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A Symptomatic Reading on Meyer's Twilight Series: Some Vicarious Lessons Overview

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Abstract. *This paper analyzes the problems or conflicts related to the character of Bella Swan who colors the plot in the Twilight series written by Stephenie Meyer, a popular literary romance genre with a vampire theme, a New York Times Best Seller, that consists of four (4) series, namely Twilight, New Moon, Eclipse, and Breaking Dawn. The author uses the Symptomatic Reading theory based on several expert opinions and basic theories about romance and fantasy, as well as several other expert opinions about this work. Written from the perspective of the main character, Bella, the four Twilight series explicitly and implicitly show some of the problems or conflicts that Bella experienced as a young girl approaching adulthood. The conflicts she experiences stem from his family, herself, and her love life. By analyzing this series of novels, the author not only presents the differences between ideological matters and the facts or reality of the main character's problems, but also raises a new understanding or perhaps more precisely an acknowledgment of the realities that underlie family circumstances, choices and desires of an individual like Bella. Through this analysis, some values or discussions can be drawn and overviewed and can be taken into consideration for the teaching and learning in literature classes, or for the general readers and movie goers in general; bearing in mind that popular literature is no longer a topic to be taken lightly, but must be criticized and benefited from in this era of media and technology, which, in turn, greatly influences the popular culture itself. Thus, it is hoped as well that there will be a balance in knowledge and decision-making in discussions about popular literature.*

Keywords: *Symptomatic reading, Meyer, romance, fantasy, vampire, vicarious lessons*

INTRODUCTION

While popular literature is usually placed and appreciated under high literature - due to its pleasure-oriented and commercial-oriented nature-, it must be admitted that popular literature is a reflection of people and their culture. Reading and understanding a popular novel can be both for pleasure and for investigation. Behind the easy reading of a pop literature lie some meanings – either deep or shallow- readers may learn and reflect on. It is necessary to read for the 'symptoms' or the problems behind what appears to be fun or pleasant on the text. It is not one easy reading sometimes.

According to (Storey, 1996) asymptomatic reading of a text is reading for the visible problematic against the invisible one. According to Louis Althusseras quoted in (Storey, 1996), "ideological discourse is a closed system. As such, it can only ever set itself such problems as it can answer. To remain secure within its self-imposed boundaries, it must stay silent on questions which threaten to take it beyond these boundaries". By this formulation, Althusser comes to a concept of the 'problematic', which can be related to the term 'symptomatic', since both words, when combined, bring about the idea of 'indicative', where 'a problem helps indicate another problem' in fiction. This concept is relevant to what (Storey, 1996) furthermore concludes that "a problematic is structured as much by what is absent (what is not said) as by what is present (what is said)". And the task of symptomatic reading is to "produce a new knowledge of the text" (Storey, 1996), explaining the ideological necessity of its silence, its silences, its structuring incompleteness – the *staging* of that which it cannot speak" (Storey, 1996). In brief, "what is important in the work is what it does not say". The task of the writer, then, is to explain the disparity between the subject of the narrative and its inscription in narrative. For example, Storey uses one of Jules Verne's works that stages the contradiction between the myth or ideology of French imperialism with its voyages of conquest and the reality or history of imperialism through the "continual staging of the fact that the lands are always already occupied" by others (Storey, 1996), despite the ideology of imperialism itself.

In line with the symptomatic theory above, the vampire-themed narratives of Meyer's *Twilight* series belong as well to fantastic literature that discusses "the questions of

unconscious emerges" (Jackson, 1981). According to Jackson (1981) fantastic literature creates a discourse space that is different from the conscious or real space due to the inadequacy of its language in expressing about desire. Moreover, she adds that "those narrative effects and forms can be seen as manifestations of deeper cultural issues", by creating uncanny sphere, the unseen-before or unfamiliar environment or region which lie behind the real one. In Meyer's series, the forest region of Forks is described as foggy, dark, rainy and mysterious, as well as hiding inside it a pack of mysterious werewolves and a clan of vampires which both take the forms of common men and women when mingling with humans. Jackson uses the term 'paraxis' to explain that fantastic literature metaphorically has a mirror that reflects or represents an imaginary world which is "neither entirely 'real' (object), nor entirely 'unreal' (image), but is located somewhere indeterminately between the two" (Jackson, 1981).

