirize Byron as an incurable villain. However, the story that made the Byronic hero into a phenomenon was *The Vampyre* by John Polidori. He worked for a short period as Byron's physician, and accompanied Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Mary Godwin to the Villa Diodati in the summer of 1816 where they amused themselves by reading ghost stories and made a pact to come up with their own supernatural tale. Soon thereafter Polidori's short story was published as *The Vampyre* and turned out to be an immediate success. The name of the main character, Lord Ruthven, is taken from Lady Caroline Lamb's Byronic character and based on Byron's personality, reputation, and scandalous lifestyle.<sup>62</sup>

Following the success of *The Vampyre* the Byronic hero came to dominate the horror fiction of the early nineteenth century. Polidori created a trend that many imitated, which led to a new wave of vampire popularization.<sup>63</sup>

The Byronic character is made into a typical, romantic anti-hero who torments those he loves. He is an irresistible seducer who symbolizes forbidden desire. The sensational part of this fatal vampire is that he is a nobleman of rank, educated but arrogant.<sup>64</sup> He is mysterious and charismatic, with strong powers of seduction, sexual attraction, and uncontrollable passions. He is sophisticated and well mannered, but also an artistic, rebellious outsider, ready to challenge the norms and values of the

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<sup>60</sup> Gelder, *Reading the Vampire*, 31.

<sup>61</sup> Thorslev, *Byronic Hero*, 3-4.

<sup>62</sup> Gelder, *Reading the Vampire*, 31; Praz, *Romantic Agony*, 78.

<sup>63</sup> Frost, *Guises of the Vampire*, 38.

<sup>64</sup> Frost, *Guises of the Vampire*, 38-39; Frayling, *Vampyres*, 9.

bourgeoisie. The Byronic hero is not a bloodsucking monster but an anguished personality with strong needs who cannot refrain from causing other people suffering. He is condemned to walk the earth with the living, but without being part of their social community.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, the Byronic hero differs from the folklore-inspired vampires by the fact that he has no family. In their earlier monster-like form, vampires would rise after death to torment their families. The Byronic hero does no such thing.<sup>66</sup>

## 3.2 Edward Cullen

### 3.2.1 Traits in Common

Edward Cullen has much in common with the Byronic hero. First of all he might be named after Edward Ferrars in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), and Edward Rochester in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), both considered Byronic heroes.

In Edward Cullen, the Byronic hero's status as a nobleman is transformed into privileged financial circumstances with suggestions of European aristocracy. Edward and his coven of vampires live in a big, luxurious house; they drive expensive cars and dress well. As the Byronic hero, Edward is intelligent, educated, sophisticated, and artistic.<sup>67</sup> His room is filled with books; he is able to recite a monologue from *Romeo and Juliet* by heart when asked to in class; he owns many records; he can dance; and he can play the piano.

Edward's looks are presented very much like those of the Byronic hero: he is pale with very red lips. The first thing that is said about Edward by Jessica in *Twilight* is that he is "totally gorgeous, obviously", and that "apparently nobody here is good enough for him". Jessica's words insinuate that many have tried but failed to obtain Edward's attention. As the Byronic hero, Edward is handsome and sexually attractive but extremely arrogant – he is present but not very social.<sup>68</sup> He is as mysterious and magnetic as the Byronic hero is supposed to be.<sup>69</sup> This becomes even clearer when

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<sup>65</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 84.

<sup>66</sup> Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, 17.

<sup>67</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 84.

<sup>68</sup> "Characteristics of the Byronic Hero".

<sup>69</sup> Praz, *Romantic Agony*, 66.



Edward explains to Bella that he is the world's most dangerous predator and everything about him is there in order to invite his victims in. In school, however, the Cullens have the status of outsiders; the other students think they are weird, consider them freaks, and prefer to stay away from them (which demonstrates quite a contradiction in regards to Edward's explanation).

