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The Young Adult Speaks for Herself:
My Reading of Modern Criticism and *The Twilight Saga*

by

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The more I read, the more I've come to realize that the theories behind modern criticisms are not restricted to examining the subjects that theorists write about in their essays and speeches. Instead, many of the ideas can be applied to works of popular culture as well. In this essay, I have taken several theories from psychoanalysis, political criticism, cultural theory, and feminism and applied them to the young adult series *Twilight*. I wanted to explore how even the oddest of fictional situations (a love triangle including a choice between a vampire and a werewolf) would hold up to the criticism which I have applied to works from the accepted literary canon. Young adult novels are more complex than they appear when taken at face value; it is when one looks behind the words and uses theory to investigate the novels the intricacies of the story become apparent. Professor Michie's Modern Criticism class inspired me to apply multiple perspectives to interpret a series I enjoy. I also chose this series at a time when it was at the top of all the bestseller's lists, meaning the story has a better chance of being known to many. I started with four major schools of thought to see what would happen, and I was surprised that the series held up as well as it did compared to the poor critical reception it received. This is just a sampler of the types of theories that could be applied to *Twilight*; I hope in the future to continue to explore the subject.

The *Twilight* Saga is a series of four published books and a online manuscript that tell the story of Bella and Edward, a human girl and the vampire that falls in love with her. The two are drawn to one another, and face difficult situations that attempt to prevent them from being together, from Edward's appeal to her blood to car crashes to the characters' own views of the safety of this relationship. The novels have a distinct lack of sexuality and instead rely on sensuality, a reflection of the author Stephenie Meyer's Mormon background. Young women relate to Bella because they can see qualities of themselves in her – shyness, clumsiness, etc. –

but at the same time, they live vicariously through her because she always makes the dangerous choice, the ones the readers never could because they know the danger.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar write in their book *The Madwoman in the Attic* that “a woman writer must examine, assimilate, and transcend the extreme images of ‘angel’ and ‘monster’ ”.¹ While this was written in 1988 and talks of nineteenth century literature by women, it still rings true today. Stephenie Meyer takes the idea of monster and angel and transforms them into the main characters of her series *Twilight*. Gilbert and Gubar argue that the most dangerous of monsters look like angels; this is true of Meyer’s “monster” characters as well. The Cullens are described as some of the most beautiful people, like models who stepped off the runway. In particular, Meyer focuses on Edward Cullen. Edward is the most dangerous thing to Bella, as he says, and yet he looks, as Bella describes him, akin to a Greek god. “Everything about me invites you in – my voice, my face, even my smell”². Here the monster and angel presented by Gilbert and Gubar become vampire and human under Meyer’s hand; though the characters frequently use words such as monster and angel as well to refer to themselves and each other. Edward often says that he is a monster for wanting Bella, and that he has broken the deadliest of sins by coveting her. Bella, on the other hand, refers to Edward as having the face of an angel painted by an old master. But while Gilbert and Gubar write that women writers must transcend the images of angel and monster, Meyer takes this idea to another level. She looks deeper into the characters rather than just labeling them. Edward, as a vampire, is automatically labeled as a monster for what he is, but, as Meyer reveals his and his family’s background, one can start to see that they are just trying to make the best of their situation. They hunt animals rather than humans because they don’t want to kill people, jokingly calling

¹ Gilbert and Gubar, 2004, 812.

² Meyer, 2005, 263-64.

themselves vegetarians; they are essentially fighting their instincts. Edward comments to Bella when she figures out what he is that he “doesn’t *want* to be a monster”.³ Edward also describes Bella as an angel, too good for him. But she says the same of him: she sees the angel in the “monster” character. In a pivotal chapter in the first novel, appropriately entitled “The Angel,” Bella is bitten by another vampire and is infected with venom which burns as it travels through her veins and begins to change her into a vampire. As she drifts in and out of consciousness, she dreams and frequently refers to the voice she hears (which happens to be Edward’s) as that of the angel’s. In this semi-conscious state Bella’s true beliefs about Edward are revealed. “I heard the sound of an angel calling my name, calling me to the only heaven I wanted”.⁴ Edward is not the monster to Bella, but the angel who saves her not once, but three times in this novel from death. Meyer often references nineteenth century literature in series; one of Bella’s favorite and often quoted books is *Wuthering Heights*. In addition, Edward, having been born in 1901 and frozen in time in 1918, still has the mannerisms and speech of a nineteenth century gentleman, which makes Gilbert and Gubar even more relevant.

