



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

Department of Languages and Literatures

EN1C02: Literary essay, 15 higher education points

A Literary Analysis of Stephenie Meyer's
Breaking Dawn from a Gender Perspective:
Female Emancipation or False Liberation?

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Spring term 2011

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Introduction

Breaking Dawn (2008) is the fourth book in the series about the complicated love between Bella and Edward, who is a vampire. The series has become immensely popular among teenagers and young adults, and especially among female readers. The novels belong to the fantasy genre but also blend in realism, which makes it easy for young adults to identify with the everyday life of the characters. In *Breaking Dawn* the reader is presented with the end of the Twilight saga, which the series is often referred to as. The novel consists of three parts with different narrators; book one and three are narrated by Bella and book two by Jacob. The novels have been made into films and are nothing less than a pop culture phenomenon. The theme of the vampire and of the young female victim/lover is an old theme and has been elaborated on in many novels and films. Vampire stories have been particularly interesting to discuss in relation to gender issues. Melissa Ames discusses the allure the vampire genre has had and the criticism it has received:

The fact that the same gender critiques appear in both *Dracula* and in more contemporary texts suggests that the vampire narrative is a productive space to tease out problems of gender and sexuality, but that it is not a space that necessarily resolves such issues since they recycle decade after decade and text after text in similar fictional constructs. (2010, p 44-45)

The three novels before *Breaking Dawn* clearly show Bella as unequal to Edward and the other vampires. This is of course partly due to her being human and less powerful. However, in the final novel Bella is transformed into a vampire and the question is whether Bella will finally be able to be independent from and equal to Edward. This analysis will focus on the relationship between Bella and Edward and on how Bella and Edward are allowed to act in relation to their gender roles. Jacob will not be part of my focus although he has a major part in the narrative structure; instead, his role will be analysed according to the relationship between Bella and Edward.

Material and method

This essay takes as its starting point John Stephens' schema of masculine and feminine traits. The main character in *Breaking Dawn*, Bella and Edward, will be analysed according to Stephens' description of masculine and feminine character traits. I will also draw on an analysis of one of the earliest novels about vampires, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, to see how Meyer's characters compare to Stoker's. Several essays analysing the Twilight series are also used.

Masculine and feminine in literature

Masculine and feminine traits are deeply rooted in society and in literature. Masculine and feminine traits are in direct opposition to each other and Stephens describes this relationship as “binary opposites” which implies that masculine traits are generally considered superior to feminine traits. Stephens explains his schema in the following manner: “The socially desirable male conforms to the descriptors in the left-hand column; it is undesirable to transgress them. Similarly, the ”good” woman conforms to the descriptors in the right-hand column; the undesirable woman transgresses them” (Stephens, 1996, p 19). According to Stephens it is difficult to have characters break this schema completely and still remain likeable. The typical traits of each gender are:

Schema for masculinity:

strong
violent
unemotional, hard, tough
aggressive, authoritarian
transgressive
(= ‘nature’ when + sexual)
competitive
rapacious
protective
‘hunter’, powerful
player
independent
active
analytical
thinks quantitatively
rational (= culture, civilization)

Schema for femininity:

beautiful (therefore, good)
non-violent
emotional, soft, yielding
submissive, compliant
obedient, pleasing
(= ‘culture’ when + sexual)
self-effacing, sharing
caring
vulnerable
‘victim’; powerless
prize
dependent
passive (active=evil)
synthesizing
thinks qualitatively
intuitive (= nature, the primitive)
[intuition = “lateral thinking “ when + male].

(Stephens, 1996, s 18-19)

Using this sort of polarized schema makes an analysis of characters rather binary. Maria Nikolajeva discusses the problem with such a schema as Stephens:

Although feminist approaches to children's literature have been prominent for many years, we still lack a more precise metalanguage to discuss gender-related issues and too often get entangled in rigid definitions of female/male, feminine/masculine, which frequently depends on the scholar's essentialist or constructivist approach respectively. (Nikolajeva, 2010, p 105)

A schema is of course rigid but it is possible to see characters as having more or less of the traits described by Stephens. You could see the schema as a spectrum rather than a set of binary pairs. Based on Stephens' schema, I would argue that Bella and Edward correspond to gender expectations and that it is mostly Bella who breaks gender expectations. There is a debate about using this sort of schema; Judith Butler has criticized using this type of binary thinking and she views both sexuality and gender as performative. David Gauntlett (1998) describes Butler's book *Gender Trouble* in the following way:

Butler argued that feminism had made a mistake by trying to assert that 'women' were a group with common characteristics and interests. That approach, Butler said, performed 'an unwitting regulation and reification of gender relations' -- reinforcing a binary view of gender relations in which human beings are divided into two clear-cut groups, women and men. Rather than opening up possibilities for a person to form and choose their own individual identity, therefore, feminism had closed the options down.

I will use Stephens' schema because I believe it will highlight Bella's and Edward's relationship in a clear way, even though I am aware of how using this type of schema reinforces gender roles. Since Bella and Edward are rather non-dynamic characters and by using Stephens' binary schema it is easy to see how much Meyer moulds them into stereotyped gender roles. I also believe that characters in Young Adult fiction often correspond to binary character traits, and using Stephens' schema could highlight this in Meyer's *Breaking Dawn*.

