VICTORIAN MELODRAMA IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

JANE EYRE, *TWILIGHT*, AND THE MODE OF EXCESS IN POPULAR GIRL CULTURE

KATIE KAPURCH

Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Century

Katie Kapurch

Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Century

Jane Eyre, Twilight, and the Mode of Excess in Popular Girl Culture

palgrave
macmillan

Katie Kapurch
Department of English
Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas, USA

ISBN 978-1-137-59060-2 ISBN 978-1-137-58169-3 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-58169-3

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016943537

Cover illustration: Cover image © itanistock / Alamy Stock Photo

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Nature America Inc. New York.

To
Jon Marc Smith

Preface

The heroine looks in a mirror and judges her reflection plain and unimpressive, lacking the qualities her society would consider beautiful. Meanwhile, the moody, brooding object of her affection languishes under the weight of a secret. The heroine confesses contradictory feelings— shared intimately with the reader— of low self-esteem and mounting desire for this captivating, dangerous man. Eventually he confesses his dark secret, along with his reciprocated passion, to the heroine. Just as their bliss is in sight, catastrophe strikes; the couple is fated to suffer in each other's absence, seemingly doomed by evil forces outside their control. By the final curtain, however, the heroine, aided by supernatural forces, is reunited with her tortured man. Hope for their future is restored.

Does the story above sound familiar? Ideally, dear reader, that summary would be accompanied by music, a soundtrack with a sweeping, circular score to cue the emotional ups and downs of anxiety, bliss, despair, and hope. Music completes the melodramatic picture; after all, melodrama means "a drama set to music."

Now, with mood music in place, the big reveal: the summary above pinpoints moments of heightened emotion in Charlotte Brontë's 1847 *Jane Eyre*, which fascinated Victorian readers (even Queen Victoria herself) and continues to enthrall readers today, especially girls and women. But the summary also describes a much more recent literary phenomenon, Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga*, the young adult series whose popularity in the early twenty-first century was driven at first by the girl readers who discovered the first installment in 2005.[1] The four novels in the *Twilight Saga* proper include *Twilight* (2005), *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse* (2007), and *Breaking*

Dawn (2008). After the saga's completion in 2008, Meyer published a novella, *The Short Second Life of Bree Tanner: An Eclipse Novella* (2010) to coincide with the film adaptation of *Eclipse* that same year. Indeed, the *Twilight* phenomenon has expanded to include the five cinematic adaptations that premiered almost annually between 2008 and 2012. The series has also received a graphic novel treatment, which began with *Twilight: The Graphic Novel, Volume 1* (2010) and is ongoing. In addition, the saga's literary universe includes an unpublished and incomplete manuscript famously leaked online in 2008, *Midnight Sun*, which is the story of *Twilight* from Edward's perspective.

The *Twilight* phenomenon is far from over, especially since it is still undergoing more reboots. In 2015, the Twilight Storytellers contest, designed to encourage aspiring female filmmakers, facilitated the premiere of eight short films, the finalists posted on the *Twilight* Facebook site; these narrative additions to the *Twilight* universe were then voted on by fans. In a similar vein of fan-fiction-type retellings that include Meyer's own *Midnight Sun*, on the 10-year anniversary of the first novel, Meyer surprised the market with *Life and Death: A Reimagining of the Classic Novel* on October 6, 2015 (coinciding with the very month the manuscript of this book went to press). The newest version of *Twilight* flips the gender pronouns and names: Bella is Beau, Edward is Edythe, Jacob is Julie, and so on. According to the author's foreword, the book was motivated largely by Meyer's discomfort with readers' perception of Bella as a "*damsel in distress*" (*Life*). [2] Meyer's recognition of this character type and her title immediately recall conventions addressed throughout this book, suggesting that the questions this study seeks to answer about melodrama continue to be asked in popular culture, especially when it comes to assumptions about melodrama's most belittled conventions.

As a rule, melodrama raises the stakes of the everyday to life-and-death extremes, an impulse the *Twilight Saga* inherits from *Jane Eyre*. With their concern for moral truths, expressive feeling, secrecy, and revelation, *Jane Eyre* and *Twilight* both invoke melodrama, a "mode of excess" as Peter Brooks famously terms it. This descriptor, which I borrow in my own subtitle, is borrowed from Brooks's influential study, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (1976). For primary definitions of melodrama, throughout the following chapters I turn to this study because Brooks's explanations have had so much traction in melodrama studies. For the last quarter of the twentieth century and beyond, scholars have drawn on Brooks whether they are

addressing film, literature, televised soap operas, or public discourse; he has been rediscovered again and again by scholars working in a variety of disciplines. Importantly, Brooks defines melodrama as "a mode of conception and expression, as a certain fictional system for making sense of experience, a semantic field of force" (xvii). Brooks was onto something significant when he recognized melodrama's modal qualities, paving the way for an appreciation of melodrama as bigger than a genre limited to a particular type of narrative or medium of expression.

Indulging intense feelings, musical ecstasy, and whirlpools of tears, melodrama is a pervasive mode of discourse in twenty-first century girl culture. We see it in girl characters' extreme emotions and in the life-and-death urgency of talk uttered by "real" girls. Despite (or maybe because of) its ubiquity in girl culture, melodrama and the girls who love it are often derided and dismissed. Although melodrama has saturated popular culture since the nineteenth century, its expression in texts for, about, and by girls is also remarkably under theorized. *Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Century* defines melodrama in girl culture, focusing on shared conventions found in Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Meyer's four-book literary *Twilight Saga*, as well as its film adaptations and fan-authored texts. By defining melodrama through its Victorian contexts and lineages, I reveal melodrama's form and function in contemporary girl culture while also demonstrating a legacy of the mode since the nineteenth century.

Tracing melodramatic conventions found in *Jane Eyre* through the literary, fan, and film texts of the *Twilight* phenomenon reveals melodrama as a pervasive mode of discourse in girl culture. Consistently, melodrama works to validate girls' interior emotional lives, taking seriously feelings of frustration and anxiety, as well as other coming-of-age experiences related to the female body. Through excess and exaggeration, melodrama critiques limiting social constructions of girlhood and, at the same time, enhances intimacy between girls—both characters and readers. In doing so, melodrama can be an empowering mode of expression in girl culture.

Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Century begins with an introduction that makes a case for a theory of melodrama in girl culture, justifying the use of *Twilight* texts as a vehicle for the investigation. Beginning with *Twilight*'s relationship to *Jane Eyre*, the saga's predecessor and most dominant intertext, I develop a definition of nineteenth-century melodrama, which gave rise to a mode that still pervades popular culture today. I discuss the mode's relationship to girls in the context of feminist theories of melodrama and power, then focus more specifically on Victorian and

contemporary girlhood, defining what I mean by "postfeminism" when it comes to discursive constructions of girlhood. I conclude by situating *Twilight* in a trajectory of melodrama in popular girl culture. This survey reinforces *Twilight*'s relationship to girl culture from the nineteenth century to today and that leads to a brief explanation of generic rhetorical criticism, a method that encourages the classification of genre based on rhetorical functions, rather than forms alone.

Following this theoretical introduction, each chapter defines melodramatic conventions through the *Jane Eyre-Twilight* literary relationship, establishing the legacy of nineteenth-century discourse in contemporary girl culture. To reveal the ubiquity of melodrama in girl culture, I consider the form and function of melodramatic impulses found in the literary texts, along with film adaptations and girls' fan discourse. In some chapters, I treat the *Twilight* cinematic adaptations alongside the analysis of the literary texts in order to show how film accentuates melodramatic impulses in the novels. In other chapters, I separate a discussion of the *Twilight* films from the analysis of the literary texts because certain techniques warrant more explanation or theoretical grounding. Aside from Chap. 5, which offers girl readers' responses as entry points into a couple of melodramatic conventions, all of the chapters explore girls' fan discourse in separate sections from the literary works. The purpose of this is to show how individual melodramatic impulses are points of appeal and features of girls' own discourse while preserving as much of the girls' own language as possible.

Chapter 2, "Powerless Protagonists: Melodramatic Heroines of Victorian and Postfeminist Girlhood," introduces the concept of the powerless and victimized heroine in melodrama, situating the literary Jane Eyre and Bella Swan in their historical moments. When they recognize their own inadequacies, the protagonists' self-consciousness is a response to restrictive discourses of "successful" Victorian and postfeminist girlhood. As they aspire for equal footing with their respective Edwards, melodramatic expression makes the protagonists' lack of social, cultural, political, and economic capital obvious—and sympathetic to girl readers. The first *Twilight* film amplifies Bella's awkwardness, especially as the new girl in school, through voice-over, as well as cinematography and even costuming.

The relentless suffering of the melodramatic heroine opens up space for a critical examination of narrative structure in Chap. 3, "Spatial Invasions and Melodrama's Narrative Structure: Innocence, Villainy, and Vigilance in Girlhood." Melodrama's narrative form positions the heroine as an innocent

persecuted by villainy; this narrative sequence continues to confirm frustration with powerless social positions. The chapter concludes by briefly considering how powerlessness and anxiety are translated to the screen in Catherine Hardwicke's[3] *Twilight* through voice-over and symbolic imagery. This film successfully courted girl audiences, who frequently use melodramatic discourse to create safe spaces for their own *Twilight* fandom.

As one of melodrama's most vital expressions, music encourages empathy for a girl character's desiring, but anxious, heterosexual gaze. Chapter 4, "Musical Gestures: Melodramatic Lullabies of Anxious Desire," explores references to music in *Jane Eyre* and *Twilight*. In these literary texts, music simultaneously cues the protagonists' insecurities and accentuates their sexual longings. Although Bella's desire for physical intimacy with Edward is consistently thwarted throughout much of the series, music's circularity validates and even replicates that sexual yearning. In fact, recognizing music's expression of desire reveals how the cinematic Bella's sexual desire is articulated—outside of her own spoken narration. Although such passivity has been criticized, it has not prohibited girls from imagining Bella's sexual desire, which some fans vocalize in their own musical discourse.

Following a discussion of sexual agency vis-à-vis music, I explore the intimacy-building consequences of melodramatic confession, along with the agential nature of feelings. Chapter 5, "Secrets Revealed, Feelings Moralized: Girls' Confessional Intimacy and Emotional Agency," argues that moral feelings function as emotional agency, the consequence of confessional revelations that expose secret social taboos. Brontë's and Meyer's female characters rely on feelings to determine a course of action once their Byronic bad boys expose their secret identities; at times the heroines' feelings are in direct opposition to rational thought. In the first *Twilight* film, vampiric imagery accelerates the intensity of Bella's commitment to Edward and, consequently, the viewer's understanding of the protagonist's moral feelings. The intensity of both Jane's and Bella's feelings, especially frustration, shines a critical light on social restrictions facing girls.

Chapter 6, "Melodrama's Gothic Remnants: Nightmares and Vampire-Girl Doubles," continues to show how melodrama exposes postfeminist paradoxes related to female empowerment. In *Jane Eyre* and *Twilight*, nightmares and female vampire villains antagonize the protagonists' psyches. In the cinematic saga, these Gothic remnants are externalized onscreen in dramatic ways that make the critique of postfeminist contradictions all the more obvious. Nightmares validate over-the-top fears about change, especially aging and motherhood, showing the crippling effects

of Western culture's postfeminist emphasis on feminine youthfulness; at the same time, female vampires serve as active foils to the protagonists' passivity. Girl readers' *Twilight*-themed fantasies and dreams appreciate these alternate subject positions, which help girl readers negotiate change in their own lives.

Female villains who function as doubles for the protagonist are empowering components of melodrama in girl culture—but so is crying. Chapter 7, "Suffering, Separation, and Crying: Melodrama, Tears, and Girls' Emotional Empowerment," explores melodrama's most denigrated convention. In both *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight Saga*, suffering and crying validate emotional expression, promote intimacy between girls, and even critique the limitations that produced such affective responses in the first place. These rhetorical outcomes are expressed directly in girls' conversations about crying while they read the saga and about Bella's crying within the saga itself. Girl readers empathize, but also offer their own critical interpretations as they actively engage the saga's messages about girlhood.

The final chapter, "Melodrama's Happily Ever After? Girls, Rereading, and Resistance," examines closure as a melodramatic device. Facilitated by supernatural coincidence and romantic, heterosexual couplings, the similar endings of *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight Saga* reinforce the relationship between the nineteenth century and contemporary girl culture. The promise of a happy ending is a major point of appeal among girl readers, who simultaneously resist the ending, promising to reread the series. In fact, through musical and visual flashbacks, *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn-Parts 1* and *2* indulge the same impulses, offering closure but "rereading" previous installments of the saga at the same time. In fact, these films render the conventional ending dull, an outcome that critiques the heteronormative message of the novels. These resistant stances, encouraged by melodrama's extremes, defy interpretations that focus too much on the ideological implications of melodrama's conventional conclusion.

Notes

1. I define "girls" broadly as "younger females in the culture," whether they are preschool age, preadolescents, teenagers (Inness 3), or even young adults whose coming-of-age experiences speak to the social construction of adolescence as a period of becoming (Driscoll, *Girls* 6). Marketed as a literary series for young adults, at its height the *Twilight Saga* no doubt enjoyed

a definite girl readership, including younger girls, tweens, and teenagers. Followers of the series, however, expanded to include many adult women readers, as evidenced by websites such as *TwilightMOMS.com* (Click et al. 137). Still, *Twilight*'s initial fan-base was largely female youth.

2. More should and no doubt will be said about *Life and Death* and its gender swap, which, on the surface, smacks of problematic assumptions about gender equality having been reached (e.g., boys and girls basically have the same problems and concerns). The new novel, however, does make some alterations based on gender; the author's foreword also outlines some reasons for her choices. For example, Meyer maintains Bella's parents as Charlie and Renee, acknowledging the historical context and the improbability that a father would be awarded custody of a child born in 1987 (*Life*). Meyer also adapts word choice to reflect conventional attitudes about gender roles for men and women. For example, whereas *Twilight*'s Billy fixes the truck himself, his *Life and Death* counterpart Bonnie has it fixed by professionals.
3. Screenwriter Melissa Rosenberg adapted all four Twilight novels. Although her significant contributions should not be underestimated, throughout this book, I refer to the films in connection to their varying directors in order to make clear the distinctions between them.

Acknowledgments

In the words of Lulu, "how do you thank someone who has taken you from crayons to perfume?" To each person listed below and to all of the unnamed support: thank you, truly.

Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Century has been rewritten from my dissertation, completed at the University of Texas at Austin in 2012. I am grateful to the generosity of my advisor, Barry Brummett, as well as my committee members: Dana Cloud, Mary Celeste Kearney, Carol MacKay, Madeline Maxwell, and Janet Staiger. Dr. Kearney's course, Girls' Media and Cultural Studies, and Dr. MacKay's course, The Melodramatic Impulse in Victorian Literature, provided the foundation for this book.

This monograph is also an expansion of ideas first suggested in "Unconditionally and Irrevocably": Theorizing the Melodramatic Impulse in Young Adult Literature through the *Twilight Saga* and *Jane Eyre*," published in the *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 37.2 (2012). Special thanks to then-editor, Kate Capshaw Smith, as well as Holly Virginia Blackford and the blind reviewers for their instrumental support. A few selections stayed the same throughout revisions from that article to the dissertation to this book; these selections are reproduced with the permission of Johns Hopkins University Press. Similar ideas about *Twilight* also appear in chapters I contributed to Anne Morey's *Genre, Reception, and Adaptation in the Twilight Series* (Ashgate, 2012) and Elaine O'Quinn's *Girls' Literacy Experiences In and Out of School: Learning and Composing Gendered Identities* (Routledge, 2013).

Thanks to co-panelists, chairs, and those in attendance at annual meetings of Children's Literature Association (2011; 2013) and the

International Conference for the Fantastic in the Arts (2012), where I began to preview this theory of melodrama. And to the "Beatle people" at the Penn State-Altoona conference in 2014, especially music scholars Walter Everett (University of Michigan) for the Shangri-las suggestion, as well as David Thurmaier (University of Missouri-Kansas City), who explained the technical terms for "circling-the-drain" music.

To Juliane G. Kapurch and Thomas J. Kapurch for love and support.

To the Department of English at Texas State University, especially my children's literature colleagues, Marilynn Olson, Teya Rosenberg, and Graeme Wend-Walker, who gave me a home. I am fortunate for the kindness and support of our administrators, especially Dean Michael Hennessy and Chair Daniel Lochman. I am also lucky to work with so many friends who encouraged the book during the years it was in progress: Suparno Banerjee, Rebecca Bell-Metereau, Karen Bryson, Scott Christenson, Matthew Greengold, Richard Heaberlin, Kathryn Ledbetter, Priscilla Leder, Whitney May, Kathleen McClancy, Debra Monroe, Tomás Q. Morín, Susan Morrison, Deanna Rodriguez, Victoria Smith, and Nancy Wilson. Special thanks to Robert T. Tally, Jr. for his shepherding of the book into publication and to Susan Tilka for shepherding me.

Finally, to colleague and writing partner, Jon Marc Smith, whose infinite contributions extend well beyond this book: *we talk, I believe, all day long.*

Contents

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Melodrama, Power, and Girl Culture

"Young girls are sad. They like to be; it makes them feel strong," explains the adult female protagonist of A.S. Byatt's *Possession* (61). Byatt's words capture the essence of melodrama in girl culture. In many ways, girls' ongoing preferences for the affective experience of melodrama are a Nietzschean affirmation that says "yes" to life's suffering. Melodrama gazes at the abysses of life and offers redemption through affirmation, just like Nietzsche's Zarathustra: "he that has the hardest, most terrible insight into reality, that has thought the 'most abysmal idea,' nevertheless does not consider it an objection to existence, not even to its eternal recurrence—but rather one reason more for being himself the eternal Yes to all things, 'the tremendous, unbounded saying Yes and Amen.'—Into all abysses I still carry the blessings of my saying Yes" (306). Though Nietzsche himself would probably not recognize the commonalities shared by contemporary girls and Zarathustra, they are, in fact, alike. In spite of villainy's perpetual pursuit of innocence, girls read and reread melodramatic texts, affirming the existence of suffering and bearing witness to it, often through their own tears. True to melodramatic form and in accordance with Nietzsche's philosophy, girl culture optimistically hopes for positive resolutions—in spite of all the danger.

What is it about black-and-white extremes and life-and-death urgency that compel girls to turn again and again to melodrama, both in their choices of entertainment and in their own speech? Why do girls enjoy reading and viewing media that make them cry or scream? What does

K. Kapurch, *Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Century*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-58169-3_1

wallowing in lyrical and tearful whirlpools of emotion allow girls to express and confront? And why does melodrama, an outwardly conservative mode of discourse popular among Victorians, remain applicable to twenty-first-century girls, who have presumably benefited from more than a 100 years of feminist strides? These questions beg for a theory of melodrama's ongoing popularity in girl culture.

Melodrama's persistence in girl culture is an indication that we should look closely at the mode's capacity to negotiate girlhood as a historically situated and socially constructed category.[1] Western girlhood is historically laden with expectations inherited from the very same historical context that elevated melodrama to prominence: Anglo-American Victorian culture. Younger females' participation in the nineteenth-century public sphere gave rise to English uses of the word "girl" to describe females in school and work settings: "Young lady and young person—like lady and woman—had class referents; girl is inclusive. It takes in work girl, servant girl, factory girl, college girl or girl graduate, shop-girl, bachelor girl, girl journalist, and office girl. It includes schoolgirl as well, but she is not a child" (Mitchell, *New* 39). The emerging English-language uses of "girl" reveal the word's connections to economic class, work experiences, and to adult femininity—and this inheritance continues today. Born out of a similar contextual consciousness, melodrama and girlhood beg for a consideration of the rippling out of the nineteenth century.

Recognizing the form and function of melodrama, without fear of its historically pejorative connotations, offers scholars a tool for advancing interpretations of political, social, and cultural messages about girlhood ascertainable through the melodramatic mode. Melodrama has not been systematically theorized in a study of girl culture, which includes adult *and* girl-authored texts.[2] Although children's literature and adolescent literature scholars have made passing references to melodrama, it is often couched in apology or used as a derogative.[3] Recent literary studies (Blackford, "Mockingbird"; Bousquet) that do seriously consider melodrama and youth often consider only one textual phenomenon and do not consistently incorporate the responses of young readers to understand melodrama's appeal to those audiences.[4]

Feminist scholars in the late twentieth century have already reclaimed "feminine" genres, namely melodrama and romance, and their appeal for adult women. Around the same time as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, feminist scholars in literary studies paid a great deal of attention to Victorian women's (writers' and readers') preferences for sensationalism

and melodrama (see Mitchell; Auerbach; Showalter; Vicinus). Likewise, film and media studies scholars acknowledged twentieth-century film's indebtedness to the Victorian theatrical and literary tradition to theorize filmic and serial television melodrama's particular connection to women's (domestic) experiences and female audiences (see Doane; Gledhill; Kaplan, Modleski; Williams).[5] In terms of romance, Janice Radway's findings in *Reading the Romance* (1984), are now famous in feminist theory and media reception studies. Radway discovers how seemingly conservative romantic storylines can still contain elements of resistance—available even in the pleasure of the reading experience itself.[6] Subsequent scholars have considered Radway's findings in light of adolescent romance (Christian-Smith) and to romance in *Twilight* (Morey) and to girl readers of *Twilight* (Behm-Morawitz et al.).[7] Generally, these studies all work to untangle the complicated relationship between feminism and romance, questioning the representation of stereotypical and conventional narratives in which a heroine is empowered through a heterosexual relationship.

The specific appeal of *melodrama*, a mode that pervades different genres and media, and its appeal to girls has not been theorized in relation to *Twilight*—or to girl culture writ large. The melodramatic mode houses a consideration of romance but does not limit the focus to romantic relationships. Indeed, a concern for melodrama finds sensational and even erotic potential in the melodramatic conventions themselves, which often favor circular patterns of heightened emotions related to suspense and anxiety, in addition to sexual desire (see Chaps. 4 and 7). Although literature and film and media studies scholars exhaustively addressed melodrama's appeal to adult women, with a few exceptions (see Mitchell; Karlyn) they ignore the readership and representations of female youth. The musicologist Jacqueline Warwick has recognized melodrama in girl-group discourse, but that insight does not extend past pop music. And while Kirsten Drotner recognizes girls' discursive preference for melodrama from a sociological perspective, this understanding is not connected to other realms of girl-oriented mass media.[8] In short, no study has explored melodrama as a mode of discourse in girl culture in order to answer the question: why is melodrama so popular with girls?

The gap in scholarship related to melodrama and girls became entirely evident in the initial reception and critical assessment of *Twilight*. Displeased with girls screaming and crying over a seemingly passive girl's obsessive romance with a potentially violent, sparkly male vampire, many critics were quick to judge *Twilight* as harmful to female youth. But Barbara

Ehrenreich, Gloria Jacobs, and Elizabeth Hess have already encouraged scholars to appreciate why girl fans scream for popular teen idols. In the case of Beatlemaniacs in the 1960s, the scream was, in fact, liberating. Ehrenreich et al. suggest the girls' screams implied a kind of collective agency that anticipated the feminist movement that would gain traction as the decade went on. Given the sexually restrictive culture of the late 1950s and early 1960s, girl fans' screaming was more about the girls than the Fab Four: "It was hard to miss the element of defiance in Beatlemania. If Beatlemania was conformity, it was conformity to an imperative that overruled adult mores and even adult laws" (17). Understanding girls' emotional reactions to *Twilight* as evidence of their own affective agency is a finding unearthed by an exploration of melodrama in girl culture. As I argue, *Twilight*'s adherence to the melodramatic mode may empower girls, rather than inhibit them.

Melodrama's capacity to champion the powerless cuts to the heart of melodrama's popularity in girl culture: melodrama persists because, through excess and overstatement, cultural restrictions facing female youth are exposed and critiqued. Melodrama consistently works to validate girls' emotional lives, especially their affective responses to coming-of-age experiences. More specifically, melodrama's circular patterns evoke heightened emotions that permit the representation of girl characters' sexual desire and anxiety—and replicate those sensations for the reader at the same time. Through such confession and revelation, melodrama promotes empathy and intimacy among girls. Melodrama's extremes, in fact, create a space for critical renegotiations of meaning, especially because of the mode's capacity to critique the very extremes it represents.

Why *Twilight*? Girlhood Reading

This book is about *Twilight*—but it's not really about *Twilight*. The *Twilight Saga* is just one popular work featuring a coming-of-age girl and melodramatic excess. Charlotte Brontë's novel is a forerunner for Stephenie Meyer's literary series, which turned into a multimedia phenomenon including film adaptations and fan communities—both full of their own melodramatic discourse. When they translate Bella's melodramatic subjectivity to the screen, *Twilight*'s cinematic adaptations express a girl's emotional feeling using cinematic techniques associated with filmic melodrama as well as conventions of girls' media. In the media girls themselves produce, *Twilight* fan productions also offer frequent examples

of emotional and affective reactions to the saga's melodramatic impulses. During the height of the *Twilight* phenomenon's popularity (circa 2007–2010), on discussion forum on the website TwilightTEENS, girls from all over the globe went online to talk about their reactions to reading Meyer's saga. Likewise, on TheTwilightReader's YouTube channel, a 12-year-old girl, Liza, posted videos she made, sometimes joking about her parents' reactions to her intensity of feeling for the literary and cinematic versions of the vampire romance. The Bella Cullen Project, a band started by three 13-year-old girlfriends from Texas, channeled a similar kind of affective energy into composing and singing *Twilight*-inspired songs that were distributed in other online spaces. These girls' online activities, however, are all past tense; their fan communities are no longer active (see Appendix for detailed descriptions of these communities, as well as methodology for research girls online).

Identifying melodrama as a mode in girl culture, rather than a genre, has important implications because the saga's multimedia nature allows us to see melodrama's ubiquity in adult-authored *and* girl-generated media. Pairing *Twilight*, a popular but maligned phenomenon with Brontë's now celebrated proto-feminist novel serves several purposes. For skeptics of the saga, the Brontë connection may help legitimize *Twilight*'s melodramatic impulses. True, Jane's narrative voice and Brontë's prose style are much more compelling than Bella's and Meyer's (Silver, "*Twilight*" 135). Yet Jane also experiences the paralyzing effects of self-consciousness brought on by social judgment and restrictions related to gender, class, and age. These limitations, often depicted in exaggerated hyperbole, correspond to actual controls associated with the social construction of both Victorian and twenty-first-century girlhood.

Defining melodrama first through the Brontë-Meyer pairing reveals the mode's form and function, offering clues to both texts' appeal, especially their capacities to validate emotion, critique restrictive discourses of girlhood, and foster intimacy between girls. *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight Saga* invoke the mode of excess to address the social construction of girlhood and to appeal to girls. Scholars have gained fruitful insight into the melodramatic nature of contemporary works through their relationship to nineteenth-century texts. Holly Virginia Blackford, for example, uses a comparative framework[9] to understand how melodrama operates in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a mid-twentieth-century novel whose girl narrator retrospectively recounts her experiences as a child growing up in the racially segregated American South. Blackford explicates melodramatic

conventions and their critical functions in Harper Lee's novel through connections to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).[10] By revealing Lee's inheritance and transformation of a Victorian melodramatic convention (innocence's persecution), Blackford discovers how the twentieth-century novel addresses racial injustice, a social issue Stowe's novel was certainly calling upon melodrama to confront.

Discerning melodramatic conventions particular to the nineteenth century is not to say, however, that *Jane Eyre* and *Twilight* are identical to Victorian stage melodramas,[11] which favored externalized expression uttered onstage. Swarthy villains, sweetly spoken heroines, and dashing heroes were the key players in predictable plots of excitement and improbability punctuated by moments of levity—and intense suffering.[12] These sensations were elevated on the backdrop of over-the-top sets and props (such as a large ship thrust onto the stage), and, of course, thrilling musical accompaniments. Music cued audiences to boo and hiss the villain and to cheer (or tear) for the plights of hero and heroine (Booth, *Theatre* 151–52; McWilliam 56).[13] But even though these tropes are recognizable in *Jane Eyre* and the saga, melodramatic expression comes from *within* the protagonist.

In the nineteenth century, Brontë invoked melodramatic tropes in the portrayal of her protagonist's interior drama. These narrative choices are similar to the kind of stage-to-page process that was occurring among other novelists of her day. Drawing on the works of French writer Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850) and American-born English writer Henry James (1843–1916), Brooks recognizes how stage melodrama informed the rise of the novel in the nineteenth century: "The nineteenth-century novel needs such theatricality [...] to get its meaning across, to invest in its renderings of life a sense of memorability and significance. With the rise of the novel and of melodrama, we find the entry into literature a new moral and aesthetic category, that of the 'interesting'" (13). Informed by Brooks's perspective, I locate melodrama in the works of Brontë and Meyer not to prove a one-to-one influence (even though it exists as I explain later), but to appreciate the "memorability and significance" (13) with which melodrama invests coming-of-age girlhood—both on the page, onscreen, and in the variety of discourse created by girls themselves.

The *Jane Eyre-Twilight* connection offers direct evidence of the nineteenth-century's ongoing legacy of melodrama in girl culture today. Meyer's affinity for the Brontës is clear from the beginning of the series when Bella's own worn copy of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847)

is introduced at the beginning of *Twilight*. *Eclipse* explicitly acknowledges Emily's *Wuthering Heights*, but Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* pervades the entire saga. In its first-person presentation of coming-of-age interiority, *Twilight* follows a narrative tradition that includes *Jane Eyre*. In *The Voyage In* (1983), Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland distinguish the female *bildungsroman* from the male prototype: "Novels of female development, by contrast, typically substitute inner concentration for active accommodation, rebellion, or withdrawal" (8). As is the case for *Twilight* and *Jane Eyre*, in girls' literature melodramatic expression often characterizes the presentation of a narrator's interiority.

