

# **Breaking and Catching Feminism:**

Female roles in literature for young adults

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May 2014



## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my supervisor Domhnall Mitchell, for invaluable guidance and help with developing my ideas through the process of this master thesis. Your useful comments, engagement and immense knowledge have been very motivating and inspiring.

To my beloved Daniel for being here.

To my family and friends who supported me and accepted my absence while undertaking this project.

To Runa, Susann, Milena, Ida, Maja and Stine for making my time at NTNU an unforgettable one.

Hanne Gyløien

Trondheim, May 2014



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# Chapter 1

## 1.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I investigate female roles in literature for young adults, taking a comparative approach to a number of the most popular and bestselling works in recent times, *The Twilight Series* (2005-2008) by Stephenie Meyer and *The Hunger Games* (2008-2010) by Suzanne Collins. Since the former is a series of four novels, and the latter a trilogy, I will mainly use the first one in the sequence and refer to the sequels more briefly to see if there is a change or continuity in the models of female behavior that they represent.

The thesis will open with a brief historical overview of the history of feminism followed by a descriptive summary of the origins and developments of children's literature/ young adult literature in the United States. Here I want to look at what models of behavior were established in selected magazines, journals and books addressed to young women – such as *Godey's Lady's Book* from the 1840s, which avoided overtly political issues but did cover social affairs that were of interest and relevance to young middle-class women of European descent. What kinds of articles were included here, and which messages were sent to women? My research suggests that morality, tradition, the centrality of family, decorum in dress and manners, and Christian morality, are paramount. Conduct manuals, attempting to educate its audience on social norms, will also be looked at. In *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, Nancy Armstrong argues that although conduct manuals were produced in lesser numbers during the nineteenth century, that this

was not because the female ideal they represented passed out of vogue. To the contrary, there is every reason to think that by this time the ideal has passed into the realm of common sense where it provided the frame of reference for other kinds of writing, among them the novel.<sup>1</sup>

What I want to look at in my thesis is how certain feminine ideals are brought up to date and reflected in twentieth century literature addressed to young women such as *Daddy Long Legs* (1912) by Jean Webster and the *Nancy Drew*-series (published from 1930).

My second and third chapters will focus on *The Twilight Series* and *The Hunger Games* respectively. For the former, I look beneath the apparent sensationalism and excess of its

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<sup>11</sup> Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (1987), p.63  
<<http://books.google.no/books?hl=no&id=NYD5FSeERakC&q=vogue#v=snippet&q=vogue&f=false>>  
Accessed 02.03.14

surface story of vampirism and find out how it supports politically conservative and possibly Christian morality. The main focus will therefore be on the novel's main female character Bella Swan and her relationships with the male protagonist Edward Cullen and the secondary character Jacob Black. Given the gradual development of feminism during the twentieth century, the success of this twenty-first century's series can in many ways be said to be a step back for young women – and men. In this chapter I will look at *Twilight*'s critical and popular reception, and online in fan web sites and blog sites, to investigate how young women readers formulate and respond to the messages given in the series.

As a comparison and counterweight I will look at *The Hunger Games*. An immediate difference is in the degree of choice and agency that the female protagonist enjoys, as well as the large scale scope of the novel's focus: Suzanne Collins said in an interview with Scholastic Inc. that her father was her main inspiration for writing a novel which ‘tackles issues like severe poverty, starvation, oppression, and the effects of war among others.’<sup>2</sup> There are both similarities and differences between the two series, but as I will be using *The Hunger Games* as a commentary on *Twilight*, the issues discussed here are chosen on the basis of what is discussed in the previous chapter. Again, I will use secondary sources such as book chapters and journal articles to situate my writing in the field of academic work, but also include more contemporary forums of reception online, combining the techniques of close reading of the texts and practical criticism with a reception studies approach to see what patterns emerge of female identity as it is dramatized in this series.

## 1.2 Feminism

Discrimination has given women [...] a special status in American society. For much of American history, male-dominated society in the USA has forced women [...] into inferior categories. They have moulded American history through their struggles for equality and resistance against discrimination. (Mauk & Oakland, *American Civilization* (2005), p.72)

The history of women, like the history of other oppressed groups across different cultures, is associated with the struggles to gain equal rights. Already in 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, where she promoted women's education on the grounds that women were central in the upbringing of children and should therefore have

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<sup>2</sup> “Scholastic Inc. A conversation: Questions & answers: Suzanne Collins”  
<<http://www.scholastic.com/thehungergames/media/qanda.pdf>> Accessed 05.04.14

as much access to historical knowledge as men (Barry, *Beginning Theory* (2009), p.116). In 1848, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were instrumental in organizing the first women's rights convention at Seneca Falls in the state of New York (*American Civilization*, p.73). They altered the words of the Declaration of Independence ("all men are created equal") for a new Document of Sentiments:

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. (qtd in Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Woman's Rights Convention* (2004) p.198)

This was "a revolution of women against patriarchal institutions: the law, the family, religion, work, education, and most startling of all, politics" (*The Road to Seneca Falls*, p.198). The Declaration of Sentiments provided a list of complaints about the treatment of women by men, including the fact that "he has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise." (*The Road to Seneca Falls*, p.199) Despite this, women still had yet to wait over seventy years before the Nineteenth Amendment gave them the right to vote in all elections in the US. But in the meantime, both men and women wrote about female characters that began to exercise different kinds of independence. One example is Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899), about a young woman of twenty-eight who leaves her husband and children in search of herself. Another is Henry James's *Daisy Miller* (1879), about a young American woman in Europe who breaks social conventions. Both end unhappily with the death of the female protagonist, suggesting that society was not yet ready for women's emancipation.

Feminist literary theory asks questions about how the female is represented in literature. Fiction provided women with role models who showed them how women are and should be, thus influencing their own behavior and manners. In nineteenth-century writings, such as the women's magazine *Godey's Lady's Book* and conduct manuals such as *How to be a Lady* and the *Ladies' Book of Etiquette and Manual of Politeness*, the focus is very much on the women's choice of husband and her role as a housewife. Barbara Welter discusses the cult of domesticity in her article "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860" (1966), maintaining that valued qualities for a women to possess were those of piety, purity, submission and domesticity. The cult of domesticity was a prevailing set of values in the US during this time,

and had a significant impact on both contemporary and later literature. Chopin and James showed how young women began to question some of the traditional roles at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century. Henry James called them “the New Women”: “Young and unmarried, they rejected social conventions, especially those imposed on women. These women fought stagnation. They acted on their own. They were the unique product of American society [...] inconceivable in Europe. [...] they suffered the consequences of their autonomy.” (Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (1985), p.176)

My thesis looks at popular, not canonical, works of fiction by and about women – for example Jean Webster’s novel *Daddy-Long-Legs* (1912), which is not far removed from *Daisy Miller*, and two *Nancy Drew* novels<sup>3</sup>, which brings us closer to the *Twilight* and *Hunger Games* series. I examine to what extent these works conform to or challenge certain codes of feminine behavior and James’s ideas of “the New Woman”. This might seem strange, taking nineteenth century standards and examining them in the twentieth century. But in the 1950s and 1960s, women’s roles remained remarkably unchanged: as the TV series *Mad Men* shows, traditional views of women as housewives whose task was to take care of the kitchen, the children and the husband were still strong.<sup>4</sup> Betty Friedan, founder of the National Organization of Women (NOW), called the American women’s sufferings of the 1950s the “problem with no name” in her 1963 classic *The Feminine Mystique* (Waugh, *Literary Theory and Criticism* (2006), p.320).

In *The Second Sex* (1949), her review of the history of women’s oppression, Simone de Beauvoir fuelled the second wave of feminism and has since inspired thousands of feminists. According to her, women had been, and still were, reduced to a second and lesser sex – on the grounds that their reproductive function left them vulnerable to isolation in the domestic sphere (*Literary Theory and Criticism*, p.320). In addressing the question of why there is a hierarchical separation between the male and the female and arguing against it, she discusses biology, psychology, history and culture to find answers (*Literary Theory and Criticism*, p.320). This thesis will consider how women are represented in the works of different authors throughout times, both male and female, and examine how her relationships to men are described.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Nancy Drew Mystery Stories* (1930-2003). I have selected two to investigate; 1. *The Secret of the Old Clock* (the first publication from 1930), and 2. *The Clue in the Old Album* (1947).

<sup>4</sup> *Mad Men* (ABC, 2007-). The series begins in the early 1960s.

### 1.3 Origins and development of children's and young adult literature in the United States<sup>5</sup>

Since the first settlement in America of English-speakers, children's literature has been an important part of social culture. The main genre was that of the moral tale, aimed at teaching the young how a good life was based on religious precepts. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1554) contained stories of gruesome punishment, and was still read and popular throughout the nineteenth century. The value of entertainment was of little importance in these stories, and many writers supported the view of Jacob Abbott that the main purpose of children's literature was "to present models of good conduct for imitation and bad examples to be shunned, to explain and enforce the highest principles of moral duty".<sup>6</sup> Reading for pleasure was, as Hunt agrees, "a prostitution of the God-given ability to read" (Hunt, *An Introduction to Children's Literature* (1994), p.39).

Many of the writings from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries portrayed the deaths of young children in order to persuade readers to become religious. *The New England Primer* (printed almost continuously from the 1680s) became an important educational textbook with its teachings about religion, the alphabet and other moral lessons. Janeway's *A Token for Children* (1672/3) was highly regarded in New England for its eye-witness accounts of the deathbeds of thirteen young children. John Newberry states in his introduction to *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* (1744) that

Would you have your Child Strong, take Care of your Nurse, let her be a prudent Woman, one that will give him what Meat and Drink is necessary, and such only as affords a good Nutriment [...] She must also let the child have due Exercise; for 'tis this that gives Life and Spirits, circulates the Blood, strengthens the Sinews, and keeps the whole Machinery in Order (*Origins & Developments of Children's Literature: ENG020N231A: Module Reader* (2011), p.23).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The following texts are found in *Origins and developments of children's literature: ENG020N231A: Module Reader* from The Department of English and Creative Writing at the University of Roehampton, London (2011):  
- Foxe, John (1880s) *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, London: Book Society (first published in Latin 1554), pp.327-329  
- Janeway, James (1672/3) *A Token for Children, Being an Exact Account of the Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives and Joyful Deaths of several Young Children*, preface and Example 1  
- Newberry, John (1966) *A Little Pretty Pocket Book, Facsimile Edition*, London: OUP, selected extracts (first published 1744)

<sup>6</sup> MacLeod, "For the Good of the Country: Cultural Values in American Juvenile Fiction", 1825-60"  
<[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/childrens\\_literature/v005/5.macleod.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/childrens_literature/v005/5.macleod.html)> Accessed 18.02.14

<sup>7</sup> Due to the topic of this assignment, this example concerns girls and young women. Newberry also outlines what parents must do to make their boys "a Hardy Child" (*Origins & Developments of Children's Literature*, p.48)

According to Mary Sherwood,

all children are by nature evil, and while they have none but the natural evil principle to guide them, pious and prudent parents must check their naughty passions in any way that they have in their power, and force them into decent and proper behaviour and into what are called good habits (*An Introduction to Children's Literature*, p.48).

Children, in other words, needed to be saved since their souls were damned from birth. The moral tales which dominated children's literature in the eighteenth century had a huge impact, directly or indirectly, on nineteenth century works as well. Focusing on religious education in the first half of the century, the second half aimed at "social advancement through practical wisdom" (*An Introduction to Children's Literature*, p.45). Especially popular in the US were Samuel Griswold Goodrich, who wrote under the pseudonym Peter Parley, and Martha Finley, whose pen name was Martha Farquharson. Goodrich wrote a huge amount of books, including Peter Parley's book of Fables (1836), and a series of educational texts including Peter Parley's Common School History (1840). In response to his success, he wrote: "it has been my chief object [...] to set forth the excellence of good temper and cheerfulness, united with energy and perseverance; to show that sources of proper enjoyment will be found all around us if we but look for them in a right spirit" (*An Introduction to Children's Literature*, p.51). Clearly, his intent was not to entertain but to educate and regulate. His *Juvenile Tales* (1840) is full of adapted versions of older stories, full of moral lessons: "Children who do wrong in one thing are very apt to do wrong in others" is the conclusion to one story about three children locked in the closet for bad behavior.<sup>8</sup> This is something Anne MacLeod discusses in her article "For the Good of the Country", where she quotes numerous writers' views on this subject:

"Children should never disobey their parents", warned Samuel Goodrich. "The number of children who die from the effects of disobedience to their parents is very large," agreed another author. Indeed, "the obedience of children to their parents is the basis of all government," according to Mrs. Sigourney, and therefore of legitimate concern to all. "There would be fewer mutinies and revolutions, if children were trained up in obedience," she added. An ideal child was also kind, orderly, honest, punctual, and

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<sup>8</sup>Goodrich, *Peter Parley's Juvenile Tales* (Philadelphia: Thomas Cowperthwait & Co., 1840) <[http://books.google.no/books?id=m\\_EXAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA52&dq=peter+parley&hl=en&sa=X&ei=hKJLU\\_27K4fnygOlgoLIAG&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=peter%20parley&f=false](http://books.google.no/books?id=m_EXAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA52&dq=peter+parley&hl=en&sa=X&ei=hKJLU_27K4fnygOlgoLIAG&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=peter%20parley&f=false)> Accessed 14.04.14 (pp.67-8)

industrious, but these and other virtues were variously emphasized in juvenile books. The virtues dwelt upon in every tale were those of obedience and self-control.<sup>9</sup>

While earlier writings were direct with their moral lessons, publications in the nineteenth century onwards tended to hide their didactic message – and they usually had one – in stories; the school story, the family story, the fantasy story and the adventure story amongst others.<sup>10</sup> Behind these tales about magical lands far away and young children on adventurous journeys a hidden moral point was made. Children were no longer only the readership; they now became the main characters in many of the stories in order to reflect real life. Hunt states that during this time “children’s literature was growing up – growing away from adults. The direct contact with children was becoming more common, rather than stories being mediated through the controlling adult mind” (*An Introduction to Children’s Literature*, p.59). A recurrent theme became the search for identity and the shift from childhood to adulthood, something many of the readers could relate to. Also, stories written separately for boys and for girls emerged. Stories for boys tended to focus on school and journeys, and recurrent themes in girl’s stories were religion and domesticity, teaching them to be dutiful daughters, wives and mothers. In her article “Twilight is not Good for Maidens: Gender, Sexuality and the Family in Stephenie Meyer’s Twilight Series”, Anna Silver underlines this well-known tendency for children’s literature to moralize and instruct with the purpose of shaping its readers: “a substantial proportion of children’s fiction attempts to construct and impose a unified (monologic) worldview upon readers.”<sup>11</sup> One of the genres aimed at girls and young women was the girl’s public school story, established in the second half of the nineteenth century, which flourished in the beginning of the twentieth century and exemplified by Jean Webster’s *Daddy-Long-Legs*. In time, writings that encouraged young women to investigate on their own grew in popularity, as is reflected in the *Nancy Drew*-series amongst others.

