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Gender Roles in Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* series”

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**To my mother and father,  
for their constant support.**

**To Daniel,  
for his faith in me.**



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## Introduction

The figure of the vampire has fascinated mankind over centuries. Vampiric creatures have attained cult status in today's society. Therefore, a (literary) world without bloodthirsty vampires would simply be unimaginable. Today, the number of fictional works whose main protagonist is a vampire is countless. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) are only two vampire classics that became enormously popular (Melton 201; 376). In the twenty-first century, a new vampire wave emerged with the publication of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga that resulted in an incredible vampire hype and led to the release of numerous other vampiric tales.

Meyer's *Twilight* series became a major success. "At the time of publication," the books have been "sold 116 million" times and have been translated into fifty "different languages" (Parke, and Wilson 3). Moreover, the *Twilight* saga managed to establish a firm fan base and a real hype developed around Bella Swan and her vampire lover Edward Cullen. The more famous the series, however, became, the more people raised their voices, criticizing the novels for their stereotypical representation of traditional gender roles. Donnelly even goes as far as referring to the saga as a "part of a disturbing trend of anti-feminist popular media" (191).

This thesis will deal with the depiction of gender roles in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga and will investigate if experts' gender critique is justified. It will be analyzed if *Twilight's* men and women are portrayed according to patriarchal norms, which regard women as subordinate to men, or if the *Twilight* series has managed to break free from constrictive patriarchal codes. In a further step, this thesis will explore if gender only applies to *Twilight's* human world or if gender roles can also be found in the saga's supernatural universe.

Moreover, this thesis aims to show that Stephenie Meyer used well-known formulas of success, which she cleverly integrated into her novels. One of these popular formulas would be the Gothic. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Gothic literature is "written in the style popular in the 18th and 19th centuries, which described romantic adventures in

mysterious or frightening surroundings” (672). In the course of this thesis, I will prove that the *Twilight* saga employs various Gothic elements, such as mysterious locations, dangerous undertakings as well as supernatural beings. These Gothic components might be one reason for *Twilight*’s incredible success, as they cause a suspenseful atmosphere and might encourage the reader to continue reading in order to find out about the outcome of these thrilling adventures.

Another effective pattern that Meyer used in her *Twilight* saga is the romantic formula that is characterized by “a central love story and an emotionally-satisfying and optimistic ending” (Romance Writers of America<sup>1</sup>). With respect to the successful formulas that Stephenie Meyer used in her series, I will argue that *Twilight* has only become that popular because of the integration of Gothic and particularly romantic elements. Further, I will demonstrate that even though Meyer has used those well-known patterns, she modernized them by dissolving gender roles to some extent in *Twilight*’s supernatural world, as the novels do not only show powerless and passive female protagonists but also strong and active vampiric women. In a further step, I will analyze in which instances Meyer has disrupted and modernized these traditional formulas of success in order to create the impression of the *Twilight* saga not conveying a too conservative attitude.

Moreover, I will maintain that Meyer’s *Twilight* series does not completely ignore feminist movements. This can be shown by the fact that female vampires are described as being more or less the equal of their male partners. Another important instance of female empowerment is the fact that Bella is the narrator of nearly the whole story, thus gaining certain agency, as she is the one who is allowed to raise her voice and tell the story from her point of view. In a further step I will argue that even though the saga has shown to recognize feminist movements, it, however, subordinates itself to patriarchal norms by depicting human women as entirely passive and dependent on men.

This thesis will also demonstrate that Meyer’s use of gender stereotypes was not random but cleverly elaborated, as *Twilight*’s success might also be due to Meyer’s neat handling of stereotypical gender traits with which she

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<sup>1</sup> published on <http://www.rwa.org>, accessed on November 12, 2012.



managed to get the majority of the readers on her or rather Bella's side. The fact that Bella is the narrator of the story makes it easy for readers to identify with her. Moreover, by depicting Bella as a stereotypical damsel in distress who is constantly in need of a strong hero that saves her life, Meyer achieves to evoke in many readers the longing for such a protective partner, envying Bella instead of criticizing and questioning her highly stereotypical portrayal. As many teenagers feel isolated during puberty, they are able to easily relate to Bella, whom Meyer depicts as an outsider, who has the feeling of never fitting in.

In order to get a better understanding of the vampire's nature as well as the gender roles that have always been accredited to vampiric creatures, the first part of this thesis will investigate the historical origins of the folkloric vampire. This chapter will explore the representation of the prototypical vampire of folklore with a specific focus placed on gender roles. The second part of this chapter will include a brief outline of the history of the literary vampire. This section will also focus on the depiction of gender roles in literary vampire tales. Moreover, it will also touch on the literary vampire's change over the centuries from alienated figure to humanized character. This part will also deal with characteristics of the Gothic genre and will analyze to what extent Gothic elements can be found in the *Twilight* series. As the *Twilight* saga can be accounted to the romantic genre, the last part of the first chapter will briefly discuss the genre of paranormal romance and will additionally deal with characteristic features of the traditional romantic novel.

The second part of this thesis will explore if and to what extent gender roles are reinforced in the *Twilight* series. In order to investigate these realms, the first section of this analysis chapter will examine how men and women are represented in the series, taking male and female humans, vampires and werewolves into account. Therefore, a closer look will be taken at the gender traits that are attributed to *Twilight's* male and female protagonists. The second section of the analysis chapter will explore the relationships between *Twilight's* men and women and will especially focus on abusive relationships in order to find out if women are given the traditional role of mistreated victim or if they are depicted as powerful and strong. The final part of the second chapter will explore the representation of parenthood in the *Twilight* series.

The analysis of the role of *Twilight*'s fathers and mothers as well as the examination of the power and authority a mother or father occupies should provide an insight into the importance and power relations of men and women in the *Twilight* series and should show to what extent traditional gender roles concur with the distribution of power.

# 1 The Vampire in Legend and Fiction

Ever since the vampire had its first appearance in the English language, “it has almost permanently existed either in print or visual culture”. Therefore, it can be said that the vampire “is an enduring figure in the Anglo-American cultural imagination” (Williamson 1).

It is important to keep in mind that one has to distinguish between different kinds of vampires. There are the vampires of folklore as well as fictitious vampires of literature, film and television. These diverse types of vampires differ greatly from each other – not only with regard to their appearance but also with respect to their manners, weaknesses and how to be warded off and killed.

The vampire of folklore and the vampire of fiction do not have many similarities. While the literary vampire is described as an elegant and graceful figure that usually has aristocratic roots and lives in a solitary and magnificent castle, “the folkloric vampire is of peasant stock and resides (during the day at least) in the graveyard in which he [or she] was buried” (Barber 2010: 4). Moreover, they do not much resemble each other in appearance, as the vampire of legend “is never pale, as one would expect of a corpse [but has a] florid [...] or [...] healthy” complexion (Barber 2010: 41), whereas the vampire of fiction has a pale skin, sharp canine teeth, red lips and long fingernails (Lecouteux 10).

## 1.1 The Etymology of the Term *Vampire*

According to Wilson, it proved immensely difficult to classify the roots of the term *vampire* (1998: 3). Linguists all over the world hold diverse views on where the word derives from. There are four distinct theories, maintaining that today’s *vampire* has either originated from Turkish, Greek, Slavic or Hungarian. Advocate of the first group is, amongst others, Franz Miklosich, an Austrian linguist of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, who claims “that the word *vampire* and its Slavic synonyms *upior*, *uper*, and *upyr*” all stem from “the Turkish *uber* (witch)” (Wilson 1998: 4). The second school regards the Greek term *πι*, which means ‘to drink’, as the base for *vampire* (Wilson 1998: 4; Summers

2005: 18). The third theory, which is almost universally acknowledged, claims that the word has Slavic origin and derives from the Serbian *BAMIIUP*. The fourth group considers the Hungarian term *vampir* to be the source of present-day *vampire* (Wilson 1998: 4; Kroner 57). Wilson, however, dismisses this hypothesis instantaneously, by justifying that “the first appearance of the word *vampir* in Hungarian postdates the first use of the term in most Western languages by more than a century” (1998: 5).<sup>2</sup>

## 1.2 The Folkloric Vampire

According to the *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, a vampire is “the reanimated body of a dead person believed to come from the grave at night and suck the blood of persons asleep” (1382). This concise definition incorporates the most important attributes that are associated with the prototypical vampire of the Western world: an undead being that arises from its tomb in the middle of the night in order to satisfy its quenchless thirst by feeding on human blood.

The figure of the vampire is a worldwide phenomenon. It has been found that people of every culture group believed in the existence of vampires since the dawn of mankind (Kroner 59). Even though the figure of the vampire exists throughout the whole world, “the modern popular culture vampire has its folklore roots in Eastern Europe” (Day 12-13).

Each country has a different notion of a vampire (Equiamicus 44-45). While the African revenant is known as *adze* which is able to “assume[...] the form of a firefly, lives off blood, palm oil and coconut water [and is particularly] attracted [...] to children,” the Malagasy call their vampire *ramanga* “which drinks spilled blood” (Bartlett, and Idriceanu 4).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The first appearance of the word *vampire* in the German language took place in 1725, when newspaper articles reported on a vampire hysteria in Serbia (Wilson 1998: 5; Schaub 24; Equiamicus 43). In these reports a Latinized version of the already naturalized Slavic or Serbian word for vampire was used; it was the plural form *Vanpiri* (Borrmann 16). Six years later, in the winter of 1731/32, the term *vampire* finally found its way into the English language, when an account of a Serbian vampire fright was published (Wilson 1998: 5; Bartlett, and Idriceanu 12).

<sup>3</sup> In contrast, the inhabitants of India have a completely different concept of bloodsucking creatures which they call, amongst others, *bhuta*, *brahmaparush* and *gayal*. While the *brahmaparush* “drinks its victims’ blood through their skull and then eats the brains,” the

In former times, the vampire “was no mere fictitious figment of the folk imagination”. It was common belief that vampires really existed (Bartlett, and Idriceanu 2) “and in some instances [they] were [even] thought to be responsible for local outbreaks of disease or other community calamities” (Fine 57). A lot of people believed in the existence of real vampires until the late eighteenth century (Köppl 18).

In his important publication *Vampires and Vampirism*<sup>4</sup>, the well-known English demonologist Reverend Montague Summers gives a comprehensive description of the appearance of a stereotypical European folkloric revenant:

A Vampire is generally described as being exceedingly gaunt and lean with a hideous countenance and eyes wherein are glinting the red fire of perdition. When, however, he has satiated his lust for warm human blood his body becomes horribly puffed and bloated, as though he were some great leech gorged and replete to bursting. Cold as ice, or it may be fevered and burning as a hot coal, the skin is deathly pale, but the lips are very full and rich, blub and red; the teeth white and gleaming, and the canine teeth wherewith he bites deep into the neck of his prey to suck thence the vital streams which re-animate [sic] his body and invigorate all his forces appear notably sharp and pointed. [...] It is said that the palms of a Vampire’s hands are downy with hair, and the nails are always curved and crooked, often well-nigh the length of a great bird’s claw, the quicks dirty and foul with clots and gouts of black blood. His breath is unbearably fetid and rank with corruption, the stench of the charnel. (Summers 2005: 179)

As the concept of the vampire has constantly changed over the centuries (Copper 29-30) with each country having a different notion of an undead being, it has proven immensely difficult to come up with a complete list of characteristics that assemble a prototypical vampire of folklore. Summers’ depiction of a folkloric revenant, however, seems to cover an extensive number of vampiric traits. Interestingly, Summers only refers to a prototypical male vampire, even though people also believed in the existence of female

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*gayal* “is created when the burial rites of a funeral are not properly performed” (Bartlett, and Idriceanu 4). In China, Japan and the Philippines the vampire is called *aswang* and is especially famous for its fondness of infants’ blood. Furthermore, the revenant is also a well-known figure in South America. While the Brazilians have a creature that they call the *lobishomen*, the monster doing mischief in Mexico is named *tlaciques*, a “witch-vampire” (Bartlett, and Idriceanu 4). The inhabitants of Australia have their very own vampires whom they have given the name *talamaur*, “a living vampire [that] could extract any residual life force trapped in the body from a recently dead corpse” (Bartlett, and Idriceanu 4).

<sup>4</sup> This casebook was primarily published in 1929 under the title *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin*.

folkloric vampires. This is one indication of the already gendered nature of the revenant of folklore which was stereotypically male, as most vampiric reports only cover sightings of male folkloric vampires in these times.

The vampire of folklore is an especially popular figure in Bulgaria, Romania, Russia and Serbia and is also common in Bohemia, Moravia, Poland and the old regions of Eastern Germany (Equiamicus 43).

The classical type of vampire as we know it today is a product of the seventeenth and eighteenth century (Kroner 60). These ages “were marked by epidemics in parts of Europe” and were specifically predominant in “Hungary, Bohemia, Silesia, Poland and Greece” (Bartlett, and Idriceanu 11). Due to the limited medical knowledge at that time, people explained these outbreaks by a vampire epidemic (Barber 2010: 57) that they called “a plague of the undead” (Bartlett, and Idriceanu 11). In fact, these outbreaks were, however, “epidemics of plague” (Barber 2010: 57).

The vampire of European folklore primarily served to provide an explanation for the spread of fatal illness among a family or group of neighbors in an era in which the mechanisms of contagion were unknown. (Day 12-13)

Therefore, it can be said that revenants “were a metaphor [that gave] human shape to viruses and bacteria” (Day 12-13).

Even though the “number of [vampiric] cases” was not high, “the few reported incidents had an impact across Europe” (Bartlett, and Idriceanu 11). There were two cases which particularly supported the theory of vampire epidemics. These involved the accounts of Peter Plogosovitz and Arnod Paole (Kroner 60). The reports of these vampiric incidents led to a spread of vampire panics across big parts of Europe (Bartlett, and Idriceanu 10-12).

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, these vampire hysterias provoked striking transactions: numerous corpses were exhumed in Hungary, Moravia and on the Balkans, as witnesses stated that they have heard the undead smack in their tombs and have seen deceased people rising from their graves to drink the blood of the living who in turn also died and turned into vampires (Köppl 19).

Whenever the residents of a village had a suspicion that a vampire was haunting their place, they located the tomb of the supposed vampire in order to exhume the body of the culprit (Equiamicus 45). Strikingly, there are only

reports on male exhumers, which reinforce stereotypical gender roles and depict men as the stronger and braver sex, whereas women are represented as weak and anxious beings. As soon as the corpse of the supposed revenant was unearthed, the exhumers examined it, looking for certain characteristics that were considered as typical signs of vampirism.

One proof of the disinterred corpse being a revenant was the absence of decomposition as well as the flourishing state of the dead body (Copper 31; Summers 2005: 201; Borrmann 51; Kroner 58). The cheeks of the alleged vampires were often depicted as “plump and healthy” (Copper 31), their faces as “ruddy or livid,” and their figure as “swollen,” “bloated” (Hughes 253), “sleek and well-nourished” (Copper 31). The exhumers interpreted the turgid condition of the vampiric body by being a result of the revenant’s excessive consumption of human blood (Barber 2010: 42). Today, it has been ascertained that this phenomenon is part of the natural putrefaction, as “a human corpse [...] will typically bloat until it is close to twice its original size, through the production of gas by microorganisms that are already present, during life, in the intestines” (Barber 2010: 90; Borrmann 131).

Another sign of vampirism was that hair, beard, nails and skin (Barber 2010: 42; Kroner 58; Borrmann 51; Lecouteux 139-140) of the defunct had grown in the tomb. There is, however, a plausible explanation for these mysterious occurrences: human tissue diminishes after death, which consequently gives the impression of hair and beard having grown (Equiamicus 44-45). This phenomenon is called “skin slippage” which is “a normal event” after death (Barber 2010: 109).

Further, the lack of rigor mortis, which revealed itself by pliable limbs of the corpse, characterized a folkloric revenant. It was also often reported that alleged vampires had their eyes open or half-closed (Barber 2010: 41; Lecouteux 134) with which they “glazed, fixed and glar[ed] fiercely” (Summers 2005: 201).

Another indication of being a revenant were “markedly full and red” lips (Summers 2005: 201). With respect to the folkloric vampires’ teeth, opinions differ considerably. While Summers (2005: 201) described the folkloric revenants’ teeth as “long, sharp [...] razors [which are] ivory white,” Hughes noticed that “the canine teeth [...] are seldom described as prominent” (253).

The mouth of a vampire of folklore was often described as open with traces of “blood at the lips”. There were also often blood spots found at the “nose [and] sometimes even at the eyes and ears” (Barber 2010: 41; Borrmann 51; Kroner 58; Copper 31; Summers 2005: 201), which Borrmann (131) identified as mere sanguineous putrefaction liquid. Sometimes signs of blood could even be detected at the genitals (Equiamicus 44-45). The reported discoveries of “bottoms of the coffins [which] were aswill with blood” (Copper 31) aroused a lot of fear, as it made many people believe that it was the blood “from the latest victim” (Oinas 48).

A further characteristic (of a male vampire) was an erect penis that was also known as ‘wild sign’ (Borrmann 51; Köppl 24-25). According to Borrmann, this ‘wild sign’ can also be attributed to fermentation gases that come along with putrefaction (131).

Moreover, it was also often reported that an assumed vampire was found in a sitting position in his or her grave “or at least in a different position from that in which he [or she] was buried” (Barber 2010: 42-43). This can, however, be explained due to the fact that in the eighteenth and nineteenth century it was common to bury persons, who appeared dead, accidentally prematurely, “due mainly to faulty diagnosis and primitive medical techniques”. After having regained consciousness, these prematurely buried people “attempted to tear [themselves] out of [their] coffin[s]” and were therefore later found in a distinct position than that buried (Copper 36).

These encounters and discoveries, for which there is in most instances a scientific explanation, “have swelled the legends of the vampire and terrified millions at their firesides” (Copper 36-37). According to Barber, “vampire stories” have been invented in order “to explain otherwise puzzling phenomena associated with death and decomposition” which people in those times could not understand (1998: 111).



## 1.3 The Literary Vampire

### 1.3.1 Genealogy of the Vampire Motif

In 1819 John Polidori created the first literary vampire in his short story *The Vampyre* (Laycock 40). The *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* gives a detailed definition of literary vampires, specifying them as being

only awake at night and will die if go[ing] into the sun's light. They do not have a reflection if they stand in front of a mirror; they do not like garlic; they are afraid of the cross [...] they sleep in a coffin, and they can only be killed if someone pushes a wooden stake [...] through their heart. (*Longman Dictionary of English Language* 1523)

This portrayal incorporates the most important features that characterize a prototypical literary vampire, such as the lethal effect of the sun, the averseness to garlic, the fear of the cross as well as the fact that they do not cast a reflection in the mirror. Barber adds further important features of the literary vampire by defining him or her as

a creature of the night, flitting about in the guise of a bat, he [or she] pursued his [or her] victims until the arrival of daybreak, signalled [sic] by the crow of the cock, and then retired to his [or her] coffin to rest there quietly until nightfall. (Barber 2010: 84)

Essentially, the literary vampire was based on the vampire of folklore. New additional characteristics were, however, attributed to the new literary vampire. These were, for instance, the prominent canine teeth and the relation with the bat and other animals (Kroner 66). Moreover, the literary vampire could only enter a house after having gotten the owner's allowance to come in (Kroner 76). With regard to the appearance of the traditional vampire of literature, he or she was described as a pale skinned being that had sharp incisors, red lips, long fingernails and extremely cold hands (Lecouteux 10). Strikingly, the traits that Lecouteux attributes to the prototypical literary vampire, such as red lips and long fingernails (10), are characteristics that are usually associated with women. Therefore, these traits could be interpreted as an indication of the androgynous nature of the traditional vampire of literature, even though male literary vampires are

generally depicted – due to their incredible strength and seductiveness – as embodiment of maleness.

In order to become a literary vampire, one had to be bitten by such a creature (Kroner 76). Interestingly, most literary vampiric tales only describe the seduction of an innocent young woman by a coveting male vampire who finally bites his victim, which leads to her transformation into a revenant. This attack can be considered as a metaphorical device for the sexual act. Further, this stereotypical depiction of the male vampire being the predator and the female woman being the prey already shows the highly gendered roles of the protagonists of the traditional literary vampire stories which force women into the stereotypical role of powerless and helpless victims, whereas vampiric males are represented as powerful, dominant and superior creatures.