The Byronic hero can seem calm and cold, but beneath the surface he hides dark passions and can be compulsive.<sup>70</sup> This is clear in Edward's love for Bella. At times he also shows his difficulty in controlling himself when feeling strongly about something. As Bella is harassed by a group of men in *Twilight*, Edward saves her and struggles to prevent himself from going back to "rip those guys' heads off" because of the "vile, repulsive things they were thinking". When it comes to Bella's relationship with Jacob, Edward can sometime barely stop himself from attacking his rival.

Emotional conflicts and tendencies for moodiness are apparent in the Byronic character.<sup>71</sup> In Edward's relationship with Bella he constantly shifts between wanting to be with her and wanting her to leave him for "her own good". From the moment they meet in *Twilight* he is torn between his attraction to Bella and his rational mind telling him to keep away from her. He ignores her only to approach her in the next scene; he rejects her and later tries to be friendly. In the cafeteria thirty minutes into the film, when Edward approaches Bella yet again, she tells him: "You know, your mood swings are kind of giving me whiplash". Later he tells her that he does not have the strength to stay away from her any longer. At the end of *Twilight* he tries to convince her to go and live with her mother in Jacksonville so that he cannot hurt her again, only to change his mind when Bella gets angry with him for even suggesting this. Early in *New Moon* Jasper loses control over his bloodlust and attacks Bella. This convinces Edward that the best thing would be to leave her. In the end of *New Moon* he comes back, promises never to fail her again, and asks her to marry him.

A Byronic hero is an independent rebel who creates his own moral code and has a dislike of rank, defying the ruling institution.<sup>72</sup> Certainly, Edward does not adhere to the norms for how to behave and act. He also points out that he is breaking all the rules

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<sup>70</sup> Praz, *Romantic Agony*, 66.

<sup>71</sup> "Characteristics of the Byronic Hero".

<sup>72</sup> Thorslev, *Byronic Hero*, 172; Stein, *Byronic Hero*, 1.

by being with Bella. The powerful Volturi family, who regulate the vampire's laws, command him to turn Bella into a vampire so as they might let them live. Edward does not respect the council's authority, but prefers to defy the Volturi and keep Bella human. There is, however, one authority that Edward chooses to obey, which will be discussed below.

As an adaptable being, the Byronic hero is an outlaw who resides in exile of some kind. The exile can be created by external forces or be self-imposed.<sup>73</sup> Edward and his coven are constantly forced to move in order not to raise the suspicions of the humans around them. Forks is their hometown when we enter the story in *Twilight*, it is said that they moved there a few years earlier from Alaska. Jacob points out that the coven had lived in Forks before, which indicates that the Cullens' exile is something of a rotation. Through Bella, Edward turns into another kind of outlaw when he defies the Volturis' order to change her into a vampire. In many respects, Edward Cullen can be seen as a typical Byronic hero. However, there are two areas in which the differences between them stand out, and these can best be described as the vampire ethics.

### *3.2.2 Sexual Indulgence*

Like Edward, the Byronic hero is sexually attractive and passionate, but unlike Edward his passions and desires are uncontrolled, with streaks of promiscuity and indifference. Edward does not spend his time luring women to fall for him; he does not have wild affairs with women of all social ranks, only to leave them broken and sucked dry. Edward is deeply aware of his potentially uncontrollable lust for blood, but in his case it is not the world around him that tries to restrain him, but he himself who has a set of clear boundaries that he refuses to cross.

When it comes to Bella, Edward fails to control himself completely; her scent brings out the passion and desire he has done everything to restrain. Consequently he tries to avoid her but fails. Bella asks Edward why he hated her so much when they first met. Edward confesses that he did, but "only for making me want you so badly". What

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<sup>73</sup> Praz, *Romantic Agony*, 63; Stein, *Byronic Hero*, 2.

Edward means is that he wanted her blood; however, the rhetoric used (to “want” someone) is easily connected to wanting someone romantically or sexually.