#### **1.4 Godey’s Lady’s Book and Magazine**

Between 1830 and 1898 *Godey’s Lady’s Book* was the most popular women’s magazine in America.<sup>12</sup> Advancing a French lifestyle, publisher Louis Antoine Godey (1804-1878) wanted

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<sup>9</sup> <[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/childrens\\_literature/v005/5.macleod.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/childrens_literature/v005/5.macleod.html)> Accessed 18.02.14

<sup>10</sup> These categories are common to discussions of children’s literature in this period. Both Hunt and Grenby discuss them in their respective works *An Introduction to Children’s Literature* and *Children’s Literature*.

<sup>11</sup> Silver “Twilight is not Good for Maidens: Gender, Sexuality and the Family in Stephenie Meyer’s Twilight Series” >[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/studies\\_in\\_the\\_novel/v042/42.1.silver.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/studies_in_the_novel/v042/42.1.silver.html)> Accessed 03.06.13

<sup>12</sup> Eisenman, “Historical Dictionary of Women’s Education in the United States”

<<http://books.google.no/books?id=nFt6csjzc48C&pg=PA173&lpg=PA173&dq=Between+1830+and+1898+Godey%E2%80%99s+Lady%E2%80%99s+Book+was+the+most+popular+women%E2%80%99s+magazine+in+A>

to inform young middle-class women on how to be ladies, and he was described as “the guiding star of female education, the beacon light of refined taste, pure morals, and practical wisdom”.<sup>13</sup> Between 1837 and 1877, Sarah Josepha Hale (1788-1879) was the magazine’s editor, hired to promote young women’s education.<sup>14</sup> This thesis will concentrate on three issues from different periods which are representative of the rest.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from its stories, the magazine presents updates in fashion and household hints. Decorum in clothing comprises a large part of the magazine, and there are articles about patchwork, embroidery and knitting, and headlines such as Madame Demorest and Gigot’s famous sleeve. Men were inspired to buy the magazine for their daughters and wives with the promise that it would make them educated ladies rather than ignorant girls and women. “Education” is a general term, being both academic or scholastic and practical: it includes promoting the Tudor hat, the Victoria tie and the Alice Maud Dress; providing food recipes and directions for preserving fruit; giving guidelines on how to raise children (“never compel a child to sit still, nor interfere with its enjoyment, as long as it is not actually injurious to person or property, or against good morals” (1862, p.98-106)), and giving educational advice such as chemistry for the young. Despite the occasional reference to political issues, such as “Two months recollection of the war in Spain and Portugal” (1830, p.41), it is noteworthy that the issue from 1862 fails to mention one of the most central events of the time, the American Civil War (1861-1865). The magazine suggests that ladies had no reason to concern themselves with political debates or conflicts, and that how to dress, how to act, and how to manage the domestic sphere were the primary concerns: the ambition was to make girls and women better wives and daughters. The few political references were meant more as

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merica&source=bl&ots=GxLNilawHa&sig=KBQ92\_k58OqU\_RNCREn3QgLkKs0&hl=no&sa=X&ei=7D>  
Accessed 02.02.14

<sup>13</sup> Morris, Rushing & Sachsman, “Seeking a Voice: Images of Race and Gender in the 19th Century Press”  
<<http://books.google.no/books?id=4fRavAMv5iwC&pg=PA203&lpg=PA203&dq=%E2%80%99the+guiding+star+of+female+education,+the+beacon+light+of+refined+taste,+pure+morals,+and+practical+wisdom&source=bl&ots=zzbKVbG8iD&sig=OMsPzWzEutVOOGT4RRrM7w3oVQE&hl=no&sa=X&ei=m>> Accessed 09.01.14

<sup>14</sup> <[http://books.google.no/books?id=nFt6csjzc48C&pg=PA173&lpg=PA173&dq=Between+1830+and+1898+Goodey%E2%80%99s+Lady%E2%80%99s+Book+was+the+most+popular+women%E2%80%99s+magazine+in+America&source=bl&ots=GxLNilawHa&sig=KBQ92\\_k58OqU\\_RNCREn3QgLkKs0&hl=no&sa=X&ei=7D](http://books.google.no/books?id=nFt6csjzc48C&pg=PA173&lpg=PA173&dq=Between+1830+and+1898+Goodey%E2%80%99s+Lady%E2%80%99s+Book+was+the+most+popular+women%E2%80%99s+magazine+in+America&source=bl&ots=GxLNilawHa&sig=KBQ92_k58OqU_RNCREn3QgLkKs0&hl=no&sa=X&ei=7D)>  
Accessed 02.02.14

<sup>15</sup> The three issues are as follows, and they will be referred to with year of publication and, when necessary, page number:

Godey, *The Ladies Book VOL. I* (1830)

<<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101064241910;view=1up;seq=7>> Accessed 15.04.14

Godey & Hale, *Godey’s Ladies Book and Magazine VOL. LXV* (1862)

<<http://ia600606.us.archive.org/10/items/godeysladybook1862hale/godeysladybook1862hale.pdf>> Accessed 18.07.13

The Goodey Company, *Godey’s Magazine VOL. CXXXIII* (1896)

<<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015024384227;view=1up;seq=407>> Accessed 15.04.14

orientations and came in the background of the domestic articles.<sup>16</sup> Particular attention should be drawn to the two stories “How the wrong was done and righted” by Virginia Townsend (1862, p.66-73) and “The story of the New Woman” by Louis Bradley Sims (1896, p.391-395) as they represent the magazine’s general view on women’s roles during this period.

“How the wrong was done and righted” is a story about Cecilia Howard, the future wife of Horace Nicholls who orders his “little girl” not to engage in the company of Mr. Marshall while he is away on a trip. Despite Cecilia’s promise to not do so, her friends Helen and Daniel Eustis trick her into going without telling her that Mr. Marshall, who has a well-known skill in dazzling women, is coming with them. Mr. Eustis says: “you’re my prisoner; I sha’n’t let you go Cecilia” (1862, p.68), leaving her no other choice but to come along. Mr. Marshall is portrayed as a man who “often took possession over her, in a manner which she could not decline without marked rudeness; and in a little while she submitted to it, and forgot all about the disagreeable necessity” (1862, p.69). Cecilia later tells Horace that she kept her promise, but she regrets the lie instantly: “I have told a lie! I have taken a great sin upon my soul!” (1862, p.71) Cecilia writes him a letter confessing her wrongdoing, but before it reaches Mr. Nicholls he has decided to leave for Europe. When Mr. Nicholls returns he finds her letter and understands he acted unfairly. “I thought you would come home, Horace; I thought God would send you back to me” (1862, p.73) is Cecilia’s reaction when she sees her betrothed again. The story portrays a woman whose life is decided by the people around her. What she does and does not do is decided by others: Mr. Nicholls forbids her to meet Mr. Marshall; the Eustis’s trick her into coming to Central Park against her will and better judgment; and Mr. Marshall flirts with her even though he knows she is engaged to another man. Cecilia is the submissive character who follows orders because she does not want to displease anyone by being rude. The moral lesson of the story is to be a good and dutiful wife, to be obedient to your husband and to follow Christian guidelines. Cecilia was in the wrong and has to suffer “three months on a sickbed” (1862, p.73) as her punishment, but as she rights the wrongdoing by confessing the sin she is rewarded with the return of her fiancée.

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<sup>16</sup> Despite the somewhat conservative view on debating serious political issues, the magazine was liberal on other aspects. For example, many of the literary and advice articles in the magazine are written by women, and Hale published a few issues which included female writers only (Vaughn, *Encyclopedia of American Journalism* <[http://books.google.no/books?id=R6ySAGAAQBAJ&pg=PA199&lpg=PA199&dq=Between+1830+and+1898+Godey%E2%80%99s+Lady%E2%80%99s+Book+was+the+most+popular+women%E2%80%99s+magazine+i+n+America&source=bl&ots=du5s77jyUH&sig=4rVboiiViS\\_INpuGSgzGe6hbkro&hl=no&sa=X&ei=pT](http://books.google.no/books?id=R6ySAGAAQBAJ&pg=PA199&lpg=PA199&dq=Between+1830+and+1898+Godey%E2%80%99s+Lady%E2%80%99s+Book+was+the+most+popular+women%E2%80%99s+magazine+i+n+America&source=bl&ots=du5s77jyUH&sig=4rVboiiViS_INpuGSgzGe6hbkro&hl=no&sa=X&ei=pT)> Accessed 02.02.14).

The magazine's disapproval of the women's right's movement on the grounds that it would take women away from their domestic sphere caused a decrease in the magazine's readership.<sup>17</sup> The 1896 issue does present an article about Elizabeth Cady Stanton, where it says

to us, happily living in a more enlightened period, some of the laws of that day are almost incredible. At that time a married woman was simply so much of her husband's property [...] scarcely any rights could she call her own [...] Certainly no one more completely revolutionized the old medieval idea that a married woman was the property of her husband. (1896, p.69-70)

According to the magazine, a revolution has occurred and a more enlightened period has begun since Mr. Nicholls deemed his finance *his* property. This statement, however, comes in the background of the praise of Stanton as a woman who “has all her married life been a devoted wife and mother” (1896, p.70) and the addition of “The story of the “New Woman”“. Here, the protagonist Priscilla aspires to become a “new woman” and states that “I mean to show you all that there is something in life for a woman besides marrying” (1896, p.392). Her boyfriend Richard deems these ideas “some little school girl notions” (1896, p.392) and her friends says that “you will get over it in a few months [...] Wait until the right man comes along” (1896, p.391). Richard, assumed to know Priscilla better than she knows herself, manages to silence his girlfriend when trying to persuade her into marrying him: “the emancipated woman remained silent” (1896, p.393). He is in many ways similar to the medieval Mr. Nicholls when saying “oh, sweetheart, how little you understand” (1896, p.392) to his girlfriend when she decides to pursue a career as a writer. The story ends with Priscilla holding her arms out to the man she finally declares to love, and throwing her story in the waste-basket. This was a story where “the heroine had a mind and soul above love, leaving marriage for women of commoner clay” (1896, p.394). Being told that her manuscript was not suited for the magazine in which she tried to have it published, the lesson learned is that the time has not yet come for the “new woman”. After Hale's resignation in 1877 and the death of Godey in 1878, the magazine struggled until it ceased production in 1898.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup><[http://books.google.no/books?id=R6ySAAQBAJ&pg=PA199&lpg=PA199&dq=Between+1830+and+1898+Godey%E2%80%99s+Lady%E2%80%99s+Book+was+the+most+popular+women%E2%80%99s+magazine+in+America&source=bl&ots=du5s77jyUH&sig=4rVboiiViS\\_INpuGSgzGe6hbkro&hl=no&sa=X&ei=pT](http://books.google.no/books?id=R6ySAAQBAJ&pg=PA199&lpg=PA199&dq=Between+1830+and+1898+Godey%E2%80%99s+Lady%E2%80%99s+Book+was+the+most+popular+women%E2%80%99s+magazine+in+America&source=bl&ots=du5s77jyUH&sig=4rVboiiViS_INpuGSgzGe6hbkro&hl=no&sa=X&ei=pT)> Accessed 02.02.14

<sup>18</sup><<http://books.google.no/books?id=R6ySAAQBAJ&pg=PA199&lpg=PA199&dq=Between+1830+and+1898+Godey%E2%80%99s+Lady%E2%80%99s+Book+was+the+most+popular+women%E2%80%99s+magazine>

## 1.5 Conduct Manuals

Conduct literature, which dates back to the middle ages, provided instructions on how to behave in different social situations. It became very popular in America in the late 1820s due to social fears about the consequences of secularization and the pioneer women's need of information (*An Introduction to Children's Literature*). *How to be a Lady: a book for girls, containing useful hints on the formation of character (1850)*<sup>19</sup> by Harvey Newcomb and *Ladies' Book of Etiquette and Manual of Politeness. A Complete Hand Book for the use of the Lady in polite society (1860)*<sup>20</sup> by Florence Hartley are two examples of behavioral literature. Like other authors of conduct books who aimed to educate their readers on social standards, their goal was to offer good advice and assist them "in forming their characters upon the best model; that they may become well-bred, intelligent, refined, and good; and then they will be LADIES, in the highest sense" (*How to be a Lady*, p.4) through providing them with "full directions for correct manners [and] rules for the duties [in different social situations]" (*Ladies' Book of Etiquette*, p.2). In this respect the aim of the manuals is much the same as that of *Godey's Lady's Book*: to develop and improve young women's characters through showing them what is and is not appropriate behavior. Newcomb states that "to be a lady, one must behave always with propriety; and be civil, courteous, and kind, to all [...] the romping, boisterous miss, who pays no regard to propriety of conduct, will never be a lady" (*How to be a Lady*, p.10), and Hartley states that the ground rule of female etiquette is to "do unto others as you would others should do to you" (*Ladies' Book of Etiquette*, p.3). In a systematic way, both Newcomb and Hartley demonstrate how young girls should behave in a variety of social settings in order to satisfy the social norms of the time.