The *Jane Eyre-Twilight* relationship is not coincidental. In a 2009 interview about her artistic inspirations, Meyer acknowledges *Jane Eyre*'s impact on herself as a girl reader:

> I read it when I was nine [...] and I've read it literally hundreds of times. I do think that there are elements of Edward in Edward Rochester and elements of Bella in Jane. Jane was someone I was close to as a child—we were good friends! I think in some ways she was more real to me than any other fictional heroine. (qtd. in Valby)

Here, Meyer's own discourse invokes the melodramatic mode to communicate her love of *Jane Eyre* through an exaggeration of her reading experiences. Meyer's intimacy with Jane confirms Cora Kaplan's theory of Jane's narrative voice and its adherence to discursive conventions of feminine relationship-building through revelatory talk, a fundamental feature of melodramatic discourse. Elsewhere, Meyer expands her rationale about *Jane Eyre*'s importance, explaining that *Jane Eyre* "was such a big part of my growing-up experience and the way I viewed the world" ("Conversation" 41). Clearly, Brontë's novel habituated Meyer to melodramatic expression set within a narrator's psyche.

Meyer's recollections of her girlhood reading experiences with *Jane Eyre* are also consistent with the kind of empathy many of Meyer's own readers offer Bella. The *Twilight* girl fans cited in this book frequently offer emotional reactions to—and express pleasure in reading about—the saga's melodramatic impulses. They often report crying in empathy, but they also reveal a range of complex emotions while they both admire and critique the saga. Anna Silver notices similar critical readings among fans: "even on fan message boards heavily stacked with Edward supporters, readers vigorously debate the degree to which Edward is too controlling, and whether

he is a good model for a boyfriend in today's world. Meyer's novels are more nuanced, in other words, than some reviews suggest" ("*Twilight*" 126). Even though Silver alludes to a few fan comments throughout her analysis, critical readings of *Twilight* would be aided by more voices from the readers themselves. As such, responses from fan communities are a significant component of the forthcoming chapters' analysis. The intensely emotional nature of these girls' own discourse, which often highlights tears and dreams, illustrates the same kind of excess that characterizes the melodramatic mode in the adult-authored works about coming-of-age girls.

Empathetic responses from contemporary fans of *Twilight* are comparable to reader sympathy with Jane Eyre and the secretive, brooding Edward Rochester, who, like Edward Cullen, is ridden with guilt and in need of salvation from the heroine. Sandra M. Gilbert offers central insight into the appeal of Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, explaining how the novel challenged Victorian literary norms in part through the intensity of characters' expressive discourse, a tenet of melodrama:

> Unlike most of her predecessors, too, [Brontë] endowed her main characters—hero as well as heroine—with overwhelmingly powerful passions that aren't always rational and often can't be articulated in ordinary language. This sense of unspeakable depth or fiery interiority imbues both Rochester and Jane with a kind of mystery that has always been charismatic to readers. (357)

Accounting for *Jane Eyre*'s sustained popularity, Gilbert identifies the main characters' passionate feelings as part of the reason for female readers' continued captivation with Brontë's text (357). Gilbert also points to a central function of passionate feeling in *Jane Eyre*: its capacity to critique and subvert nineteenth-century social constructions of girls and women. Situating passionate feelings beneath the umbrella of melodrama continues to certify an association between the nineteenth-century novel and the twenty-first-century saga to explain the ubiquity of melodrama in girl culture. In *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979/2000), Gilbert and Susan Gubar advance a critical awareness of *Jane Eyre* as a novel that addresses a woman writer's repressed anger and frustration, especially at the gendered social and economic restrictions inherent in a patriarchal culture. The study uncovered the subversive ways Charlotte Brontë and other nineteenth-century women writers exposed female subjectivity,

often using conventional literary forms. Gilbert and Gubar's work was groundbreaking in 1979, encouraging subsequent feminist critics, whose appreciation for and fascination with *Jane Eyre* has not subsided.

Girl and women audiences of *Twilight*, however, had to be defensive about their pop cultural preferences given the public ridicule of the saga's novels, films, and girl audiences—often for their melodramatic tendencies. As Melissa A. Click, Jennifer Stevens Aubrey, and Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz observe, "the mainstream media has belittled the reactions of girls and women to the *Twilight* series and the actors who play their favorite characters, frequently using Victorian era gendered words like 'fever,' 'madness,' 'hysteria,' and 'obsession' to describe Twilighters" (6–7). Part of the reason *Twilight*'s girl fans and their sensational reactions to the films became more visible in mainstream pop culture—and thus fodder for ridicule—was due to the heightened media attention surrounding the premiere of the first film in 2008 (see Aubrey et al. for an analysis of the Summit Entertainment's marketing of *Twilight* actors as teen idols). Because the emotional reactions of girls are so often trivialized, critics were quick to diminish *Twilight*'s cultural value.

In girl culture, melodrama remains a mode in need of defense because the sources of girls' feelings are criticized. Critiques of *Twilight* as "bad literature" are too often coupled with a dismissal of young female readers. Popular critiques of *Twilight* frequently echoed well-known US author Stephen King's unflattering comparison of *Harry Potter* author, J.K. Rowling, and Meyer: "The real difference is that Jo Rowling is a terrific writer and Stephenie Meyer can't write worth a darn. She's not very good." King then speculates about *Twilight*'s appeal to girls:

> [I]n the case of Stephenie Meyer, it's very clear that she's writing to a whole generation of girls and opening up kind of a safe joining of love and sex in those books. It's exciting and it's thrilling and it's not particularly threatening because they're not overtly sexual. A lot of the physical side of it is conveyed in things like the vampire will touch her forearm or run a hand over skin, and then she flushes all hot and cold. And for girls, that's a shorthand for all the feelings that they're not ready to deal with yet. (Condon, "Exclusive")[14]

King refers to melodrama's hallmarks, particularly the loaded significance of small gestures accompanied by affective responses. But his speculation underestimates the erotic potential that so many girls (and women) have

undoubtedly enjoyed when reading the *Twilight* series. Moreover, while many girl readers may find melodramatic moments appealing, King characterizes their preferences as immature, connecting his aesthetic dismissal of Meyer's skill with a description of melodrama.

The diminishment of melodrama and girl readers also intersects with the critical dismissal of female audiences' preferences for vampires.[15] Much of the cultural outrage about *Twilight* had to do with attitudes toward Meyer's vampires as inauthentic. The saga's vampires are frequently deemed counterfeit because they sparkle in the sunlight and their teeth are not pointed in exaggerated ways. Yet, with these sparkles, Meyer is still upholding sun as a conventional restriction—and the bite as the dominant method of penetration. Moreover, the revenant undead have always been creatures of the imagination, fictional constructs whose characteristics have consistently changed according to the cultural needs of storytellers, audiences, and mediums.

The gendered disparagement of *Twilight* female fans as unworthy admirers of vampires is nothing new. Noting this dismissal in *The Lure of the Vampire* (2005), Milly Williamson argues that many women identify with the vampire due to his (or her) conflicted and outsider status. Williamson's publication just predates *Twilight* (also published in 2005), but her research on vampire fandom is applicable to a consideration of the saga. Showing how the sympathetic construction of the vampire is not recent, Williamson recognizes its roots in the nineteenth-century "public adoration" of Lord Byron (30), whose persona is echoed in both Brontë's Edward Rochester and Meyer's Edward Cullen (see Chap. 5). Exploring the vampire with a complex emotional life, Williamson addresses the subject of melodrama as she takes issue with another critic, Jules Zanger, who "mourns the demotion of the vampire from its status as a figure of metaphysical and cosmic evil to that of a 'demystified … next-door neighbor'" (Williamson 31). Williamson's rebuttal of Zanger is insightful:

> It is significant that Zanger regrets those changes in the genre which shift it into areas that are conventionally associated with women's fiction, melodrama and the feminine (and therefore devalued) reading pleasures; the depiction of emotional states and the experience of interior conflicts. Yet this is not a new aspect to vampire fiction. The vampire has long had ties of intimacy that has complicated the emotional investments surrounding the figure. (31)

Williamson's contention suggests several interrelated concerns that apply to Meyer's vampire-themed series and their melodramatic impulses. In many ways, the vampire has become a kind of territory over which writers and scholars compete to, ahem, stake claims. Often debates over which vampire is most authentic have more to do with discrediting melodrama and feminine experiences rather than the aesthetic or literary merit of the texts themselves. Dismissals of *Twilight*'s melodramatic expression and girl audiences continue to link the saga to popular nineteenth-century melodrama, which critics also denigrated.

Melodrama, the Nineteenth Century, and Popular Culture

In prominent Victorian literary critic George Henry Lewes's appraisal of *Jane Eyre* in *Fraser's Magazine* (1847), he notes:

> There are some defects in it—defects which the excellence of the rest only brings into stronger relief. There is, indeed, too much melodrama and improbability, which smack of the circulating-library,—we allude particularly to the mad wife and all that relates to her, and to the wanderings of Jane when she quits Thornfield; yet even those parts are powerfully executed. (85)

Even though Lewes derides the seemingly common use of melodrama, he nonetheless concedes its force. In her letter back to Lewes, Brontë recognizes melodrama's negative reputation, but acknowledges melodrama's necessity for publication and appeal for Victorian readers. Her defense indicates mid-nineteenth-century market demands:

> You warn me to beware of melodrama, and you exhort me to adhere to the real. When I first began to write… I determined to take Nature and Truth as my sole guides… I restrained imagination, eschewed romance, repressed excitement…. My work… being completed, I offered it to a publisher. He said… such a work would not sell. I tried six publishers in succession; they all told me it was deficient in "startling incident" and "thrilling excitement[.]" (qtd. in Mettinger-Schartmann 382)

Brontë's explanation makes clear the cultural stakes: melodramatic tendencies were critically scorned; such derision was anticipated.

But the appeal of melodrama for the reading public, especially the women implied by Lewes's sexist dig about the "circulating-library," was undeniable. We would be wrong, however, to take Brontë's letter at face value and to assume these are her real or only feelings about melodrama. Rather, this letter is a good example of the kind of rhetorical maneuvers Brontë invokes to shield herself from criticism, especially from authority. In this particular letter, Brontë suggests melodramatic tendencies are the result of publishing preferences, a concession to Lewes's critique. Brontë has nevertheless invested much of the importance of the novel in those sensational moments, legitimizing their narrative vitality. Moreover, Brontë's investment in Romantic epics, evident in her Angria tales, which she imagined with her brother, reveal a penchant for the sensational that stretched back to childhood.

Before melodrama was academically redeemed by the likes of Brooks and other feminist scholars in the latter twentieth century,[16] critics like Lewes frequently relegated melodrama to an aesthetically wanting category due, in part, to melodrama's marginalized audiences. In the nineteenth century, audiences in the playhouses were largely members of the working class (Booth, *Theatre* 151); readers of sensation fiction, a literary genre indebted to the melodramatic mode, were chiefly females (Wynne 33–35). According to Ann Cvetkovich's study of Victorian sensation novels and their affect, "The 'sensational' became an aesthetically, morally, and politically loaded term used to dismiss both particular kinds of representations and the affective responses they produce" (13). This remains true for contemporary girl audiences, whose cultural preferences and affective responses are frequently belittled and misinterpreted.

Even though the melodramatic mode pervaded many forms of expression in the nineteenth century, some of the most popular Victorian melodramas were those that lacked so-called literary value. For example: most critics would agree that Charles Dickens's novels, while adhering to the melodramatic mode, offer a sophisticated prose style to present complex human interactions. This, however, is not the case in the earnest prose of Mrs. Henry Wood's bestselling sensation novel *East Lynne*, published the same year as *Great Expectations* (1861). Like *Twilight*, *East Lynne* often seems to waste words to explain a single event or feeling:

> Ah! there could no longer be concealment now! There she was, her pale face lying against the pillow, free from its disguising trappings. The band of gray velvet, the spectacles, the wraps for the throat and chin, the huge cap,

> all were gone. It was the face of Lady Isabel; changed, certainly, very, very much; but still hers. The silvered hair fell on either side of her face, like the silky curls had once fallen; the sweet, sad eyes were the eyes of yore. (611)

Dickens's works were obviously popular, but his theatrical adaptations were not the most popular stage melodramas of their day (much to the author's dismay); rather, *East Lynne* enjoyed more success in theaters. So it may be true that *Twilight*'s literary merit is not on par with the quality of many other YA novels. The saga's flat word choice is certainly not on the level of *Jane Eyre*'s brilliant, often witty prose. Still the aesthetic-value argument does not invalidate the saga's provocation of feelings among girl readers, who may be empowered through such emotional allowances.

Recognizing melodrama's pervasiveness and its empowering functions in girl culture, then, requires an understanding of its historical popularity and rise to prominence in the nineteenth century, which shaped *Jane Eyre* and continues to inform many popular texts today. Melodrama's pervasiveness in popular culture has not subsided since its genesis in the theaters of revolutionary France[17] when it soon skipped over the English Channel to take over the Victorian stage. Michael Booth summarizes melodrama's key attributes (which remain today) while explaining their appeal to wide-ranging audiences:

> The serious drama that did satisfy the taste of the time, whether of the pit and the box audience of the patent theatres, the new theatres of the East End and the Surrey side of the Thames, or the touring portable theatres and the provincial Theatres Royal was melodrama. Melodrama contains every possible ingredient of popular appeal: strong emotion, both pathetic and potentially tragic, low comedy, romantic colouring, remarkable events in an exciting and suspenseful plot, physical sensations, sharply delineated stock characters, domestic sentiment, domestic settings and domestic life, love, joy, suffering, morality, the reward of virtue and the punishment of vice. (*Theatre* 150–51)

The Victorian theater gave rise to melodrama as we know it today. Patsy Stoneman's study of melodrama in Victorian *Jane Eyre* stage adaptations summarizes the positions of the two scholars who were most influential to our understanding of nineteenth-century melodrama: "Brooks argues that melodrama began in France as an ideological vehicle for revolutionary protest, and [...] Booth confirms that in the mid-nineteenth century [in England] it was still 'anti-aristocratic, anti-employer, anti-landlord,

anti-landowner and anti-wealth, often violently so'" (7). This summary conveys the subversive potential smoothed over by melodrama's conservative sheen.

Melodrama, from its inception, is a theatrical mode of discourse not limited to the stage[18] in its confrontations with issues of power and social change. Hyperbolic expression certainly infected serialized literature, especially the works of Dickens and the sensation novels of women writers like Wood and Mary Elizabeth Braddon (McWilliam 54). In the same manner as *Jane Eyre* (not published in serial form), these literary works were obvious choices for immediate stage adaptations unhindered by copyright laws that would restrict use. The dialogue between these mediums is most contemporary: "Popular novels frequently provide stories that were immediately purloined for the theater. Just as modern bestsellers frequently generate film adaptations, the Victorian stage abounded with Lady Audleys, Aurora Floyds, and women in white. But the relationship with the stage went both ways" (McWilliam 54). The female characters Rohan McWilliam references were (and still are) titillating for their dalliance with social taboos, like bigamy and infidelity, astonishing and ever-appealing pleasures of melodramatic sensation fiction.

The Victorians were truly awash with melodrama—but so are we today. Especially in the USA and in the UK, we expect to find melodramatic excess in daytime soap operas still on television, but melodrama is just as apparent in popular period dramas like *Downton Abbey* (2010–2015), hospital dramas like *Grey's Anatomy* (2005–), and in the sensational presentation of news. Hollywood film, with its early roots in the nineteenth-century theater,[19] continues to adhere to the melodramatic mode. In the late twentieth century, feminist film scholars exhaustively theorized melodrama as a film genre, particularly one related to women, also known as "the woman's film" or the "weepie." Since then, film and media studies scholars have reevaluated the use of the term "melodrama," reaching a consensus that melodrama is, in fact, a pervasive mode in Hollywood film, not a genre limited to feminine and/or female audiences and perspectives.[20] Steven Spielberg's oeuvre offers a representative example: in 1988, he even told an audience at the American Film Institute, "I don't think that I have ever not made a melodrama" (Friedman and Wood). Spielberg's *War Horse* (2011), a coming-of-age film about a boy and his horse in World War I, is clearly melodramatic; the film's over-the-top imagery of pain, suffering, and redemption is so heart-wrenching it might as well be labeled "emotional porn." Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993) also invokes the melodramatic

mode in its spectacular dinosaur effects; moreover, like *War Horse* and his earlier *E.T.*, (1982), *Jurassic Park* is the story of a family's reunification, one of melodrama's favorite outcomes.

Melodrama consistently celebrates rigid delineations of good and evil, an expression of moral legibility that continues to appeal strongly in moments of rapid social, economic, and political change. We may not even realize the inescapable presence of melodrama today because we are so used to encountering the mode's conventions, such as music, in literature and other media (Brooks 48). Music is just one of signature of excess that heightens feeling in the melodramatic mode, a "drama of pure psychic signs" (Brooks 54). Relating melodrama to its roots in French and English stage forms and the "social upheaval" to which they responded, film scholar Thomas Elsaesser also highlights the affective, expressive, and emotional capabilities of melodrama, facilitated particularly through sound and visual symbols (48). As Elsaesser explains: "Sound, whether musical or verbal, acts first of all to give the illusion of depth to the moving image, and by helping to create the third dimension of the spectacle, dialogue becomes a scenic element, along with more visual means of the *mise en scène*" (51). Elsaesser recognizes the melodramatic impulse to externalize interior feelings through music, as well as "the symbolisation of objects" in the setting and décor (61). This insight is foundational in studies of melodrama. Everyday objects are laden with meaning and significance—whether they are described on the page or captured in a close-up shot on screen. Especially in the case of *Twilight*'s film adaptations, these exterior expressions are often where we locate the protagonist's emotional subjectivity. More broadly, melodrama is a mode with particular importance to girl culture because of its capacity for certain signs' registration of interior feelings, especially those that society demands girls repress.

Melodrama, Theory, Power

Realizing how melodrama appeals to girls through emotion while addressing girlhood as a social construct first involves realizing how the mode's characteristic excess works to address issues of power and powerlessness. Foundational studies in melodrama theorize how melodrama's extremes contradict the narrative, expose impossibilities through incoherence, and reflect actual constraints that validate suffocating experiences in real life. Sometimes these exaggerations are so extreme they cannot be contained in the narrative, leading to ideological critiques of historical exigencies and

insight into the human condition. Melodrama critiques what it represents through the pleasures of exposure and the recognition of desires unable to be voiced in normative ways. This is the key theoretical insight on which this study rests because it leads us to a theory of melodrama's relationship to girls.

Melodrama looks familiar given its realistic settings and everyday concerns. But the mode's very nonrealistic exaggerations, dream-like fantasies, and hyperbolic expressions of stakes raised to life-and-death extremes violate verisimilitude in such a way that the realistic circumstances are themselves called into question. In this way, the melodramatic experience is about exposing, grasping, and reaching for objects of desire: "Melodrama is concerned not with what is possible or actual, but with what is desirable" (Vicinus, "Helpless" 132). Brooks locates this "break-through of repression" in a psychoanalytic framework (54), citing familial narratives.[21] Film scholars Thomas Elsaesser[22] and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith[23] are also concerned with the family dimension of melodrama. Like Brooks, they point to music and other non-representational elements' disruption of the reality principle in order to understand melodrama's critique of historical conditions, along with the mode's capacity to address psychological feeling. More specifically, feminist scholars' ground melodrama's significance in its potential to address patriarchy's positioning of women. Laura Mulvey's "Notes on Sirk and Melodrama" (1977/1978), offers a foundational feminist critique. In her analysis of female point-of-view films, Mulvey argues for the empowering nature of "recognition" the exposure of patriarchy's entrapments.[24]

These findings help us to understand the mode's rhetorical vitality in girl culture. On the surface, melodrama's narratives often promote conventional outcomes, such as family reunions and heterosexual pairings that support the status quo. Melodrama's extreme drawings of good versus evil seem to simplify attitudes toward complicated human experiences. And when it comes to women and girls, depictions of suffering females who are punished for social transgressions may seem hard to reconcile with feminist thought. Tania Modleski acknowledges this, but she concedes melodrama's appeal to grown women: "even the contemporary mass-produced narratives for women contain elements of protest and resistance underneath highly 'orthodox' plots" (*Loving* 16).

Melodrama's conservative dress may disguise its progressive functions because melodrama can actually champion the powerless, or those who *feel* powerless, given their social, material, political, or economic conditions.

Writing about nineteenth-century domestic melodrama, which often features suffering young heroines, Martha Vicinus offers instructive insight: in its presentation of moral absolutes, whereby good triumphs over injustice, melodrama functions as "a psychological touchstone for the powerless, for those who felt themselves to be 'the helpless and unfriended'" ("Helpless" 128). Theorizing the special appeal of the domestic melodrama[25] for women, Vicinus explains that genre's capacity to expose "contradictions":

> Removed under capitalism from participation in essential production, the middle-class woman found all her energies focused on the family and its emotional life. As the angel in the house, she was expected to sacrifice all for the emotional, moral, and physical well-being of her husband and children. It is little wonder that rebellion and self-sacrifice recur so frequently in popular melodrama; they speak to a recurrent underlying emotional tension in women's lives. (132–33)

Noting the subversive potential in Mrs. Henry Wood's *East Lynne* and Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), Vicinus also recognizes how melodramatic heroines and female villains (who, for example, violated marital fidelity) allowed women readers to contemplate their own constrictive domestic conditions related to home and marriage (133–34).[26]

Feminist film scholars also theorize melodrama's capacity to expose and empathize with powerlessness by representing the crippling effects of patriarchy's contradictions, a motif recognized in Mulvey's aforementioned study of female point-of-view film melodrama. Linda Williams draws on Mulvey, in part, to theorize the "shock of recognition" women viewers experience when they encounter the maternal melodrama in a twentieth-century film like *Stella Dallas* (1937) ("Something" 320). By identifying with the multiple characters and points of view at once (even though this kind of viewing is not intended by the film itself), the feminine spectator may recognize the contradictions and injustice associated with the female subject positions patriarchal ideology inscribes. This recognition opens the space for critique (319–20).

Williams's theory about female spectatorship and melodrama coincides with Blackford's findings in *Out of This World: Why Literature Matters to Girls* (2004).[27] The study shows how girl readers assume multiple subject positions, reading for theme and form, rather than for character identification (13). Blackford explains,

> Girls construct a literary text as both an aesthetic object and an alternative world, separate from life and their social worlds. By forging a relationship with the presumed spectator of a text, they experience a welcome diffusion of identity, bifurcating themselves into a "seeing and imagining" agent "in" the text and differentiating this omniscient, reading self from the self that exists in life. Inhabiting this reader position allows them to feel that they "see" the conventions by which the literary world is made and the vision of the world that the text presents. (9)

Blackford notices that talk about reading fiction like they are watching a movie, a kind of reader-spectator position informed by cinematic experiences (25–26), which further aligns Blackford's theory with theories of melodrama and female film spectatorship.[28]

Girl fans of *Twilight* cited throughout this book continue to uphold Blackford's findings about girls' reading experiences, as well as feminist theories of melodrama and spectatorship. Whether they are crying or conversing, confessing or singing, many girl fans communicate their preferences for *Twilight*'s melodramatic impulses with their own melodramatic expression. Even though they express intense and affective feelings about the saga's characters and situations, these girls generally do not elevate Bella as a model for their own behavior; they empathize with her emotional struggles, but are also sometimes critical of her choices—and, in doing so, girls reveal how melodrama functions both as a touchstone for powerlessness while the mode's extremes create a space for critique. Although Bella's position as the protagonist and narrator encourages particular empathy for her point of view, girl readers do not singularly identify with Bella since they also imagine other characters' points of view. These findings support an interpretation of *Twilight* as a melodramatic text that girl readers engage on an aesthetic level rather than a prescription for how to live. This is not to say, however, that the melodramatic mode does not address lived experiences. As Elsaesser argues, melodrama has the capacity to replicate

> the patterns of domination and exploitation existing in a given society, especially the relation between psychology, morality and class-consciousness, by emphasizing so clearly an emotional dynamic whose social correlative is a network of external forces directed oppressingly inward, and with which the characters themselves unwittingly collude to become their agents. (64)

Melodrama's extremes, then, actually correspond to realistic limitations facing girls, especially when it comes to the ways they are rendered powerless by the kind of "external forces" Elsaesser mentions.

Victorian and Postfeminist Girlhood

The melodramatic mode is uniquely useful to those in oppressed circumstances, a voice and comfort for the powerless. But how are girls, especially Western girls who were the initial fans of *Twilight*, rendered powerless today? Although contemporary girls certainly do enjoy more freedom and opportunities than female youth in previous centuries, girls still have "relatively little social power; they cannot vote; they are typically dependent on their parents; they form a culture where certain rules about what is acceptable behavior for girls are reinforced whether a girl is seven or seventeen" (Inness 3).[29] The attitude toward girls as powerlessly impressionable—and in need of protection from adults—became entirely evident in the scholarly and popular discourse surrounding *Twilight* girl fans; strangely, however, this attitude often came from feminist critics.

Critics often argue that Bella is a "bad role model" for girls because she is relatively powerless when it comes to defending herself and she is largely subservient to Edward's restrictions on their sexual experiences. Some of the earliest published *Twilight* scholarship frequently voiced these role model worries.[30] Carrie Anne Platt concludes: "Bella is a troubling role model. Meyer has rendered her weak in both body and mind, giving her little to no agency when it comes to dealing with her physical attraction to Edward" (84). Likewise, Natalie Wilson determines, "As for Bella, I do think she is ultimately too passive and self-effacing to serve as a strong role model, and her ultimate capitulation to Edward's demand that he marry her, followed by her decision to carry out a pregnancy at age 18, one that literally ends her life, are, in my book, far from empowering material" (*Seduced* 81). In fact, the collection *The Twilight Mystique*: *Critical Essays on the Novels and Films* (2010) premises itself entirely on role model concerns: "we have included essays that represent differing reactions to the Twilight phenomenon, particularly where it involves Bella and the question of her suitability as a role model for girls" (A. Clarke 4). None of these studies, however, has offered an adequate view of the *Twilight* phenomenon in girl culture, which includes girl-authored texts, too.[31] Such critiques may be right to question the saga's privileging of heteronormativity and its messages about female sexual

desire as dangerous. But there is no conclusive proof that girls are harmed by ideas about gender and sexuality that they encounter in literature, or that girls read to find a pattern they can simply and uncritically copy. Denying girls' pleasure in pop culture is antithetical to many positions in the field of cultural studies.

Role-model concerns even more specifically ignore what Blackford has discovered about girls' reading experiences.[32] The *Twilight* girl fans cited in this book uphold Blackford's theory: rather than seeing Bella as a role model to emulate, they negotiate the meaning of her fictional circumstances and dilemmas, often empathizing with, but sometimes critiquing her choices too. Following Blackford's scholarly model for girls' studies research, listening to what girls say about *Twilight*'s melodramatic impulses is an important component of a project that claims to address girl culture. Moreover, engaging *Twilight* through the lens of melodrama reveals how the saga's melodramatic impulses may actually empower—rather than disempower—girls, which justifies the ongoing appeal of the mode in pop culture for girls.

Assumptions about *Twilight*'s harmfulness for girls connect the *Twilight* phenomenon even more closely to the nineteenth century, which saw the rise of women's and girls' literacy. In English and American publications spanning popular literary presses, educational forums, and legal statements, male *and* female Victorian writers with a variety of political leanings argued about how to educate, socialize, enfranchise, and domesticate female youth. Debates stemmed from an inherent concern for what kind of adult women young females would grow up to be (Vallone and Nelson 2–3; Driscoll, *Girls* 35–7).

The Victorians' anxiety was especially prevalent in debates about young females' reading material: "Indeed, for many guardians of the public morals, the exposure of young women to the 'wrong' sort of novels could have disastrous results" (Wynne 33). Just as today, novels with sensational and melodramatic qualities were extremely popular among those nineteenth-century girls and women (Wynne 33–35). These nineteenth-century anxieties about girls paralleled the transitional historical moment facing Victorians: "Anglo-American girls at once symbolized, experienced, and in some degree forwarded the cultural crisis into which they were born" (8–9). Vallone and Nelson recognize the Victorians' paradoxical fixation: "Objectified yet demanding subjectivity, sexualized but not always sexual, girls were both fascinating and troubling for those Victorian commentators

who wrote about women" (2). Anxiety about girls and paradoxes about "successful" girlhood have certainly not gone away.

This twenty-first-century moment continues to offer contradictory and limited discursive trajectories for girls' so-called success. Ruth Saxton perfectly summarizes such competing claims over the girl:

> Told she can do anything and become anything, she is also infantilized and expected to keep to her second place in a patriarchal world full of glass ceilings and second shifts. Told to develop her mind, she is simultaneously bombarded with messages that reinforce the ancient message that her body is the primary source of her power, that she is primarily decorative, that she should have a model's body, that she should be beautiful within a narrow range or cultural stereotypes. Portrayed as a social failure if she procreates as a teenager, she is simultaneously taught that to be a mother is a mark of maturity and the passage to adulthood in society. (xxi)

These contradictions, which empower and disempower girls in the blink of an eye, are characteristically "postfeminist," a term that requires much more definition.

Even though postfeminism can sometimes be a confusing concept because of its name's relationship to feminism, feminist scholars in cultural and media studies have successfully argued that postfeminism is not a feminist movement. Angela McRobbie identifies that as one of postfeminism's largest problems: "Feminism is taken into account, but only to be shown to be no longer necessary" (17). Drawing on McRobbie's important contributions, Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra argue that postfeminist culture is "inherently contradictory, characterized by a double discourse that works to construct feminism as a phenomenon of the past, traces of which can be found (and sometimes even valued) in the present" (8). Enmeshed in these postfeminist discourses of contemporary femininity, womanhood, and girlhood are strains of neoliberalism, especially the emphasis on individualism at the service of capital.

In media culture today, a postfeminist "sensibility," as Rosalind Gill terms it, is sustained by interrelated themes related to femininity, feminism, and the female body—which all serve an ideology of neoliberalism. According to Gill, female subjects (like protagonists in "chick lit") are empowered through careers and sexual subjectivity. These feminist themes are undercut however by regressive messages that position women as capitalist subjects. Consumerism affords the constant maintenance of

conventional femininity enacted on a (hetero)sexual female body required to stay ever fit and youthful.[33] Adult women are entreated to remain girlish—and girls are summoned to revel in the power of shopping, sisterhood, and femininity, also known as "Girl Power." Sue Jackson and Elizabeth Westrupp offer a useful summation:

> Girl Power arguably comprises one of postfeminism's most potent expressions, seductively inviting girls to be fun loving, sassy, and independent and self-pleasing (Griffin 2004a). These postfeminist meanings of being a girl are constructed within the entangling discourses of feminism, neoliberalism and conventional femininity producing a contradictory femininity that delivers "empowerment" through a (consuming) girlie femininity and sexuality (McRobbie 2008). (358)

The perfect postfeminist girl is, then, an emotionally and physically "healthy" girl, who consumes the right things in the right quantities (such as food and sex), is body confident, intellectually assertive, and professionally ambitious—but who is carefree and conventionally feminine at the same time. This social construction of female youth, what Anita Harris terms "can-do" girlhood, is the discursive flip side of "at-risk" girlhood, which involves failing at all of those postfeminist methods of empowerment. The "at-risk" girl is particularly criticized for out-of-control appetites related to sexuality and consuming the "wrong things" (Harris 28–30). In forthcoming chapters, I elaborate on Harris's definitions of these categories, themselves indicative of melodramatic extremes, as they apply to *Twilight*'s representation of coming-of-age girlhood.