Chapter one – Bella

Bella's physical appearance

The female body has been objectified and subjected to the male gaze in poetry, art and literature. According to Stephens, women are typically portrayed in literature as being beautiful and therefore good. The female vampires of *Breaking Dawn* are all described as extremely beautiful, including the evil ones. They can also be active and good at the same time. The women in the novel can therefore be seen as somewhere in-between Stephens' schema of typical female and masculine traits as they are both beautiful and active. Throughout the series Bella's appearance is seen through others and through herself. There is a clash between others' view of her appearance and Bella's thoughts about herself. While it is typical for female characters to be beautiful it is not typical for them to be overly confident and to be aware of their beauty. A female character's beauty is to be appreciated by a viewer, very often male, and not by herself. Bella is described as beautiful by many of the characters. Jacob, her best friend, often describes her: "You look unbelievable, Bella. So beautiful" (Meyer, 2008, p 55), "Her colour was back to the way I remembered it. Pale, but with the rose undertone. Her lips were pink again" (Meyer, p 257). The concept of the male gaze is applicable here. Bella on the other hand lacks self-confidence about her physical appearance which can be seen as typical of female behaviour i.e. being submissive and not confident. She also often compares herself to the female vampires: "She was so beautiful it made me want to cry. What was even the point of dressing up with Rosalie around?" (Meyer, p 39). Bella's doubt about her own appearance enables the young adolescent reader to identify with her. She would be considered "unlikeable" if she were to act overly confident and be aware of her beauty. Bella constantly compares herself with Edward, always with the result that she is unworthy of him: "Is this really necessary? I'm going to look plain to him no matter what" (Meyer, p 38).

Bella is subjected to the male gaze of Edward as he is often described looking at her and describing her physical appearance: "Then I suppose you don't realize how utterly, heart-breakingly beautiful you are tonight. I'm not surprised Mike's having difficulty with improper thoughts about a married woman" (Meyer, p 52). His descriptions of her are abundantly concerned with the way she looks: "It made no sense when he looked at me that way. Like I was the prize rather than the outrageously lucky winner" (Meyer, p 22). She clearly feels that Edward considers her to be a prize, i.e. that he is objectifying her, however she does not question this, instead she considers herself to be someone who has won something. Is this a

way of objectifying him? She views his physical appearance in the same way he views hers, with a typical male gaze: “I never got over the shock of how perfect his body was – white, cool and polished as marble. I ran my hand down his stone chest now, tracing across the flat planes of his stomach, just marvelling” (Meyer, p 23). Ann Yonger discusses how an unrealistic ideal exists in Young Adult literature:

girls’ lives are still adversely affected by negative body images. An influential source of negative body image is Young Adult literature, in which harmful representations of body image weaken otherwise positive portrayals of young women. Many Young Adult texts mirror the positive aspects feminism has made for young women, yet some texts continue to perpetuate an unrealistic “ideal” physical appearance. (Yonger, 2003, p 16)

Bella sees herself as ordinary and questions what Edward sees in her. The text revolves around Bella’s appearance, signalling to readers the importance of women’s appearance. Only after Bella has been masked, buffed, and every surface of her body has been polished (Meyer, p 39) is she able to feel that she is beautiful (Meyer, p 52). Yet it is not until Bella is transformed into a vampire that she is allowed to be confident about her appearance permanently. Yonger also discusses the close link in young adult literature between a girl’s weight and her being described as beautiful and non-promiscuous. Bella is described as thin and Edward implies the importance of keeping your weight ““Do you want to swim with the dolphins this afternoon – burn off the calories?’ he asked” (Meyer, p 106). Burning calories can be seen as a typical part of dieting, a way of implying the importance of being thin. Interestingly enough, Bella’s reply can be seen as taking charge over the situation by suggesting other ways of burning calories meaning having sex (Meyer, p 106).

Bella’s sexuality

Stephen’s schema does not bring up sexuality as a typical trait for either sex. However, society often favours men who are sexual and act on their urges whereas women often are discouraged from being sexual and can be severely punished when they are being too sexual. You can interpret Stephens’ traits ‘player’ and ‘hunter’ for male behaviour and ‘prize’ and ‘victim’ for female behaviour as sexual qualities. You could then argue that it is the male that is supposed to pursue the female, i.e. a man can be sexual and act on his desires while a woman needs to wait for the man to pursue her. According to this interpretation Bella acts more in a masculine way when she is allowed to be sexual. Bella is described as having strong sexual feelings and she longs for Edward sexually. It is Bella who tries to initiate a sexual relationship, with Edward denying her it.