There is also an interesting parallel that can be drawn from the cover of the first novel. The cover is a black background with a set of pale white arms shown from the elbows down. The cupped hands hold out a single red apple (Figure 1). The paleness of the arms could be a signifier of vampires, specifically Edward. It is my impression that anyone with knowledge of the Book of Genesis would surmise that the apple is the one that Eve is given by the serpent, and she in turn gives it to Adam. The apple represents fruit of the tree of knowledge, the only fruit forbidden to Adam and Eve by God. But the devil, in the guise of the serpent, persuades them to eat the apple, and so they gain an awareness that they did not have before. I wonder then if the

³ Meyer, *Twilight*, 187.

⁴ Meyer, *Twilight*, 452.

apple is meant to represent the knowledge of vampires, and Edward is holding it out to Bella. If Edward is the monster, he is holding out the temptation of knowledge to Bella, the innocent. This image is paralleled in the movie as well; in one scene Edward holds out an apple to Bella in the same gesture. Here, unlike with the motionless cover, she takes the apple. One could draw the conclusion that Bella is making her choice: she is giving in to the temptation. This again could also be tied to Gilbert and Gubar's "monster and angel" theory, but also, interestingly, to Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger*. Douglas describes this formation of culture which can be compared to Gilbert and Gubar's angel and monster theory.

For us holiness and impurity are at opposite poles. Holiness and unholiness after all need not always be absolute opposites. They can be relative categories. What is clean in relation to one thing may be unclean in relation to another, and vice versa.⁵

What Douglas is describing can be compared to Edward and Bella's view of one another. Edward says that he, an impure creature, is keeping Bella from heaven. He mentions several times throughout the series that he has no soul, and therefore cannot get into heaven. It is a series of parallels that continually show up in the saga: the opposite poles of "holiness and impurity." Bella and Edward, human and vampire, soul and supposedly no soul, angel and monster, alive and dead, the list just continues on. But the second part of the quotation where things can be in relation to one another sounds more like the novels. One example can come from examining the types of vampires Meyer includes in her novels. Comparing one type of vampire to another - that is, blood-drinking nomads to vegetarian families - shows that the vegetarians are more like angels than the nomads, but when one compares all vampires to humans, humans are the purer creatures, at least in the eyes of many of the characters (both mythical and human). Werewolves are introduced in the second novel, and the vampires call

⁵ Douglas, 1984, 7-10.

them dogs or mutts, especially since one of the werewolves, and coincidentally Bella's best friend, is in love with her. The comment seems to suggest that the werewolves are a mix of human and animal, an impure breed of sorts, while vampires are of no such mix; they were once human and are turned into purely vampire. The Cullens have retained human aspects of their nature, but they are not human. Bella is one of those people who sees no boundary lines or impurities; to her they are all just people. She judges people not on what they are, but their actions. Edward may have killed people, but he only killed those who were hurting others. She deems this as not being a bad thing because he rescued the potential victims.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar present the idea that "the woman writer has had (if only unconsciously) to define herself as a mysterious creature who resides behind the angel or monster or angel/monster image that lives on what Mary Elizabeth Coleridge called 'the crystal surface'..." in their book *The Madwoman in the Attic*.⁶ Besides the obvious comparison of the "the crystal surface" to the skin of a Meyer vampire in the sunlight (they sparkle like the surface of diamonds), if we extend the idea of the "mysterious creature who resides behind the angel or monster or angel/monster image" to apply not only to the female writer (aka Stephenie Meyer) but also to her characters, a new line of thought emerges. Suddenly, humans, vampires, and werewolves are not as dissimilar from one another as one may have originally believed. If we consider how the characters are portrayed, we see that there are multiple layers to each personality, consisting of both monster and angel personas, with two notable exceptions, found in Bella's human friends of Angela Weber and Ben Cheney. These two are the most open of all the characters. They are not one-dimensional or flat in any way, but rather their personalities, actions, words, and thoughts (which are known thanks to Edward's point of view in *Midnight Sun*) are all consistent with one another. Their bright personalities do not hide petty thoughts, as

⁶ Gilbert and Gubar, 2004, 812.

is true with some of the other characters. With some minor human characters such as Mike Newton, Jessica Stanley, and Lauren Mallory, jealousy brings out the monster image dwelling beneath the skin's surface. Meyer writes in three distinct points of view throughout the series: human (Bella), werewolf (Jacob in *Breaking Dawn*), and vampire (Edward in the unpublished *Midnight Sun*). Thanks to Edward's point of view, the readers get glimpses of other character's points of view as well. It is from these glimpses, their actions, and their words that we find the angel and monster personas.