As in many cases throughout the vampire genre, the lust for blood is connected to the lust for sex.<sup>74</sup> In the Twilight Saga, blood, love, and sex are mixed in both language and behavior. After Edward’s failed attempts to keep away from the girl who brings out the passionate bloodsucker in him, he is still the one who wants to keep the relationship as asexual as possible. When kissing her, his desire for blood gets too strong and he harshly tells himself to stop. He feels content with just watching her sleep with her clothes on.

The Cullens have renounced the drinking of human blood on moral grounds; instead they feed on animals. Through the connection of blood, love, and sex this choice could be considered an act of celibacy. Edward motivates the principle by saying that he does not want to be a monster. Thus the Cullens consider themselves of a higher moral rank than vampires who feed on human blood. Of course, even in the Twilight Saga there are vampires who give in to their lust for blood, and attack and suck dry whoever they see fit. However, these vampires are seen as villains who must either be killed or scared away if they get near the Cullens’ territory. The only vampires that are seen as truly righteous are the ones that have joined the Cullen coven of “vegetarians”.

Bella is exclusively chosen by Edward. He tells her that she does not know “how long I’ve waited for you” and that he “never wanted a human’s blood so much in my life”. From these statements we are given to understand that he has not been with anyone before Bella. She is special to Edward since her smell is like his “own brand of heroin” and since he is unable to read her mind, as he can with everyone else. To “wait for someone” implies a desire for the conservative form of lifestyle: to get married in a monogamous, heterosexual relationship, have children, and live happily ever after. In *New Moon* Edward asks Bella to marry him and in *Eclipse* he states that he does not want them to have sex before marriage. He motivates this by a desire to protect Bella’s soul, even though he believes his own to be damned. His explanation indicates a belief in something higher than humanity that possesses the power either to save or to damn.

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<sup>74</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 328.

The institution of marriage is otherwise a very human notion; in literature, the vampiric Byronic hero has no such ambitions. A Byronesque marriage would only occur as a way to feed on women; marriage itself as a sacrament is available only to human men, not vampires. In the Twilight Saga, on the other hand, the idea of marriage is introduced relatively early and has a significant function in the story.<sup>75</sup>

*Breaking Dawn – Part 1* begins accordingly with Edward and Bella’s wedding. The newly married couple is then off on a honeymoon at the Cullen’s private island, Isle Esme, where the marriage is consummated which immediately results in Bella’s pregnancy. The conservative moral of sex after marriage is fulfilled with intercourse leading to reproduction, as even the name of the Island clearly implies (as it is named after the Cullen mother, which links sexual activity to procreation).

In many ways, Edward becomes Bella’s protector. He saves her from serious physical injury; he keeps her from getting harmed by other men who think “repulsive thoughts”; he makes sure that other vampires restrain themselves from drinking her blood; he opposes her determination to become a damned, soulless vampire like himself; and he keeps her from losing her virginity before marriage, as that would also harm her soul. Edward, even though he is a vampire with strong similarities to the passionate Byronic hero, has extreme control over his desires. In the Twilight Saga it is the humans who cannot restrain themselves, as we see when Bella gets into trouble with groups of men. Edward does not try to have sex with Bella; instead he is the one who keeps the relationship on a platonic level until marriage. He does not have a history of numerous sexual and/or bloodsucking escapades. Instead he has waited for “the one and only”. Conveniently, he can put his conservative views down to the fact that he comes from a different era. He wants to court Bella, drink iced tea with her on the porch, ask for her father’s permission, and marry her before having sexual intercourse.

### 3.2.3 Religion

The second area in which Edward differs from the Byronic hero concerns Christian symbolism. According to Mario Praz, Milton’s Satan is to be found in every Byronic

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<sup>75</sup> Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, 13, 18.

hero. He is a fallen or exiled being expelled from heaven to dwell on earth under a curse.<sup>76</sup> Anna Höglund argues that the combination of Byron and the vampire motif became associated with Milton's fallen angel, which later was developed in the Byronic hero, who took the form of a fallen angel with black wings.<sup>77</sup> Brian Frost, meanwhile, describes the Byronic hero as a being dressed in black with a long cloak fluttering around him like the wings of a bat.<sup>78</sup>

The first time Bella sees the Cullen vampires in school they are all wearing white or light-colored clothes, except Edward who is wearing grey and black. The next time Bella sees him is in class. Edward sits behind a desk with a white, stuffed owl behind him, spreading its wings. In many shots there seem to be white wings sprouting from Edward's shoulders. While using the Byronic hero's characteristics, the black wings of a demon are changed into the whiteness associated with wings of an angel.