The importance of Christian faith as the basis for sound morality is especially underlined:

I would persuade you, then, as the first and great thing, to seek God. [...] If you lay the foundation of your character now in the love and fear of God, it will rise higher and higher, in excellence, beauty, and loveliness, for ever and ever. But if you lay the foundation in selfishness and sin, and build accordingly, it will forever be sinking lower in degradation and deeper in wretchedness. (*How to be a Lady*, pp.21-23)

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+in+America&source=bl&ots=du5s77jyUH&sig=4rVboiiViS\_INpuGSgzGe6hbkro&hl=no&sa=X&ei=pT>  
Accessed 02.02.14

<sup>19</sup> Newcomb, *How to be a Lady: a book for girls, containing useful hints on the formation of character (1850)* <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moa/AJF2301.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext>> Accessed 20.06.13

<sup>20</sup> Hartley, *Ladies' Book of Etiquette and Manual of Politeness. A Complete Hand Book for the use of the Lady in polite society (1860)* <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/35123/35123-h/35123-h.htm>> Accessed 15.04.14

Separate chapters in Newcomb's manual are dedicated to "how to pray", "the benefits of prayer", "keeping the Sabbath" and "the benefits of the Sabbath" etc., and Hartley states that "silence, quiet attention, and a grave, reverential demeanor, mark the Christian lady in church" (*Ladies' Book of Etiquette*, p.157). Those who follow these guidelines will be rewarded, but those who fail to do so will be punished: "it is profitable to keep the Sabbath, and unprofitable and dangerous to break it" (*How to be a Lady*, p.80). Newcomb's strategy seems to be that moral righteousness is nutritional: "nothing will make you so lovely in the eyes of others as a dutiful behavior towards your parents [...] cultivate the habit of submission to their authority" (*How to be a Lady*, p.24 & p.26). Submission is a key word repeated several times in the text, for example "submit yourself to the molding of the good" (*How to be a Lady*, p.15). Both Newcomb and Hartley attempt to scare their readers into following their advice; Hartley, for example, states that the young girl will become "the happy wife" when following her advice, but a "wretched victim" if not (*Ladies' Book of Etiquette*, p.247). One of Newcomb's most remarkable means to scare his readers is the story on death:

Sudden death is so common that it is a folly to be in any place or condition in which we are not prepared to meet it. Many persons have been cut down in the midst of scenes of gayety, and the same may occur again. A man in Germany was sitting at the gaming table. His card won a thousand ducats. The dealer handed over the money, and inquired how he would continue the game. The man made no reply. He was examined, and found to be a corpse! Similar scenes have occurred in the ball-room. [...] At no moment of life are we exempt from sudden death. (*How to be a Lady*, p.189)

Newcomb and Hartley, like Godey and Hale, aspire to educate women of the Victorian era mainly to be better daughters, wives and mothers. They offer advice on physical and mental good health and how to keep a sound home as well as steps in educating the body, the hearth and the mind, and ladylike activities such as reading, writing, drawing, painting and dressing, all of which are attributions attractive in the domestic being.

### **1.6 *Daddy-Long-Legs* by Jean Webster**

Jean Webster, supporter of the women's suffragette movement and promoter of education for women, published *Daddy-Long-Legs* in 1912, a novel that follows the female protagonist Jerusha Abbott through a college education that is funded by a rich benefactor who writes to her and is known only by her pet name for him, Daddy-Long-Legs. Emphasizing the values of social life and a good education, Webster portrays the growing female voice and

independence of her protagonist through her increasingly rebellious manners. Being a product of its time, the novel represents views on women that are both traditional and modern.

As a young girl in an orphanage, her name picked out randomly from the telephone book, Jerusha struggles to find her place, especially under the watchful eye of the governess Mrs. Lippett, who “often brought accusing eyes to bear upon the prisoner in the dock” (Webster, *Daddy-Long-Legs* (1912), p.8). Jerusha is a prisoner in the John Grier Home, where the only encouraged quality is that of duty. The John Grier Home reflects the traditional ways of upbringing that were to be found in earlier writings such as the *Lady’s Book* and the conduct manuals. Ongoing changes in society and its views on women are also commented upon by the president of the girl’s college, Mr. Cuyler:

the modern generation [is] flippant and superficial [...] we are losing the old ideals of earnest endeavour and true scholarship; and particularly is this falling-off noticeable in our disrespectful attitude towards organized authority. We no longer pay a seemly deference to our superiors. (p.123)

*Daddy-Long-Legs* is the unknown man who provides a college scholarship for the best essayist at the orphanage, and enable Jerusha to gain a college education in exchange for letters informing him about herself and college-life. As she never sees her benefactor and is told to call him Mr. John Smith, Jerusha names him *Daddy-Long-Legs* in memory of an insect of that name she observed in a corner the same day he visited. Lacking a description of the man, the only associations are those of the daddy-long-legs spider living in dark places trying to catch his prey through shaking his web making escape nearly impossible. Is this the future for Jerusha? His secretary explains to her that the benefactor “desires you” to write because “he wishes to keep track of your progress” and that these “obligatory” letters should be “respectful in tone” (p.10). His explanation is like a manual explaining how Jerusha should behave; this is what is expected of her. Like Mr. Nicholls, *Daddy-Long-Legs* wishes to keep track of her and decide over her. Before leaving the John Grier Home, Mrs. Lippett tells her “how to behave all the rest of [her] life, and especially how to behave towards the kind gentleman who is doing so much for [her]. [She] must take care to be Very Respectful” (p.12). The usage of capital letters here offers associations to earlier moral tales.

The first and significant change in Jerusha’s identity is that she changes her name to Judy when she starts college. From being a prisoner of the orphanage she wants to start afresh, keeping her upbringing a secret from everyone. She creates and develops a new identity for

herself, an identity that is hers only and not one assigned to her by the collective society of the orphanage. At first, feeling that she owes something to her benefactor and out of respect for him, she dutifully obeys his wishes and does as she is told. Although she wants to spend her first vacation with a friend's family, she obeys her patron's instructions to visit Lock Willow Farm. The name of the farm is significant; it is as if she is locked in there. She also aspires to learn about home life: "it's a fine chance for me to learn housekeeping. Every woman ought to understand it, and I only know asylum-keeping" (p.91). Because it is a norm in society that women should be home taking care of the family, Judy thinks it is her duty to learn about this. However, as she develops she changes and becomes more a thinker than a housekeeper. Speaking about herself in the third person she writes in her correspondence that "Judy is becoming so philosophical of late, that she wishes to discourse largely of the world in general, instead of descending to the trivial details of daily life" (p.168). Exposure to a college education teaches her that there are more important things to learn about than patchwork, embroidery and knitting. Interestingly, however, clothes are also an item of attention in this novel, much like *Godey's Lady's Book*. When Judy starts at college, it is necessary for her to buy some new clothes, after which she writes to her benefactor:

Julia has a trunkful of the most ravishing new clothes – an evening gown of rainbow Liberty crepe that would be fitting raiment for the angels in Paradise<sup>21</sup> [...] I copied Mrs. Paterson's wardrobe with the aid of a cheap dressmaker, and though the gowns didn't turn out quite twins of the originals, I was entirely happy until Julia unpacked. But now – I live to see Paris! Dear Daddy, aren't you glad you're not a girl? I suppose you think that the fuss we make over clothes is too absolutely silly. It is. No doubt about it. But it's entirely your fault. (p.137)

It is a very interesting passage, because the suggestion is that Judy is meant not only to copy the clothes that Mrs. Patterson wears but also her values and role – to become a married woman, in other words. But she, like her clothes, is not quite "twin of the original". Judy blames men for women's concern about their appearances and clothes: this is how women are judged.

Written in a time where women still did not have the right to vote in the US, Webster's support of the suffragette movement shines through in her story. After Judy's friend Sally runs for president, Judy warns Daddy-Long-Legs that "when we women get our rights, you

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<sup>21</sup> Women in the nineteenth century were often described as angels of the house (a phrase taken from the title of a Coventry Patmore poem from 1854, *The angel in the House*).

men will have to look alive in order to keep yours” (p.62). Women’s position in society is gradually changing, and women are increasingly pictured as interested and important in public affairs. Where politics was a shunned theme in *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, Judy, signing one of her letters with “Yours in politics”, states that she has no more time to spare Daddy-Long-Legs as she “casually [has to] drop a few thoughts on the subject of our next president” (p.63). Webster’s point is that, even though the outcome might be the same, women should have the *choice* to do as they wish:

The Self-Government Association has abolished the ten o’clock rule. We can keep our lights all night if we choose [...]. The result is a beautiful commentary on human nature. Now that we may stay up as long as we choose, we no longer choose. Our heads begin to drop at nine o’clock, and by nine-thirty the pen drops from our nerveless grasp. (p.147)

Towards her benefactor Judy shows early signs of trying to break free from the hold that he has on her. She is firm in her argument and refuses to let herself be dictated to: “I almost weakened; if he hadn’t been so dictatorial, maybe I should have entirely weakened. I can be enticed upon step by step, but I WON’T be forced. He said I [...] ought to let older people judge” (p.132). But a more important passage is when her benefactor demands that she give up the scholarship and accept a personal allowance directly from him instead, making her fully dependent on him economically:

I earned it by hard work. [...] But what’s the use of arguing with a man? You belong, Mr. Smith, to a sex devoid of a sense of logic. To bring a man into line, there are just two methods: one must either coax or be disagreeable. I scorn to coax men for what I wish. Therefore, I must be disagreeable. I refuse, sir, to give up the scholarship; and if you make any more fuss, I won’t accept the monthly allowance either, but will wear myself into a nervous wreck tutoring stupid Freshmen. That is my ultimatum! (p.112)

It has to be said that “being disagreeable” for a woman is equivalent to disagreeing with a man. But Judy insists on retaining the scholarship she earned on her own merits and thus rejects personal dependency on a man – which is what marriage often entailed for women in the nineteenth century. It is also noteworthy that Judy accuses men of being “devoid of a sense of logic”, since it is usually women who are accused of lacking logic by men.

Despite her determined tone against Daddy-Long-Legs and his authority, she meets a man, Master Jervie, and falls in love with him. “I never used to care much for men”, she says, “but I’m changing my mind” (p.81). She also changes her mind about marriage, which she in the

beginning describes as “a deteriorating process” (p.155). She consents to Master Jervie’s proposal, who in the end of the novel turns out to be her unknown benefactor Daddy-Long-Legs, and at one point the whole world seems to revolve around this man: “I miss him, and miss him, and miss him. The whole world seems empty and aching. I hate the moonlight because it’s beautiful and he isn’t here to see it with me” (p.160). This is worrying from a feminist point of view, because earlier Judy had written that her ambition was to “see the whole world” (p.96) and now it is limited to a man. When Daddy-Long-Legs first revealed himself for Judy he refers to her as his “dear little Judy” (p.166), just like Mr. Nicholls refers to Cecilia as his “little” fiancée. She comes to realize, however, that now she has a “Great big Worry” (p.164) all the rest of her life that she has to take care of.