In contrast to her strong feelings of desire Bella does not view herself as the sexual seducer in the relationship and this is made clear when she reacts to her suitcase that was packed by Alice, Edward's sister: "it came to my attention that there was an awful lot of sheer lace and skimpy satin in my hands. Lingerie. Very lingerie-ish lingerie, with French tags. I didn't know how or when, but someday, Alice was going to pay for this" (Meyer, 2008, p 75). Obviously Bella does not respond to this femme fatale sexiness that Alice wants her to embrace. Bella does not see herself as a seducer until she is not able to attain what she desires. At that point she decides to take action and seduce Edward, which can be seen as a typical masculine trait i.e. being the hunter of a sexual object. In this sense, Bella can be seen as liberated as she does not conform to the traits ascribed to feminine behaviour; instead she is being the "hunter" and Edward the "prize". It could be argued that she is not being punished because of her sexuality, she is able to achieve the object of her desire who is Edward and she is able to fully enjoy her night with Edward. However, Edward's and Bella's first sexual act together has consequences for Bella who wakes up all bruised because of Edward not being able to control his inhuman powers. Bella is allowed to feel sexual urges and also to pursue them, leading to a sexual relationship with Edward. However, because of her acting on her sexual desire not only is she physically hurt as a result from their sexual act, but also Bella is the one who comforts Edward the day after. Her first reaction to Edward's disappointment is: "My first instinct, the product of a lifetime of insecurities, was to wonder what I had done wrong" (Meyer, p 80). She takes responsibility over the fact that their sexual experience had dire consequences. Bella is described as being completely happy and in total bliss (Meyer, p 78-79) and as not feeling any pain from her injuries (Meyer, p 82). There is, however, a discrepancy between the description of Bella's feelings and that of Bella's body:

There was a faint shadow across one of my cheekbones, and my lips were a little swollen, but other than that, my face was fine. The rest of me was decorated with patches of blue and purple. I concentrated on the bruises that would be the hardest to hide – my arms and my shoulders. (Meyer, p 87)

The choice of the word "decorated" instead of for example "bruised" diminishes the severity of the actual violence that Bella was subject to. It is, moreover, Bella who needs to convince Edward that there is nothing wrong with her being bruised and she is more disturbed by him feeling guilty about hurting her. Meyer portrays Bella's sexuality as something that is dangerous. Ann Yonger discusses how Yong Adult literature both acknowledges female sexuality but also suppresses it:

Young Adult fictions frequently depict female sexuality as a threatening force for young adults. For young females in a patriarchal society, sexuality (particularly sexual desire) is often represented by educators, parents and authors as a primitive, taboo drive that must be regulated. (Yonger, 2003, p 17)

As Yonger argues, Meyer also portrays Bella's sexuality as a potentially dangerous experience and something that needs to be regulated, in this case by Edward. According to Stephens' schema Bella's behaviour corresponds to many traits: submissive, self-effacing, pleasing, yielding and non-aggressive. Her feelings of great sexual content is set against his feelings of remorse for hurting her and her own doubts that he did not enjoy himself as she did (Meyer, p 84). Since being sexual is typically associated with male behaviour, Bella compensates by conforming to behaviour of a more female nature. Bella needs to comfort Edward even though it was Edward who hurt Bella physically. Is this a way to reclaim Bella's feminine innocence? It is not desirable for Bella to be the one who is most sexual and she therefore needs to be punished for her straight-forward sexuality. Melissa Ames discusses Meyer's representation of sexuality in the following way:

Beyond the troubling gender portrayals present in the book, other critics have taken offense to the way the series deals with sexuality. Although teen sexual desire is a common motif of Meyer's *Eclipse*, the underlying message present is that sex is sinful and off limits. This is seen repeatedly as Bella's advances are cast aside by Edward, who wishes to preserve her virtue by waiting until they are married to first have sexual intercourse (Ames, 2010, p 40).

A parallel can be drawn to Victorian values and to a new type of woman that emerges, at the time: the New Woman. In *The Vampire in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* Carol Senf describes the New Woman as follows: "When it came to sex, the New Woman was more frank and open than her predecessors. She felt free to initiate sexual relationships, to explore alternatives to marriage and motherhood..." (Senf, 1988, p 62). In Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, female characters, exploring their sexual desires and going against Victorian values, are in the end punished. This New Woman cannot be allowed by Stoker to engage in a behaviour that is outside of the norm for female behaviour. Typical male behaviour such as being very sexually active cannot be enjoyed by female characters. As Lisa Nystrom for example points out:

It is telling that Arthur, in the role of the husband, punished his wife for her untoward behavior. By penetrating her with his stake on what should have been their wedding night, he puts an end to her "unseemly" independent lifestyle. In death, Lucy is restored to her once-passive self, no longer a threat to masculinity. (Nystrom, 2009, p 71)

Bella is not punished in the same open way as female vampires in *Dracula*, she is, however, punished with a dangerous pregnancy. Bella's and Edward's decision to have sex only after they are married, is also very much a demand from Edward (Meyer, p 19). It is as if Bella's sexuality and choices are conditioned by Edward. She can be sexually active and she can be transformed into a vampire, but only after marriage. *Breaking Dawn* can therefore be seen as maintaining old values and traditions, and keeping the belief that a young woman needs to be married in order to have sexual intercourse. The one major choice that Bella makes without Edward's consent is to keep the child she conceived after having sex with him (Meyer, p 120-121).