Given the contradictions of postfeminism's ideals, is it any wonder that girl culture continues to privilege melodrama, which replicates the sensation of being trapped by outside forces? *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight Saga* reveal how the mode both allows and validates anxious sexual feelings, along with frustration with social and economic powerlessness. Just as melodrama has exposed the claustrophobic nature of patriarchy's oppression of women in the nineteenth century, melodrama reflects oppressive and contradictory pressures facing more contemporary girls, too. In our own postfeminist moment, the agency of girls is undercut by forces that ostensibly seek their success—because this so-called success is limited to certain avenues and to certain able-bodied girls, whose usually white, middle-class status affords them consumer power, education, and control over their emotions and their sexuality. Meenakshi Gigi Durham argues that

works tending toward the supernatural, such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003), especially tend to reflect a version of female empowerment that is constrained by ideologies that privilege whiteness, blondness, thinness, and heterosexuality "all in the interests of capital" (3). Interpreting *Twilight* through a melodramatic prism reveals the saga as a reaction to these postfeminist limitations and contradictions—the very messages that cripple Bella, who sees herself polar opposite to the kind of girlhood articulated by Buffy Summers.

Melodrama and Popular Girl Culture: A Brief Survey

Melodrama is everywhere, but when it comes to girl culture, melodrama *reigns*. Perhaps melodrama is so ubiquitous in girl culture that its presence at first seems invisible. Since the nineteenth century, girls have enjoyed reading outwardly conventional stories spiked with passionate yearnings, especially the Brontë novel so influential on *Twilight*: "Many adolescents were also reading *Jane Eyre* (1847) or Charlotte Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853) and other popular romances at the same time they consumed school stories. Both of these genres shared with the domestic story an independent thinking heroine who must be chastened, either by circumstances or by marriage" (Vicinus, "Models" 53). And *Jane Eyre* remains popular among girl readers. HarperCollins recognized the *Twilight*-Brontë connection when the publisher reissued *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* (along with two other Meyer intertexts, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Pride and Prejudice*) as YA imprints beginning in 2009. The book covers of these rereleases mimicked the style of Meyer's covers, featuring a red or white object suggestive of the book's emotional conflict dramatically set off by the plain black background. The cover of *Wuthering Heights* even offers the caption, "Bella and Edward's favorite book."

But what happens in popular girl culture in between the nineteenth-century *Jane Eyre* and the twenty-first-century *Twilight*? In her discussion of nineteenth-century girls' reading experiences, Sally Mitchell explains, "Melodrama [...] not only presents a fantasy of an "ideal" world, in which the good are (defined and) rewarded and the bad punished, but (also) educates the feelings, so that readers are habituated to feel anger, or fear, or the reward of a warm and positive glow, in response to certain specific stimuli" (*New* 157). A survey that catalogues the rippling out of Victorian

melodramatic impulses in girls' literature, film, television, music, and social media is necessary, and that project would require its own study. Instead, highlighting some very well-known texts situates *Twilight* within a tradition of the melodramatic mode in popular girl culture. By highlighting these popular works, I do not aim to be thorough to each text, but to call attention to a comprehensive set of techniques and tropes relevant to girls' melodramatic expression in order to position *Twilight* as representative of melodrama in girl culture.

Near the beginning of *New Moon*, Edward tersely requests, "Don't be melodramatic, please," after Bella's desperate proclamation, "I'd rather die than be with anyone but you" (Meyer 45). In doing so, Bella follows a 150-year-old line of heroines who use exaggerated discourse to express their feelings. Fictional girls on the page and screen frequently frame life in terms of death. In Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868), Amy March proclaims, "Let us be elegant or die!" and Jo March also yearns for heightened experiences, "I want to do something splendid before I go into my castle, something heroic or wonderful that won't be forgotten after I'm dead." More than a century later in the 1990s, *My So-Called Life*'s Angela Chase confesses on television, "I bet people can actually die of embarrassment. I bet it's been medically proven" ("Dancing"). In addition to validating feelings associated with social humiliation, Angela's narrating voice-over fosters intimacy between the girl character and her viewers. Addressing *MSCL*, Kathleen Rowe Karlyn makes the case for voice-over's connection to interiority: "A female voice-over privileges female subjectivity, and it is rare in mainstream cinema" (268). Because of its capacity to privilege emotional interiority, voice-over often facilitates melodramatic expression in girl culture. Although the first *Twilight* film's use of voice-over is most consistent throughout the whole film, all of the *Twilight* films invoke this cinematic technique to some degree.

Spoken narration is just one technique for communicating melodramatic subjectivity. The emotional allowances that melodrama affords through signs, often everyday objects filled to the brim with significance, are another clue to its ongoing popularity among girls. Take, for example, Anne Shirley's "depths of despair" when she accidentally dyes her hair green in L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908). Anne's attempts to change her red hair reflect the orphan's very real and legitimate feelings of being an outsider in a new community. After much weeping and promising to remain hidden forever, however Anne recovers. This mistake was not her first (she previously got her best friend Diana drunk) and is not

her last (she reenacts a Tennyson poem and nearly drowns). The reader is comforted by an outlook she maintains throughout the series: "tomorrow is a new day with no mistakes in it yet." The reassuring sentiment signals melodrama's promise: a hopeful resolution in spite of tear-stained loss.

Anne Shirley's contemporary counterpart might be Georgia Nicholson, the protagonist of Louise Rennison's popular YA series beginning with *Angus, Thongs, and Full-Frontal Snogging* (1999), later adapted into a 2008 film. Like Anne, the modern-day British girl is prone to accidents and theatrics, offering the same "end-of-the-world" discourse when she clumsily shaves off half of her eyebrow before the first day of school. Also like Anne, Georgia recovers—but with the help of her comedic sensibilities. Georgia's penchant for melodrama in the context of her humor is a good reminder that over-the-top expression is sometimes funny; after all, those nineteenth-century stage melodramas encouraged audiences' extreme emotional reactions: crying was mitigated by laughter inspired by stock characters who introduced levity (Booth, *Theatre* 127–28). Moreover, sometimes laughter is a defense mechanism for girls' painful sadness, a rhetorical maneuver some of the *Twilight* fans cited in this book demonstrate.

In girl culture, melodramatic impulses are apparent in the treatment of coming-of-age experiences related to the young female body, especially in iconic texts whose influence spans decades. Judy Blume's *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.* (1970) takes seriously a girl's anxiety about her menarche, a topic that made Blume's novel controversial as she was the first to address it in adolescent literature. Melodrama can address the persecution of the female body, a motif available in another milestone YA text. The protagonist of Laure Halse Anderson's *Speak* (1999) assumes muteness as a coping mechanism after she is raped; this extreme lack of expression is the melodramatic flipside of expressing all. But more positive sexual experiences are also rendered in melodramatic terms. Melodrama is invoked in representations of girl characters' bodily agency, as in *Dirty Dancing*'s (1987) iconic moment: Patrick Swayze's character lifts Baby in the culmination of their dance to the song, "(I've Had) The Time of My Life." This public performance—set to music—reveals Baby's sexual awakening to the whole town, a moment reminiscent of a theatrical stage spectacle.

The musical and melodramatic expression of forbidden romance is even more obvious in girl-groups popular at the beginning of the 1960s, a decade that witnessed the rise of rock 'n' roll and youth culture at large.

Prior to the 1960s, however, the expression of sexuality and romance from what seemed like "authentic" girl voices was lacking in an age of highly censored media. This is especially true in literature geared to adolescent readers, with the possible exception of *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1947). Maureen Daly's *Seventeenth Summer* (1942) does invoke melodramatic expression in its Romantic efforts to displace a girl's sexual awakening onto blooming pea plants (10). Even though Daly was herself a teen when she wrote her novel, the absence of actual girls' voices expressing sexual longing in the mid-twentieth century makes the emergence of girl-group sound and its use of melodrama even more significant, opening the door for literature and other media to follow suit.

One girl group that gave voice to teen heartbreak and nostalgic sorrow was the Shangri-las, a group made of two sets of Jewish sisters from Queens, New York. So obviously melodramatic are the songs of the Shangri-las that they "earned the moniker 'myrmidons of melodrama'" (Warwick 194), a name that suggests the mode needs defense when it comes to girls. One of the Shangri-las' iconic hits, "Leader of the Pack" (1964), is a perfect illustration of melodrama in girl culture: sung in first-person to a chorus of girls, who offer empathetic affirmations, the song is the story of "Betty's" romance with the bad boy, whom her parents forbid her to see. After their tearful break up, he crashes his motorcycle—and dies. The sound effects are another indication of melodramatic expression: due to the "strategic use of sound effects, the lyrics to 'Leader of the Pack' never have to spell out that Jimmy is a motorcyclist, presenting an elegant economy even in the midst of angst-ridden, high melodrama" (Warwick 194). Refusing to hide her tears, Betty vows to remember her boyfriend, a resistant stance against authority and social judgment. The melodramatic nature of this song is even more obvious during the Shangri-las' televised performances; while the girls lip-synched to the words, they acted out the song, complete with a motorcycle onstage.

Other early 1960s girl-group music presents a more complicated expression of violence and suffering that have definite bearing on *Twilight*'s depiction of Edward Cullen's violent urges toward Bella, whose intoxicating scent tempts his vampiric inclinations to kill her. The Phil Spector-produced Crystals' "He Hit Me (And It Felt Like a Kiss)" (1962) is an eerie tune that, on the surface, seems to condone relationship violence. The girls sing as if in a trance, concluding that a male partner's anger is

an indication of his love. In spite of that problematic theme, Jacqueline Warwick[34] argues that the extreme representation of a girl's suffering is actually a critique of the abuse: "a song that appears at the level of lyrics to be a straightforward celebration of physical violence as a loving corrective can also be read as an attempt to speak from the position of a girl in this kind of situation, a compassionate performance of the unhealthy logic that makes abuse tolerable" (69). Although she does not specifically reference melodrama here, Warwick's insight suggests that the appeal of extreme representations of feeling are more complicated than they first appear; indeed, here is an example of melodrama critiquing the thing (relationship violence) it represents.

In the post-*Twilight* era, Lana Del Rey is a presiding queen of pop music melodrama. Despite accusations of inauthenticity, Del Rey is very popular among girls and young women, along with gay males. Even though she often claims to be expressing her "real" self, Del Rey consistently plays with dramatic personae, especially in musical narratives about suffering and sexual desire. One of her recent hits, "Ultraviolence" (2014), harkens back to the melodramatic discourse of 1960s girl groups with the explicit use of the Crystals' "He hit me (and it felt like a kiss)" lyric in a song about masochistic pleasure. In the beginning, the singer's voice reveals she is the one who is poisonous ("deadly nightshade"). When she is struck, it feels like a kiss—but that sensation is felt by both partners. In the first verse, it is Jim who feels the violence: "Jim told me that/He hit me and it felt like a kiss," but later Del Rey seems to own the feeling: "I can hear sirens, sirens/He hit me and it felt like a kiss." The ambiguity and reversals are thematic parallels to *Twilight*, in which Bella feels guilty for Edward's suffering when her rising sexual desire tempts him. "Ultraviolence" continues to play with the "He hit me" lyric as the singer begs for the pleasure of his violence while her devotion becomes more and more over the top—another corollary to Bella's intense physical longing.

"Ultraviolence" is a perfect example of Del Rey's performative indulgence in the forbidden. Applying Warwick's insight into the Crystals' song to "Ultraviolence" (and to *Twilight*) begins to suggest that empathetic readings are available and that the song is not necessarily prescribing relationship violence. This compassionate stance should make us seriously interrogate why girl characters who voice expressions of pain,

especially in heterosexual relationships, continue to appeal to girl audiences. The Crystals' and Lana Del Rey's songs suggest that melodramatic representations may expose suffering to critique it, rather than condone it.

As a soundtrack that cues feelings, music is a major component of "real" girls' melodramatic discourse in social media. In fact, Del Rey herself owes much of her musical fame to such participation on the web: "Too awkward for the medium of live television, too ethereal for the stage, Lana Del Rey seems to know her bread is buttered on the Internet (she is literally a child of that medium, the daughter of a web entrepreneur who made his dough hawking Internet domains). There, fans embrace her eclectic video mashups and twisted takes on pop culture clichés" (Parramore). Lana Del Rey is like many young purveyors of culture all over the web. Girls in particular exhibit melodramatic responses to their favorite novels, television, movies, and music using pastiche and parody to create new texts in honor of the ones they love. When they make YouTube videos that mash-up songs and images from *Twilight* and contemporary adaptations of *Jane Eyre* or *Downton Abbey*, girls often highlight moments of romantic passion and suffering longings that relate disparate texts on melodramatic grounds. By slowing down the speed of the images, reediting for close-ups, and adding their own (often contemporary) music, girls imitate soap-opera-style film techniques to heighten and intensify feeling.[35]

Online spaces are conducive to girls' melodramatic and performative expression. Social networking sites and other websites not only allow space for artistic and discursive expression, but personal, interior experiences can also be projected publicly. Literally, girls' private bedrooms are the setting for creating media shared with the world via the web (Kearney, "Productive" 137).[36] The intimacy fostered through melodramatic conversation is strikingly similar to the performances of the fictional March girls, who perform sensational plays and mimic Charles Dickens with their "Pickwick Papers" in the privacy of their domestic space. With sites like YouTube, girls have a public venue for which Jo could only dream. Yet, like the other March sisters, many *Twilight* girl fans are self-consciously protective about their melodramatic expression, defending their affective excess from outsiders' criticism just as Alcott's girls kept their theatrical spectacles a secret.

In fact, girls' melodramatic public/private online expressions of fandom are much like nineteenth-century girls' diary writing. Middle-class Victorian girls were encouraged to keep daily journals that recorded their accomplishments; in this way, diaries were often considered "semi-public" (Hunter 56). These were not the kinds of diaries hidden away under bed mattresses, but they are still records of girls' personal and social development. In her study of American girls' Victorian-era diaries, Jane Hunter "focuses on the function and the practice of the Victorian girl's diary, providing an analysis of the strategies by which girls used diaries both as technique and discipline in their formalization of one kind of self" (51). Hunter discovers that "[girls] came to use their diaries not as an escape from the Victorian family, but as a way of discovering -or constructing -the self within it" (53). Although Barbara Crowther examines girls' diaries from the mid-twentieth century, she finds comparable negotiations of social positions: "for many young girls, diary-writing also constitutes a performance, both a public and a private one" (197). By discovering similar kinds of public/private negotiations of the public/private self, I add to these conversations about girls' discursive practices by situating them in the context of the melodramatic mode. Online spaces allow for diary-like disclosure and revelation as well as public performance, which elicits immediate feedback, often from other girls.

Discerning Melodrama's Form and Function in Girl Culture

The *Twilight* phenomenon—comprised of a variety of texts, both girl and adult authored—is the perfect vehicle for theorizing the rhetoric of melodrama in girl culture. Although *Twilight* is often disparaged for its melodramatic tendencies, with respect to both the vampire romance and its screaming fans, this critical dismissal frequently belies sexist and ageist tendencies toward girls and their pop culture preferences. Thus my study acts as a corrective that advocates for girls. Meyer's literary saga derives inspiration from *Jane Eyre*, a work generally celebrated by critics. Similar to *Twilight*, *Jane Eyre* features a self-conscious and introspective coming-of-age girl, whose narration is often characterized by melodramatic impulses.

Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Century is informed by an approach to genre criticism in rhetorical studies. Instead of only identifying shared conventions and narrative features, generic rhetorical criticism classifies genre through shared rhetorical outcomes. While generic rhetorical criticism has its roots in "the writings of Aristotle and other classical rhetoricians" (Foss 194), Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson's influential work, "Form and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism: An Introduction" (1978) sets forth premises on which subsequent rhetorical critics concerned with genre will build. Campbell and Jamieson draw, in part, on Kenneth Burke's theory of the "psychology of forms" and they cite his memorable insight: "form is the creation of an appetite in the mind of the auditor, and the adequate satisfying of that appetite" (408). Realizing that forms help situate a response—and expectations for a kind of response—helps us determine how melodramatic moments, those formal attributes that make up melodrama, function rhetorically to position the girl reader. Generic rhetorical criticism, as Campbell and Jamieson suggest, offers a "window" onto the cooperation of certain "elements," conventions that function together at the service of a whole system of meaning. This particular explanation of genre, which is not a kind of text, but, rather, a type of response to a rhetorical problem, offers a prime directive for the following chapters.

Illustrating melodrama's rhetorical functions in girl culture involves not only the recognition of defining formal melodramatic moments. Exploring melodrama's rhetorical dimensions also reveals how those moments work together to respond to coming-of-age girlhood as well as to create expectations among girl audiences—who respond in kind with their own melodramatic discourse. For example, a melodramatic narrative typically opens with an innocent's space invaded by an evil intruder. Although this narrative feature is conventional to melodrama, the portrayal shines a critical light on actual social pressures facing girls, who are encouraged to be ever vigilant about their safety, especially when it comes to their bodies. This melodramatic impulse, then, validates the frustration and fear many girls may feel when it comes to the pressure to be hypervigilant. So it is no surprise that when girls go online to offer pro-*Twilight* fan texts—texts they know are ridiculed by many outsiders—they try to construct safe spaces for fan participation. Meyer's series, along with its cinematic adaptations and fan discourse, invokes

narrative conventions and rhetorical outcomes that parallel melodramatic impulses in Brontë's text, revealing a vital continuity of melodrama in girl culture.

Notes

1. "Girlhood is made up and girls are brought into existence in statements and knowledge about girls, and some of the most widely shared or commonsensical knowledge about girls and feminine adolescence provides some of the clearest examples of how girls are constructed by changing ways of speaking about girls. For example, while adolescence has often implied a development of increased maturity and (eventual) stabilization of identity, it is only since the nineteenth-century that adolescence has become very strongly identified with puberty and the teenage years" (Driscoll, *Girls* 5).
2. "It is important to consider the culture that girls themselves create as active producers and shapers of their realities as well as the culture that is created and shaped by adults and then marketed to girls, who, in their turn shape market-place commodities in ways that might or might not have been intended by their adult creators" (Inness 4).
3. For example, in *Disturbing the Universe*: *Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*, Roberta Seelinger Trites mentions melodrama only in passing:

   > One critic of adolescent literature, Perry Nodelman, dismissively describes characters in adolescent fiction as people who live "ordinary lives, but see them in terms of melodrama ('Robert Cormier' 102)." Nodelman is undoubtedly reacting to the profound seriousness that many of these characters express in their first confusion about social institutions. (3)

   Nodelman's diminishing view of melodrama is also apparent in Michael Cart's *Young Adult Literature*: *From Romance to Realism* (2010): "What saves this book [*Living Dead Girl*] from lapsing into melodrama or genre horror fiction is, first, the numbly affectless—but pitch perfect voice—that Stone has created for Alice to use in telling the reader her own story" (152). This seems to suggest that melodrama's excess is mitigated by the narrative voice of the protagonist, whose less-tempered (or hysterical) voice would, according to Cart, detract from the novel's authenticity. I argue that a revised vision of melodrama is necessary in

scholarship addressing adolescent literature, especially since the mode of excess responds so profoundly to issues of power and powerlessness relevant to youth.

4. Blackford foregrounds her study of melodrama in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by acknowledging the appeal of Lee's novel for young readers, but reader responses are not a major component of the study. Marc Bousquet examines a more recent YA phenomenon, Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, in terms of melodrama. In "Harry Potter, the War against Evil, and the Melodramatization of Public Culture," Bousquet considers Rowling's series "in the context of the Reagan-Bush-Thatcher-Blair 'war against evil'" (177). Nevertheless, Bousquet's arguments about the rhetorical functions of melodrama in the *Harry Potter* series are more interested in national politics at large. Bousquet does not treat melodrama's particular connection with contemporary youth or the mode's appeal to the lived experiences of young readers.
5. Gledhill explains, "Feminism [...] given melodrama's long relegation as a women's cultural domain, claims a stake in critical reappropriation of the form and introduces the problem of the 'woman's film' which, it has been assumed, represents a sub-set of melodrama" (Introduction 1). Pam Cook also observes, "[Melodrama's] potential to move the audience deeply while laying bare the impossible, painful contradictions of social and personal relationships appeals strongly to radical film critics, and recent feminist interest has focused on the way in which it deals with aspects of women's experience marginalised by other genres" (248).
6. "What they achieved through romance reading was twofold: a temporary release from the demands of the social role that defined them, and psychological gratification for the needs they experienced because they had adopted that role. It might be said that romance reading functioned for the women as a kind of tacit, minimal protest against the patriarchal constitution of women" (Radway 481)
7. Behm-Morawitz et al.'s reception study of *Twilight* fans (both girls and women) "demonstrates that the romantic relationships in the *Twilight* series were interpreted differently by fans according to their ideologies and stages in life" (151).
8. Although Drotner is concerned with young women's preferences for romantic melodrama as she makes a case for the feminist study of popular culture, she insists her study is not intended to "contribute a great deal to an overall understanding of female consumption of the genre or genre development" (59). Rather, Drotner wants to "help reopen an analytical

space within which we may create a more nuanced understanding of the social and aesthetic changes in popular culture" (59).

9. "Reading *Mockingbird* through [the nineteenth-century novel's] nexus of meaning enables us to more thoroughly understand why a young daughter is the witness to the American romance—to all it excludes and affects. If we view *Mockingbird* through the lens of melodrama, we find that pantomime in the trial overwhelms the literary form of the novel's earlier emphasis on consciousness and irony. Pantomime and spectacle shut down Scout's usually perceptive mind, explaining her increasing sleepiness" (89–90).
10. According to Blackford, "By updating Uncle Tom melodrama, Lee taps into a thriving American literary tradition to which readers have been conditioned to react: they must not only think about but also feel the outrage of persecuting innocence" (*Mockingbird* 90). Through a side-by-side reading of key melodramatic moments in the novels, Blackford reveals their similar rhetorical functions in both novels: "*Mockingbird* simultaneously appeals to America's nostalgia for small-town childhood and its embrace of liberal progress. This paradox provides the context to the novel's mythic emphasis on a persecuted innocent African American Tom, which updates *Uncle Tom* melodrama" (94).
11. "Every Victorian play bearing the name of 'drama' is a melodrama of one kind or another, in four acts, perhaps, instead of two or three" (Booth, *Theatre* 154–55).
12. "Theater in the nineteenth century was a genuinely popular form, enjoyed by all classes from Queen Victoria down to the working classes of London's East End, who flocked to the Britannia Theatre, Hoxton. It was, however, the taste of the latter that really shaped drama in the first half of the century, and what it loved was 'melodrama.' Most plays conformed to the conventions of melodramatic performance with its blood and thunder, heightened emotions, moustache-twirling villains, swashbuckling heroes, comic rural yokels, romantic brigands, and victimized heroines" (McWilliam 54).
13. All Victorian stage melodramas were not identical. Certain types (such as the "Gothic drama," "nautical drama," and the "sensation drama") had visibility at different moments throughout the nineteenth century (Booth, *Theatre* 151–54).
14. Coming from King, this assessment is not at all surprising given his low opinion of melodrama, which is ironic considering his own body of work is haunted by the Gothic, a point of connection with the melodra-

matic mode. King also dismissed the popular television show *Mad Men*, the AMC drama about an advertising agency in the 1960s, as "basically a soap opera" (Nikolas). In his *Atlantic* piece, Akash Nikolas takes up King's rejection in a defense of melodrama in popular culture, recognizing that, in the case of *Mad Men*, the mode's "tropes are all in the service of character studies and the deconstruction of American identity through imposters, a theme so important F. Scott Fitzgerald couldn't stop writing about it. That hybrid nature is why the series remains critically beloved."

15. One of the most circulated analyses espousing a dismissive attitude toward female vampire fans is Stephen Marche's *Esquire* article. In "What's Really Going on With All These Vampires?" Marche tries to account for vampires' success with female audiences. He does so by denying current vampires (in *Twilight* and HBO's *True Blood*) complex metaphorical functions:

> Vampires have overwhelmed pop culture because young straight women want to have sex with gay men. Not all young straight women, of course, but many, if not most, of them. Neil Gaiman, sci-fi novelist and geek grandmaster, found out just how many during the shitstorm of pique that covered him from head to toe this past summer after he suggested in an interview that the vampire craze had run its course and should disappear for another twenty to twenty-five years. (Twilight fans took to Twitter in protest.) A foolish hope. The craving for vampire fiction is not a matter of taste but of urges; one does not read or watch it so much as inject it through the eyes, and like any epidemic, it's symptomatic of something much larger: a quiet but profound sexual revolution and a new acceptance of freakiness in mainstream American life. (Marche)

Marche casts young female fans of *Twilight* as both "foolish" and hysterical in their disagreement with Gaiman, and he oversimplifies the gendered implications of the twenty-first century undead phenomenon. Vampires may indeed speak to new sexual possibilities—as Lord Ruthven and Count Dracula did in the nineteenth century.

16. Brooks recuperates melodrama, acknowledging its "bad reputation" among critics and making a case for its critical worth (11). In the updated 1995 preface to *The Melodramatic Imagination*, Brooks summarizes the outcome of scholarly efforts that occurred alongside and since his study's original publication in 1976, concluding, "the

melodramatic mode no longer needs to be approached in the mode of apology" (xii).

17. While some trace melodrama's genesis to the theatrical stages of Greece or Shakespeare, Brooks convincingly argues for melodrama's modernity:

    > The origins of melodrama can be accurately located within the context of the French Revolution and its aftermath. This is the epistemological moment which it illustrates and to which it contributes: the moment that symbolically, and really, marks the final liquidation of the traditional Sacred and its representative institutions (Church and Monarch), the shattering of the myth of Christendom, the dissolution of an organic and hierarchically cohesive society, and the invalidation of the literary forms—tragedy, comedy of manners—that depended on such a society. (14–15)

18. Like Brooks, Elaine Hadley understands melodrama's pervasiveness in nineteenth-century culture as modal in nature: "Melodrama's familial narratives of dispersal and reunion, its emphatically visual renderings of bodily torture and criminal conduct, its atmospheric menace and providential plotting, its expressions of highly charged emotion, and its tendency to personify absolutes like good and evil were represented in a wide variety of social settings, not just on the stage" (3). Hadley goes on to explain: "The melodramatic mode was manifest in texts and speeches but also [...] crucially expressive in nonlinguistic forms of representation—physical gestures, political actions, and visual cues, such as clothing and other objects" (4).
19. See Gledhill's "The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation," which locates the historical roots of melodrama in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in order to explain the relationship between European melodrama's influence on American Hollywood cinema (14–38).
20. Two decades after Brooks's important study was originally published, Williams confirms his conclusions:

    > Melodrama is the fundamental mode of popular American moving pictures. It is not a specific genre like the western or horror film; it is not a "deviation" of the classical realist narrative; it cannot be located primarily in woman's films, "weepies," or family melodramas—though it includes them. Rather, melodrama is a peculiarly democratic and American form that seeks dramatic revelation of moral and emotional truths through a dialectic of pathos and action. It is the foundation of the classical Hollywood movie. (Williams, "Melodrama" 42)

The generic definitions of the "woman's film of the 1940s" or the "maternal melodrama" still exist, however, and will be useful to a discussion of the *Jane Eyre* and *Twilight* films; but it is important to remember the differences between the theoretical conceptions of melodrama as a "mode" versus "genre" when considering scholarship in this field.

21. "Melodrama regularly rehearses the effects of a menacing 'primal scene,' and the liberation from it, achieved through articulation and a final acting-out of conflicts" (Brooks 54).
22. With particular attention to director Douglas Sirk's films, reflecting the emphasis on auteur theory in the 1960s (Gledhill, Introduction 8), Elsaesser theorizes the Hollywood family melodrama. Understanding the Hollywood family melodrama as distinct from the Western, Elsaesser finds: "The family melodrama, by contrast, though dealing largely with largely with the same oedipal themes of emotional and moral identity, more often records the failure of the protagonist to act in a way that could shape events and influence the emotional environment, let alone change the stifling social milieu" (55). As Gledhill summarizes, "Thomas Elsaesser's 'Tales of Sound and Fury' (1972) was the earliest, and remains the most comprehensive account of film melodrama, attempting to come to terms not only with the melodramatic nature of Hollywood aesthetics, but with the place of cinema in the total field of European melodramatic forms" (Introduction 7–8).
23. According to Gledhill's summary of Nowell-Smith: "the radical potential of melodrama lies less in a Sirkian critique of the bourgeoisie life style and values that in the possibility that the 'real' conditions of psychic and sexual identity might—as symptoms of a 'hysterical text'—press too close to the surface and break the reassuring unity of classical realist narrative. 'Ideological failure,' built into the melodramatic programme, results in the breakdown of realism" (Introduction 9).
24. "The workings of patriarchy, the mould of feminine unconscious it produces, have left women largely without a voice, gagged and deprived of outlets (of a kind supplied, for instance, by male art), in spite of the crucial social and ideological functions women are called on to perform. In the absence of any coherent culture of oppression, the simple fact of recognition has aesthetic importance; there is a dizzy satisfaction in witnessing the way that sexual difference under patriarchy is fraught, explosive and erupts dramatically into violence within its own private stamping ground, the family. While the Western and the gangster film celebrate the ups and downs endured by men of action, the melodramas of Douglas Sirk, like the

tragedies of Euripides, probing pent-up emotion, bitterness and disillusion well known to women, act as a corrective" (Mulvey, "Notes" 75–76). Mulvey locates melodrama's roots in Greek tragedy, a position refuted by Brooks's more convincing argument about melodrama's foundation in structural dissolution following the French Revolution, which justifies the mode's modernity.