John Polidori was, as already mentioned, the first author whose protagonist was a vampire. His short story *The Vampyre* was first published in 1819 in the *New Monthly Magazine* and was “accompanied by a preface that suggested the work was actually written by Byron”. The allegation of Byron being the author of *The Vampyre* was the cause of the work’s “immediate popularity in England and on the Continent”. It is supposed that Polidori only confirmed to be the author of *The Vampyre* due to its success, “for he came to feel that for a final payment of 30 pounds he had simply sold his work – and identity – too cheaply” (Telotte 10).<sup>5</sup>

Thirty years later either Thomas Preskett Prest or James Malcolm Rymer<sup>6</sup> released his important work *Varney the Vampire: or, The Feast of Blood* (Copper 64; Melton 780) that was originally published “in 109 weekly installments in the mid-1840s”. It “was the first vampire novel in English, and

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<sup>5</sup> The protagonist of Polidori’s short story is Lord Ruthven, the first aristocratic vampire in literature (Köppl 46). Moreover, Ruthven was the first (fictional) revenant that was described as attractive and whose appearance was not portrayed as deterrent – as it was common for folkloric vampires. To the contrary, Ruthven was depicted as a nobleman with good habits who preferred to consort with the elite. Polidori also introduced the stereotypical erotic element that involved Ruthven’s consumption of his victims’ blood (Equiamicus 209). *The Vampyre* has enormously changed the image of the vampire, as before its publication people were only familiar with the folkloric vampire. Polidori transformed the vampire from a terrifying creature into an object of desire (Köppl 50) and his vampiric protagonist “set the pattern for all such vampire-heroes in literature” (Copper 58).

<sup>6</sup> It is uncertain who the author of *Varney the Vampire* was. Therefore some sources, such as Copper (64), acknowledge Thomas Preskett Prest to have written this tale, while others, such as Melton (780), refer to James Malcolm Rymer as the author of the story.

the first vampire fiction since the original short story by John Polidori” (Melton 780).

In 1872 the Irish author Sheridan Le Fanu published his famous tale *Carmilla* that centers on the accounts of a young woman called Laura (Köppl 50). Le Fanu’s work was the first vampire story that featured a female vampire (Köppl 51). It is also famous for its “more than passing lesbian overtones” (Melton 104-105). Importantly enough, Le Fanu was the first author who broke free from traditional gender roles by depicting his vampiric protagonist as a powerful and independent female character. It is, however, still the innocent human woman, in this case Laura, who is portrayed as helpless and powerless victim that is entirely exposed to Carmilla’s superior status. Further, Le Fanu’s work still reinforces traditional gender roles by granting men the power to destroy Carmilla entirely. Therefore, *Carmilla* only manages partially to free itself from stereotypical gender portrayals.

Twenty-five years later Bram Stoker’s famous *Dracula* appeared. Stoker’s revenant “set the image of the vampire in the popular culture of the twentieth century” (Melton 201). On the one hand, Count Dracula is “like Lord Ruthven [...] an aristocrat”. On the other hand, “Stoker did a great deal of research into history and folklore, [and restored] to the vampire elements of the Slavic revenant” (Laycock 41). Today it is known that Stoker “loosely based [Dracula] on the fifteenth-century Transylvanian warrior known as Vlad the Impaler, who was famous for impaling his enemies on spikes” (Steiber 75).

In 1922, a German film company decided to make “an unauthorized [...] adaptation of Bram Stoker’s novel,” which they called “*Nosferatu, a Symphony of Horrors*”. They shifted the location of Stoker’s novel to the German city of Bremen and “set [the story] in 1838, the year of an actual outbreak of the plague in that city”. The protagonist’s name was also changed into “Graf Orlock” who was represented with “exaggerated features – a bald head, [and] long, claw-like fingernails,” thereby transforming him, “to some extent, [into] a very different character” than Stoker’s Count Dracula (Melton 501).

In 1976, almost hundred years after the publication of *Dracula*, Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* was released, which has “become the second best-selling vampire novel of all time [after] Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*”.

This work “introduced one of the most important contemporary vampire characters, Lestat de Lioncourt” (Melton 376). Further, *Interview with the Vampire* presented an entirely new type of vampire from whose perspective the story is even told (Barber 2010: 83-84).

Rice “has challenged the traditional portraits of vampires in several fundamental ways, producing a series of books that cannot properly be understood if read according to the old codes” (Wood 60). The vampires in *Interview with the Vampire* differ profoundly from the traditional literary revenants. Even though Rice’s main vampiric figures “are aristocratic, undead, nocturnal, and thirsty for blood, they share few other traits with their literary predecessors,” as the vampires in *Interview with the Vampire*, for instance, are neither able to undertake a transformation “into dust [or] fog [nor into] bats [or] wolves”. Moreover, Rice’s vampires are able to enter a house freely although they have not been invited into it. Other characteristics of these vampires are that they

show no fear of garlic, whitethorn, or the wild rose, respect neither priest nor church nor crucifix, can sleep in any ground they wish, cast reflections into mirrors, cross moving water at will and survive nearly any calamity – not even a stake through the heart will kill them. (Wood 61)

Rice’s new vampires strongly resemble humans (Wood 62-63). This might also be the reason why so many readers of *Interview with the Vampire* do “not only like vampires and identify with them, but also trust them” (Wood 69). Since then “the figure of the vampire has undergone a variety of fascinating transformations” (Gordon, and Hollinger 1).

The contemporary figure of the literary vampire “is often presented [...] as multiple, communal, and familial, living with and relating to other vampires” (Zanger 18). Some critics even speak of a “domestication” of the fictional vampire which means that “the contemporary vampire is no longer only that figure of relatively uncomplicated evil so famously represented by Count Dracula” (Gordon, and Hollinger 2). It seems as if “the new vampire [became] more human with each modification of Stoker’s original conception” (Zanger 20).

In 2005 Stephenie Meyer's first novel of the *Twilight* saga was published, which became one of the most famous vampire novels of the twenty-first century. The *Twilight* series seems

to indicate a trend toward a return to traditional conservative values, strict gender roles and heterosexual monogamy, paralleling the increasingly conservative sexual politics in the USA. (Walser 102)

One of the reasons for *Twilight*'s unchallenged success might be the embedding of Gothic elements. According to Brooker, the genre of the Gothic "has presented narratives of a 'darker' psychic reality often linked to particular locations" (95). Examples of "familiar 'Gothic' places" are

deserted moors, remote and ruined castles, abbeys, and country houses, the ghettos and alleys of industrial cities or the interiors of chapels, vaults, cellars, crypts, secret passages, corridors, [...] complete with creaking doors and staircases. (Brooker 95)

The *Twilight* saga also uses to some extent Gothic locations. The city of Forks, for instance, could be regarded as a typical Gothic place, as it is portrayed as sparsely populated, densely wooded, with the weather being always bad:

In the Olympic Peninsula of northwest Washington State, a small town named Forks exists under a near-constant cover of clouds. It rains on this inconsequential town more than any other place in the United States of America. It was from this town and its gloomy, omnipresent shade that my mother escaped with me when I was only a few months old. (*Twilight* 3)

The depiction of Forks as having a "gloomy, omnipresent shade" (*Twilight* 3) already establishes a mysterious atmosphere. In *New Moon*, Forks is described as a supernatural place, which becomes apparent when Bella gets lost in the woods and is all alone:

Finally, I tripped over something – it was black now, I had no idea what caught my foot – and I stayed down. [...] As I lay there, I had a feeling that more time was passing than I realized. I couldn't remember how long it had been since nightfall. Was it always so dark here at night? [...] Tonight the sky was utterly black. [...] It was black for a long time before I heard them calling. [...] Suddenly, there was another sound, startlingly close. A kind of snuffling, an animal sound. It sounded big. I wondered if I should feel afraid. I didn't – just numb. (*New Moon* 65-66)

This passage is a good example of the use of Gothic elements. In *Twilight*'s woods time does not matter. Bella does not even realize when night closes in.

Moreover, it is emphasized that everything is entirely black, which should create an even more mysterious and terrifying atmosphere. Finally, the climax is reached by the introduction of a snuffling sound of a big animal that is just within Bella's reach.

Another Gothic place in the *Twilight* series would be the Cullens' house. It is located outside the city in the middle of nowhere, being only surrounded by woods and nature.

We passed over the bridge [...], the houses flashing past us growing farther apart, getting bigger. And then we were past the other houses altogether, driving through misty forest. I was trying to decide whether to ask or be patient, when he turned abruptly onto an unpaved road. [...] The forest encroached on both sides, leaving the road ahead only discernible for a few meters as it twisted, serpentlike, around the ancient trees. And then, after a few miles, there was some thinning of the woods, and we were suddenly in a small meadow [...] [with] six primordial cedars that shaded an entire acre with their vast sweep of branches. The trees held their protecting shadow right up to the walls of the house that rose among them, making obsolete the deep porch that wrapped around the first story. (*Twilight* 280)

This setting, which describes the Cullens' house as being located far off from other human beings, manages to create a mysterious atmosphere. Even though the Cullens' house is not portrayed as a "ruined castle" (Brooker 95), its depiction establishes a Gothic setting:

The house was timeless, graceful, and probably a hundred years old. It was painted a soft, faded white, three stories tall, rectangular and well proportioned. The windows and doors were either part of the original structure or a perfect restoration. (*Twilight* 281)

Another characteristic of the Gothic novel is the inclusion "of marginal and transgressive types [such as] mad scientists, evil monks or nuns, rapacious aristocrats, outlaws, monsters, or the undead" (Brooker 95-96). This also applies to the *Twilight* series, which features various supernatural creatures, such as vampires and werewolves.

Furthermore, the "hero-villain" is a typical feature of the traditional Gothic novel (Stoddart 176). This character stands out due to his "unpredictable [behavior]; he is moodily taciturn and violently explosive by turns" (Stoddart 177). The "hero-villain" can be found in *Twilight*'s Edward Cullen who displays a mysterious behavior towards Bella at the beginning of *Twilight*, which makes her completely insecure.

Just as I [Bella] passed, he [Edward] suddenly went rigid in his seat. He stared at me again, meeting my eyes with the strangest expression on his face – it was hostile, furious. I looked away quickly, shocked, going red again. I stumbled over a book in the walkway and had to catch myself on the edge of a table. [...] I'd noticed that his eyes were black – coal black. [...] I kept my eyes down as I went to sit by *him*, bewildered by the antagonistic stare he'd given me. (*Twilight* 20)

This is only one example of Edward behaving mysteriously when Bella is around him. Bella cannot understand his demeanor towards her, as she did not do anything to Edward. It is not until the middle of the first novel that Edward's behavior is explained by disclosing his secret of being a vampire who is incredibly attracted by Bella, particularly by her smell.

The *Twilight* saga does not, however, only include Gothic elements but also shows numerous characteristics of the genre of the romantic novel, which will be examined in more detail in the following chapter.

### 1.3.2 The (Paranormal) Romance

The *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines romance on the one hand as “a love story especially in the form of a novel” (1080-1081) and on the other as “a class of such literature” (1081). Fuchs points out that

romance is a notoriously slippery category. Critics disagree about whether it is a genre or a mode, about its origins and history, even about what it encompasses. (Fuchs 1-2)

There are also numerous subcategories of the romantic novel, such as the “paranormal romance,” which is a “relatively new category of popular fiction – distinct from the horror novel but similarly dealing with supernatural themes”. “These novels are for the most part spicy love stories in which vampires, werewolves, and other supernatural beings play a major role in the plot” (Frost 230).

The romance writers' association Romance Writers of America (RWA) refers to two characteristics – “a central love story and an emotionally-satisfying and optimistic ending” – which constitute a traditional romance:

A Central Love Story: The main plot centers around individuals falling in love and struggling to make the relationship work. [...].

An Emotionally-Satisfying and Optimistic Ending: In a romance, the lovers who risk and struggle for each other and their relationship are rewarded with emotional justice and unconditional love. ([http://www.rwa.org/cs/the\\_romance\\_genre](http://www.rwa.org/cs/the_romance_genre))

The romance is considered as a genre “that appeal[s] to women only” (Doody 15-16). It is known as “the most female of popular genres [, as] nearly all of the writers and readers are women” (Regis xii). Therefore, the romantic genre is not taken seriously (Langbauer 1-2).

“Romance literature is often called escapist or wish-fulfilling literature [and is thought to have] little literary merit” (Cole 168-169). In her famous study, Janice Radway questioned the role of escapism in romantic novels. Her findings showed that romance novels are not only read because of their provision of “a relaxing release from the tension produced by daily problems and responsibilities, but [also because of their creation of] a time or space within which a woman can be entirely on her own” (Radway 61).

An ideal romance novel usually consists of “eight essential elements,” whose succession is arbitrary. These involve:

the initial state of society in which heroine and hero must court, the meeting between heroine and hero, the barrier to the union of heroine and hero, the attraction between the heroine and hero, the declaration of love between heroine and hero, the point of ritual death, the recognition by heroine and hero of the means to overcome the barrier, and the betrothal. (Regis 30)

The perfect romance novel often starts with “the heroine’s emotional isolation and her profound sense of loss” which has been caused by her “removal from a familiar, comfortable realm usually associated with her childhood and family”. The heroine is usually scared of this relocation “because it strips her of her familiar supports and her sense of herself as someone with a particular place and a fixed identity” (Radway 134-135).

In the course of a romantic novel the perfect heroine changes

from an isolated, asexual, insecure adolescent who is unsure of her own identity, into a mature, sensual, and very married woman who has realized her full potential and identity as the partner of a man and as the implied mother of a child. (Radway 134)

The ideal romantic hero is always portrayed strikingly masculine. “Almost everything about him is hard, angular, and dark” except for “a small feature that introduces an important element of softness into the overall picture”



(Radway 128). The hero usually displays a “hard physical exterior [that] is complemented by his imperious, distant manner” at the beginning of each romance. This repellent behavior makes the heroine insecure and gives her the impression “that he finds her uninteresting”. She is then constantly puzzled by “that contradictory evidence of his hidden, gentle nature and she therefore feels unsure of his motives” (Radway 139).

In contrast, the perfect romantic heroine is depicted either as “unusual[ly] intelligen[t] or [as having] an extraordinarily fiery disposition. Occasionally, she even exhibits special abilities in an unusual occupation” (Radway 123). Even though not every romance has a beautiful heroine, Radway’s study shows that readers particularly prefer female protagonists who “are characterized by an especially alluring appearance”. These favored heroines are never conscious of their beauty and how it affects others. “They are never [depicted as] vain, nor do they preen in an effort to attract a man” (Radway 126). Moreover, the romantic heroine is usually portrayed as a nurturing and caring figure (Radway 127).

The majority of romantic heroines is characterized by “childlike innocence and inexperience,” as most of them are only seventeen to twenty years old and have had rare “contact with a member of the opposite sex before her confrontation with the hero” (Radway 126). The virginity of the romantic heroine is one of the most important characteristics of a traditional romance novel (Young 122).

With respect to the heroine’s sexual desires, she is “completely unaware that [she is] capable of passionate sexual urges,” which are, however, “awakened,” “when [the hero] forces his attentions upon her” (Radway 126-127). “Sex is [, however,] neither the center of the plot nor the basis of the relationship between the hero and the heroine” and “usually occurs only within the context of [traditional] marriage” (Young 121-122) which usually marks the end of a romance novel (Regis 9).

A sexual scene will never explicitly be portrayed in a romance novel, as “the writer will, more often than not, take the reader to a certain point in a love scene and then leave the rest to the imagination” (Young 121).

## 2 The *Twilight* World – Oppressive Men and Domineered Women

### 2.1 The *Twilight* Phenomenon

It all started with a dream that did not only change Stephenie Meyer's life, but also those of millions of other people. It was on June 2, 2004 when Stephenie Meyer, housewife and mother, had a lively dream about a girl and a vampire boy who fell in love with each other. Even though Meyer did not have any experience with publishing, she decided to use the story of her dream in order to write a novel. Three months later she finished her first document that comprised 130,000 words. This copy turned out to be the first novel of Meyer's famous *Twilight* saga (Beahm 87).

Meyer's vampiric love tale proved to be an enormous success, as the series, "at the time of publication, has sold 116 million copies worldwide" which have been translated into fifty languages. Moreover, "[a]s of July 20, 2011 the *Twilight* books have spent 302 weeks on the New York Times bestseller lists" (Parke, and Wilson 3) and a real *Twilight* hype emerged (Köppl 243). Over the years, the saga has managed to establish a gigantic fan base with *Twilight* fans being either called "Twilighters or Twi-hards" (Click, Stevens Aubrey, and Behm-Morawitz 14).

The main story centers on seventeen-year-old Isabella (Bella) Swan who moves from sunny Phoenix to the rainy city of Forks in order to live with her father. As the *Twilight* series can be assigned to the romantic genre, it features traditional characteristics of the romantic novel, such as Bella's initial feelings of isolation and loneliness after having moved to Forks. In the beginning, Bella does not like Forks at all. This, however, changes, when she meets Edward Cullen, a mysterious and beautiful boy who shows particular aversion to Bella. Over the course of the series, Bella reveals Edward's secret of being a vampire and they fall in love with each other.

The *Twilight* saga is a "first-person narration" (Granger 26) which is mainly told from Bella's perspective. "This means that [everything] that happens is depicted from her internal viewpoint" (Leffler 119). Therefore, the reader can easily identify with her. Moreover, Bella's character "is designed to be 'everywoman'". She does not have a lot of "distinct" features, which leads

to the conclusion that “she could be [...] any young woman who feels out of place in the world and out of place in her body”. Therefore, Bella is a figure the reader can effortlessly “identify with, which is an important element in her appeal” (Larsson, and Steiner 14-15).

With Bella narrating the majority of the *Twilight* series, one has to be cautious because even though “Bella may be honest,” she is an unreliable narrator. Therefore, the reader has to question everything Bella narrates, as there are “conspicuous gaps between her personal assessments and [the] observable reality” (Tenga 103). An example for Bella being an unreliable source would be her appearance. While Bella constantly describes herself as ordinary and plain (*Twilight* 9), her peers show a completely different (positive) reaction to her physical aspect (*Twilight* 23) and in the course of the novels a lot of boys ask her for a date. In one instance, Edward even tells Bella that numerous boys admired her on her first day at school: “You don’t see yourself very clearly, you know. [...] but you didn’t hear what ever human male in this school was thinking on your first day” (*Twilight* 184). Even Edward often mentions her beauty by telling her that she is “the opposite of ordinary” (*Twilight* 184). This clearly shows that Bella as a narrator is not entirely trustworthy.

In the few exceptions of Bella being not the narrator of the series, her best friend Jacob Black tells the story from his point of view. Jacob takes over narrating the epilogue of *Eclipse* (551-559) in which he describes his reactions to Bella’s decision of marrying Edward as well as her plan of being transformed into a vampire. Moreover, Jacob is also the narrator of “Book Two” in *Breaking Dawn* (127-331) in which he portrays and comments Bella’s life-threatening pregnancy.

During the course of the novels, it becomes obvious that the vampires of the *Twilight* saga do not have much in common with the stereotypical folkloric revenants and the traditional vampires of literature. With regard to gender distribution, the *Twilight* series incorporates both male as well as female vampires. This equation, however, considerably differs from the vampire of folklore. Even though reports on female folkloric revenants also existed, these only accounted for the minority. Therefore, the male folkloric vampire represented the prototypical revenant of former times, as the majority of

vampiric reports only involved male vampires, as already shown in chapter 1.2 of this thesis. Similarly, male vampires dominated the literary vampire tradition. As already mentioned earlier, the most famous vampires of literature, such as Count Dracula, Lord Ruthven or Varney were all male with the only scarce exception being Sheridan Le Fanu's female vampire Carmilla. By analyzing the *Twilight* saga, it becomes, however, obvious that these gender inequalities have definitely changed, as *Twilight* both features male and female revenants.

With regard to gender roles, another characteristic of the prototypical male vampire of both folklore and literature was to seduce only women in order to then suck their blood and transform them into revenants. This shows that the vampire legend as well as the literary vampiric tradition has already used gender roles by representing women as helpless and powerless victims and men as powerful and strong perpetrators. By contrast, today's *Twilight* series decentralizes gender roles by also depicting female vampires as predators that attack their victims who are now both men and women. This means that *Twilight's* female vampires are as powerful as male vampiric creatures and that female as well as male humans are equally weak and defenseless victims, representing male and female vampires as well as male and female humans as kind of equals.

