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English 305

Feminist and Gender Criticism

October 2014

Never would I imagine myself analyzing a book I read and cherished (and even “fangirled” over) back in seventh and eighth grade for a college essay. Yet, here we are. I was the perfect intended audience then for Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight Saga*, but over time I began to see the ambiguity and complications of the series with the help of the public bandwagon: a simple representation and construction of literature, “cheesy” and dramatic characters, and just another competitor, as it grew in popularity, to *Harry Potter*. (However, the *Twilight* books... and movies of the franchise still hold a special place in my heart nonetheless.) I feel inclined to state that I understand the positive and negative views of the franchise, having experienced them myself when I discovered the books, and a feminist view of the books simply added another difficult interpretation for me to swallow.

Twilight portrays its female characters in a weak, but capable position that reflects the confusion women are facing when identifying their roles in society, ultimately they must choose to become subservient or an individual expressing their own perception of femininity.

Meyer argues that the foundation of feminism, “in [her] own *opinion* (key word) is this: being able to choose.” Essentially, any choice or anything a woman does is in light of or support of feminism in her own right. Of course, this pertains to the main character of her books, Bella Swan, as an example of this free expression of feminism. Despite the fantastical realm Bella is placed in, Meyer would argue that Bella still has the capability to choose freely.

Considering Bella's interesting characteristics: her clumsiness, constant self-degradation, the need to be accepted and yet, the need to be alone, her fragility, and her craving for sexual attention, she expresses feeble qualities that make her appear incapable of making a strong, independent decision. However, "as readers, we are told repeatedly that Bella is smart and strong, but her actions, or rather the actions that happen *to* her, only illustrate her frailty... all the while blaming herself for her troubles" (Erzen 14). Fans at TwiCon, a convention of Twilight fans, were even divided in their efforts to define Bella. Some said she was "clingy and needy and got too much attention from too many males" while others said Bella was the "suffer in silence type that chose her own pain over others—" to defend (Erzen 14) Meyer did not grant Bella with independent characteristics that would allow Bella to make big decisions to participate in Meyer's form of feminism.

The only choice that is made important to Bella, the fans, and the series is deciding between Team Jacob or Team Edward, two perfect, masculine, and gentlemanly characters. (And "Because I have read Twilight I have unrealistic expectations of men") (Erzen 36). A contemporary, heterosexual woman must juggle various roles: whether professional, partner, mother, never-aging vixen, moral leader, homemaker, etc. "it only makes sense that her fantasized mate must also negotiate a highly convoluted personality. Vampire boyfriends are noteworthy for their extraordinary ability to be all things at once, embodying masculine ideals from multiple classes and eras..." (Mukherjea 11). Edward is a great example of this through repeatedly rescuing Bella, carrying her books, carrying Bella herself, rocking her in a rocking chair, singing her to sleep with his lullaby, scolding and essentially grounding her in *Eclipse*, and even completes a college application or two for her...just in case. Considering all of this, Edward still takes a dominant, patriarchal stance in Bella's life. "He'd [Edward] never been less

human...or more beautiful. Face ashen, eyes wide, I sat like a bird locked in the eyes of a snake” (Meyer, *Twilight* 264). He still hinders her possibilities at a different future or obstructs any decisions she could make on her own because she is so infatuated with him. She’s experiencing “the glory of first love and all that” (Meyer, *Twilight* 302).

Bella’s relationship with Edward and Jacob is even more frustrating when she cannot decide between the two and jumps from one to the other; she always needs someone by her side. She never considers college, getting a job, or even dating a human boyfriend. Bella even states in *New Moon* “college was Plan B” (Meyer *New Moon* 13). Bella is so infatuated with Edward and this gothic vampire realm that she is willing to end her mortal life only to spend more time with him, “what was so great about mortality” anyways? (Meyer *New Moon* 10). This neediness to have a partner reflects our society’s contemporary, heterosexual views and the fear of making a choice for anything but heterosexual or ideas of being single—“forever alone.” There is never a Team Bella and the recognition of her own self-empowerment and individuality, however, she ironically understands that she has her “own life to live” even when her choices are so narrowly focused on boys (Meyer *Twilight* 475).

However, “separatism is not a real choice for the human race, though a few individuals might manage it. Making this the issue – will you leave the company of men or remain for ever in their power? – obscures the real problems of finding ways to live together in harmony, which in the end is what most people would prefer” (Midgley 52).

Works Cited

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Other people prefer watching TV to reading books. Personally, I get a lot of enjoyment out of reading books. Our family loves gathering in the sitting room in the evening and reading books: fairy tales, novels, detective stories, thrillers, fantastic stories and what not. It has become a tradition and I'm sure it makes our family united. To my mind, books are our best teachers and friends because they have the power to educate and entertain us. When I'm tired, I like reading detective stories and thrillers. When I want something more serious and instructive, I take an encyclopedia or *Analysing gender and language*. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, Vol. 9, Issue. 1, p. 118. Book description. *Language and Gender* is a 2003 introduction to the study of the relation between gender and language use, written by two of the leading experts in the field. It covers the main topics, beginning with a clear discussion of gender and of the resources that the linguistic system offers for the construction of social meaning. The body of the book offers broad and deep coverage of the interaction between language and social life, ranging from nuances of pronunciation to conversational dynamics to the deployment of metaphor. *Gender and psychology: feminist and critical perspectives*. London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: Sage Publications. Crystal, David. *Frankenstein: A Feminist Critique of Science* (1987). Anne K. Mellor. In *One Culture: Essays in Science and Literature*, ed. {287} {{89}} From a feminist perspective, the most significant dimension of the relationship between literature and science is the degree to which both enterprises are grounded on the use of metaphor and image. The explanatory models of science, like the plots of literary works, depend on linguistic structures which are shaped by metaphor and metonymy. The feminist reader is perhaps most sensitized to those symbolic structures which employ gender as a major variable or value. Find, read and cite all the research you need on ResearchGate. gynocriticism which was introduced in her seminal book *Towards a Feminist Poetics* (1979), and the theme of. *ells.ccsenet.org English Language and Literature Studies* Vol. 7, No. 1; 2017. 121. issues like racism and gender discrimination in a country that claims democracy and celebration of diversity. She. rejects women's identity crisis in which women depend entirely on men without flourishing themselves.