25. "Domestic melodrama, situated at the emotional and moral center of life, is the most important type of Victorian melodrama; it is here that we see primal fears clothed in everyday dress" (Vicinus, "Helpless" 128).
26. Auerbach makes a similar argument about female villains' subversive potential in *Women and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth*.
27. Blackford conducted interviews with 33 "racially, socioeconomically, and geographically diverse girls, ages eight to sixteen, about their experiences with stories in books and other media" (1). Instead of fictional female protagonists, Blackford's girls report actively seeking role models "in what they perceive as real life. They crave stories about and told by the women in their lives. They hang posters around their mirrors and imagine themselves being the women in those posters [...] Many girls feel television and magazines to be models of information for problem solving in their lives" (11).
28. In fact, the three professional music videos featuring the Bella Cullen Project offer a perfect illustration of Blackford's theory about girls engaging literature as a separate aesthetic object. Although the videos (still available on MTV's website) include settings and props that replicate a *Twilight*-themed setting, they do not depict the members of the band acting out Bella's role. Instead, the band members are the narrators in *Twilight*-themed songs; two videos cut back and forth between shots of the girls singing directly to the camera and corresponding scenes with actors playing the melodramatic scenarios of Bella, Edward, and Jacob. The BCP's narrator/spectator positions and choices not to play Bella in their videos visualizes Blackford's theory of girl readers: the band members are the storytelling narrators, commenting on the *Twilight* world from an intimate vantage point, but not taking the place of the saga's characters. The BCP song lyrics offer even more evidence of this interpretive position in relation to melodrama, as subsequent chapters reveal.
29. While Inness suggests the teenage years as a loose border for a girl's age span (3), this is a permeable border. The late teenage years and early twenties in the West often mark a transitional period defined by financial and

other kinds of dependencies that prolong adolescence, a phenomenon illustrated by HBO's television show *Girls*, a coming-of-age narrative featuring 20-something females in New York City.

30. Scholars' dismissal was echoed by popular critics in mainstream news sources, too. MSNBC contributor Susan Young asserts, "It's too bad that a force as strong as 'Twilight' can't serve to show young women that they have their own power, and don't need to be subservient in order to find true love."
31. Wilson does consider a girl reader (*Seduced* 5–6), but her partiality is problematic: Wilson implicitly privileges and extends her own daughter's retrospective attitudes toward the saga rather than offering a theoretically grounded study of other girls' reading experiences.
32. Angela Hubler also recognizes girls' active reading strategies, what she terms "liberatory reading":

> girls in my sample commonly focused on aspects of texts that confirmed female behavior they found desirable while ignoring or forgetting aspects that undermined those behaviors. Liberatory reading helps account for the gap between childhood memories of a book and the substantially different analysis an adult critic might construct when returning to it. (270)

33. Gill draws on a variety of texts, like *Sex and the City* and *Bridget Jones's Diary*, to define the following "interrelated themes" of postfeminist media culture:

> the notion that femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; an emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and self-discipline; a focus on individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; and a resurgence of ideas about natural sexual difference. (147)

34. Warwick's study recuperates girl-groups' contributions to the 1960s musical scene, an intervention in an area of study that frequently privileges the white male canon (4). Warwick's appreciation of girls, girlishness, and girlhood in the field of musicology reflects a larger trend in girls' studies scholarship, which involves an interest in reexamining popular girl culture in historical moments.
35. In her study of *Gossip Girl* fans, Catherine Burwell has also noticed girls' uses of melodramatic film techniques in girl-made fan media.
36. "Although many girls who make media in their homes do so by themselves, most are problematizing the conventional construction of the bedroom as private by using this space as not only a production studio, but

also a distribution center. Indeed, the majority of American girl media producers send their texts well beyond their homes to audiences far outside their local communities. This phenomenon should give us pause, for while girls' domestic media production is transforming bedroom culture, the broad diffusion of girl-made media has the potential to substantially alter girls' relationships to the public sphere, a cultural, economic, and political landscape from which members of their demographic group have historically been excluded" (Kearney, "Productive" 137).

CHAPTER 2

Powerless Protagonists: Melodramatic Heroines of Victorian and Postfeminist Girlhood

"Shall we call you 'Jane'?" asks Edward Cullen in *Twilight* when he and Bella Swan hypothetically use aliases to discuss his supernatural condition (Meyer 173). As usual, Bella negotiates a mix of feelings: insecurity about her self-worth coupled with curiosity and sexual attraction. This emotional mishmash resembles that of Bella's literary predecessor, Jane Eyre, who navigates a similar sea of passions in relation to Edward Rochester. Edward Cullen's question, then, makes the connection between Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* eerily obvious; one could indeed call Bella "Jane" as both self-conscious protagonists yearn for equal footing with their love interests.

Jane and Bella are melodrama's power-deprived heroines, whose ongoing suffering and struggle pervade the narrative. Situating the literary protagonists' anxiety, self-consciousness, and persistent yearning in the context of discursive constructions of girlhood in the nineteenth century and this postfeminist moment begins to reveal how melodrama addresses issues of power relevant to coming-of-age girls. Although novel and film are not interchangeable, the first *Twilight* film upholds these critical functions. The film translates the literary protagonist's clumsiness to the screen and amplifies her awkwardness through voice-over, as well as cinematography and costuming. Bella's social anxiety is a point of appeal among girl readers, who sympathize with Bella's situation (especially in the context of the school setting), but whose comments prove that they are not rendered

K. Kapurch, *Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Century*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-58169-3_2

powerless themselves through exposure to Bella. These power dynamics suggest critical functions of melodrama in girl culture that all of the forthcoming chapters continue to address.

Powerless Literary Heroines

Calling Bella Swan a powerless heroine is not a provocative statement; calling Jane Eyre a powerless heroine, however, might be more controversial. When I say "powerless," however, I do not mean without agency. Rather, power relates to the social, economic, and political capital that coming-of-age girls like Jane and Bella lack throughout much of their narratives. Writing about the nineteenth-century domestic melodrama, Vicinus explains, "The heroine, though ostensibly weaker than the hero, invariably suffered greater persecution; her strength under adversity confirmed the moral superiority of women over men" ("Helpless" 133). Jane and Bella both struggle against powerful forces from their vulnerable positions; their ongoing struggle aligns them with melodrama's young ingénues.

Understanding Bella and Jane as heroines whose social positions have rendered them powerless immediately recalls their narratives' fairy-tale connections. Bella's familiarity to many girl readers is due, in part, to *Twilight*'s inheritance of beloved fairy tales, the same stories that continue to make Jane Eyre an appealing heroine. Jane and Bella are Cinderella-girls who are frequently persecuted and ignored. As Anne Morey explains in her analysis of *Jane Eyre* and *Twilight* on the grounds of romance and fantasy, "In both narratives, the heroine rises from misprized child to powerful woman, tracing an arc of *Bildung* that may be one of their shared attractions for both girls and women" (16). Jane and Bella both transcend their inauspicious childhood beginnings when they blossom into the love objects of men who are then redeemed by the heroines' love. Sandra M. Gilbert explains *Jane Eyre*'s appeal on the basis of its fairy tale connections:

> To be sure, Bronte was working with plots familiar to many of her readers, who would have known, among other significant precursors, the Cinderella story Samuel Richardson told in *Pamela* and the Bluebeard tale of Anne Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*. But the author's genius in *Jane Eyre* consisted in the fervor with which she defamiliarized such received plots by putting them together in a new way. (357)

Others have extensively explored *Jane Eyre*'s indebtedness to fairy tales, especially "Cinderella." Micael Clarke, for example, argues that Brontë deliberately adapts the Grimm Brothers' German version of the tale in order to highlight an "ethic of female intelligence, activity, pleasure, and integrity" (697). By upholding this particular *Jane Eyre* allusion, Meyer endows her protagonist with similar Cinderella values.

In addition to "Cinderella" and "Bluebeard," Brontë incorporates and transforms "Beauty and the Beast," as well as Scheherazade's storytelling in *Arabian Nights*: "By associating Jane with Scheherazade, Brontë asserts the power of narrative: like Scheherazade, Jane Eyre employs narrative to save lives, her own as well as those of other women" (M. Clarke 697). Frequent references to folkloric imagery (birds, trees, fairies, and the moon) recur throughout the novel (see M. Clarke; Ralph; Rowe). Phyllis Ralph is particularly concerned with the fairy tale's impact on *Jane Eyre* as a story of adolescent development. Ralph concludes, "While the narrative is heavily dependent on fairy-tale motifs, they are motifs of the active heroine who achieves her own transformation and that of her beloved, rather than the passive princess often associated with fairy tales" (109–10). In this way, *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight Saga* owe much of their popularity to their simultaneous maintenance and destabilization of fairy-tale tropes within the melodramatic mode, which allows the reader to feel deeply alongside the protagonist. Melodrama, with its characteristic excess and lyrical qualities, indulges lengthy yearning and suffering that is usually shortened in most conventional fairy tales. *Jane Eyre*'s and *Twilight*'s incorporation of well-known fairy tales is also a feature related to melodrama's nineteenth-century origins, where it would habitually "sponge" up other popular genres—particularly the fairy tale (McWilliam 56). The melodramatic mode is, indeed, the perfect house for the transformative wonder and utopian longings underpinning the sacred profanity of fairy tales.

Just as *Jane Eyre* adapts familiar stories to tell the narrative of a girl turned governess turned heiress, Meyer's *Twilight Saga* offers a contemporary twist on the Brontës—as well as the same fairy tales that inspired them. For example, Bella's domestic dreariness is brought into relief by the romantic possibilities presented by a sparkly vampire, Edward Cullen, akin to Cinderella's prince. Bella's wanderings into the forest—despite warnings of danger from both her father and Edward—recall Little Red Riding Hood's classic off-the-path meeting with the wolf. The pale, dark-haired Bella's temporary sleep after a villain's bite resembles Snow White's

slumber induced by the bite of an apple, a symbolic suggestion reinforced by the apple on *Twilight*'s cover.[1] While others have explored the saga's fairy-tale influences (see Diamond; Kramer), *Twilight*'s association with the Brontës and with *Jane Eyre* in particular informs a larger theory of melodrama in contemporary girl culture.

Prior to becoming self-assured and self-sufficient adult women, the happily ever after the fairy tale and melodrama both promise, Jane's and Bella's self-doubts characterize much of their narration. Jane and Bella are both cognizant, to varying degrees, of their presentation of psychological distress to their readers. Jane continually invites intimacy, positioning her readership to understand her motivations through addresses to "reader." As Carla Kaplan argues in her study of Jane Eyre's "girl talk,"

> The story Jane tells is not simply the story of her movement from victim to agent, orphan girl to familied heiress, governess to wife; it is also the story of her own longing to talk, to find someone to credit her version of her life, to sympathize with her trials and listen as a friend […] Jane's desire for discursive intimacy is shaped by protest against her place in the social order and by a concomitant vision of social change. (9)

While Bella does not directly name and call forth the "reader" as Jane does, Bella does encourage a close relationship with her (girl) readers, a process Sarah K. Day terms, "narrative intimacy"[2] in her exploration of the *Twilight Saga* (66).[3] Bella does seem especially conscious of how her perceived weakness and the extremism of her emotional turmoil might be judged by an audience, which is not surprising considering Bella's social anxiety. For example, before Bella learns of Edward's vampiric nature, she dwells: "I was consumed by the mystery Edward presented. And more than a little obsessed by Edward himself. Stupid, stupid, stupid. I wasn't as eager to escape Forks as I should be, as any normal, sane person would be" (*Twilight* 67). Bella consistently judges her own reactions, comparing them to some ideal to which she does not measure up.

Edward Rochester and Edward Cullen are the objects of Jane's and Bella's affections and the subjects of much of the girls' narration. These male characters are also very similar—and not just in first name, of course. The male love interests are both significantly older than Jane and Bella: Rochester is "near forty" (Brontë 160) and Edward has been living for a century past his 17 human years. Jane's and Bella's self-consciousness is both exacerbated and alleviated by the attention of these Edward love

interests, who appreciate the heroines' unique qualities. Rochester tells Jane: "You have saved my life: I have a pleasure in owing you so immense a debt. I cannot say more" (150). True to character, however, he goes on to say more: "Nothing else that has being would have been tolerable to me in the character of creditor for such an obligation: but you; it is different;—I feel your benefits no burden, Jane" (150). Similarly, Edward consistently reminds Bella that she is unlike any other human he has encountered in his long life: "I told you—you don't see yourself clearly at all. You're not like anyone I've ever known. You fascinate me" (245). Their Edwards' compliments stand in direct contrast to Bella's and Jane's perceptions of themselves.

As they reflect themselves to the reader, Jane and Bella both judge themselves inadequate, especially as potential romantic partners. At the beginning of her Thornfield stay, Jane is frequently frustrated by Rochester's contradictory actions: "He was moody, too; unaccountably so: I more than once, when sent for to read to him, found him sitting in his library alone, with his head bent on his folded arms; and, when he looked up, a morose malignant scowl, blackened his features" (Brontë 146). Her anxiety about Rochester's mixed signals reaches a peak when Jane perceives Rochester's romantic affection for the blonde, beautiful, and cunning Blanche Ingram, who banters with wit and rides horses with confidence. Jane proceeds to dismiss her own worthiness through self-abuse and chastisement: "That a greater fool than Jane Eyre had never breathed the breath of life: that a more fantastic idiot had never surfeited herself on sweet lies, and swallowed poison as if it were nectar" (160). In an effort to disillusion herself from the idea that Rochester might fancy her, Jane commands herself to render portraits of Blanche and herself with precise attention to detail; she titles her own, "Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain" (Brontë 161). The distress that encumbers Jane illustrates the novel's interior melodrama since, as a first-person narrator, she negotiates this masochistic suffering within the setting of her own psyche.

Just as late-teenaged Jane peers into her glass and sees a plain misfit, at the beginning of *Twilight* 17-year-old Bella gazes into her own mirror, comparing herself to an ideal other while she anxiously anticipates the first day at a new school:

> Maybe, if I looked like a girl from Phoenix should, I could work this to my advantage. But physically, I'd never fit in anywhere. I should be tan, sporty,

> blond—a volleyball player, or a cheerleader, perhaps—all the things that go with living in the valley of the sun. Instead I was ivory-skinned, without even the excuse of blue eyes or red hair, despite constant sunshine. I had always been slender, but soft somehow, obviously not an athlete; I didn't have the necessary hand-eye coordination to play sports without humiliating myself—and harming both myself and anyone else who stood too close. (Meyer 10)

Jane's and Bella's mirror moments, a trope in girls' literature and other media, situate readers to reflect alongside the female narrators. As the reader looks at and with narrator, her harsh judgments inspire empathy. This outcome begins to suggest that *Twilight*, from its opening pages, offers a similar critique of the pressures to conform to idealized beauty images that *Jane Eyre* presents. Indeed, the blonde, fair, physically adept, and talented girl remains the impossible standard, a poster girl for postfeminist success today just as Blanche was a prototypical ideal in the nineteenth century.

Jane's and Bella's insecurities reflect a perceived otherness that parallels the overt monstrosity (would-be bigamy and vampirism) of their love interests—and this may also explain why girl readers sympathize with such heroines. Jane and Bella are narrators whose self-descriptions of plainness, social awkwardness, and emotional insecurity defy the ideal girl of their day. Jane and Bella recognize their own physical deficiencies, but they are not obsessed with improving their looks, a motif advocated by postfeminist media culture, which demands constant attention to "femininity as a bodily property" (Gill). When Jane has the opportunity to adorn herself in extravagant garments for her wedding, she insists on a frock that suits her character despite Rochester's urgings: "With infinite difficulty, for he was stubborn as a stone, I persuaded him to make an exchange in favour of a sober black satin and pearl-grey silk" (268). Similarly, although Bella does wish for vampiric perfection in order to keep up with Edward, throughout most of the series, she does not work to enact this perfection on her human body. In fact, she is awkward and resistant toward his sister-vampire Alice's attempts to make her over with clothes, shoes, and cosmetics. Bella also consistently refuses Edward's gifts, which signal upper-class comforts. Such rejections of commodified femininity are initial clues to the saga's presentation of a protagonist who is negotiating the demands of postfeminist constructions of girlhood just like her readers.

Bella's failure to measure up to a postfeminist "can-do" poster girl for most of the series is actually what feminist scholars have criticized her for (see Platt; Wilson). Anna Silver is a bit more generous when she explains:

> Bella's clumsiness, of course, is not simply a sign of incompetence. Rather, she embodies, in her physical klutziness the adolescent girl ill at ease in her new woman's body and with her first emotions of first love and lust. Nevertheless in the context of Edward and Bella's relationship, her gracelessness provides numerous opportunities, particularly in *Twilight*, for Meyer to demonstrate the dynamic in their relationship of perpetual rescuer and rescued. ("*Twilight*" 125)

Silver concludes that Bella's deficiencies stem from the physical and emotional in-between-ness of adolescence, but ultimately function as excuses for rescuing. I suggest a slightly different reading: Bella is clumsy and weak, but she is also aware of her human frailties (this cognizance is a quality shared with Jane Eyre). Meyer's representation may be appealing to girl readers because Bella so clearly fails to measure up to postfeminism's discursive demands, namely "Girl Power" and what Anita Harris calls the "can-do girl" (see Introduction). Bella's frustration with herself is, then, an expression of frustration many twenty-first-century girls may share when they judge themselves harshly in comparison with mediated exemplars of so-called empowered girlhood. In girl culture, melodrama's excess can critique the constraints it often depicts.

The critical capacity of Bella's angst is reinforced by the Brontë connection, this time with Emily's *Wuthering Heights*. In her analysis of Bella's narrative through the myth of Persephone, Blackford addresses Bella's presentation of interiority:

> Catherine's writing in *Wuthering Heights* inscribes her voice into the margins of a male text and Lockwood's consciousness, a theme that becomes paramount in Bella's "twilight" story. She is the narrator for most of the series and her voice becomes her compensatory agency in the struggle against her inner feelings of monstrosity and insecurity. (*Myth* 12)

Bella's interior conflict is, then, largely a struggle to overcome her own freakish humanity: "If Edward feels monstrous, Bella experiences herself and her vulnerable, clumsy body as a monstrosity. She is, in many ways, the more vampiric in *Twilight*" (Blackford, *Myth* 199–200). Bella is aware

of this correlation as she reads *Wuthering Heights*, later comparing her choices with those of Cathy, whom Bella acknowledges is "a monster" (Meyer, *Eclipse* 610). True to postmodern form, Bella's cognizance not only comments on the nineteenth-century connection, but also calls attention to her own excessive tendencies through the intertextual association: "I was selfish, I was hurtful. I tortured the ones I loved. I was like Cathy, like *Wuthering Heights*, only my options were so much better than hers, neither one evil, neither one weak. And here I sat, crying about it, not doing anything productive to make it right. Just like Cathy" (517). The text's awareness about its over-the-top tendencies, made possible by Bella's self-conscious narration, illustrates melodrama's ability to critique pressures facing girls by encouraging empathetic reading experiences.

As first-person coming-of-age narrators offering intense, interior perspectives, Jane and Bella frequently highlight their heterosexual attraction to their respective Edwards. Both heroines gaze at their male love interests with a deep sense of longing. Despite fighting the urge to love him, Jane gazes upon Rochester and submits to him; her gaze encourages the reader to recognize his singular beauty at the same time. As she confides,

> Most true is it that "beauty is in the eye of the gazer." My master's colourless, olive face, square, massive brow, broad and jetty eyebrows, deep eyes, strong features, firm, grim mouth,—all energy, decision, will,—were not beautiful, according to rule; but they were more than beautiful to me: they were full of an interest, an influence that quite mastered me,—that took my feelings from my own power and fettered them in his. I had not intended to love him: the reader knows I had wrought hard to extirpate from my soul the germs of love there detected; and now, at the first renewed view of him, they spontaneously arrived, green and strong! He made me love him without looking at me. (174–75)

Romantic attraction characterized by deep passion and even submission to power is indeed a melodramatic expression of Jane's and Bella's interiority.

Like *Jane Eyre*, *Twilight* encourages the reader to gaze at Edward through Bella's point of view. Although she will marvel at his beautiful features, when she first sees Edward, her description belies a magnetic attraction that Bella, like Jane, tries to avoid: "I peeked up at him one more time, and regretted it. He was glaring down at me again, his black eyes full of revulsion. As I flinched away from him, shrinking

against my chair, the phrase *if looks could kill* suddenly ran through my mind" (*Twilight* 24). Also similar to Jane, Bella expresses later submission: "Because when I thought of him, of his voice, his hypnotic eyes, the magnetic force of his personality, I wanted nothing more than to be with him right now. Even if … but I couldn't think of it" (*Twilight* 139). Bella's descriptions of Edward cast him in other-worldly, god-like terms of beauty (Silver, "*Twilight*" 125–26), which does deviate from the representation of Rochester, who is not traditionally handsome. The nature of Bella's looking and desiring is the same as Jane's: desirous, but anxious and unwittingly submissive.

An erotic emotional undercurrent links *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight Saga*, whose adherence to romantic tropes are but one facet of melodramatic excess. Indeed, many girls' sensational responses to *Twilight* echo the titillated sentiments of the *Atlas* reviewer of *Jane Eyre* in 1847: "it is a tale of passion, not of action; and the passion rises at times to a height of tragic intensity which is almost sublime. It is a book to make the pulses gallop and the heart beat, and to fill the eyes with tears" (Brontë 455). This *Jane Eyre* reader's sensational reading experience suggests a kind of orgasmic response, complete with tears, an affective corollary to many of the *Twilight* girl readers' comments cited throughout this book (see Chap. 7).

The heroines' hunger for equality, however, is just as palpable as is their romantic yearning. When Rochester threatens to send Jane away from Thornfield, pretending to be engaged to Blanche, Jane famously asserts:

> Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless?—You think wrong!—I have as much soul as you,—and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh;—it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal,—as we are!" (253)

Rochester responds, "As we are!" and physically embraces Jane in a steamy embrace: "gathering me to his breast, pressing his lips on my lips" (253). Gilbert explains Brontë's novel's lasting appeal through this erotic, romantic undercurrent, which is mitigated by Jane's hunger for equality: "That *Jane Eyre* introduced audiences to the 'wild declarations' and egalitarian strivings of an unprecedentedly passionate heroine certainly explains

why the novel has always had a special appeal for women, who tend to identify—and want to identify—with this compelling narrator's powerful voice" (357). Gilbert's theory about *Jane Eyre*'s appeal applies to Bella's narrative, which appeals to many girls because it is a story about striving for recognition and equality.

Bella's ardent devotion to, sensual admiration of, and committed yearning to be on equal footing—as a vampire—with her undead love interest mirrors Jane's plight with Rochester. Even though she does not express it as eloquently as Jane does, Bella yearns for equality: "I'll be the first to admit that I have no experience with relationships. But it just seems logical … a man and 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*" (473). although Bella situates the disparities between herself and Edward as having to do with his supernatural condition, Bella is also aware of her economic disadvantage. In *New Moon*, Bella explains,

> I'd never had much money, and that had never bothered me. Renée had raised me on a kindergarten teacher's salary. Charlie wasn't getting rich at his job, either—he was the police chief here in the tiny town of Forks [Washington]. My only personal income came from the three days a week I worked at the local sporting good story. In a town this small, I was lucky to have a job. Every penny I made when into my microscopic college fund. (Meyer 13)

Bella offers this explanation as a point of contrast with Edward's extreme wealth, which affords him the ability to shower her with material things. Throughout the series, however, Bella consistently refuses his lavish gifts. In this way, she defies the consumerist and neoliberal agenda of many postfeminist protagonists, whose interests in clothes, makeup, and cell phones, serve capital. Catherine Driscoll also recognizes this: "Bella offers a critique of contemporary girl-directed consumer culture and commodification of girlhood […] That Bella ends up having all these things regardless of her disinterest in them seems like an incidental reward for her virtue, including the virtue of not caring for commodities" ("Girl" 101). Driscoll's finding is correct, and she calls attention to a melodramatic convention—the heroine's virtue. Such a critical emphasis on the saga's final outcome however ignores Bella's ongoing striving and struggle to reject the constant stream of luxuries from the Cullens throughout

much of the series. The melodramatic nature of enduring toil provides the space for critiquing materialism.

Jane's and Bella's ongoing struggles for recognition are points of connection that continue to explain their texts' appeal. Recognizing the protagonists' "egalitarian strivings" (Gilbert 357), Anne Morey has explored connections between Meyer's series and *Jane Eyre* on the generic grounds of romance:

> Meyer uses the resources of fantasy, those elements of the plot and characters that are not mimetic of the world as we know it, to first heighten and then eliminate the sexual disparities between Bella and Edward, a process *Jane Eyre* performs without recourse to fantasy. Meyer may be signaling the difficulty of imagining an empowered young woman even in the context of the present, and certainly within the context of the romance. (16)

Morey interrogates the ideological nature of the authors' representations of gender and heterosexual relationships, but my exploration of melodrama takes a different angle. I consider the rhetorical appeals of such fantastical representations as extreme expressions consistent with melodrama; these exaggerations, while sometimes fantastical, still correspond to actual social pressures facing girls. In fact, it is exactly because Meyer depicts a girl who fails to measure up to postfeminist standards of female empowerment throughout most of the saga that her series may appeal to girls similarly frustrated with social pressures and restrictions.

An Awkward Girl On-Screen

How does a cinematic adaptation of a literary text articulate melodramatic impulses set largely within an anxious girl narrator's interiority? Beginning with this question is an entry point into exploring the adaptation of the powerless heroine's anxiety from page to screen. This analysis previews ideas relevant to the translation of other melodramatic conventions addressed in subsequent chapters.

Kristen Stewart is often critiqued for her halting, stuttering, and sometimes expressionless portrayal of Bella Swan, but the actress's awkwardness communicates her character's constant insecurity and discomfort. Because the literary Bella articulates her feelings to the reader—but not often to the characters with whom she interacts—from the start, the films faced a challenge translating the protagonist's melodramatic subjectivity.

Interestingly, the translation of interiority was also a concern facing *Jane Eyre* stage adaptations in the nineteenth century. According to Stoneman's analysis of eight *Jane Eyre* stage melodramas, "The conventions of stage melodrama do not […] ignore Jane's inner space but they turn it 'inside out,' so that a private 'autobiography' shared with the discerning reader becomes a public declaration of grievance delivered in a voice, as Dickens put it, 'audible half a mile off'" (148). In film adaptations, one of the most obvious strategies for communicating a protagonist's voice is voice-over.[4] Although their uses of the technique are not consistent, the *Twilight* films all employ narrating voice-over to some degree. Additionally music, cinematography, and other aesthetic components of the mise-en-scène, what Elsaesser calls "non-representational" elements, also reflect the heroine's subjectivity.

The first *Twilight* film offers representative examples of cinematic melodramatic subjectivity. When she directed *Twilight*, Catherine Hardwicke was already intimate with female coming-of-age films and melodramatic narratives about teen angst. Her orientation with girls and girlhood is exemplified in *Thirteen* (2003),[5] which Hardwicke directed and cowrote with Nikki Reed, one of the film's lead actresses and who was then a teen herself. (Not coincidentally, Reed later plays Rosalie in the *Twilight* films.) Mark Cunningham recognizes Hardwicke's commitment to truthful representations of young people's lives since her film "shows the director blending her stylized approach with an honest depiction of youth culture" (204). Hardwicke's film choices convey an aptitude for verisimilitude, both in the portrayal of coming-of-age girlhood and in terms of the source material, the novel *Twilight*. This directorial approach was apparent from the beginning of the casting process, when Hardwicke advocated for the age-appropriate teen Kristen Stewart because of her likeness to the literary Bella (Cunningham 204). Hardwicke's *Twilight* similarly invokes melodramatic tropes, replicating on-screen the urgency and angst inherent in the literary Bella's interior point of view—at the service of legitimizing it, not laughing at it.

Twilight takes seriously the anxiety of being "the new girl" at school, communicating Bella's interior awkwardness through voice-over, which works in conjunction with setting and cinematography. Hardwicke's *Twilight* does not include scenes with Bella crying the night before school as does her literary counterpart, but the film still encourages empathy for Bella's feelings of being an insecure outsider. *Twilight*'s voice-over works as a cue toward other nonverbal signs that heighten the viewer's

understanding of Bella's extreme angst and alienation. An instance of narrating voice-over occurs after an establishing shot of Forks High School, filmed in a low-angle shot, which is Bella's vantage point as she drives into the parking lot. The building seems imposing against the dark clouds, an oppressive atmosphere created intentionally by adding "lightning, storm clouds and rain" in the editing process (Hardwicke 150). Following the visual intimidation, in her resigned tone, Stewart voices lines not in the novel: "My first day at a new school. It's March, middle of the semester. Great." "Great" is sarcastic, a characterization many viewers of the film who are familiar with the standard American school calendar would immediately understand. Being new at a school is hard enough, but coming into a new school in a small town when the school term is already underway means being behind in both academic and social calendars, an anxiety-inducing situation.

Hardwicke's film continues to elevate Bella's mixed feelings of alienation and claustrophobia through close-ups and costuming, which position the viewer to respond empathetically with a protagonist who worries about being noticed. When Bella gets out of her rusty vintage truck, a girl student's face is featured in the foreground of the frame; she looks at Bella and turns to laugh with her friends, which suggests that she might be laughing at Bella. Another student, Tyler, calls to Bella, "Nice ride"; although subsequent scenes make it clear he has a crush on Bella, his delivery of these lines is so casual it seems as though he is insulting the truck. The cinematic Bella continues to look lost, calling attention to her newness as she walks through a school hallway holding a piece of paper close to her face; this is the schedule the literary Bella worries about "having stuck in front of my nose all day" (14). Bella is singled out in another awkward encounter with Eric, who enthusiastically informs her that she is the subject of "the feature" in their school newspaper. Bella refuses that spotlight with dialogue made more uncomfortable by Stewart's characteristic stuttering delivery of lines. This awkwardness heightens discomfort in the viewer, who also perceives Bella's inelegance through her cumbersome clothing, a too-large baggy and beige waterproof jacket that swallows her slim frame, making movement even clumsier.