Sunlight is an element that conventionally affects vampires in various ways. In the Twilight Saga the beams of the sun brings out the vampires' true nature so that they sparkle like diamonds. This might seem to differ from the common vampire character. However, when it comes to the specific details of the vampire's strengths and weaknesses, it is common for writers of vampire tales to pick and choose whatever fits the specific story. The selection of specific vampire traits is sometimes explained in the stories while other traits are frowned upon and seen as "silly", or they may not be mentioned at all. In the Twilight Saga, the true nature of the vampire is something that sparkles, something "beautiful" as Bella puts it, almost angel-like.

The Twilight vampires have a few common characteristics such as strength, speed, and a keen sense of smell. Their eyes change color; they are pale and cold. They do not eat, drink, sleep, or age. Some of them also have individual powers: Edward can read minds, while Alice can foresee the future. To choose a few vampire characteristics while ignoring others is not uncommon per se, but the selection in the Twilight Saga all points to an elimination of the religious conflict. The Cullens are associated with light as opposed to darkness: they do not sleep in dark coffins but live in a big, open-plan

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<sup>76</sup> Praz, *Romantic Agony*, 63.

<sup>77</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 84.

<sup>78</sup> Frost, *Guises of the Vampire*, 39.

house with white walls and enormous windows. They are not to be warded off by crucifixes or holy water – indeed the Cullens have a big wooden crucifix on the wall.

Carlisle is the leader of the Cullen coven and the only authority Edward completely acknowledges. Carlisle is determined to exclusively feed on animal blood, and he helps other vampires overcome their bloodlust in order to lead a similar kind of lifestyle. He is a pacifist who avoids spilling blood to the point that he is even reluctant to kill villains like James. Instead of draining life, Carlisle saves lives by working as a doctor; he is a healer, not a destroyer. The only reason he turned his wife Esme and Edward into vampires was in order to save them from certain death. Carlisle and his coven's alternative lifestyle is not recognized by the Volturi council, or by other vampires for that matter. The Cullens live by their own moral code; much like religious groups that adhere to their own interpretation of what they believe is divine authority, refusing to recognize profane authority – the Volturi in this case. Carlisle encourages the members of his coven to take care of one another no matter what. He repeatedly reminds them that they are a family, despite the lack of any biological connection, in a manner similar to a priest leading a congregation. With his authority, willingness to stand up for his beliefs however controversial, welcoming and good-hearted personality, pacifism, and community-oriented convictions, Carlisle becomes a form of shepherd leading his followers on the right path towards salvation, eschewing damnation.

A Byronic hero is a damned being who also recognizes this fact without problematizing it by trying to be “good” or “bad”. While the Byronic hero's conscience is rarely reflected in his actions, Edward suffers tremendously from what he sees as his true nature. He repeatedly states that he knows himself to be doomed. He believes his soul is damned and that he will go to hell. This notion fits with the Byronic hero's characteristics as a fallen angel, yet as viewers we constantly receive indications to the contrary. Bella, for one, does not believe him to be soulless or damned. Following the part in *Twilight* when Edward confirms that he indeed is a vampire and he and Bella declare their love for each other, they lie in the grass with the sun shining through the trees to light up their faces. The light on Edward's face makes it sparkle so he stands out from the otherwise grey surroundings, as if their new-found relationship is receiving a blessing from above.

