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Femininity in Twilight:

A Literary Analysis of Stephenie Meyer's

Twilight from a Gender Perspective

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Abstract

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Abstract: This essay examines the female characters in the novel *Twilight* by Stephenie Meyer which is the first novel in the series often referred to as the Twilight Saga. Through looking at the female characters and comparing them to, among other sources, John Stephens's schema of feminine and the masculine this essay argues that the female characters are depicted as stereotypes of their gender.

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Introduction

Twilight is the first book in the series of four written by the American author Stephenie Meyer, about the teenager Isabella Swan (Bella) who meets and falls in love with the vampire Edward Cullen. The series, often referred to as The Twilight Saga, has become a huge success worldwide. According to Stephenie Meyer's official website the first editions of the novels were published from 2005 to 2008 (www, Meyer, 25/5/2012) and by 2010 they had sold 100 million copies and had been translated into forty languages (Larsson & Paolo, 2011, p.10). The series has gained enormous popularity among female readers (Hayes-Smith, 2011, www, 23/3/2012) and as I have been out in schools doing my teacher training I have seen many girls (yes, only girls), who when faced with a reading assignment, choose these books in every class. When I myself read the novels for the first time a couple of years ago I enjoyed them tremendously. I found it fascinating to experience the world from Bella's point of view, as a female protagonist, but even so the books left me with a strange feeling of unease. Even though I identify myself with Bella, as I believe Meyer intended, I was time and again frustrated by the choices Bella made, how she reacts to her surroundings and how her surroundings interact with her. The book centers around a female hero, however, the reader is left without any feeling of power and heroism. Why is this?

Upon a closer inspection of the book I found it inhabited by, what I perceived as, gender stereotypical characters, particularly the female characters and especially Bella the main character. Though, Stephenie Meyer herself seem to think that Bella is a strong female protagonist and she has publicly defended Bella against anti-feminist accusations (www, Meyer, 12/6/2014), others do not agree with Meyer. Rebecca Hayes-Smith writes in an internet article that: "Throughout the series, women are weak, passive, and in need of protection" (Hayes-Smith, 2011, www, 23/3/2012). Similarly, Esté Yarmosh of Eastern

Connecticut State University states that there exists an issue concerning the women of The Twilight Saga:

Young readers encounter women, embodied in narrator Bella Swan, shoved back into traditional gender stereotypes that have taken years of effort to overcome. And millions of young girls (not to mention adult women) are devouring these books. (Yarmosh 2009, www, 4/5/2012)

According to Yarmosh the issue seems to be linked to gender and more specifically to gender stereotypes.

However, these statements by Hayes-Smith and Yarmosh aim at the whole series. I chose to work with the first book since it would, obviously, be the one book that you start reading and thus the most widely read book out of the four. Even if some of the other books in the Twilight Saga contain, in my view, obvious gender issues, with possible anti-abortion views in *Breaking Dawn* (Meyer, 2008) and romanticizing of sexual abuse in *Eclipse* (Meyer, 2007), I was interested in if the first book also carried structures of gender inequality even if they might be of a more subtle kind.

As Hayes-Smith and Yarmosh points out there exist an issue regarding *Twilight*, and women, linked to gender and gender stereotypes, which is why the main focus of this essay has been on researching the women in the story and how they are portrayed. I will argue that the women in *Twilight* is depicted as stereotypes of their gender. Meyer has created a fictional society that, though depicting forms of life other than human, is nevertheless based on the norm of two polarized genders, which, for the individual, does not allow for much deviation from that order.

Gender

The concept of gender is not confined to the two physical sexes but could be summed up as society's perceptions and expectations of what it is to be male or female, how we should look and act to be considered to belong to either sex. Claire Colebrook summarizes Anne Oakley's thoughts about what gender is like this: "Gender is the social construction of sex" (Colebrook, 2004, p.9). In that case gender has little to do with which type of reproductive organ one has and more to do with how we all believe that someone of either sex looks like or behaves.

However, society has a history of merging the two terms sex and gender, thus viewing our biological sexes as carriers of two different sets of defined behavior and attributes. On this topic Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman present the thoughts of Harold Garfinkel in the article "Doing Gender".

In Western societies, the accepted cultural perspective on gender views women and men as naturally and unequivocally defined categories of being [...] with distinctive psychological and behavioral propensities that can be predicted from their reproductive functions. (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p.127-128)

This perspective of biological determinism removes the social aspect of gender as it relies on biology to explain any structure of division between men and women in society. West and Zimmerman take a different standpoint than the historic view of gender that Garfinkel presents. They do so by arguing that the removal of social aspects, relying only on biology to explain gender, is naive and that "gender is not a set of traits, nor a variable, nor a role, but the product of social doings of some sort" (p.129). This correlates with Colebrook's statement quoted earlier in this chapter, that "gender is the social construction of sex" (Colebrook, 2004, p.9), which would mean that gender is created in a social context and that it is not programmed through our genes. But if gender is a creation of society, why does society look

at women and men so differently and why is this need for the division of men and women?

