**From *The Vampyre* to the *Twilight Saga*: Character and Romance in Vampire Fiction**

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Introduction: The *Twilight Saga* in Close Perspective

Selling 1.3 million copies in the first 24 hours after publication is a feat not many novels have accomplished. The final novel of the *Twilight Saga, Breaking Dawn,* achieved this in the United States (Memmott 8). The fantasy saga by Stephenie Meyer, of which the first novel was published in 2005, is a recent addition to the vampire genre. Even though the numbers are significant, the young adult novels have received much criticism and their quality is under discussion. Mariah Larsson and Ann Steiner observe that “it can be argued that the vampires in Twilight are ‘not real vampires’ in the generic sense of the word. It is also quite possible to argue that the Twilight novels are of small literary merit. Nevertheless, neither argument explains why the series should be disregarded by scholars” Other opinions admit to its appeal, such as Gretchen Kolderup, who argues the *Twilight* novels are “a great example of genre-blending. They have vampires, but they’re not horror stories. And the paranormal element is only one aspect of the story: much of its appeal is in the romance of forbidden love” (Kolderup 17). The discussion regarding the saga’s position in literature did not end after the final novel and film came out, and it mostly regards the difference between *Twilight* and previous vampire fiction. Meyer’s vampire is not similar to the representation of vampires before *Twilight,* as Jan Svoboda admits in his essay “Toward the sympathetic vampire:From Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* to Stephenie Meyer’s *The Twilight Saga*”: “the change from the utmost evil presented by the vampire characters in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* to the more human-like vampires is best to be seen in the attempt of Stephenie Meyer’s vampires to fit the major society – the human society” (25).

Although Meyer updates the vampire genre and discards many of its characteristics, her novels are still vampire fiction, as the fact that one of the protagonists is a vampire, is key to the plots of the novels. Would this not have been the case, the storylines could not have existed. Despite the alteration of the vampire’s image, he remains a supernatural being. Apart from the character of the vampire, Meyer also changed the vampire romance; these modifications are successful as on the one hand the setting and the vampire’s character are relatable to current readers, and on the other hand the romance recounts Victorian times and therefore meets a current need of readers for escapist fantasy.

First, an elaborate account of the vampire genre will be given, including opinions of critics who have researched vampire literature. Furthermore, Victorian society, with which the saga has many parallels, will be discussed to be able to reflect on the *Twilight Saga*, and to determine its characteristics in comparison to the genre. Little research has been done on *Twilight’s* position in the vampire genre; therefore, this will be examined.

I will return to the beginnings of the vampire genre, starting with an analysis of John Polidori’s *The Vampyre.* The genre’s most influential contributions will be discussed, such as James Malcolm Rymer’s *Varney the Vampire,* Sheridan le Fanu’s *Carmilla,* Bram Stoker’s *Dracula,* and finally *Interview with the Vampire* by Anne Rice. The focus will be on the vampire characters in these novels, and on the romance in each particular novel.

This thesis has been divided into four chapters. The first section, Vampire Characters in Two Centuries of Fiction, will offer an extensive account of vampire literature starting with John Polidori’s *The Vampyre* from 1819, and ending with *Interview with the Vampire* by Anne Rice, published in 1976. It will investigate the characters of the vampires, compare them, and set apart the characteristics that stand out. Chapter two, Controversial Romances in Vampire Fiction, will analyse the romances in the novels and identify recurring motifs, such as a lesbian relationship, and a romance between a vampire and a child. In addition to the study of previous vampire novels, chapter three, From Monster to Hero: Stephenie Meyer’s Vampires, will research the characterisation of the genre’s latest addition, the *Twilight* novels*.* It will show in what ways the vampire character is different from those in previous vampire fiction, and highlight the result of the changes Meyer made. The final chapter, The *Twilight Saga’s* Traditional Romance, will focus on the romance in the *Twilight Saga*, and on its differences from the more controversial love stories in previous vampire literature; it will show that both the protagonists’ characters adhere to Victorian gender roles.

Chapter one: Vampire Characters in Two Centuries of Fiction

The earliest notions of vampires stem from folkloric tales and superstition in different cultures (Beresford 7). Vampires had not yet played an important role in fiction when in the nineteenth century, vampires appeared increasingly in literature and many novels on vampirism arose.