We have already considered the vampire as both an angel and monster when it comes to the Cullens; now consider the werewolf and human. The monster persona of human personality is much easier to identify than perhaps the angel side is. It is usually because the acts are more outrageous, more deviant from the social norm, that they stand out in one's mind. So what happens when we have a hybrid of monster and human in the form of a werewolf? Perhaps here Gilbert and Gubar's "monster and angel" theory can be found in one kind of character. The wolf pack of the La Push Indian Reservation is a group of boys (and one girl) who transform into large wolves in order to protect the humans of the area. This shift is not intentional, but comes from an exposure to vampires. It would be like describing a mutation in their genetics: some people have the ability, and some don't. Supposedly, according to tribal legend, as Jacob Black, the son of her father's best friend, tells Bella in the novel, the Quileute Indians are descended from wolves. They have to learn control over their form, but in essence they can switch between "monster" and "human". The debate over what to classify the wolves as is one that all the characters struggle with; Jacob tells Bella that he is still human, but Bella, in anger at the thought that Jacob has been killing hikers, says that he isn't.

How does being afraid of a monster make me a hypocrite?...Well, I'm sorry I can't be the *right* kind of monster for you, Bella. I guess I'm just not as great as a bloodsucker, am I?...It's not what you *are*, stupid, it's what you *do*!⁷

Again, Bella proves that it isn't what a person is, but how one acts that makes one a "monster." Jacob being a werewolf doesn't bother her; instead, it's the idea that he is responsible for the missing hikers.

Twilight does not strictly reflect the "monster and angel" theory set out by Gilbert and Gubar. Rather, Edward troubles the line between monster and angel; depending on the view point, he could be considered either. Throughout the novel, bits of his past are revealed about how he spent the last hundred-plus years. He tells Bella that for about four years in the late 1920s and early 1930s he broke away from his vegetarian family and lived on his own. He hunted humans during this time, no longer resisting but embracing his instincts, at least to a point. Edward only hunted a certain type of human, the vilest kind: rapists, murders, and other people of that nature, whom he could seek out due to his mind-reading abilities as a vampire.

I had the typical bout of rebellious adolescence. I wasn't sold on his [Carlisle's] life of abstinence, and I resented him for curbing my appetite. So I went off on my own for a time. I thought I would be exempt from the ...depression...that accompanies a conscience. Because I knew the thoughts of my prey, I could pass over the innocent and pursue only the evil. If I followed a murderer down a dark alley where he stalked a young girl – if I saved her, then surely I wasn't so terrible.⁸

Does this make Edward a monster or an angel? Yes, he killed people, but he killed the ones who were hurting others. Does this make him a hero of sorts, or no better than those he hunted? "But as time went on, I began to see the monster in my eyes. I couldn't escape the debt of so much

⁷ Meyer, 2006, 306-07.

⁸ Meyer, *Twilight*, 342-43.

human life taken, no matter how justified”.⁹ He admits to having a conscience about what he does, calling himself a monster, and he faces depression from his acts. This is the clearest illustration of Edward muddying boundary lines, though there are other examples. Bella and Edward’s first meeting is in biology class, when Bella is assigned to be Edward’s lab partner. As Bella passes by a fan, her scent hits Edward and he nearly loses control. His eyes turn black with thirst, and he clutches the edge of the table, desperately trying to regain control. He has a malicious look on his face as he does this, and Bella believes he hates her on sight. Of course, at the time she has no idea how desperately he is trying to control his instincts.

It took everything I had not to jump up in the middle of that class full of children and – If I hadn’t been denying my thirst for the last, well, too many years, I wouldn’t have been able to stop myself.¹⁰

Here he looks the part of the monster, and a misinterpretation of his actions through Bella’s eyes would indicate this, but the truth of the matter can only be seen through Edward’s point of view. Does this make him a monster or an angel? He looks the part of the monster, but a correct reading of his actions would make him an angel because he resists his instincts. He goes to extreme measures to ensure Bella’s safety from his instincts that scream at him to kill her and drink her blood by immediately leaving after school for Alaska, to his family’s previous home. He disappears abruptly for about a week, and then returns to school as if nothing has happened. His attitude towards Bella is a constant see-saw; he is polite and friendly towards her when he returns, curious about the human that he is so attracted to, and yet he is cold and distant after the near accident with a classmate’s car. Edward saves Bella’s life three times in the novel; the first time stopping the car of a fellow classmate’s who skids across the ice and nearly crushes her. He

⁹ Meyer, *Twilight*, 343.