At the end of *Breaking Dawn – Part 1* and concluding in *Breaking Dawn – Part 2*, Edward finally turns Bella into a vampire in order to save her from dying in child birth. He has been reluctant to do so during the entire saga in fear of damning Bella's soul, as he believes his own soul to be damned. In turning, Bella spends three days in agony. She goes through a sort of hell in order to rise as an immortal; stronger and more beautiful than ever. The Christian symbolism is not hard to decipher as the story of Jesus' crucifixion results in him being dead for three days while descending into hell, only to resurrect as a the supernatural being of Christ. Bella joins the Cullen family who are saved instead of damned through their values and choices.

Is Edward really soulless and damned? These details indicate that he is not, but rather saved by virtue of his own personal values and moral choices. On the whole, Edward seems more an angel from heaven than a fallen angel damned to hell. Far from conflicting with Christianity, the Twilight vampires conform to its values. Rather than using Christian symbols to ward vampires off, these symbols flood the Twilight Saga through the Cullens.

## 4. Discussion and Conclusions

### 4.1 Edward and the Byronic Hero

Edward possesses many traits typical of the customary Byronic hero. They both come from wealthy backgrounds; they share certain details of appearance and are intelligent, educated, sophisticated, and artistic. Both the Byronic hero and Edward are sexually attractive men who convey arrogant attitudes. They are mysterious and magnetic; they can seem calm and cold on the surface but feel very passionate about certain issues. Edward shares the Byronic hero's emotional conflict and tendency to moodiness, and equally exists in a form of exile. They are independent rebels, creating their own moral codes regardless of accustomed authority and rank.

However, when it comes to indulgence in vice and the impact of religious themes, Edward and the conventional Byronic hero strongly differ. Sexuality and the lust for blood are intertwined in the Twilight Saga. Edward tries to control both of these desires and therefore actively denies himself certain actions. Where a Byronic hero would indulge, Edward abstains. Edward holds to the idea of finding the "one and only" to love and be with forever, as opposed to a Byronic hero who would work his way through all the women who fall for him. In addition, the institution of marriage is a central part of Edward's relationship with Bella, something that would only be attempted as means to a self-serving end by a Byronic hero.

Christian symbolism is evident in the Twilight Saga as it is throughout the history of the vampire genre. Many common vampire traits are used in the Twilight Saga, yet the ones chosen all point to the elimination of religious conflict. For example, Christian iconography does not repel vampires but is instead adapted by them. Although there is an obvious link to the fallen angel–Byronic hero's dark wings in *Twilight*, certain visual elements are used to illustrate the opposite. Instead of black bat-wings, the viewer catches a glimpse of white angel wings, along with the fact that Edward's skin sparkles in the sun, looking angelic. Furthermore, Edward, as opposed to the Byronic hero, suffers from the nature of his being and speaks in terms of being damned. Yet as viewers we witness indications of the opposite. Edward and Bella's relationship seems to receive blessings from above as their union is shined upon from heaven; his



choices reflect a high moral standard; and he believes he can spare Bella his fate by not having sex with her before their marriage. This idea indicates a certain belief that their actions are in some way registered and will eventually bear fruit. Edward Cullen is a modern Byronic hero, but instead of being ruthless, demonic, and damned, he is morally correct, angel-like, and saved. His salvation is in many ways achieved through Carlisle's Christ-like guidance to keep on the right path.

## 4.2 Choices and Intentions

What might be the reason for the choices made in the creation of the Twilight Saga? The story has clearly embraced certain elements of the vampire genre, particularly those originating from the Romantic Movement. Meanwhile other concepts or traits are either ignored or transformed in a way that ultimately gives the story a far more conservative tone than preceding classics.