The first influential novel within the tradition was John Polidori’s *The Vampyre,* published in 1819*.* The vampire was called Lord Ruthven, and he was described as an aristocratic and gaunt figure; a malicious character: “there was an evil power resident in his companion (…) his character was dreadfully vicious, for that the possession of irresistible powers of seduction, rendered his licentious habits more dangerous to society” (Polidori 5). It becomes clear in the story that his appearance was frightening: “She detailed to him the traditional appearance of these monsters, and his horror was increased, by hearing a pretty accurate description of Lord Ruthven” (Polidori 7). It is argued that this was the novel that linked the separate elements that were related to vampires up to then together, forming a coherent vampire genre. (Frayling 116). Moreover, Lord Ruthven was the first vampire character that recognised in later literature.

Polidori’s concept of a vampire remained dominant until *Varney the Vampire* was published, by James Malcolm Rymer (1847). The main character, Varney, resembles Polidori’s Lord Ruthven; both characters are malicious vampires and petrifying in the eyes of their victims: “The eyes look like polished tin; the lips are drawn back, and the principal feature next to those dreadful eyes is the teeth – the fearful looking teeth – projecting like those of some wild animal, hideously, glaringly white, and fang-like” (Rymer 14). Matthew Beresford argues that *Varney the Vampire* was the last of a type of vampire in literature: “Not only was this the end of Varney, it was also the end of the early literary vampire type, as ‘all the various plays, poems, stories and operas which exploited the commercial potential of Polidori’s Vampyre (…) simply reworked the Ruthven plot’” (Beresford 125). Ronald Foust analysed the vampire concept that was dominant after *Varney the Vampire* was published and he includes in its characteristics: “the vampire's ‘evil eye’ or hypnotic power, its tremendous strength, its pallor and association with the moon, its immortality, its identity as a selfabsorbed egotist who brings ruin on individuals and societies, its thirst for blood..., and its associations with the grave ... , with Satan, and with the lovecrime” (74-5). The figure that is described is the vampire representation of both Polidori and Rymer, of which later authors continued to use traits for their own vampire characters.

After *Varney the Vampire,* authors started to deviate increasingly from the Ruthven type. For instance, in *Carmilla,* by J. Sheridan Le Fanu, (1872) the author still used the malicious character from Polidori’s novel, yet the vampire is a woman, Carmilla, who is in a relationship with her victim, a young girl named Laura. The first time the two meet is in a dream, and the attraction is clear immediately: “I looked at her with a kind of pleased wonder, and ceased whimpering. She caressed me with her hands, and lay down beside me on the bed, and drew me towards her” (Le Fanu 7). Despite Carmilla being a vampire and biting Laura, her love for the girl is deep. In the 19th century, a female vampire was exceptional, and a lesbian relationship in literature was controversial. Novels regarding lesbianism were often banned, and this continued even into 20th century with *The Well of Loneliness* by Radcliff Hall (Gilmore 603). In other words, for its time, *Carmilla’s* love story was quite shocking. For readers it is, in the first part of the novel, easy to sympathise with Carmilla’s character, since the mystery surrounding her character conceals that she is a vampire for a great part of the novel, and she can be perceived as a friend and loved one of the protagonist. Later, it is revealed that she is, comparable to Ruthven, a malevolent character: “Its horrible lust for living blood supplies the vigor of its waking existence. The vampire is prone to be fascinated with an engrossing vehemence, resembling the passion of love, by particular persons” (Le Fanu 102).

Although *The Vampyre*, *Varney the Vampire,* and *Carmilla* all contributed new characteristics to the vampire type, they were not as ground-breaking and influential as Bram Stoker’s *Dracula,* which appeared in 1897. It is often described as the novel that brought the vampire to the modern world. Beresford claims that it is “the crossover between historical vampirism and modern vampirism” (135). Stoker was influenced by *Carmilla,* which is noticeable in many ways, such as the mystery surrounding the names of characters (127-128). He added contemporary technology to the novel such as blood transfusions and the phonograph, which lifted it from the past and added a touch of modernity. Stoker based his vampire on the Romanian crusader Vlad Tepes (Geringer 2). Tepes was a politician and a member of the Romanian court and had an infamous reputation. For instance, he was accountable for much bloodshed during crusades, and cruel punishments for beggars (Geringer 6). Dracula, in character resembling Tepes, approximates the Ruthven vampire in maliciousness: “Let me tell you now, but not a word to another. I want to cut off her head and take out her heart. Ah!” (Stoker 126).