Bella has strong feelings of sexual desire before her transformation but she is only allowed to completely enjoy her sexuality after the transformation: "He had the most beautiful, perfect body in the world and I had him all to myself, and it didn't feel like I was ever going to find a point where I would think, *Now I've had enough for one day*. I was always going to want more" "I should have guessed, after a day like today, that it would be better. I could really appreciate him now [...]" (Meyer, p 446). The transformation can be seen as liberating for her sexuality since she is not punished for her sexuality after she becomes a vampire.

The mother role

Bella who throughout the series has been described as disliking marriage and as unable to see herself as a mother is suddenly attributed an inner desire for what all women, according to gender stereotypes, really want, that is getting married and having lots of babies:

I wanted him like I wanted air to breathe. Not a choice – a necessity. Maybe I just had a really bad imagination. Maybe that was why I'd been unable to imagine that I would *like* being married until after I already was – unable to see that I would want a baby until after one was already coming... (Meyer, p 120)

Bella is very emotional about the baby while Edward is non-emotional and cold. "He didn't care about the baby at all. He wanted to *hurt* him" (Meyer, p 121). Edward is only protective of Bella and prefers abortion in order for Bella to survive. Bella sees Edward's unwillingness to keep the baby as a threat and she decides to take action herself, in order to keep the baby. Bella is clearly going against Edward's will and in this way she can be seen as independent and that she is in control of her own body.

Bella is changed through her experience of motherhood and Meyer depicts her as the typical, good mother. Feminine traits of character such as being caring, yielding, and emotional and so

on are more prominent in Bella after the pregnancy. Ann Alston discusses what is expected of the good mother: “The mother is expected to sacrifice herself to feed her children: first through the placenta, second through breast milk and finally through preparing good wholesome food to allow the children to grow healthily” (Alston, 2008, p 112). This is very much applicable to Bella since the vampire baby actually could take her life in order to feed itself. Bella even plans to survive the dangerous pregnancy and delivery by having Edward transform her into a vampire (Meyer p, 175).

From the moment Bella realises she is pregnant she acts according to the image of the caring mother. Bella suddenly embraces the stereotype of one of the archetypal female roles: the good mother. She takes care of the baby and is willing to sacrifice herself, conforming to Stephens’ schema. The choice to keep the baby is a choice that Bella is allowed to make, even though Edward is against it because it threatens her life. In one way, Bella can be seen as independent, because of this choice. On the other hand she can be seen as dependent since she is conforming to a stereotyped female role, i.e. that of the protective mother. For a woman to sacrifice herself for her baby must be the ultimate female sacrifice. The fact that Bella becomes pregnant after having had sex with Edward only once can be seen as a punishment of her sexuality. The fact that female vampires are not able to conceive a child but male vampires are fertile can also be seen as a punishment of female strength. Much like the New Woman ended up being punished in *Dracula*, female vampires in *Breaking Dawn* also have to make sacrifices, such as being infertile, to compensate for their active behaviour as vampires. Many cultures look down upon female infertility. Interestingly enough, male vampires are not being deprived of their fertility.

Transformation

Bella’s transformation from an ordinary human to an extraordinary creature is a common theme of children’s literature. Maria Nikolajeva discusses this common theme:

an ordinary child is empowered through transportation to a magic realm, through the possession of a magical agent (object or helper), and through the acquisition of a set of heroic traits or magical force, impossible or at least improbable within the existing order of things [...] Carnival, reversing the existing order, elevates the fictional child to a position superior to adults. (Nikolajeva, 2010, p 41-42)

Bella is given an even more special status when it is clear that she will manage the difficult part of the transformation process, being a newborn: “I’d seen newborn vampires firsthand, and I’d heard all my family-to-be’s story about those wild early days. For several years, my

biggest personality trait was going to be *thirsty*. It would take some time before I could be *me* again” (Meyer, 2008, p 22). The time after the transformation is described as a time of distress and the implication is that Bella will not be able to function properly. It is interesting that Bella is given a special status when she is able to handle the newborn period in a different, more positive, way compared to other newborns: “I’ve never seen a newborn do that – stop an emotion in its track that way” (Meyer, p 404). Not only is Bella elevated from being just a normal human being and transformed into a vampire, she is also given extra traits when she handles the transformation beyond everybody’s expectations. One thing she fears most about the transformation, however, is the possible loss of her sexuality. She therefore starts to question the transformation. Edward diminishes her wanting to stay human explaining that it is because she is ruled by hormones. “I *like* this part of being human. I don’t want to give it up yet. I don’t want to wait through years of being a blood-crazed newborn for some part of this to come back to me” (Meyer, p 94) His response to her thoughts about her sexuality is that she should go to sleep. Again, Bella’s voice is silenced by Edward.