There are gains and losses in *Daddy-Long-Legs*: the young woman has a chance to choose a career, to have an education, to gain worldly experience, and to practice the art of letters. In the end, she chooses a man, but we cannot help feeling that the author is sending mixed signals through this ending. Maybe the “Daddy” figure is a spider after all, luring women into his web of control? But a change in men can also be seen in the novel, as Master Jervie is described as an unbalanced man with radical ideas far different from the Church of England beliefs held by his family. He is also seen as a Socialist whose views are different from more traditional men. Therefore, although Daddy-Long-Legs is paying for her and requires her to send him letters, he has given her freedom from the John Grier Home and independence to pursue a career as an author, and Judy thanks him for this: “I am getting quite independent, you see. You have put me on my feet and I think I can almost walk alone by now” (p.130). Ignorant about the world at first, Judy turns out to be a reflected young lady who no longer bears a grudge towards the John Grier Home, and rather sees it as a useful experience that has given her a better perspective on the world and on herself.

### **1.7 The *Nancy Drew* Mystery Stories<sup>22</sup>**

In “Nancy Drew: Feminist or Daddy’s girl?”, Kate Taylor argues that the titular character of this detective series was a pioneer:

Each generation of feminists is disgusted at the new generation, but each had to do it their own way [...] The books for girls used to be really boring: we kept [the characters] at home. Nancy stood out and is still way ahead of a lot of stuff.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Of the Nancy Drew Mystery Stories published between 1930 and 2003, I focus on *The Secret of the Old Clock* (1930) and *The Clue in the Old Album* (1947). Other publications present different mysteries, but are similar in style and in their presentation of the protagonist.

While the story of *Daddy Long-Legs* showed the process of Judy Abbott gaining a measure of independence before marrying her economic benefactor and patron, *Nancy Drew* totally shattered the traditional view of women as domestic beings whose main function was to secure the well-being of their husbands and children. Created by several authors under the pen name Carolyn Keene, the *Nancy Drew* series portrays an autonomous young woman who carried out criminal investigations on her own, thus conforming to the ideal of “the New Woman” as someone educated, intelligent and self-sufficient with a variety of interests and an occupation outside the home. As Jennifer Woolston claims in “Nancy Drew’s Body: The Case of the Autonomous Female Sleuth”, “Nancy Drew is a character who defies the conventional feminine gender expectation often socially inscribed upon young women within American society by their peers, parents, or academic institutions.”<sup>24</sup>

In showing self-reliance and initiative through her attempts to solve mysteries, Nancy Drew, an “attractive girl of eighteen” (*The Secret of the Old Clock*, p.1)<sup>25</sup>, reveals various qualities that make her a role-model, especially for her young adult readers:

A fresh wave of fright swept over Nancy, but resolutely she held on to her courage. (*Old Clock*, p.108)

I can’t let a little note like this frighten me (*Old Album*, p.95).

“Not many girls would have used their wits the way you did” (*Old Clock*, p.139).

Quickly she took out the spare tire from the rear compartment, found the jack and lug wrench, and went to work. (*Old Clock*, p.91)

Nancy had frequently handled motorboats and was confident she could manage this one. (*Old Clock*, p.97)

“Can you walk at all? [...] Then your hip isn’t broken [...] Let me see your ankle. Oh my, it is swollen. I’ll bandage it for you.” (*Old Clock*, p.73)

My reward is in having everything turn out so well. (*Old Album*, p.178)

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<sup>23</sup> Taylor, “Nancy Drew: Feminist or Daddy’s girl?” <<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/nancy-drew-feminist-or-daddys-girl/article1087049/?page=all>> Accessed 13.04.14

<sup>24</sup> Woolston “Nancy Drew’s Body: The Case of the Autonomous Female Sleuth” <[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/studies\\_in\\_the\\_novel/v042/42.1.woolston.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/studies_in_the_novel/v042/42.1.woolston.html)> Accessed 13.04.14

<sup>25</sup> For future reference I will use *Old Clock* for *The Secret of the Old Clock*, and *Old Album* for *The Clue in the Old Album*.

“Here, let me arrange those pillows for you.” Gently Nancy moved the old woman into a more comfortable position. (*Old Clock*, p.73)

There had been amateur women detectives before Nancy Drew – Agatha Christie’s Miss Marple is the obvious example. But Jane Marple was an older woman living in a small village, genteel enough to employ a succession of maids. Drew is younger, more modern, and physically brave as well as mentally sharp. By taking risks and having a curious eye about the world she inspires her readers to *act* within a male-dominated society. She still retains “traditional” female virtues: she is “attractive”, not plain; she has practical knowledge about domestic questions; she is generous; and she is caring amongst other things. In “Nancy Drew’s Body” Lissa Paul is quoted as saying that women were traditionally “lumped together as helpless and *dependent*; creatures to be kept away from the scene of action, and who otherwise ought not to be seen or heard.”<sup>26</sup> Nancy does the opposite of this; instead of being a passive spectator she takes matters into her own hands, making her an agent rather than a subject, and one with a strong voice.

Previously, men were often placed at the center of attention in women’s lives. Although Judy Abbott gains some degree of independence, she ultimately marries Daddy-Long-Legs and thus joins herself to him. Nancy Drew does have a “special friend” as well - the “handsome, dark-haired Ned [Nickerson]” (*Old Album*, p.31) - but he often takes second place to her constant interest in various mysteries. When Ned says that “my future is pretty well set [...] I’ll go into business, prosper, and marry a certain ambitious young lady” (*Old Album*, p.32), Nancy interrupts him and says she needs to focus her attention on a violinist playing since it may be of importance to the case that she is currently working on. Rather than spending her time exclusively on young men, Nancy’s attention is divided equally between her two best friends George and Bess and the other individuals she meets throughout her numerous investigations. Ultimately she presents her readers with an exciting alternative to the all-domestic being.

Not all critics agree. In “Nancy Drew: Feminist or daddy’s girl?” Taylor reports objections to Drew as “a girl who makes it in dad’s world on dad’s terms”,<sup>27</sup> and “The mystery of a feminist icon” shows how others dismiss her as “a distant ideal, with no interior life and an inability to fail at anything” and “too perfect [...] she never would have thrived in the real

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<sup>26</sup> <[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/studies\\_in\\_the\\_novel/v042/42.1.woolston.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/studies_in_the_novel/v042/42.1.woolston.html)> Accessed 13.04.14

<sup>27</sup> <<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/nancy-drew-feminist-or-daddys-girl/article1087049/?page=all>> Accessed 13.04.14

world”.<sup>28</sup> But she is also praised for the same reasons: as Priya Jain points out in “The mystery of a feminist icon”, Nancy

made us hope for a utopian life of professional challenges and fulfilling personal relationships, and she provided a vision for what life might look like. It’s perfectly fine that other children’s characters offer us the chance to emphasize and feel that we’re not alone in our childhood traumas, but that was never Nancy’s function.<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, Jain continues, “even as Nancy Drew moldered in my parents’ basement, the teen sleuth still lived in the center of my heart, and became, ultimately, the most powerful role model in my life.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> <[http://www.salon.com/2005/02/01/nancy\\_drew\\_3/](http://www.salon.com/2005/02/01/nancy_drew_3/)> Accessed 13.04.14

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 2: *Twilight*

After having a dream about a young couple in a meadow, the girl average and the boy magnificent, Stephenie Meyer started working on the script that was to become one of the most popular series in recent time; The *Twilight* saga. Publishers Weekly gave her the title “most promising new authors of 2005” because of her work: “Propelled by suspense and romance in equal parts [this story] will keep readers madly flipping the pages of Meyer’s tantalizing debut”.<sup>31</sup> Deeming the novel “Best Book of the Year”, Amazon regarded it as the “Best Book of the Decade... So Far” and the American Library Association thought of it as one of the “Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults”.<sup>32</sup> Thanks to the fact that it has now been translated into over 20 languages, adolescents all over the world are drawn into the supernatural world of vampirism and werewolves. But what lies beneath its success? How is the character of Bella Swan portrayed and how are her relationships with the two male characters Edward Cullen and Jacob Black treated? Can Bella be considered a role model for young women? Taking into consideration the progress of feminism during the last third of the twentieth century, this chapter argues that the success of this twenty-first century series can be said to be a step back for young women – and men. Critical and popular reception as well as online fan web sites will also be looked at to examine how the readership reacts to the messages that are given in the series.

### **2:1”And so the lion fell in love with a lamb. What a stupid lamb. What a sick masochistic lion”<sup>33</sup>: The *Twilight* plot overview.**

The series is predominantly written from the first person perspective of the female protagonist Isabella or “Bella Swan”, the clumsy girl with low self-esteem who is prone to getting herself into dangerous situations: she is seventeen when the series begins<sup>34</sup>. The name Isabella is associated with beauty and intelligence, and the related name Elizabeth, meaning God’s promise or God is my oath, is associated with royalty and nobility: in its original Hebrew version, however, Isabella means “devoted to God”. The story begins, interestingly, with Bella choosing to leave her mother in Phoenix to join her father Charlie in Forks, a real city in the State of Washington: the place name indicates that her life has come to a crossroads. Her mother is described as having “childlike eyes” (*Twilight*, p.4) and her daughter worries about

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<sup>31</sup> Meyer, “The Official Website of Stephenie Meyer” <<http://www.stepheniemeyer.com/bio.html>> Accessed 11.10.13

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Meyer, *Twilight* (2005), p.274

<sup>34</sup> Eleven chapters in *Breaking Dawn* are written from Jacob’s point of view.

her not being able to fend for herself – but then realizes that the mother’s boyfriend Phil will look after her: “the bills would [...] get paid, there would be food in the refrigerator, gas in her car, and someone to call when she got lost...” (*Twilight*, p.4). Bella leaves her mother partly because she is not a good parent (she prioritizes traveling with her new husband Phil, a minor league baseball player), but also because she is helpless, and not a good role model.<sup>35</sup> But she flees not to independence but to a father (Charlie) and later a father figure (Edward): both names have royal associations, and both are symbols of male authority. So even though she literally distances herself from her helpless mother and shows initiative, she seeks a similar kind of dependency.

Although Bella says herself that she never fits in anywhere or relates well to people around her, she meets and falls in love with the hundred and four-year old vegetarian vampire Edward Cullen (and his family) in *Twilight*. The Anglo-Saxon meaning of the word “Edward” is a combination of “wealth” and “guard” which fits the character’s personality in many ways.<sup>36</sup> Because the relationship between them endangers Bella’s life, Edward finds it appropriate to end things with her in *New Moon* (2007), leaving her heartbroken in the arms of her best-friend-to-be, the shape-shifter Jacob Black (whose surname suggests an ambiguous status: his first name implies that he is a potential usurper, because in the Bible Jacob takes the place of his older brother Esau). In *Eclipse* (2008) Edward returns, and Bella is torn between her need to be with both Edward and Jacob. Ultimately she chooses Edward, marries him and discovers that she is pregnant with him during their honeymoon. The fast-growing child, half-human and half-vampire, nearly kills Bella during giving birth, and Edward has no other choice but to “change” her to save her life. In *Breaking Dawn* (2008), Bella thus finds that she has become a vampire mother with superpowers enabling her to protect the people she loves through her shield.<sup>37</sup> The daughter is named Renesmee and becomes Jacob’s imprintee, and everyone live happily ever after.<sup>38</sup>

## **2.2 “‘Bring on the shackles – I’m your prisoner.’ But his long hands formed manacles around *my* wrists as he spoke”<sup>39</sup>: The submissive Bella**

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<sup>35</sup> There is a breakdown in parental structure which forces the child to seek alternative authority figures.

<sup>36</sup> Wikipedia, “*Edward*” <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward>> Accessed 02.04.14

<sup>37</sup> This is a magical mental shield that enables her to block out any powers, mental and physical, when covering herself and others with it.

<sup>38</sup> Imprinting is a personal experience happening involuntarily to shape-shifters of the Quileute tribe in order for them to find their soul-mates. Once the imprinting is done it cannot be reversed and the imprinter will forever be tied to the imprintee.

<sup>39</sup> *Twilight*, p.302

What is it about Edward Cullen that makes Bella – and tens of thousands of readers - fall for him? He is first seen from a distance in the school cafeteria, together with other classmates who later turn out to be vampires, in a group that is separate from the rest of the people at the school. None of them are eating. One of them looks like a model from *Sports Illustrated* (*Twilight*, p.18). The reference to the magazine is interesting because it invokes a look that many young women aspire to when they are teenagers, and not eating is like a diet, which many young women use to maintain a certain shape. So Meyer uses these references to suggest a lifestyle and look which American culture promotes for women, and which all the vampires have. They were all “devastatingly, inhumanly, beautiful. They were faces you never expected to see except perhaps on the airbrushed pages of a fashion magazine. Or painted by an old master as the face of an angel” (*Twilight*, p.19). Edward is one of these - tall and “bronze-haired” (*Twilight*, p.19). So he is physically attractive, in a way that is new (fashion magazine) and old (master) at the same time – modern and classic – and later we are told that “he looked like he’d just finished shooting a commercial for hair gel” (*Twilight*, p.43). These comparisons don’t just get us to imagine male models, but also the values of the magazines they appear in, which tend to feature physically good-looking people with status. Of course the mention of the “old master” (*Twilight*, p.19) is because he *is* old (he’s a vampire but he looks young), but the reference to the “angel” (*Twilight*, p.19) also makes him kind of innocent in a way too, which means he is good.