When *Interview with the Vampire* by Anne Rice was published in 1976 the vampire character again underwent changes. Although the protagonist of the novel, a vampire named Louis, is a malicious character, he struggles with his cursedness, and has an apparent conscience; the reader can empathise with him on a level that was new in the genre. At one point in the novel he discusses his killings: “And what constitutes evil, real evil, is the taking of a single human life. Whether a man would die tomorrow or the day after or eventually... it doesn't matter. Because if God does not exist, then life... every second of it... Is all we have” (148). Louis’ character even becomes more sympathetic after he is changed into a vampire, for he claims: “It was only when I became a vampire that I respected for the first time all of life. I never saw a living, pulsing human being until I was a vampire. I never knew what life was until it ran out in a red gush over my lips, my hands!” (230). Although it was not the first novel from the point of view of a vampire, it was the first time that the vampire’s point of view was similar to human nature. (Seddon 8). Consequentially of this similarity, the vampire’s actions are much more dramatised. In *Interview with the Vampire*, love became an option for vampires, as well as other human feelings, such as compassion, which makes it easier for readers to identify with them (Seddon 8).

Rice’s series *The Vampire Chronicles,* of which *Interview with the Vampire* is the first part, remained dominant in the vampire genre for the remainder of the 20th century. At the start of the new millennium, *Twilight*, by Stephenie Meyer, was published. This novel altered the vampire character immensely; hardly any traces of previous vampire characters are found in Meyer’s protagonist.

Chapter two: Controversial Romances in Vampire Fiction

Most stories in the vampire genre include a romance. A romantic plot focuses on the development of the protagonists’ relationship. In a vampire romance, dramatic tension is added by the danger of the vampire biting the victim; it adds a forbidden aspect to the romance. Additionally to the vampire character, the romances in vampire novels until the 21st century also have evolved through time. The vampire and its victim are almost always in a relationship, and it is hardly ever a standard romance. The attraction between a vampire and its love interest usually has parallels with a craving for the victim’s blood, with all possible risks involved.

The vampire in Polidori’s *The Vampyre*, Ruthven, does not choose his victims randomly. He holds a grudge against the protagonist of the story, Aubrey, and he goes to great lengths to inflict pain on him. This is the most apparent theme in the story and in light of this, Ruthven preys on Aubrey’s sister and intends to marry her. She is thrilled about her future husband, and Aubrey finds out too late that his sister is marrying his enemy. After Ruthven has married her, he devours her, completing the tragedy.

The romance in *Varney, the Vampire,* by Rymer, is not used to damage another character, but serves to highlight the power and horror of the vampire. It is more elaborate and includes much sexual tension, for instance in the following lines: “The clothing of the bed was now clutched in her hands with unconscious power. She drew her breath short and thick. Her bosom heaves, and her limbs tremble” (Rymer 3). Here, the desire is one-sided; the victim does not care for her pursuer, and it adds more to the suspense of the horrific character than to a romantic storyline. The scene in which the vampire attacks even is suggestive of rape:

Her beautifully rounded limbs quivered with the agony of her soul. The glassy, horrible eyes of the figure ran over that angelic form with a hideous satisfaction -- horrible profanation. He drags her head to the bed's edge. He forces it back by the long hair still entwined in his grasp. With a plunge he seizes her neck in his fang-like teeth -- a gush of blood, and a hideous sucking noise follows. (Rymer 4)

It is conceivable that the scene of the biting is a way of secretly describing sexual intercourse, which was a writing taboo in the mid-19th century (Williamson 11). Milly Williamson argues that all vampires are a metaphor for the female body and sexuality. She states that female sexuality, rather than the obvious horror of the vampire, is what actually makes the storyline exciting (12). This relation between the bite of a vampire and sexual tension is evident in many vampire novels, yet *Varney the Vampire* was the first in which it was made explicit.

In *Carmilla*, by Le Fanu, the romance between the female vampire Carmilla and her victim, teenage girl Laura, is the most important feature of the story. Their affection is mutual, for when they meet they first become friends, and later become romantically involved. They are drawn to each other and Carmilla tells Laura of her love: “I cannot help it; as I draw near to you, you, in your turn, will draw near to others, and learn the rapture of that cruelty, which yet is love” (Le Fanu 51). At other points in the novel, the sexual tension is very much present: “it was as if warm lips kissed me, and longer and longer and more lovingly as they reached my throat, but there the caress fixed itself. My heart beat faster, my breathing rose and fell rapidly and full drawn” (Le Fanu 44). Their love is already in dispute as it later becomes clear that Carmilla is a vampire, but moreover, a lesbian relationship had never occurred in vampire literature before. As Laura reflects on her former lover when their relationship has ended, she notes she still has ambiguous feelings towards her, even though she knows Carmilla was a vampire: “to this hour the image of Carmilla returns to memory with ambiguous alternations - sometimes the playful, languid, beautiful girl; sometimes the writhing fiend I saw in the ruined church” (Le Fanu 85).