Stephenie Meyer has claimed that she had no knowledge of the vampire genre in literature or film. As a devoted Mormon, Meyer is against the idea of premarital sex, a view which is clearly incorporated in the world of Twilight. She states that her intention was not to write a message, only to entertain. However, she confesses that Mormon themes are included, her views on sex as well as the importance of free will stem from her beliefs. She wants her characters to be aware of spiritual issues and possess the ability to choose different paths in their lives.<sup>79</sup>

Catherine Hardwicke adapted Meyer's first book *Twilight* for the screen. In this film the major part of the Twilight vampires' world is presented, to be elaborated on in the subsequent films. In *Twilight*, common vampire traits are employed while others are either ignored or used in different ways. Few interviews bring up the subject of how Hardwicke adapted *Twilight* when it came to the content of the story. The question of literary influences is not even raised. The only comparison made is with *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003). Hardwicke, like Meyer, denies any knowledge of this predecessor. When asked about Meyer's involvement in the making of *Twilight*,

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<sup>79</sup> "Stephenie Meyer's Twilight Series"; Goodnow, "Stephenie Meyer's Forks-based Saga"; "10 Questions for Stephenie Meyer"; Castellitto, "Dreams of High School Vampires".

Hardwicke replies that Meyer was present and involved, but did not interfere. The only time Meyer had an objection concerned a scene when Bella and Edward kissed in a way she regarded unduly sexual. This scene was recut and modified. While Meyer is an outspoken Mormon, Hardwicke grew up a Presbyterian. Whether this had an impact on their collaboration and choices, one can only speculate.<sup>80</sup> The fact remains that common vampire traits are employed throughout the films, regardless of Meyer and Hardwicke's denial of vampire knowledge. The result is a higher degree of restraint as well as conformity with Christianity.

### 4.3 Contemporary Vampire Fiction

Is it Meyer and Hardwicke's personal beliefs that have shaped the Twilight Saga, or are the concepts discussed in this thesis part of a general trend?

Atara Stein, in analyzing a number of contemporary examples of the Byronic hero, concludes that the modern Byronic hero is ultimately applauded and not condemned. She calls these characters "decent" Byronic heroes who are given the opportunity to be rehumanized. As an example, Stein mentions Angel in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as a typical decent Byronic hero.<sup>81</sup>

Meanwhile, Höglund argues that the vampires of today are more open about the connection between blood and sex. They are also more concerned with controlling and limiting these needs – and far more romantically minded. They believe in true love by selecting one person to be with forever. The humans are more likely to lack control of their urges; they are often rendered irresponsible, weak and more primitive than the supposed monsters, as reflected in Twilight. In addition, many vampire characters share Byronic traits such as creativity, intellect and education, some in a more modern form than others.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Rogers, "Interview with a Vampire's Director"; Carnevale, "Twilight – Catherine Hardwicke interview"; Weintraub, "Director Catherine Hardwicke".

<sup>81</sup> Stein, *Byronic Hero*, 34, 214, 216.

<sup>82</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 317-327, 329, 331-332.

Trends distinguishable in *Twilight* do not seem to be exclusive examples in contemporary vampire fiction considering the huge publication rate of vampire romances, their screen adaptations and financial achievements.

#### 4.4 The Vampire Genre

Does *Twilight* fit into the vampire genre? I argue that it does. As mentioned above genre can be seen through different categories such as types of character, narrative construction, the emotion it evokes, style, conventions, iconography, setting, theme, and actors.<sup>83</sup> Looking at *Twilight* through a genre perspective can be accomplished by all of these different angles, though you could argue that some aspects are more essential to the specific genre than others.

In my analysis I have focused on the *character* of Edward Cullen, while in “‘I’m with the vampires, of course’: *Twilight* novels and films as vampire stories” Györgyi Vajdovich looks at *Twilight* through a genre perspective, focusing on the *emotion* vampire fiction typically evokes. He argues that the vampire is a subgenre to horror and means that *Twilight* deviates from the vampire tradition as it is not a story that evokes fear. At the same time he admits that the vampire genre is subject to constant change; the neglect of certain features and the incorporation of others ensure the genre’s renewal and survival.<sup>84</sup>

Furthermore, a fusion of different genres within the vampire narrative is not a new concept. Since the emergence of cinema, vampires have been depicted in horror stories, but also mixed with comedies, dramas, experimental films, westerns, action movies, animated children’s films, anime, road-movies, adventure films, science fiction, counterfactual history, thrillers, art cinema, gangster movies, chick-flicks, war movies, melodramas and now romance. While Vajdovich mentions a few of these fusions he easily dismisses them by claiming that genres like action and western work well with horror, while melodrama (he mentions *Interview with a Vampire*) and romance (The

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<sup>83</sup> Grant, *Film Genre*, 1-2; Vajdovich, “‘I’m with the vampires, of course’”, 245-246.