In the first chapter of this thesis it was demonstrated that folkloric reports on only male exhumers who interred the corpses of a supposed vampire in order to entirely kill the folkloric revenant exist. In the *Twilight* series, by comparison, both female and male vampires as well as female and male werewolves fight against the "newborns," i.e. uncontrollable vampires that constitute a major threat, in order to kill them and to stop their senseless slaughter. This is another indication that *Twilight's* male and female vampires are represented as being equals.

Stephenie Meyer, however, takes a further step in modifying *Twilight's* new literary vampire who strikingly differs from the traditional vampire figure of the nineteenth century (Clements 105). As already mentioned, *Twilight's* new literary vampire is now both male and female. Moreover, the new male and female vampires have enormous powers and are incredulously fast. They are pale and outstandingly beautiful and their eye color changes depending

on which kind of blood they have consumed. While with human blood, vampires' eyes become red, with animal blood, they turn golden. If they have not drunk any blood for a longer period of time, they become black.

In contrast to the traditional literary vampires who slept in coffins during the day, the new vampires of *Twilight* never require any sleep. Even though *Twilight's* vampires do not burn in the sun, they try to avoid it because their skin glistens conspicuously in the sunlight, which would reveal their true identity.

Further, the new vampire of literature does not cast a reflection in the mirror. He or she does not fear garlic and is able to enter a foreign house without needing the owner's invitation. *Twilight's* revenants do not fear running water, holy water or the cross and the only way they can be killed is to tear their bodies to pieces and afterwards burn it. Importantly, the new literary vampire is an abstinent creature, as the members of the Cullen clan do not drink human blood but consume animal blood instead. They also live together in a house and do not live alone, as it was common for the traditional literary vampire. Moreover, each vampire of the *Twilight* saga does have a partner.

Stephenie Meyer's vampires do also have special abilities. While Edward can read people's minds, Alice sees other's future and Jasper is able to manipulate people's emotions and feelings, whereas Bella has the power to create an invisible shield that protects herself and the people she loves. This indicates that not only male but also female vampires possess agency and power in the *Twilight* series. Female agency, however, does not apply to human women who are rather portrayed as being weak and subordinate to men.

According to Donnelly, the *Twilight* series reinforces "a strict, heteronormative, patriarchal worldview" (185-186). This specific system

implies two clearly defined gender roles. In these roles, actions, emotions, and characteristics become gendered, with certain attributes labeled as 'feminine,' others 'masculine'. (Donnelly 185-186)

While "traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive[,] they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive" (Tyson 83-84). "This socialized division of gender both

supports and perpetuates the system of patriarchy, exalting the masculine and suppressing the feminine” (Donnelly 185-186). In how far these gender roles apply to the *Twilight* series will be analyzed in the following chapters of this thesis. The next chapter will take a closer look at the portrayal of women and men in the *Twilight* saga.

## **2.2 The Representation of Women in the *Twilight* Saga**

### **2.2.1 Isabella Swan**

Obviously, the *Twilight* series features traditional romantic characteristics. Therefore, Bella reminds the reader of a prototypical romantic heroine that comprises specific traits relating to traditional gender roles. Bella’s name, meaning “beautiful swan,” already reveals a lot to the reader. On the one hand, it gives away that the protagonist is a pretty young woman and on the other hand, it can be considered as an indication of stereotypical gender roles that can be found in Bella’s character.

With her ordinariness and clumsiness, Bella represents the “typical teenage girl”. Moreover, she exhibits particular features that are characteristic “for most people her age,” which are the feeling of isolation and alienation (Clements 113). Bella is depicted as an insecure young woman who has no self-esteem at all. She is not satisfied with her appearance, as she constantly complains about her too pale skin and labels herself as an outsider who has always felt out of place (*Twilight* 9). When Bella moves to her father, she feels alone, desperate and miserable. “While she sees herself as distinct and atypical, this very characteristic makes her easily relatable for most readers” (Clements 113).

Bella seems to be a very shy teenage girl. On her first day at her new school, she permanently wishes no to be noticed, as she detests being in the center of attention. Instead, she prefers to remain in the background and to go unnoticed. Bella is happy when she realizes that she does not stand out with her old car and her ordinary clothes (*Twilight* 12-13).

The fact that Bella is depicted as an outsider, “introverted and intelligent but lacking in both self-confidence and self-awareness” has made it easy for readers to “identify with Bella” (Clarke 8).

The identification, however, has led feminists to question a series that from start to finish emphasizes a young woman’s relationship to the opposite sex, shows her being physically and emotionally pushed around, and has her marry and bear a child at eighteen. (Clarke 8)

When Bella meets Edward for the first time on her first day at school, his incredible beauty and his mysterious aura fascinate her. She gets immediately obsessed with him. Anastasiu explains this obsession “in terms of sexual awakening,” as feelings and desires appear in Bella that “she never before allowed herself to acknowledge” (45-46). When Edward looks at her, “something stronger than butterflies batter[s] recklessly against the walls of [her] stomach” (*Twilight* 194). There is a high sexual tension between Edward and Bella. When they sit close together, they feel “electric currents” passing through their bodies (*Twilight* 38, 61, 192). “These descriptions suggest Bella is experiencing sexual arousal” (Anastasiu 45-46).

In fact, Edward has such a strong physical “effect on Bella” that it often gives the impression that “Bella [will not] survive their interactions” (Ursu 43). When he kisses her, her pulse even gets faster and then her heart stops beating for a second (*Twilight* 403). And sometimes when they get physical, Bella even forgets to breathe and almost faints: “It wasn’t until my head started to swim that I realized I wasn’t breathing” (*Twilight* 197). Another reaction that Bella often has after having kissed Edward is the feeling of dizziness: “He took my face tightly between his cool hands and kissed me until I was so dizzy the forest was spinning” (*New Moon* 466). One time she even faints: “‘Bella?’ His voice was alarmed as he caught me and held me up. ‘You ... made ... me ... faint,’ I accused him dizzily” (*Twilight* 279). These are only some examples that illustrate Bella’s subordination to Edward. She forgets everything around her and even her body does not work properly anymore when she kisses Edward. This is an indication of Bella entirely depending on him.

During the course of the books, Bella’s obsession does not stop. It seems as if she even gets more fascinated by him over time. This can be seen in the

scene of their marriage, when Bella walks down the aisle, only looking at Edward, realizing nothing else:

All I really saw was Edward's face; it filled my vision and overwhelmed my mind. His eyes were a buttery, burning gold; his perfect face was almost severe with the depth of his emotion. And then, as he met my awed gaze, he broke into a breathtaking smile of exultation. (*Breaking Dawn* 44)

Like the traditional romantic heroine, Bella is portrayed as the stereotypical damsel in distress who needs the protection of the hero. Edward and Jacob are repeatedly depicted in situations in which they save Bella's life. This depiction has, however, raised a lot of criticism, as many experts fear that Bella is a bad role model for young teenage girls because she is portrayed as an extremely powerless young woman who depends too much on men (Click, Stevens Aubrey, and Behm-Morawitz 2). According to Hawes, Bella's status as helpless damsel in distress "sends a problematic message to young women trying to work through their own confusion about gender roles" (168).

Another traditional characteristic that is usually attributed to women is clumsiness which can also be found in Bella's character. She is extremely clumsy and describes herself as "being so clumsy that I'm almost disabled" (*Twilight* 184). Bella "is prone to get bruises and scrapes just in the process of moving from one place to another" (Mann 133). She always manages to get herself into a perilous situation from which a male protector usually saves her (Beahm 75). Bella has been tracked by a male gang in Port Angeles, has been nearly crashed by a car, always gets into conflict with dangerous vampires, such as James, Laurent, Victoria, or the Volturi, almost died from cliff diving, has been nearly killed by newborns, and also brings herself in danger by getting pregnant with a supernatural child. She is depicted as weak, powerless and subordinate to Edward, both in the physical as well as in the psychical sense. Because of Bella's powerlessness "she relies on the various men in her life to keep her safe. As a result, there is a paternalistic quality to nearly all of Bella's relationships with men". Only after Bella has transformed into a vampire, she does no longer need her male saviors (Schwartzman 129).



Before Bella's transformation into a vampire, Edward and Bella, are, however, clearly unequals, with Edward being able to easily kill her if he loses control. *Twilight's* depiction of Bella as being weak and helpless is, however, dangerous, as

this characterization of Bella as a vulnerable innocent does the ideological work of transforming the overprotective thoughts and actions of the men in her life – particularly Edward and Jacob – into perfectly reasonable, and almost endearing, impulses. (Platt 81)

As the typical romantic heroine, Bella is portrayed as caring and nurturing. She takes care of her father, which reverses the traditional roles. Bella is confined to the household which shows that *Twilight* reinforces traditional gender role, as the kitchen is considered as women's domain. She cooks, does the laundry, buys the groceries, does the washing up and cleans the house, which are all "traditional feminine tasks" (Demory 213). Interestingly enough, Schwartzman notices that when Bella cooks, she "is always described as making 'Charlie's dinner' (*Eclipse* 522) rather than 'our dinner'" (129). This emphasizes

the expectation that women should prepare meals for the men in their families. This gender expectation is also evident among the Cullens (Esme and Rosalie prepare food for Bella, but Carlisle, Jasper, and Emmett never do) and the Quileute (Emily prepares food for the pack of werewolf boys, and Sue Clearwater cooks for Charlie after Bella leaves). (Schwartzman 129)

Bella does not, however, only care for her father, but she has also been the caretaker of her mother who seems to be unable to take control of herself and her life.

Even though Bella is, on the one hand, depicted as an independent young woman who cares for her parents who therefore consider her as very responsible and mature (*Twilight* 91), "Edward's behavior highlights her childlike qualities" (Platt 75). When she is with Edward she is portrayed as naïve, innocent and infantile. There are various instances that Bella is carried around by Edward, Jacob and other members of the Cullen clan (*Twilight* 398, 430). Edward is often described as cradling Bella "like a small child" (*Twilight* 246). He even orders her when she should go to bed. Bella subordinates herself and completely obeys Edward. She does everything what he instructs her to do. The fact that Edward even sometimes carries

Bella into bed and covers her in her blanket highlights Bella's childlike status (*New Moon* 44). Further, Edward writes a lullaby for her which he sums to her when she cannot sleep. This also reminds the reader of measures that are usually only undertaken with younger children:

'It's late,' he said again, murmuring, almost crooning now, his voice smoother than silk. 'Sleep, my Bella. Dream happy dreams. You are the only one who has ever touched my heart. I will always be yours. Sleep, my only love.' He started to hum my lullaby, and I knew it was only a matter of time till I succumbed, so I closed my eyes and snuggled closer into his chest. (*Eclipse* 173)

Moreover, Bella also seems like a child, when being compared to Jacob: "He was so big, I felt like I was a child hugging a grown-up" (*New Moon* 157). Jacob himself thinks of Bella as a "porcelain doll" because she is as pale and breakable as a doll (*New Moon* 158). This might also be an indication of Bella being only considered as passive object instead of active agent, as a doll is obviously an inanimate object. Edward as well as Jacob seem to occupy the role of Bella's fathers, as Bella feels "like a child being exchanged by custodial guardians," (*Eclipse* 282) when Edward drives her to Jacob's place. According to Tenga, "Bella relies on strong males who dominate and, in some respect, babysit her" in order "to satisfy her emotional needs (106-107).

Edward and Jacob are, however, not the only ones who treat Bella like a child. As an example Wolf mentions Bella's flight from James, when "Emmett pulls Bella out of her seat in the truck and tucks her to his chest (*Twilight* 399 qtd. in Wolf 158), "and soon thereafter, Esme carries Bella up the stairs and dresses up the girl in her own clothes like a doll" (*Twilight* 401-402 qtd. in Wolf 158). This is another sign of Bella's passive and helpless status. According to Wilson, these depictions aim to continuously encourage "readers [...] to recognize Bella's frailty and to appreciate her protective, domineering mates" (2011: 62-63).

But even though numerous other people are described as having "control over Bella's body," her mind cannot be taken over, as even Edward is unable to read her thoughts (Wolf 158). Bella's thoughts are the only thing that she possesses and that nobody is able to control.

Bella entirely depends on others, but particularly on Edward whose controlling behavior she hardly ever questions. She gears her whole life

towards Edward's and her whole world revolves around him. When Edward leaves her in *New Moon*, Bella is completely desperate and falls in a "zombie-like" state. She does not even narrate the story anymore. This "signals to readers the depth of her despair over her loss and the degree to which she sees Edward as necessary to the story she tells". It has, however, been considered as highly problematic for many experts, "who read Bella's silence as indicative of the unhealthy nature of her relationship with Edward" (Parrish 174). Bella does not have a voice when Edward is away.

Bella's mother also worries about Bella depending too much on Edward, as she notices, "the way you move – you orient yourself around him without even thinking about it. [...] You're like a ... satellite" (*Eclipse* 61). Miller defines a satellite as "any object that moves around a larger object" (167). With respect to Bella being described as a satellite, this means that Edward is "symbolically place[d] at the center [, whereas] Bella [is set] in the periphery" (Miller 167). In a broader context, this comparison highlights Edward's status as active agent, whereas Bella occupies a passive role, or as Miller suggests, "Edward's role as the actor and Bella's role as the reactor. When Edward moves, so does Bella" (167). She aligns her whole life with Edward which emphasizes her complete dependency on him.

It is highly problematic that Bella hardly ever questions Edward or Jacob's behavior. Tenga argues that

Bella's ready acceptance of male hegemony sends a strong message about the role of women. [...] To the feminist reader, Bella may indeed serve as an unsatisfactory role model for young women. By the standards of her own fictional models, though, Bella reaches her goals and receives the classic reward: marriage, motherhood, and upward mobility. (Tenga 113)

Another dangerous message that the *Twilight* series effuses is that a woman totally forgets her own interests and is completely absorbed in her relationship when having a partner. When Bella starts a relationship with Edward, she completely ignores all of her friends. Her behavior is not taken into question during the *Twilight* series but is rather described as normal and not deplorable. Another sign that shows that Bella's and generally all of *Twilight's* females' worlds only rotate around their partners is that one of the only topics Bella and her female friends have is boys. For instance, in *New*

*Moon* Bella tries to renew her friendship with Jessica after Edward has broken up with her. Therefore, Jessica and Bella decide to go to the cinema. At first, it exposes highly different for them to find a topic of interest they share. Only when Bella asks Jessica about her amorous relations, Jessica starts talking. This can be considered as a sign that women in the *Twilight* saga do not even know what they should talk about besides about men, as the most important thing for them is the male world. This illustrates that *Twilight's* women are only reduced to their subordinate dependent position to men. The same applies to a scene in *Eclipse*, in which Bella aids Angela with the addressing of envelopes. In this sequence, they also do not really manage to come up with a conversation. Only when they start talking about their partners, a lively discussion develops (Clasen 126-127). This conveys a dangerous message for young girls, as it shows that women do not have a voice except for praising their male partners.

“Once Bella and Edward enter their relationship,” they become one entity and are scarcely separated. Edward’s obsession to protect and completely control Bella is limitless. He even goes as far as to “sneak[...] into her room at night so they are not apart while Bella sleeps, and by the second book, they have almost all of their classes together” (Clasen 128). Therefore, it can be said that one of *Twilight's* problematic messages is to show that the true goal in life is to find a partner, as *Twilight* shows that “one is incomplete without his or her true soul mate” (Clasen 128). This is a problematic message, as it says that one is only whole and complete after he or she has found his true love.

Like the traditional romantic heroine, Bella does not have much experience with boys and is still a virgin. It is striking, however, that it is Bella, who constantly wants to sleep with Edward and tries to seduce him, not the other way around. Bella is the one

who has uncontrollable sexual urges as she struggles to suppress her own desires, and it is Edward who makes rational decisions about their physical relationship. (McGeough 90)

This is one rare exception of Bella showing agency. Moreover, Bella being the one who wants to have sex does not conform to traditional female gender traits. In this case, Edward is the one, who presents female gender characteristics by suggesting Bella to wait having sexual intercourse until

marriage. According to Bella, Edward has even established rules for them getting in physical contact before marriage:

Edward had drawn many careful lines for our physical relationship, with the intent being to keep me alive. Though I respected the need for maintaining a safe distance between my skin and his razor-sharp, venom-coated teeth, I tended to forget about trivial things like that when he was kissing me. (*New Moon* 15)

This shows that Bella has lost control over her sexual desires which, according to McGeough, “implies that the adolescent female body lacks control at both the physical and rational level” (90).

Although Bella seems to be the active part in their sexual relationship, Edward still dominates and controls her by refusing to sleep with her. He is still the one who has power over Bella’s body.

The *Twilight* saga became especially famous for “mak[ing] *not* having sex sexy”. Even though Bella and Edward do not have any sexual intercourse until they finally get married in the saga’s final installment, one of the series’ main focuses is the couple’s sexual longings and “the negotiation of sex”. This phenomenon can be called “the erotics of abstinence” which considers lust “as an active part of abstinence” (McGeough 91).

Ultimately, Bella, however, manages to persuade Edward to sleep with her but only on his condition that she marries him. Even though Bella is averse to the concept of marriage, as she has “been raised to cringe at the very thought of poofy white dresses and bouquets,” she finally agrees to marry Edward (*Breaking Dawn* 5). With Bella’s aversion to marriage, Bella goes against traditional female gender roles, as the stereotypical woman is represented as being obsessed by marriages and white dresses. Bella is presented as not being particularly obsessed with getting married soon which does not comply with “the stereotype that females want to rush headlong down the aisle” (Wilson 2011: 73). To the contrary, Bella vehemently antagonizes Edward’s ideas of a quick marriage. At first she is strictly against marrying Edward so young. This instance proves to be another rare exception in which Bella gains agency and in which she rebels against Edward. In this sequence, “Bella is depicted as actively resisting Edward’s marriage demands while making sexual claims of her own” (Wilson 2011: 74). Even though Bella shows attempts of fighting and denying “Edward’s demands,” her voice is

taken away “by his paternalistic rhetoric and” she is forced to be silent “via his vampire strength” (Wilson 2011: 74-75). Therefore, Edward finally manages to persuade Bella to marry him. Edward’s successful attempt to force Bella into marrying him can be seen as “symbolizing the restrictions placed on females via patriarchy and its normalization of heterosexual, monogamous marriage” (Wilson 2011: 74-75).

Before Bella’s transformation into a vampire, the couple is strikingly unequal, as Bella is described as a weak and frail figure who requires to be protected by Edward which also frequently implies “controlling her, ordering her around, carrying her against her will” (Ursu 52). For Edward it is entirely normal to have the control over Bella, therefore, the scene in which Alice takes Bella hostage so that she cannot meet her best friend Jacob is described as blameless behavior. Edward’s superiority over Bella implicates that “she is always in the role of victim, needing to be saved, and her only power in battles is her ability to draw her own blood” or to sacrifice herself. Only when Bella turns into a vampire she is described as Edward’s equal who does not need to be protected anymore (Ursu 52).

In their relationship, Edward has clearly the upper hand. Edward’s behavior towards Bella is highly problematic, as he entirely controls her. What is more disturbing is that Bella accepts all of his behavior. Additionally, Bella acquiesces “the mortal threat posed by Edward with little or no acknowledgment that her life has, or should have, value” (Tenga 106). When Edward warns Bella that he is dangerous or that he might lose control over himself, Bella does not show any signs of fear. “I realized slowly that his words should frighten me. I waited for that fear to come, but all I could seem to feel was an ache for his pain” (*Twilight* 215). So even when Bella should be worried about her life, she only seems to pity Edward and be sorry for him. Later she realizes that she rather prefers to die than abandon Edward. She cannot imagine a life without him. “There was nothing more terrifying to me, more excruciating, than the thought of turning away from him. It was an impossibility” (*Twilight* 217). Bella’s most terrible dread is a life without Edward. Therefore, Bella rather prefers being “killed by him than rejected by him” (Tenga 106).

Edward's obsession of controlling Bella's every move provokes, according to feminist experts, two different responses. Firstly, females "resent being controlled and" decide to undertake secret measures, "such as lying, sneaking around, and their own brand of manipulation". Secondly, there are also women who think that the "controlling behavior" of their partners only means that they love them and care for them. Both reactions can be found in the character of Bella. While on the one hand, Bella shows signs of rebellion against Edward's methods (such as fleeing to Jacob even though Edward did not allow it), on the other hand, she considers it as a way for Edward to show her how much she means to him (McClimans, and Wisniewski 168).