Although in Stoker’s *Dracula* the romance is not the most important feature of the story, the connection between the vampire and his victim is key in the novel. As Dracula is not as sympathetic a character as previous vampires, the story of the monster that kills women brutally is much more explicit and gruesome. Drinking blood, sex, and death are closely related in Dracula’s relationships with his victims. Lauren Brooks concludes: “The union of sex and death becomes obvious in Harker’s victimization by Dracula’s three vampiric brides” (3). For example, this is apparent in Dracula’s own description of his victim:

The fair girl went on her knees, and bent over me, fairly gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. (Stoker 61)

In addition, after Dracula has bitten his first victim, Lucy Westenra, Lucy’s utterings have a sexual note to them, which becomes increasingly apparent: “… and said in a soft, voluptuous voice, such as I had never heard from her lips: – 'Arthur! Oh, my love, I am so glad you have come! Kiss me!'” (Stoker 258). The theme of sexuality is continually evident in the novel. The tension builds up towards a climax which is represented by the scene of Lucy’s destruction, which is a quite explicit metaphor for sexual intercourse:

Then he struck with all his might. The Thing in the coffin writhed; and twisted in wild contortions; the sharp white teeth champed together till the lips were cut and the mouth was smeared with crimson foam. But Arthur never faltered. He looked like a figure of Thor as his untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake (…). (194)

A dubious romance can be found in *Interview with the Vampire*, by Anne Rice. The protagonist, vampire Louis, is romantically involved with his creator, vampire Lestat. Yet, when Louis rebels against their cursedness, Lestat bites a young girl, Claudia, to create a companion for his lover. Louis eventually falls in love with her; however, although Claudia’s spirit matures, her body does not. The affection is mutual, yet Claudia knows she will never grow up: “‘You see that old woman? That will never happen to you. You will never grow old, and you will never die.’ – ‘And it means something else too, doesn't it? I shall never ever grow up’” (Rice 272). Even though no sexuality is explicitly expressed, the vampire is in love with a child, which suggests paedophilia. Louis repeatedly makes his expressions towards the girl clear: “I love you still, that's the torment of it. Lestat I never loved. But you! The measure of my hatred is that love. They are the same! Do you know now how much I hate you!” (Rice 202). James Keller, author of *Anne Rice and Sexual Politics: the Early Novels*, claims this is not the only example of paedophilia in the novel. He suggests that upon first meeting Claudia, Louis was erotically attracted to her. Moreover, Louis was also physically drawn to the boy who conducts the interview that sets the frame of *Interview with the Vampire.* Louis’ creator, Lestat, is more overt regarding the youth of his victims, and often preys on young boys (Keller 24). The most suggestive scene in which paedophilia comes forward is an interaction Louis has with a boy, in which the sexuality between them is not concealed: “He was offering it to me. He was pressing the length of his body against me now and I felt the hard strength of his sex beneath his clothes pressing against my clothes” (Rice 230). The romance and sexual tension in this novel are, even for a genre that deals with drinking blood and killing, quite appalling. It seems as though vampires and sexuality go hand in hand. This is also the opinion of Alan Ball, the creator of vampire TV series *True Blood.* He is determined that vampires are metaphors for sex, and that people dream about vampires in an erotic way. He argues these fantasies exist and people feel safe to have them because they will never come true in real life (Ball 3). In the larger part of vampire novels a sexual aspect exists, albeit in eminently different ways.

Chapter three: From Monster to Hero: Stephenie Meyer’s Vampire

From 2005 onwards, Stephenie Meyer’s the *Twilight Saga* was published. In four novels, the romance between one hundred year old vampire Edward Cullen and teenage girl Bella Swan is narrated. In most of the storylines, the endangerment of their love is an explicit theme. Others motives, such as jealousy, sacrifice, choice, and revenge are incorporated as well, yet all centre on Bella’s relationship with a vampire. An important conflict that repeatedly occurs is the danger that Edward, because he is eminently attracted to Bella, might devour her and drink her blood. However, for her, Edward’s character is not something to fear, for Meyer’s vampire deviates substantially from the representations that were the norm up to the 21st century. She turned vampire characteristics around and changed weaknesses into strengths.