When a van is about to crash into Bella at the beginning of book one, Edward protects her by placing his body between the oncoming van and Bella. He holds her in an iron grasp that saves her. This hold is maintained throughout the entire series; Bella is consumed and obsessed with the mysterious man who saved her life. When she says that he owes her an explanation for what happened in the crash, he says “I saved your life – I don’t owe you anything,” (*Twilight*, p.64) and although she disagrees, the physical act of protection becomes the key to their relationship: he is her guardian for much of the book and the series. Bella is intelligent enough to know that this hold is unhealthy and weak: “I couldn’t allow him to have this level of influence over me” (*Twilight*, p.74), but she does not seem to be able to release herself from it. She is captured and imprisoned:

“I looked down at my book as soon as his eyes *released* me” (*Twilight*, p.73).

“[D]rink, he ordered. I sipped at my soda *obediently*” (*Twilight*, p.169).

“I sat like a bird *locked* in the eyes of a snake” (*Twilight*, 264).

“[H]is hand *locked* my wrists in an unbreakable hold” (*Twilight*, p.305: all italics mine).

When Edward goes away for a few days in *Eclipse*, he asks Alice to look after Bella, who is not very content with the arrangement: “Alice, don’t you think this is a little bit controlling? Just a tiny bit psychotic, maybe? [...] It wasn’t so bad, except for the fact that I was being held hostage against my will. [Bella phoning Jacob] I’m kind of being held prisoner” (Meyer, *Eclipse* (2008), pp.146-8). But when Edward comes back she instantly forgives him and says to him that he can hold her hostage whenever he wants, underlining that his presence makes her dependent and thoughtless<sup>40</sup>. Bella’s situation is similar to Cecilia Howard’s, whose friend Mr. Marshall declared that she was his prisoner and he would not let her go. Like Cecilia, Bella is unable to stand up for herself because of the way the dominant man takes possession over her, and she submits to his authority. What is worth noting here is that submission was a key tenet of Harvey Newcomb’s conduct manual, discussed earlier: it is disturbing that submissiveness is recommended as an essential part of being a good girl or young woman in the twenty-first century as well.

In Bella’s eyes, Edward is the interesting, mysterious, brilliant and perfect creature who she cannot live without. They first meet, suggestively, in biology-class, where the only available seat is next to Edward, who instantly moves his seat as far from her as possible, shifting his glance in the opposite direction and holding his nose as if something smells really bad. Without saying a word to her throughout the entire lesson, he rushes off the moment the bell rings, and skips biology for a week.<sup>41</sup> Biology is the study of living organisms, and later we learn that Edward’s response was based on his attraction to Bella, and he realized that this attraction was dangerous for her. So one of the things that make him attractive to the reader is the masculine quality of sacrifice: he is noble and wants to save her from himself.

Despite his poor behavior and the fact that they don’t talk much at first, Bella falls in love with him. That he doesn’t say much to her in the beginning suggests that it is his youth and good looks that first attract her: he is “lanky, less bulky [than the more muscular other vampires], with untidy, bronze-colored hair [...] the most beautiful of the group” (*Twilight*, p.18). He is “absurdly handsome” and has “a low, attractive voice”, “a voice like velvet”, which is very masculine and rich (*Twilight*, p.27). After he saves her life, she wakes up in the hospital and he is standing at the foot of her bed “smirking” (*Twilight*, p.61). Later “he smirked again” (*Twilight*, p.61). He has “a patronizing smile” (*Twilight*, p.62). He speaks

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<sup>40</sup> “He was already forgiven. [...] “You can hold me hostage any time you want.” ‘’ (*Twilight*, p.189)

<sup>41</sup> Because of the smell of Bella’s blood, Edward goes hunting for a week to control his hunger.

“smugly” to her (*Twilight*, p.62). Because of the way he looks, acts and speaks, as exemplified in the quotations here, it is clear that he is the dominant person in this relationship. According to Bella, Edward’s face has a dominant expression to it, and she asks him if he is aware of the hold that he has on people. Edward says about himself that “I’m essentially a selfish creature. I crave your company too much to do what I should” (*Twilight*, p.266). He knows that this relationship is unhealthy for Bella and he is fully aware of the hold that he has on her: “you’re intoxicated by my very presence” (*Twilight*, p.284), he says. This shows that he is confident in himself, and he knows that she submits willingly to his dominance. He wants everyone to see that she is *his* belonging and *his* to decide over, and this is one of the reasons he cajoles her into marrying him as well: “I just want it to be official – that you belong to me and *no one else* [...] I do [have a ring] ready to force upon you at the first sight of weakness.” (*Eclipse*, p.456)

Nevertheless, in *New Moon*, Edward leaves Bella because he realizes that his presence endangers her life. Bella is devastated and is not capable of seeing a meaning in her life without him. She is figuratively unconscious for several months and is unable to speak. Like a child, she covers her ears and shuts out the world. The three chapters entitled “October”, “November” and “December” are empty of any contents except for the title, dramatically illustrating how Bella does not live during this period. Her father Charlie is worried and says that “you’re just [...] lifeless Bella” (Meyer, *New Moon* (2007), p.95). She loses contact with her friends and her life goes on in a haze of numbness like a zombie:

It was a crippling thing, this sensation that a huge hole had been punched through my chest, excising my most vital organs and leaving ragged, unhealed gashes around the edges that continued to throb and bleed despite the passage of time. [...] I curled inward, hugging my ribs to hold myself together. I scrambled for my numbness, my denial, but it evaded me’ (*New Moon*, p.118).

The mentioning of the “ribs” in this quote is interesting in relation to the discussion of the relationship between men and women. The Bible maintains that the first woman, Eve, was made out of the ribs of the first man, Adam:

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of

my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.<sup>42</sup>

Without man, woman would never have existed, so without Edward, Bella does not exist. As discussed in the section on feminism, the woman is incomplete and partial without a man. In her numbness, Bella gets herself into dangerous situations because she thinks that it will bring her closer to Edward. Whether it is an embrace of freedom or a wish for death, she buys two motorcycles and asks Jacob to teach her how to ride. Edward's first intervention in her life is saving her from being crushed by a van. By buying the motorcycle she may be showing self-destructive behavior subconsciously to invite Edward to save her again. During this time she develops a close relationship to Jacob, and she comes to depend on him as much as she depended on Edward: "I felt hideously empty, and I wanted to see Jacob. Maybe I was developing a new kind of sickness, another addiction, like the numbness before. I didn't care. I pushed my truck as fast as it would go as I barreled toward my fix" (New Moon, p.162). Bella needs a distraction, and in this search she finds Jacob, a new addiction where she can again play the submissive part. She comes to love him and need him like a drug. Even though Jacob tries to make her understand that her relationship with Edward is unhealthy, he has the same hold on her that Edward has:

His lips crushed mine, stopping my protest. He kissed me angrily, roughly, his other hand gripping tight around the back of my neck, making escape impossible. I shoved against his chest with all my strength, but he didn't even seem to notice. His mouth was soft, despite his anger, his lips molding to mine in a warm, unfamiliar way. (*Eclipse*, p.330)

Edward and Jacob are dominant both mentally and physically which can be seen through these images of suppression and animalistic violence, silencing the submissive female and making her unable to escape. Interestingly, kissing is seen as an act of male violence that the woman finds arousing: the man crushes her, his kisses are angry and rough, his hands grip her tightly; but his lips are soft and warm, as if awakening something in her. The act of biting and drawing blood associated with vampirism can be seen as a metaphor for the sexual act, a penetration which is dangerous but exciting.

Edward is unable to live without Bella, and thinks about committing suicide. It is Bella who saves him. So does this mean that they are equal – that she saves him the same way that he saved her? Bella has the chance to release herself from him forever, but she saves him only to

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<sup>42</sup> "Genesis 2" <<http://biblehub.com/genesis/2.htm>> Accessed 03.02.14

become trapped again: she cannot live without his imprisonment. Whenever she is left on her own she has nightmares: “when he was gone [...] it brought back the abandonment nightmares” (*Eclipse*, p.94). Bella suffers from serious abandonment issues which may have started already in her childhood when her mother Renée often prioritized boyfriends – and the book starts with Bella seeking an alternative parent because of this. It’s important to see that this isn’t just about being abandoned by anyone: because of her parents’ divorce, she “lost” her father; because her mother is going to follow her new husband, she “loses” her as well. Bella moved back with her father, but she is seventeen, an age when young men and women usually seek alternatives to their parents. There is a sense then that she is looking for a mate who is also a parent – a father figure, in other words.<sup>43</sup>

By the way Edward treats her, and also by the way she acts sometimes, Bella is portrayed as a child. Edward is very protective of her, in the same way someone would be protective about their children:

He scooped me up off the bed with one arm, and pulled the cover back with the other. He put me down with my head on my pillow and tucked the quilt around me. He lay down next to me – on top of the blanket so I wouldn’t get chilled – and put his arm over me (*New Moon*, p.50).

Bella is often described as curled up on Edward’s chest, cradled like a child, and she is described as a toddler in his arms. In discussions with Edward, she is portrayed as an obstinate and stubborn child; although she needs her medication she says that she will not take it; when Edward takes her to the prom she sits stubbornly in the car because she does not want to go. When Edward is gone in *New Moon*, she turns to Jacob as another father-figure: “I threw my arms around him instinctively, wrapping them around his waist and pressing my face against his chest. He was so big, I felt *like I was a child hugging a grown-up*” (p.178: italics mine). Being masculine automatically makes the male characters physically bigger to the female ones, but the suggestion is that they are more authoritative, superior, to the women as well. This is a role played by men, and with it comes power. Edward and Jacob share the role of being her protector, and they exchange her between themselves without letting Bella having a say in it at all. Bella is aware of this role: “It’s just *like when I was a kid* and Renée

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<sup>43</sup> Around other people she feels worthless and insecure, and when the people she relies on turn their back on her, she withdraws from society and starts gravitating towards extreme sports and risky activities such as cliff jumping and hiking with potentially dangerous men. Whether this suggests a death-wish, a desire to feel alive or an attempt at learning that she can cope with and survive danger, it is certain that her relationships with Edward and Jacob are fundamental to her survival and she constantly seeks their reassurance.

would pass me off to Charlie for the summer. *I feel like a seven-year-old*" (*Eclipse*, pp.235-6: italics mine). It might be these childhood experiences that cause Bella to regard Edward and Jacob as father figures; as a child she was constantly going back and forth between her divorced parents, Renée being unable to take care of her daughter and Charlie acting more like a friend than a father. What she desires is a stable family where someone more authoritative can look after her. Edward and Jacob thus provide her with the father that she never had.

### 2.3 "Edward answered for me"<sup>44</sup>: Choices and equality

On her website, Stephanie Meyer defends herself against allegations that she is anti-feminist and defines feminism as being able to choose.<sup>45</sup> According to her, anti-feminism is about telling a woman that she cannot do something because of her being a woman. In her opinion, Bella is a feminist character because she makes her own choices. Is this how it is in the *Twilight*-series? In the situations where Bella does have to make important choices, she prioritizes Edward or is unaware of the fact that she has the opportunity to make a choice because someone else makes it for her:

I didn't know if there were ever a choice, really. I was already in too deep. Now that I knew – *if* I knew – I could do nothing about my frightening secret. Because when I thought of him, his voice, his hypnotic eyes, the magnetic force of his personality, I wanted nothing more than to be with him right now (*Twilight*, p.139).

Meyer herself claims to be a feminist, and that feminism is important to her. In his article "How Could Someone Who Writes About Lovesick Teen Girls Be a Feminist?", Noah Berlatsky mar defends Meyer by defining her view on feminism: "Meyer is the kind of feminist who sees romance and relationships as important, who sees motherhood as important, who has fantasies in which your best friend [...] can read your mind and loves you more for it."<sup>46</sup> The counter question is whether or not this should come at the expense of the woman herself. If the main priority is always the husband and the child, where does the woman herself fit in?

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<sup>44</sup> *Twilight*, p.493.

<sup>45</sup> <[http://www.stepheniemeyer.com/bd\\_faq.html](http://www.stepheniemeyer.com/bd_faq.html)> Accessed 11.10.13

<sup>46</sup> Berlatsky mar, "How Could Someone Who Writes About Lovesick Teen Girls Be a Feminist?" <<http://www.theatlantic.com/sexes/archive/2013/03/how-could-someone-who-writes-about-lovesick-teen-girls-be-a-feminist/273955/>> Accessed 10.07.13

One of the first times Bella goes out with Edward he wants her to ride on his back while he runs through the forest with his unnatural high speed. Bella is skeptical, but Edward seems to spellbind her into changing her mind. The influence that he has over her is apparent, and in the end she goes along with what he wants. Gradually, he removes her will by taking control over several aspects of her life, leaving Bella with no choices of her own: “His mouth was on mine, and I couldn’t fight him. Not because he was so many thousand times stronger than me, but because my will crumbled into dust the second our lips met” (*New Moon*, p.512). Little by little, Edward takes away her integrity. He even takes control over Bella’s relationship with Jacob: “I wanted to wrap my arms around his waist and erase the expression of misery on his face. Edward pulled me back again, his arms restraining instead of defending.” (*New Moon*, p.561) At one point, Edward sabotages her car in order to prevent her from visiting Jacob. Bella’s need to see Jacob forces her to lie to Edward, and afterwards she is afraid to face him because she feels that she has done something wrong. This situation has many similarities to the story about Cecilia Howard in *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, where Cecilia was afraid to face her fiancé after her encounter with Mr. George Marshall. Even though both of these women did nothing wrong and nothing happened, the men in their life succeed in making them feel guilty. As in “How The Wrong Was Done and Righted”, *Twilight* is a story about a woman whose choices are taken away from her and made by others.