Edward being entirely in control over Bella is a clear sign of "patriarchal oppression" which is existent throughout the whole series (Donnelly 185-186). One example of his mandatory and overbearing manner would be the scene in which he orders Bella to drink something after he has saved her life from potential rapists. It seems that Edward knows better than Bella herself what she needs. The following scene can be considered as example of Edward's total control over Bella, even knowing better than herself what her body craves for.

'Drink,' he ordered. I sipped at my soda obediently, and drank more deeply, surprised by how thirsty I was. I realized I had finished the whole thing when he pushed his glass toward me. 'Thanks,' I muttered, still thirsty. The cold from the icy soda was radiating through my chest, and I shivered. 'Are you cold?' 'It's just the Coke,' I explained, shivering again. 'Don't you have a jacket?' His voice was disapproving. (*Twilight* 147)

Bella's wish to be transformed into a vampire is ceaseless. Even though she is completely aware about the consequences, i.e. potential death, her life as a human, or not seeing her parents ever again, she puts up with it (Clasen 126-127). Although Bella seems weak and subordinate to Edward, she stays with her decisions of becoming a vampire:

When it comes to those decisions that to her are the most important, not even Edward can change her mind. In his desperate attempt to save Bella's soul and spare her life as a monster, which is how he sees himself, Edward passionately opposes Bella's fervent wish to become a vampire. Though she is moved by his love and concern, she will not be dissuaded. For Bella, the most important reason is that it will allow her to be with Edward forever [...]. (Beahm 80)

So Bella's wish to spend an eternal life with Edward is one reason why Bella wants to be transformed into a vampire. There are, however, other factors why Bella wishes so desperately to become a vampire. One of these is, according to Mann, Bella's enormous fear of aging (141). She presses Edward to turn her into a vampire because she is worried that she might otherwise become older than he is, as Edward's appearance is for always frozen at seventeen. Another factor that might resonate in her wish might also be the fact that gender does not exist or matter for vampires, as both male and female vampires are equally strong, powerful and beautiful (Mann 141). When Bella expresses her wish of becoming a vampire, she explains to Edward that then they would be equals. In the following discussion, Bella expresses her wish of becoming a vampire and not being dependent and weak anymore:

'But it just seems logical ... a man and woman have to be somewhat equal ... as in, one of them can't always be swooping in and saving the other. They have to save each other *equally*. [...] I can't always be Lois Lane, [...] I want to be Superman, too.' (*Twilight* 412-413)

This shows that for Bella, the transformation into a vampire does not only mean spending a romantic life in eternity with Edward but also implies that she would not be subordinate anymore but equal instead (Mann 141). The resolution of gender roles in the superhuman *Twilight* world is also shown by

Rosalie and Emmett's and Alice and Jasper's romantic relationships, [in which] neither partner is dominant. For Bella, vampirism with the Cullens represents a liberating alternative to the oppressive dependency and scarring vulnerability represented by the human stories of [...] Renee, [...] Rosalie and Emily. (Deffenbacher, and Zagoria-Moffet 38)

After her marriage, Bella immediately gets pregnant. Her pregnancy divides the Cullen clan into two different fronts. While the females encourage Bella to keep the baby, the male vampires want Bella to perform an abortion. Bella decides to keep her child, as she immediately develops motherly feelings for her unborn, while Edward considers the fetus as threatening Bella's life (Beahm 81). Bella's decision to keep her child is another instance in which she is represented as active woman who is able to make her own decisions. The fact that the Cullen men are against Bella's pregnancy is another sign of men trying to control women's bodies. Bella has, however,



Rosalie on her side who protects her from the male vampires. Rosalie and Bella working together in order to save the baby's life can be considered as symbol of female rebellion against dominant patriarchal norms.

During the course of her pregnancy, Bella shows self-sacrificing traits which is labeled as traditionally feminine. Bella does anything for the wellbeing of her unborn child. She even considers the baby's life as more precious than her own and therefore does not accept anything that would be risky for her child, even though it endangers her own health. When Jacob comes up with the idea that Bella's unborn might want to consume blood, Bella even decides to drink the blood all by herself so that her child is able to absorb it faster. This is an extreme sacrifice for Bella, as she normally gets nauseous by the mere smell of blood (Worley 117).

The scene in which Bella gives birth to her daughter Renesmee is described as a horrible and violent event. Bella is unconscious and only represented as an object the others work over:

I [Jacob] heard the soft, wet sound of the scalpel across her stomach. More blood dripping to the floor. The next sound jolted through me, unexpected, terrifying. Like metal being shredded apart. [...] I glanced over to see Edward's face pressed against the bulge. Vampire teeth – a surefire way to cut through vampire skin. I shuddered as I blew more air into Bella. (*Breaking Dawn* 323)

This sequence, which is told from Jacob's point of view, is highly disturbing. It shows Bella as being passive and weak. Bella dies after having given birth to her daughter. Edward, however, tries to save Bella's life by transforming her into a vampire, which Bealer defines as a combination of "violent injury [and] sexual touch" (149). Jacob describes Edward's attempts to change Bella the following way:

I watched what he was doing. It was like he was kissing her, brushing his lips at her throat, at her wrists, into the crease at the inside of her arm. But I could hear the lush tearing of her skin as his teeth bit through, again and again, forcing venom into her system at as many points as possible. I saw his pale tongue sweep along the bleeding gashes, but before this could make me either sick or angry, I realized what he was doing. Where his tongue washed the venom over his skin, it sealed shut. Holding the poison and the blood inside her body. (*Breaking Dawn* 326)

After her transformation, Bella seems to have enormous powers. As a vampire, Bella even excels Edward's powers. She is able to run much faster than Edward and also seems to be more powerful than he is. Bella is not clumsy anymore, she feels absolutely invincible as a vampire:

Over the sound of my peals of delighted laughter, I could hear Edward racing to find me. My jump had been twice long as his. When he reached my tree, his eyes were wide. I leaped nimbly from the branch to his side, soundlessly landing again on the balls of my feet. 'Was that good?' I wondered, my breathing accelerated with excitement. 'Very good.' He smiled approvingly, but his casual tone didn't match the surprised expression in his eyes. (*Breaking Dawn* 381)

This sequence shows that Edward is impressed by Bella's new vampiric self, which he, however, does not admit. It seems to bother him that Bella is stronger and faster than he is. Bella does not require Edward's controlling behavior anymore. He does not need to carry her anymore, as she is now his equal:

And so I flew with him through the living green web, by his side, not following at all. As I ran, I couldn't help laughing quietly at the thrill of it; the laughter neither slowed me nor upset my focus. [...] I kept waiting to feel winded, but my breath came effortlessly. I waited for the burn to begin in my muscles, but my strength only seemed to increase as I grew accustomed to my stride. My leaping bounds stretched longer, and soon he was trying to keep up with me. I laughed again, exultant, when I heard him falling behind. My naked feet touched the ground so infrequently now it felt more like flying than running. (*Breaking Dawn* 381-382)

After her becoming a vampire, Bella "claims ownership and control over her body". Her change also makes it possible for Bella to be on one level with Edward. She even overpowers him by having better senses and she also has more strength than Edward (McGeough 99).

After her conversion, "Bella [...] is no longer clumsy or accident prone, but graceful, poised, and able to move with ease" (McGeough 98). Moreover, Bella is described as incredibly beautiful. When she sees herself for the first time in the mirror, she is astonished by her new appearance:

My first reaction was an unthinking pleasure. The alien creature in the glass was indisputably beautiful, every bit as beautiful as Alice or Esme. She was fluid even in stillness, and her flawless face was pale as the moon against the frame of her dark, heavy hair. Her limbs were smooth and strong, skin glistening subtly, luminous as a pearl. My second reaction was horror. Who was she? At first glance, I couldn't

find my face anywhere in the smooth perfect planes of her features. And her eyes! Though I'd known to expect them, her eyes still sent a thrill of terror through me. All the while I studied and reacted, her face was perfectly composed, a carving goddess, showing nothing of the turmoil rolling inside me. (*Breaking Dawn* 371-372)

As a vampire, Bella is perfectly comfortable with her looks and is described as a self-confident "woman". According to Jeffers, after her transformation, Bella "is finally able to realize her best possible corporeal self" (147).

Bella's vampiric self seems to be even more obsessed with Edward and his appearance than her human self. When Bella regains consciousness after Edward has turned her into a vampire, she surprisingly notices that Edward is even more beautiful than she has ever thought:

The greater part of my senses and my mind were still focused on Edward's face. I had never seen it before this second. How many times had I stared at Edward and marveled over his beauty? How many hours – days, weeks – of my life had I spent dreaming about what I then deemed to be perfection? I'd thought I'd known his face better than my own. I'd thought this was the one sure physical thing in my whole world: the flawlessness of Edward's face. I may as well have been blind. For the first time, with the dimming shadows and limiting weakness of humanity taken off my eyes, I saw his face. I gasped and then struggled with my vocabulary, unable to find the right words. I needed better words. (*Breaking Dawn* 360)

In this scene Bella completely worships and adores Edward. She cannot take her eyes off him and cannot believe that she has never been able to grasp his full beauty. She also has the feeling that as a human she was not able to take in his perfection, as her human senses were too weakly equipped.

Bella's transformation involves Bella and Edward becoming "better partners" (Jeffers 146). When they get physically intimate after Bella's transformation, Edward does not need to be careful anymore:

He was not so hesitant in his movements; his arms locked around my waist and pulled me tight against his body. His lips crushed down on mine, but they felt soft. My lips no longer shaped themselves around his; they held their own. Like before, it was as if the touch of his skin, his lips, his hands, was sinking right through my smooth, hard skin and into my new bones. To the very core of my body. I hadn't imagined that I could love him more than I had. (*Breaking Dawn* 393-394)

Bella thinks that as a vampire she loves Edward even more than as a human. Here, Hawes remarks that paradoxically Bella's "enjoyment of life has

increased now that she is a member of the undead” (170-171). Bella’s transformation seems to have strengthened Bella and Edward’s bond and “enables more physical and emotional intersubjective connection between the two” (Bealer 149).

Their first sexual intercourse after Bella’s transformation is described the following way:

He was all new, a different person as our bodies tangled gracefully into one on the sand-plate floor. No caution, no restraint. No fear – especially not that. We could love *together* – both active participants now. Finally equals. (*Breaking Dawn* 446)

In this passage the emphasis lies on both partners being “active participants now”. Bella is not passive anymore, but is also an active agent. She is not subordinate to Edward anymore (Jeffers 146). As a vampire, Bella has gained agency. She is not weak and submissive anymore but an independent woman who can protect herself and is able to make her own decisions. Importantly, in the final fight against the Volturi, it are neither male vampires nor werewolves who save all of the participants’ lives but Bella who is their savior (Mann 142). This she manages by using her special ability that she has gained as a vampire. This special gift involves the power of forming a shield that protects herself as well as everybody else she wants to be safe. Bella’s gift is the remedy that saves her and the others in the final fight against the Volturi (Granger 127).

Whereas many critics consider Bella’s decision to keep her baby and to abandon her human life in order to spend an eternal life with Edward as problematic, as they consider it as a sign of Bella’s dependency on Edward and “evidence of submission to a traditional patriarchal mindset” (Jeffers 146), Jeffers interprets her decisions as signs for “a fully empowered woman,” making her own decision that seem to fit for her (146). Further, Jeffers does not evaluate Bella’s decision and preference to “continue to nurture her family” but just considers it as “a choice” which does not mean that she is a submissive female but just that she is “confident in her own personhood and can embrace her being as a female” (146).

Bella changes tremendously in the course of the four novels. She matures and turns “from a seventeen-year-old girl, a loner from a broken home, into a married woman, a mother and a member of an extended loving

family” (Clarke 6). Moreover, she “transforms from an average girl to a powerful vampire” (Click, Stevens Aubrey, and Behm-Morawitz 3). As a vampire, Bella is incredibly strong, independent and even superior to Edward. She is no longer a damsel in distress but has managed to break free from *Twilight*’s strict confines of patriarchal dominance.

### **2.2.2 Renée**

To some extent, Bella’s mother Renée represents the stereotypical woman. She is portrayed as an extremely dependent person. Even though Renée is a grown-up woman, Bella has always cared for her mother. As Renée is not able to take care of herself, she either relies on her daughter or on other men. Strikingly, Bella and her mother have changed roles, as Bella has taken over the role of the mother. Bella instructs her mother not to “do anything rash,” when she is worried about Bella because she has not written back for a few days (*Twilight* 29). Bella also tells her mother where the blouse is that Renée was not able to find.

Even though her mother has abandoned Bella by deciding to accompany her new husband Phil to his baseball games, Bella is the one who feels guilty for having left her mother behind. This is another sign that Bella does not believe that her mother could live without her. When Bella moves to her father, she is deeply worried about her mother:

I felt a spasm of panic as I stared at her wide, childlike eyes. How could I leave my loving, erratic, harebrained mother to fend for herself? Of course she had Phil now, so the bills would probably get paid, there would be food in the refrigerator, gas in her car, and someone to call when she got lost but still... (*Twilight* 4)

In this passage it becomes obvious that Bella regards herself as the mother and her mother as the child whom she portrays with “childlike eyes” and dependent. Bella does not think that her mother would be able to care for herself if she does not have her husband Phil.

Further, Bella does not describe her mother as the traditional mother figure: “She’s more outgoing than I am, and braver. She’s irresponsible and slightly eccentric, and she’s a very unpredictable cook. She’s my best friend” (*Twilight* 90). Even though Renée is on the one hand depicted as helpless

and dependent character, her depiction of being “irresponsible and slightly eccentric” as well as not very good at cooking “does not fit into the female gender role subscribed to by those in a heteronormative, patriarchal system”. In the *Twilight* series she is represented as the “Other” who goes against traditional gender norms (Donnelly 187-188) and “do[es] not conform to [her] gendered expectations” (Donnelly 187).

### **2.2.3 Jessica Stanley**

As Bella dismisses all of her friendships in order to spend more time with Edward, her friends do not take up a large part in the *Twilight* saga which could be also reinterpreted in the gender context that women are even not that important to be mentioned. Strikingly, the *Twilight* series does not include a lot of human women. One of them is Jessica Stanley whom Bella gets to know on her first day at school.

Jessica is described as a stereotypical woman who loves gossiping. The character of Jessica is mostly restricted to female gender stereotypes, as she is portrayed as preferring to talk about herself and boys. Whenever Jessica is having a conversation with Bella, it mostly revolves around boys. She enjoys talking about her progress with Mike Newton and she immediately tells Bella after he has asked her for a date.

Jessica is depicted as the stereotypical girl, going to proms and loving shopping. She asks Bella if she wants to join Angela and her buying a dress for their prom. Jessica seems to be a rather egoistic person. When Edward seems to be interested in Bella, she is hardly able to believe that he might show interest in Bella. Jessica does not seem to be interested in Bella as a person but rather in her popularity. Therefore, Jessica appears to be only friends with Bella because she expects to get benefits from this friendship.

Moreover, Jessica is portrayed as being highly jealous. She falls in love with Mike Newton who seems to keep an eye on Bella. When Jessica realizes that Mike tries to increasingly talk to Bella, she makes it immediately clear to Bella that this is not okay for her.

As Jessica is described as the prototypical feminine girl, she also loves watching chick flicks. When Bella asks her to watch a movie, Jessica is keen

on seeing a romantic film. Bella, however, manages to persuade her to watch a horror movie which incredibly scares Jessica, another characteristic that is attributed to female gender roles.

In addition, Jessica is described as being extremely anxious. When Bella leads her in a dark alley in the middle of the night and approaches some dubious male figures that drink alcohol in front of a bar, she gets hysterical, flees and leaves Bella behind on her own.

Jessica seems to represent traditional female gender roles by being described as possessing all the stereotypical traits that are attributed to women, such as gossiping, loving shopping, enjoying to talk about boys, being anxious and rather powerless, liking chick flicks, depending on men with her only goal in life is finding the perfect (male) partner.

#### **2.2.4 Angela Weber**

Angela Weber is another friend of Bella. Angela is portrayed as a rather quiet teenage girl. Bella enjoys being with Angela, as she never asks uneasy questions and respects when Bella wants to have some privacy. It seems as if Bella prefers to be with Angela rather than with Jessica. Angela appears to be really interested in Bella as a person. She seems to be an honest girl who really cares for Bella.

Angela's character does not appear very often throughout the series. This could be interpreted as another sign that women are not even worth mentioning. Angela seems to be a submissive and modest young woman. She does what people expect from her and follows the traditional heteronormative pattern. Therefore, it can be concluded that Angela is also presented according to traditional female gender roles.

#### **2.2.5 Leah Clearwater**

According to Donnelly, Leah Clearwater is besides Renée the second woman in the *Twilight* saga that seems to “not conform to [her] gendered expectations [and who is] shown as problematic” (187).

Before her transformation into a werewolf, Leah combined all of the stereotypical features that are expected from women. She was submissive and weak and was even engaged to Sam, the leader of the werewolf pack, who has, however, broken their engagement, after he imprinted on Leah's cousin Emily. This incident broke Leah's heart and she became a bitter and sad young woman whose life does not make any sense without her fiancé.

Later Leah is forced into the role of a werewolf. She is the only female in the pack and therefore tries to "assert her place in the male wolf pack" (Donnelly 188). She is depicted as not incredibly strong but as the fastest wolf of the pack which she is very proud of. During the course of the novels, Leah is portrayed "as difficult, confrontational, and emotional" (Donnelly 188). It is difficult for her to be the only woman amongst the male pack. Therefore, she is "aggressively competitive and defensive". Due to her transformation into a werewolf, Leah has been "removed from her traditional place of house and home". Since Sam has broken up with her, "Leah causes problems, reinforcing the oppressive, patriarchal system of gender roles" (Donnelly 188). While she is

Othered by her new role in this traditionally masculine world, Leah is normalized by Meyer by her victimhood – her heart was broken and the role of wife [as well as mother] was ripped away from her through no fault of her own. (Donnelly 188)

Leah as a human is another example of the *Twilight* saga reinforcing traditional female gender roles, as Leah is described as weak, submissive and dependent on Sam. As a werewolf, Leah is forced into male gender roles by not being able to bear children anymore. She also has to fight, thus being forced to do the same tasks the male werewolves have to do.

## **2.2.6 Esme Cullen**

It seems as if gender does not play a large role in *Twilight's* vampire universe. Esme Cullen, however, combines to some extent traditional female gender characteristics. This can be seen in Esme's caring and nurturing nature. She always cares for others and sees herself as the mother figure of the Cullen clan.



In contrast to most of *Twilight's* human female figures, Esme is not helpless or weak at all. This can be explained by her vampiric status that has bestowed unnatural strength and power on her. Esme seems to be an independent woman. Even though she is in a relationship with Carlisle, she does not appear to be dependent or particularly obsessed with him. Obviously, Esme has feelings for her "husband" and cares for his wellbeing but she is portrayed as a woman who would also survive without men, which cannot be said of (human) Bella, Renée, Jessica or Angela.

All in all, Esme seems to be equal to *Twilight's* vampiric men and is able to protect herself from any danger. Even though she is gendered by being the mother figure of the Cullens and being responsible for the household, Esme's vampiric self is not portrayed as a frail or submissive woman who is subordinate to men.

### **2.2.7 Alice Cullen**

According to Deffenbacher and Zagoria-Moffet, "Alice Cullen also blurs conventional gender roles" (38). On the one hand, Alice represents the stereotypical woman, as she is described as a tiny and breakable woman who sets a high value on appearance and clothing. Alice always wears the latest and most expensive fashion and is always perfectly styled. On the other hand, Alice is independent and likes to order others around, especially Bella whom she enjoys dressing like a doll (Deffenbacher, and Zagoria-Moffet 38).

Furthermore, Alice's figure "subverts gender conventions [by stressing] particular tastes that illustrate a nonconformist frame to traditional gender stereotypes" (Goebel 175). Alice's passion for fast vehicles, which "is something not typically associated with women" would be one example of gender subversion that can be particularly found in *Twilight's* vampiric women (Goebel 175).

Overall, as a vampire, Alice can, however, be described as an independent woman who is on an equal level in her relationship with Jasper. Moreover, Alice is very powerful and is kind of superior to the others by being able to see the future.