In the article "A Gendered Society", published in the book *The Meaning of Difference: American Constructions of Race, Sex and Gender, Social Class, Sexual Orientation, and Disability*, Michael S. Kimmel talks about how we, in our everyday lives, are constantly fed with messages about how different men and women are from each other (2012, p.113). He argues that this creates the illusion of gender difference. He examines the two, in his view, basic schools of thought on the matter of explaining gender difference, of which the first is biological determinism (p.114), which I mentioned above in relation to West and Zimmerman. The second school of thought he calls differential socialization (p.114), which tells us that in opposition to the biological explanation, gender is something we learn. We are taught to be different because society treats men and women differently (p.115).

However, Kimmel discards both these theories with his argument that "Many perceived differences turn out to be differences based less on gender than on the social positions people occupy" (p.115). He continues by saying that the gender difference that society constantly bombards us with is in fact not that great at all, explaining it like this: "In virtually all the research that has been done on the attributes associated with masculinity or femininity, the differences among women and among men are far greater than the mean differences between women and men" (p.121). What he is saying here is that the two explanations of the gender differences are redundant due the fact that the differences are an illusion: "We have far more in common with each other than we have differences" (p.112). Furthermore, Kimmel says that the illusion of gender difference is closely related to the issue of gender inequality "When we speak about gender we also speak about hierarchy, power, and inequality, not simply difference" (p.114). He points out that gender difference stems from gender inequality and that the view of gender difference as something innate serves to legitimize and uphold the unequal patriarchal structures present in most societies today (p.114-115).

Gender Stereotypes

What could then be considered a gender stereotype? According to Linda Brannon "A gender stereotype consists of beliefs about the psychological traits and characteristics of, as well as the activities appropriate to, men or women" (1999, p.160). By itself, this explanation of gender stereotypes is very similar to the definition of gender presented by Colebrook earlier in this chapter. However, Brannon elaborates this further: "When people associate a pattern of behavior with either women or men, they may overlook individual variations and exceptions and come to believe that the behavior is inevitably associated with one gender but not the other" (p.160). Thus, according to Brannon, the stereotyping comes about when we assume, on no grounds, that people are in a certain way based on what preconceptions we have with the sex to which they belong. Noteworthy is also the fact that she specifies that this assumed behavior belongs to "one gender but not the other" (p.160). This seems to indicate that the attributes and behavior we assign to a gender stereotype not only serve to put a gender label on one person but also to differentiate that person from the other gender, thus creating two opposite gender sides.

According to Brannon, this view of gender being divided into two polar entities stems from the Victorian era and the industrial revolution in the 19th century, when men had to leave home to earn and the women were left to manage and care for the home and children. This created a belief that women's and men's interests and areas of influence were divided into two different directions (p.160). Brannon writes that: "This conceptualization of opposition forms the basis not only for social views of gender, but also for psychology's formulation of the measurement of masculinity and femininity" (p.161). Thus, gender stereotyping also seems to be closely linked to a polarity between what is seen as masculine and feminine.

Furthermore Brannon highlights what she calls "Elements of stereotyping of women and men" in which she refers to two different sources, one for the female stereotype "the Cult of

"True Womanhood" (Barbara Welter), and one for the male stereotype "Male Sex Identity" (Robert Brannon) (p.162). Even though these lists were initially compiled and presented by two different authors they are both based on the values of the Victorian era of the 19th century (p.161, 162).

The Cult of True Womanhood:

Piety - True Women were naturally religious.

Purity - True Women were sexually uninterested.

Submissiveness - True Women were weak, dependent, and timid.

Domesticity - True Women's domain was in the home.

Male Sex Role Identity:

No Sissy Stuff - A stigma is attached to feminine characteristics.

The Big Wheel - Men need success and status.

The Sturdy Oak - Men should have toughness, confidence, and self-reliance.

Give 'Em Hell - Men should have an aura of aggression, daring, and violence.