First of all, he is a sympathetic character, with all the traits and emotions of a human being. With a few exceptions, all previous vampires were malicious characters, and thirsted for a victim’s blood. One of these exceptions is Angel, the vampire in the TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, created by Joss Whedon, and this vampire resembles Edward in many ways. They are both portrayed as handsome, kind, willing to have a relationship with a human, and both struggle with being a vampire. Angel eventually performed in his own spin-off; however, the TV series was not based on a story or novel, meaning that Meyer was the first to popularise the sympathetic vampire in a novel. In *Interview with the Vampire*, the character of Louis evokes empathy, yet the reader cannot sympathise with his character and his actions altogether. Even though he is endowed with a defined conscience, Louis is a vampire that kills innocent humans: “Her blood coursed through my veins sweeter than life itself. And as it did, Lestat's words made sense to me. I knew peace only when I killed, and when I heard her heart in that terrible rhythm, I knew again what peace could be” (Rice 99). If the reader were to feel sympathy towards him, it would be a consequence of the attitude in the novel regarding rebelling against society, that was much related to in the seventies; the decade of *Interview with the Vampire*: “Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* marks the rebellion and the decision to live out of the rules of the society as sympathetic most likely because of the changed attitude to authority” (Svoboda 41). Instead of rebelling against authority and therefore gaining sympathy, Meyer’s Edward is altogether moral and is not portrayed as a monster; he does not drink human blood; instead he hunts animals, as does his whole family. They call themselves vegetarians and the animal blood is sufficient for them to quench their thirst.

Secondly, Edward believes that being a vampire equals being a monster. He is embarrassed of what he is and believes he does not have a soul. He does not want his partner to become a vampire, for he believes she will then be doomed as well. Edward’s father explains: “He doesn’t believe there is an afterlife for our kind … You see, he thinks we’ve lost our souls” (Meyer 33). The embarrassment is repeatedly apparent, for instance when he tries to explain to Bella what he is capable of. “‘Tell me why you hunt animals instead of people,’ (…) I don’t *want* to be a monster” (Meyer 163). Besides restraining himself, Edward also protects his loved one from rapists and malignant vampires. His actions are sometimes heroic, and this is quite the opposite from earlier types of vampires. For instance, when Bella is menaced by bandits, he has to control himself not to go after them and avenge them: “‘But it wouldn’t be helpful for me to turn around and hunt down those …’ He didn’t finish his sentence, looking away, struggling for a moment to control his anger again. ‘At least,’ he continued, ‘that’s what I’m trying to convince myself’” (Meyer 142).

Finally, in the novels, common character traits of vampires until the 21st century that added to their maliciousness are turned to positive traits in *Twilight*. A few are intensified, such as the attractiveness of vampires, which is useful to seduce their prey. The vampires in *Twilight* all are incredibly handsome; everything about them is attractive: their voice, manner of walking, and even their smell. Bella repeatedly remarks the fine smell of Edward’s breath, which draws her in. What stands out most regarding their appearance is that when their skin meets the sunlight, it sparkles as diamonds, which can be traced back to the well-known myth that vampires will burn in the sun. Bella often acknowledges how extraordinarily beautiful this is. Also, when Edward and his family go hunting, they have fun and make jokes regarding their prey: “‘Early spring is Emmett’s favorite bear season – they’re just coming out of hibernation, so they’re more irritable.’ He smiled at some remembered joke. ‘Nothing more fun than an irritated grizzly bear,’ I agreed, nodding” (Meyer 189). Apart from vampires taking pleasure in hunting their prey, the Cullen see it as a competitive activity; a positive side to life as a vampire.

Other character traits are reversed instead of intensified. Where in older vampire stories vampires had to sleep in coffins, and were bound to that coffin, the vampires in *Twilight* do not sleep at all, which gives them time to all be highly educated and skilled in numerous disciplines. Because they can run fast and do not become exhausted, they have travelled to many locations. Apart from the craving for human blood and hiding their identity from humans, everything about life as a vampire is quite satisfactory. In addition, they all possess considerable physical strength. Meyer’s creation is similar to a Uomo Universale, a person whose physique, intelligence, and competences are all perfected. Such a person’s accomplishments were all to be developed to the fullest extent (Wojciehowski 2). Meyer achieved this resemblance by turning all the vampire’s weaknesses into strengths.

Another activity that is improved because of being a vampire is sexual intercourse. In the fourth novel, *Breaking Dawn,* Bella and Edward are both vampires, and Bella claims their lovemaking is better now that neither of them is human. They cannot experience exhaustion and the condition of both their bodies is sublime. Bella explains: “it didn’t feel like I was ever going to find a point where I would think, *Now I’ve enough for one day*. I was always going to want more. And the day was never going to end. So, in such a situation, how did we ever *stop*?” (Meyer 447). The lovemaking is, analogous to many other aspects of being a vampire, perfected.