### **2.2.8 Rosalie Cullen**

Rosalie Cullen is described as the embodiment of prettiness. She is breathtakingly beautiful and she is entirely conscious about her impact on others. As a young human girl, Rosalie is described as naïve and vain. Rosalie thinks a great deal of herself and is an egoistic person. She is submissive and plans to marry a wealthy man whom her father has chosen for her. Before her marriage, Rosalie is, however, raped and almost killed by her fiancé and his friends. This horrible scenario also involves male and female gender traits, as it casts Rosalie in the role of a helpless and powerless victim, while men are assigned to the role of powerful and evil perpetrators who are not in control of their sexual desires.

As a vampire, Rosalie, however, does not conform to female gender norms. She is described as a powerful and strong woman who is able to defend herself. In her role of a vampire, Rosalie is given agency. She takes revenge on her rapists and kills all of them. Moreover, Rosalie is portrayed as the one with the best mechanical skills of the whole Cullen clan. Even though, Rosalie is female, she does not pursue activities that are particularly connected to female gender roles. The only stereotypical female traits that Rosalie possesses are her longing for a baby as well as her amazing beauty.

### **2.2.9 Renesmee**

According to Donnelly, Edward's and Bella's daughter Renesmee can be considered as "the potential epitome of the wild feminine, out of control of her urges and desires" (190). Renesmee gets bigger and bigger very quickly and soon does not seem to have enough space in Bella's womb. When Renesmee is "cut from the womb," Bella's heart stops beating, and from then on Renesmee represents "a threat to the entire Cullen clan by her very existence". Renee is "half human, half vampire" and even though she seems to be a charming little girl, she proves "monstrous in her unabashed desire for blood". The Cullens instantly love Renesmee. She is, however, "dangerous and unstable, and no one is completely convinced that she will not continue

to be a liability". By the character of Renesmee, the *Twilight* series conveys the meaning that

things are safer [...], when they conform to standards and norms and when boundaries are not crossed, reiterating the need for heteronormative, patriarchal control. (Donnelly 190)

This chapter has shown that particularly human girls are equipped with stereotypical female gender characteristics in the *Twilight* saga. Bella's character makes this especially obvious, as she is portrayed as a weak, submissive and dependent woman when she is human, while she is described as strong, powerful and superior to men after her transformation into a vampire. The same applies to Esme, Alice and Rosalie who are all described as powerless women when being human, whereas their figures mostly managed to break free from traditional gender roles after having been turned into a vampire.

## **2.3 The Representation of Men in the *Twilight* Saga**

### **2.3.1 Edward Cullen**

Edward Cullen is a 107-year-old vampire who looks like a seventeen-year-old teenage boy. He is described as being extremely beautiful. Edward is very intelligent. He is able to speak numerous different languages. Edward is depicted as having great strength and being very powerful. He can run very fast and he saves Bella's life for more than one time. Besides his strength, Edward has a special ability of his own. He is able to hear what other people think. Edward is a self-confident man who is "tortured by his desire to drink Bella's blood". Edward constantly fights against his desires for Bella's blood, which "charges his physically intimate encounters with Bella with erotic, mortal, *and* moral danger". Edward really cares for Bella. It is important for him to "protect[...] Bella's virtue" as well as saving her life (Mann 134).

Edward is conscious about how dangerous it is for Bella to spend time with him and he therefore feels egoistic. His feelings of "guilt and [...] desire to keep Bella safe" could be seen as one reason why Edward is the dominant

part in their relationship, “controlling when, where, and how often they see each other, and the level of intimacy of their courtship” (Click, Stevens Aubrey, and Behm-Morawitz 2). His controlling behavior can be considered as traditional gender trait that is associated with men.

Bella is fascinated by Edward’s skin that sparkles when exposed to sunlight. She constantly “compares Edward to a diamond, sculpture, marble, and crystal” (Clements 196). According to Clements, these equations lead to an emasculation of Edward (106). They could, however, also be interpreted as attributes typical for a godlike being. During the course of the novels Bella frequently refers to him as an angelic creature, “and it is clear – at least physically – why she sees him as such. He is more beautiful, more splendid, more glistening than any human being” (Clements 106). Bella describes Edward in the following way:

He grinned his crooked smile at me, stopping my breath and my heart. I couldn’t imagine how an angel could be any more glorious. There was nothing about him that could be improved upon. (*Twilight* 211-212)

Edward’s glistening skin can be considered as a female gender trait. The same applies to Bella’s constant comparisons with an angel. This shows that Edward is portrayed as an androgynous figure.

When Bella sees Edward for the first time in the sunlight, she is shocked. His skin sparkles and he looks excessively beautiful. His shirt is open which gives the story an erotic touch. She glorifies Edward over the top. For her, he is simply perfect:

Edward in the sunlight was shocking. I couldn’t get used to it, though I’d been staring at him all afternoon. His skin, white despite the faint flush from yesterday’s hunting trip, literally sparkled, like thousands of tiny diamonds were embedded in the surface. He lay perfectly still in the grass, his shirt open over his sculpted, incandescent chest, his scintillating arms bare. His glistening, pale lavender lids were shut, though of course he didn’t sleep. A perfect statue, carved in some unknown stone, smooth like marble, glittering like crystal. (*Twilight* 228)

Although Edward represents to some extent the stereotypical male, as being portrayed as excessively strong, controlling and powerful, he is feminized by being likened to an angel-like figure. Moreover, Edward “lacks

some typical male sexual characteristics. He is old, sparkles like crystal, and has no body hair to speak of" (Clements 115-116).

Even though Edward is a vampire and so to say a predator, he is in total control over his cravings for Bella's blood. By depicting Edward as a moral being who is able to control his bloodlust and make it thereby "secondary to the action of the story," Edward is not presented as a "monster" but as a humanized being with a conscience. Moreover, the character of Edward differs from the traditional vampire figure of literature "because of his sensuality, not sexuality" (Beahm 71).

With respect to sex, Edward is surprisingly the one who keeps Bella from having sexual intercourse with him. In their sexual relationship, Bella is the driving force, whereas Edward is the one who holds her back. He justifies his behavior by religious reasons, as he considers premarital sexual intercourse as a sin and additionally is concerned about Bella's and his own soul (*Eclipse* 402). This clearly emphasizes the *Twilight* saga's abstinent message. This scene shows a reversal of gender roles, as Bella is the one who wants to force Edward to have sex with her and not the other way around. Edward's decision to stay abstinent does not only, however, affect his life but also Bella's. "This control over her decisions reflects the strong, patriarchal dominance of the tales" (Donnelly 181).

It is quite an exception that Edward is so relentless "about abstinence until marriage" (Mukherjea 71). But even more surprising is the fact that although Edward is 107 years old and unbelievably beautiful, he is still a virgin, as he has always waited to find his true soul mate. It is uncommon and highly ironical that men, especially at that age, are sexually inexperienced. This is also another instance of Edward not complying with traditional male gender roles.

When Bella and Edward are, however, married their sexual intercourse is constantly and indirectly described. Therefore, "the reader is assured that Bella and Edward enjoy an active marital sex life" (Mukherjea 71). This also highlights Edward's sexual potency which in turn confirms *Twilight's* stereotypical male gender roles.

According to K  rrholm, Edward represents the new literary vampire. While in the past, the literary vampire was a figure "who mainly stood for

seduction and the practice of violent sexuality,” today, the vampire of literature, as encountered in the *Twilight* saga, is a character that “represent[s] love and self-control” (50).

In her *Twilight* series, Meyer often takes abstinent behavior as an indication of being moral. On the one hand, abstinence in the *Twilight* saga is used to set the Cullen clan apart from other vampires, as they do not drink human blood but animal blood instead. Another facet of abstinence promoted in the *Twilight* novels is sexual abstinence, which Edward demands from Bella until their marriage.

But the fact that Edward must both convince and prevent Bella from acting on her physical impulses reveals the highly gendered nature of the politics of abstinence in the series. (Platt 79)

While Edward is perfectly in control over his sexual longings for Bella, she is mainly not able to hold back her lust, “increasing both the mortal and moral perils associated with their physical relationship”. By not being able to control herself, Bella completely “depend[s] on him to prevent things from going too far”. When Bella and Edward kiss for the first time, Bella is entirely overpowered by her desires, while Edward is the one repressing her lust (Platt 79).

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. Immediately I felt him turn to unresponsive stone beneath my lips. His hands gently, but with irresistible force, pushed my face back. I opened my eyes and saw his guarded expression. (*Twilight* 247 qtd. in Platt 79)

Edward is often portrayed as being the hunter and Bella being his “potential prey” by referring to them as “angelfish” and “shark,” “baby seal” and “killer whale” (*Twilight* 269), “lamb” and “lion” (*Twilight* 240). This also shows *Twilight*’s reinforcement of traditional gender roles by comparing Bella to a weak animal, whereas Edward is compared to a powerful predator. Bella, however, does also take to some extent the role of a hunter by being

the predator in their sexual relationship, trying to seduce Edward on multiple occasions, recklessly oblivious to the risk of inciting a violent, instinctual reaction from him. (Platt 79)

Edward, however, is the one who controls her sexual desires by denying her to have sex with him (Platt 79).

Platt considers “the sexual politics of the saga [as] decidedly conservative” (80). Bella is often portrayed as a “victim of her own uncontrollable desires, desires, that get her into more and more trouble as the series progresses” and is unable to control herself. With this the *Twilight* saga conveys the message that it could be fatal to be “young, female, and sexual” (Platt 80).

Edward shows controlling behavior that is deeply disturbing. Throughout the novels, “Edward’s protective impulses cross the line into behavior that would be considered controlling and frightening in any other relationship (Platt 81-82). He secretly comes to Bella’s room at night and watches her sleep. He breaks into her house. He also overhears the conversations with her friends so that he can hear what she thinks about him. He also wants to forbid her to meet her friend Jacob. Moreover, he even manipulates her car so that she cannot secretly sneak off to Jacob’s place. Shockingly, he even bribes his sister Alice with a new Porsche into kidnapping Bella and keeping her in their house without letting her out (McClimans, and Wisniewski 166). Wilson describes Edward as “a throwback to another era – the one in which he was born (the early 1900s) – when women could [not] vote let alone wear pants” (2011: 88).

More disturbingly, Bella does not seem to mind his obsessive behavior. To the contrary, she thinks that his actions are only indications of his love to her. When she finds out that Edward has watched her sleep every night, she is not furious at all. “‘You spied on me?’ But somehow I couldn’t infuse my voice with the proper outrage. I was flattered. He was unrepentant” (*Twilight* 256). This shows that “Bella does not seem to have the critical skill set to critique the patriarchal ties that bind” (Wilson 2011: 75). Bella’s submissive behavior could dangerously be understood as message “that men must step in, dominate, and protect [, whereas] women should capitulate, understanding that it is for their own good” (Donnelly 186). Edward does not even feel guilty for what he has done and considers his behavior as completely normal.

With respect to Edward’s obsession to be in total control of Bella, McClimans and Wisniewski state that

controlling behavior is a consequence of patriarchy: Men will try to control those situations in which their dominant status is threatened. Controlling behavior, however, also reinforces systems of dominations and subordination, in that the women whom men attempt to control are taken to be in *need* of control – in need of guidance, protection, and oversight. (McClimans, and Wisniewski 169)

Edward's obsession to keep Bella safe increases by considering her more and more as "weak and vulnerable". Edward does not only consider Bella as weak in a physical sense but also thinks that she is not able to decide on her own. This is best shown by

Bella's and Edward's ongoing argument about whether she will become a vampire. Edward *continually* dismisses Bella's request as irrational, uninformed, and hasty, (McClimans, and Wisniewski 167)

and does not take her serious (McClimans, and Wisniewski 167).

Edward is described as being imperious. He always tells Bella what to do and often orders her around. He even commands her to eat something although she declares that she does not need anything. Similarly, Edward decides what is best for Bella without even asking her. An example would be Bella being in hospital and Edward deciding to call the nurse for Bella's pain medication, even though Bella does not want it:

'I think we're ready for more pain medication,' he said calmly, ignoring my furious expression. [...] 'I won't take it,' I promised. He looked toward the sack of fluids hanging beside my bed. 'I don't think they're going to ask you to swallow anything.' (*Twilight* 416)

The most disturbing scene, however, is "when Edward attempts to arrange for an abortion for Bella without any discussion or her permission" (Miller 169).

Edward is portrayed as being extremely jealous. He directly shows Bella his disapproval of male admirers. At the beginning of the series, Edward is jealous of Mike Newton courting Bella. When Bella starts spending time with Jacob, Edward also immediately presents his disapprobation. Throughout the whole *Twilight* saga, Edward and Jacob are portrayed as rivals who fight for Bella's love. Edward does not want Bella to meet Jacob. This he achieves by manipulating Bella's car or by even bribing his sister Alice to keep Bella hostage in exchange for a new Porsche. In the rare scenes when he allows Bella to visit Jacob, he insists on driving Bella to Jacob's place as well as picking her up again (Miller 169).



While Edward is, on the one hand, described as traditionally masculine protagonist who is strong, powerful and in total control of Bella, on the other hand, he also possesses traditional female characteristics, such as his glistening skin or being constantly portrayed as an angel-like creature. These traits rather portray Edward as a more androgynous creature than a real man.

### **2.3.2 Jacob Black**

Jacob Black is described as cheerful and happy teenage boy before he becomes a werewolf. Throughout the *Twilight* series Bella calls him “my sun” (*New Moon* 231). Jacob is younger than Bella. After his transformation, however, he seems much older than her. He has grown enormously and is extremely muscular:

Jacob had changed radically in the last weeks since I’d seen him. The first thing I noticed was his hair – his beautiful hair was all gone, cropped quite short, covering his head with an inky gloss like black satin. The planes of his face seemed to have hardened subtly, tightened ... aged. His neck and his shoulders were different, too, thicker somehow. His hands, where they gripped the window frame, looked enormous, with the tendons and veins more prominent under the russet skin. (*New Moon* 231)

This description of Jacob’s appearance represents the stereotypical embodiment of masculinity, as he is portrayed as muscular, big and powerful.

Like Edward, Jacob is in love with Bella and is therefore Edward’s “romantic rival” (Click, Stevens, and Behm-Morawitz 2). Jacob is very skilled. He easily repairs cars or motorcycles. He even builds his own car out of other cars’ parts. Jacob spends a lot of his time in his garage before becoming a werewolf. He enjoys spending time with Bella, having more than feelings of friendship for her.

As a werewolf, Jacob has enormous problems of controlling his temper. He constantly has to struggle against his anger. This distinguishes him from Edward who is perfectly able to control his desires (Wilson 2011: 90).

Jacob does not want to be a werewolf and is unhappy with his situation. He is desperate when he learns that Bella wants to be turned into a vampire. After having heard about her plans of marrying Edward, Jacob cannot bear his feelings. He decides to turn into a wolf, as in this shape he does not have

to think much about his problems, and randomly runs throughout the whole country, leaving Forks for a long time behind.

Jacob is portrayed as a powerful, strong, independent and superior young man. He is sometimes described as aggressive and in *New Moon* expressions like “his mouth twisting into a snarl,” “his hostile expression,” “he groaned, pressing his trembling fists to his temples” (269), “glaring with fury,” “he roared, his entire frame quivering with rage” (270) are used in connection with Jacob in order to refer to his hot temper. Jacob’s transformation into a werewolf has robbed him of his power to control his body and his feelings. This he comments the following way: “The hardest part is feeling ... out of control,” he said slowly. ‘Feeling like I can’t be sure of myself [...]. Like I’m a monster who might hurt somebody’” (*New Moon* 304).

When Jacob finally imprints on Edward and Bella’s daughter Renesmee, the possibility of free choice is also taken from him and he changes from an active to a passive person who is not even able to choose his partner all by himself. Jacob describes the phenomenon of imprinting the following way:

Everything inside me came undone as I stared at the tiny porcelain face of the half-vampire, half-human baby. All the lines that held me to my life were sliced apart in swift cuts, like clippings the string to a bunch of balloons. [...] I was not left drifting. A new string held me where I was. A million steel cables all tying me to one thing – to the very center of the universe. [...] It was the baby girl in the blonde vampire’s arms that held me here now. Renesmee. (*Breaking Dawn* 330-331)

According to Clasen, “imprinting occurs involuntarily, even when there may be negative consequences,” such as Sam breaking his engagement with Leah after having imprinted on Emily (122-123). More importantly, imprinting only applies to “heterosexual couples whose long-term goal is a romantic relationship” (Clasen 122-123).

The concept of imprinting is a highly problematic one. Donnelly claims that “the female technically has a choice but it is assumed she would never want to decline the male wolf’s attentions” (188-189). The imprinted woman “is passive, chosen and bound by *his* destiny”. A highly intimidating fact is that it is possible for a wolf to imprint on a child or even a toddler. The concept of imprinting is disturbing, as the young female children “are bound to grown men before they even have a sense of self”. Their only purpose of life will be

“to become wives and mothers with no real chance to date or explore themselves before making a lifetime commitment”. These young girls “do not have any control over their sexuality or their future relationships, yet this is idealized in the novels as romantic and spiritual”. Imprinting as well as the suggestion to get married as soon as possible, convey “a clear message of patriarchal control through the institution of pair bonding [...], leaving no room for a woman’s individual control over her destiny” (Donnelly 188-189).

Jacob’s transformation into a wolf also changed his previous boyish status into a stereotypical man. He is described as incredibly big and strong. Even though Jacob seems to be the embodiment of maleness, his role of a werewolf makes him passive, as he is not able to control his body anymore which automatically turns into a werewolf when he is upset. Moreover, his passivity is illustrated by his imprinting on Renesmee. Jacob has no choice to choose his partner on his own and is therefore a rather passive figure.

### **2.3.3 Carlisle Cullen**

Carlisle is the head of the Cullen clan. He makes all the decisions which the other Cullens respect. Carlisle is also the creator of the Cullen clan. He found all of his “family” members severely injured and close to death and therefore decided to save their lives by transforming them into vampires.

Carlisle is depicted as a highly moral vampire. He has hated himself for being a vampiric creature that is only driven and bound by bloodlust. Therefore, he decided to fight against his desire and to only consume animal blood instead of human blood. Over the centuries, Carlisle managed to be perfectly able to control himself. Impressively, he even works as a doctor at a hospital, surrounded by injured humans every day and never being even tempted to drink their blood.

Like Edward, Carlisle is described as an androgynous figure. Even though he is the head of the clan, he is not described as a stereotypical male figure. He is beautiful and looks very young but he is never portrayed as being muscular or especially repressive. Carlisle is a problem solver. Whenever there is a problem, his family members come to see him first in order to ask him for his advice.

A reason for Carlisle being rather depicted as an androgynous character than a stereotypical male figure could be that he does not only occupy the role of a father but to some extent also the role of a mother, as he was the one who has “created” his whole vampire family.<sup>7</sup>

### **2.3.4 Charlie Swan**

Bella’s father Charlie is Forks’ chief police officer. Even though this position is associated with stereotypical male gender roles, Charlie is portrayed as rather dependent and helpless.

After Bella has moved to her father, she takes care of the entire household. Charlie never has to do anything, as dinner is always ready when he comes home. With respect to food, Charlie, on the one hand, entirely depends on Bella. On the other hand, this instance of being cooked and cared for by a woman is, however, associated with traditional male behavior.

Charlie’s manhood is, however, called into question, by being always protected by Bella from bloodthirsty vampires, even though Charlie is not even aware of this. For instance, in *Twilight* when Bella is tracked by the vampiric killer James, she decides to leave Charlie in order to protect him and keep him safe.

Charlie is not good at talking or expressing his feelings. He has problems to tell anybody that he loves this person. He also seems to be quite lazy, as the only things he is described to do is either being at work, eating meals which have been cooked by Bella, going fishing, or watching TV. He entirely relies on Bella and on the fact that she is doing the whole household. In fact, it is Bella who cares for her father and nurtures him and not the other way around which could be considered as Bella and her father reversing traditional parental roles, so that Bella has in fact incorporated the role of the mother, while Charlie has taken over the role of the child.

Therefore, it can be said that Charlie is portrayed with both male as well as female gender traits. On the one hand he is depicted as traditional man who has a stereotypical masculine job and does not have to do anything in the household which he considers as women’s sphere. On the other hand,

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<sup>7</sup> For more detail see also chapter 2.5.2.

Charlie is depicted as dependent, as he only gets food from Bella. Moreover, Bella constantly protects him from potential vampiric dangers, even though Charlie is not even aware of Bella's protective measures.