(Brannon,1999, p.162)

The "True Women" (p.162) were wives in heterosexual relationships whose main concern was cooking, caring for the home, the children and the men. Although they were not compatible with formal education, religious studies were good for them because it could keep them from becoming overly romantic (thus, out of control). There was an unequal balance of power in this two-part system: "Women were expected to be weak, dependent, and timid,

whereas men were supposed to be strong, wise, and forceful." (p.162) The men in the family were the undisputed authority (p.162). This new way of looking at women and men was at its height in the 19th century. However, according to Brannon, it still influences the way we view femininity and masculinity today (p.162-163).

Similar to Brannon, John Stephens believes that there exists a polarity in how femininity and masculinity are portrayed in literature. He discusses this in the article "Gender, genre and children's literature" (1996). Stephens argues that masculine traits are seen as superior to feminine ones, and he states that for each of the traits assigned to femininity there is a binary opposite trait in masculinity. To illustrate this he has created a schema:

Schema for masculinity:

strong

violent

unemotional, hard, tough

aggressive, authoritarian

transgressive

(= 'nature' when + sexual)

competitive

rapacious

protective

"hunter", powerful

player

independent

active

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)

analytical	synthesizing
thinks quantitatively	thinks qualitatively
rational (= culture, civilization)	intuitive (= nature, the primitive)
	[intuition = "lateral thinking" when + male].

(Stephens, 1996, p.18-19)

Stephens argues that if a character has traits on the wrong side of the schema that character becomes "undesirable" (p.19).

However, looking at gender as two units in binary opposition can be contradicted. The feminist philosopher Judith Butler argues that it is a mistake to view women (or men) as a group with common traits (Butler, 1990, p.14) as Stephens does in his schema, and that this attitude could restrict the individual and reinforce gender stereotypes. I acknowledge that there is a possibility that in using such a schema one will find what one is expecting to find. Still, this presumes that you only look for traits from one side of the schema. If one only uses the female side of the schema when analyzing the women, then one will by default find female stereotypes. This issue might be avoided if one takes both sides of the schema in to the analysis, which I have tried to do in this essay.

To investigate if these women are portrayed as stereotypes in a gender binary structure I will discuss the characters from the perspective of Stephens's schema, the Cult of True Womanhood and Brannon's theory of gender being polarized. The basic method of producing evidence to support my findings is a close reading.

I have chosen to limit this study to researching primarily the women in *Twilight*. I wanted to be able to go into detail with my findings and thus I chose a limited area which could be researched thoroughly. In order to reveal if the book shows tendencies towards gender

stereotyping one might also want to look at gender polarization, which according to Brannon is closely linked to gender stereotyping, this phenomenon of gender being divided into two separate units mentioned by both Kimmel (gender difference), Brannon (gender polarization) and Stephens (binary schema). However, looking solely at the women in the book might not fully reveal whether they are in binary structure or not which is why I will at times include the men in the analysis.

When discussing traits in Stephens's schema I will sometimes indicate a word as belonging to the schema and also highlight if it belongs to the feminine side or the masculine side, like this: independent (schema: masculinity) or dependent (schema: femininity).

Chapter One – Bella

This chapter is dedicated to the main character Bella who will be analyzed from the perspective of Stephens's schema and the Cult of True Womanhood (CTW). To be able to fully understand Bella, one also has to look at her vampire boyfriend Edward and the dynamic between the two of them. They meet when Bella starts school in her new town and are immediately drawn to each other, Bella to the mysterious vibe Edward sends out, and Edward to Bella because of her smell. This smell makes him attracted to her at the same time as it makes him want to eat her. They start of a relationship where he has to restrict himself in order not to kill Bella, which could be done unintentionally due to his strong urges and supernatural strength.

A Strong Independent Female Character?

Meyer introduces her protagonist in *Twilight* as an intelligent person who manages school and homework with ease, which to some degree complies with the masculine side of Stephen's schema (analytical, thinks quantitatively, rational). Thus, initially one might find that Bella is quite the feminist character. She even writes a paper about “Whether Shakespeare's treatment of the female characters is misogynistic” (Meyer, 2011, p.124). Although Bella's conclusion in her essay is not revealed, I interpret this as Meyer letting us know that Bella to some degree has knowledge about society looking at men and women differently and thus one can assume that by writing her essay she wants to highlight this.

To link Bella further to the masculine side of the schema, in relation to her family, she seems to show a high level of independence (schema: masculinity). In the beginning of the book she leaves her mother and moves across the country to the new town of Forks, away from her old life (Meyer, 2011, p.3). In her new home, with her father, she manages her

everyday life by herself. However, as the story unfolds, Bella does not in my view live up to this image of independence she is given at first, and she moves more and more away from independent towards the binary opposite of dependent (schema: femininity).