The appeal Edward has on Bella and on the readers is, additionally to being depicted as a Uomo Universale, due to the fact that he is described as dangerous. The forbidden romance between a vampire and a human that comes forward in the vampire genre is used by Meyer to create an exciting love interest. She states that the apple used on the cover of the first novel is a fitting metaphor for the romance: “The apple on the cover of *Twilight* represents "forbidden fruit." I used the scripture from Genesis (located just after the table of contents) because I loved the phrase "the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil." Isn't this exactly what Bella ends up with? A working knowledge of what good is, and what evil is” (Meyer 1). Edward is at various times close to killing Bella, and this creates the forbidden aspect to the relationship. Danger attracts, and forbidden fruit is tempting; Bella takes a risk by becoming close to him and yet she will not evade him: “‘I should have left long ago,’ he sighed. ‘I should leave now. But I don’t know if I can.’ ‘I don’t want you to leave,’ I mumbled pathetically” (Meyer 233). Next to the forbidden aspect, Edward is appealing to the readers in another way. He is a man that is portrayed as perfect; both his appearance and his personality are flawless. The attraction to Edward is a motive of many girls and women to read the novels.

By changing all the vampire’s negative aspects into strengths, Meyer succeeded in creating a character that readers can relate to. He is capable of many human aspects of life, such as being a boyfriend. By depicting him as a Uomo Universale, the malicious vampire from previous fiction is now an amiable and moral character that readers can sympathise with.

Chapter four: The *Twilight Saga’s* Traditional Romance

In addition to the representation of vampires in the *Twilight Saga*, the romance in the novels is very different from other vampire literature as well. Instead of a provocative or horrific relationship, *Twilight* is very conservative and stems from Victorian ideology. Meyer deliberately adopted a traditional romance, and did not focus on controversies such as previous vampire fiction. Both personalities of the protagonists adhere to the gender roles common in the Victorian era.