It is clear that Bella sometimes is quite trapped in fixed gender roles, but her transformation allows her to develop. Bella is sometimes treated as property by Edward: “I should have taken the time to make sure we were in a safe zone before I set her loose” (Meyer, p 407). However, at the same time she is described as stronger than Edward by having abilities beyond anybody’s expectations (Meyer, p 408). Bella is in some ways breaking gender roles but seems as well to be punished and held back, she cannot be too free of gender roles, something she shares with female characters in *Dracula*. Nystrom describes the gender dynamic of *Dracula* in the following way:

Fear and subversion of female power form the basis of many of *Dracula*’s horrific aspects, as is continually highlighted by the presence of the “New Woman.” After introducing audiences with female characters who are both active and unashamed of their sexuality, Stoker proceeds to strip them of any power they may possess by having his heroes drive into their breasts the symbolic stakes of masculine superiority. (Nystrom, p 74)

All of the choices Bella is allowed to make before her transformation are always controlled or consented to by Edward. Bella does not have any real power over her choices or her body. In that way she is punished in the same way as female characters that are too active in *Dracula*. In many ways, however, Bella is liberated from this theme of female subjection. She can be considered to finally being an independent woman, equal to Edward in strength and no longer needing his protection after the transformation. She is not punished as the New Woman was

by Stoker when she becomes a vampire. Bella feels the same sense of new power and stronger sexuality as the New Woman in *Dracula* does, with the difference that she is able to enjoy them without consequences.

Bella's transformation into a vampire enables a relationship on more equal terms. For a while Bella is even physically stronger than Edward: "I tried to keep in mind that I was stronger than he was" (Meyer, p 446), but this is not a permanent stage since she will become less strong. The transformation also allows Bella to finally feel equal to Edward emotionally, and to feel strong in their relationship: "If he were gone, I would not be able to live through that. If I were gone, he wouldn't live through it either" (Meyer, p 345). It also allows Bella to see her own beauty: "The alien creature in the glass was indisputably beautiful, every bit as beautiful as Alice or Esme" (Meyer p, 371-372). I would argue that this awareness of her appearance strengthens her, and delivers her from the male gaze that used to define her in the beginning of the novel.

Chapter two – Edward

The Character of the Vampire

Starting with Bram Stoker's *Dracula* there has been a development in the portrayal of vampires from the 19th century to the 20th century. The horror genre during the 19th century made it possible to describe homo-erotic relationships disguised in the vampire act. With *Dracula* as a clear breaking point, a new theme appeared with that of the struggle between on the one hand society, which required self control, and on the other sexual drift which was represented by Dracula. The relationship was very much polarised. The vampire character was allowing him- or herself to be governed by impulses, above all sexual impulses, and had no self control. The character of Dracula for example did not question whether vampire instincts could be wrong. This sort of vampire represented everything that civilised society tried to suppress, in particular sexual desire. Dracula is seen as a character that embodies lust (Öhman, 2002, p 93-95). Yvonne Leffler, however, argues that Dracula could be seen as a more complex character because of him embodying opposites:

as a vampire he transcends all given boundaries; he is a combination of impossible opposites. He is human being and predatory animal; as a predatory animal he represents the thirst for blood, violence and sexual perversion. His lust is also transferred to his victims: Dracula's bite, his consumption of his female victim's blood, gives her an indescribable sense of physical enjoyment superior to anything she has ever experienced in human relations. (Leffler, 2000, p 145)

During the late 20th century a new type of vampire character emerges who is aware of his existence in relation to the values mankind have about moral aspects of right and wrong. In the novel *A Vampire's Diary* a vampire with an existential dilemma is at the centre, indicating that the vampire has changed from a monster to a complex creature that questions his own existence (Öhman, 2022, p 100.) The vampire has gone from a menace to society to a dualistic being questioning his own right to exist. This new type of vampire is a dualistic creature that is able to question his choices. The vampire as a creature is now approaching a more human representation and can, accordingly, have completely different character traits. Because of the vampire being now able to control his or her own urges, human relationships are possible.

Meyer's representation of vampire characters follows this new tradition of the vampire as a dualistic creature, especially as far as Edward's family is concerned. Other vampires that are a threat to Bella are represented as simple, out-of-control beings more in line with the old vampire tradition. To keep Edward and his family separate from more evil vampires, they are

“vegetarians” i.e. only feeding on animals and not humans as the evil vampires do. This is of course in order to portray Edward and his family as good characters. Edward is able to have a relationship with Bella, but needs to suppress the more primary desires of sucking her blood, which is in line with the tradition of older vampiric relationships: “He claimed he was long past the temptation my blood used to be for him, that the idea of losing me had cured him of any desire for it. But I knew the smell of my blood still caused him pain – still burned his throat like he was inhaling flames” (Meyer p 21).

Physical appearance

Edward’s appearance is central in Bella’s narration. When explaining her feelings for him, she often describes how he looks and how he makes her feel. There are no major explanations of how he is as a person, the descriptions of Edward are mostly concerned with his appearance. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, Bella could be viewed as objectifying Edward as she repeatedly describes separate body parts when looking at him. When describing Edward’s physical appearance Meyer places the reader as the viewer, in line with how women’s appearance often is described and portrayed in media and art. His body is broken into parts by Bella, which is in accordance with an objectifying gaze where the female body is separated into body parts and not seen as a whole: “stone chest”, “planes of his stomach” “polished as marble” (Meyer, p 23), “glorious body”, (Meyer p 22). His appearance, however, always conforms to a typical masculine ideal. He is often described as resembling a statue or as a statuesque type: “I ran my hand down his stone chest now, tracing across the flat planes of his stomach, just marvelling” (Meyer, p 23). The comparison of Edward to hard, solid materials can be linked to Stephens’ schema where male characters are described as hard, tough and tenacious. While Bella is objectifying Edward it is, however, by using adjectives that are in line with Stephens’ schema for male characters such as hard, tough, and unyielding. This is something that is applicable when it comes to Edward’s sexuality.