There are two different sides to this dependence, that I want to address here. First, there is Bella's physical dependence. She is time and again being physically saved, most of the time by Edward. The first time occurs when she is nearly run over by a car in the school parking lot. Edward stops the car with his vampire strength and rescues her (Meyer, 2011, p.47-48). Later on, Bella encounters a group of men who threaten her and want to do her harm. Again Edward comes to her rescue (p.140). Later again, Bella is attacked and nearly killed by the evil vampire James. This time however, Edward has the help of his family when he rescues her (p. 394-398). On all three occasions Bella is put in a situation where the outcome is beyond her control. She is the vulnerable victim (schema: femininity) and has to depend on Edward to physically help her.

Besides being saved from dangerous situations, she is constantly being lifted up and carried around by other characters (p.83, 244, 332, 348, 352, 353, 398, 430), which shows her to be not only dependent but also passive (schema: femininity). One can argue that in some of these situations there is a need for Bella to be carried. That is, it is not because she is a girl that she is being carried, but because she is human. She cannot run as fast as vampires. Thus, they carry her. However, on some of these occasions the lifting up is totally redundant (p. 83, 245-246, 352). Many people in this world are physically stronger than their partner and could lift them with ease. That does not mean that they do so all the time and certainly not without consent. Edward does not lift Bella up because he is a vampire. He does it because he wants to, and he does not ask for permission. By lifting her up, Edward is robbing Bella of her power and treating her like an object, a possession he can do as he pleases with. One could also argue that the lifting up of Bella serves to infantilize her. Bella describes one of these

incidents as Edward "cradling me in his arms like a small child" (p.246) and we all know that children are dependent and need taking care of, physically but also mentally.

This brings us to the second part of Bella's dependence, the emotional and intellectual dependence that mostly occurs in relation to Edward. The book is filled with statements that establish Edward's mental superiority to Bella, thus indicating that she should look to him for guidance and not the other way around. Here are some examples, coming from Bella: "to take his advice: to be smart" (p.120), "He enunciated every syllable, as if he was talking to someone mentally handicapped" (p.71), "I am an idiot" (p.240). Edward also does his best to let Bella know that he knows better than she does: "it's not my fault if you are exceptionally unobservant" (p.70), "Bella you are utterly absurd" (p.70), "All this arguing isn't good for you" (p.415), "You are an idiot" (p.240). Some of these statements are made with humor and might sound harsher taken out of context, as I have done here. But the point is that it is predominantly Bella's mental capacity and judgment that are questioned and joked about, both by herself and by Edward.

Furthermore, Bella is frequently ordered around by Edward who is telling her what to do, often in a forceful way, seemingly for her own good: "You eat, I'll talk," (p.152), "Get in," (p.140), "Lie down!" (p.267), "Just eat, Bella." (p.276), "Get dressed" (p.278), "Take you hair down" (p.326). Bella never tells Edward what to do in the same dictating way. She does what Edward tells her to do and is even described as doing so "obediently" (p.326) (schema: femininity). Again one can observe a difference between the young couple. Edward is authoritarian and tough (schema: masculinity) and Bella is compliant, submissive and yielding (schema: femininity). Bella's dependence on Edward goes so far as she says outright: "it really seemed that my life was about him" (p.220).

It seems that Meyer wanted a strong female character but as the story progresses, this character loses much of her former independence and power. When does this change start? It

does so when Bella meets a man that she loves. Historically women have lost much of their power when they get married, but is that how things work today? To show how and why a woman being dependent on a man fits in with the female stereotype, I will now look at Bella from the perspective of the Cult of True Womanhood.

As I previously mentioned the Cult of True Womanhood consists of four virtues, piety, purity, submissiveness, domesticity, which were conceived as a result of Victorian industrialism, based on the assumption that women need men to provide for them (Brannon, 1999, p.161-162). The "True Women" were supposed to be domesticated wives who were in need of men to provide financial security but also to decide things for them (p.162). However, Brannon makes it very clear that this image of the "True Women" is an invented stereotype that was almost, if not totally, impossible to live up to (p.162).

As I interpret Brannon, one of the most important factors in CTW for a woman, is to have a man; one can not be submissive to a man if one has not got one. Bella's main desire and wish throughout the entire book is to want to be with Edward. That is the only thing she really wants and she is willing to sacrifice everything for it. Even though Edward is dangerous, and possibly life-threatening to hang around due to his vampirism, Bella declares: "I would rather die than stay away from you" (p.240) and "I couldn't resist him anything" (p.247). Having a man is clearly important in *Twilight* as well as in CTW.