The cinematic Bella continues to look out of place and physically uncomfortable in the next scene: gym class. The literary Bella tells the reader about her lack of athletic ability, but this scene in the film positions the viewer intimately alongside the protagonist when she is thrust into a volleyball game. The camera cuts quickly between shots of the ball

passed between players, accompanied by sounds of punting and the loud scuffling sounds of gym shoes. Bella, unlike the other athletically adept girls who are wearing shorts as they capably pass the ball, is in long pants reminiscent of pajama bottoms. Bella clumsily swats the volleyball into the head of a boy across court; the good-natured Mike Newton appears to introduce himself to Bella, soon followed by Jessica, who joins the conversation. Despite his good humor, the mid-to-close-up shot of Mike looking almost directly into the camera (Bella's point of view) makes his attention seem overwhelming. Their interaction is shot in a series of mid-to-close-up shots; the cutting encourages the viewer to identify with Bella's point of view in the conversation. Bella makes a joke about her pale skin and Arizona, mumbling, "maybe that's why they kicked me out." Mike gets the joke, but the bubbly Jessica does not understand, which inspires more lip-biting awkwardness from Bella. Through cinematic techniques that translate Bella's awkwardness and claustrophobia in the school setting, Hardwicke's *Twilight* advances the same critique of postfeminist girlhood available in the novels' representation of Bella's anxiety as a response to the fear of social judgment. By replicating feelings of discomfort for the viewer, the first *Twilight* film's melodramatic techniques encourage viewer sympathy for the alienated girl who is clearly not an exemplar of Girl Power.

Girls' Empathy for the New Girl

Girls' preferences for Bella support the idea that the saga's melodramatic conventions critique "empowered" postfeminist girlhood. Over and over again, girls report taking pleasure in reading about the shy, awkward Bella and frequently explain how seeing through a "normal" girl's perspective fosters empathy for Bella. Girl readers share the protagonist's human characteristics, especially insecurity, and they can imagine the discomfort induced by certain social situations, especially in school. Importantly, this identification and empathy does not imply, however, that girls model themselves after the protagonist.

The members of the Bella Cullen Project, for example, identify with Bella's experiences, particularly as the new girl at in the school setting. The following selection from one *MTV* interview illustrates how these girls, the trio who filled two albums worth of original *Twilight*-themed music, engage with *Twilight's* melodramatic expression of its protagonist's angst:

> MTV. Here's the obvious question: Why "Twilight"?
>
> ALLY KIGER. Because we really love it. It's really relatable.
>
> TORI RANDALL. Everyone has been in Bella's situation. Everybody's loved somebody, and it's just really amazing because you can read it and be like, "I've felt that."
>
> MTV. Do the "Twilight" books stay true to what real high school is like right now?
>
> RANDALL. Well, we just finished our freshman year, so yeah.
>
> NASH. We definitely know that kind of thing. [*Laughs.*] I used to move around a lot as a kid. We'd go to one place and I'd be the new kid again, and I'd have to start over. I definitely know how Bella would have felt if I'd been in her place and gone to this new school in this place where there's really weird kids. Because, let's face it: People in high school, they're weird. [*They laugh.*]. (Carroll, "'Twilight' Tribute")

By expressing empathy with Bella's situation in a discussion of their own experiences, these bandmates illustrate how the dramatization of everyday circumstances validates the gravity of coming-of-age experiences. Their laughter is reflective of many *Twilight* girl readers' responses, whereby confessions of discomfort are accompanied by laughing. Humor is, after all, a counterpoint emotion in the melodramatic mode, which uses moments of levity to offset extreme suffering. As subsequent chapters show, in girl culture this form of melodramatic discourse is one that girls use to validate each other and to deflect outsiders' criticism at the same time.

The *Twilight Saga*'s melodramatic impulses elevate seemingly ordinary high school experiences, such as being a new girl, to cosmic heights in order to defend their significance against trivialization. By imagining this fictional situation, the Bella Cullen Project responds to the saga's melodramatic conventions with their own equally melodramatic discourse. "Out of the Blue," a song on the BCP's first album, responds to the anxiety Bella feels about moving to Forks. Asked about the song in another interview, the BCP explains: "It's about Bella when she moves to Forks, and she just wants to pick up and leave. She has to sacrifice a lot, and a lot of weird things happen, and she just doesn't know what to do. It's about how she feels when she moves to this new town and it's so unfamiliar to her" (Carroll, "'Twilight' Tribute"). Reiterating their understanding of high school's strangeness, the girls' explosion of this particular melodramatic moment signals their empathy.

"Out of the Blue" reflects an intimacy with Bella's experiences in *Twilight*, but the lyrics are not sung from her perspective. Rather, the second person point of view offers a kind of commentary on Bella's painful circumstances as a social outsider. The first verse of "Out of the Blue" asks: "What do you do when life gets burning?" Through its use of the "you" perspective, "Out of the Blue" responds to Bella's frustration while encouraging listeners at the same time: "Don't give up, your rose bud's blooming." Subsequent verses repeat the question-and-answer format, a call-and-response sequence characteristic of the supportive feedback favored by girl-group musical discourse. Such lyrical expression validates feelings of hopelessness, but encourages perseverance, evidencing how the melodramatic mode is a form of expression that inspires girls to support each other. The song's hopeful disposition is reinforced by the bridge: "Out of the blue comes a face/ Where your faith is placed." These lines, although somewhat trite, recognize the tension between the image a girl is expected to project when she is new ("your smile is running thin") and her inner feelings of alienation ("You don't fit in"). In this way, the girls are responding to the saga's critique of social pressures on girls to enact self-control and femininity. These lines also suggest the melodramatic convention of moral feelings through the reference to "faith," a reference to Bella's decision to believe in Edward's virtue based on her emotions (see Chap. 5). The lyrics' promise of hope is, moreover, reinforced by the song's instrumentation; twinkling xylophone sounds reinforce the song's last lines of optimism appearing "out of the blue."

Girls conversing on TwilightTEENS's discussion forum also consider the "out of the blue" nature of Bella's encounter with Edward. True to melodramatic form, which makes the mundane meaningful, the novels' representation of everyday experiences in the school setting enhances the semblance of ordinary reality (in spite of the vampires). When imagining what she would do if Edward came into her own biology class, IsabellaMarieCullen reports:

> Ok. well, my Best friend sits next to me in that class, so if edward walked in, i would have probably shoved her out of the seat, shouted "Over here!" when the teacher asked if there were any open seats, and had her sit in the one in front of me (yeah a three-seating desk, don't ask). then i would be shy for the rest of the class period, or possibly rest of the semester toward him, but i would be talking to my friend, who is kind of like Alice in her own ways, so maybe we could have worked that to our advantage… because i'm a LOT like bella, too. ("Biology")

Bella does not shove her human girlfriends (after all, she does not really have any best friends) or shout because that would put the spotlight on her, an uncomfortable position for the protagonist. Yet IsabellaMarieCullen still sees shyness as a trait the two girls share.

These girl fans often see the juxtaposition of vampires and high school as a circumstance they can readily imagine; melodramatic extremes are, then, comforting fantasies confirming the gravity of coming-of-age experiences. Dazzled Imprint…x, who lists her location as "Complete middle of nowhere in Scotland fighting of Haggis's!", offers a humorous fantasy that includes her real-life friends:

> My Biology classes are always so fun … Edward being there would triple my fun! Me and two of my friends, Emily and Kim (weird coincidence … my name's not Leah though) wind our teacher up when we have to take our "vital signs" and tell him that we are vampire and start biting things!
>
> Anyways…
>
> Well at first I might be a bit annoyed that he was sitting next to me as I have a lovely person sitting next to me anyway. Getting over that I would come across as shy because I'm like that around new people. I might do the peeking behind the hair thing Bella does. If he didn't talk though I would try to start up a casual conversation. Trying not to let my voice go all squeaky which would probably happen as I wouldn't have been breathing properly! He would find my Biology jotter and folder interesting as they are decorated with smiley vampires faces that look like me and my friends. While I would be talking to him I would be playing with my hair, putting it into plaits or doodling.
>
> After class I would meet up with my friends and we would probably start dancing with happiness and wondering if he would have lunch with us! ("Biology")

Both IsabellaMarieCullen and Dazzled Imprint…x present fantasies full of imagined melodramatic extremes. *Twilight* offers these girls a pleasurable escape from school experiences, which the first *Twilight* film renders especially claustrophobic for the anxious Bella.

Similar to the Bella Cullen Project, girls conversing on TwilightTEENS's discussion forum frequently express intimacy with Bella's interior perspective. These girls appreciate characters who seem real—rather than characters who the mass media tells them they should try to be. As laurenhale[6] explains,

> Well, I can only really tell you why I like them, and that is because they are beautifully written, it has a good plot and its so easy to relate to because Bella is narrating it, she is just a normal teenage girl, like the rest of us, and its a great love story and a brand new twist on vampires, rather than sleep in coffins, burn in sunlight etc. Then of course, the characters, Bella is great because she is just normal, everyone loves Edward because of his charm and *struggles for words*, Jake because he is so fun. ("Why")

Similar to other girls on this forum, laurenhale does not assume she can speak for other girls. Consistent with Blackford's findings about girl readers, laurenhale's response first indicates theme and form, noting the sensational pleasure of romance and vampire novelty. Laurenhale even hits precisely upon muteness, a conflict related to melodramatic expression, when she notes Edward's predicament. By describing Bella as "normal" twice, laurenhale recognizes Bella not only as a girl like herself, but also like a friend she knows—one of "us." These feelings of friendship are similar to those cultivated by the narrative strategies of *Twilight*'s predecessor, *Jane Eyre*, whose heroine directly addresses her reader with the same sense of normalcy (and often feelings of inadequacy) that Bella projects.

In spite of their collaborative and empathetic attitudes, girls participating on TwilightTEENS also suggest that Bella's melodramatic narration empowers girl readers by offering opportunities to critique the main character. Despite their identification with some of Bella's qualities, girls do not report efforts to emulate the saga's protagonist. Rather, girl readers often preempt Bella's choices, determining the choices they would make for her or choices they would make if faced with similar problems. As Alice from England reports:

> Everybody loves a good old love triangle where the main character must choose between two loves. In Twilight these two loves of Bella happen to be quite different and people find themselves choosing *for* Bella, which in a sense is choosing who they'd prefer.
>
> Which leads us onto my last point, Edward Cullen. A *lot* of people fell in love with him for his mysterious ways and the appealing way that Bella see's him, through her own eyes and this kept quite a few people reading.
>
> Sorry for the ramble, but this is what I think on why the books are so popular. [smiling emoticon]. ("Why")

Calling attention to the black-and-white choices Bella faces with regard to her romantic choices, Alice's "ramble" illustrates how melodramatic

extremes encourage readers to think critically about options available to girls. The saga's narration does position readers alongside Bella's interiority, especially in relation to her sexual attraction and romantic attachment to Edward. Readers understand her choices, but they are not necessarily compelled to make those choices; rather, melodramatic excess compels readers to reflect empathetically, but not passively.

Conclusion

Like Jane Eyre, Bella acknowledges her physical imperfections and interior feelings. These often over-the-top feelings are established in the literary text and accentuated on film; both facilitate a critique of the social pressures on girls. Bella's angst about failing to measure up to an impossible social standard renders her empathetic; empathy is also induced for the cinematic Bella when her interiority is translated to the screen through voice-over and other non-representational elements. Girl readers of *Twilight* consistently value the intimacy afforded by Bella's interior perspective, which continues to prove how melodrama critiques social pressures that demand girls live up to unachievable measures of success. Girl readers' responses introduce powerful rhetorical dimensions of melodrama in girl culture that the following chapters continue to develop. Sharing over-the-top anxiety enhances friendship between actual girl readers, as well as girl readers and girl characters. Moreover, girls relate to Bella's insecurity, but do not necessarily seek to emulate her exact actions. In fact, discussions of Bella often talk about her as if she were a friend—which means she is not immune to criticism.

Notes

1. The apple-as-choice motif also connects the saga to the Biblical story of Eve's temptation in *Genesis*, an allusion made perfectly clear by *Twilight*'s epigraph. All of the *Twilight* novels include epigraphs that reference canonical authors: William Shakespeare, Robert Frost, Edna St. Vincent Millay.
2. "I offer the term narrative intimacy to refer to the construction of the narrator-narratee relationship as a reflection or model of intimate interpersonal relationships, established through the disclosure of information and the experience of the story as a space that the narrator shares with the reader" (Day 66).
3. Day's analysis focuses on how Bella's narrative intimacy facilitates "Bella's claiming agency over her feelings and desires" determining that Meyer "limits the potential and scope of that agency by relegating it to the

narrator-reader relationship" (66). Day views this conclusion as problematic: "by asking the reader to align herself with Bella's experiences of and decisions about love, desire, and sex, Meyer presents the narrator-reader relationship as a model of submission to control" (66). I agree with the premise that Bella's intimacy with the reader encourages a particular empathy for Bella's experiences. My exploration of melodrama however demonstrates how this empathetic construction not only validates girls' emotional lives and promotes intimacy between girls, but also critiques limiting social constructions of girlhood. In this way, melodrama's excess works to critique Bella's decisions, especially in the latter part of the series.

4. "First person narration is […] used in films where words, most often via voice-over narration, establish that the story is being told from the point of view of a character who experienced the events about to unfold" (Cahir 66).
5. Karlyn recognizes Hardwicke's association with melodrama (treating it as a film genre, rather than a mode) in her analysis of the director's *Thirteen*, which is considered alongside *My So-Called Life*. Examining the melodramatic representation of mother-daughter relationships and tensions between generations and feminisms, Karlyn concludes,

   > Both works demonstrate that girls need their mothers. Mothers need their children, too. This is a simple message—after all, these are melodrama—but one that resonates literally and symbolically. *Thirteen* and *My So-Called Life* remind us of the power of melodrama to put urgent social issues in the public consciousness, and the ability of maternal melodrama to draw our attention to the lives of girls and women related generationally to each other. (190)

6. All names cited here are screen names; in this case, laurenhale assumes the last name of two characters in the saga, Jasper and Rosalie Hale.

CHAPTER 3

Spatial Invasions and Melodrama's Narrative Structure: Innocence, Villainy, and Vigilance in Girlhood

Tied to the railroad tracks, the heroine's body is hopelessly exposed to imminent danger until the last possible moment, when the hero arrives just in time to save his lady from a devastating death. Of course, we know who is responsible for this stereotypically melodramatic scenario: a mustache-twirling scoundrel, whose villainy, according to Brooks, has been driving the narrative (34). In the melodramatic mode, innocence is relentlessly persecuted by evil. As Brooks explains in relation to nineteenth-century melodrama, "The violation and spoliation of the space of innocence stands as a recurrent representation of the dilemma confronting innocence" (Brooks 30). This pursuit, illustrative of melodrama's Gothic sensibility, escalates with rising intensity until a resolved conclusion delineates the good from the bad, the "public recognition of where virtue and evil reside, and the eradication of one as the reward of the other" (Brooks 32). Prior to this happy ending, the heroine, whose virtue is indeed her burden, suffers to protect herself from the villain's ongoing attempts to exert control over her body.

Even though our heroines are not tied to railroad tracks, Jane and Bella experience the same kind of perilous danger in *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight Saga*. Evil's constant threat requires constant vigilance, a pattern that corresponds to messages that discursively construct the young female body as something in need of protection and maintenance. In this way, the narrative structure corresponds to actual limitations facing girls, especially their bodies. At the same time, melodramatic form critiques the burdensome nature

K. Kapurch, *Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Century*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-58169-3_3

of that which is defined as "virtue." Through voice-over and symbolic imagery that render these messages obvious, such melodramatic impulses are translated to the screen in Hardwicke's *Twilight*. This film successfully courted girl audiences, who frequently use melodramatic discourse to create safe spaces for their own *Twilight* fandom.

Plot-Driving Spatial Violations

Melodrama's conventional narrative structure begins with the presentation of innocence soon menaced by evil, a sequence readily apparent in *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight Saga*. Brooks explains: "In the typical case […] melodramatic structure moves from presentation of virtue-as-innocence to the introduction of menace or obstacle, which places virtue in a situation of extreme peril" (31). Brooks's observation about evil's violation of virtue is especially applicable to the opening pages of Brontë's novel. *Jane Eyre* begins with Jane's memory of childhood desolation as an orphan living in the home of the Reeds, her unwelcoming and unkind aunt and cousins. The first chapter depicts cousin-John's violation of Jane's reading space, his subsequent verbal and physical abuse, and the punishment Jane terms "'unjust!'" (Brontë 15): banishment to the presumably haunted "red-room" (11).

At the very beginning, Jane is presented as an "innocent," first enclosed within a secure space, aligning the setting of her intimate introduction to the reader with the melodramatic mode. Brooks offers a vision of how this would appear in a theatrical stage setting:

> Remarkably prevalent is the setting of the enclosed garden, the space of innocence, surrounded by walls, very often presenting at stage rear a locked grille looking out on the surrounding countryside or onto the highroad leading from the city. Down this road, into this space, a villain, the troubler of innocence, will come to insinuate himself, either under the mask of friendship (or courtship) or simply as intruder. (29)

Fitting Brooks's description perfectly, Jane describes her enclosed sanctuary, an escape from her unloving family:

> Folds of scarlet drapery shut in my view to the right hand; to the left were the clear panes of glass, protecting, but not separating me from the drear November day … With Bewick on my knee, I was then happy: happy at least in my way. I feared nothing but interruption, and that came too soon. The breakfast room door opened. (Brontë 8–9)

Whereas the stage melodrama uses the curtain to visualize a physical enclosure, the effect of Jane's curtained sanctuary is also a heightened sense of her interiority: "The retirement created by the shrine is double, both physical and mental. Now that Jane is on her own in a space of intimacy, in accordance and not in opposition with herself, she may dwell on images and let her imagination follow its own track, thus allowing the reader, who is looking at the book over Jane's shoulder, to be the witness of the possibilities of Jane's mind" (Borie 108). Melodramatic convention, then, enhances emotional intimacy with the reader, who, behind the curtain with Jane, is intimately positioned to empathize with the sudden intrusion. John, who does not disguise his nefarious aims with regard to Jane (although he plays the innocent with his mother), discovers her private space and attacks her verbally before literally striking her hard enough to draw blood with the very book, *Bewick's History of British Birds*, in which she had sought refuge. Both in his physical and emotional invasion, John is a villain—according to Jane, a "Wicked and cruel boy!" (11)—against whom her virtue is brought into relief.

The righteousness of the child Jane against the obvious cruelty of her cousin underscores Brontë's novel's moral position in relation to nineteenth-century children's domestic and educational conditions. According to Sally Shuttleworth, *Jane Eyre* echoes other critiques, such as Harriet Martineau's *Household Education* (1849), of nineteenth-century children's neglect and abuse in homes and in schools (Introduction x-xiii). Brontë's critique is advanced through the melodramatic mode, which promises that villainy will be put in its place. When the adult Jane is serving as a governess at Edward Rochester's estate, Thornfield, she returns temporarily to Gateshead to find the family miserable: John Reed has committed suicide, Mrs. Reed faces imminent death, and her female cousins cannot stand each other. The Reed family has turned their hateful dispositions toward each other and themselves, a moral lesson against spite and the inability to forgive. The Reeds' wrongs are certainly devastating for Jane, especially Aunt Reed's withholding of a letter from Jane's uncle, who would have offered her love while he was alive. Admirably Jane does not hold the grudge she promised as a child—even though her childhood recognition of injustice is certainly valid. In this way, villainy is recognized and punished while Jane's virtue is made clear.

Jane's capacity to forgive as an adult is, in part, due to the lessons she learns from Helen Burns, her single best friend in girlhood. The devoutly Christian Helen, who dies from tuberculosis, teaches Jane about humil-

ity and forgiveness: "It is far better to endure patiently a smart which nobody feels but yourself, than to commit a hasty action whose evil consequences will extend to all connected with you— and besides, the Bible bids us return good for evil" (55). The child Jane reacts with disbelief: "I heard her with wonder: I could not comprehend this doctrine of endurance" (56). When Jane is an adult (especially when forgiving Aunt Reed at the dying woman's bedside), the reader recognizes that Jane has adopted much of the forgiving endurance Helen modeled early on. Nevertheless, Jane still retains her passionate disposition, too.

Helen's death is largely the result of inadequate care and mistreatment, another form of evil that Jane continues to encounter throughout her childhood. Her description of the conditions is vivid and exacting:

> Our clothing was insufficient to protect us from the severe cold: we had no boots, the snow got into our shoes and melted there; our ungloved hands became numbed and covered with chilblains, as were our feet: I remember well the distracting irritation I endured from this cause, every evening, when my feet inflamed; and the torture of thrusting the swelled, raw, and stiff toes into my shoes in the morning. (59)

Through her detailed description of girls' extreme suffering from the cold, as well as a lack of food, Brontë advances a critique of Christian "charity schools" charged with the religious and intellectual development of girls who lived there. The hypocrisy of the school establishment is epitomized by the memorable hair incident. Brocklehurst insists that a girl's naturally curly hair is an affront to God—even though his own wife and daughters are not only adorned in fine frocks, but also hair that is "elaborately curled" (64).

The exaggerated representation of abuse, however, is not without realistic grounding: it is well-known that Brontë based the representation of Lowood, with its frozen bathing water, unsanitary, and cruel living conditions on her own experiences at Cowan Bridge, where her two elder sisters died from tuberculosis following an outbreak of typhoid fever at the school. Heather Glen explains the contemporary significance of Brontë's critique:

> In her representation of Jane's childhood—to which a third of the novel is devoted—Charlotte Brontë is dealing with a set of power relations no less socially significant than those issues of class and gender and race with which recent critics have been concerned. Here […] the figure of the subjugated

> child—occupies the center of the stage. It is not here distanced into the third person, as it was in *The Professor*, or as it had been in Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, first published in serial form ten years before. Jane tells of her childhood sufferings with an intimacy and directness hitherto unparalleled in fiction. (129)

The closeness Jane cultivates with the reader during these childhood experiences, which continually validate a girl-child's point of view, works hand in hand with the melodramatic mode. Just as the Reed family is punished, the cruel headmaster, Mr. Brocklehurst, is censured after exposure of the shameful management that resulted in Helen and many other girls' deaths. Through melodrama, then, Brontë is advancing a critique of the treatment of girls, championing the cause of those with institutional powerlessness due to their age, gender, and class.

Just as evil insinuated itself into Jane's early childhood experiences in the home and in school, Bertha Mason's spiteful existence is certainly an obstacle to Jane and Rochester's future happiness. While Jane, then completely unaware of Bertha's existence, is living at Thornfield Hall, Bertha torches Rochester's bed while he sleeps, savagely attacks her own brother with her teeth, and enters Jane's room at night to destroy her wedding veil. Characterized in Jane's narration as a vampire, Bertha's illicit, mysterious nighttime activities add an air of mystery to Thornfield, an old country estate, enhancing the novel's Gothic undertones (see Chap. 6).

Rochester's attempts to marry Jane while Bertha lives, as well as his enticements to Jane that she join him in France as his "wife" (Brontë 303), represent additional threats to her virtue. Jane refuses him, solidifying her moral stance when she proclaims out loud to Rochester (and the reader): "I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man. I will hold the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad—as I am now. Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this, when body and soul rise in mutiny against their rigour" (317). Bertha's ultimate death both eliminates the tempting prospect of romantic and physical intimacy outside of a sanctioned marriage and facilitates Jane and Rochester's final reunion—and legal marriage— at the end of the novel. The final resolution offered by Brontë's *Jane Eyre* conforms to melodramatic narrative structure: evil is expunged through the death of Bertha.

While Jane's moral center develops amidst (or in spite of) her childhood oppression, Bella's early home life is not marked by overt abuse.

Still, Bella's parents' divorce, her mother's immaturity, and her father's reticence mean that she often parents herself—as does the orphan Jane. Bella even parents her own parents, worrying about how her mother will cope without her and then cooking and cleaning for her father. Bella's orphaning functions as symbolic abandonment, a sort of intangible extremism (opposed to the literal orphaning of Jane), a representation relevant to many young readers' family lives today. Bella's parents' neglect is not necessarily positioned as abusive or morally unjust; their absences and her compensation are simply realities of her childhood. The consequences of orphaning in both texts, however, lead to Jane's and Bella's search for moral truth, which lies at the heart of the melodramatic mode.

Adhering to the conventions of nineteenth-century melodrama, just like *Jane Eyre*, throughout Meyer's saga evil insinuates itself into secure spaces, especially as threats to the physical safety of Bella, herself a kind of innocent. Even though each novel in the series presents a narrative consistent with melodramatic structure, a close treatment of *Twilight* offers a clear explanation of its maintenance of nineteenth-century melodrama's narrative structure. The first chapter of *Twilight* does not depict disruptive circumstances in the predictable way readers might expect; a male family member is not responsible for Bella's oppression. After a foreshadowing preface, *Twilight* opens as Bella moves to Forks to live with her father, Charlie, because her mother has married Phil, a minor-league baseball player who frequently travels. But Phil is not an evil stepfather—Bella describes him as "fine" (Meyer, *Twilight* 48), a characterization that does not adhere to stereotypical portrayals of stepparents. Furthermore, despite Bella's anxiety about entering a new high school in a small community, she is generally welcomed, and the students, especially the boys, are rather fascinated by her.

Similar to Jane, Bella does use reading as an escape from being the center of attention, an awkward social position for the protagonist. Bella's reading, however, occurs in open spaces such as her backyard or the school parking lot. The lack of an obvious physical enclosure does not preclude an interpretation of Bella's reading as consistent with melodrama. Bella certainly finds solace in the comfort of books frequently read, as evidenced by her "dog-eared" copy of *Wuthering Heights* (Meyer, *Eclipse* 610). Here, *Twilight*'s depiction overemphasizes Bella's efforts to protectively surround herself within the space of her own mind. In spite of the self-criticism she often finds there, Bella's mind is also a source of refuge, a motif intensified in *Breaking Dawn* when she becomes a vampire whose mind shield protects others.

Although Meyer's saga sometimes offers a more figurative sense of innocence's enclosure, persecution and eventual penetration by evil are definitely available in the series. As in *Jane Eyre*, which depicts John Reed's intrusion in its opening pages, the opening preface of *Twilight* provides the reader with a taste of the villain. The first paragraphs introduce the sinister vampire James, who will eventually materialize in the last quarter of the novel: "I stared without breathing across the long room, into the dark eyes of the hunter [...] Surely it was a good way to die, in the place of someone else, someone I loved [...] The hunter smiled in a friendly way as he sauntered forward to kill me" (Meyer, *Twilight* 1). This description of James corresponds to Brooks's characterization of the melodramatic villain, who sometimes presents as a friend (29); not coincidentally, the friendship tactic is the same one favored by vampires (Twitchell 10). The foreshadowing preface also endows Bella with the virtue of an innocent and a martyr, further consistent with the heroine of a melodrama (Brooks 29).

Nevertheless, *Twilight*'s preface actually does more than foreshadow the conflict with James. Such an introduction suspends the certainty of the hunter's identity; after all, James is not initially named in the preface. When the reader is subsequently introduced to Edward in *Twilight*, he warns Bella to "avoid" him (89) since he might be "the bad guy" (92). The preface thus inspires questions that remain with the reader throughout the novel: Could Edward be the hunter? Will Edward, who lusts insatiably for Bella's blood, lose control, give in to his thirst, and kill the narrator? Some *Twilight* readers even expressed to the author their confusion about the preface and the hunter's identity. "I'm confused by the preface; who is the Hunter?" is an inquiry on Meyer's website under "Frequently Asked Questions: *Twilight*." In her response, Meyer apologizes, explaining that the hunter is James. This confusion, however, is not necessarily a quality of unclear writing and is not cause for apology; rather, the ambiguity adds to tension that builds throughout the novel. True to melodramatic form, however, the reader can count on a resolution that specifies who is good and who is bad.

Just as John Reed encroaches upon and then abuses Jane, James enacts similar violations when he finally appears much later in *Twilight*. But James's trapping of Bella is not the first time she is threatened: earlier in *Twilight*, a group of human men corner her in a dark alley and, as Edward's telepathy reveals, they mean to do her serious harm. Through James, however, the permeable boundaries marking Bella's physical space are most obviously under attack. Attended by his own vampire companions, Victoria

and Laurent, James first interrupts the Cullens' friendly game of vampire-baseball. When Bella wonders why vampires would enjoy such a normal activity, Edward justifies the sport as "'the American pastime'" (Meyer, *Twilight* 347). This patriotic play, enjoyed by vampires striving to blend into human society, is also an induction for Bella, witnessing the Cullen family game play for the first time as Edward's girlfriend. James's intrusion into the secluded field leads to his realization that Bella is a human the Cullens are committed to protecting—so he ruins the intimate experience. Moreover, this confrontation motivates James's pursuit of Bella in the remaining pages of the novel. Despite the Cullens' efforts to secure her safety, James tricks Bella into meeting him alone at her childhood ballet studio under the false pretense that he has abducted her mother, another spatial violation of virtue that positions Bella as the martyr. James's wickedness as a melodramatic villain is solidified when he physically attacks Bella, delivering a potentially fatal bite to her arm before Edward arrives just in time: the Cullens execute James while Edward sucks out the venom that could prompt Bella's conversion.

In the same way the vampiric Bertha's fiery death leads to moral resolution and a "happy" ending in *Jane Eyre*, the vampire James's demise in *Twilight* reunites Bella and Edward and establishes where good and evil reside for Meyer's characters, human and vampire alike. In spite of Bella's (and the reader's) initial uncertainty, Edward is undoubtedly the hero at the end of *Twilight*; he saves Bella from James's grip, musters the strength to remove the toxic venom from her blood without sucking her dry, and promises to remain with Bella for as long as is "best" (Meyer 479). At the end of *Twilight*, Bella, desiring perpetual youth with Edward, offers her neck to the vampire. Despite the temptation this would have posed for him at the beginning of the novel when he first caught the whiff of her alluring scent, Edward is now in perfect control when he calmly denies Bella what she wants.