A symptomatic reading on a fantasy fiction on romance can be associated with a reading about "dissatisfaction with women's lives" (Storey, 1996). In Storey (1996), Tania Modleski presents that popular narratives "'speak to very real problems and tensions in women's lives'", although acknowledging then that the way the narratives resolve problems and tensions is far from pleasing the modern feminists. As mentioned by Storey in Lolowang (2021) claims that "'the fantasies played out in romantic fiction are 'pre-adolescent, very nearly pre-conscious'". The women in the romantic narratives are usually recalling their very early child-father relationship, passive, and without guilt towards their responsible men. The character of Bella Swan in Meyer's *Twilight* seems to fall into the description of a young woman who is dissatisfied with her life and longing for a perfect love experience that changes her and her life forever.

Behind the 'Loud' Romance of Bella Swan

The series of Stephenie Meyer's T*wilight* combines the thrill of the fantasy world of vampires and werewolves with supernatural powers and the impossible and naïve love story between a young woman and a vampire man. Throughout the series of the novel, the author employs romance of as the leading formula in her popular literature. According to Cawelti, (1976) the gothic romance or contemporary formula is one of the most popular formulas in popular literature. It extensively uses the elements of adventure and mystery. "It uses mystery as an occasion for bringing two potential lovers together, for placing temporary obstacles in the path of their relationship, and ultimately for making its solution a means of clearing up the separation between the lovers. In this case, Meyer uses the vampire status of Edward Cullen (Meyer, 2008), the leading male character, as the mystery as well as obstacles for his love union with Bella Swan, a young woman. The glamour of this best-selling and major motion picture story lies in the thrills of the mysterious world of the vampire clan and in the convenient lifestyle of the creatures with supernatural powers.

Relating to the symptomatic reading of the novels, however, when reading what is absent or silent in the story, compared to their glamorously thrilling features, the writer finds some conflicts or problems that can be indicative to some silent events or pre-existing conditions usually repressed by popular literary authors in order to emphasize the more pleasant aspects for the enjoyment of the reader. While the dazzling physical charms of the characters male and female, together with their unusual powers of creating magic when needed, prove to be a page-turner, the personal and family problems in the background that actually put the character of Bella Swan in such a passive, depending tendency or more like an escape, are not further discussed by the author. These problems or conflicts remain as the backdrop for the story to jump into an adventurous fun and thrill of an uncanny world of escape where dreams come true, no matter how difficult they do.

What Conflicts Can a Young Woman Have?

From the four novels of the *Twilight* series, Bella Swan as the main character of the story has several conflicts that bring her life from one phase to another. Those conflicts originate from her family life. Since the dysfunctionality of her family, Bella develops a protection fort around herself to avoid hurting influences from the outside, whether from the past or present. She would decide or choose anything that can set her free from the painful past of her parental divorce in order to transfer herself to a better situation. Love becomes her main vehicle in achieving her goal. She becomes fully receptive to the love at the first sight with the magic charm of a Hollywood-look-alike Edward Cullen (Meyer, 2008), who actually has been a vampire himself for about ninety years. Her next conflict is her decision to become like her lover, a vampire,

when she hits eighteen years old in order to be immortal and to have an immortal love. As her final conflict, she decides to keep her suspected semi-vampire baby through a fatal phase of pregnancy and delivery, refusing the idea of abortion, to finally realize her transformation plan of being a vampire through death.

A Dysfunctional Family

The function of Bella Swan's family in the series is not discussed or exposed as fully as her side of life with Edward the vampire and his family. The story of her parents and their life as a family serves just like a backdrop, a broken one, for a fragile, pre-adolescent girl like Bella. It is a silent but hurting shadow from where Bella emerges and escapes. The absence of a normal family life indicates some problems of family dysfunctionality.