Bella is not, it appears, concerned about religion, which is why piety, the first virtue of CTW, has little, or no, connection to her. If one looks instead at the second virtue, purity, one can observe some interesting factors. The argument could be made that Bella is not that bothered about being pure as she doesn't mind Edward's advances and hangs out with him at night in her room (p.264). Though she doesn't have sex with Edward she does seem curious about it. On the other hand, Bella's virginity and her human (non-vampire) life can both be seen as symbols of Bella's purity. One of the most famous quotes from *Twilight* is "And so the

lion fell in love with the lamb” (Meyer, 2011, p.240) in which Edward compares Bella to a lamb, a symbol of innocence, and himself to a predatory lion, which enhances even more the innocence and purity of Bella. There are many occasions where Bella is referred to as a child, or sometimes young animal (p.260, 246, 269), which besides having connotations of purity also lets us know that decisions need to be made for her.

This might be why Bella's sexuality is constantly being policed, not only by Edward, but it seems to be fair game for the men around her to comment and have opinions on her love life. This behavior can be observed for example in Bella's school friend Mike Newton who tells her "I don't like it" about Bella dating Edward (p.194) and even her father's old friend Billy thinks he has something to say about Bella's dating. He bribes his son Jacob to go tell Bella that she should break up with Edward (p.426-427). Meyer is clearly painting a picture where the social norms allow men to be protective about women's sexuality and purity.

As I have shown earlier when discussing Bella in relation to Stephens, she is submissive, the third virtue, which leaves the fourth, domesticity. In 2011 Rebecca Hayes-Smith writes in an internet article: “Continuing the stereotype, Bella selflessly takes care of everyone in her life” (www, Hayes-Smith, 23/3/2012). In the book Bella is described as caring (schema: femininity) for other people, in particular for her father. As soon as she arrives in Forks, she takes over the household chores from her father. She is doing dishes (p.32), washing clothes (p.220), doing the shopping (p.28) and the cooking (p.28, 67, 129, 130). Not once does her dad Charlie cook dinner for her and this household arrangement is not questioned. Meyer seems to be saying to us that as soon as a woman, or girl, enters a home the running of it will be her responsibility. Apart from not being very religious, Bella seems therefore to fit the CTW stereotype remarkably well.

However, the female stereotype is not only defined by behavior but by physical attributes as well. The first trait in Stephens's schema is beauty. Is Bella considered beautiful? In the

beginning of the story Bella is portrayed as a grey mouse, maybe so that she will be easy to relate to. Bella does not care about looks. But as the story unfolds we are reminded of Bella's beauty (p.427, 430) although she just does not think so of herself: "But physically I'd never fit in. I *should* be tan, sporty, blond - a volleyball player or a cheerleader perhaps" (Meyer, 2011, p.9). In this quote she describes how she thinks she *ought* to look, reproducing the ideal that she does not fit into. This could mean that Meyer seeks to show the problematic reality of many young women today where they are pressured by the media and society to believe that their looks are their most important feature. However, Meyer does not let the reader know that there is anything wrong with striving for this ideal and Bella never comes to a point where she accepts herself. Instead she continuously puts herself down, punishing herself for not being beautiful and for being "clumsy" (p.39), looking "unhealthy" (p.9) and calling herself "absolutely ordinary" and "almost disabled" (p.184).

The only one that can validate Bella is Edward who does so not by saying that Bella is a good person but by pointing out that she is attractive to him and the other boys in their school (p.184). The book iterates Bella's low self-esteem, both mentally but also physically, and her feeling the opposite of beautiful and therefore unhappy with herself. The picture of Edward as the primary source of validation for Bella seems to conform to the view of Ann Steiner who states that if Bella is not beautiful to begin with, she is made so by a man who "discovers" her (Steiner, 2011, p.15). This tells us two things, first that women that are not beautiful, or consider themselves not to be, are not happy, which seems to fit well into Stephens's schema. Secondly, that a state of happiness cannot be attained without the help of a man, which correlates with CTW.

Meyer talks on her website about feminism being all about having choices and that Bella has the ability and option to choose how she wants to live her life (www, Meyer, 12/6/2014). No one is forcing Bella to choose Edward. Having choices is a positive thing, for all human

beings, but is it not also important how you choose? If one creates a female character that always chooses to be obedient, yielding, compliant and dependent in relation to the man she is in love with, is that not telling us something? In some way Meyer is letting us know how she thinks women should choose, which, the more one analyzes this book, starts to advocate for the values of the 19th century. This points to the conclusion that Bella has more in common than not with an established female stereotype.