### **2.3.5 Mike Newton**

Mike Newton is one of Bella's classmates. She gets to know him on her first day at school. Mike has immediately kept an eye on Bella. It is obvious that Bella's appearance as well as her personality please him. Bella, however, has no feelings for Mike who simply ignores this fact by being obstinate and simply trying to capture her heart. This is also a sign of heteronormative patriarchal norms being conveyed in the *Twilight* series, as Bella's feelings are simply disregarded.

Mike is portrayed as a confident teenage boy. He is attractive and Bella's friend Jessica desperately wants to go on a date with him. Bella makes it plain to Mike that she does not have feelings for him and that he should go out with her friend Jessica who is in love with him. When Mike finally realizes that he will never have a chance to get together with Bella, he asks Jessica for a date. They date for some time but in the end it turns out that they do not fit as a couple and therefore decide to stay friends.

Mike is depicted as a self-assured young man. He seems to be cocksure of himself. He is very insistent, as can be seen in his attempts of courting Bella. He does not accept the fact that Bella is not interested in him and is constantly rejected by her.

Overall, Mike represents traditional male gender roles. He is confident and attractive and does not pay attention to other's feelings. Further, Mike does not accept that Bella has no feelings for him. This is another stereotypical male characteristic.

In a nutshell, it can be said that all of *Twilight's* men seem to exert power on women. As all of *Twilight's* men, particularly supernatural males, are portrayed as powerful and strong they are superior to women who are represented as the weaker sex. As a werewolf, Jacob seems to be *Twilight's* most stereotypical male. Interestingly, both Edward and Carlisle's characters

have shown to include androgynous features, which means that they have both male as well as female characteristics. According to Donnelly, “men are frighteningly superior throughout the series,” as their disturbing predominance ranges “from Edward’s nearly complete control of Bella’s life to the acceptance of domestic abuse and the binding of females in the werewolf community” (181).

## **2.4 Abusive Relationships**

The *Twilight* series contains several sequences that stand out due to strikingly abusive behavior and violence. In these instances it are the men who treat their female partners incorrectly. With respect to oppressive behavior conducted by men, Donnelly notes the “many allowances [that] are made for masculine violence [in patriarchal, heteronormative societies] as men fulfilling their God-given role to protect and fight” (189).

Throughout the four books, Bella has to bear many violent assaults. Wilson even calls “Bella’s relationships with both Edward and Jacob [as] ‘abusive teenage relationships’” (2011: 94). In order to emphasize this, she gives a list of characteristics of an “potentially abusive partner”:

[E]xcessive jealousy, inability to control anger, making threats to do harm to self or others, and a tendency to criticize, humiliate, and belittle. Abusive partners also often try to control their partner’s whereabouts, with a tendency to try and isolate their partners from friends and family. Jacob, and especially Edward, exhibit these tendencies. (Wilson 2011: 94)

Bella is, however, not the only woman in the *Twilight* series who is stuck in an abusive relationship. Emily, for instance, is disfigured by her werewolf fiancé who was not able to control his wolfish self. Additionally, the saga also reveals that the vampire women of the Cullen clan have also experienced physical violence by men when they were humans. According to Torkelson, these violent instances “reveal[...] an imbalance of power relations that extends beyond Edward and Bella to the series’ other male-female relations” (210).

In the following subchapters the relationships of *Twilight's* protagonists will be analyzed in more detail, whereby a particular focus will be laid on the violent factors that are portrayed in these relations.

### **2.4.1 Bella and Edward**

Bella and Edward's relationship is depicted as highly problematic. Edward constantly exercises power over her, frequently using violence in order to make Bella acquiescent. One instance for Edward performing violent behavior on Bella is when Bella needs to see the school nurse after almost having fainted during a biology class in which they had to identify their blood group. After Bella is allowed to go home, she is certain that she is perfectly able to drive home by herself.

When Bella [, however,] moves to the driver's seat of her truck, Edward physically restrains her by pulling the back of her jacket. Later, Bella is restrained again, this time by Emmett (under Edward's direction) as they rush to flee James after the baseball game. While trying to decide how to counter James' inevitable attack, Edward decides to take Bella away from Forks. When she protests, Edward orders Emmett to secure her by her wrists and forcibly strap her into the harness of the Jeep they are using to escape. (Miller 170)

These instances are extremely disturbing as Edward exerts violent physical power on Bella. This shows *Twilight's* male dominance. It is also unsettling that not only Edward but also his brother Emmett treats Bella in such a disrespectful and violent way. Bella is completely subordinate to Edward and Emmett's violent assaults, as they are obviously more powerful than she is.

According to Jeffers,

Edward's behavior towards Bella [...] is frightening in many ways. Over the course of the series, he watches her sleep, constantly tells her she is absurd, and tries to control who she sees and who her friends are. This abusive behavior is rooted in his inability to recognize Bella's agency, his inability to acknowledge that she can decide for herself what she needs. (Jeffers 145-146)

Edward also forbids her to become a vampire. Even though he has promised her to transform her into a vampire after they got married, he finally only turns her into a vampire because if he did not have done it, she would have died.

Jeffers regards “his refusal to allow her to become a vampire [as] further evidence of [...] paternalism” (145-146).

What is even more disturbing is that Bella does not question Edward’s behavior and tolerates it almost unlimited. Myers calls their relationship “abusive,” and thinks of “his sneaking into her bedroom at night to watch her sleep” as alarming (158-159). Moreover, Bella abandons all of her friends in order to spend more time with Edward.

He [, however,] does [not] encourage her to pursue other friendships or interests outside of him, apart from his vague warnings that he is ‘dangerous,’ and insists on following her and accompanying her almost everywhere. (Myers 158-159)

These examples can all be considered as indications of an unhealthy and abusive relationship in which Bella completely depends on Edward, while Edward entirely controls her.

The most disquieting instance of physical violence in their relationship is the day after they had sexual intercourse for the first time (*Breaking Dawn* 80-86). When Bella wakes up, she only realizes that her body is full of bruises after Edward has pointed to them.

Bella’s attitude toward her injuries, however, is even more disturbing than the injuries themselves. First, Bella expected the injuries and worse, knowing that sex with Edward would endanger her life. (Torkelson 213)

“When Bella discovers her injuries, she justifies and downplays her pain in multiple instances, such as by saying she has had worse” (Torkelson 213). Bella represses “the danger and brutality of the sexual experience” and only thinks on the good aspects of it. “Physically battered, she only thinks of Edward, hiding her bruises to spare his feelings and worrying that he might not have enjoyed himself” (Torkelson 213).

The depiction of Bella’s state after she and Edward had sex for the first time is upsetting:

Under the dusting of feathers, large purplish bruises were beginning to blossom across the pale skin of my arm. My eyes followed the trail they made up to my shoulder, and then down across my ribs. I pulled my hand free to poke at the discoloration on my left forearm, watching it fade where I touched and then reappear. It throbbed a little. So lightly that he was barely touching me, Edward placed his hand against the



bruises on my arm, one at a time, matching his long fingers to the patterns. (*Breaking Dawn* 81-82)

Shachar calls this scene “one of the most violent ‘deflowering’ or ‘morning after’ passages,” which “almost reads like a rape-fantasy” (158). Shachar, however, thinks that the “moral context in which this description is given, which echo the kind of excuses men and women make in response to rape and domestic violence” seems to be more troubling (158).

It is Bella who initiates this consummation and in turn tries to convince Edward that she is not hurt despite evidence to the contrary, whilst Edward apologizes profusely. (Shachar 158)

Bella’s attempts to underplay her injuries, which seem to be more or less severe, is disturbing as her behavior shows that she even tolerates Edward’s violent behavior towards her and does not rebel against his abuse. While Bella is left “with bruises all over her body” and is then surprised by “an unexpected [...] pregnancy,” their sexual intercourse does not have any consequences for Edward, as he is the one who “remains physically unchanged” (Platt 80).

What is also alarming is the scene “that eroticizes abusive sex through violent images such as more bruises, shredded lingerie strewn across the sheets, and a destroyed headboard” (Torkelson 213).

Bella and Edward’s relationship is best described in the way Meyer already did by comparing Bella to a “lamb,” while Edward to a “lion” (*Twilight* 240). This comparison is very accurate, as it shows that Bella is the weak and subordinate one, whereas Edward is powerful and superior. It also implies that it is enormously dangerous for Bella to be with Edward, as Edward’s nature is that of a predator. Bella’s lamb-like status changes, however, after she has been transformed into a vampire, as from then on Bella is depicted as Edward’s equal. Regarding Bella and Edward’s sexual relationship, they are able to “fully relax and enjoy the experience [after Bella’s transformation],” which shows that *Twilight*’s message is to represent “sexual relations before a sealed marriage [as] both unnerving and dangerous” (Schwartzman 127-128).

## 2.4.2 Bella and Jacob

The relationship between Bella and Jacob is a difficult one. For Bella, it is only friendship, whereas Jacob has amorous feelings for her. He does not want to accept that Bella is in a relationship with Edward. Therefore, he has decided to fight for Bella's love. In order to win Bella's feelings, Jacob tries every remedy.

In the beginning, his attempts are kind of harmless. He spends a lot of time with Bella and helps her repair the motorcycles that she has bought. Bella enjoys her time with Jacob, as with him she feels safe and her pain over Edward's breakup (in *New Moon*) is less when she is with Jacob. Jacob, however, exploits Bella's weak condition. He tries to win Bella's love by exposing his feelings for her. This confession confuses Bella. On the one hand, she does not want to lose Jacob as a friend, but on the other hand, she only has platonic feelings for him. At first, Jacob accepts Bella's decision to stay friends. But after some time, he cannot bear the thought of being only friends with Bella.

In the course of the *Twilight* series, Jacob even tries to win Bella's heart by violently abusing her. This scene depicts Jacob violently mistreating Bella:

His lips crushed mine, stopping my protests. He kissed me angrily, roughly, his other hand gripping tight around the back of my neck, making escape impossible. I shoved against his chest with all my strength, but he didn't even seem to notice. His mouth was soft, despite the anger, his lips molding to mine in a warm, unfamiliar way. I grabbed at his face, trying to push it away, failing again. He seemed to notice this time, though, and it aggravated him. His lips forced mine open, and I could feel his hot breath in my mouth. Acting on instinct, I let my hands drop to my side, and shut down. I opened my eyes and didn't fight, didn't feel ... just waited for him to stop. (*Eclipse* 293)

Jacob's behavior can be clearly called abusive. At first, Bella tries to push Jacob away, which she does not, however, manage due to her subordination to Jacob. When she realizes that she is too weak and Jacob simply too strong, Bella simply stops fighting, waiting for Jacob to finish his abuse.

The scene reaches its climax when Bella punches Jacob's face in order to punish him for having mistreated her and to free her anger. Jacob, however, being incredibly muscular, does not feel anything. In contrast, Bella

is the one being penalized for defending herself. For, as Jacob's body is as hard as stone, her arm is severely injured by having beaten Jacob.

Finally, he let go of my face and leaned away. 'Are you done now?' I asked in an expressionless voice. 'Yes,' he sighed. He started to smile, closing his eyes. I pulled my arm back and then let it snap forward, punching him in the mouth with as much power as I could force out of my body. There was a crunching sound. [My arm] was broken, I could feel it. (*Eclipse* 294)

What is even more shocking is Charlie's reaction to Jacob's assault of his own daughter. Instead of filing charges, which should be his task, as he is Forks' chief police officer as well as the victim's father, Charlie only laughs when hearing the story and even compliments Jacob for having abused his daughter: "'Good for you, kid,' Charlie congratulated him" (*Eclipse* 298). Charlie does not take Bella's injury or her being sexually assaulted serious. This is another instance that shows that women do not have a word. They can be violated just as men want to, which is entirely accepted in *Twilight's* masculine world.

According to Torkelson, Bella's resistance is "a rare moment of agency" (211). However,

[t]he novel quickly reverts this female power back to the structure of male dominance [...] when Bella accepts a ride home from Jacob, who banters and whistles, his conscience completely at ease with his assault on Bella moments before. (Torkelson 211)

Jacob does not feel guilty in the tiniest bit. He is happy for having kissed Bella. He does not even seem to have noticed that he has kissed her against her will. Torkelson also notes that "Bella is not praised for her self-defense, nor does Jacob face any consequences" (211). In this sequence it becomes clear that "Bella is viewed by all [...] as a prize to be conquered, an object to cater to Jacob's sexual needs" (Torkelson 211).

Jacob does not seem to be conscious of the graveness of his acts. In *Eclipse*, Jacob abuses Bella for another time. In this sequence he kind of forces Bella to kiss him by telling her that he will not survive the fight against the newborns if she does not kiss him. "This coercive tactic effectively leaves Bella without true choice, powerless to do other than he demands" (Torkelson 212). Therefore, Jacob kisses her forcefully for another time. "When Bella fights back and Jacob continues, Bella excuses him, saying that he

‘misunderstood’ her struggles” (*Eclipse* 527 qtd. in Torkelson 212), (Torkelson 212).

Although Bella is at first very angry with Jacob, she forgives his behavior during the course of the *Twilight* series. She does not think that it was right of him but she still stays friends with Jacob and sadly his behavior does not have any consequences for him. By not being punished for his behavior, Jacob naturally does not learn from his mistakes. He does not regret what he has done to Bella. This sends a problematic message to young teenage girls who are the main target group of the *Twilight* saga, as it trivializes abusive masculine behavior.

### **2.4.3 Emily and Sam**

Another abusive relationship that is pictured during the course of the *Twilight* series is the one between Emily and the werewolf Sam. In the books, their relationship is extremely idealized. Their relationship is described as perfect. Emily loves Sam more than her own life and for Sam, Emily is the most important person in the world. The two are described as caring for each other and as accepting each other completely.

There is, however, a bitter aftertaste to that idyllic relationship. Emily and Sam’s past shows that their relationship is far from being a perfect one. In fact, it is the story of a violent and abusive relationship. When Sam argued with Emily at the beginning of his werewolf “career,” he was overpowered by his temper and not able to control his shape-shifting powers anymore. Therefore, he turned into a werewolf and hurt Emily considerably. As a werewolf, Sam completely deformed his fiancé by having crawled her entire left side of her face.

Emily accepts both the scars and the role she must play in keeping everyone calm. Bella is told repeatedly how dangerous the young wolves are and the implication is that it is her and all of the women’s responsibility not to rile them up. (Donnelly 189)

This means that *Twilight’s* women are responsible for being assaulted if they provoke men which is highly problematic.

In *New Moon*, Jacob tells Bella: “You’ve seen Emily. Sam lost control of his temper for just one second ... and she was standing too close” (304). This explanation is also disquieting, as it implies that Sam is not responsible for losing control but blames Emily who stood too close.

In the *Twilight* series, it becomes, however, apparent that even Emily herself has completely accepted Sam’s abusive behavior. She is still with him and cooks for him and his werewolf “brothers”. Emily seems to cover up this incident and simply ignores Sam’s violent behavior towards her. Even though Sam seems to be sorry for his attack,

in the text there is nor further apology and no shame. The passive acceptance of such a doctrine is deeply unsettling, clearly reminiscent of the social adage that men are not to be held responsible for their actions and that it is a woman’s rile to keep them under control and accept the abuse they offer should they lose their cool. It undermines a woman’s right to live unabused in her hoe, clearly reinforcing a system of patriarchal control. (Donnelly 189)

In contrast to Jacob, Sam, however, deeply regrets his behavior, even though he never voices his sorrow. When he attacked Emily, Sam was more or less not himself. He did not really know what he was doing, as his werewolf self took total control over him. Jacob, however, did exactly know what he was doing, when he kissed Bella violently against her will. However, this does not, of course, mean that Sam is innocent. He knew that it could be dangerous for Emily to be with him, which he, however ignored, as did she.

When Bella first gets to know Emily, the other boys of the “wolfpack” warn her that she should not stare at Emily’s face. It seems as if they want to downplay Sam’s behavior. They also tell Bella that she should not say anything about this incident. Therefore, *Twilight* conveys another problematic and dangerous message for young girls, as it glorifies that abusive behavior should simply be silenced down and ignored.

Interestingly enough, Bella is shocked by Emily’s deformed face. When she learns that Sam is responsible for Emily’s scars, she is even more outraged.

The right side of her face was scarred from hairline to chin by three thick, red lines, livid in color though they were long healed. One line pulled down the corned of her dark, almond-shaped right eye, another twisted the right side of her mouth into a permanent grimace. (*New Moon* 291)

Bella considers Sam's behavior as unacceptable, even though she tolerates the abusive behavior that has been done to her.

Emily's scars are excused by telling people that a bear has attacked her. This story protects Sam instead of punishing him for his behavior. "Emily never discusses the vent or her scars; men control her story. Emily even ends up comforting Sam for the violence done to her" (Torkelson 215). Emily is

bound in her relationship by Sam's imprinting and by *Twilight's* society of compulsory heterosexuality, Emily is ultimately a silent victim of domestic abuse, unable to leave her abuser. (Torkelson 215)

#### **2.4.4 Rosalie and her fiancé**

"Rosalie's agency as a vampire is similarly troubled by her human history" (Torkelson 217). Rosalie is the embodiment of beauty. In the course of the novels, Rosalie tells Bella the story of her human life. For Rosalie, her physical appearance was always the most important thing. She loved being admired for her beauty. As a human, Rosalie had a lot of male admirers who all wanted to marry her and she

had wanted nothing more than to be a wife and mother. However, her parents had social aspirations and she was a great beauty, so it was plotted that she should marry the son of the richest man in town. (Kane 114-115)

This already shows that as a human, Rosalie was passive and strictly confined to traditional female gender roles, as her only goal in life was to slip in the role of mother and wife, and she even was not able to choose her own husband, another indication of her passivity.

One evening, when Rosalie was on her way home, she came across her fiancé and his friends. They obviously seemed drunk and the situation escalated in her fiancé and his friends raping and abusing Rosalie.

'Rose!' he yelled, and the others laughed stupidly. [...] "Suddenly, Royce ripped my jacket from my shoulder – it was a gift from him – popping the brass buttons off. They scattered all over the street. "Show him what you look like, Rose!' He laughed again and then he tore my hat out of my hair. The pins wrenched my hair from the roots, and I cried out in pain. They seemed to enjoy that – the sound of my pain ... (*Eclipse* 142-143)

Rosalie's fiancé and his friends terribly mistreated Rosalie by raping and abusing her. Afterwards they just left her dying on the street. This was when Carlisle found Rosalie and decided to save her life by transforming her into a vampire. According to Torkelson, by making the decision to turn Rosalie into a vampire, Carlisle "again [took] a woman's future into his own hands" (217). By doing so, "he is actually violating Rosalie's choice to become immortal. He also treats her as a sexual reward, transforming her in order to create a mate for Edward" (Torkelson 217). Rosalie often mentions that she would not have wanted to be turned into a vampire if she had the chance to choose.

It makes the impression that Rosalie kind of feels responsible for having been raped by her fiancé.

Rosalie accepts partial blame for her attack; because she was beautiful, she was expected to marry a man for his high social standing instead of for love, which led to her involvement with her fiancé. But whether Rosalie married the right or wrong man, for the right or wrong reasons, she [...] fail[s] to recognize that she is not responsible what happened to her. (Torkelson 218)

As a vampire, Rosalie is, however, not helpless and passive anymore. She takes revenge on her fiancé and his friends. She called on them in the middle of the night, frightened and tortured them terribly before she finally killed all of them. Torkelson describes "Rosalie's story of vengeance [as] shocking in *Twilight's* world of submissive, powerless women" and thinks that it "is also empowering" (218). "Rosalie did not let her attackers evade justice, and she carried out that justice herself". Therefore, "she demonstrates agency as a vampire" (Torkelson 218).

Rosalie is also the only "female vampire who does [not] accept her new fate without question" (Torkelson 218). She often tells Bella that she does not like being a vampire. The main reason for her disapproval of being a vampire is that she is not able to conceive a child in her vampiric state. Therefore, Rosalie cannot understand why Bella wants to become a vampire so desperately and is so ready to abandon the chance of getting pregnant.

Importantly, Rosalie has gained agency by becoming a vampire. Moreover,

as a vampire, Rosalie also breaks free of the male-dominated power structure when she chooses Emmett for her mate and when she

stands with pregnant Bella against the rest of the coven's wishes, acting as her protector. (Torkelson 219)

She is independent and on her own and able to protect and defend herself as well as others.