With only some blur memories of a childhood with her mother and father, Bella finds herself living in the hot Arizona with her mother who is just remarried to her second husband whose professional job requires them to move from one place to another. While her own father still lives and works in Forks, a forest town region where she spent her childhood, her mother has to accompany her new husband from place to place for the sake of a new family. Her mother is not present in Bella's important years when she had to endure the conflicting questions on love and doubt when she met Edward, her prince charming. Bella's mother is available by long-distant phone calls, but not present beside her with the necessary conversation and intimacy a mother and daughter should have in their important moments.

Bella's only supposed confidant at home is her father who, unfortunately, has no enough time nor understanding on what is going on with his own daughter. He never knows what kind of love relationship and to whom Bella is in love with. Occupied with his sheriff duty to protect Forks from the weird troubles of werewolves and vampires, he ironically does not know that her only daughter has access to all the weird troubles in town. The figure of her father represents a father who can easily be lied to about her boyfriend's real identity and her decision to be a vampire: "and Charlie still believes that you are sick. He thinks that you're in Atlanta right now … and he's frustrated. He's been speaking to Esme" (Meyer, 2008). Charlie Swan as the father has no power or access to influence her in her plans, despite the weirdness of her daughter's husband to-be and his family. He is a father who seems to agree with and accept whatever path his daughter takes, since he knows that he cannot compete with the Cullens in providing her with happiness nor the material security she needs.

It seems that the presence and open arms of the Cullens to Bella has replaced and fulfilled the dysfunctionality of her family. Although she has some problems with the vampire instinct of one of Edward's brothers and with the Volturi, the vampire high powers, Bella is always saved and happy with Edward and her new family. This issue explains that this romance actually admits a dissatisfaction in family dysfunctionality, that it proposes a new kind of family, however weird, to satisfy a young woman's utopian fantasy.

A Girl in the Fortress

As a teenage girl going into her pre-adolescent years, Bella learns that she needs to protect herself from any chance that may hurt her already-broken life. Her broken family surely has become the source of her alert. She refuses to remember any memories from her childhood in Forks since that place will just reminds her of a lost family she once had when her parents were still together. Moving from the sunny, hot Phoenix, Arizona to the dark, cold Forks, a town located near a big forest, which is constantly covered by clouds and rain. This setting may symbolize Bella's effort to hide herself in a shadowy place or atmosphere of her dark, melancholic heart to avoid the exposure of life. She finds it tiresome to smile to people as an obligation of living in Arizona society that acquires superficial politeness. She prefers the dark, shadowy Forks, the place she once hated (Meyer, 2008). It is now the place where she surely knows how to protect herself from the shadow of her uncomfortable past. Her choice to come home to Forks where her father lives to exile herself, is an indication of her longing for love that her mother has to divide with her new husband. Bella would like to come to terms with her root, while keeping herself from any possible wounds from unnecessary memories: "That would explain why I didn't remember him. I do a good job of blocking unnecessary things from my memory" (Meyer 2008). She might find a kind of freedom in her father who does not usually shows emotions, and is always busy with work.

Seemingly, however, there is no reason strong enough for Bella to ensure her love for Jacob Black since he comes from her once-happy family she used to have in Forks. Despite Jacob's

sincere, brother-like love to Bella and partly her self-defense, she remains indecisive on her feelings for him. She loves him just because he fills up her emptiness while Edward is not present. Jacob's presence serves as a perfect distraction of a more down-to-earth love experience that may logically end Bella's relationship to Edward. It is Edward's love however, that really possesses her heart. Readers are presented with the fact that Bella chooses Edward for love at the first sight. With all the weird things attributed to Edward as a vampire, his love and magic has possessed her probably due to its freshness of experience and glamorous lifestyle he and his family show. Even more, Edward's presence and sacrifice for her guarantee her with true and pure love, respect, understanding, and supernatural protection, as well as material facilities that Bella does not have to worry about for the rest of her life. Even though Jacob is the only person Bella is able to relate to, she becomes disappointed finding out that he is not a real human: "It wasn't such a surprise to find out what he [Edward] was—because he so obviously was *something*. But, Jacob? …, who was just Jacob, and nothing more than that? … and he wasn't even human" (Meyer, 2008). .Jacob's love only helps intensify Bella and Edward's relationship, and Edward is always the best choice for her.