Previously in this chapter I have discussed Bella being submissive, obedient and yielding towards Edward. However, I want to take this discussion further by looking at the man she is submissive to. This is a man who, when he meets Bella, spends his days (and nights) following her around, breaking into her house, watching her sleep, without her knowledge. In the real world this would be considered utterly creepy, criminal behavior and he would be considered a stalker, perhaps even a sexual offender (have I mentioned that he is ninety years old). However, Bella's reaction to finding out about Edward's break-ins is "I was flattered" (p.256-257). I would think that, for most of us, such a violation of privacy would trigger a strong negative reaction, not gratefulness.

Gina R. Dalfonzo questions the perfect boyfriend image of Edward by calling him "one of modern fiction's best candidates for a restraining order," due to his possessive behavior towards Bella (www, Dalfonzo, 2008). Unfortunately, Edward's controlling and sometimes abusive behavior doesn't stop there. He wants to control where Bella goes without him: "I'd still rather you didn't go to Seattle by yourself" (p.187) and he even has opinions about her feelings and thoughts: "I just wish... that you wouldn't be thinking some things" (p.182) and "I don't want to hear that you feel that way" (p.166). Furthermore, he asserts himself physically on Bella by lifting her up, as mentioned previously, but also by holding her forcefully: "There was no resisting the iron strength of his fists" (p.246), "His hands refused to let me move so much as an inch" (p.247), "He caught me up in his iron grip, crushing me to him" (p.352). He

does so because he can; he is stronger than she is and takes advantage of it.

To sum up this first chapter we can conclude that Bella to a large extent fit in with the traditional female stereotype. But how do the other characters compare with this. This is something I want to address in my next chapter.

Chapter Two - Other Female Characters, Difference and Inequality

In this the second chapter I will look at the female characters in the book other than Bella. These characters do not individually play a prominent part in *Twilight*; thus the information about them is not as extensive as with Bella. Firstly, the characters will be examined separately, and secondly, they will be analyzed as a group (now with Bella included) in order to show that the stereotypical female aspects are not something reserved only for the individual characters, but that they are recurring elements of the book.

The Mother

Bella's mother Renée is not a prominent character in the book due to her not living in Forks, where most of the story plays out. However, she is introduced to the reader early on in the book as it gives a background to Bella.

Besides being a mother and a wife we get very limited information about who Renée is and what she does. Like the "True Women" in CTW (Brannon, 1999, p.162) Renée's primary function seems to be as a wife who is supported by her husband. In comparison, the men in her life, we are told, have professions, and quite prominent ones too. Her ex-husband Charlie is the Chief of Police in Forks and her new husband Phil is a baseball player. However, there is little or no mention of what Renée does besides being married. Compared to Renée, Phil has a much smaller part in this story. We only know of him because he is mentioned by Bella. Even so, we know more about what he does, traveling and playing ball, than we know about Renée (p.41). Phil gets to be more than a husband while Renée's defining characteristic is being a part of a family, as a wife or a mother. In the beginning of the book Renée leaves her home to live with Phil who takes care of her (Meyer, 2011, p.4). Renée is portrayed as dependent both in relation to her husband but also to her daughter who is worried about

leaving her mother, and describing her like this: “I stared at her wide, childlike eyes. How could I leave my loving, erratic, harebrained mother to fend for herself?” (Meyer, 2011, p.4). This sentence sums up, not only Renée as a character, but also much of Stephens's schema. Firstly, she is compared to a child, which makes her vulnerable, dependent and powerless (schema: femininity). Secondly, Bella describes her as loving, which could be seen as a synonym for caring (schema: femininity). Thirdly, saying that she is erratic and harebrained, that she has an animal brain, would suggest that, besides being stupid, she is a person who acts intuitively (schema: femininity) rather than rationally (schema: masculinity). Furthermore, this quote also suggests that Renée would have trouble to “fend for herself,” which could be seen as yet another sign of powerlessness, dependence and vulnerability (schema: femininity). Renée is given the role of the hysteric mother who is emotional (schema: femininity) and irrational. Bella tells us: “My mom was in hysterics, of course” (Meyer, 2011, p.57). We don't get that many details about Renée but much of what we do get conforms to a high degree to the female stereotype.

The Friends - Jessica and Angela

Jessica is Bella's classmate and she is the girl Bella spends the most time with in the novel. As a character, Jessica is portrayed as quite overbearing and annoying, and Bella (among others) constantly complains about her, describing her as intrusive (Meyer, 2011, p.35), babbling (p.74), jabbering (p.132) and dubious (p.133). She basically seems like an unpleasant person to be around. But what does she do that is so awful?