¹⁰ Meyer, *Twilight*, 269.

risks revealing his family's secret by doing this, having to move across the parking lot in the blink of an eye. He is cold towards her after this, saying he owes her no explanation for how he has managed to save her, and yet we must recognize that behind this "monster" persona is a man who did risk everything, several times, to save her life. Edward's character also troubles boundary lines because of his gender; Gilbert and Gubar write that "the extreme images of 'angel' and 'monster' which male authors generated for her" means that the idea of "angel and monster" is meant only for women, as written by men.¹¹

Edward's belief that he is a monster extends beyond his eating habits and affects both his and his family's way of living. As a whole, when becoming a vampire, sometimes personality or human physical traits from the former life are amplified. For example, Edward was a very perceptive human, and, as a vampire, this trait developed into mind-reading. Other family members took on similar traits, such as Alice, who can see the future, Jasper, who was once very good at convincing people to do what he wanted, can now sense and manipulate people's emotions, and Emmett, whose physical strength as a human was amplified as a vampire. Other family member's gifts are more subtle. Carlisle and Esme, the "parents" of the family, retained more human traits rather than receiving gifts – Carlisle, who was always compassionate towards people as a human, retained that compassion to the point where the smell of human blood does not bother him and he is able to do what he loves: caring for people by being Chief Doctor at the local hospital. Esme's gift is even more subtle; as a human she was incredibly loving, but never had a family of her own. As a vampire she has accepted everyone who joins or is connected to her family, including human and werewolf. Rosalie is the more cynical vampire of the bunch; she was one of the most beautiful women when she was alive, and becoming a vampire only amplified her beauty. These characteristics lead to a classic case of repression,

¹¹ Gilbert and Gubar, 2004, 812.

specifically that of a social nature. The fact that the family has kept human traits as vampires has given them a conscience; and because of this they are socially repressed by their own choice. They are aware that the less contact they have with humans, the better the chances they have of keeping their secret and keeping the humans safe. The “children” – though the youngest is around ninety years and yet looks eighteen – go to school to keep up with the charade of being human, but they do not interact with any of the students. They sit by themselves at lunch, do not participate in sports or any extracurricular activities, nor do they generally speak to anyone besides when it is necessary. This is social repression by choice, in order to keep people safe. Frantz Fanon mentions a passage by Freud in his “The Negro and Psychopathology” essay. I understand that I am taking Fanon out of context, but I am not focusing on his essay as whole, rather I am looking at his inclusion of a passage by Freud.

This trauma, it is true, has been quite expelled from the consciousness and the memory of the patient and as a result he has apparently been saved from a great mass of suffering, but the repressed desire continues to exist in the unconscious; it is on watch constantly for an opportunity to make itself known and it soon comes back into consciousness, but in a disguise that makes it impossible to recognize; in other words, the repressed thought is replaced in consciousness by another that acts as its surrogate, and that soon surrounds itself with all those feelings of morbidity that have been supposedly averted by the repression.¹²

This could be compared to the difference between being a nomadic (blood-drinking) vampire and a vegetarian one. The trauma is that of killing a human, which means you have a conscience. The “great mass of suffering” could be that feeling of guilt from killing people. Edward mentions that his family doesn’t hunt humans because they don’t want to be monsters and that they face depression (at least he has) from killing people, even evil ones. The repressed

¹² Fanon, 2004, 463.

desire is the instinct to drink human blood, and though the Cullens are vegetarians, that desire still exists in their subconscious. The passage says that the repressed desire is on constant watch for an opportunity to make a reappearance in the conscious; this could be compared to Bella's scent hitting Edward for the first time. The desire flares up, and it takes all of Edward's will power and decades of self-control to stop him from attacking her. The disguise could be Bella herself. Edward believes her to be just another ordinary human, based on the thoughts of everyone around him. But when he smells her for the first time, everything changes – her scent is much more powerful, and he is unable to hear her thoughts. So the repressed thought (the desire to drink human blood) is replaced in the consciousness of the vegetarian way of life, and the thoughts of morbidity (that is, taking someone's life in order to drink them) still exist as the "what if?" possibility in the back of their minds, even though it is no longer a constant thought as it would be if the Cullens were human blood-drinkers. It is also a social group repression as well; Fanon talks about this with race in his essay, but here it is a whole other species that is being repressed from their instincts. It is a collective conscious on their part; to deny their instincts and go against a vampire's nature.