After her transformation into a vampire, Rosalie is also able to choose her partner by her own. Her status of a vampire has empowered her, being able to make her own decisions. When she found her partner Emmett after he had been severely attacked by a bear, she begged Carlisle to transform him. Her reasons for saving and transforming Emmett were, however, not so much love but motherly feelings that sprouted when she saw Emmett for the first time. She tells Bella that he reminded her of her human friend's baby:

With the dark curls ... the dimples that showed even while he was grimacing in pain ... the strange innocence that seemed so out of place on a grown man's face ... he reminded me of Vera's little Henry. I didn't want him to die, so much that, even though I hated this life, I was selfish enough to ask Carlisle to change him for me. (*Eclipse* 149)

Rosalie's comparison of Emmett with a baby clearly shows that as a vampire, she is obviously superior to human men, as she is incredibly strong and powerful, independent and active.

#### **2.4.5 Esme and her former husband**

"Powerlessness and domestic violence are themes that also run in Esme's story, though interestingly, Esme's untold history is also one of female agency" (Torkelson 215-216). In *The Twilight Saga: The Official Illustrated Guide*, Meyer tells Esme's whole story for the first time. Like Rosalie's father, Esme's father also wanted Esme to marry a man she did not really know. She agreed to the arranged marriage and married the man her father had chosen for her. Soon after the marriage, however, it turned out that Esme's husband was an abusive man who physically mistreated her. Instead of helping their daughter, Esme's parents did not allow her to come back home and ordered her to be a submissive and modest wife. When Esme learned about her pregnancy, she decided to run away from her husband in order to protect her unborn child and also herself (106-107).



Esme is, however, differently portrayed in the *Twilight* series which does not show the independent Esme who has rebelled against her husband and broke away from him. Instead, the novels only “present [...] the side of her story in which Carlisle decides her future” (Torkelson 215-216). In *Twilight*, when speaking of her old human life, Esme only mentions her suicide which she commits after her two-day-old son has died. This was when Carlisle found her and transformed her into a vampire (*Twilight* 321).

Torkelson considers Carlisle’s behavior as problematic, as he refused Esme to choose. He did not think about whether Esme actually wants to live a life in eternity, never being able to conceive a child again, always driven by bloodlust.

Carlisle [simply] took control of her future, transforming her out of loneliness and his own desire for a mate. Furthermore, Carlisle does [not] question whether Esme, once a vampire, would choose to become his mate, and Esme happily and unquestioningly accepts a man’s control of her fate and his desire for her as his sexual partner. (Torkelson 215-216)

All in all, it can be said that the above-mentioned examples of abused women in the *Twilight* saga can be considered as proof of *Twilight*’s human females being all victims of abusive behavior undertaken by their male partners. All of *Twilight*’s mistreated women showed to be helpless, subordinate, impassive and not able to defend themselves during their abuse. One exception, however, is Esme who, invigorated by her pregnancy, decided to leave her husband to provide her child a safe and happy life. The other women, however, even tolerate their partners’ violent behavior, some of them, such as Bella, even considering it as indication of their love and care.

After having analyzed the abusive relationship that feature in the *Twilight* saga, it seems as if *Twilight*’s message is that “men are dangerous,” as human women are “at constant risk from seemingly innate violence of men” (Donnelly 189-190). Therefore, “the world of *Twilight* [...] is a dangerous place for women, especially women who do not have vampire powers or werewolf strength” (Wilson 2011: 65). Disturbingly, the *Twilight* series “reinforces a power structure that denies female agency and positions male dominance as the natural social hierarchy” (Torkelson 210).

What is also striking is that the *Twilight* saga only portrays heterosexual partnerships. As, according to Donnelly, “there are no characters living outside of the male/female pair bond” (183-184). Homosexual characters are never mentioned throughout the whole series and “nearly all of the characters are united in a male/female pair bond, a bond with specific gender roles for each partner” (Donnelly 183-184). For those who do not have a partner, the only goal seems to be to find someone with whom they can start a relationship and whom they can finally marry. There are, however, also characters who do not have a partner. Donnelly, however, notices that

these characters are all clearly identified as Others, and marked in some way. This strong emphasis on labeling Otherness works with the exclusion aspect of Meyer’s texts to emphasize patriarchal heteronormative ideals, (Donnelly 183-184)

which means that in the *Twilight saga* only heterosexual partnerships are accepted (Donnelly 183-184).

## **2.5 Parenthood in the *Twilight* series**

In order to specify the gender roles that are incorporated in the *Twilight* saga, it is also important to take into account how the roles of mothers as well as fathers are portrayed in the *Twilight* series. Therefore, the first part of this chapter will analyze *Twilight*’s mothers, whereas the second part will focus on *Twilight*’s father figures.

### **2.5.1 Motherhood**

Strikingly, human “mothers in [the] *Twilight* [series] are either negligent [...] or dead and gone,” whereas female vampires “become uber-mothers through vampiric mothering” (Wilson 2011:77).

One human mother is Bella’s mother Renée. She is described as an extremely dependent woman. Further, all of her life revolves around the masculine world, as she chases from one relationship into another. When she marries a baseball-player, who is much younger than herself, she even abandons her daughter in order to travel with her new husband to all of his

baseball games. Therefore, Renée is not portrayed as the perfect mother. She is almost always absent and only appears when Bella is hurt or at her wedding.

According to Miller, “Renée [...] is muted throughout the story,” as the reader only gets to know information about Renée by Bella, and by Renée almost being never present in the books so that she would be able to say something by herself (166). Importantly, “before [her mother] remarried, Bella saw herself as her mother’s caretaker” (Miller 166).

Renée is depicted as entirely dependent. It seems more as if Bella has cared for her mother all of her life instead of the other way around. Throughout the series, Bella is “more of a caretaker to her mother than her mother is to her” (Kramar 16). When Bella leaves her mother, Bella is very worried about her mother getting along without her daughter.

I felt a spasm of panic as I stared at her wide, childlike eyes. How could I leave my loving, erratic, harebrained mother to fend for herself? Of course she had Phil now, so the bills would probably get paid, there would be food in the refrigerator, gas in her car, and someone to call when she got lost but still... (*Twilight* 4)

This example clearly shows that the “mother-child” roles have been reversed “with Bella adopting the parental role over her impulsive young mother” (Whitton 126).

Bella takes care of her mother. When Bella already lives at her father’s house, her mother still keeps writing her emails, asking Bella if she knew where her things are. She depends on Bella and entirely relies on her daughter.

Bella’s mother considers Bella to be a grownup because she behaves very responsible and mature. Bella has taken over the mother role and has cared for her mother who always depended on her and asked her daughter for advice, even though it should be the other way around.

‘My mom always says I was born thirty-five years old and that I get more middle-aged every year.’ I laughed, and then sighed. ‘Well, someone has to be the adult.’ (*Twilight* 91)

“Bella’s own parents are examples of adults who do [not] adhere to traditional roles” (Benning 94). Bella’s mother has left Charlie, when Bella was still a child. As already mentioned, her

relationship with her mother is reversed as Bella takes on the role of chaperone, protector, and confidant and Renée dates younger men, makes poor life choices, and relies on her daughter's smarts to guide the both of them safely through life (Benning 94)

This shows that Renée is characterized as a teenager, whereas Bella is portrayed with (motherly) adult features. Importantly, Renée only plays a minor role in the novels, as she is mainly absent.

The same applies to Jacob's mother who has died early in a car accident so that Jacob was raised by his father Billy. Similarly, Edward's human mother dies from the plague. She is described as a self-sacrificing and caring woman who is more concerned about her son's life than her own. When Edward's mother realized that she had not much time left, she asked Carlisle, who was then their doctor, to do anything in order to save Edward's life. According to Whitton, this scene is "the most explicit example of [a] transfer of parental authority from the inadequate figure of the mother to the more capable male" (129). As already mentioned, the same applies to Bella who is handed over to her father and the "transfer of parental authority" can also be seen with Jacob who is solely raised by his father after his mother's fatal accident. The only exception to this theory would be the human mother Sue Clearwater, who has to raise her two children on her own after her husband died. Even though Sue is seldom mentioned in the books, she is described as a tough woman who can easily fight for herself and provide for her children after her husband's death. To some extent, Sue is, however, also constricted to female stereotypes, as she is portrayed as the one who cooks for Charlie and cares for him after Bella has married Edward and has left Charlie behind.

Another female figure who "serves as mother and domestic servant to the werewolf pack" is Emily (Donnelly 186-187). She is simply reduced to her domestic skills and is always portrayed in the action of cooking. Emily is constantly described being in the kitchen. She is depicted as a caring and nurturing mother figure. When Bella first comes to Emily's house, she describes how Emily cares and cooks for the "wolfpack" and how she regards them as her family.

'Food's ready,' [Emily] announced then [...]. The guys hurried to surround the table – which looked tiny and in danger of being crushed by them – and devoured the buffet-sized pan of eggs Emily placed in their midst in record time. Emily ate leaning against the counter [...]

and watched them with affectionate eyes. Her expression clearly stated that this was her family. (*New Moon* 297)

Moreover, Emily is described as the perfect housewife, always cleaning, cooking or doing something else that needs to be done in the household, which only reduces her to her domestic duties.

Emily was a cheerful person who never sat still. I drifted behind her while she flitted around her little house and yard, scrubbing at the spotless floor, pulling a tiny weed, fixing a broken hinge, tugging a string of wool through an ancient loom, and always cooking, too. She complained lightly about the increase in the boys' appetites from all their extra running, but it was easy to see she didn't mind taking care of them. (*New Moon* 308)

It seems as if Emily is satisfied with her role of mother and food provider. "The devotion of Emily [...] to her mate and his dependents borders on the suicidal. Emily [...] is a fairytale mother: living in her idyllic little house" who always fulfills domestic duties (Whitton 127). In the course of the *Twilight* series, "the association of Emily with the provision of endless nourishment is [constantly] pronounced" (Whitton 127). Emily is consistently at "risk of assault," when performing "her maternal duties," as Sam has already disfigured her face after having lost his temper (Whitton 127). She seems to be satisfied with her status of caring for her "adopted" wolf-children and never voices the wish of getting pregnant with a biological child.

When it comes to the vampire women, all of them are not able to bear children. This fact has made most of them bitter, as the majority of the female vampires have always wished for a child. Esme, however, has found her vocation as an adoptive mother for the other vampires of the Cullen clan. She is the perfect mother figure. She cares for everybody and is always concerned about her family's wellbeing. Schwartzman comments Esme's role of adoptive mother the following way:

As a vampire, Esme deals with her inability to have children by 'adopting' the children that Carlisle has 'fathered,' and by allowing those relationships to serve as a kind of substitute motherhood. (Schwartzman 130)

Even though Esme does not have any biological children, whereas Renée does, Esme is presented as a motherly figure, while Renée is not. Esme is the embodiment of motherhood. As a human, Esme's newborn child died

shortly after birth. Esme was not able to bear the pain of her loss and therefore decided to commit suicide. Carlisle, however, found her smashed body and turned her into a vampire. “As a vampire, Esme retains her core sense of self as a mother” (Kane 111). She considers Edward, Rosalie, Emmett, Alice, Jasper and Bella as her own children. This Esme explains by telling Bella that she “never could get over [her] mothering instincts” (*Twilight* 321). These instincts that Esme mentions are

something that Bella, whose mother required more mothering than she offered, has never known. It is something she comes to desire and, before the *Twilight* series ends, emulate. (Kane 111)

According to Kane, “Esme’s motherliness is in her very physicality” (111). “She was small, slender, yet less angular, more rounded than the others” (*Twilight* 322 qtd. in Kane 111).

Esme’s gestures and words cast her as an idealized version of motherhood. She is the constant quiet source of support, rarely visible beyond her eagerness to lend a hand or a hug when someone is in need. (Kane 111)

Another thing that distinguishes Esme from Renée is that while Renée requires someone who looks after her, “Esme is a caretaker, not just within her family but to everyone” (Kane 111). An example would be Esme’s caring behavior toward Jacob, Seth and Leah who have broken with their pack in order to save Bella’s life. Esme is deeply worried about them, as Carlisle tells Jacob:

‘Esme was troubled by the hardships this is putting your pack through. She asked me to speak to you privately about it.’ That took me [Jacob] off guard. ‘Hardships?’ ‘The *homeless* part, particularly. She’s very upset that you are all so ... bereft.’ I snorted. Vampire mother hen – bizarre. ‘We’re tough. Tell her not to worry.’ ‘She’d still like to do what she can.’ (*Breaking Dawn* 250)

Jacob is surprised that Esme cares for them, as he is not used to having a caring motherly figure in his life. Esme always pays attention that Jacob and his companions have enough clothes to wear when they change into their human forms and she also cooks for them. Even though Jacob is repelled by the vampiric smell of the clothes Esme gives to him, he does not dare to be rude to her and accepts her offerings.

‘Jacob,’ she said quietly. [...] ‘I know it’s ... unappetizing to you, the idea of eating here, where it smells so unpleasant. But I would feel much better if you would take some food with you when you go. I know you can’t go home, and that’s because of us. Please – ease some of my remorse. Take something to eat.’ She held the food out to me, her face all soft and pleading. I don’t know how she did it, because she didn’t look older than her mid-twenties, and she was bone pale, too, but something about her expression suddenly reminded me of my mom. Jeez. ‘Uh, sure, sure,’ I mumbled. (*Breaking Dawn* 260)

This scene perfectly illustrates that “Esme performs the traditionally feminine household duties of laundry and cooking that symbolize her role as maternal caregiver” (Hawes 172-173).

Esme seems to be the mother, Bella has always wished for. She is always there when Bella needs her. “Unlike Renée, [...] Esme represents the ideal mother. In fact, she adopts a much more parental role in relation to Bella” (Hawes 172-173).

In the scene before Bella’s wedding, it seems obvious that her biological mother Renée has only a subordinate motherly position, whereas Esme has become Bella’s real mother.

The image of Bella’s human mother and vampire mother together symbolizes a transition. Having already adopted a more traditional maternal role than the childlike Renée, Esme replaces Renée as Bella’s mother figure. The wedding, in fact, is the last time that Bella sees Renée. (Hawes 172-173)

In the *Twilight* series, vampire women are not able to conceive a child and are therefore infertile. Esme and particularly Rosalie do not seem able to accept these limits. Rosalie wanted to be a mother for her whole life. She is very bitter for being unable to bear children. This is also the reason why Rosalie wishes to having never been turned into a vampire. She advises Bella to rethink her decision of wanting to be turned into a vampire. According to Schwartzman,

vampire women seriously struggle with their inability to bear children. For [...] Rosalie, the inability to have children is what makes her envy Bella and value human life. (Schwartzman 130)

Moreover, Rosalie’s “desire for children is her most enduring memory of humanity, and the cause of her intense bitterness about being made a vampire” (Whitton 128).

Rosalie desperately longs for having a baby. When Bella is pregnant, Rosalie tries everything to save the baby's life. She is obsessed with Bella's pregnancy and protects her from Edward and Carlisle who advise Bella to undertake an abortion. According to Whitton, her

obsessive drive to preserve the life of Bella's child, in spite of the risk to Bella's life, is figured as the direct consequence of her own thwarted maternal instinct. (Whitton 128)

Rosalie does anything for Bella just in order to keep the unborn baby safe. In fact, the only thing that is important to Rosalie is Bella's baby, while Bella's wellbeing is not that significant to her.

For Rosalie, being a mother is "the prime purpose in a female's life" (Wilson 2011: 78-79). This can be seen as a problematic depiction, as it implies that women's only goal in life is being a dutiful mother and modest wife.

Like Rosalie, Leah also seems to be bitter due to her infertility and thinks of herself as abnormal. She is desperate of her menopausal state and considers herself as "a freak" (*Breaking Dawn* 291). She cannot bear the situation of being infertile which she equals with not being feminine. Leah questions herself and her whole existence. Leah does fit neither in the masculine nor in the feminine world. On the one hand, she does not really think of herself as a woman, as she is not able to conceive children. On the other hand, she is also refused to join the male werewolf world, as she is not masculine enough. In fact, the male members of the "wolfpack" "find her feminine mentality intrusive, and her physicality embarrassing" (Whitton 128). Therefore, Leah is an outsider and does not fit in anywhere.

Even though Leah is supernatural, she is not described as strong as the other werewolves. This means that even though she theoretically must have the same powers as the male werewolves, as vampirism changes men and women into equals, this does not apply to *Twilight's* werewolves. This is another indication of traditional female gender roles, as Leah is described as weak and powerless in contrast to her male werewolf "brothers".

With respect to vampiric motherhood, the *Twilight* saga does, however, also features female vampires who have "created" their own "children". Those vampiric women who have become mothers by turning humans into vampires



by injecting their venom into their veins are depicted as cruel and violent women. One example is Maria, the vampire who has created Jasper. She is described as insensitive and violent. Maria only transforms humans into vampires in order to have an army and not a family. She is an aggressive and egoistic woman and does not represent the traditional role of a mother. According to Whitton, Maria only “creates children to serve her own ends, destroying them when they are of no further use” (133). Maria’s depiction goes against stereotypical female gender roles, as she is not described as caring and nurturing mother but as a selfish and violent woman.

The same applies for Victoria who also creates newborns in order to revenge the murder of her partner James. She only uses the newly created vampires as tools and has no feelings towards them. Victoria is described as greedy for power and vindictive. She is an aggressive and powerful woman. Victoria’s character also does not possess traditional female gender roles but rather male traits, as she is portrayed as revengeful, strong and powerful.

In *Breaking Dawn*, Carlisle also tells the story of vampire women who transformed human children into vampires because of their unfulfilled desires to have children; these children were known as “immortal children” (*Breaking Dawn* 30). Even though Carlisle describes these children as “beautiful,” “endearing,” and “enchanted,” they were highly dangerous, as they could not be tamed and therefore killed innocent people (*Breaking Dawn* 31). With these immortal children, the Volturi feared a revelation of their vampiric existence and consequently decided to destroy all of the immortal children as well as their “mothers” by letting all of them burn to pieces. This shows that

vampire mothers in the literal sense – as opposed to father-approved surrogates like Esme – are selfish and inadequate, and more often than not come to a bad end. (Whitton 133)

As a human, Bella never voices the wish of becoming a mother. When she is, however, pregnant, she does not want to undertake an abortion. During her pregnancy she develops real feelings for her unborn child. She talks with the fetus and already loves her child. She does everything for her unborn, such as even drinking blood, although she usually faints at its smell. After having given birth to her daughter, Bella is transformed into a vampire.

During her transformation which lasts several days, Bella is, like the other human mothers, absent and not able to care for her daughter.

When Edward wants to persuade her to abort the fetus, Bella, for the first time, becomes an agent. She

is horrified by Edward's plan to abort the fetus. Instinctively maternal and already in live with the baby because it is a part of Edward, Bella makes it clear she will do everything she can to give birth to this part vampire, part human child. (McGeough 95)

With the decision to keep her baby, she surprisingly "break[s] from her usually submissive behavior [and] defies the male authority figures who call for her to terminate her pregnancy" (Whitton 127). Moreover, Bella asks Rosalie to help her protect her child from the male vampiric sphere. Whitton calls this request for support a "feminist move," with Rosalie being the one who "help[s] [Bella] retain control of her body" (127). However, Bella seems to be punished for her rebellion against male authority by suffering from an extremely dangerous and violent pregnancy.

Her body is ill-equipped for the difficulties of a half-vampire, half-human fetus. The signs of pregnancy, such as a protruding belly and kicking baby, occur at an accelerated rate, warning Bella her body is inadequately prepared for this birth. (McGeough 95)

Even though "Bella is strong-willed, her body is weak, swollen and perpetually sick, and limp while the baby literally sucks the life from her" (McGeough 95-96). Bella does not have control over her pregnant body and becomes "alienated from" it. Even though it was Bella's own choice "to give birth, she has little control over the experience of giving birth and ultimately must rely on the help of others to survive" (McGeough 96).

When she sees her daughter for the first time, Bella is overwhelmed. She loves Renesmee more than anything else and would do anything for her. Bella is described as the perfect mother. She sacrifices her life for her baby.

Her mother status simultaneously empowers Bella, as she is from then on a vampire who is not in need of male help anymore. As a vampire, Bella has also a special ability by herself which Schwartzman describes the following:

The new powers that Bella claims surrounding childbirth reinforce an idea that female strength is connected to one's ability to be a mother. Even as a vampire, her abilities are notably maternal in that they are

not aggressive but shielding, enabling her to protect her family from harmful outside forces. (Schwartzman 129)

Renesmee's future role of a mother can, according to Whitton, already be presupposed by her name.