Jessica is a forward person, she wants to be Bella's friend and she shows it by being interested, asking Bella about her experiences. The characters in *Twilight* interpret this as annoying but I would argue that many people would see this as a highly valued trait in a friend. Someone who asks you questions and wants to listen to your side of everyday life

seems rather nice, in my opinion. If one looks at Jessica in relation to Stephens's schema, her most prominent feature is being active (schema: masculinity) by asking questions. My argument is that by being active Jessica strays beyond the female stereotype and thus has to be punished by having the other characters dislike and ridicule her. Instead of valuing Jessica, Bella rejects her friendship. She does so, not by saying so outright, but by trying to "evade" her (p.180), being reluctant to sit by her (p.177) and "not bothering to pretend to listen" (p.126) which as behavior goes is borderline bullying.

Edward too expresses irritation about Jessica showing interest in him and Bella as a couple (p.182). Meyer even names the whole chapter ten "Interrogations", which further emphasizes Jessica's unwanted attention. Besides being talkative, Jessica is something of a go-getter. She decides early on that she wants to go out with Mike, who is another classmate of Bella's, and she takes action for this to happen. Jessica has set her mind on getting Mike, which could be seen as her being a "hunter" (schema: masculinity). Meyer is here leading us to believe that women will be shunned and socially unwanted if they act in a way that strays too far outside of the stereotype. She tricks us into thinking that being forward and voicing one's interest in other people is a bad thing if you are a woman.

Jessica can be seen in contrast to Angela who is another one of the friends Bella meets at her new school. Angela is an even more minor character than Jessica but she is interesting to look at because of the fact that Bella seems to like Angela more than Jessica. In contrast to Jessica, Angela is quiet and not so pushy: "Angela was passively happy to be going to the dance, but not really interested in Eric" (p.132). Angela is a better fit for Stephens's schema than Jessica. She shows passiveness and she is not going after Erik in the active way that Jessica pursues Mike. In another comment by Bella, she compares Angela to Jessica: "She didn't ask one question, let alone the hundreds that Jessica would have unleashed. I was beginning to really like Angela" (p.135). Besides being unappreciative about Jessica, Bella

praises Angela for not talking, in other words for being passive. As I have argued, these two characters are in line with Stephens' schema, Jessica by breaking the norm and thus being punished, Angela for fitting in and being rewarded for it. Bella's friends seem thus to fit the female stereotype but does this also apply to the vampires?

The Vampires - Esme, Alice and Rosalie

There are three female vampires in the Cullen family. Esme is the oldest and she is married to Dr Emmett Cullen. Her adopted female kids are Alice and Rosalie. These three characters are physically much more powerful than Bella, obviously because of them being vampires; hence they are much more equal to their respective partners (Carlisle, Jasper and Emmet). Even so, it is still pointed out that they are physically inferior to the men, such as in baseball for example where Emmet is the hardest hitter and Edward is the fastest runner (p.323). All three of them are exceptionally beautiful (schema: femininity) (p.17).

Like all of the female characters previously mentioned, these vampire characters conform to the heterosexual norm present in CTW by having male partners. Furthermore, Esme's only role in life seems to be that of the mother and wife, much like Bella's mother Renée.

The one character that goes the furthest outside of Stephens' schema out of the three is Alice. She is the only woman in the book that is described as having short hair (p.16), which means that she is beautiful despite not having one of the strongest physical symbols of femininity, long hair. She also occasionally gives orders to the people around her similar to how Edward does to Bella, "Pull over Edward" and "Do it, Edward" (p.334). Furthermore, Alice is described as being reasonable and talking with authority (p.334), which would correlate to the masculine side of Stephens's schema. Unlike Jessica, who is punished for breaking the binary structure, Alice is in every way accepted by her surroundings. She is a perfectly happy character, and she thus in some ways breaks from Stephens' schema. To

some extent, one is tempted to think that this is the character who really differs from the stereotype. For example she is the only female character who lifts up and carries Bella (p.353). She does things like the boys do. However, Alice is also the only one who asks Bella for permission to lift her up. Meyer seems relentless in differentiating the women from the men, whether they are vampires or not. This is why I now want to address the overall binary dynamic between men and women in the book.

The Gendered Difference

As mentioned earlier, in the introduction, Linda Brannon writes that gender stereotyping stems from differentiating two genders from each other. They are binary and there is a point to them being different from each other, which, according to Michael S. Kimmel, has to do with inequality. He writes that the view of gender difference as something innate validates inequality in society (2012, p.114-115). Thus, indications of overall gender differentiating and inequality between the two groups could by themselves be signs of gender stereotyping.