Consequently, when Edward's heroics are juxtaposed against James's villainy at the end of *Twilight*, Meyer clearly delineates good and evil, an opposition that is a persistent feature of the melodramatic mode (Brooks 32). The melodramatic structure—innocence persecuted, villainy's pursuit, and a happy ending with moral closure—is replicated in each of the *Twilight Saga*'s novels and in the series as a whole. James's intrusion drives the suspense and major conflicts in *Twilight*, but his death sets off a chain of events that inspires more conflict in the rest of the series. Consistent with the melodramatic narrative structure whereby evil drives the plot until the end, James's brand of villainy reverberates throughout Meyer's series.

And Edward, ridden with guilt about Bella's safety, doubts whether he is good for the teen girl; those doubts culminate in their breakup in *New Moon*. Following, in *New Moon* and *Eclipse* James's mate Victoria seeks retribution for his death. As such, James's death makes room for the more conniving villainy of Victoria, as well as members of the Volturi, the unforgiving Italian-dwelling royalty of the undead. These escalating extremes and threats of peril drive the plot toward a final conclusion, again illustrating how the popular series inherits melodramatic conventions from the nineteenth century. That *Twilight* upholds a narrative structure driven by villainy's threat to innocence's space says something significant about the legacy of Victorian girlhood in this contemporary postfeminist moment.

Femininity as vigilance has direct roots in Victorian notions of ideal womanhood, which demanded girls' and women's attention to their moral righteousness through, in part, the space of the body. More precisely, moral goodness became synonymous with a body in control of its appetites. These messages were distinctly gendered. As Anna Silver observes of nineteenth-century children's literature, "criticism of girls' appetite focuses on hunger as a sign of sexual desire more frequently than does criticism of boys' appetite" (*Victorian* 56). Throughout her study of now-canonical nineteenth-century literature, *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*, Silver explores the expression of an anorexic paradigm, which she explains as "the cultural narrative that emphasizes discipline over the body as an essential aspect of femininity can be situated on a continuum of anorexic thought" (11). Ideal femininity in the Victorian era was achieved through the carefully managed body, a social emphasis on discipline and management that remains today.

Femininity as *bodily* vigilance is one of the very "themes" Rosalind Gill recognizes as a component of contemporary postfeminist media culture. Defining postfeminism as a sensibility (a "set of interrelated themes"), Gill observes: "The body is presented simultaneously as women's source of power and as always unruly, requiring constant monitoring, surveillance, discipline and re-modelling (and consumer spending) in order to conformed to ever-narrower judgements of female attractiveness" (149). Bella's constant need to be vigilant in the face of vampiric danger (even from Edward and his family) corresponds to the kind of monitoring women and girls are compelled to perform by postfeminist media culture. Bella's emotional anguish, then, may feel familiar to girls similarly frustrated by such contradictory messages about the female body, suggesting melodrama's capacity to critique postfeminism's limiting visions of femininity.

In this postfeminist moment, girls continue to navigate a culture that demands they be constantly vigilant about their bodies, especially against the intrusion of so-called evil. Whether this evil takes the form of too much food (marking a loss of appetite control) or girls' own sexual appetites (another kind of loss of control), postfeminist media culture demands persistent watchfulness when it comes to the female body. In *The Body Project*, Joan Jacobs Brumberg recognizes that "American girls are on guard constantly against gaining weight, and, as a result, appetite control is a major feature of their adolescent experience" (120). The cultural imperative to manage a woman's body through sexuality and appetite is extensively explored by the feminist-philosopher, Susan Bordo, who traces the history of gendered bodies in Western culture: "throughout dominant Western religious and philosophical traditions, the capacity for self-management is decisively coded as male. By contrast, all those bodily spontaneities—hunger, sexuality, the emotions—seen as needful as containment and control have been culturally constructed and coded as female" (189). Mass media, such as magazine advertisements, perpetuate images of "tightly managed" bodies that reflect both "compulsive dieting and body building [...] united in battle against a common enemy: the soft, the loose; unsold excess flesh" (191). At first we may be tempted to apply Bordo's dichotomy to *Twilight*. It is easy to think of Bella's self-described "soft" and nonathletic (10) body as the antithesis to Edward's stone-hard form, which is "smooth like marble" (260). In this reading, Bella's body and her desire–soft, female, unruly, dangerous—is consistently in need of Edward's hard, male discipline. This is not, however, the only reading available. There are other nonregressive, nonessentialist ways to understand the rhetorical significance of appetites as a form of evil in the saga.

Edward's own fear of his appetite can be situated in the context of spatial invasions as a melodramatic convention. The vampire's body is male and masculine, yes, but *Twilight* also feminizes Edward in ways that corresponds to girls' experiences. He has an out-of-control appetite for his food source (blood), but he must make do with substitutes (animal blood) in order to be socially acceptable (to "pass" as a human). His life is, then, organized around a feeding schedule built on appropriate food sources, much like any girl (or person for that matter) with an eating disorder. Although vampiric appetites are certainly metaphorical of other hungers, devouring blood "is also a literal act of eating: the act of consumption is at the very center of the vampire legend and literature" (Silver, *Victorian* 118). In her analysis

of *Dracula* and *Carmilla*, Silver argues that the vampire appeals to actual girls' experiences:

> Vampires are personifications of anorexia in that they, like the disease, cause emaciation and, eventually, death, by disrupting their victims' normal eating habits […] Within an anorexic paradigm, the vampire's insatiable desire for blood can be read as a metaphor for the enormous appetite with which the anorexic girl struggles. (*Victorian* 125)

The vampire-as-anorexic metaphor may help explain why Meyer's saga garners such fascination among a girl readership. The vampire's insatiable and unsatisfiable hunger, especially expressed through Edward's thirst, is a point of empathy for female fans living in a culture obsessed with the maintenance of their bodies. Western girls are inundated with contradictory messages: be sexy, but also virginal; be thin, but also svelte. These bodily struggles, especially in relation to managing hunger in order to control weight, are akin to Edward subsisting on animals while lusting for the blood of the girl he loves. In spite of an exterior that resembles "a perfect statue" (260), Edward's own vampiric struggle against the villainous potential of his appetite corresponds to the social demands experienced by many girl readers.

Melodrama's capacity to critique restrictive discourses of girlhood is even more available when one considers the evil James's pursuit and eventual biting of Bella as resembling sexual assault. This is a criminal injustice "real" girls are often entreated to thwart through watchfulness, an expectation that implicates girls in rape prevention. Even though national public service campaigns, such as *Help Save the Next Girl* in 2012, are certainly commendable for their efforts to raise awareness and empower girls through unity, the emphasis on persistent vigilance still perpetuates older notions of feminine virtue. Again, this campaign was admirable for suggestions that girls follow their instincts and voice concerns, but the Public Service Announcement's other ideas (e.g., the "buddy system" ("Help")), may subtly undermine an individual girl's autonomy. When Bella meets James at the dance studio, she defies these kinds of recommendations—because she follows her moral compass, which demands she save her mother. It would be too easy to suggest that the representation of Bella as a persecuted innocent simply propagates a damsel-in-distress model. Rather, the frustration, hopelessness, and loss Bella experiences as a result of James's pursuit and invasion, followed by other catastrophic

events in the saga, may appeal to girls similarly frustrated with a culture that demands their ongoing and constant vigilance against threats from multiple directions.

Symbolic Spaces On-Screen

The melodramatic mode's characteristic spatial invasion foregrounds the first *Twilight* film, whose opening scene depicts villainy's persecution of innocence. A narrating voice-over, a symbolic forest setting, and Carter Burwell's eclectic score help translate the novel's melodramatic impulses from page to screen, encouraging empathy for Bella's interiority. These techniques replicate the psychological stress of the constant threat of evil's invasion.

More than any of the films that follow it, *Twilight* consistently uses voice-over to translate Bella's subjectivity and pinpoint exact melodramatic impulses from the novel. Hardwicke's *Twilight* opens to a black screen as Stewart issues the first line of Meyer's novel: "I'd never given much thought to how I would die." The choice to begin with Stewart's rather monotone voice alone on the screen—with no accompanying images—elevates Bella's interiority from the film's first seconds. In the empty black space, the audience is positioned intimately alongside Bella, situated to be more receptive to her feelings and fears. Moreover, by beginning with such a dramatic narrating voice-over, *Twilight* privileges girl audiences.

Twilight's voice-over belongs to a tradition of confessional discourse in girls' media; first-person narration and narrating voice-over facilitate melodramatic expression and foster confessional intimacy. Bella's voice-over continues throughout the opening sequence, but foregrounding its connection to girls' media affirms our understanding of the technique's relationship to girl culture. Through a confessional voice-over, the viewer shares experiences to which characters in the narrator's own narrative world are not even privy. In the mid-twentieth century, popular television shows, especially *Gidget* starring Sally Field, continued a legacy already established in girl culture through conventions of literary texts: "the confessional strategies adopted by *Gidget* have been a trademark of much of the fiction centered around young women since the eighteenth-century publication of *Clarissa*" (Luckett 388). Thus, the voice-over is a discursive descendent of the confessional first-person narration by literary coming-of-age girls and women protagonists. Of course, this includes

Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, whose first-person narration is directed specifically to "Reader."

The connections between nineteenth-century literature and voice-over are also apparent when we consider marketing efforts to reach girls in the mid-twentieth century. Just as they did for nineteenth-century Victorians, who worried how to socialize female youth, girls also presented a "problem" for television executives in the early-to-mid 1960s (Luckett 388). In her important contribution to a historical understanding of girls' media through her study of girl protagonists and television, Moya Luckett explains the twentieth-century paradox: "Socially and culturally [...] teenage girls and their peculiar, ever changing tastes were deemed incomprehensible, unpredictable, and potentially unrepresentable. Yet, at the same time, these girls were a source of media fascination due to their spending power and their new role as trendsetters" (388). Luckett goes on to explain how voice-over regularly positioned the (girl) viewer:

> Gidget's voice-over started most shows (her implied authorship "authenticating" the program), and most episodes concluded with scenes where she playfully discussed events first with her father and then with the audience, using direct address to share her real feelings with her viewer-confidants [...] *Gidget* used confessions, diaries, direct address, and voice-overs to represent the *internal* contradictions of her teen femininity. (389)

According to Luckett, the representation of the girl protagonist's interiority served to subjugate and monitor her sexual desire given the mid-twentieth century "taboo of female sexuality" (389). The exposure of contradictions through confessional discourse also recalls theories of melodrama's appeal to women, especially arguments about melodrama's extremes and their capacity to expose patriarchy's injustice through the contradictions represented (see Introduction). Recognizing voice-over's legacy in girl culture, then, reinforces its connection to melodrama.

Thirty years after *Gidget* in the mid-1990s, *My So-Called Life* featured a girl protagonist. Like Luckett, Karlyn also links *MSCL*'s use of narrating voice-over to the show's marketing efforts to girls: "Recognizing the opportunity provided by the lack of media attention to teen girls, writer Winnie Holzman developed the series around Angela, a sensitive and introspective girl whose voice-over defines the consciousness and tone of the series" (163). Exploring *MSCL*'s adherence to maternal melodrama

as a genre, Karlyn argues that the show addresses tensions between feminisms, embodied by the mother and daughter characters. She also notices how voice-over is invoked as the girl protagonist navigates the complicated terrain associated with the coming-of-age female body.[1] Karlyn observes, "[Angela] notes wistfully in voice-over that her growing breasts have come between them. When Graham becomes distraught about Angela's withdrawal, Patty comforts him by explaining that Angela is merely pushing him off his pedestal" (Karlyn 167). In this and subsequent chapters, I call attention to voice-over's articulation of interiority because of the technique's important legacy in girl culture. At the same time, melodrama often displaces subjectivity onto music and objects (especially when it comes to feelings unable to be voiced), so recognizing how voice-over works in conjunction with other sounds and mise-en-scène offers a more complete picture.

Bella's voice-over is heard on the backdrop of a black frame, the establishing shot of *Twilight*; these cinematic choices elevate the character's interiority and call to girl viewers. The opening sequence continues with a dramatic and symbolic image of evil intruding itself upon a girl's safe space, a persecution of innocence that continues to position the viewer alongside Bella's perspective. After the initial black screen, a deer sipping from a wooded brook appears, rather than Stewart as Bella. At this point, Bella speaks again: "But dying in the place of someone I love seems like a good way to go." The viewer magnetizes Bella's voice-over to the innocent deer, which, sensing danger, begins to run. The anxious and fearful deer is an expression of the protagonist's fear.

The presentation of innocence's violation and persecution is intensified by the entrance of the male hunter and the accompanying score. This hunter is played by an unrecognizable stunt double (Hardwicke 148), so his identity is unclear—just as it is in the novel. When the scene opens to the deer, the music is ethereal instrumentation, interlaced with chirping and leaves rustling; the tranquil sounds heighten the false security soon to be violated. With a swooshing sound like a gust of wind, the camera abruptly cuts to a view of the sky, staring up at the canopy of trees. The music turns foreboding as drums and bass evoke a tribal beat, a leitmotif that continues throughout the musical score: "Burwell's eruptions of frantic drumming show the blood-hungry savage that Edward's trying to keep in check, as well as the vamps who revel in it. It's a primal beat that also ties Edward's 'family' to the Pacific Northwest, and the Indians who know what these ageless folks are" (Schweiger). The composer Carter Burwell's

contributions to *Twilight* warrant significant consideration because his musical compositions set the tone for the film franchise; although he does not score the second and third films, he returns for the final installments (see Chap. 8).

In the opening sequence, the deer's frantic flight is accompanied by the song "How I Would Die" from Burwell's score. The electric style throbs and pulses, much in the way of a beating heart. In his discussion of Burwell's contributions to the films of writers-directors Joel and Ethan Coen, Philip Brophy describes Burwell's music as "chameleon-like, eclectic, unexpected—perfectly matches the many genre-betiding excursions of the Coens' projects" (128). Brophy goes on to argue, "Burwell's prime eclecticism lies in a strange mismatching whereby his cues at first appear to 'not fit'" (128). The description of his previous scores corresponds to his contribution to *Twilight*, a film also blending multiple genres: teen romance, horror, and mystery. As Heather Phares explains,

> Taken as a whole, Burwell's music for the film is often less brooding than the songs on the soundtrack and adds as much subtlety to a film about a teenage girl falling in love with an 100-year-old vampire as can be added. Despite titles like "How I Would Die" and "The Most Dangerous Predator," his score is rarely heavy-handed, using chilly atmospheres and drones to keep things from getting too obvious. Burwell's work is often steeped in yearning and melancholy, making him a good fit for writing music for a love story that would probably result in death if it were consummated. (*Twilight*)

Burwell's score communicates the urgencies associated with *Twilight*'s generic expectations through the mix of classical instrumentation and electric sound effects that highlight romantic tension as well as vampire danger.

The symbolism of the deer and the urgency in the eclectic score are complex counterpoints to the more on-the-nose expressions that follow. Bella's voice-over resumes with lines from the novel, but we meet Stewart holding a cactus, an image that matches the narration. During the next 3 minutes, Bella offers her rationale for leaving Phoenix and moving to Forks, while accompanying images depict that journey: a car ride from her mother's home, a plane flight over mountains (one peak even resembles Summit's logo), and then a car ride through the small town of Forks. During this sequence, the Black Ghosts' song, "Full Moon" plays: "When the full moon turns white that's when I'll come home/I am going out to see what I can sow/And I don't know where I'll go/And I don't know what I'll see/But I'll try not to bring it back home with me." The song

foreshadows Bella's journey into the unknown, where she will encounter the Gothic supernatural hinted at by the song. In all of these visual and musical expressions, we continue to perceive Bella's melodramatic subjectivity.

Keep Out, Only Girls Allowed

The discourse of girl fans of *Twilight* replicates the inclination to create secure spaces free from intrusion, as well as awareness for the need of such vigilance. Specifically, many girl fans use melodramatic expression consistent with the mode's narrative structure when they create safe spaces for their fandom and work to exclude hateful intruders. These are spaces girls themselves build and maintain in spite of dominant culture, which often disparages both girls and fans alike. As Sharon Mazzarella's study of girls' online fandom discovers: "Considering that fandom, as Fiske (1992) notes, is typically denigrated by the mainstream culture […] webmistresses are actively constructing safe spaces for themselves and others to publicly engage in an activity they previously would have kept hidden" (157). Situating girls' online fan activity within the melodramatic mode reveals its ubiquity in many aspects of girl culture.

Presenting up-to-date news about Meyer's books and their cinematic adaptations, the girl-operated website TwilightTEENS offer opportunities for discussion, role playing, and merchandise purchasing (primarily of t-shirts). In their efforts to encourage participation, moderators pose a question, "Why should you become a part of the TwilightTEENS community?" and offer a response:

> Why not?! We are all a very friendly group of people. We do not support or tolerate negativity towards our members or Twilight related topics. Our staff is a wonderful group of people who you can talk to about anything! We ensure your happiness on our forums, and we will keep you up to date on the latest Twilight news, thanks to help from the TwilightMOMS. We are 100 % free, and you are bound to have a great time. (We swear by our copies of Twilight that you will have a great time!). ("About")

Moderators thus establish parameters for participation, expanding their rules into a "code of conduct." While fans and fansites often set rules for their communities (Staiger, *Media* 107), TwilightTEENS's moderators go out of their way to discourage "negativity" that will hurt their

participants, a disposition that reflects an avoidance of harmful conflict. In fact, TwilightTEENS's promise of a safe space reflects the melodramatic narrative's opening: the presentation of an enclosed space where virtue is guarded (Brooks 29).

Another way TwilightTEENS's moderators created a safe space for *Twilight* fandom is through a validation of feelings girls might be made to feel embarrassed about in non-*Twilight* circles. In 2008, the opening statement on the site's homepage read,

> You look towards the massive pile of homework that you have put off until the last minute, and then turn to your computer that has your favorite book—Twilight—right next to it. What do you do?
>
> Of course, I know most of you will probably pick up the Twilight book for the millionth time and swoon over the gorgeous vampire or smoking hot werewolf. We all do it. If we saw a Volvo following us, we would constantly look in the rearview mirror trying to see if the guy looked like *Edward Cullen*.
>
> When you hear thunder in the distance, you shout out to your friend "*EMMETT* JUST HIT A HOMERUN!"
>
> And she responds, "NOPE, *EDWARD* CAUGHT IT, SO HE IS OUT!"
>
> You hear a dog howling in the night and shout out "BE QUIET, *JAKE*! But, it doesn't listen. Typical *Jacob Black*.
>
> When you see someone reading Twilight, you almost spill what happens and begin to swoon over the characters again. As you can tell, teenagers, have a tendency to freak out over the silliest things when referencing to Twilight.
>
> But, we can't help it right? ("Home")

Incorporating references that only *Twilight* readers recognize is a common speech practice among fans (Staiger, *Media* 107–8). In doing so, TwilightTEENS encourage potential members to feel comfortable. Using a second-person perspective and immediately referring to "normal" experiences many girls face (such as homework), this passage lets a potential participant know that her *Twilight* fascination is inevitable: "We all do it" ("Home"). Obsessive behaviors are rendered "normal" through the validation of community support. Such a confirmation, which validates sensational emotion and alleviates embarrassment, is the same rhetorical outcome TheTwilightReader works to effect on her YouTube channel.

Similar to the moderators on TwilightTEENS, TheTwilightReader also tries to guarantee a safe space for fans in her *YouTube* channel when she welcomes viewers, establishing rules and validating obsessive behaviors. In the first video, "Welcome to my videos and channel!", Liza establishes herself as a speaker who is both earnest and playful. This video presents Liza's typical address from what she calls her "stage," where she films herself amid the backdrop of her bedroom while she spoke into the camera. She articulates who should— and who should not—interact with her *YouTube* channel:

> Hello! Welcome to this new *YouTube* account that I have just opened today and it is a completely *Twilight* fan account. Um, like channel. I should probably say that word. It is completely for *Twilight* fans only and please don't leave hate comments on any of the videos or the channel because they will be removed because I want *Twilight* fans, like myself, to be able to go to this channel or my videos to see a bunch of *Twilight* things and discussions with me and some of my friends or discussions about a book in the series itself, like one of those videos where you can leave comments discussing it without just seeing comments like, "oh, *Twilight* stinks and stuff," cuz you know they don't really wants to see that. Nobody who will be going to this channel or this videos will really want to see that. So, please leave comments on this channel and show it to any people you know, if they're *Twilight* fans, and yeah!

Liza positions her preferred audience in either/or terms: invited fans are "any" who find pleasure in communicating about *Twilight* in a hate-free zone; anti-fans are intrusive, boring, and subject to deletion. Reflecting characteristic melodramatic either/or extremes, Liza heightens the opposition between fans and nonfans: she calls for "Twilight fans only" then immediately promises to remove anti-fans' hostile communication.

As TheTwilightReader, Liza constructs her fan community as a particularly feminine girl-space that is safe for fans like her. Elevating the conflict between *Twilight* lovers and haters to the stakes of good versus evil, Liza's oppositional positioning of fans and anti-fans resembles what media-reception scholars such as Janet Staiger and Henry Jenkins have discerned more generally about fan behavior: "exclusion creates group identity. Fans distinguish between themselves and 'mundanes' (Jenkins, 1988: 88). In this opposition, fans 'embrace pleasure; mundanes suppress or deny it'" (Staiger, *Media* 108).[2] Liza alters her voice and physicality to mimic the mundane's hate comment: she uses a deeper, masculine

voice and slumps into a slouch as if mimicking someone she has *seen* say, "oh, *Twilight* stinks and stuff." Her perception of *Twilight* haters as male or masculine shows how she perceives the gender dynamics of *Twilight* fandom and its detractors. In this way, melodrama is a mode of discourse girls use to resist dominant culture's limiting views of girls' cultural pleasures. Through melodramatic form, Liza's first video represents deliberate attempts to invite her preferred audience (fans) and to shut out the opposition (anti-fans who might intrude), but in the subsequent 81 videos, Liza typically addresses the audience as fans like herself, who she calls "my viewers."

Like the moderators on *TwilghtTEENS*, Liza also validates obsessive behavior by revealing her own. For example, in the eleventh video she posted to her channel, "You know you're obsessed with twilight when …" Liza defines *Twilight* devotion through a slideshow set to the song, "Love Comes" by the Posies. This video touches on multiple melodramatic impulses, highlighting conventions related to narrative form, as well as music and affective, extreme expressions such as crying. The following lines appear on-screen as individual phrases in black text against a red background:

> You know that you're obsessed with twilight when …
>
> You think Edward will come in your window at night and you lie awake waiting for him
>
> You look for silver Volvos and yell "BITE ME" when you find one.
>
> you think of twilight at least 10 times a day (i think of it WAAAAAAAAAAY more than that).
>
> You have or plan to read the series more than one time
>
> You won't let friends borrow your book
>
> You talk to your book and do dangerous things because you think it'll talk to you.
>
> You won't date any guys who aren't edward/Jacob/emmet/jasper etc.
>
> You Google 'twilight' at least once a day and look through most of the results.
>
> When you were done googling 'twilight' you googled 'adrenaline rush' (sorry if its spelled wrong)
>
> You know why you would google adrenaline rush!

> When there's a new moon you cry and yell at it for Edward to come back.
>
> You cried so hard when Edward left that people were wondering if you need to see a doctor
>
> You wish you would've because maybe it would be Carlisle.
>
> When you hear a song you always find a way to relate it to twilight.
>
> When someone says they hate twilight you tell them that you're gonna provoke the volturi and blame them.
>
> You cleared an entire shelf on your book case just to put the twilight saga
>
> You wish edward were yours but you know in your heart that him and bella are meant to be together.
>
> While you watch things that don't have to do with twilight you find your mind wandering off and thinking about twilight.
>
> All of these relate to you!
>
> Comment and subscribe! YouTube.com/TheTwilightReader

With witty allusions to characters and circumstances that other *Twilight* fans will recognize, Liza's video documents the variety of "obsessed" activities of fans. Importantly, through the second-person perspective, Liza encourages intimacy with other fans through melodramatic expression, a rhetorical gesture invoked by the moderators on TwilightTEENS—as well as Jane and Bella.

Liza's validation of reader and fan interactions' with *Twilight* is accomplished through exaggerations that normalize the *Twilight* fan activities. These include intimate connections with the physical books, attentiveness to real-life scenarios that poignantly recall the imaginary world of mesmerizing vampires, and the expression of affective responses like crying. But these references are coupled with playful *Twilight*-themed rebuffs of the anti-fan ("someone [who] says they hate twilight") and the outsider ("people" who suggest that tears require medical attention). In both instances, Liza offers humorous rejoinders to those critiques by redirecting her response back to *Twilight*'s fictional universe, implicitly neutralizing critics by taking ownership of her extreme responses to fiction. In addition to her explicit statement about music, Liza exemplifies how songs encourage *Twilight* identification through her video's accompanying audio. Some of the lyrics of "Love Comes" precisely hit upon the narrative structure that characterizes melodramatic form: "Oh baby, you're too

pure/You're too pure for this wicked world/Your data's uncorrupted/ But does something skip inside you?" Such lyrics replay melodrama's spatial invasion: an evil agent (usually male) inserts itself into an enclosed space occupied by an innocent (usually youthful and female) central character (Brooks 29). This is the very concern Liza has articulated in her first video when she creates a safe space for other *Twilight* fans.

Conclusion

Melodrama's conventional narrative structure positions the heroine as an innocent persecuted by villainy; the *Jane Eyre-Twilight* connection offers insight into how this nineteenth-century form continues to address contemporary girlhood. Hardwicke's *Twilight* accentuates the notion of spatial invasions through symbolic imagery that recreates the persecution Bella feels within her mind, which is also her source of refuge. Although this representation may appear to perpetuate images of the powerless damsel in distress, fear of spatial invasions may appeal to girls by confirming their frustration with powerless social positions. Girls' own fan discourse illustrates that they invoke melodramatic structure when they create safe spaces for their cultural preferences. Just as the mode may have done for nineteenth-century audiences, melodrama validates frustration with messages that entreat girls to be ever vigilant about their virtue, which is often associated with their bodies.

Notes

1. In addition to *My So-Called Life* (see Chap. 2), Karlyn offers other examples from film and television to reinforce voice-over's capacity to reflect a girl character's subjectivity. For example, in the blockbuster *Titanic*, the audience is positioned alongside the main character, "Rose, who is the film's main point of identification and whose voice-over links us to her subjectivity" (Karlyn 37). Narrating voice-over also appears in less epic films, working to align the viewer with the protagonist, who may educate the viewer at the same time: "From romantic comedy *Clueless* draws its unruly female protagonist, and Cher's voice-over anchors the film in her subjectivity. Throughout, she asserts her authority as narrator, speaking directly to use with affectionate tolerance for our ignorance of her universe" (Karlyn 82). In a more recent comedy, *Mean Girls*, Karlyn again notes voice-over's positioning of the viewer in relation to the girl protagonist: "And once again, the film takes viewers inside a teen girl's consciousness with the on-going voice-over of its protagonist" (88).

2. Liza's strategies to both promote and deny certain kinds of participation on her site speak to larger issues about fan practices and social interaction, especially via communication online. As Jenkins importantly observes, for fans, "meaning-production is not a solitary and private process but rather a social and political one" (75). Staiger echoes this conclusion, stating, "Group interactions and shared activities are significant aspects of fan behavior" while going on to note how the Internet both heightens visibility and the potential room for performativity (*Media* 107).

CHAPTER 4

Musical Gestures: Melodramatic Lullabies of Anxious Desire

Sparkling, bright notes tell us that a happy resolution is at hand for the reunited hero and heroine.

An ominous "dum-dum-dum" signals danger right around the corner; reverberations from these bass notes course through us as we feel the sounds as much as we hear them.

A piano plays a repetitive melody in a minor key as a heroine descends into a spiral of grief. The sounds get louder, deafening even, but the rhythmic patterns repeat with no apparent goal; this musical technique, an "ostinato," is a favorite of soap operas because it makes the listener feel like she too is circling a drain of sorrow.

As contemporary audiences, we are so habituated to the sensational presence of music and other sounds that we may forget how instrumental they are in orchestrating our own emotional responses. Brooks explains, "Through the film and the pervasive exploitation of background music, we have become so accustomed to music used toward the dramatization of life that it is difficult for us to recapture its radical effect, to measure its determination of our reading of the representations before us" (48). Sound always amplifies emotional effects for characters and readers, but in girl culture the heightening of feeling through music is especially visible and profound.

In the melodramatic mode, music is related to circular narrative structures, reaffirming its connection to feminine narrative expressions of girlhood. An analysis of Brontë's novel and Meyer's *Twilight* shows how music

K. Kapurch, *Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Century*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-58169-3_4

punctuates the mundane and the seemingly trivial, connecting music to another melodramatic convention, exaggerated gestures. Specifically, music cues the protagonists' sexual anxiety, which encourages empathy for the female narrators' insecurity about their romantic worthiness. The film adaptations of *Twilight* and *New Moon* employ music (rather than voice-over narration used elsewhere in the film) to relate Bella's intensity of interior sexual desire, as well as her anxiety about these new feelings. This anxious desire is necessary to the representation of self-consciousness (see Chap. 2), which critiques actual limitations facing girls in this post-feminist moment. At the same time, music recreates the experience of bodily feelings, especially sensual excitement. The novels and films use music to cue sexual desire and anxiety and to promote intimacy between the protagonists and girl readers, who, in turn, have responded to the saga with their own musical discourse. Such lyrical expression reveals music's appeal among girls, who use it to build community with other female youth. Some girl-authored songs even reinterpret *Twilight* scenarios to explore sexual longings and imagine physical experimentation.

Musical Literary Sensations

In the case of both Jane and Bella, musical discourse accentuates their simultaneous self-consciousness and romantic heterosexual desire, resulting in a kind of excited anxiety. In *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight Saga*, the escalating threat of evil is consistent with the narrative form typical to nineteenth-century stage melodramas. A close consideration of music shows how linear narrative includes circular rises and falls in action. This is especially apparent when it comes to the emotions of Jane and Bella, who swing from insecurity to comfort to insecurity to ecstasy back to insecurity. These spiraling romantic feelings run parallel to the rising and falling threat of evil that motors the storyline.