In Victorian times, women had fewer rights than men. A woman was supposed to take care of the house and children when married, and was not allowed to earn money. She “would be stoical, motherly, submissive and chaste” (Paxman 228). She had a social corset to fit into: “Innocence and inexperience and a cultivated fragility were the characteristic attributes of the Victorian girl” (Klein 264). The man was the dominant partner and the woman the submissive one. (264). Many aspects of Meyer’s *Twilight* resemble Victorian ideology. The romance between Bella and Edward is quite conventional, and both their characters are conservative. In the relationship, he is the dominant and powerful one, while she is clumsy, as Meyer often mentions, weak, and needs to be taken care of. Bella acknowledges this of herself: “I’m absolutely ordinary — well, except for bad things like all the near-death experiences and being so clumsy that I’m almost disabled” (Meyer 210). Bella is dependant of Edward, and thinks her world orbits around him: “I could do nothing else. I had to keep moving. If I stopped looking for him, it was over. Love, life, meaning… over” (65). Karen Sullivan explains that the love between Edward, who says his love is “the most important thing” and Bella, who claims she cannot stay away from him, is like the Victorian story of Jane Eyre, who is “only able to realise her place in the world through her relationship with her significant other, Rochester. However Rochester is already married and Edward Cullen is a vampire so places Bella in danger every time they are together. Thus the tension underlying both heroines’ love for their ‘significant other’ is the main theme of both novels” (2). Although the novels and the heroines are not much alike, the impossibility of their romances is similar.  
 The Victorian aspect of their relationship is the result of the couple’s characters, which are greatly adhering to Victorian gender roles. Edward is chivalrous, responsible, feels protective of Bella, and does not want to have sex before he is married to her. Being intimate is perilous for them, as this is so tempting for Edward there is a great risk he might lose control and drink her blood. Furthermore, he wants to protect their virtue, by following traditions that were common in the 19th century. Although Bella does not want to wait, in the end she agrees with Edward, who says his feelings are the result of growing up in the Victorian age (Meyer). The two have to be very careful while kissing; he always pulls back after a while, leaving Bella unsatisfied: “I reached for his face, trying to pull myself up to kiss him. His arms held me tighter, restraining. He sighed. ‘Must I always be the responsible one?’” (Meyer 171). Critic Steven Greydanus argues that this struggle with chastity is part of the appeal of *Twilight* (12). It is as well a part of the moral life of a human as a narrative craft in *Twilight* to add suspense (13). The reader might identify with Bella’s longing for Edward and wants to read the parts when Bella’s dreams finally come true. As these wishes are only fulfilled in the final novel, it functions as a way to captivate readers. Bella desperately wants to have sex with Edward, but he, being so afraid of devouring her, tries to postpone it. As he first wants to marry her, he promises sex in order to secure the marriage. After they are married, Edward holds his end of the bargain, and during their honeymoon, Bella becomes pregnant with a creature that is half human, half vampire, and it nearly causes Bella’s death. For a great part of the final novel, *Breaking Dawn*, the fetus is unwelcome and for readers this can be interpreted as another conservative message: teenagers having sexual intercourse results in unwanted pregnancy.  
 Additionally to Edward, Bella’s personality is conservative as well. She lives in a time in which women and men are treated much more equally than in the past; an age of feminism has passed and changed the position of women. However, Bella shows many anti-feminist traits, such as her negative self-image and her dependence on a man. Reni Eddo-Lodge argues: “She convinces both herself and the reader that she needs protecting; their difference is biological and the inequality between Bella and Edward should not be questioned. There isn’t much difference between Bella’s worldview and that of a woman adapting coping mechanisms in male dominated environment” (1). At one point, she even compares herself and Edward with two different looking motorcycles: “I stared at the beautiful machine. Beside it, my bike looked like a broken tricycle. I felt a sudden wave of sadness when I realized that this was not a bad analogy for the way I probably looked next to Edward” (Meyer 207). Moreover, Bella deems it natural to take care of her father. She comes to live with him at the start of the first novel, and when she finds out he cannot cook well, she decides to take care of the meals and also of the household in general: “Was Charlie doing laundry? That was out of character. ‘Dad, did you start the wash?’ (…) ‘Did you want me to?’ ‘No, I got it.’” (Meyer 176). In the novels, Bella is constantly under the care of a male figure. She lives with her father, yet when her relationship with Edward begins, the latter looks after her. In the second novel, *New Moon*, he leaves her for several months, which is when Bella develops a close friendship with Jacob, an old acquaintance. He takes over protecting Bella, she depends on him, and this continues until Edward returns and the couple marry. Bella is aware she is being treated as someone who needs to be taken care of: “Edward insisted again on delivering me to the border line like a child being exchanged by custodial guardians” (Meyer 282). Nonetheless, her occasional remarks do not change the situation. When in the final novel, the couple has a child, Renesmee, the girl seems to be more important to Bella than to Edward. It is never implied that Edward does not have as strong a bond with his daughter as Bella does, yet when the child needs something, it is Bella who provides it. There are plenty remarks of Bella addressing Renesmee’s education and care, and Edward never specifically considers these subjects. For instance, Bella puts the child to bed by herself: “Wanting some normality for Renesmee, I’d insisted on taking her home to our cottage at bedtime. (…) After she was deeply under, I put Renesmee in her bed and then went to the front room to ask my questions of Edward” (Meyer 531). This division is never explicitly mentioned by Meyer; it seems natural that the mother raises the child, and that Renesmee is Bella’s, and not Edward’s, first priority. Another example of the difference in gender positions comes to light when Bella is, in the final novel, changed into a vampire. Although she is physically stronger than Edward because she has not long been a vampire, when the family is anticipating a fight, Edwards intends to fight but does not want Bella to do the same: “‘Edward, will you teach me how to fight?’ I asked him, tensed for his reaction, as he held the door for me. (…) ‘If it comes to a fight, there won’t be much any of us can do,’ he hedged” (Meyer 532). Also, occasionally, Edward forces his wishes upon Bella when she wishes for something else. It appears as though Edward is in charge of Bella, and they will do what he decides is best for them. When Bella wants to practise fighting with Edward’s brother, and he does not want her to, they argue for a little until Edward forbids it, which Bella accepts: “‘What?’ he demanded. ‘I wanted to practise with Emmett a little…’ ‘There’s plenty of time for that tomorrow,’ he said. ‘Don’t be ridiculous,’ I complained. ‘There’s no such thing as *plenty of time* anymore. That concept does not exist. I have a lot to learn and - ’ He cut me off. ‘Tomorrow’” (Meyer 605). Even when they are both vampires, they are not equals in their relationship.  
 Another parallel to Victorian times is the setting of the simple world Bella lives in; her life, especially in the first three novels, usually deals with problems most teenagers encounter. The setting is a small town of approximately 3000 inhabitants and there is only one high school. She does not own a mobile phone and does not often use the internet. Her priorities include the bad weather and her parents’ happiness. In addition, the young adult genre, to which the *Twilight Saga* belongs, often deals with the first issues a person encounters when becoming an adult. *Twilight* adheres to this, as the main themes are love, social identity, and sexuality, which are issues most young adults come across.