While creating her own fortress to protect herself from further hurt from her parents' divorce, Bella seems to take care of her own feelings from later hurts and pain that may come her way now that she is ready for love. However, this girl in the fortress is ready and confident to trust herself in the hands of a mysterious, loving vampire prince in human form with magic power and blinding physical charm as well as means. She prefers the man to whose hands she can totally submit herself, that she would not worry about pains, separation, or lacking of means, for this is a true and ideal love. She totally believes in him, like a fantasy of an innocent princess meeting her prince charming, the knight with the shining armor, who accepts her as she is and would live with her happily ever after. Even more in her later relationship with Edward, she bans herself from public exposure to live in secrecy: "I was going without a lot of things these days. …, to avoid spending time in public" (Meyer, 2008).

The Ultimate Decision

Bella's ultimate decision to be a vampire is a decision to preserve her ideal love relationship from the vanity of human mortality that would surely cause separation, something painful from which she has been protecting herself. The reason why Bella would like even to die for Edward's love is the most thrilling part of any gothic romance, where the mystery of Edward's life and the fatal obstacles from the other vampires are worth dying for. For her, Edward's love is a dream beyond expectation. She finds out a moving truth that he has to sacrifice his predatory instinct every time they are together because of love. Moreover, Bella is too grateful that she would not miss the opportunity to eternal happiness: "About three things I was absolutely positive. First, Edward was a vampire. Second, there was part of him – and I didn't know how potent that part might be – that thirsted for my blood. And third, I was unconditionally and irrevocably in love with him" (Meyer, 2008).

As Edward sacrifices his lust for blood and for sex before marriage, Bella is willing and decisive in her choice to be a vampire to appreciate such a noble love. She was never mistaken in her love at the first sight. She, then, is willing to endure all the troubles and fatal threats from the other vampires to live an eternal life with Edward. Entering their marriage is entering the door of sacrifice and death. Her pregnancy is troublesome and fatal. It makes her sick all the time due to the nature of the baby inside. Her fatal birth delivery is even mourned since her pregnancy phase. However, this phase of life is the one Bella has been waiting for.

Bella's rejection to the idea of abortion is a sign of determination to pass the transition time to immortality. This is the significant, redeeming moment that Bella can afford to appreciate Edward's love, respect and sacrifice for her. Her fatal delivery of a baby girl is the critical moment for her to be turned into a vampire. By enduring all these problems and conflicts, Bella shows the significance of the love and life she has chosen. There is a great need in her to do this all.

The Ideology of Love versus the Facts

The ideology of love in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series firstly can be concluded as a true love that respects each other. By respect, Edward as a man with sexual drive waits for their wedding day to have an intimate physical intercourse with his girl. The reason for this however, seems to be mostly Edward's vampire nature. He really has to withdraw his drive and lust to Bella since he will hurt her fatally: "… large purplish bruises were beginning blossom

across the pale skin of my arm" (Meyer,102)**.** Edward with his supernatural power is not compatible with Bella's power as a mere human. For him, withdrawing from sexual intimacy before marriage is not of moral boundary. It is about his own way of doing things according to his nature. Nevertheless, for Bella, the love that waits seems to be the love that makes a broken-home girl like her crazy about. It promises faithfulness instead of divorce, long-lasting relationship, protection, and happiness. Christine Seifert in her article "Bite Me! (Or Don't)" states that "the *Twilight* series has created a surprising new sub-genre of teen romance: It's abstinence porn, sensational, erotic, and titillating …. *Twilight* actually convinces us that self-denial is hot … Edward and Bella's chaste but sexually charged relationship was steamy precisely because it was unconsummated--…**"**(Seifert). Behind the idealism of love, however, it cannot be denied that there is a reasonable and physically technical fact that it is necessary for the couple to wait since they are not the same creatures. It does take time to jump into a decision because their relationship will surely stir chaos among mortals and immortals.