Such elliptical patterns are closely aligned with the circular (feminine) structure found in soap operas, rather than the linearly climaxing (masculine) narrative structure that Brooks describes (Kuhn 225). Just when the characters (and the audience) think a happily ever after has been achieved or is in reach, that contentment is called into question all over again. This structure is recognizable to anyone familiar with daytime soap operas; once a character announces his or her happiness, that character is always doomed to imminent suffering.[1] And melodrama's cyclical and extreme states of being—whether they are depicted on a nineteenth-century stage

or a televised soap—are always accentuated by music. Feminist critics, following Hélène Cixous, have noted how these spiraling narrative structures are indicative of the *écriture féminine*, which can replicate the sensations of the female orgasm. While I am not assuming an essentialist stance that links the feminine directly to the female body, melodramatic circularity in both *Jane Eyre* and *Twilight* does indeed communicate the protagonists' sexual awakenings.

Brontë's and Meyer's novels adhere clearly to the melodramatic mode through their presentation of actual songs.[2] Brooks summarizes nineteenth-century musical motifs that persist in contemporary girl culture, especially entrance music: "Music in melodrama first of all marks entrances, announcing by its theme what character is coming onstage and what emotional tone he brings to the situation" (48). Brooks also explains the presence of a choreographed celebratory scene (or fête) that is "interrupted" and "resumed," a "theme song" passed between female members of generations, and musical accompaniment for climaxes and emphases (48–49). These musical tropes are all present in Brontë's and Meyer's novels, especially when they position the reader to recognize the female narrators' powerful feelings of sexual yearning for their respective Edwards. In doing so, music accentuates the emotional spiral of Jane's and Bella's alternating feelings of insecurity and confidence, a circular pattern that characterizes the protagonists' interior melodrama. Consequently, music encourages empathy for the female narrators' anxiety.

References to music abound in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, highlighting Jane's alternating insecurity and transitory comfort when she confesses her feelings to the reader. This pattern is apparent from the novel's beginning. As a child, Jane experiences music (along with folktales) through Bessie, the children's nurse at Gateshead. Following Jane's traumatic red-room punishment, Bessie sings:

> I had often heard the song before, and always with lively delight; for Bessie had a sweet voice,—at least, I thought so. But now, though her voice was still sweet, I found in its melody an indescribable sadness. Sometimes, preoccupied with her work, she sang the refrain very low, very lingeringly; "A long time ago" came out like the saddest cadence of a funeral hymn. She passed into another ballad, this time a really doleful one. (21)

Bessie's song is about a "poor orphan child," whose sole protector is God (22); the ballad, meant to be comforting, foreshadows Jane's imminent

departure from Gateshead and the suffering she will endure at Lowood Institution. During that journey, Jane notices musical instruments in a room on a stopping point between Gateshead and the unknown future of Lowood, further connecting music to uncertainty. During her tenure at that punishing boarding school, Jane's favorite teacher, the superintendent Miss Temple teaches music to "some of the elder girls" (48). Miss Temple's name even suggests her presence is a haven, a direct contrast with the cruel and hypocritical headmaster, Mr. Brocklehurst. Jane's association of Miss Temple with music renders it a source of comfort. Nevertheless, just as with Bessie, music is an uneasy comfort since Jane's age initially distances her from the opportunity for music lessons with the generous teacher.

The function of music as a source of comfort and anxiety repeats when Jane begins her stay at Thornfield. Although she worries that Mrs. Fairfax, with whom she has corresponded for the governess position, might be "a second Mrs. Reed" (94), Jane finds the housekeeper most welcoming: "My heart really warmed to the worthy lady as I heard her talk; and I drew my chair a little nearer to her, and expressed my sincere wish that she might find my company as agreeable as she anticipated" (97). But when Jane is introduced to her charge and Rochester's ward, Adèle Varens, the French girl sings what Jane deems an age-inappropriate song taught to Adèle by her mother. Jane remarks: "The subject seemed strangely chosen for an infant singer; but I suppose the point of the exhibition lay in hearing the notes of love and jealousy warbled with the lisp of childhood; and in very bad taste that point was: at least I thought so" (Brontë 102). The song—passed from mother to daughter as Brooks notes—introduces Adèle with a kind of theme song against which Jane reaffirms her moral stance. Yet the tune's thematic content actually foreshadows the very feelings Jane will negotiate in relation to Rochester: romantic desire and jealousy.

Just as her age separates Jane from access to Miss Temple's musical instruction (and more intimacy with the teacher), Jane's lack of musical ability initially distances her from Rochester when he demands she play for him. Upon hearing her attempt, he announces, "Enough! […] You play a *little*, I see; like any other English school-girl: perhaps better than some, but not well" (124). Although Rochester has admired Jane's drawings, his assessment of her piano playing positions her in a comparison with other women, a situation that will produce more and more anxiety as Jane's attachment to Rochester intensifies. Although Jane first remarks that Rochester "is very changeful and abrupt" (Brontë 127), his sudden attentions and interest in her as a conversational partner are exciting for

the 18-year-old, who has no experience with men. Rochester begins confiding pieces of his past, specifically his liason with Adèle's mother, "a French opera-dancer, Céline Varens, towards whom he had once cherished what he called a 'grande passion'" (140). Jane does not express overt jealousy about Céline, but when she fears his affection for another woman, Jane's jealousy is actually cued by music and references to voices singing.

Rochester feigns a relationship with the beautiful Blanche Ingram, with whom he shares a musical talent. As Jane's rival for Rochester's affection, Blanche showcases a musical ability that the governess lacks; in this way, music punctuates Jane's insecurity. Although Rochester's preliminary overtures have made Jane hopeful, the narrator's insecurity goes into overdrive when she learns that Rochester has abruptly left Thornfield to visit Blanche's family. To make matters worse, Jane learns that Blanche is a "beauty" with "accomplishments," evidenced by a past duet sung with Rochester (159). Still excited by the idea of Rochester's voice, Jane exclaims, "'Mr. Rochester! I was not aware he could sing'"; Mrs. Fairfax, explains: "'he has a fine bass voice, and an excellent taste for music'" (159). The connection between quality music and a quality noblewoman is not lost on Jane, who takes the opportunity to admonish herself for what she believes are false romantic hopes. Jane's crashing disappointment encourages empathy for her interior distress; her extensive self-disciplining efforts are revelatory confessions to the reader, the only witness to her self-admonition.

Jane endeavors to dampen her own romantic hopes, assuming a "decent calm" in the face of Blanche's family's incivility (Brontë 162), but her desire for Rochester remains. When she listens in on Rochester and his newly arrived party guests, she seeks the sound of his voice during his duet with Blanche: "I listened long: suddenly I discovered that my ear was wholly intent on analyzing the mingled sounds, and trying to discriminate amidst the confusion of accents those of Mr. Rochester; and when it caught them, which it soon did, it found a further task in framing the tones, rendered by distance inarticulate, into words" (168). Jane's characterization of Rochester's "tones" and her aural search for his vocal particularities bespeak a desire for the intimacy for which she is still longing.

That Rochester's singing voice will eventually illustrate his devotion to Jane and bring her comfort (albeit a temporary interlude prior to more suffering) underscores music's vitality as a nineteenth-century melodramatic convention. After Rochester and Jane confess their romantic feelings for each other, they spend an evening in the library. Although Jane begins

to play the piano accompaniment while Rochester sings, she "was presently swept off the stool and denominated, 'a little bungler.' Being pushed unceremoniously to one side—which was precisely what I wished—he usurped my place, and proceeded to accompany himself; for he could play as well as sing" (Brontë 271). Instead of feeling inadequate about her musical ability, this time she flirtatiously creates a scenario that involves physical touch. Rochester's playful, but forceful handling of Jane is a prime example of melodrama's elevation of everyday gestures, whose significance are heightened by music.

The song Rochester plays for Jane includes 12 four-line stanzas dwelling on the painfulness of unrequited love, a thematic foreshadowing of their impending separation. Within the song, however, suffering is relieved in the second to last verse: "My love has placed her little hand/With noble faith in mine, /And vowed that wedlock's sacred band/Our nature's shall entwine" (272). After highlighting the promise of marriage (appropriate to their recent engagement), Rochester's last verse reinforces everlasting love with a melodramatic flourish: "My love has sworn, with sealing kiss, / With me to live—to die; /I have at last my nameless bliss: As I love—loved am I!" (272). This expression of devotion overwhelms Jane with longing—and fear of its consequences: "He rose and came towards me, and I saw his face all kindled, and his full falcon-eye flashing, and tenderness and passion in every lineament. I quailed momentarily—then I rallied. Soft scene, daring demonstration, I would not have; and I stood in peril of both" (273). Believing she must uphold their usual quick-witted banter to avoid sinking into a physical embrace, Jane relies on her "tongue" as "a weapon of defence" against Rochester's amorous advances (273). The voice that has intrigued and fascinated Jane is now lifted to sensational heights in its musical form, an elevation that enhances the reader's understanding of Jane's overwhelming desire, as well as her sense of being loved, a stark contrast to her usual doubts about her own worth. Nevertheless, as is the usual case in melodrama, this contented state will fall apart just as happiness is in sight and Rochester's attempt at bigamy is made public.

The temporary comfort of Rochester's musical voice, which evidences his reciprocated devotion, is echoed in the *Twilight Saga*, particularly through Edward's musical compositions. The role of music in Meyer's saga reflects the inheritance of nineteenth-century theatrical conventions. Meyer's use of music is also indebted to melodrama's legacy in film: "Not only is the very existence of melodrama as a distinct genre originally linked to its use of music, music is inherent to its representations, as to those of

the cinema, its inheritor in this convention" (Brooks 48). So important is the role of music that Meyer even suggests soundtracks to accompany the reading of her novels. On the author's website, Meyer provides playlists with her motivational writing music. In *The Twilight Saga*: *The Official Illustrated Guide*, Meyer goes a step further with a more detailed playlist (470–504). In her own over-the-top gesture of musical enthusiasm, Meyer invokes the melodramatic mode as she imagines Bella's interior perspective: "So what I've done is assign a quote from the series to each song. This will give you the general location of the song, and the specific feeling or issue I was thinking of while listening. I hear all of the songs from Bella's perspective, except where otherwise noted" (470). Meyer's writing process is, then, indicative of melodramatic performance as she imagines her protagonist's feelings, using music to cue the emotion she translates to the page. Meyer goes on to explain, "Music is my one necessary tool. I put on music that fits the mood of what I'm writing, to help me stay in the zone and get the emotional tone right" (472). Meyer's melodramatic musical disposition is reflected in the experiences of her narrator.

As in *Jane Eyre*, songs underscore Bella's physical attraction to Edward while heightening the reader's empathy for the protagonist's emotional vacillations between insecurity and comfort. Riding this emotional wave with Bella enhances intimacy between narrator and reader. The presentation of music, often depicted alongside small, but grave gestures, elevates the emotional gravity of Bella's conflicts and validates the importance of contemporary girls' lived experiences, which are surprisingly underrepresented. Karen Coats suggests that the realistic inclusion of music is the exception, rather than the rule, when it comes to YA literature:

> Unless the book is specifically about a teenager's relationship to music, many authors either omit any mention of it, or else they use it as a more or less atmospheric marker of setting, unimportant to character development. For authors sensitive to the full materiality of the teenager's world, however, music becomes an important code for social and individual identity formation, much like it functions in actual teenager culture. (112)

In *Twilight*, references to music playing on the radio or on CDs through stereos, especially in cars, depict musical mediums relevant to youth in the early years of the 2000s. The technology young people use to play music has since changed (now favoring mp3 formats and Internet streaming), but music obviously remains vital to young people.

One of the first prominent musical occasions happens early in *Twilight*, illustrating how a song punctuates Bella's fluctuating mood and desire, positioning the reader alongside her interior view. Edward annoys Bella, then unaware of his secret identity, by insisting that he drive her home. In the same way that Rochester tests Jane's artistic ability (disapproving of her piano playing but impressed with her drawings), Bella's recognition of "Clair de Lune" impresses Edward. Edward is surprised ("You know Debussy?") as if he has low expectations of her knowledge. Just as Jane admits to a "little" piano ability, Bella responds: "Not well […] My mother plays a lot of classical music around the house—I only know my favorites" (Meyer, *Twilight* 105). The narrator's apologetic claim to information, along with her musical association with an older woman she admires, aligns *Twilight* with *Jane Eyre*. Further, Edward claims the song as "one of my favorites, too" (105), affirming his ownership of the song, as well as their common ground. Bella subsequently confesses to the reader: "I listened to the music, relaxing against the light gray leather seat. It was impossible not to respond to the familiar, soothing melody. The rain blurred everything outside the window into gray and green smudges. I began to realize we were driving very fast; the car moved to steadily, so evenly, though, I didn't feel the speed" (105). "Clair de Lune" is a unifying moment and demonstrates how a small gesture, such as playing a particular song, can have major consequences. Music offers Bella temporary comfort as she relaxes in close proximity to Edward. Yet this relief is only transitory; although Edward and Bella share intimate details about their families, the conclusion of the car ride results in Edward annoying Bella once again by suggesting she is a "magnet" for "accidents" (109). Moreover, Bella's insecurity about Edward's mysterious behavior is not alleviated after the pleasant musical interlude of the car ride.

Music continues to serve as Bella's coping mechanism during her emotional ups and downs. After Bella's conversation with Jacob, who shares the legend of the "cold ones," she believes her suspicions about Edward's supernatural identity to be correct. She turns to a CD her stepfather had given her:

> I popped it into place and lay down on my bed. I put on the headphones, hit Play, and turned up the volume until it hurt my ears. I closed my eyes, but the light still intruded, so I added a pillow over the top of my face. I concentrated very carefully on the music, trying to understand the lyrics, to unravel the complicated drum patterns. By the third time I'd listened through the

> CD, I knew all the words to the choruses, at least. I was surprised to find that I really did like the band after all, once I got past the blaring noise. I'd have to thank Phil again. And it worked. The shattering beats made it impossible for me to think—which was the whole purpose of the exercise. I listened to the CD again and again, until I was singing along with all the songs, until, finally, I fell asleep. (Meyer, *Twilight* 130)

This methodical musical process is a prelude to Bella's nightmare, a dream that confirms Edward's vampirism while foreshadowing his rivalry with Jacob-the-werewolf, a conflict later novels will explore. Music thus precedes dreams, in which Bella discerns the truth about supernatural phenomenon as well as her own depth of feeling, an illustration of two distinct melodramatic impulses and their connections to each other.

I expand on the significance of dreams in Chap. 6, but here it is worth noting that Bella's systematic process with her CD mirrors the kind of step-by-step reasoning she later uses to determine the extent of her devotion to Edward. After weighing her options, she discerns only one choice—to love him despite his undead nature: "Because when I thought of him, of his voice, his hypnotic eyes, the magnetic force of his personality, I wanted nothing more than to be with him right now. Even if … but I couldn't think of that" (Meyer, *Twilight* 139). Bella's attraction to Edward's vocal qualities resembles the appeal of Rochester's bass voice to Jane Eyre. Interestingly, Edward later discovers the very CD that accompanied Bella's deterministic decision-making. The CD is at once a source of embarrassment when Edward puzzles, "Debussy to this?" (229), as well as a revelation that enhances their intimacy.

After Edward's startling vampire revelations (see Chap. 5), his connection to music is again reinforced by his singing. This narrative choice aligns him with Rochester, with whom he shares these Byronic artistic qualities. Edward's singing also heightens the reader's awareness of Bella's sexual attraction—along with her comfort in his presence. As they drive home from the meadow in Bella's truck, she notices, "He had turned the radio to an oldies station, and he sang along with a song I'd never heard. He knew every line" (Meyer, *Twilight* 286). When Bella asks about his preference for "fifties music," Edward explains: "Music in the fifties was good. Much better than the sixties, or the seventies, ugh!" (286–87). Of course, Edward's preference for the 1950s is understandable considering what we later learn about his conservative views on chastity, family, and monogamy. The Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and other musical icons of

the 1960s explicitly called Edward's traditional values into question with their long hair, drug use, and messages about free love. Edward's musical tastes, then, suggest that he is one safe and traditional vampire.

The presence of the vampire's melodic voice is, however, a tenuous comfort for Bella, just like Rochester's voice for Jane. Once Edward and Bella commit themselves to each other in *Twilight*, the vampire resumes his practice of staying overnight—now with her knowledge. He offers, "shall I sing you to sleep" (Meyer, *Twilight* 306) and, just as Bella sought refuge in the loud music of her CD player, Edward's song functions as cold (literally given his skin's temperature) comfort: "He laughed, and then began to hum that same, unfamiliar lullaby; the voice of an archangel, soft in my ear. More tired than I realized, exhausted from the long day of mental and emotional stress like I'd never felt before, I drifted to sleep in his cold arms" (311). Edward's humming, coupled with his frigid body temperature, offers security that is at once devoted and strange, much like the mixed emotions Jane feels after Rochester's passionate musical display.

Music's capacity to cue Bella's physical yearning intensifies when she witnesses Edward playing the piano. Her description of his movements and her own reactions are erotically charged: "And then his fingers flowed swiftly across the ivory, and the room was filled with a composition so complex, so luxuriant, it was impossible to believe only one set of hands played. I felt my chin drop, my mouth open in astonishment, and heard chuckles behind me at my reaction" (Meyer, *Twilight* 326). Bella discovers the song he had been humming is his own composition, her lullaby, which he plays as a revelatory expression of romantic commitment in front of the speechless Bella and his family of vampires, who then leave the room (326). Edward's instrumental song does differ from Rochester's sung verses, but both instances offer the reader the opportunity to imagine the kind of sounds that would entrance Jane and Bella. In addition, the songs empower both Jane and Bella. After all, the male characters, when occupied in such extreme concentrated expression, are at once vulnerable, fascinating, and passionate—and able to be gazed upon by the protagonists.

Music strengthens Bella's (and the reader's) confidence in Edward in *Twilight*, but these early experiences have consequences in subsequent novels. As the melodramatic structure promises, Bella's rising faith in Edward's devotion will be completely shattered before it is restored; music helps facilitate this cycle, which positions the reader to empathize with Bella's extreme loss. Edward's devotion is intimately tied to his song since

he gives the lullaby to Bella on a CD as her eighteenth birthday present in the beginning of *New Moon*. This grand gesture is followed, however, by another grand gesture of betrayal. After Edward breaks up with Bella and she remains in the forest in emotional agony, the vampire removes his gift, along with all photographs of himself, from her bedroom: "I rushed to my room, shutting and locking the door behind me before I ran to the CD player by my bed […] It was empty" (Meyer, *New Moon* 83). Melodrama takes seriously the significance of these items, validating Bella's extreme response to their loss. Edward's infiltration of Bella's personal space, especially the bed they shared, signals a violation, as well as a definite retraction of his affection. Bella's realization about the loss of the CD and photographs begins her descent into silence, hysteria, and return to total insecurity. I explain the significance of melodramatic suffering in Chap. 7, but here I focus on how music cues suffering.

The melodramatic mode validates Bella's extreme reaction to seemingly trivial, everyday things (a homemade CD and photographs in a scrapbook), taking seriously the weight girls might place in such items. Throughout *New Moon*, Bella continually works to avoid music and songs that remind her of the absent vampire, reminding the reader again and again of his betrayal. Empathy inspired by melodrama's use of music promotes intimacy with Bella's interior struggle. After Edward has redeemed himself for those devastating actions in *New Moon*, Meyer's saga continues to invoke melodramatic convention regarding music, upholding what Brooks recognizes about theme songs passing from mother to daughter (48–49). Edward composes another lullaby in *Breaking Dawn* for Renesmee, the human-vampire hybrid child he shares with Bella. Such a move not only offers readers another theme song to imagine, but also reifies the character traits that Bella and readers now expect from Edward: constant devotion.

Through music, Jane and Bella not only negotiate sexual desire, but also their own insecurity. This is relevant, of course, to Victorian readers, especially women and girls, whose climate of sexual repression is well-known. Girls today also face contradictory social pressures: they are entreated to be sexually attractive and confident, but not sexually active. And if they are sexually active, teen pregnancy is the mark of social failure (Saxton xxi; Harris 30). Through a circular structure that itself replicates sensational pleasure, the melodramatic mode affords girls' simultaneous delight in romantic tension, as well as frustration with those postfeminist contradictions.

Cuing Anxious Desire On-Screen

In the *Twilight Saga*'s cinematic adaptations, music translates the narrator's sensual longings more loudly and with more clarity than any other filmic technique, including voice-over. One of the temptations when analyzing film adaptations is to rely too heavily on novelistic conventions; when those fail to appear, critics often judge a work, especially one with a female protagonist, lacking. Scholars have debated the importance, necessity, and feasibility of translating Jane Eyre's first-person perspective to the screen through techniques like voice-over. In her exploration of *Jane Eyre* adaptations, Donna Marie Nudd questions why scholars and critics "demand that filmmakers be faithful to the first-person point of view of the novel" (525) and suggests that "critics might try to discover for what purpose the point of view was violated" since "it may be to develop the characterization of another major or minor character in the novel" (526). Nudd's suggestion is just as relevant to the *Twilight* films, which generally (but not always) uphold Bella's point of view, employing various cinematic techniques to express melodramatic subjectivity. Indeed, being attuned to the melodramatic mode encourages us to see subjectivity in Elsaesser's non-representational elements, especially music.

The *Twilight* films' soundtracks offer some of the most obvious expressions of Bella's interior feelings, especially anxiety and desire. In *Twilight*, Paramore's "Decode" lyricizes Bella's emotional turmoil because the lead singer, Hayley Williams, a "superfan" of the series, wrote the song specifically for the film (Montgomery). Williams's lyrics, told from the protagonist's point of view, convey Bella's curiosity about Edward's vampirism and telepathy, affirming the protagonist's devotion: "(I'm screaming 'I love you so') /On my own/(My thoughts you can't decode)." The music video of "Decode," the soundtrack's first single, interweaves shots of the band singing the song in a forest setting with scenes from *Twilight*. The same interweaving of scenes occurs in music video of *New Moon*'s first soundtrack single, Death Cab for Cutie's "Meet Me on the Equinox." This song offers a musical expression of loss ("everything ends") reminiscent of that film's inciting incident, the Bella-Edward break up. On *Eclipse*'s soundtrack, Florence and the Machine's "Heavy in Your Arms" communicates Bella's anxiety about emotionally manipulating Jacob, who physically carries the protagonist to safety during both novel and film. Generally, during the *Twilight* films, soundtrack song lyrics are only partially audible—or they are played during the credits. When these songs

are heard in their entirety on the soundtrack, they encourage the viewer to remember and dwell with saga, a melodramatic cue to relive the series' melodramatic moments. Indeed, there are numerous instances of music replicating Bella's feelings throughout the films.

A less obvious, but no less melodramatic expression of emotional interiority is available on Burwell's score in *Twilight*, which translates Bella's alternating feelings of insecurity and comfort as she gazes upon Edward—but without words. The wordlessness of music recalls melodrama's capacity for subjective expression in film:

> Dramatic situations are given an orchestration which will allow for complex patterns: indeed, orchestration is fundamental to the American cinema as a whole (being essentially a dramatic cinema, spectacular, and based on a broad appeal) because it has drawn the aesthetic consequences of having the spoken word more as an additional "melodic" dimension than as an autonomous semantic discourse. (Elsaesser 51)

Burwell's complex musical score articulates a tension that will lead to a consideration of how melodrama critiques pressures related to postfeminist girlhood. Burwell's *Twilight* score mismatches musical notes and keys, as well as instrumentation (such as conventional piano melodies and guitar slides), to create feelings of suspense, uncertainty, and sexual tension. Burwell himself explains: "There's a tension between the intimacy of this small ensemble and the occassional (*sic*.) outbursts of darkness and aggression in the score (and story), and this shifting is one of my favorite things about the movie." Burwell's insistence on maintaining this musical complexity actually reveals an attitude toward girl audiences that resembles Hardwicke's respect for female youth, a disposition apparent in his approach to "Bella's Lullaby," the central piece of the score.

Because of its significance in the novel, "Bella's Lullaby" was an anticipated part of the film for the saga's fan base of girl readers. Although dominated by a piano melody, the song does not sound like the traditional lullaby that Edward composes for Bella in the novel. During the film, "Bella's Lullaby" gives unity to a montage of scenes depicting Bella and Edward up in a tree overlooking the green, lush landscape of Forks, followed by shots of Bella (slightly open mouthed just as she is in the novel) watching Edward play the piano (actually played by actor Robert Pattinson). Amplifying the Gothic sensibility, the piano room is misty and dark, except for bright light streaming through the windows. The Gothic

aesthetic reminds us that this human girl and vampire boy's love is fraught, a sensibility evoked by Burwell's song, which is "romantic without being sentimental" (Phares, *Twilight*). Indeed, "Bella's Lullaby" projects sad longing, a feeling that characterizes Bella's anxious sexual desire—and Edward's loneliness as a vampire who yearns for the girl, but also fears for her safety. Burwell takes these feelings seriously, validating them with a complex musical composition.

"Bella's Lullaby" is a song that affirms the intensity of feeling, evident in its backstory. The song is rooted in Burwell's own painful romantic experience, a story he shares on his website: "Years ago I was in love with an amazing and challenging woman […] She left me, I was heartbroken, and I wrote a piece of music that tried to express the thrill and pain of having my heart pierced. She wouldn't speak to me, so I sent her the music to speak in my place." This autobiographical sketch articulates melodrama's penchant for musical expression when words are insufficient to communicate emotional pain. "Bella's Lullaby" is, in fact, the piece Burwell wrote for that lost love—and the song around which the entire score was built. Burwell explains the song's technical complexity: "It has an 'A' theme which is a bit ambiguous, like two people trying to find a common ground, climbing to a high, then tumbling down, and a 'B' theme that is forthrightly joyful (at least as joyful as my music gets)." The highs and lows described here recall melodrama's elliptical structure, which encourages empathetic responses to Bella's anxious longing.

Burwell also verbalizes an attitude toward girl audiences that does not deny their complex readings. The composer explains why he rejected Summit's proposal to uncomplicate song:

> The suggestion that teenage girls would want a sweet tune was somewhat condescending, and that was something I tried to avoid in this score. Also I don't believe it's possible to know how music will affect someone else, even though film composers claim to. The unpredicability is what makes it interesting […] And can you imagine what it would be like—as it was occasionally on this project—trying to compose music to satisfy a director who's trying to satisfy a male executive who's trying to satisfy ten million teenage girls? (Burwell)

Recognizing Burwell's high estimation of girls, as well as music's subjectivity, leads to a consideration of how his score musically replicates Bella's anxiety in the film itself.

In *Twilight*, the score situates the viewer alongside Bella's anxious desire, especially when Edward makes his first entrance in the film. Instead of a voice-over with Bella speaking lines from the novel to explain Edward's overwhelming presence, music communicates her feelings as beyond the realm of conscious thought. While Bella sits in the lunchroom on her first day of school, she looks on as the five Cullen siblings parade into the lunchroom from outside the building; the processional offers a more purposeful and dramatic entrance than in the novel. Two classmates, Jessica and Angela, offer introductions for each one; Jessica explains Dr. Cullen's "weird" practice of adopting foster children, who end up "together-together," meaning romantically involved. As Rosalie and Emmett and then Alice and Jasper enter, the simple rhythmic backing is punctuated with an electric guitar's melodic signatures for each couple. After these entrances, Edward is just visible through the blinds of a window and Bella asks with breathless hesitation, "Who's he?" When Edward appears in the doorway, an ethereal female singer on the score accompanies his revelation to Bella—and the audience. This voice moans in a series of "ahh"s, a musical expression that is at once angelic and orgasmic, resembling awe, desire, and wonder all at once: these are Bella's sensations.

Bella's excited feelings are validated through the subjectivity of this otherworldly music (rather than conscious speech), effectively capturing the protagonists' interiority and recreating it for the viewer. As Schweiger describes,

> Burwell responds to the story's teen fan base with swooning female voices, guitar work that can veer from the melancholy to the savage, and ethereal samples that cast a truly magical spell over the dew-speckled trees and vampire skin. It's like a combo of Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd, a rock 'shroom trip that plays the unconsummated romance between living and dead as the ultimate trip.

The sudden aural presence of the female voice, ringing out the moment Bella (and the viewer) gets her first full look at Edward, begs for a magnetization of that sound to Bella's interior perspective, especially her anxious desire for Edward. This obviously melodramatic musical expression facilitates understanding between girl protagonist and audiences.

Through musical expression and editing, Edward's entrance scene also continues the critique of postfeminist constructions of girlhood available in Meyer's novel. Bella looks upon Edward as a desiring sexual subject,

which might at first seem to correspond with one of the defining qualities of postfeminist media culture:

> Where once sexualized representations of women in the media presented them as passive, mute objects of an assumed male gaze, today sexualization works somewhat differently in many domains. Women are not straightforwardly objectified but are portrayed as active desiring sexual subjects who choose to present themselves in a seemingly objectified manner because it suits their liberated interests to do so. (Gill 151)

Although Bella gazes at Edward with a desirous curiosity (and this sexualized yearning becomes even more evident as the film goes on), she does not offer herself in the "objectified manner" Gill notices (151). After Edward sits down, Bella looks uncontrollably and anxiously over her shoulder at the vampire, a position that denies him a complete view of her body and face.

Relevant here is Laura Mulvey's notion of "the gaze," which describes looking relations that assert male dominance and result in women's objectification in conventional Hollywood films. In *Twilight*, Bella looks upon Edward—but hers is not the only gaze operating in *Twilight*. After Edward enters the cafeteria amid the sounds of the ethereal female voice sighing along with the score's instrumentation, he and Bella exchange looks. The music offers darker, warning tones: Bella is hesitantly curious, but Edward begins to look angry. Edward's "male" gaze becomes a persistent source of Bella's anxiety. Rather than empowering her, his cryptic look worries her. We might read here a subtle critique of postfeminist media's encouragement that girls should internalize the male gaze—and that they should adopt a similar kind of objectifying look. This critique is advanced through the melodramatic mode, specifically the tension created by the musical and visual expression of Bella's simultaneous anxiety and desire.

Girls Singing Desire

Music highlights Bella's anxious yearning, which encourages empathy from girl readers who also use music to consider and reimagine the saga. On "You Might be Twilight Obsessed if…" a thread on TwilightTEENS's online forum, essa01 answers: "You hear a song and immediately relate it to one of the characters in Twilight." This response is echoed numerous times throughout the discussion boards, such as the thread, "Things that

people say to you that remind you of twilight," in which another reader, Ugottaluvtwilight, explains: "Every time that I hear a muse or linkin park song it reminds me of Bella and Edward. Also every time there is a thunderstorm I think of the Cullens playing baseball:)." These fan comments reflect girls' awareness of music's capacity to cue their memories of the saga.