Bella sees herself as less beautiful than Edward, and while Edward is perfect both in appearance and in physical abilities, Bella is clumsy and imperfect. When Edward’s sister prepares Bella for the wedding it is evident that she sees herself as not good enough compared to him: “Is this really necessary? I’m going to look plain next to him no matter what” (Meyer, p38). Bella constantly uses the word perfect when describing Edward; “The pallid light of the moon turned his skin a perfect white” (Meyer, p 77), “his perfect face was almost severe with the depth of his emotion” (Meyer, p 44), “I never got over the shock of how perfect his body was – white, cool, and polished as marble” (Meyer, p 23). Physical appearance seems to be of

great importance in Meyer's character descriptions. Bella needs to be imperfect probably to have young female readers identify with her, and Edward's appearance needs to be almost too perfect in order for female readers to lust for him. Descriptions of Edward often play on the contrast between fire and heat on the one hand, and ice and cold on the other: His eyes are "burning gold" (Meyer p 44) and his skin a "cool miracle" (Meyer p 45), "Edward's voice was cold as ice" (Meyer, p 60). When Edward's temper is being described it is often with similar comparisons. Edward is consequently described using direct opposites and extreme comparisons.

Edward's sexuality

As I pointed out in my first chapter, Edward is not the sexual predator in the relationship. With Edward, Meyer has developed the traditional vampire from a highly sexual being not caring about his victims to one who is even worried about Bella's virtue. This is a major change compared with the highly sexual older representations of vampire, such as Dracula. While their sexual relationship has serious consequences for Bella who is bruised and put through a highly dangerous pregnancy, nothing happens to Edward. It is many times implied that the right thing to do is to wait until after marriage to have sex and Meyer has a clear message about marriage. It is Edward who represents the conservative idea about marrying before having sexual intercourse, and it is Edward who decides when he and Bella should have sex. Bella is not even given any saying about the conditions of the marriage: "Edward's family and my family were taking care of the nuptials together without my having to do or know or think too hard about any of it" (Meyer, p 17). Bella often questions marriage and does not feel the need to get married: "Not that this fact necessitated *marriage* in my book, but the wedding was required due to the delicate and tangled compromise Edward and I had made to finally get to this point, the brink of my transformation from mortal to immortal" (Meyer, p 14). Whereas Edward makes the importance of marriage clear and says it would be wrong not to marry: "I'd like to do that, well, the right way. It's how I was raised" (Meyer, p 14). It is Edward's values that govern their "tangled compromise". Bella can only give in to Edward's demands in order to make her choice become real. By having Bella think about her father's reaction to their marriage, Meyer also condemns not marrying by suggesting it would be a sin: "But what could he say? *I'd prefer you live in sin first?* He was a dad; his hands were tied" (Meyer, p 14). Meyer reverts back to conservative ideals by portraying sex as something sinful, and something that is off limits for young women. This is a backlash to the more traditional characterization of vampires more in line with *Dracula*. Meyer portrays Edward in

line with Stephens' schema as being rational and very controlling of his urges, while at the same time portraying Bella's urges as something that is wrong.

Edward's demand to have sex after marriage is portrayed as a rational, responsible choice. Bella's urges are in comparison uncontrollable and seen as something that needs to be controlled by Edward and there are many situations in the novel where Edward physically needs to hold her back: "He started to pull away – that was his automatic response whenever he decided things had gone too far" (Meyer p 23), "He began the kiss, and he had to end it; I clung to him [...] Finally, his hands restrained my face and he pulled back" (Meyer p 46). Edward is therefore not only in total control of his own sexuality but also controls Bella's. Carmen Siering (2009) discusses Edward's restraining role in Bella's awakening sexuality in the Twilight series in the following way:

But while Twilight is ostensibly a love story, scratch the surface and you will find an allegorical tale about the dangers of unregulated female sexuality. From the very first kiss between Edward and Bella, she is fighting to control her awakening sexuality. Edward must restrain her, sometimes physically, to keep her from ravishing him, and he frequently chastises her when she becomes, in his opinion, too passionate. (Siering, p 1)

It is evident that it is always Edward who is the one who stops Bella's sexual urges from going "too far". It is therefore a major contrast when Edward is obviously able to control his sexual urges but not his inhuman powers when Bella finally convinces him to have sex with her. Why can he not control his powers when he is able to control his sexual urges? You could see this as a way for Edward to regain male power after giving in to Bella's sexual desires.