As previously shown, the women characters, to a high extent, conform to Stephens's schema and their traits are largely different than the men's. Thus, gender differentiating has been established. I will now show that inequality between women and men is also present in the book. Earlier in the text, the character's professions, or lack of them, were mentioned as an issue in relation to Bella's mother. I want to show that there is a clear pattern in the book of men being more prominent in their careers than the women. While none of the matriarchs, Renée and Esme, have jobs outside the home, their men are very much active in their jobs and, as a result, in their community. Charlie is the chief of Police and Carlisle works as a doctor. To add to this picture, there is the fact that Bella is willing to become a vampire. In doing so she would be giving up "everything" (p.432, 433) to be with Edward. This means that in becoming a vampire she would not be able to lead a normal life, with the hopes of

going to university and later on working in a chosen profession. She too would be giving up the possibility of a career for a man.

Furthermore, if one looks at the women in the book that are actually working, they have a much higher tendency to have jobs of a lower status than the men. The examples I have found of women and men working are as follows: two female nurses (p.409), woman working in a bookstore (p.135), front desk receptionist (p.12), waitress (p.144) and restaurant host (p.144). These can be seen in contrast to the male professions, some of which I have mentioned before, like Charlie the Chief of Police (p.5), Carlisle the doctor (p.17), Phil the baseball-player (p.41) and several teachers, including Mr. Mason (p.13), Mr. Banner (p.37), Mr. Varner (p.15) and Coach Clapp (p.50). I have left out several nurses in this list due to them not being identified as either male or female. Besides that the men have jobs that could be considered of higher status than the women's, another thing stands out when looking at the list of people and their professions. The men have names and the women are anonymous. This could be simply due to the fact that the male characters had to be named because of Bella having to interact with them. Another possible interpretation is that these anonymous women are not important enough to name, but nearly all of the men that inhabit the book are, which further increases the high-low status polarity of men and women in the book.

The book has many features that could be seen to support inequality between the main characters, Bella and Edward, some of whose features have already been touched upon in chapter one. However, one issue that has not been addressed is that of class. Bella talks about her and Edward being from different leagues, implying his league to be superior to hers (p.46). Rebecca Hayes-Smith puts it like this “Bella -as a low-income, white woman -is weak, subservient, and deserves to be protected. Edward -also white, but of a high socio-economic status and, of course, male -is strong, powerful, and dominant” (2011, www.23/3/2012). As Hayes-Smith points out, Edward has, in addition to his physical superiority and his

controlling psyche, the advantage of belonging to a family with unlimited financial resources and hundreds of years of accumulated knowledge. Bella is not from very poor circumstances, she lives in a house and has money to spare, but there is no luxury in her life. This can be seen when one looks at the cars that they both drive. While Edward drives an expensive “shiny” car (p.13) Bella gets an old car given to her (p.7). This further adds to the unequal and polarized balance between the two lovers.

The quote mentioned in an earlier section of this essay "and so the lion fell in love with the lamb" (p.240) can, also, be seen as a way of letting us know that Bella is an innocent victim and Edward is a predator. Esté Yarmosh raises the question about this, suggesting that a rapist or sexual offender can have affectionate feelings for his victim (Yarmosh, 2009, www, 4/5/2012). If you see the quote in that light, the book also suggests that men's possible abuse of women is normal or even worse, something to be desired. This further enforces the polarity of the two genders with one side in a position of power over the other, a situation that characterizes the novel as a whole.

Conclusion

In this essay I have shown that the female characters in Stephenie Meyer's book *Twilight* conform to a great extent to a female stereotype.

The main character, Bella, shows characteristics and behavior that match the majority of these traditional feminine traits. She is also shown as discontented when seeing herself as outside of the feminine stereotype. Female stereotyping is further emphasized by the description of Bella's mother Renée and Bella's friends Jessica and Angela. In addition to showing that the female characters conform to CTW and Stephens's schema, I have also argued that to some extent they are punished when they have traits outside the stereotype, as in the case of Jessica. Additionally, the three female vampires Esme, Alice and Rosalie are for the most part portrayed in line with the stereotype, while Alice breaks out somewhat from the pattern by having a few masculine traits for which she is not punished. Furthermore, I have shown that there exists an unequal balance between the two genders in the novel, which I argue strengthens the female stereotyping by recycling the binary opposition between masculine and feminine. This is made evident, first, by looking at the professions of the characters where the male characters to a much higher degree have high status jobs. Secondly, I have shown that there is inequality between Bella and Edward. This inequality is manifested both through the issue of class and the balance of power between the two characters.

My conclusion is that the collective image of women in the book is highly stereotypical since the female characters to such a large degree correlate with Stephens' schema, CTW and the polarization of gender mentioned by Brannon (and Kimmel and Stephens).

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