Meyer says on her website that Bella “chooses to marry at an early age and then chooses to keep an unexpected and dangerous baby. I never meant for her fictional choices to be a model for anyone else’s real life choices. She is a character in a story, more or less.”<sup>47</sup> Bella wants Edward in every possible way, but with his old-fashioned way of courting, his condition is that they be married first. Crucially, Edward is remaining true to the period in which he was born and raised – the custom was for men and women to marry before they started a sexual relationship, and sex itself was for the purposes of recreation. In a more secular and liberal modern democracy, this is no longer the norm. But what Meyer seems to do is import an old-fashioned view of how relationships between men and women are regulated into the twenty-first century, without offering a serious alternative or critique. This is reflected in Bella’s reaction to Edward’s proposal, which is a combination of biological determinism and panic: it is as if it is in Bella’s nature to respond and surrender to male desire, and that this instinct is more powerful than the power of reason – or culture:

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<sup>47</sup> <[http://www.stepheniemeyer.com/bd\\_faq.html](http://www.stepheniemeyer.com/bd_faq.html)> Accessed 11.10.03.

Cold iron fetters locked around my wrists, and pulled my hand above my head [...] and he began kissing me in a way that should be illegal. Too persuasive – it was duress, coercion. I tried to keep a clear head [...] and failed quickly and absolutely (*Eclipse*, pp.450-1).

There is a struggle between the head (repeated twice here) and the heart (or the body), and it is the latter which wins. So the head, associated with reason and intelligence, is less strong in women than their physical nature – and women are less strong-willed than men.<sup>48</sup> The cold iron fetters handcuffing her and forcing her into an act of submission and surrender give the impression of bondage. This is interesting precisely because, in the wake of “girl-power” with images of women as self-confident and brash (The Spice Girls, Lilly Allen, and more recently Lady Gaga), Meyer seems to advance a nineteenth-century view of female sexuality as defined by passivity. Though this seems like an extreme choice, and far removed from the reality of most women’s lives today, a traditional marriage can be seen, for some women, as equivalent to a sort of civil death – a relinquishment of personal autonomy. Even taking the husband’s name involves the loss of one’s previous identity. In *The Second Sex*, De Beauvoir poses the question of why women allow men to dominate them, and advances domesticity as an explanation. Women, being passive in the public sphere, tend to rely on men instead of forming their own female group identities. Describing marriage, De Beauvoir states that it is “an oppressive and exploitative economic arrangement, which reinforces sexual inequality, and binds women to domesticity. It perpetuates the belief that if the female is protected and provided for by her male partner, she is happy.” (Tolan, *Feminisms* (2006), p.321).

Even though Jacob has a hold on Bella, he is constantly reminding her of the fact that she would not have to change in order for them to be a couple. With him, Bella doesn’t have to go through the change of her inner self that is a necessary consequence of choosing Edward. In the wolf-pack Jacob is the Beta, the number two, in the same way that Bella always considers herself second-best at everything. When the pack needed a leader, Jacob had first-right to take the title because of heritage, but he declined it because he did not want the responsibility and power. Because of this, he does not have the power to dominate over someone else in the same way that an Alpha would. The love-triangle between Bella and her two men ends with Bella choosing the dominant one, Edward, and thus choosing death because she must die and

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<sup>48</sup> When the wedding arrangements begin to be made Edward tells Bella that she is free and that she does not have to marry him to get what she wants. This appears to be an act of reverse psychology, and the goal is to prevent her from changing her mind and choosing Jacob instead. He knows that Jacob would never force her into a marriage.

become someone else in order for them to be together forever. And she does eventually “die” in different ways – physically by being made a vampire by Edward (which is curiously imagined as an act of heroism, saving her from actual death as a result of complications during birth), and in terms of agency and identity by becoming Edward’s wife.

There is an ongoing discussion throughout the entire series whether or not Edward will let Bella change into a vampire. Bella says that “a man and a woman have to be somewhat equal [...] as in, one of them can’t always be swooping in and saving the other one. They have to save each other equally” (*Twilight*, p.473). Bella knows that they are not equals in their relationship, and she knows that she has to change in order for them to be equals. She cannot be herself, because then she will always be the submissive one and he will be the dominant one. Eventually the Cullens agree to change her, thus locking her with Edward forever when she finishes school. When the school year comes to an end it is ironic that Bella talks about her freedom being so close she can almost touch it. Even though this is what she has wanted for a long time, she is terrified as the day approaches. She knows that this will change her forever and there is no going back: “For the first time, giving up being human felt like a true sacrifice. Like it might be too much to lose” (*Eclipse*, p.589). Becoming a vampire is linked with the idea of becoming a wife: the woman has to sacrifice herself in order to be with the male. And what drives this forward is the woman’s nature. Despite the possibility that he might kill her, Bella’s desire to sleep with Edward is fulfilled on their honeymoon, leaving Bella bruised and damaged the next day:

There was stiffness, and a lot of soreness [...] but mostly there were the odd sensation that my bones all had become unhinged at the joints, and I had changed halfway into the consistency of a jellyfish [...] large purplish bruises were beginning to blossom across the pale skin of my arm. My eyes followed the trail they made up to my shoulder, and then down across my ribs. I pulled my hand free to poke at a discoloration on my left forearm, watching it fade where I touched and then reappear. It throbbed a little [...] I’d definitely had worse. There was a faint shadow across one of my cheekbones, and my lips were a little swollen [...] The rest of me was decorated with patches of blue and purple. I concentrated on the bruises that would be hardest to hide – my arms and my shoulders. They weren’t so bad. (*Breaking Dawn*, pp.80-81 & 87)

What is disturbing about this passage is that sexual penetration is seen as an act of violence (rather than a mutually satisfactory activity). Bella looks as if she has been badly beaten, but doesn’t seem to mind. This indicates a willingness to surrender the body to the pain inflicted

upon her by the male. In her article “Twilight is Not Good for Maidens”, Anna Silver argues that *Twilight* is not good for young women, examining critical responses to the series. Amongst other things she states that: “I find the message to young girls disturbing. That love is an irresistible force that precludes making any rational decisions. That it’s OK (even noble) to sacrifice your personal safety if you ‘really’ love someone”.<sup>49</sup> The message is that the women’s role in a sexual relationship is to be the submissive in a patriarchal system. Edward, who has finally accepted the idea of her becoming a vampire, patronizes her by saying that she only wants to remain human for a time longer because she is tired and needs sleep. The choice of changing into a vampire, however, is taken away from her the moment she finds out that she is pregnant. She says herself that she never wanted to be a mother, but since this is Edward’s child the situation is completely different. As she puts it, the child is “not a choice – a necessity” (*Breaking Dawn*, p.119). She is well aware of the fact that the pregnancy might kill her, due to the all-too rapid growth of the fetus. Jacob says about her that “the girl was a classic martyr. She’d totally been born in the wrong century. She should have lived back when she could have gotten herself fed to some lions for a good cause” (*Breaking Dawn*, p.172).<sup>50</sup> Natalie Wilson interpreted this in her article “*Breaking Dawn*: part 1 – An Anti-Abortion Message in a Bruised-Apple Package”. In the article she discusses Bella’s choice to not end the pregnancy, and concludes that her decision leaves the reader “with an anti-abortion message seductively packaged as a true-love fairy tale.”<sup>51</sup> When giving birth to the child, Edward has to change Bella in order for her to survive, and her decision about staying human and going to school is forever lost. Without an education she has fewer chances of getting a well-paid job. Meyer seems to reverse the course of twentieth-century feminism, allowing her character the “choice” of motherhood and child-rearing over education and professional self-realization.

#### **2.4 Change is a necessity: “We could love together – both active participants now. Finally equals”.**<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> <[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/studies\\_in\\_the\\_novel/v042/42.1.silver.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/studies_in_the_novel/v042/42.1.silver.html)> Accessed 03.06.13.

It is possible to argue that Meyer shows a character that is driven by natural impulses that young women will recognize. For many of these, love *is* an irresistible force which makes them act irrationally. In this respect Meyer could be seen as a realist whose story portrays real-life experiences of today’s young women instead of an anti-feminist.

<sup>50</sup> Interestingly, early Christians were among those fed to the lions in Ancient Rome. Meyer subtly uses Christian references when talking about Bella as a mother.

<sup>51</sup> Wilson, “*Breaking Dawn*: part 1 – An Anti-Abortion Message in a Bruised-Apple Package” <<http://msmagazine.com/blog/2011/11/17/breaking-dawn-part-1-an-anti-abortion-message-in-a-bruised-apple-package/>> Accessed 03.02.14

<sup>52</sup> *Breaking Dawn*, p.446

When she is changed into a vampire, Bella looks at herself in the mirror, and what she sees is the perfectly composed face of a goddess:

As a human, I'd never been best at anything [...] After eighteen years of mediocrity, I was pretty used to being average [...] I just did the best with what I had, never quite fitting into my world [...] So this was really different. I was amazing now - to them and to myself. It was like I had been born to be a vampire [...] I had found my true place in the world, the place I fit, the place I shined. (*Breaking Dawn*, pp.484-5).

In "Twilight is Not Good for Maidens", Anna Silver also writes that "the restoration of her identity at the end of the novel as vampire wife and mother provides an image of security and safety that evidently appeals to numerous readers today."<sup>53</sup> As a vampire she acquires the superpower of shielding, meaning that she can protect those around her if they are in danger. It is this ability that she uses to save the vampire-covens from destruction when the Volturi come to challenge them because they believe Renesmee to be an immortal child: "I inspected my shield; it felt just as impenetrable as before. I flexed it now into a low, wide dome that arched over our company" (*Breaking Dawn*, p.652). Bella becomes the mother and the protector of the family, and this is a characteristic she brought with her from her previous life. This trait is the reason many critics consider the *Twilight*-series feminist. Bella enjoys the role of being a housewife when she lived with her father; making him dinner, doing the dishes, going out grocery shopping and doing the laundry, in all doing everything that her mother Renée rejected. She is also portrayed as a parent-figure when it comes to other characters in the book, such as Renée and also Jacob ("How could I leave my loving, erratic, harebrained mother to fend for herself?" (*Twilight*, p.4)). When Jacob finishes building the two motorcycles from scratch in *New Moon*, Bella thinks that "he built it from scratch, all by himself, I bragged, proud as a PTA mom with a student on the principal's list" (*New Moon*, p.208). She actually finds that lots of traits about herself are the same, but that does not change the fact that she had to sacrifice her humanity and change her inner self to become Edward's equal. What Bella does is to choose love and being with Edward above having an independent life. This suggests that the feminine is less worth than the masculine and that marriage and motherhood are what makes women equal to men – that gives them power. It is only when these roles are fulfilled that women can genuinely be themselves; their true selves are found in the context of relationships with others. Silver argues that this idea of the woman dates back to the 1800s, where the duty of the middle-class woman was to be the

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<sup>53</sup> <[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/studies\\_in\\_the\\_novel/v042/42.1.silver.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/studies_in_the_novel/v042/42.1.silver.html)> Accessed 03.06.13.

guardian of the home, “shielding her family from the pollution and immorality of the public sphere”.<sup>54</sup> Because of this choice, all the other choices are taken away from her. Even though she wanted to change from the day she found out that Edward was a vampire, one can never be sure that she would go through with this. Right before she finds out that she is pregnant, she is uncertain and wants to postpone it and go to school instead. When Edward changes her, this is not something she chooses, but it is a consequence of her pregnancy, which again is a result of Bella marrying Edward. Issy Sampson ironically lists the lessons she has learned from the *Twilight*-series in her article “*Twilight*: what have we learned?”, and sums it up like this: “Feminism is dead. [...] Bella’s life (much like life after 30) is a depressing trudge towards marriage and babies. Meet a man. Do what he says at all times. Rely on him for everything. Have a ridiculously over-the-top wedding even if you don’t want one. Have sex (once), have a baby, devote your entire life to said baby, don’t mention going to university. Merge your identity with your husband’s. Oh, and try and look pretty.”<sup>55</sup> Giving up your education because of early marriage and motherhood is thus not something many critics would advise young girls to do in today’s society.