As Edward's choices are portrayed as the rational, thoughtful options compared to Bella's out-of-control sexual urges, Bella's descriptions of Edward are in line with how he responds to her touch. The descriptions of Edward's appearance, among others "polished as marble" and "stone chest" (Meyer, p 23), signal not only the importance of his highly masculine appearance but also his responses to Bella's touch. With Edward being compared to dead things continuously, it is interesting that his body does not submit to Bella's touch the way Bella reacts to Edward's:

I clutched my arms around his neck again and locked my mouth with his feverishly. It wasn't desire at all – it was need, acute to the point of pain. His response was instant but quickly followed by his rebuff. He struggled with me as gently as he could in his surprise, holding me away, grasping my shoulders. 'No, Bella,' he insisted, looking at me as if he was worried that I'd lost my mind. (Meyer, p 97)

Again it is Edward who decides when their course of actions needs to be stopped and in this way it is Edward who is in control of not only his own sexual urges but also Bella's.

Edward as masculine

Edward can be seen as a typical masculine character in that he fits into many of the traits described by Stephens. He is authoritative, rapacious, and protective and there is always a need for Edward to protect Bella who continuously ends up in trouble. Their relationship is very much conditioned by Edward; Edward controls Bella, he does not listen to her opinions and often explains to her that his way is better than hers. He diminishes her choices and seems to always know better than she does, even when it comes to what is best for her. Even when Bella says she knows what she is doing he answers with "How could you know that, Bella?" (Meyer, p 25). Siering (2009) discusses this characterization of Bella and Edward in this way:

Bella is also depicted as being in need of someone to take charge, someone to take care of her. Edward isn't just protective, though, but often overprotective of Bella. Edward is jealous of Bella's relationships with other boys, going so far as to disable her car to keep her at home. He is condescending, assuming that he knows what is best for her in every situation. (Siering, p 1)

Edward is not only controlling of Bella but also of their relationship. McGeough discusses Edward's control over their relationship as a dichotomy where the male mind rules over the female body:

Because rationality and self-control function as the ideal, Edward is granted power in their relationship, whereas Bella's body is defined as inferior and in need of constant surveillance. This dichotomy also highlights the paradox of adolescent girls and sexual desire: they are expected to be desirable but are denied the expression of their own sexual desire. (McGeough, p 100)

As Stephens also describes it, "likeable" characters need to conform to the traits of the schema, and perhaps Edward needs to be protective and rapacious in order to be a believable character. On the other hand, characters need to challenge conventions in order not to adhere to typical gender roles. Maria Nikolajeva discusses the long tradition of masculine stereotypes:

Young males have always had the pressure on them to be strong, aggressive and competitive. [...] the masculine stereotypes turned out to be much more tenacious. The masculine stereotype has been dominant in juvenile literature because it has prevailed in Western culture at large, going back to myths and classical literature. (Nikolajeva, 2010, p 106)

This could explain why Edward is much more stuck in gender roles compared to Bella and why he does not really evolve during the story.

Stephens' schema for masculine traits clearly shows many controlling traits that are typical for male characters in fiction. Strong, violent, hard, tough, authoritarian, protective, powerful are all traits that correspond to Edward. Although he is emotional and caring of Bella, it is very often pictured in a very shielding and protective manner: "Edward had an obsessive sort of concern over the human things that I would be giving up" (Meyer, p 19). When Bella and Edward go or come somewhere it is always with Edward leading her or in other ways controlling her body physically: "When Edward claimed me again" (Meyer, p 64), "Edward pulled me close to his side as we made our escape" (Meyer, p 67), "Edward shielded me from the rice" (Meyer, p 68) and when Bella wants to talk with Jacob, it is Edward who hands her over: "Edward kept his grip under my elbow until another set of strong hands caught me in the darkness" (Meyer, p 53). Bella is therefore in constant male management or protection from Edward or other male characters.

Bella is never allowed to come through in difficult situations. Even in a dispute with her best friend Jacob, Edward is there to save the day when Jacob gets too physical with Bella: "He shook me again. His hands, tight as tourniquets, were quivering, sent vibrations deep into my bones. 'Jake – stop!' The darkness was suddenly very crowded. 'Take your hands off her!' Edward's voice was cold as ice, sharp as razors" (Meyer p 60). It seems that Bella could manage the situation herself, by telling Jacob that she wants him to stop. However, Meyer is not having Bella being independent; instead she is always highly dependent upon having Edward come and rescue her. Melissa Ames also describes Meyer's portrayal of Bella as dependent: "Bella is consistently depicted as the damsel in distress forever in need of rescue by a male" (Ames, 2010, p 40).