The reason for these conservative aspects can be found in modern day society. Eric Christensen notes: “Genre fiction, and fantasy in particular, can be a useful form of escapism. But I think it is not as a response to a boring life, but to a chaotic one” (2). The simplicity of fantasy is a world to which many like to escape; the fantasy genre deals with problems that readers do not have to consider themselves. The interest in nostalgic and fantastical literature is a result of changing times. In recent years, technology and the Internet have changed society irreversibly. Communication has reached a new level and social media is hard to ignore; statistics show that in December 2013, 73% of adults that are online use one or more social media websites (Duggan 1). All these changes mean much more to consider in daily life, which can be stressing. On that account, this interest in nostalgic literature appeared, and *Twilight* corresponds with the readers’ nostalgia. As every novel is a product of the time in which it was written, the traditional themes in *Twilight* are a reaction to the changed society of the last decade. Readers can lose themselves in a dramatic story that cannot be real and escape their own problems. Critic Scott Mendelson adheres to this theory and claims that: “Let's not forget, part of the point of fantasy is to indulge in that which is not (or, sometimes, what shouldn't be so)” (9). Meyer created a traditional story with many parallels to Victorian ideology to, after the more controversial vampire novels, help readers escape into a romantic and fantastical world.

Conclusion

A closer look at *Twilight’s* predecessors has provided a clearer account of its exact contribution to the vampire genre. Before the *Twilight Saga,* the character of the vampire in literature evolved through time, yet a few traits remained in place. With Polidori’s *The Vampyre,* and its character Lord Ruthven, the aristocratic and gaunt vampire figure was born, and it remained the dominant representation of vampires until the 21st century. In *Carmilla,* the figure was a lesbian female, in *Dracula,* the vampire was exceptionally cruel, and in *Interview with the Vampire* by Anne Rice, the reader could empathise with the vampire. However, all characters still possessed traits of the Ruthven type. With Meyer’s *Twilight*, this formula was broken. Meyer did not conform to a malicious character; she was the first to give her vampire eminently sympathetic characteristics. For instance, vampire Edward does not drink human blood, and feels embarrassed of being a monster. Meyer changed the vampire from a malevolent figure to a Uomo Universale, by turning the weaknesses of vampires into strengths. The vampires in *Twilight* are all very attractive, physically strong, well-read, well-travelled, and fast, and in addition, Edward and his family are kind and morally correct. The vampire Meyer created does not fit in with its predecessors; all characteristics of Polidori’s representation were changed, and she gave the vampire a new character.

Additionally to changing the image of the vampire, Meyer changed the vampire romance. Until *Twilight,* the romances were all quite controversial, such as the lesbian storyline in *Carmilla,* that was appalling for the era it was published in, and Louis’ romance with a child in *Interview with the Vampire*, that suggests paedophilia. Also, throughout the genre, there was much sexuality. With the romance in *Twilight*, Meyer does not conform to the predecessors and goes back to Victorian standards, with a very traditional relationship and conservative lovers. Because Edward is an amiable character, and is portrayed as a Uomo Universale, he fits into the role of a person in a relationship. He has a conservative character, cares about his virtue, and does not want to have sex before the couple is married. Bella takes on the role of subordinate one, as she is an anti-feministic character. Her attitude towards Edwards shows much similarity with the Victorian gender roles for women. For the duration of the first three novels, all they do is kiss, and they do not have sex until after they are married, which results in an unwanted pregnancy. Meyer moves away from the standard of controversial relationships, and chooses a highly conservative romance.

In changing Edward’s character, Meyer erased many negative aspects of vampires, such as killing innocents, and their inability to form a relationship with a human. Edward is a sympathetic character who is perfectly able to fulfil the role of a modern boyfriend, which is why current readers can relate to the storyline. Because he is such a sympathetic character, readers can identify with him more than was ever possible with a character in previous vampire fiction.

Compared to its predecessors, *Twilight*’*s* romance is fairly simple, which is a way of indulging in nostalgic literature. By keeping the romance traditional Meyer provides the reader with a chance to escape into fantastical and mind-easing literature, which is desired in today’s hectic society. The relationship between a vampire and a teenage girl is complex, yet the path it follows is recognisable and therefore soothing. The couple falls in love, their love is threatened by multiple factors which are conquered eventually, they marry, have sex, and have a baby.

Meyer’s novels are vampire fiction because they include supernatural beings that still possess traits of vampires in previous fiction. Although the characteristics are changed immensely, the vampires are key to the storyline in the novels. Meyer renewed the genre, and the changes have proven successful. The differences regarding the character of the vampire cause for the considerable appeal of the novels. The reader can relate to the vampire in the novels because of his sympathetic and moral character. The changes with reference to the romance meet the reader’s desire to return to nostalgic themes in literature. The complexity of speeding technology nowadays causes a preference for escapist fantasy fiction, and the protagonists’ characters and the traditional romance in the *Twilight Saga* conform to that.

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