The other ideology or concept of love is of having a reliable man. As a young female growing up in a patriarchal world, Bella has a busy father who does not know how to relate with her as a girl. Her mother has to follow the new husband to maintain her dependence on him. Her lovers are the weird ones with supernatural powers: a vampire and a werewolf. It gives the impression that what qualifies to be her reliable man is someone who is dominant because he is able to save and pamper her as well as someone she admires for his mysterious powers. A human school boyfriend at school is not impressive. The gang boys on the street are just threats. Behind this concept of a reliable man of love, she needs a dominant man with charm, power, and material security that is part of the love package. As quoted by John Storey, Rosalind Coward claims that romantic fantasy adores the very early child-father relationship where the girl submits to a dominant male power. The sexual desire responsibility is projected to the male to which she merely responds to (Storey, 1996). By depending on Edward and his family, the story reveals that the heroine has a competing need for mental relief.

When it comes to material security in the context of love, Bella seems to debate with herself on the importance of the Cullens' wealth for her. Despite the fact that Bella never appears as a gold-digger, she sees the Cullen's wealth as part of the protection program she needs, for instance, the high-end built Mercedes that is used to protect her from the crazy male gangs on the street as whom she usually encounters. It also protects her from the public scrutiny of their secret relationship. Bella argues that it makes sense for the Cullens to have such wealth since they have lived much longer than any mortals, full with experiences and supernatural powers and long-time accumulation of wealth:

Edward had a *lot* of money—I didn't even want to think about how much. Money meant next to nothing to Edward or the rest of the Cullens. It was just something that accumulated when you had unlimited time … and a sister who had an uncanny ability to predict trends in the stock market … But how could I let him give me things when I had nothing to reciprocate with? …. Anything he gave me on top of that just threw us more out of balance (Meyer, 2008). Claudia Lindén in her research article "Virtue as Adventure and Excess: Intertextuality, Masculinity, and Desire in the *Twilight* Series" states that the social class difference between Bella's and Edward's family is similar to those of Jane Austen's and Brontë sisters':

In the bourgeois novel the heroine often comes from a lower class than the hero. In that way she became the bearer of an ideal bourgeois virtue in opposition to the aristocracy's affectation and debauchery. Therefore, she is portrayed as less mannered, more unpretentious and straightforward than other women in the hero's environment – except for his sister (Meyer, 2008). The reliability of Edward as the right man is guaranteed by his sister Alice's open heart and enthusiasm to Bella. Nothing is hidden when it comes to Edward's reputation. As the 'present' for Bella's sincere qualities, the 'high-class' Cullens reward her with their wealth and luxury she can enjoy as she is now part of the family. Like the rest of the women in the family, she needs no career to join the in-laws' life-style. Their only job left is to maintain their social status and security.

Another ideology of love, which is almost subtly noticeable in the series, is that happiness equals youth and agelessness. Behind her nightmare of physically getting older than Edward, Bella finds a solution foraging through the immortality and agelessness of being a vampire: "What's the worst that could happen?" … "Getting older" … "It's older than Edward" …

"Being a vampire didn't look like such a terrible thing—not the way the Cullens did it, anyway" (Meyer, 2008). There is a subtle concept the narrative tries to tell the readers that the initial power of love at the first sight does not come from nothing. It takes two hearts to feel each other, but it is undeniably true that their glamorous look and dazzling luxury that first ignites Bella's attention. The harmless, no-fangs, decades-old but forever young vampire in the form of a young handsome teen is the required package of love. Furthermore, as an anonymous saying states that "what takes to get is what takes to keep", similarly, Bella would like all the youth, the good-looking and the charm of Edward, and of herself, to be cherished forever, without the limitation of time or age. This emphasizes that there is a need, especially for Bella, to overcome all her fears about factors that may disrupt her love life.

The ideology of sacrificial love, which is finally presented in the narrative, reveals the fact of the need to preserve the relationship through test and trial. Bella's decision to keep her fatal pregnancy and to decline the idea of abortion is a sign of her wish to strengthen their marriage through the birth of her daughter. The test and trial from the Volturi on the dangerous existence of the child becomes a new moment of union between the vampires and the werewolves. In line with her willingness to suffer the pregnancy, Bella's decision to be transformed into a vampire through death makes their love immortal. In the wake of the concept of love and sacrifice, there is always a need to preserve and to hold the relationship interest even stronger, as what often happens in popular romantic fiction. As John Cawelty states that "romances often contain elements of adventure, but the dangers function as a means of challenging and thus cementing the love relationship" (Meyer, 2008).