The vampires also have a fascinating way of dealing with social repression; they interact with one another by playing baseball and video games in a safe environment where they no longer have to hide their strength and speed. They do like all of the things any other person would; they just can't be around other people. Our society has a stereotypical view that men who go through a mid-life crisis generally buy an extravagant car or some other equivalent to deal with these feelings. Strangely, vampires are very similar in Meyer's novel. Because they are socially repressed and immortal, they deal with these feelings by buying extravagant cars and reworking the engine to go two hundred miles an hour or by buying private islands. Apparently

vampires have mid-life crises as well. The repression is evident in their activities. Edward describes the family as being proficient or accomplished in several different things such as music, languages, and art, just because there is so much time, especially when they don't have the ability to sleep. It is almost like they are living a fulfilled mid-life crisis; they have the money to buy whatever they want, and they have the immortal youth so sought after.

To simplify the ideas of Sigmund Freud's essay "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," one can ask why do we continue to do the same things that don't give us pleasure over and over? Strangely enough, this question posed by a classmate struck a chord about a theme in the series *Twilight*. Edward's initial reaction to Bella is extreme attraction, not necessarily sexual, but a sensual attraction to the smell of her blood. Later in the series it is revealed that Bella is Edward's "la tua cantante" which is Italian for "singer," meaning her blood sings for him.¹³ Vampires may sometimes come across people whose blood is more appealing to them than anyone else's. There are only three other cases of it mentioned in the series, and it was impossible for the vampires to resist their singers. So it makes it rather interesting that Edward not only manages to resist the call of Bella's blood but falls in love with his singer. He is, in essence, repeating a motion that continually gives him pain; the venom is excruciating to swallow, his throat burns, and yet he manages to control his thirst and be around Bella, even going as far as kissing her. He checks on Bella at night when she is sleeping, using the time to become desensitized to her smell so it won't bring him as much pain. It is an interesting cross between pain and pleasure; he describes how hard it can be to be around her, and yet he continues to put himself in a painful situation. We ask why do we continue to do the same things that don't give us pleasure over and over; in the case of Edward, the pain eventually does become pleasurable and easier to deal with.

¹³ Meyer, *New Moon*, 490.

He startled me, suddenly grabbing my hand, pressing my palm to his face, and inhaling deeply.

“Easier all the time,” he muttered.¹⁴

Edward is training himself to become desensitized to his desire for her blood in order to fit himself into her human world. In another novel of the series, when Bella and Edward are reunited after several months apart, a period during which Edward believes Bella to be dead, he describes the pain as a wonderful thing, because it is proof to him that she is still alive. I believe what Freud is trying to show is that pain and pleasure are interconnected. The pain of his throat burning is more pleasurable to him because it means Bella is alive and near. Another example of looking beyond pleasure is how the Cullen family resists drinking human blood, even though it would be pleasurable. They call themselves vegetarians because they only survive on the blood of animals, comparing it to living on tofu.

I'd compare it [animals] to living on tofu and soy milk; we call ourselves vegetarians, our little inside joke. It doesn't completely satiate the hunger – or rather thirst. But it keeps us strong enough to resist.¹⁵

They are denying themselves that pleasure in order to not be the monsters their species is believed to be. Perhaps this is a connection between Gilbert and Gubar and Freud. They are essentially monsters in name only, because of the title “vampire.” In reality, they personify the “angel” identity because they go against the instincts that would bring them pleasure and instead endure the pain of burning throats from venom; the pain becomes a signifier that what they are doing by denying their instincts is the right thing. The pleasure comes from embracing the pain which signifies that they are not monsters.

It has also been identified that in childhood we have a sense of destiny that pushes us towards something which Freud says is the death drive. This drive “seeks to repeat the earliest

¹⁴ Meyer, *Twilight*, 279.