Transformation

Because of Edward's unwillingness to deprive Bella of her human life (Meyer, p 19), Bella is put in great danger because of the half-human-half-vampire-baby in her womb when she is to give birth to the baby. Edward is then forced to turn Bella into a vampire, in order to save her life. It is therefore never Edward's choice to turn her into a vampire (Meyer, p 325-326). However, looking at it from another angle presents a difficulty with Edward's unwillingness to transform Bella into a vampire. Edward for instance views Bella as clumsy and in constant need of protection: "Because I was so fragilely human, so accident-prone, so much a victim to

my own dangerous bad luck, apparently I needed a tank-resistant car to keep me safe” (Meyer, p 7). While Bella is sarcastic about Edward’s overprotection of her she still interprets it as a sign of him loving her. Since the transformation would allow Bella to defend herself and she would be in no need of Edward’s protection it is worth that Edward only sees the negative aspects of such a transformation. He does not see the advantages of turning Bella into something more powerful than a human ruled by hormones (Meyer, p 94). You could argue that because Edward does not bring up the positive aspects of Bella turning into a vampire, being stronger and independent, he does not want her to change. He needs her to be dependent on him.

Edward acknowledges that Bella is stronger in both physical and mental power after the transformation: “The fact that you are stronger than anyone I’ve ever known [...]” (Meyer, p 408). It is always expressed with more factual statements, he never puts any positive connotation to the fact that she is in control over her body after the transformation which is rare for new-born vampires.

When Bella is a vampire Edward allows her to move freely (Meyer, p 618). In the earlier novels he often follows her motivating it with concern. Bella has a backup plan in case something could go wrong in the final battle between good and evil in *Breaking Dawn*. This is something that Edward is not aware of. After the transformation the gender roles are a bit reversed, it is now Bella that needs to protect and rescue Edward: “I focused totally on Edward, ready to shield him instantly if something went wrong” (Meyer, p 642). In a way Bella is emancipated and able to not only protect herself and therefore be independent; she is also allowed to take a step further, being stronger and able to protect Edward as well. The fact still remains that in order to become liberated she needs to completely change and become something different. She cannot be an ordinary human woman and still be liberated.

Father role

Edward’s initial reaction to Bella’s pregnancy is to “get that thing out before it can hurt any part of you” (Meyer, p 120). He does not change throughout Bella’s pregnancy. Edward represents the choice of abortion and it is Bella’s sudden need to keep the vampire baby that represents the pro-life option. This is therefore a clear message in the pro-life debate that is very active in the U.S. Many readers have seen Bella’s choice to keep the baby as an

intervention in the pro-life debate.¹ Since this is the only real choice Bella is allowed to make without Edward's consent it is clearly a choice of major importance. It is worth mentioning why Edward is allowed to control every move and choice Bella makes, and not this one. Edward is not as emotive as Bella when it comes to feelings for the child. It is not until Edward is able to hear the baby's thoughts through the womb that Edward expresses any positive emotions about the baby (Meyer p 298). At this moment Edward completely changes his opinions about the fact that he wants Bella to have an abortion. Jacob, Bella's best friend, describes the scene: "As he stared at her, his face was not frightened or angry or burning or any of the other expressions he'd worn since their return. He was marvelling with her" (Meyer, p 299). Apparently all that is needed for Edward to overcome his fear of losing Bella and change his opinion about abortion is a sort of communication with the unborn baby. It is a strong message in the debate of the right to have an abortion in the U.S: "I'd counted on him to hate that revolting thing killing Bella more than I hated it. I trusted him with that. Yet now they were together, the two of them bent over the budding, invisible monster with their eyes lit up like a happy family" (Meyer, p 300). After the baby is born, and the "emergency vampirization" is done (Meyer p, 325- 331), Edward is the image of the happy, caring father.

¹ See these websites for examples of the debate on Meyer's *Breaking Dawn*:
<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/chat/2059154/posts>
<http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/twilight-pro-chastity-pro-life/>

Conclusion

As I have tried to show in this essay, *Breaking Dawn* both conforms to and breaks away with the typical gender stereotypes. With the help of Stephens' schema I have been able to analyze how Bella and Edward correspond to typical gender characteristics.

Bella corresponds to many of the feminine aspects in Stephens' schema, she is emotional, caring, beautiful and dependent. However, Bella is definitely allowed to glide on the scale of the traits; she conforms to some of the traits but is also allowed to act outside the schema of feminine traits, for example with her sexuality. Bella can be seen as being liberated and independent since she is sexual, strong and active and still the "good woman". She is, however, severely punished for her sexuality. And it is, however, her transformation that allows her to be equal to Edward and independent.

The portrayal of Edward is much in line with Stephens' schema of masculinity. He is highly protective and controlling and he is much more stuck in Stephens' masculine traits. This is what Nikolajeva discussed with the male role being much more tenacious. Moreover, Edward's control over Bella continues after her transformation and it is still Edward who, in many ways, rules over Bella. By portraying Edward's control over sexuality as the right option and Edward's choices as the rational, responsible ones, Meyer reverts back to conservative ideals. In this way, Meyer also portrays sex as something that is not to be enjoyed by young girls.

My conclusion is that Meyer maintains much of the image of stereotyped characters in terms of gender. Bella is allowed to act more outside of the typical feminine traits, while Edward is much more consistent according to Stephens' schema, in that he conforms to the typical masculine traits. Bella's emancipation is, in my view, a false liberation since she needs to change her whole being in order to become independent and in control of her sexuality.

It would be interesting to analyze the role of female vampires in the Twilight series and how they are portrayed. A closer look at the werewolf structure and its patriarchal society would also make a topic to analyze.

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