At the same time as Bella is pregnant, Jacob’s instincts change, and the primitive core of his wolf-self craves for supremacy. He breaks out of the existing pack and creates his own where *he* can be the Alpha. When he sees Renesmee for the first time, his life changes and he imprints:

Everything inside me came undone as I stared at the tiny porcelain face of the half-vampire, half-human baby [...] Everything that made me who I was [...] disconnected from me in that second [...]. It was the baby girl in the blonde vampire’s arms that held me here now. Renesmee. (*Breaking Dawn*, pp.330-1)

From the moment Renesmee is born, the question of who she *belongs to* is immediately raised. That Jacob imprints on her makes her *his* belonging and *his* to care for. Although it is not said, it is suggested that their now father-daughter relationship will turn into a romantic relationship when she comes of age. This act of child grooming deprives her of a future decided by herself because it is already mapped out for her. Renesmee’s destiny is very similar to Judy Abbott’s in that a dominant man follows them both with the hidden intention of becoming their lover while acting as a father-figure while they are too young to make their

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<sup>54</sup> <[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/studies\\_in\\_the\\_novel/v042/42.1.silver.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/studies_in_the_novel/v042/42.1.silver.html)> Accessed 03.06.13.

<sup>55</sup> Sampson, “*Twilight*: what have we learned?” <<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2012/nov/17/twilight-breaking-dawn-lessons-learned>> Accessed 15.07.13

own choices. Considering that Jacob is now the Alpha and thus bound to be Renesmée's eternal guardian, she will be following in her mother's footsteps when it comes to "choosing" a partner and will grow up thinking that this is the way life is supposed to be. The suggestion seems to be that the future of the woman is one in which marriage and motherhood are central.

### Chapter 3: *The Hunger Games*

“I was channeled surfing between reality TV programming and actual war coverage when Katniss’s story came to me” says Suzanne Collins when asked about how she came up with the idea for *The Hunger Games* (Collins, *The Hunger Games* (2008) p.457). The book was deemed amazing by Stephenie Meyer, who “was so obsessed with [it]” and Stephen King was held in such “constant suspense [that he] couldn’t stop reading”, and Anthony Horowitz described it as “one of the best written and most thought-provoking books [he had] read for a long time” (*The Hunger Games*, p. ii). After finishing the first book, published in 2008, Collins realized that the story was not concluded and that Katniss’ actions would not go unpunished; “and so the question of whether or not to continue with a series was answered for me” (*The Hunger Games*, p.457). The first novel was extended into a trilogy, comprised of *Catching Fire* (2009) and *Mockingjay* (2010). Because of the degree of choice and agency that the female protagonist enjoys, the trilogy can in many ways be seen as a response to the Twilight-series. There is a marked shift away from a romantic narrative towards one about surviving war, oppression and injustice, and the main character Katniss Everdeen embodies very different values from those of Bella Swan. In the rest of this chapter I will look at how the character of Katniss is portrayed and how her relationships to the two male characters Peeta Mellark and Gale Hawthorne are treated, and consider the novel as engaging in a kind of dialogue about women’s roles and potentially with the Twilight-series.

#### **3.1 May the odds be ever in your favour: *The Hunger Games* plot overview.**

The post-apocalyptic world of Panem and its annual live TV-show called The Hunger Games are told to us through the voice of the sixteen year old narrator and protagonist Katniss Everdeen. This world overlaps with that of North America, and consists of a number of states (called districts) which surround a central Capitol district. The first book of the trilogy, *The Hunger Games*, explains how the Capitol uses its economic, military and political superiority to force the twelve encompassing and inferior districts to select one boy and one girl between the ages of twelve to eighteen to partake in the annual hunger games, where they must fight to the death, with only one survivor. The participants are selected in a process called the Reaping, and the chosen ones are referred to as tributes. Upon hearing her younger sister’s name being called, Katniss immediately volunteers to take her place as she understands that her sister’s chances of survival are small in a game where the only rule is to kill or be killed. Together with the selected boy, Peeta Mellark, Katniss leaves her family and best friend Gale

to compete, knowing that the odds are stacked against them. As all the participants are assigned mentors to guide them through the Games, Katniss and Peeta are introduced to Haymitch, a former winner whose life is largely one of loneliness and alcohol. His advice is for them to act as lovers in order to gain sympathy and help from sponsors who can make crucial donations during the competition. Despite being displeased about this, Katniss realizes the advantages of playing along and forms a close relationship with Peeta.

Inside the arena Katniss establishes a friendly relationship with Rue, a younger girl who reminds Katniss of her own sister, Primrose. Their alliance is brought to an end when Rue is killed by another tribute. But survival is second nature to Katniss, who defeats the other tributes but also outwits the people behind the Games, forcing them to spare Peeta, thus leaving the Games with dual victors. In the second book, *Catching Fire*, a rebellion is rising against the revengeful Capitol as Katniss and Peeta are once more chosen to appear in the Games. Katniss becomes known as the girl on fire and plays an important role in the grander scheme to defeat the Games and its wealthy promoter, the Capitol. Again she survives, after which she is declared to be the Mockingjay; the symbol of the revolt against the Capitol. The trilogy's last book, *Mockingjay*, portrays the last battle against the Capitol and Katniss' realization that her feelings for Peeta go beyond mere friendship. With the fall of President Snow comes the defeat of the Capitol, rendering Panem a country where children no longer have to be frightened to face life. The epilogue depicts Katniss' future with Peeta, a future where the arenas of the hunger games are destroyed, memorials are built, and children learn about them in school.

### **3.2 I have kind of a power I never knew I possessed<sup>56</sup>: the dominant Katniss**

“At 11 years old [...] I took over as head of family” (*The Hunger Games*, p.32). After her father's death in a mining accident, young Katniss stepped into the role as the new head of the family. She became the mother to her younger sister Primrose because their own mother was incapable of taking care of her family without the help of her husband. Katniss says that “a place inside me hated her for her weakness” (*The Hunger Games*, p.64). The situation of the mother can in many ways be compared to the situation of Bella Swan – both are unable to see a meaning in life without a male partner to guide them. The mother becomes figuratively unconscious; she is unable to act; she is lifeless; and she is not able to fully exist without a man by her side. Her soul died with her husband, rendering her incomplete – and in need of

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<sup>56</sup> *Mockingjay*, p.180

protection rather than being able to provide it. Unlike Bella who is in constant need of safeguarding, Katniss keeps her family and friends from starvation by hunting illegally in the woods and defending them from the dangers the country of Panem has to offer. And, instead of being cradled like a child in the arms of dominant men, it is Peeta who becomes the child in Katniss' arms in *The Hunger Games*: "Can I sleep now Katniss?" he asks, and at another point Katniss says of him that "what I'd really like is to try and conceal him somewhere safe, then go hunt, and come back and collect him" (*The Hunger Games*, pp.309 & 383). Whereas Bella is in search of a father-figure, Katniss *is* the father figure. It is her mother's inability to act and her unwillingness to try to do so that Katniss dislikes. Like Judy Abbott whose female voice and independence grow over the course of the novel, Katniss creates her own unique identity, one in which she incorporates qualities found both in her father and her mother. She takes from her father masculine traits such as fearlessness and a lack of sentimentality; "I silence it [a jabberjay] with an arrow in its throat. The bird falls to the ground. I remove my arrow and wring its neck for good measure. Then I hurl the revolting thing into the jungle" (*Catching Fire*, p.411). From her mother she inherits positive feminine characteristics such as compassion and kindness. Rachel Stark discusses this blending of masculinity and femininity in "Why Katniss is a Feminist Character (And It's Not Because She Wields a Bow and Beats Boys Up)", emphasizing the importance of female relationships:

Ultimately, it's not the weapons Katniss wields but the relationships she nurtures that save her life [...] She learns to recognize, value, and eventually embrace feminine strengths. It's her ability to find strength in other women – and to support them in return – that makes the girl on fire a feminist.<sup>57</sup>

According to Simone de Beauvoir, previously discussed in the section on feminism, women should create their own female group identities instead of rendering themselves passive by relying overly much on men. That Katniss finds female relationships important, and forms a close relationship with Rue in the arena, a young girl who reminds her of her sister Primrose, is therefore significant. Like Nancy Drew, who prioritizes the relationship with her two best friends rather than directing all her attention to young men, Katniss forms an alliance with Rue to overcome the oppressive Capitol and its chosen contestants in the arena, and both characters can be seen as doing feminist work. Tolan discusses female identity in her article "Feminisms", stating that "feminism should work to liberate women from a system of male-

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<sup>57</sup> Stark, "Why Katniss is a Feminist Character (And It's Not Because she Wields a Bow and Beats Boys Up)" <<http://www.tor.com/blogs/2012/03/why-katniss-is-a-feminist-character-and-its-not-because-she-wields-a-bow-and-beats-boys-up>> Accessed 06.07.13

centred valued and beliefs, and should empower them to discover their own uniquely female identity” (*Feminisms*, p.323). Katniss forms her own unique identity by combining traits which have been culturally gendered as “masculine” and “feminine”, refusing to be confined to one sphere or one set of abilities, and it is partly as a result of this that she emerges victorious in the Games. As Jennifer Mitchell discusses in “Of Queer Necessity: Panem’s Hunger Games as Gender Games”, Katniss is aware of her ability to shift between the different gender roles depending on what is required of her in the different situations that she comes across:

long before she enters the arena as the girl on fire, Katniss is conscious of her gender performance and the confines in traditional gender roles. By occupying both male and female positions in her household and the district at large, Katniss is able to transition immediately and seamlessly between genders whenever necessary.<sup>58</sup>

Katniss uses her ability to switch between genders to overcome the power of the Capitol over its inhabitants. Despite the Capitol’s attempts to make her entirely “female” by styling her as such in the Remake Center prior to the Games, Katniss never loses her “masculine traits.” The following quotes show that Ellyn Lem and Holly Hassel are correct in claiming that Katniss “balances traditionally masculine qualities such as athleticism, independence, self-sufficiency, and a penchant for violence with traditionally feminine qualities such as idealized physical female beauty and vulnerability” in “‘Killer’ Katniss and ‘Lover Boy’ Peeta: Suzanne Collins’s Defiance of Gender-Genred Reading”<sup>59</sup>

The boy from District 1 dies before he can pull out the spear. My arrow drives deeply into the centre of his neck. He falls to his knees and halves the brief remainder of his life by yanking out the arrow and drowning in his own blood. I’m reloaded, shifting my aim from side to side, while I shout at Rue, “Are there more? Are there more?” (*The Hunger Games*, p.282)

And here I am with buckets of money, far more than enough to feed both our families now, and [Gale] won’t take a single coin. It’s even hard for him to let me bring in the

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<sup>58</sup> Mitchell, “Of Queer Necessity: Panem’s Hunger Games as Gender Games”  
<[http://www.academia.edu/5316318/Of\\_Queer\\_Necessity\\_Panems\\_Hunger\\_Games\\_as\\_Gender\\_Games](http://www.academia.edu/5316318/Of_Queer_Necessity_Panems_Hunger_Games_as_Gender_Games)>  
Accessed 18.04.14

<sup>59</sup> Pharr & Clark, “Of Bread, Blood and The Hunger Games: Critical Essays on the Suzanne Collins Trilogy”  
<<http://books.google.no/books?id=n7rCt8Ee5QsC&pg=PA118&lpg=PA118&dq=Suzanne+Collins's+Defiance+of+Gender-Genred+Reading&source=bl&ots=ICPmmZ-tki&sig=nDIYR8sCUvckb2p3B7NY9iVIJ5A&hl=no&sa=X&ei=WbUU8unO8niywPiILQBA&ved=0CEUQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=Suzanne%20Collins>> Accessed 18.04.14

meat, although he'd surely have kept my mother and Prim supplied if I'd been killed in the Games. (*Catching Fire*, p.6)

The bird, the pin, the song, the berries, the watch, the cracker, the dress that burst into flames. I am the Mockingjay. The one that survived the Capitol's plans. The symbol of the rebellion. (*Catching Fire*, p.466)

And there I am, blushing and confused, made beautiful by Cinna's hands, desirable by Peeta's confession, tragic by circumstance, and by all accounts, unforgettable. (*The Hunger Games*, p.167)

"Why don't you get some sleep?" [Peeta] says. *Because I can't handle the nightmares. Not without you*, I think. They are sure to be dreadful tonight. (*Catching Fire*, p.231)

Labelling Katniss the anti-Bella Swan, Rachel Stark praises the female protagonist for doing "something more worthwhile than choose between two men".<sup>60</sup> Love, and the drama that comes with it, is a typical theme in literature for young adults, but whereas love and romance are the main focus in the *Twilight*-series, this theme provides only the subplot for *The Hunger Games* trilogy. Instead of being consumed either by the boy who is madly in love with her or by the boy who is her best friend and hunting partner, Katniss is more pragmatic and focused on her own survival and that of her family: her act of potential self-sacrifice through violent competition is one that is often gendered as male (fighting to protect those who are weak and defenseless, overcoming physical obstacles, and killing rivals). Katha Pollitt remarks in "The Hunger Games' Feral Feminism" that "When [Katniss] thinks about fairness and justice, she's thinking about social class and political power, not about who gets to be prom queen."<sup>61</sup> Going against *Godey's Lady's Book* that suggests women not concern themselves with political debate or conflict, Katniss rejects social conventions and acts on her own. She continues the ideals promoted in the *Nancy Drew*-series, of an independent woman with a mission of her own. In rejecting her mother's passivity, Katniss acts as an example for her young adult readers – not to kill, but to combine physical and ethical abilities, to take a more active role. In her opinion, the fact that Peeta announces his love for her in front of the entire nation during the televised interviews prior to the Games makes her look weak. For the audience she has to play the role of a star-crossed lover, a role she dislikes and is unfamiliar with: "I lean forward and kiss [...] first time I've ever kissed a boy, but all I can register is

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<sup>60</sup> <<http://www.tor.com/blogs/2012/03/why-katniss-is-a-feminist-character-and-its-not-because-she-wields-a-bow-and-beats-boys-up>> Accessed 06.07.13

<sup>61</sup> Pollitt, "The Hunger Games' Feral Feminism" <<http://www.thenation.com/article/167182/hunger-games-feral-feminism#>> Accessed 06.07.13

how unnaturally hot his lips are from the fever” (*The Hunger Games*, p.315). The focus is not on the kiss itself, something that is also emphasized later with her dismissive reference to “the whole romance thing” (*The Hunger Games*, p.320). In *Twilight*, in comparison, kissing is seen as a violent act where the man crushes the woman angrily and roughly to demonstrate his dominance, making the woman silent and forcing her under his authority. Instead of letting the dominant man take possession over her in a way that makes it impossible for her to escape, Katniss is instead seen as their equal.