¹⁵ Meyer, *Twilight*, 188.

experience of quiescence” and he explains the use of repetitive behavior as an attempt to deal with loss.¹⁶ These things also appear in the *Twilight* series. Bella Swan has always seen herself as a very clumsy person, even going so far as saying she has an inability to cross a level floor without tripping on air. There are several events throughout the series in which she is nearly killed. I have to wonder if this sense of destiny of childhood is what pushes her towards Edward; if it weren't for two cases of her almost dying, she and Edward would have had no contact with one another. These events forced them together; first the near accident when another student's car skids on the ice and almost kills her, and again in a nearby town when Bella is nearly attacked by drunk men. In the second novel of the series, *New Moon*, after Edward leaves, Bella discovers that when she does something dangerous, such as riding a motorcycle or cliff diving, she hallucinates hearing Edward's voice. Is this again the death drive that pushes her towards Edward? By doing things that have the potential to be deadly, she is, in a sense, reaching towards her destiny. Bella is dealing with pain of Edward leaving by doing dangerous things. Perhaps it is like the child and the “fort da” game, in which the child throws the wooden reel and pulls it back to himself.

The instinctual renunciation (that is, the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction) which he had made in allowing his mother to go away without protesting, he compensated himself for this, as it were, by himself staging the disappearance and return of objects within his reach.¹⁷

Perhaps Bella's coping mechanism is that while she does not allow Edward to leave without protest, she has no way of stopping him; he is faster and stronger than a human. Her way of coping might be by controlling when she gets to see the hallucinations that bring her comfort. After all, they appear when Bella is being reckless or is in danger; in her mind they appear

¹⁶ Freud, 2004, 431.

¹⁷ Freud, 2004, 432.

because he still cares about her. She continues to live her life to the best of her ability; she endures for her father's sake, but hearing Edward's voice becomes an outlet for her pain. Everyone around her wants her to go back to being "normal", and she pretends to be as normal as possible for them. Hearing the voice allows her the chance to grieve, in a way. Are Bella's dangerous activities that make her hear Edward's voice comparable to the child's game to combat the traumatic loss of his mother? Perhaps so; they are both a way of dealing with a traumatic situation. In essence, Edward is death. He is a vampire that is trying to resist killing her and drinking her blood because he loves her. Furthermore, Bella wants Edward to change her into a vampire, but to do so would be basically killing her. She would become like him, frozen in time; her blood no longer flowing, her heart no longer beating. He resists this idea; he says that he doesn't want to take away her human life and all of the possibilities that come with it, such as having children and growing old. Perhaps another comparison of the death drive comes from Peter Brook's book *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*: "Narrative demarcates, encloses, establishes limits, orders".¹⁸ Death establishes limits to life, and we seek to complete as many activities as possible in the time that is given to us. Perhaps the plots in novels are the same way. There is an ending point to a novel, where it must come to a close. The loose ends are generally tied up, the readers know the outcome, and the book is finished. So the novels are on a death drive of sorts as well. They are racing to finish, to put everything onto paper and build a plot. *Twilight* is an interesting mix, because it is a series. Each book does have an end, but the whole story does not finish until the final pages of the last book. And even then, is it really finished? The Cullens are immortal vampires; their story has no end.

¹⁸ Brooks, 1984, 4.

Throughout the saga, Bella has a series of dreams that seem to predict major points of the novel. Some are not always used to advance the plot, but instead give clues towards the true identity of characters. The first dream comes after the almost-accident in the parking lot at school, when Edward saves Bella's life. That night, she says, was the first night she dreamed of Edward Cullen.

In my dream it was very dark, and what dim light there was seemed to be radiating from Edward's skin. I couldn't see his face, just his back as he walked away from me, leaving me in darkness. No matter how fast I ran, I couldn't catch up to him; no matter how loud I called, he never turned.¹⁹

Bella's dream is an indication of the true nature of Edward, and also predicts events that won't occur for several months. Vampires, in Meyer's world, sparkle in the light, as if thousands of diamonds are embedded in their skin; it is the true reason vampires do not go out into the sunlight. The light radiating from his skin could be indicating this aspect of his nature, though Bella does not yet realize he is not of her species. The dream about Edward walking away with Bella unable to neither catch up to him or make him turn around when she calls is a forecasting of when Edward leaves Bella in the following book, *New Moon*. He leaves her after her disastrous birthday party, when she gets a paper cut opening her presents and Jasper, the member of the family who has been controlling his instincts for the least amount of time, tries to attack her. Edward breaks up with her, though he does not tell her his reasons, which are that he is trying to keep her safe, and runs off. Bella attempts to follow him and calls out, but with his incredible speed she is unable to. Freud explains about dreams in the following passage.