Renesmee's name [which is] a combination of the names of her maternal and paternal grandmothers [an indication] suggesting the inevitability of her own eventual accession to the state of motherhood (an event already foreshadowed by her predestined relationship with Jacob). (Whitton 135)

Moreover, Jacob's insistence on calling Renesmee "Nessie," which Bella does not like at all, can be considered as a sign "of how Bella's authority as a mother is sidelined by authoritative males, and offers little hope for Renesmee's own eventual control of her future" (Whitton 135). Jacob as well as Edward

ultimately express a superior claim over Bella's child, Jacob by imprinting on Renesmee and Edward by dint of Renesmee's predominantly supernatural nature. (Whitton 134)

Before Renesmee's birth, Edward is even able to communicate with Renesmee thanks to her special ability. This shows that even though the child is inside Bella's body, Edward has a more intimate relationship with their unborn child. This is another example of patriarchal power, dominance and control in the *Twilight* saga.

Overall, it can be said that the majority of women who appear throughout the *Twilight* novels are either "mother[s] or [...] yearn to" be one (Whitton 129). Disturbingly, in the *Twilight* world, "the role of women is limited solely to mothering" (Whitton 128). The *Twilight* series does not feature "successful career women with independently derived authority" and shockingly none "of Bella's teachers mentioned in the books is female, nor any of the doctors who treat her after her many varied mishaps" (Whitton 129). The *Twilight* saga conveys the message that "motherhood [is] the *only* path to fulfillment for women," which is demonstrated by "Rosalie and Leah" who are both unsatisfied with their lives due to the fact that they are unable to bear children (Whitton 128).

*Twilight*'s women are only limited "to the role of nurturing mother figure" (Whitton 129).

The state of motherhood is [, however,] marginalized throughout [the novels], with mother figures either absented from the text altogether, or elided with a patriarch from who they draw legitimacy but no authority. (Whitton 129)

The father role is always superior to the mother role, as, according to Whitton, "the patriarch ultimately makes all decision unilaterally, and the rest of the family adheres to his decisions" (129).

Wilson critically highlights that "*Twilight* [...] fram[es] motherhood as a key goal" for the female protagonists (78). Whitton also states that the *Twilight* series represents motherhood as the only way for women to fulfill themselves (125). This shows that *Twilight* reinforces traditional female gender roles by limiting women only to their motherly status.

### 2.5.2 Fatherhood

*Twilight*'s fathers seem to have more power than its mothers. According to Donnelly,

in a clear position of traditional patriarchal power, the heads of household (or clan or tribe) are all men. Charlie, Carlisle, Sam, Billy, Aro, Marcus, and Caius feature prominently their word serving as that which dominates. The masculine leader role is supported consistently by a female in the role of wife (or surrogate wife). (Donnelly 186-187)

The decisions made by the male authoritative figures are the ones that need to be accepted. Everything the head of the family orders has to be done.

"The role of wife is traditionally presented throughout the *Twilight* series: Esme is Carlisle's doting homemaker, 'mother' to the Cullens" (Donnelly 186-187). Bella is also portrayed as the traditional housewife. She does everything for her father which includes "cooking, cleaning, and keeping house, sheltering him from the harsh realities she herself is exposed to, and anticipating his every desire" (Whitton 126).

The mother's parenting role is [, however,] marginalized – the father is the source of guidance and support, and is far more involved with his charges' inner lives and personal struggles. (Whitton 129)

As an example Whitton refers to Sam who leads “the new werewolves through the traumatic experience of the change, and patiently helps them to control their new impulses” (129). In the *Twilight* saga “it is even implied that only an authoritative father figure can fulfill this role: when Leah and Seth become wolves, their widowed mother needs Billy’s help” in order to handle the new situation, even though she has always been described as an independent woman during the course of the novels (Whitton 129). Another example would be Carlisle who tries to be a guide for the “newborn vampires, training them to control their urges in a way that mimics the early socialization of infants usually assumed to be a part of mothering” (Whitton 129). This shows that fathers in the *Twilight* series take over the guiding and leading position which is normally assigned to mothers.

Moreover, the “mother figure [...] is secondary to the father or representative authoritative male”. It is “the patriarch [who] ultimately makes all decisions unilaterally, and the rest of the family adheres to his decisions” (Whitton 129). This can be seen in the sequence when Bella discusses her wish of being transformed into a vampire with the Cullen clan. It becomes obvious that in this discussion Carlisle’s voice is the most important one. The same applies to Sam who, as the “wolfpack” leader, makes all the decisions which the other wolves have to accept (Whitton 129). Therefore, the mother is inferior to the father, as she does not have an ultimate say in their relationship.

Edward and Bella’s “relationship [also] models traditional family roles”. Edward is the one who constantly saves Bella’s life and is her protector, whereas Bella’s “primary concern is simply to be at his side, a priority that she values over college, career, or other personal interests” (Schwartzman 123). After Bella and Edward’s marriage, they start

their own family with the birth of Renesmee. Edward quickly begins to assume the fatherly exemplar role that Carlisle has modeled and Bella eagerly accepts her role as devoted wife and mother whose foremost concern is the wellbeing of her family. (Schwartzman 123)

Edward is assigned more power in his father role than Bella in hers as a mother. Firstly, Edward is able to hear his child’s thoughts even before she is born. This shows that he already has a stronger bond with his child than Bella, although the child is inside her body and therefore mother and child

must have a much more intimate relationship. Moreover, Edward wants to keep Renesmee away from Bella after her transformation because he considers Bella as a danger for their daughter. This shows that Edward is in total control of Bella and his daughter, being even able to decide if Bella can see her daughter or not. Further, Edward's protective role as husband and partner continues in his role as a father. When Jacob imprints on Renesmee, he is outraged, as he wants to protect his little girl.

Bella's father Charlie "wears the guardian role in his relationship with Bella – and in his community role as Chief of Police". In the course of the novels, Bella, however, "becomes caretaker for him as well by cooking and doing housework" (Benning 94). Bella is very worried about her father's wellbeing and safety. She is always anxious that Charlie will be attacked or killed by one of her vampiric enemies. "In *Twilight*, Bella frets over Charlie's safety and hurt feelings when her own life is in danger" (Benning 94). When Edward leaves her in *New Moon*, Bella only pulls herself together for Charlie (*New Moon* 466) and mentions that she only does not kill herself because of her mother and father. In another instance, after Bella has jumped off a cliff and considers herself as dead, the only thing she can think of is her father and how it will affect him: "I'm dead, right? I *did* drown. Crap, crap, crap! This is gonna kill Charlie" (*New Moon* 502 qtd. in Benning 94). This shows that

in instance after instance, Bella puts the feelings and safety of her parents before her own, protecting them from the harsh reality of this new world in which she lives. (Benning 94)

As chief police officer, Charlie is presented in a powerful and well-respected position. But even though he "may have power and authority in the human world, [...] he is no match against a vengeful vampire" (Benning 96). It is Bella who always protects her father from potential vampire attacks "by leading James away from Forks" (Benning 96). She also asks Billy to "babysit" Charlie by going fishing with him so that he is safe from any vampire attack. Compared to vampiric males, Charlie does not have any power and seems rather helpless. "He is similarly powerless to help when Bella faces the Volturi in *New Moon* and when the newborn vampire army comes to Forks in *Eclipse*" (Benning 96).

Even though it seems as if Bella has the power in the Swan household, Charlie exerts power on Bella by giving her house detention. Moreover, he also does not want her to meet Edward anymore in *New Moon*. Charlie also forces Bella to meet with her old friends after Edward has left her and she has fallen into a severe depression. Shockingly, Bella does everything her father wants from her. She also meets with her friend Jessica so that her father is not worried about her precarious state anymore. This shows that Charlie is Bella's male authoritative before her marriage, although Charlie seems to be more dependent on Bella than the other way around.

Another father figure in the *Twilight* saga is Carlisle who is the patriarch of the Cullen clan. Benning considers Carlisle's "position as patriarch [as] fitting," because "Carlisle is the oldest vampire, and definitely" knows the most about vampires (95). Whenever anybody has a problem, the first who is asked for advice is Carlisle. He is highly respected among his "family".

Interestingly enough, Whitton states that with "the figure of Carlisle Cullen [the *Twilight* series has] neuter[ed] maternal power," as Carlisle is not only the father but theoretically also the mother of the Cullen clan. Carlisle is actually the "mother figure" in the *Twilight* saga, as it was him who has transformed and created each of his vampire "children".

In fact, Esme herself, although Carlisle's nominal consort, was made a vampire by him as well, and thus shares the same subordinate status as the [other] Cullens in relation to her husband/father. (Whitton 132-133)

This again highlights Carlisle's androgynous nature which has already been notice in chapter 2.3.3 of this thesis.

Another father in the *Twilight* series is Jacob's father Billy Black. Due to the fact that Billy's wife died in a car accident, he was forced to raise his children all by himself. He seems to be the patriarchal authority of the Black family. His power is, however, limited by his paraplegia which confines him to the wheelchair. Even though his feet are paralyzed, Billy seems to be independent and seems to manage his life without needing help. He does, however, seem to stand in stark contrast to his son Jacob who is, after his transformation, described as extremely tall and big, whereas Billy is rather small due to the fact that he has to sit in a wheelchair. Moreover, Jacob does not seem to listen to his father, as for example in the scene in which Jacob

learns about Bella's marriage, Billy begs his son to stay. Jacob, however, does not listen to his father and runs away, staying away for several months.

Contrarily, Sam has the power over Jacob and his "wolf-brothers," as he is the leader of the pack and everybody has to obey his orders. Obviously, Sam is a father figure for the werewolves who seem to call on him for advice in werewolf matters. Sam aims to establish a friendly basis with his wolf-brothers. They always meet at his fiancée Emily's house who cares for the "wolfpack" whom she regards as her own children. For Sam, his "brothers" are really important and he is easily worried about them. His dominant patriarchal role is illustrated in *Breaking Dawn*, when he wants to force the pack to kill Bella because her pregnancy represents an unpredictable danger to everybody. Seth, however, does not want to conform to his orders and tries to fight against Sam's orders.

When the Alpha spoke, the pack followed. Sam had never pushed his authority this far before; I knew he honestly hated to see Seth kneeling before him like a slave at the foot of his master. He wouldn't force this if he didn't believe that he had no other choice. [...] He really believed it was our duty to destroy Bella and the monster she carried. He really believed we had no time to waste. He believed it enough to die for. (*Breaking Dawn* 187)

When Jacob refuses Sam's command, he is also forced to comply with Sam's orders.

No. Sam snarled and stopped pacing in front of me. He stared into my eyes and a deep growl slid between his teeth. Yes, the Alpha decreed, his double voice blistering with the heat of his authority. *There are no loopholes tonight. You, Jacob, are going to fight the Cullens with us. [...] You are obliged to protect the tribe. That is why you exist. You will perform this obligation.* My shoulders hunched as the edict crushed me. My legs collapsed, and I was on my belly under him. No member of the pack could refuse the Alpha. (*Breaking Dawn* 188-189)

Sam's orders have to be obeyed. Even though the werewolves are represented as incredibly strong, big and powerful males, they are not able to refuse Sam's instructions. They do not have a choice and are therefore also kind of passive which would be a gender trait usually attributed to women.

This chapter has shown that *Twilight's* fathers are obviously superior to its mothers and the whole family, as they are they ones who make the decisions



for each family member and have the power and control over the others. The father's rules have to be obeyed, as he is the dominant head of a family. These depictions of controlling fathers and subordinate mothers clearly show that the *Twilight* series is governed by a patriarchal heteronormative world.

## Conclusion

The first part of this thesis has shown that the figure of the vampire has always been gendered. As my findings have demonstrated, the prototypical vampire of folklore has always been considered as male. Even though there are also reports on female folkloric vampires, the image of the male revenant of folklore dominates. Moreover, I have gained the insight that folkloric male vampires have always been depicted as superior to women who have mainly been portrayed as helpless, weak and passive victims of the dominating male revenants, only considering women as prey. The same applies to the traditional literary vampire, as this thesis has shown that the stereotypical vampire of fiction is presented as powerful, strong and superior to women, with the only exception being Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, who is in the end, however, killed by men, which is another allusion to the prevailing power of the male sphere and again forces a woman in the role of the victim. Therefore, the insight that I have gained from the first chapter of this thesis is that the traditional vampire novel has always been a gendered genre.

The second part of this thesis, which analyzed the representation of men and women in the *Twilight* series, has proven that Donnelly's statement of the "*Twilight* series [being] grounded in heteronormative, patriarchal belief" is to some extent true (179).

The insight that I have gained from this thesis is that throughout the *Twilight* saga, human females are attributed with stereotypical gender roles. They are represented as powerless, weak, submissive and passive and are only confined to the domestic realm. Bella, for instance, is constantly described as cooking for her father and portrayed as a nurturing and caring woman.

Moreover, the second chapter of this thesis showed that nearly every human woman of the *Twilight* saga has been abused by her male partner. These mistreated women are described as completely dependent on their partners, unable to protect themselves or to raise their voices against their abusers, some of them even thinking that their mistreatment is a sign of their partner's affection to them. These human females are disturbingly portrayed

as domineered and controlled by their partners, which is another indication of *Twilight*'s reinforcement of traditional gender roles.

With respect to traditional gender stereotypes, this thesis has, however, shown that Meyer's use of stereotypical gender roles was cleverly elaborated and not randomly undertaken. In the course of this thesis it has been revealed that one reason for Meyer depicting Bella as a stereotypical weak woman is that she thus wanted to emphasize the strong bond between her two main protagonists Bella and Edward. The fact that Bella is depicted as helpless and dependent on her partner, who constantly saves her life, should show the reader that Bella and Edward's relationship is something special, as Bella would not be alive without her protector. Moreover, it has become clear that the stereotypical depiction of Edward as being strong, protective and incredibly beautiful has evoked in many readers the desire for such a powerful and attractive hero being on their own side, which is characteristic of the genre of the traditional romantic novel.

Further, this thesis has proven that the *Twilight* series used well-known formulas of the Gothic as well as of the romantic genre. A detailed analysis of the *Twilight* saga has provided an insight into the integration of Gothic elements into the series, as the series features, for instance, mysterious locations, hazardous adventures or paranormal creatures. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that Meyer also included elements of the traditional romantic novel which is known for depicting its protagonists as stereotypically gendered. One example of *Twilight* using traditional romantic elements is the stereotypical portrayal of Bella's character as the damsel in distress. As it is characteristic of the romantic genre, Bella is also depicted as a childlike being with no sexual experience. She is also described as an insecure teenage girl with low self-esteem. Like the prototypical romantic hero, Edward is represented as incredibly strong and beautiful. In the beginning of *Twilight* he is a cryptic figure, behaving mysteriously towards Bella. As the traditional romantic novel ends, however, happily, Bella and Edward overcome all obstacles and finally get together. Even though the *Twilight* saga shows numerous elements of the traditional romantic novel, I have demonstrated that Meyer has modernized this stereotypical formula. First of all, Meyer accomplished this variation of the traditional romantic genre by allowing Bella

to narrate the story, thus giving her a voice and power. In a further step, Bella is assigned power after she has been transformed into a vampire. As a vampire, Bella is described as being even more powerful than Edward and being incredibly beautiful. Moreover, I have shown that *Twilight* attempts to break free from traditional gender roles by portraying both Carlisle and Edward as androgynous figures, as Edward is always compared to an angel-like being whose skin glistens in the sun, thus emasculating him.

Another insight that I have gained from this thesis is that stereotypical gender traits do exist in *Twilight's* human world, whereas it seems as if gender does not apply to *Twilight's* supernatural creatures, as both male and female vampires are more or less described as being equal. Both vampiric men and women are incredibly strong, powerful and beautiful. In contrast to human women, vampiric females seem to be active and independent. They do not require any male protector, even though it has become obvious that all of *Twilight's* females do have a male partner. Moreover, vampiric women have the power to choose their partner by themselves, except for Esme who was chosen and transformed into a vampire by Carlisle. By depicting her male and female vampiric protagonists as equal, Meyer's *Twilight* series shows the attempt to incorporate feminist ideas which reaches its climax at the end of *Breaking Dawn* which shows Bella as the one who has saved the whole Cullen clan as well as the werewolf pack from the Volturi. Therefore, Bella is finally depicted as savior figure. In doing so, the saga has achieved to dissolve stereotypical gender roles.

This thesis has, however, also demonstrated that gender does also exist in *Twilight's* supernatural universe when parenthood is involved. This has become obvious by Carlisle being the patriarch of the Cullen clan, Sam being the leader of the "wolfpack" as well as Marcus, Caius, and Aro who rule the vampire world. By giving these men entire control over the others, the *Twilight* series shows once more that men – vampiric or not – are superior to women, having entire power of decision as well as the power over the whole family. Interestingly enough, this thesis has shown that even though men do have an authoritative position in a family household, they are depicted as dependent on women, as Edward is for example portrayed as not being able to live without Bella, as he almost committed suicide after he accidentally

considered Bella as dead. The same applies to Charlie whose wellbeing depends on Bella providing him with food. Jacob's dependence on women is best shown by his imprinting on Renesmee after which he is completely bound to her, not even being able to leave her for some time.

Therefore, it can be concluded that even though the *Twilight* saga emphasizes traditional gender roles, it somehow also manages to break free from stereotypical depictions of men and women, thus achieving to rebel against authoritative patriarchal norms to some extent.

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## German Abstract

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit Stephenie Meyers *Twilight*-Reihe. Dabei wird genauer auf die Darstellung von Geschlechterrollen eingegangen. Das Ziel ist es herauszufinden, ob Männer und Frauen in Meyers *Twilight*-Serie nach vorherrschender patriarchischer Norm dargestellt werden, die Frauen als untergeordnet und Männer als höhergestellt abzeichnen, oder, ob es Meyer in ihrer *Twilight*-Reihe möglicherweise geschafft hat, sich von dem strengen patriarchischen System loszureißen. In einem weiteren Schritt soll in dieser Diplomarbeit erforscht werden, ob traditionelle Geschlechterrollen nur bei menschlichen Wesen oder auch bei übernatürlichen Kreaturen angewendet werden.

Für ein besseres Verständnis der Natur des Vampirs bzw. den Geschlechterrollen, die normalerweise Vampiren zugeschrieben werden, soll zunächst ein historischer Überblick über die Ursprünge der volkstümlichen Vampire gegeben werden. In diesem Kapitel soll herausgearbeitet werden, wie der prototypische volkstümliche Vampir in damaliger Zeit ausgesehen hat und welche Geschlechterrollen ihm zugeordnet wurden. Der zweite Teil dieses Kapitels beschäftigt sich mit der Entwicklung des literarischen Vampirs sowie den ihm zugeschriebenen Geschlechterrollen. Anschließend soll dem Genre der Schauerliteratur („Gothic fiction“) nachgegangen werden. Hierbei sollen bestimmte Charakteristiken dieses Genres herausgearbeitet werden und des Weiteren festgestellt werden, inwieweit die *Twilight*-Serie zu diesem Genre gehört. Als letzter Teil wird das Genre des Liebesromans behandelt, zu dem auch Meyers *Twilight*-Serie zählt. Hierbei sollen die typischen Merkmale eines Liebesromans aufgeführt werden, welche eine Begründung für die teils stereotype Darstellung von Geschlechterrollen in der *Twilight*-Reihe darstellen soll.

Im zweiten Kapitel wird eine Analyse der *Twilight*-Romane vorgenommen. Hierbei wird vor allem ein Fokus auf die Darstellung von Geschlechterrollen gesetzt. Die erste Sektion dieses Analyseteils beschäftigt sich mit der Darstellung von Männern und Frauen in der Romanreihe. Im zweiten Teil werden die Beziehungen zwischen Männern und Frauen in der *Twilight*-Serie genauer unter die Lupe genommen, wobei vor allem auf Frauen, die Opfer

einer gewalttätigen Beziehung waren oder noch immer sind, näher eingegangen wird. Der letzte Teil dieses Kapitels beschäftigt sich genauer mit der Verkörperung von Elternschaft in der *Twilight*-Reihe. Hierbei wird analysiert, wie die Rolle der Mutter bzw. des Vaters dargestellt wird und wie ihre Machtverteilung innerhalb der Familie präsentiert wird.

# Curriculum Vitae

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