Equal to Bella's sacrifice with the Cullens, she also has to sacrifice her relationship with her own parents and friends, as well as her beloved werewolf dearest, Jacob Black. Her separation and secrecy with her own family and friends does not happen without pain. Behind the pain and worry, Bella's love for them becomes deeper than before: "This is about Charlie, Jacob. How could you put him in danger this way? Do you realize it's death or vampire life for him now, too?" My voice trembled with the tears my eyes could no longer shed (Meyer, 2008). She realizes how she would miss them and how she actually needs them when she has to lie to and exclude them from her new life. When she admits her disappointment on Charlie, Renee, and their parental failure, it needs to be accepted that she needs a family that she can rely on and love unconditionally.

Some Vicarious Lessons

As Bella defends her right to dream, as a girl who is coming of age, readers may have to worry about how this kind of dream can be a good influence for the young female readers. As the series or saga has become a very popular work among teen girls, teachers or writers, as well as fans, need to draw some vicarious lessons from the narratives, as to dig important life lessons behind the glamorous romance. The virtual love story, with the heart-candy pleasure of the novels easily allures the readers who live in the internet-media culture. These are the readers who are not patient with problems like, for instance, their slow internet connection or drop phone calls. Like Bella, they dream and have the right to dream. While vicarious lessons may mean very different from one reader to another, the writer would like to indicate in this analysis that the saga has implicit messages on the topics of family, teen life and maturity, as well as on human needs as the essential trigger of them all.

Often criticized as regressive in regards to feminist ideology, this saga for young adult readers admits the fragility of Bella's humanity in her position as a role model for young girls. As Robert Hassan and Nicholas Ruiz III argues in their research journal that Bella Swan, in the majority of the story, "standing precariously on the side-lines of the action, in full faith that men will fight her battles for her… she is constantly described as fragile and breakable" (Hassan & Ruiz III, 2014); (Riyanti et al., 2023). The story, in terms of gender equality, ignores the feminism progress so far achieved in decades and uses "an almost archaic narrative", "an old fashioned, traditional romance narrative- Bella Swan and Edward Cullen fall in love, marry, have a child and live happily ever after" (Runtu et al., 2022). In the booming popularity of the novels, however, it seems that the young readers and fans are longing for and are still interested in that old-fashioned narrative plot. Being a major motion picture and the best-selling novels that give the author an instant, worldwide recognition by young devotees prove that there are people or young females who prefer and love the old, simple love life like that of Bella's.

Referring to Maggie Parke and Natalie Wilson's introduction in *Critical Essays on What's at Stake in a Post-Vampire World* (2011) that "few critics have examined the theme of aging, parental authority, maturity, and coming-of-age as components of Meyer's construct of age in the saga" (Parke & Wilson, 2011), the writer finds that the vicarious lessons that can be drawn from this serial are basically of family, teen life and maturity in relation to human needs that gives each of the factor some conflicts. Growing up in a dysfunctional family, Bella becomes a lonely girl with nobody to really relate to. Spending her boring teen years by watching others' happy but fake smiles, she admits that cannot be like them. After meeting her Prince Charming, however, she is strongly motivated to grow up and bear all the consequences of it.

On Family

It must be admitted that, however disappointing it is, Bella has learned so much from her family problems. Other girls may have similar experience as hers. Her rather selfish parents have no stable authority in influencing Bella in a good way. While her father is not a good communicator to comprehend her, she does not have a harmonious relationship with her mother; Even my mother, who I was closer to than anyone else on the planet, was never in harmony with me, never on exactly the same page. Sometimes I wondered if I was seeing the same things through my eyes that the rest of the world was seeing through theirs (Meyer, 2008:7). There is no need for further blaming games. What readers may learn here is the significant message that a family is the home for the stability of a young soul. It may be seen here that when Bella finds love, she actually finds a family, the Cullens, who would always defend her and are very reliable in every problem she encounters. Knowing the Cullens is an advantage for Bella to 'replace' her old, dysfunctional family and relying on the familial qualities she has never found before. The explicit existence of love between Bella and Edward also implicitly reflects Bella's needs for a strong family bond. As the American divorce percentage due to parental separation rises from 37% in 1978 to 55% in 2008 replacing the decline in separation due to parental death (*American*, 2010:213). It can be assumed from this rise that the living examples of the separated parents and their remarriages are not a good sign of family stability. On the other hand, the Cullens show an ideal, loving relationship, harboring the once-broken lives of their adopted members. With the absence of reliable parental influence, every child would seem to long for an ideal home outside the house. The silence of this domestic problem gives way to out-of-control behavior and decision of a young adult like Bella as a fragile person. What appears in the background as invisible or uninteresting to talk about in the thrilling plot of the story has actually given a significant motivation for the main character to justify her decisions, to seemingly make up for the lost niche she longs to have among her peers and family members.