¹⁹ Meyer, *Twilight*, 68.

If a dream is written out it may perhaps fill half a page. The analysis setting out the dream-thoughts underlying it may occupy six, eight, or a dozen times as much space. If the work of interpretation is carried further it may reveal still more thoughts concealed behind the dream.²⁰ Just look at the explanation of the dream above compared to the dream itself; Freud is correct. Perhaps not entirely coincidentally, Meyer has stated that the idea for *Twilight* came to her in a dream. She dreamed of a human girl and a vampire who resisted the call of her blood because he was in love with her, and expanded her dream into the series. We learn so much more from the interpretation than we do from the pictorial format of the dream. Freud affirms this theory with “the psychical material has undergone an extensive process of condensation in the course of the formation of the dream”.²¹ It is not the first prophetic dream she has; others include her predicting that she is pregnant, and that her best friend is a werewolf, to name a few major plot points. This concept that Meyer uses, could be related to Sigmund Freud’s “id” concept. Perhaps this is her unconscious, her intuition and instinct making itself known. Bella’s dreams never clearly reveal the truth, but rather hint at it. Freud would analyze a dream based on its latent content.

It is from these dream-thoughts and not from a dream’s manifest content that we disentangle its meaning. The dream-content, on the other hand, is expressed as it were in a pictographic script, the characters of which have to be transposed individually into the language of the dream thoughts. If we attempted to read these characters according to their pictorial value instead of according to their symbolic relation, we should clearly be led into error.²²

This concept, that our unconscious reveals the truth, is an idea studied by both Freud and Slavoj Žižek. This continually happens to Bella throughout the series; her dreams tend to reveal hints at

²⁰ Freud, 2004, 401.

²¹ Freud, 2004, 401.

²² Freud, 2004, 400.

the truth that her eyes do not yet see but her mind recognizes, even if those truths seem impossible, like Edward being a vampire and her best friend being a werewolf. Žižek writes about Lacan in his work “The Sublime Object of Ideology”:

For Lacan, the only point at which we approach this hard kernel of the Real is indeed the dream.

It is the same with the ideological dream, with the determination of ideology as a dreamlike construction hindering us from seeing the real state of things, reality as such. In vain do we try to break out of the ideological dream by ‘opening our eyes and trying to see reality as it is’ ”.²³

This is Bella; her dreams show her the truth, but she believes them to only be dreams and not any form of reality.

Perhaps what modern criticism has taught me is that nothing in this novel series is as simple as it appears. Every plot point, every paragraph, down to the wording, resonates. Nothing can be taken at face value. No matter how many times I reread these texts, there is always more for me to examine and discover. I’ve read and heard many times that critics dismiss Stephenie Meyer’s language in the *Twilight* series as too simplistic. At first, I might have agreed. Yes, the wording has not made the books the most complicated pieces I have ever read, but now, having analyzed part of the series using critical approaches, I would say *Twilight* reflects more thought and planning there than I originally believed. This is a young adult novel; if anything Meyer is more limited in her word choice because of the projected age range of her intended audience. Nor should the *Twilight* series be dismissed as teenage romantic fluff. I believe Meyer made conscious, deliberate decisions (especially in character development) that make the *Twilight* series complex in ways that particularly connect with young adult women. Now when I reread the series, the different novels suggest more theories than I could describe in a closing paragraph. Perhaps this is why it deserves to be taken seriously, and has earned its

²³ Žižek, 2004, 722-23

praise; it has brought young women and girls back to reading. If anything, this should help argue the validity of young adult novels; they are rarely given the praise they deserve because their plot lines are often seen as too childish or the wording too simplistic. Authors are more limited and challenged by the age of their readers, a circumstance not faced by adult fiction writers. A young adult novel that is interesting and age-appropriate in both content and wording, and still holds up well to complex theories should be taken more seriously. And so, I believe should its author.

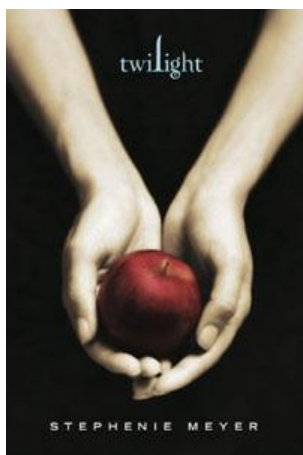


Figure 1. *Twilight* cover, by Stephenie Meyer.

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