<sup>84</sup> Vajdovich, “‘I’m with the vampires, of course’”, 245-246, 258-259.

Twilight Saga) do not. Therefore they do not fit into the vampire genre, according to him.

He backs this by the fact that we are supposed to sympathize with the main vampires in these films: “The reconciliation of horror and romance is impossible, because one cannot feel love for someone and be horrified by the same person at the same time.”<sup>85</sup> However, this explanation ignores all other vampire characters in the stories except the main protagonists. In both *Twilight* and *Interview with a Vampire* the main vampire characters differ from the “normal” vampires presented in the stories. While Louis (Brad Pitt) feels shame in drinking human blood, no other vampire shares his sentiment. The same goes for *Twilight*. Edward and the Cullens stand out when it come to their “vegetarian” life style, they fight their predatory nature of drinking human blood through the notion of free will to do good instead of evil. All other vampires in *Twilight* are presented as deadly beasts that need to be warded off in order to protect the family and the town. The Cullens even work together with their ancient enemies, the werewolves, in order to fight the monster-like vampires and keep their exclusive lifestyle. All other vampires except the Cullens are much like the vampires in horror stories.

As we have seen through different views of scholars and critics *Twilight* is not a clear-cut vampire story but mixes different genre elements. However, I maintain that it should not be dismissed from the vampire genre since it follows the conventions in many significant aspects. Furthermore, the manner in which it differs by fusing with romance is in accordance with the constant transformation of genre cycles.

There definitely exists a reluctance to welcome *Twilight* into the vampire family. I believe some people are keen to prove the sparkling vampires of *Twilight* not worthy to be included into the vampire genre on account of the low status that cultural expressions mainly targeted toward teenage girls generate. Only the future will tell if the latest vampire craze with its mix of romance will be incorporated into the vampire canon.

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<sup>85</sup> Vajdovich, “I’m with the vampires, of course”, 259.

## 4.5 Vampires and Society

In studying the vampire's history by connecting its cycles to social and cultural conditions, Höglund argues that the usage of vampires in fiction is convenient since they always say something about us as humans and the world we live in. Therefore, by studying vampires, we can also understand much of ourselves, our culture and our history. According to her, the vampire's constant reappearance in fiction is due to its ability to adapt to its specific times, explaining its constant evolvement.<sup>86</sup> Contemporary vampire fiction has obviously succeeded in tapping into something relevant for consumers of today. As Rebecca Housel and Jeremy Wisnewski puts it in *Twilight and Philosophy*: "Bella and Edward are a mirror for our greatest fears and hopes [...] there for our reflection and exploration".<sup>87</sup>

What the latest vampire craze say about our current time might be easier to identify through a rear view mirror. The message of *Twilight* is much criticized from both a feminist point of view, as well as from the Christian right. Nevertheless, in the mainstream it has gained huge popularity.<sup>88</sup> As Natalie Wilson states: *Twilight* "is neither feminist nor anti-feminist, neither fundamentalist nor anti-religion, neither progressive nor conservative".<sup>89</sup>

In "There will be Blood" Jackson speaks of the turn from the monster-like vampire of folklore, to the immense influence of *Dracula*, to the romantic vampire of today. He agrees that the romantic vampire follows the vampire trend of genre development but does not present a theory as to why this is, except that it's a "tricky question".<sup>90</sup> In "The vampire as a religious phenomenon", Pierre Wiktorin argues that the vampire transformation has to do with a changed attitude toward the superhuman being. While the church highly influenced the birth of vampire fiction much of their authority is lost today.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 11.

<sup>87</sup> Housel and Wisnewski, "Introduction: Undead Wisdom", 2.