On Teen Life

As a teen girl who is usually unstable emotionally and still looking for herself, Bella is a kind of outcast, someone who does not fit in to the larger group of her peers. She has a feeling that probably she is different from the rest, and not comfortable of being so: It wasn't just physically that I'd never fit in. And if I couldn't find a niche in aschool with three thousand people, what were my chances here?… I didn't relate well to people my age (Meyer, 2008). Living in such a big question of self, she hopes that by moving to Forks, a damp, dark, foggy small town which rains a lot, will give her a new chance for friendship, freedom to be herself, and dreams. She is tired of behaving to please others in the large, burning hot environment of Phoenix, Arizona: The sun was hot on my skin, too bright as it bounced off the white concrete and blinded me. I felt dangerously exposed. More fiercely than I would have dreamed I was capable of, I wished for the green, protective forests of Forks… of home (Meyer, 2008). Bella feels more like home and protected in Forks, a cool small town. She can live peacefully with herself and melancholically dream on: "A girl can dream." …. "Mostly I dream about being with you forever." (Meyer, 2008).

Finding it hard to live with the old, broken memories of a broken home, Bella decides to forget the past and looking for the future: But the cause didn't matter. All that mattered was the effect. And tomorrow would be just the beginning (Meyer, 2008:7). Knowing that she cannot repair the past, she is too grateful to fall in Edward's arms to escape to the bright, shining future. It is easy for Bella to plunge herself to a new, unknown relationship, when she has neither value nor reason to retain her existence at home. Edward and his family life are like heavenly relief she has been thirsting for. She

is then ready to join the vampire clan in form and nature. Edward is a symbol of a Prince Charming who comes to save her from the troubled past. He saves her physically and supernaturally. She does not need to struggle for love. She just needs to submit herself like an innocent child to a loving, reliable man.

Maturity

To justify the uncanny life path of the main character, Bella is described then as a grateful and mature person. Grateful for the love of Edward and all the convenience she can enjoy, she decides to preserve the relationship through vampirism. Knowing that she has nothing reciprocate Edward with, turning into a vampire promises a solution and escape. The charm of immortality and Edward's Romeo-like sacrifice for her actually prepare her to step into maturity. The decision to be a vampire turns to be dilemmatic. The art of telling the truth to Bella's parents is tricky and only Jacob Black, her beloved friend could do that. The truth with immortality is even the vampires have their own elite powers and troubles. Moreover, bearing a vampire child has raised a deathly suspicion that might trigger a destructive war among the uncanny creatures. Bella, however, is a new, mature person now. She is not escaping anymore. She now lives in the escape and is ready for consequences. It can be concluded that not until someone gain what he or she is missing that they are ready to mature or take the responsibility of their own life. While Bella cannot expect anything from her parents and vice versa, she is a really grateful and appreciative to the Cullens for their love and sincere acceptance of her. When someone is loved and accepted, he or she would hopefully model and respond to the acts.

Hopefully, this study may contribute positively and critically for readers or learners of these works or their similar versions to reflect on their lessons, and there would be a deeper understanding on some silent facts on family, teen life, and maturity in relation to human needs that the works use as the background problems. The popular literature often brings about the simple, disregarded issues to the surface in a very commercial way that it is easily digested and enjoyed by young and old. It is the teachers and learned readers' duty to reveal the silent, hidden topics that lie behind the visible of the text; the same unpleasant facts that underlie the life and experience of the people in general.

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