Even though Katniss comes to appreciate Peeta more when getting to know him better, she can never reciprocate his interest because their relationship was forced upon them by the Capitol as a PR exercise to attract viewers and make the competition more interesting. Because he is a pawn, Peeta is connected to President Snow, a name with a lot of irony: it is clearly meant to imply purity but is understood more as coldness.<sup>62</sup> The only reason Katniss agrees to put on a show for the audience is to keep both herself and Peeta alive by appealing to the sympathy of the viewers. But, away from the settings of the Hunger Games, Katniss feels that their relationship is non-existent:

I stare into the mirror as I try to remember who I am and who I am not. By the time I join the others, the pressure of Peeta’s arms around my shoulder feels alien [...] Already the boy with the bread is slipping away from me. (*The Hunger Games* pp.450 & 453)

During ceremonies, we are solemn and respectful but always linked together, by our hands, our arms. At dinners, we are borderline delirious in our love for each other. We kiss, we dance, we get caught trying to sneak away to be alone. On the train, we are quietly miserable as we try to assess what effect we might be having. (*Catching Fire*, pp.88-89)

Feeling that Peeta – however unwillingly - represents what the Capitol wants, the power she is trying to break free from, a future with him would be impossible: “I have chosen Gale and the rebellion, and a future with Peeta is the Capitol’s design, not mine” (*Catching Fire*, p.147). As opposed to Peeta who is associated with coldness, Gale is repeatedly associated with warmth and Katniss describes him as a person “soaking with warmth” (*Catching Fire*, p.118). This connects him with Jacob Black, whose warmth often protects Bella.

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<sup>62</sup> These characteristics are also found in Bella’s choice of man, Edward Cullen, whose pale-vampire body is always cold. But Snow is inhuman in a different way – he is cruel and heartless. Edward is cold because he is a vampire, but also because Bella then has a role in the relationship – she is the one who will warm him, whose femininity will “humanize” him in a way.

### 3.3 “Peeta bakes. I hunt”<sup>63</sup>: Choices and equality

My name is Katniss Everdeen. I am seventeen years old. My home is district 12. There is no district 12. I am the Mockingjay. I brought down the Capitol. President Snow hates me. He killed my sister. Now I will kill him. And then the Hunger Games will be over. (*Mockingjay*, p.411)

Stephenie Meyer, defining feminism as being able to choose and classifying Bella a feminist character because she makes her own choices, nevertheless seems to advance a nineteenth-century view of female sexuality as defined by passivity through rendering her female protagonist as the belonging of a dominant man. Wanting to give Peeta some of the credit for her survival in the Games and stating that “alone, I can’t be the Mockingjay” (*Mockingjay*, p.86), Haymitch thinks that Katniss can be the Mockingjay as long as she gets to make her own decisions: “every time we coach her or give her lines, the best we can hope for is ok. It has to come from her. That’s what people are responding to” (*Mockingjay*, p.86). Katniss cannot be herself as long as someone is making decisions *for* her; she is an object without her own will, the property of the public. While Bella lets herself be ruled over, Katniss tries to break free from the prison of the arenas created by the Capitol and its people. She wants to show people that she is nobody’s property, and because of this she decides to end the Capitol’s supremacy by killing the new president:<sup>64</sup> “the point of my arrow shifts upward. I release the string. And President Coin collapses over the side of the balcony and plunges to the ground. Dead.” (*Mockingjay*, p.434)

Nevertheless, in “What’s Wrong With *The Hunger Games* is What No One Noticed” Katniss is criticized as a character for not making decisions and for lacking agency.<sup>65</sup> Amanda Firestone defines agency as “the ability to make decisions and effectively enact those decisions to achieve specific results”.<sup>66</sup> But it’s important to see that instead of letting other people make choices on her behalf (like Bella), Katniss makes several important decisions in order to keep herself and the people she cares about alive. For example, she decides to ally

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<sup>63</sup> *Mockingjay*, p.452

<sup>64</sup> After the Capitol and President Snow are defeated, the leader of the rebellion, Ms. Coin, takes over as the new President of Panem. Despite being a rebel, she is in favor of holding one final and symbolic hunger games, thus continuing old traditions.

<sup>65</sup> “What’s Wrong With *The Hunger Games* Is What No One Noticed”

<[http://thelastpsychiatrist.com/2012/04/whats\\_wrong\\_with\\_the\\_hunger\\_ga\\_1.html](http://thelastpsychiatrist.com/2012/04/whats_wrong_with_the_hunger_ga_1.html)> Accessed 06.07.13

<sup>66</sup> <<http://books.google.no/books?id=n7rCt8Ee5QsC&pg=PA118&lpg=PA118&dq=Suzanne+Collins+s+Defiance+of+Gender-Genred+Reading&source=bl&ots=ICPmmZ-tki&sig=nDIYR8sCUvckb2p3B7NY9iVIJ5A&hl=no&sa=X&ei=WBdUU8unO8niywPiILQBA&ved=0CEUQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=Suzanne%20Collins>> Accessed 18.04.14

herself with Rue and to assassinate President Coin. Further criticism claims that Katniss does not kill anyone: “though this is a story about kids killing kids, somehow Katniss never actually plans and executes any kids, she’s never guilty of murder”.<sup>67</sup> Although this is strictly speaking incorrect, it is Katniss’ *own choice* whether or not to kill someone. It is the will of the Capitol that the children should kill each other, not Katniss’ own. She repeatedly tries to change things so that choices imposed by the Capitol are changed into her own choices: when the Capitol designates Primrose to compete in the Games, Katniss transforms it into her choice by volunteering to participate in her sister’s place; and despite the Capitol’s mandate that there can be only one winner of the Hunger Games, both Katniss and Peeta are accepted as winners because of Katniss’ threat to commit suicide if she does not get her will.

When deciding whether or not to hold a last symbolic Hunger Games after the Capitol is defeated, Gale is in favor whilst Peeta is against this idea. Gradually, Gale has aligned himself with the Capitol while Peeta has distanced himself from it. Now that the Capitol is defeated, Katniss can see people for who they really are, and what she sees in Gale is increasing coldness “kindled with rage and hatred” (*Mockingjay*, p.453). Gale has turned into a person who is content with sacrificing children for the “good” of the nation, while Peeta is ready to declare another war in order to prevent this from happening:

What I need is a dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction. The promise that life can go on, no matter how bad our losses. That it can be good again. And only Peeta can give me that. (*Mockingjay*, p.453)

The dandelion in the spring is the growing warmth of Peeta, who “pulls me in close and buries his face in my hair. Warmth radiates from the spot where his lips just touch my neck, slowly spreading through the rest of me” (*Catching Fire*, p.233): later Katniss describes how she sinks “down into sleep, enveloped in his warmth” (*Catching Fire*, p.233). Katniss and Peeta are the new woman and man, and their relationship – in which men and women can perform each other’s tasks – embodies new gender roles: they are equals, and the lines between what is masculine and feminine are erased. Reversing the traditional view and stereotyping of men and women as seen in earlier magazines and conduct manuals where the woman’s place was within the domestic sphere, *The Hunger Games* portrays a female who hunts in the woods and a male who bakes in the kitchen. A relationship with Gale, however, would render them more as a traditional couple; for example, when Katniss returns from the

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<sup>67</sup> <[http://thelastpsychiatrist.com/2012/04/whats\\_wrong\\_with\\_the\\_hunger\\_games\\_1.html](http://thelastpsychiatrist.com/2012/04/whats_wrong_with_the_hunger_games_1.html)> Accessed 06.07.13

Games and offers him money to buy food, Gale refuses to let her help him as he sees it as his duty as a man to provide for his family. With Peeta, Katniss gives birth to two children, one boy and one girl, representing a new future. Unlike Renesmee who has her whole future laid out before her, these children are born into a free world where they can make their own choices.

For Stephenie Meyer, romance, relationships and motherhood are important from a feminist point of view, but the language she uses in writing about them suggests that women are given little choice in these arenas and are often forced to suppress their own ability to make sensible decisions. Katniss does not have to give up herself in order to be with Peeta and become a mother - unlike Bella, who has to change her inner self in order to become Edward's equal and give birth to Renesmee. Primrose, Katniss' fragile younger sister who depended on someone else to save her, is ultimately killed, suggesting that this type of woman does not fit into the new world. In this respect, Primrose can be seen as an equivalent to Bella Swan, who constantly needed the men in her life to save her. The death of Primrose can thus be seen as Suzanne Collins' answer to Bella Swan, and to what Bella Swan represents, and in that sense the *Hunger Games* trilogy is also a response to the *Twilight* series, promoting active and resourceful young women with a variety of interests over the female who is forced by nature or culture or both to be passive and focused mainly on males.

### **3.4 Breaking and catching feminism: Conclusion**

Literature for children and young adults has, since the first settlement in America of English-speakers, been an important part of social culture. The interest of this thesis has been to investigate the representation of women in literary works throughout times, focusing especially on the *Twilight*-series by Stephenie Meyer and *The Hunger Games* trilogy by Suzanne Collins.

In the nineteenth century, a variety of written sources such as *Godey's Ladie's Book* and conduct manuals addressed the needs of middle-class young women in America, emphasizing the importance of good morals, traditions, family, decorum in dress and manners as well as Christianity. The ambition was to make girls and women better daughters, wives and mothers. Henry James' idea of "the New Woman" was not yet welcomed as portrayed in the two stories "How the wrong was done and righted" and "The story of the "New Woman"": Cecilia Howard is a submissive character who follows orders and lets her choices be made by others, and Priscilla attempts to introduce a manuscript about a "new woman" but is

ultimately turned down by the publishers who deem it unsuitable. How these feminine ideals are brought up to date and reflected in twentieth century literature is in this thesis exemplified through *Daddy-Long-Legs* and the *Nancy Drew*-series. Judy Abbott is given her freedom from the John Grier Home, the symbol of traditional ways of educating young women of the nineteenth century. Despite marrying a man, Daddy-Long-Legs, Judy appreciates the help he gives her making her independent and giving her the opportunity to move outside the confines of the domestic sphere: she gains a college education and pursues a career as an author. Nancy Drew's interests and occupation are also outside the home. As an educated, intelligent and self-sufficient young woman, Nancy defies the conventional feminine gender expectations and conforms to the ideal of "the New Woman". Through her various mysteries she inspires her readers to act within the male-dominated society.

Like Nancy Drew, Katniss Everdeen encourages her readers to act. Together with the male protagonist of *The Hunger Games*, she erases the division between the masculine and the feminine, and reverses the traditional stereotyping of men and women as seen in earlier magazines and conduct manuals where the woman's place was within the domestic sphere. Suzanne Collins promotes the active and resourceful young woman with a variety of interests over the female who is forced by nature or culture or both to be passive and focused mainly on males. This is the critique that *The Hunger Games* directs towards *Twilight*. Both the series are works of fantasy, but nevertheless they do address realistic experiences such as friendship, family relations and romantic and sexual relationships. Even here, though, the *Twilight*-series shows women to be much more passive than men: Bella Swan is, like Cecilia Howard, a submissive prisoner of the dominant man, and her choices are ultimately taken away from her or made by others. Stephenie Meyer seems to suggest that marriage and motherhood are the most central events in a women's life: in order to become Edward's equal Bella has to marry him, give birth to his child and sacrifice her humanity. In contrast, *The Hunger Games* offers a shift from the romantic narrative towards one about surviving war, oppression and injustice. Considering the gradual development of feminism from *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* and the first women's rights convention, through nineteenth century literature such as *Godey's Lady's Book* and conduct manuals, to twentieth century works as demonstrated with *Daddy-Long-Legs* and the *Nancy Drew*-series, the success of *Twilight* can in many ways be said to be a step back for young women – and men. Whereas *The Hunger Games* continues and catches the development of feminism, the *Twilight*-series seems to break with this progress and rather

advance a more conservative view on women as represented in earlier magazines and conduct manuals.

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