<sup>88</sup> Kokkola, "Virtuous Vampires and Voluptuous Vamps", 165-179.

<sup>89</sup> Wilson, *Seduced by Twilight*, 14.

<sup>90</sup> Jackson, "There will be Blood", 50-51.

<sup>91</sup> Wiktorin, "The vampire as a religious phenomenon", 280, 287-288, 292.

I believe that there might be an attraction to certain conservative values for young people today, perhaps signaling a search for stability in a chaotic post 9/11 world. Drifting into dreams of supernatural romances is appealing in order to escape reality, like the pressure of consumerism and the million possibilities presented in the midst of the information age. Moreover, religion's reduced influence on society in a post-modern world eliminates the dichotomy of good versus evil, as in church versus vampire. In combination with the contemporary humane vampire of high values the church as a force of good has lost much of its relevance in vampire fiction. Nevertheless, the relation to Christianity is extremely rooted in vampire tradition and therefore often used, although in different ways, as we have seen in *Twilight's* elimination of the religious conflict.

Höglund claims that the vampire genre peaks in popularity during social and cultural instability and in times of ongoing power plays. According to her there is a need to place the contemporary vampire in a wider social perspective in order to understand its implications. In her analysis she links the vampire's hunger to consumerism, as in the constant pursuit of perfection in body and soul through products and lifestyle choices. Overweight bodies and overindulgence in food is scorned while slimness and restraint is rewarded. The humane vampire shows restraint and is rewarded, while the monster-like vampire surrenders to its desires and must be punished. While the humane vampires are mostly men, the female is often a monster who must be either restrained or killed. The female monster resists the conventions of consumerism and revolts against the patriarchal order and poses a threat to society. If a male humane vampire loses his control he can always be forgiven, while the female vampire will be damned.<sup>92</sup>

The unrestrained vampire is often admired as a rebel. He or she reflects our longings to indulge in our desires, which can be liberating to watch in an age of consumerism. On the other hand his or her inevitable eradication can very well be seen as a warning to keep within the conventions of our society.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 14, 334-355.

<sup>93</sup> Höglund, *Vampyrer*, 356-357.

When it comes to the humane vampire Edward is constantly fighting to restrain his desires and not expose the monster in him, which is also a reflection of our time. The vampire's position as an outsider is something to identify with due to the insecurities the pressure of consumerism causes.

The portrayal of the vampires in the Twilight Saga and the vampire ethics of Edward Cullen depend on various elements. It's a combination of the general development of the contemporary Byronic hero, as well as Twilight's author and director's personal religious beliefs in accordance to current vampire development in fiction. Edward reflects contemporary society by letting audiences identify with him as an outsider who carries the pressure of restraint in a society where there are as many possibilities as there are demands. Furthermore, Twilight presents alternatives of supernatural solutions to real world difficulties. That is, if I am only discovered, seen as special and loved by a unique being like a vampire, all of my dreams will come true.

#### 4.6 Further Research

The vampire character is vital to vampire fiction, but of course many other aspects of the vampire genre can be taken into consideration. By researching how Twilight correspond and differ through additional viewpoints, in combination with the traditions of romantic literature, one could get a deeper understanding of Twilight's continuation or diversion from the vampire genre. Through an extensive study of our culture and society, much could be added to our understanding of the vampire's current appeal, and the part Twilight plays in it.

Ever since the revolutionary publication of the *Harry Potter* books (J. K. Rowling, 1997-2007), its film adaptations and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (Peter Jackson, 2001-2003), followed by commercially successful TV-series such as *The Walking Dead* (2010-) and *Game of Thrones* (2011-), what was once perceived as "nerdy" subcultures has entered the mainstream. A lucrative market opened up which has resulted in an explosion of fantasy films, TV-series and novels shifting in waves of popularity from epics, to vampires to zombies to ghosts and demons. Looking further into the emergence of this commercial fantasy market and its development could

provide more knowledge of popular cultural expressions and their meaning in contemporary society.



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