The same level of musical awareness is true for the TheTwilightReader, who created a variety of music videos, mashing up images from the films with her own drawings and other contemporary songs. In other videos, Liza even sings, replacing the song's original lyrics with her own rewritten *Twilight*-themed verses. In one video, "'Human' twilight style (twilight parody)," Liza apologizes for her voice in the video's description: "I know i cant sing and i had a sore throat when i recorded it so please no hate comments. The real song is by the killers and i rewrote it to be about twilight (of course)." Coupling her musical expression with an explanation of insecurity actually elicits the support of her community. Although some feedback does criticize Liza's voice, respondents who are *Twilight* fans more often offer support and encouragement—just as *Twilight* encourages readers to empathize with Bella's musically cued anxiety.

Music's potential to build intimacy between girls, as well as its function as a medium for *Twilight*-themed creative expression, is even more evident in the musical discourse of the Bella Cullen Project. Melodrama is a mode of expression that enhances intimacy between girls, an outcome exemplified by the three girlfriends who formed the "BCP." The girls explain the formation of their band, showing how the saga became an avenue to their own artistic endeavors. In an *MTV* interview, the girls explain:

> NASH. Me and Tori had been doing musical things. Tori had been a big fan of the Harry Potter bands, and it all just started from there.
>
> KIGER. I read "Twilight," and I forced it upon them.
>
> NASH. Thank you!
>
> MTV. And now you're all "bitten," as they say?
>
> NASH. That is true.
>
> RANDALL. We have been bitten. (Carroll, "'Twilight' Tribute")

This conversation credits the influence of bands associated with another fandom (Harry Potter), as well as the girls' friendship. Exchanging ideas about the saga through music is a form of intimacy—not only between

the BCP musicians as they create songs together, but also between those musicians and listeners who are fans of both the saga and the BCP.

"Bella's Lullaby," a song on the band's first album, adopts Edward's perspective, imagining the song he writes and plays for Bella in *Twilight*. They compose a melody featuring a piano (as in the novel), but the BCP's song also includes lyrics, which allow the girls to consider the male character's point of view: "Your face is like a poison/Intoxicating me/How can we live forever/When our love can never be." Considered in the context of the album's other songs, which sometimes question Edward's inconsistencies, this song underscores the pain of the vampire's departure. At the same time, the song sings through his perspective, a vantage point that shows how girls identify with multiple points of view at once—even those outside their own gender. The lyrics revel in the exaggerated devotionals that typify Edward's melodramatic revelation (see Chap. 5), conceptualizing the kind of discourse that encourages Bella's desire.

Another song on the Bella Cullen Project's second album offers an illustrative example of how the melodrama is a mode in which girls' address emotions associated with coming-of-age sexuality. "When It Rains, It Pours," is composed and sung through Bella's perspective and dwells on the narrator's anxious sexual desire for Edward. The BCP even amplifies sexual feelings through their song's vivid imagery. Referencing Edward's absence in sunny weather, "When It Rains, It Pours" first verse's heat imagery suggests Bella's sexual awakening, facilitated by the permeable space of a window, which is Edward's entry point into Bella's bedroom: "Window of desire/Opens up when I'm touched by your fire." Edward's pulsating presence is characterized by an abundance of water at the entry point of the window. These are obvious symbols of the desiring female body, especially when it comes to arousal and sexual initiation. Situating the window as the threshold of physical intimacy reinforces the line's request, which yearns for a more complete abandonment to romantic passion than the literary Bella experiences. Following the double entendre associated with Edward's face entering through a window pane as "pain," the song's chorus begs Edward to take Bella (the speaker) to their "special place" and longs for "slow" kisses.

The chorus makes physical, romantic yearning obvious, and the next verse continues to call upon water imagery "an electrical storm" to address barriers ("Windows, locks, or doors") to entry spaces. In spite of physical impediments, the BCP's lyrics suggest water still rushes in,

suggestive of Bella's desire for the physical intimacy that Edward denies. The listener is reminded of Edward's refusal (and of Bella's need) through lines that plead with him. After a repetition of the chorus, the singers reemphasize her desire in a three-part harmony: "Oh Edward, won't you take me away." After the repetition of these lines and the chorus, the song ends, however, by reminding the listener that closed entry points do not preclude rushing water's insistence. The last lines reinforce the idea that closing mechanisms—especially locks—cannot keep out the water and, in doing so, voice a sexual agency the saga's Bella does not articulate as forcefully.

Although the literary Edward restricts their physical intimacy, Bella's desire persists. Through their music, the Bella Cullen Project gives voice to Bella's emerging sensuality without apology. Articulating this kind of yearning shows that the saga's adherence to melodrama—particularly moments of extreme yearning and frustration—are appealing to girls, who experience similar feelings in the context of a culture that seeks to discipline those bodily feelings. As evidenced by this song, music offers girls a discursive avenue for subverting restrictions placed on girls' bodies. In the case of "When It Rains, It Pours," the meadow is a space for sexual experimentation and escape since it contrasts the limitations of Bella's bedroom. Identifying this resistant stance in metaphorical, poetic language shows how the girl readers, in this case, the BCP, revel in the kind of affective discourse that also makes social critique possible. Recognizing that girl readers use music to actively negotiate the saga's portrayal of a coming-of-age girl's sexuality reinforces our understanding of melodrama's critical capacity because girls offer reinterpretations that dwell in the spaces left open by Meyer's narrative.

The BCP musically engages with the *Twilight Saga* through Bella's emotional conflicts, but, as subsequent chapters show, the band's songs are not exclusive to the protagonist's point of view. For example, "Charlie's Answering Machine" and "Vampwolf," two songs on the band's first album, alternate and overlap voices to articulate multiple characters' perspectives at once. Adopting singing personas that do not identify singularly with Bella's point of view disrupts the interpretation many *Twilight* critics inaccurately espouse when they worry about girl readers overidentifying with and copying Bella's passivity. Girls' musical interpretations illustrate how the *Twilight Saga*'s melodramatic extremes actually encourage artistic production and active engagements with literature.

Conclusion

Situating music within the larger theory of melodrama in girl culture offers a broader theoretical framework for considering music in texts aimed at youth. Isolating music shows how the melodramatic convention responds to postfeminist girlhood. Bella's coming-of-age experiences are punctuated with profound moments of lyrical sound, which demonstrates how melodrama upholds the nineteenth-century conventions Brooks notices—even the concept of a theme song passed between female generations. The *Jane Eyre- Twilight* connection reveals how music is connected to coming-of-age female characters' sexual awakenings. In both the literary and cinematic *Twilight* texts, music functions to validate girl characters' emotional responses, especially anxiety and desire, while building intimacy between reader and narrator. This intimacy is crucial to the validation process inherent in melodrama, a rhetorical function girl readers' own discourse proves when they empathize with and imagine desire.

Notes

1. For more about soap opera's use of circular storylines, see Modleski (*Loving* 105; "Search" 12–21).
2. Brooks encourages critics to interrogate the often taken-for-granted functions of a text's lyricism, making an argument for the rhythm of words on the page: "Even though the novel has no literal music, this connotation of the term melodrama remains relevant … Style, thematic structuring, modulations of tone and rhythm and voice—musical patterning in a metaphorical sense—are called upon" (14).

CHAPTER 5

Secrets Revealed, Feelings Moralized: Girls' Confessional Intimacy and Emotional Agency

With a furtive glance behind her shoulder, a woman quickly slips a piece of paper between the pages of an old hardcover book. She re-shelves the volume, hiding the results of a paternity test that indicates the father of her daughter is actually the father of her husband, the man who thinks he is the girl's father. Years later, that man will open that forgotten book and the piece of paper will flutter out, causing major catastrophe and upheaval for the family.

In the melodramatic mode, the secret will always out. It may be kept hidden for many years, but eventual revelation is a guarantee, as viewers of soap operas such as *The Bold and the Beautiful* (to which the paternity-test-scandal described above belongs) know very well. The same is true for melodramatic narratives in the nineteenth century. Although some may scoff at over-the-top and now clichéd tropes, secrets like hidden parentage were a device Dickens certainly traded in (*Bleak House* (1853), just to name one example). Secrecy is often excruciatingly frustrating for readers when they know the secret before the text's characters and are thus burdened with keeping it themselves. The promise of secrecy's revelation—and the subsequent moral order that will be restored—is one of melodrama's foundational points of appeal. After all, melodrama's appeal rests in its continual struggle to discern and uphold a moral center in the midst of social change and injustice. This insight has profound implications for realizing how melodrama addresses contemporary girlhood and girl readers today.

K. Kapurch, *Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Century*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-58169-3_5

Revelation and secrecy are melodramatic conventions directly connected to moral feelings; confessional discourse builds intimacy between characters and readers, but emotional morality is also empowering. When confessional revelations expose secret social taboos, the ensuing emotions lead to agential actions. Jane and Bella rely on feelings to determine their own moral courses of action once their respective Edwards, both Byronic bad boys, expose their secrets. Although both narrators communicate steadfast love, their exact choices differ based on historical contexts particular to each novel. Readers are positioned to empathize with the narrators and to understand their choices as situation-specific. More specifically, the intensity of Bella's feelings may be a critical response to unfair and contradictory constructions of female sexuality as a contradictory method of empowerment and social control.

The forthcoming analysis of the literary texts incorporates responses from girl readers who respond directly to secrecy, revelation, and moral feelings. Girls critically engage with these conventions through privileged insight into Bella's interiority, which leads to a consideration of the first *Twilight* film. The incorporation of vampiric imagery in one of Bella's dreams accelerates the intensity of Bella's commitment to Edward and, consequently, the viewer's understanding of the protagonist's moral feelings.

Byronic Boys, Revelation, and Secrecy

Two reader comments posted on TwilightTEENS discussion board articulate the appeal of the Byronic hero and his dark secrets. A reader named Alice calls attention to secrecy's responsibility for much of the narrative tension in the literary *Twilight*; Edward's mystery consumes so much of Bella's curious first-person perspective: "A lot of people fell in love with him for his mysterious ways and the appealing way that Bella see's him, through her own eyes and this kept quite a few people reading" ("Why are these books so popular?"). And, as magnolia observes, in the melodramatic mode, secrets will always come out: "I always reread two chapters: 13) Confessions (this meadow…) and 14) Mind over the matter (Edward in Bella's Bed:) I like Edward being so open and just happy" ("What are your favourite chapters in Twilight?"). Indeed, secrets aid in building suspense until the pressure bursts and excessive revelation ensues. Spoken revelations are, along with music, a definitional form of melodramatic expression. According to Brooks,

> The desire to express all seems a fundamental characteristic of the melodramatic mode. Nothing is spared because nothing is left unsaid; the characters stand on stage and utter the unspeakable, give voice to their deepest feelings, dramatize through their heightened and polarized words and gestures the whole lesson of their relationship. (4)

Brooks recognizes the intense and sometimes tediously lengthy torrents of words and emotions, an explanation applicable to the female narrators' extensive first-person narration in *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight Saga*.

Throughout their narration, Jane and Bella offer revelatory discourse, giving the reader privileged insight into their psychic turmoil. Here, however, I focus on the profound and pivotal disclosures voiced by Jane's and Bella's respective Edwards and presented through the protagonists' narration. Exploring revelation as a melodramatic moment highlights the role of secrecy. Since secrecy involves withholding expression, it is one of the mode's ultimate conflicts. As Brooks observes, "The mute role is remarkably prevalent in melodrama" (56) because the inability to speak dramatizes melodrama's emphasis on expression (57). The male characters' revelations, then, form the basis for appreciating other moral feelings as a melodramatic convention. Exploring the revelation of secrets also demonstrates how readers are positioned alongside Jane and Bella as recipients of the confessions. The presence of a secret leads to rising tension that parallels the escalation of evil in both novels; the subsequent relief offered by Rochester's and Edward's revelations is offered to narrator and reader alike.

With their taboo secrets and volatile dispositions, Edward Cullen and Edward Rochester are "mad, bad, and dangerous to know," the definition of the Byronic hero, the prototype for bad boys in Western literature and popular culture. Rochester cryptically talks about his potential to be good if not for his "circumstances": "Nature meant me to be, on the whole, a good man, Miss Eyre; one of the better end, and you see I am not so" (135). Edward is equally mysterious when he notices Bella's curiosity and conjectures: "What if I'm not a superhero? What if I'm the bad guy?" (*Twilight* 92). The dark, mysterious bad-boy is also theatrical in his dark, moodiness.[1] Jane Millgate explains Rochester's Byronic nature in terms of this performance:

> what makes him seem so melodramatic is that he is the product of two literary imaginations, his own and Jane's, both fully understood and controlled

> by the author. Rochester behaves, quite deliberately and self-consciously, like a Byronic hero, taking up dramatic poses, singing Corsair songs, acting arbitrarily and inscrutably; he talks of his past in Childe Harold terms; he delights in dressing up and playing exotic roles. When such a figure is presented through the still more naively Romantic imagination of the eighteen-year-old Jane Eyre the coloration becomes positively violent. (318)

As Millgate suggests, Brontë's representation of Rochester's Byronic qualities results in an alluring, magnetic figure perfectly suited for melodramatic expression.

Edward's guilt-ridden, erratic, and temperamental nature in Meyer's first novel is similar to Rochester's—and these characters also share an emotional vulnerability. Morey considers Edward Cullen's relationship to Rochester through the Byron connection, arguing that Cullen's "tender[ness]" affords him qualities "that tend to be read as effeminate in present-day America" (Morey 18–20).[2] As the saga goes on, Cullen's violent urges lessen as he exerts more and more control over himself, especially when it comes to sexual intimacy with Bella. Blackford explains Edward's sensitivity:

> In her characterization of the moody, Byronic Edward, consumed with self-hatred for his damned condition, Meyer bears kinship with Anne Rice, whose *Interview with the Vampire* develops the conscience of the vampire who does not wish to be monstrous … Edward knows he is dangerous, aware that the onset of sexuality can bring girls to the brink of death. (199)

The bad-boy Edward of *Twilight* sneaks into Bella's room at night and makes statements such as, "I decided as long as I'm going to hell, I might as well do it thoroughly" (87), which sounds a lot like the Rochester who begs Jane to stay with him as his mistress. As the series unfolds, however, Meyer does deviate from the template Brontë offers. After *Twilight*, the rest of the saga presents a male love interest who works to uphold Bella's virtue. Silver suggests that Cullen's paternalism fills a void missing from Bella's family life ("*Twilight*" 124–25), but I argue that Meyer's vision of Edward's resistance to Bella's sexual longings has another implication. Edward's resistance means that Bella can express aggressive desire, which Jane Eyre has to guard so closely in herself. These role reversals will come into play when we consider moral feelings, an outcome of revelation.

In the melodramatic mode, secrets create opportunities for revelation. Bertha Mason is Rochester's Big Secret, the explanation for his mysterious behavior. Bertha functions as a kind of evil, wreaking havoc in Thornfield

to greater and more dangerous degrees as the novel goes on. Rochester's marriage to and clandestine lodging of Bertha are also initial impediments to his confiding completely in Jane; as such, the reader shares Jane's ignorance and curiosity. This shrouding, however, eventually encourages an abundance of expression. Once Jane and Rochester's wedding is interrupted and his secret is exposed, Rochester releases an avalanche of expressive discourse. He parades the violent Bertha into public view and later offers private revelations to Jane about his past. Rochester certainly "utter[s] the unspeakable" (Brooks 4), detailing how his and Bertha's families conspired to secure the match. Rochester also describes Bertha's eccentric behavior pre- and post-marriage, as well as his subsequent romantic affairs (Brontë 304–12). In keeping with Brooks's definition, a reader might imagine Rochester onstage, complete with backdrops and furniture to resemble a library; during the disclosure he pours out memories and emotions monologue-style while Jane remains relatively silent. Jane's own silence situates the reader alongside her; both are captive audiences taking in new and stunning information that change the course of the novel's events.

In addition to divulging long-held secrets, Rochester uses the opportunity in the library to expose how his fascination with and attraction to Jane evolved. He reveals the extent to which he views Jane as a necessity in his life (Brontë 312–18). Jane resolves to leave, but Rochester pleads, "All happiness will be torn away with you. What then is left? For a wife I have but a maniac up-stairs: as well might you refer me to some corpse in yonder churchyard. What shall I do, Jane?" (316). Positioned alongside Jane, the reader is confronted with the same questions the narrator is hearing. Just as these questions are disconcerting (Rochester is unable to legally marry) they are also comforting: they reveal the depth of his devotion to Jane. The reader, with whom Jane has been so honest, is reassured that Jane's perception of herself as unlovable is false.

Just as Edward Rochester's secret functions as an opportunity for revelatory confession, so does Edward Cullen's. For the first half of *Twilight*, Bella worries about Edward's mysterious behavior, which is largely due to his simultaneous thirst for and fascination with her. Edward's cryptic behavior creates much of the tension in the novel, just as Rochester's mysterious behavior does in *Jane Eyre*. However, two important distinctions should be made. First, Bella suspects Edward's vampirism before his own confession. Perhaps she demonstrates more agency as a heroine in this particular circumstance than does Jane. Although Jane recognizes strange occurrences at Thornfield (such as Bertha's nighttime visit to destroy the wedding veil), Jane does not actively investigate to interrogate her own suspicions as Bella does.

On the day of her wedding, Jane is (according to her retrospective narration) shocked to discover Rochester's attempt at bigamy whereas Bella's suspicions are confirmed when Edward's secret is revealed.

Another distinction between the representations of revelation in *Jane Eyre* and *Twilight* relates to the timeframe of Edward Cullen's disclosure. When Edward does begin to confide in Bella, he, unlike Rochester, does not disclose all of his secrets in one long sitting. Such a difference may speak to the lessened influence of stage theatrics in contemporary fiction and the heightened influence of filmic conventions. Over the course of several chapters, Edward reveals details about his telepathic condition (which preclude the reading of Bella's mind) and his abstention from human blood. The chapter "Confessions" contains Edward's darkest secret: the smell of Bella's blood is so intoxicating that he must continually fight the urge to kill her. Just as Jane remains relatively silent during Rochester's shocking and expressive discourse, Bella quietly and calmly listens, speaking only to encourage more of Edward's disclosure. The vampire, wracked with emotion, provides insight into his supernatural condition:

> "Bella, I couldn't live with myself if I ever hurt you. You don't know how it's tortured me." He looked down, ashamed again. "The thought of you, still, white, cold … to never see you blush scarlet again, to never see that flash of intuition in your eyes when you see through my pretenses … it would be unendurable." He lifted his glorious, agonized eyes to mine. "You are the most important thing to me now. The most important thing to me ever." (Meyer, *Twilight* 273)

This example offers another correlation between *Twilight* and *Jane Eyre* in the context of melodrama. Despite their impropriety, Rochester's and Edward's expressive revelations, full of sensational and exaggerated hyperbole, also reveal their physical attraction to and romantic enthrallment with Jane and Bella. As with *Jane Eyre*, the reader shares Bella's relief when the mystery of her love interest's behavior is explained.

Moral Feelings and Girls' Coming-of-Age Sexuality

"I also love Bella's character, I really find her so deep and interesting. Very unique and genuine, which can be challenging to find these days," shares the reader hiddenshadows on the "Favorite Character" thread on TwilightTEENS. This reader's reaction is suggestive of melodrama's reliance on secrecy to build tension for the reader, who shares the mystery

with the narrator. Following, revelation comes as a relief to narrator and reader alike. Following the revelation of secrets, the narrators' reactions both involve internal emotional upheaval. In this way, revelation leads directly to a consideration of the moral function of feelings in the melodramatic mode.

Jane Eyre and Bella Swan's interior interrogations lead them both to articulate a position grounded in moral feelings. As Brooks suggests, "Morality is ultimately in the nature of affect, and strong emotion is in the realm of morality: for good and evil are moral feelings" (54). The experience of moral feelings is a direct consequence of the Edwards' respective exaggerated revelations. Such confessional discourse deepens both female protagonists' romantic attachments while alleviating some of their characteristic self-doubt. As soon as Rochester expresses his regret, but prior to his lengthy explanation, Jane reveals,

> Reader!—I forgave him in that moment, and on the spot. There was such deep remorse in his eye, such true pity in his tone, such manly energy in his manner; and besides there was such unchanged love in his whole look and mien—I forgave him all: yet not in words, not outwardly; only at my heart's core. (Brontë 298)

Likewise, after Edward confirms her suspicions about his vampiric nature, Bella reveals,

> 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, *Twilight* 195)

The reader is positioned to comprehend the rationale for Jane's and Bella's choices to love Rochester and Edward—in spite of their troubling confessions—because the narrators have previously shared their excessive interior distress, confusion, and longing with the reader. The male characters' confessions come as relief—as solved mysteries and as vindications of Jane's and Bella's lovability. Jane's and Bella's decisions to love these men "unconditionally" (Meyer 195) and at the "heart's core" (Brontë 298), then, belies the notion of moral feelings.

Morality and emotion are connected because both female characters rely on feelings to determine a moral course of action. Although their steadfast love is the same, the immediate outcomes Jane and Bella choose

(to leave or to stay), differ based on historical exigencies particular to each text. Readers are positioned to empathize with the narrators and to understand their choices as situation-specific. In this way, moral feelings lead to a consideration of how the novels respond to contemporary social conditions related to coming-of-age girlhood.

Both narrators forgive the nearly unforgivable revelations. Jane's and Bella's subsequent choices vary, but a reading informed by melodrama shows how both narrators make agential choices. Jane's awareness of competing internal forces is clear: "while he spoke my very Conscience and Reason turned traitors against me, and charged me with crime in resisting him" (317). Jane's appeal to herself is convincing as she feels empathy for Rochester's isolation: "Think of his misery; think of his danger—look at his state when left alone; remember his headlong nature; consider the recklessness following on despair—soothe him; save him; love him: tell him you love him and will be his. Who in the world cares for *you*? or who will be injured by what you do?" (317). She evokes her orphan past and wrongs for which the reader too feels empathy. Yet Jane's argument for leaving is equally convincing: "*I* care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself. I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man. I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad—as I am now" (317). Jane exhibits tremendous fortitude when she insists upon following her ethical and moral convictions by refusing to stay with Rochester as his mistress. Although her argument cites Christian laws, she first commits to loving herself.

Brontë's ability to establish competing options in the mind of the reader is an effective rhetorical maneuver accomplished through the melodramatic convention of moral feelings. Gilbert offers an insightful account of her own reading of *Jane Eyre* as a girl in the twentieth century:

> I had to admit to myself that in my teens I'd wanted more than anything for her to run off with him to the south of France, or even indeed to the moon, where at one point he had playfully promised to bring her to "a cave in one of the white valleys among the volcano-tops" (295). And why, after all, shouldn't politically astute readers wish that she and her lover had at least eloped, if not to the moon, to France? Such real life literary heroines as George Sand and George Eliot had done as much! Why did feminist critics, of all people, have to accept the marriage-or-death imperatives built into what Nancy Miller called "the heroine's text"? (355)

As Gilbert demonstrates, it is probably tempting for many modern readers of *Jane Eyre* to wish for her alternate and perhaps more progressive course of action. After all, aside from the pain of losing Edward, as a woman alone, without money, and without professional references, leaving Rochester also involves considerable risks. Given the limited options for a young, unmarried woman without a family in the nineteenth century, however, leaving Rochester after the revelation of his wife is the only viable option—especially since Jane does not trust herself to stay with Rochester and to uphold her moral center at the same time.

Jane's constantly works to see the truth in the moral order associated with Christian principles, which prohibit adultery; these principles are those that most Victorian critics and readers would have expected a respectable novel to uphold. A reviewer for *Era* notes "The story is unique" (qtd. in Brontë 457), citing the novel's Christian influence, along with its compelling qualities: "There is much to ponder over, rejoice over, and weep over, in its ably written pages. Much of the heart laid bare, and the mind explored; much of trial and temptation, of fortitude and resignation, of sound sense and Christianity—but no tameness" (qtd in Brontë 457). Yet not every reviewer issued the same praise. Some reviewers railed against Brontë's novel, what they deemed "an anti-Christian composition," as Elizabeth Rigby complains in 1848 (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar 337).

In terms of nineteenth-century moral codes, Jane Eyre is indeed subversive because Jane does not accept the Christian myth without question. Throughout the novel, her reasoning often relies on intuitive strategies couched in fairy and moon imagery, rather than Biblical imperatives. As Micael Clarke explains,

> Brontë takes the actively intervening figure from the Grimms' tale and transforms her into an image that resonates with powerful echoes of ancient female deities, especially that of the moon-goddess. In doing so, she defies conventional expectations that the novel be realistic and presents a supernatural figure straight out of the Grimms' Cinderella: a mother in heaven who watches over, guides, and inspires Jane in crucial moments. (701)

With this mother-moon guidance, Jane discerns a moral course of action. Her struggle is characteristic of the melodrama, which "comes into being in a world where the traditional imperatives of truth and ethics have been violently thrown into question, yet where the promulgation of truth and ethics, their instauration as a way of life, is of immediate,

daily, political concern" (Brooks 15). Jane's experience with Rochester is a microcosm of this larger phenomenon: Rochester's bigamous attempts and his request for her to live as his mistress shatter her hopes of a legal Christian marriage even though she still believes him to be worthy of her love. Physically leaving Rochester does not mean that her faith in him is diminished; in fact, her forgiveness and everlasting love prove that her initial feelings about Rochester were correct when he redeems himself later in the novel.

Bella also follows her convictions when she refuses to leave Edward, whom she believes is not "a monster" as he suspects (Meyer, *Twilight* 187). After pages of Edward's revelations, Bella says to him in her typical terse, but hyperbolic fashion, "You already know how I feel, of course … I'm here […] which, roughly translated, means I would rather die than stay away from you" (274). Relying on affect to discern morality is a rhetorical dimension of melodrama. For Bella, staying with the vampire proves her steadfast confidence and, ultimately, her belief in his soul-endowed status, a similar conviction Jane upholds in relation to Rochester.

Characteristic of the melodramatic mode, the cohesion of Bella's world is violently upheaved after Edward's revelation, as in *Jane Eyre*. Bella discovers vampires exist, but that they can strive for righteousness. This metaphorically corresponds to coming-of-age realizations that undo previously held beliefs, especially about good and evil. Even though Bella chooses to stay and Jane chooses to leave, both female narrators use their feelings to locate a moral compass on which they rely for direction. This similarity says something profound about melodrama as a modern mode that continues to respond to "the loss of tragic vision" in the face of institutional breakdowns, which Brooks identifies as "the shattering of the myth of Christendom" and "the dissolution of an organic and hierarchically cohesive society" (15). Thus, within the context of each novel's framework, the heroine's immediate choices are consistent with melodramatic morality that delineates good and evil as recognizable options.

In the *Twilight Saga*, Edward, unlike Rochester, is not asking Bella to be his mistress or to participate in illicit activities of the undead. In fact, the situation is the opposite: in the early stages of their relationship, he can barely kiss her without yearning to drain her. Later, he will commit to sex only if they are married. In fact, the relationship between premarital sex and salvation is less clear for Bella than it is for Jane—even though such intimacy could have disastrous and dangerous consequences for both teen girls. Becoming Rochester's mistress would destroy Jane's future

economic and social prospects, a kind of death for a nineteenth-century woman. Similarly, Bella's attempts at physical intimacy with the insatiable vampire would likely result in her actual death. Bella's moral feelings, then, have important implications for interpreting Bella's agency in the context of seemingly antifeminist messages about female sexuality. Admittedly, discerning Bella's agency is a challenge, especially considering that Meyer herself is a devout Mormon who is so opposed to premarital sex that she refused her editors' requests to include it (Meyer, "Interview"). Still, true to melodramatic form, Bella's agency is located in the realm of emotions, which helps explain the saga's appeal to girls.

As the saga goes on, Meyer continues to establish what constitutes good (restraint) and bad (indulgence) in the context of vampire morality—a model that critics have extended to Meyer's portrayal of adolescent sexual experiences. Edward is charged with control, so Bella's spikes in romantic passion—along with her yearning to become vampire—are carefully monitored or eliminated altogether. In this way, Jane and Edward are alike: upholding moral fortitude means physical restraint. Bella actively desires Edward, but he stipulates no human-vampire sex. In the context of such moral themes, Carrie Anne Platt finds the contradictory representations of female sexual desire "troubling" and she worries what kind of role model Bella will make for girls (84). Platt's judgment ignores research about girls' reading, especially Blackford's findings about girl readers, who do not generally read for role models and who experience complex engagements with texts as aesthetic objects (see Introduction). A one-to-one metaphorical interpretation is problematic because it treats literature as something ingested rather than art that inspires thoughtful readings.

Interpreting conflicts about vampire conversion and adolescent sexuality, topics Bella and Edward debate and negotiate throughout the four novels, through a melodramatic lens forces us to pay more attention to the emotional affect surrounding these conflicts. After all, Bella and Edward are constantly negotiating the boundaries of physical intimacy while they debate what constitutes soullessness and salvation—and this negotiation is ongoing throughout multiple books. Bella worries, wonders, and agonizes over these predicaments as her needs, Edward's desire, and, in later novels, the judgment of friends, family, and the community weigh on her.

What makes this such a powerful rhetorical dimension of melodrama is that the reader shares the intimate experience of Bella's excessive emotional expression, which validates the gravity of her feelings and encourages empathy for the particularity of her experiences. Does

Twilight perpetuate old-fashioned messages about virginity and romantic partnership as an adolescent girl's primary concerns? Or, does *Twilight* take seriously the idea that complex messages about those concepts continue to inundate girls, who actively navigate girlhood, as Bella does? Understanding the critical functions of melodrama points to the latter, proving Martha Vicinus's observation:

> The strength of melodrama rests in evoking emotional and actual situations that cannot be resolved, and then offering a form of resolution by linking current values—such as woman's purity or the innate nobility of the hero—to universal ones. Indeed, the central paradox of melodrama is that it defends the domestic ideal against a malign society under the belief that a larger moral order will prevail, yet in fact this moral order is a reflection of current social values. ("Helpless" 134)

Bella's tortured feelings about the prospect of romantic intimacy with Edward are perhaps one of the most appealing aspects of the saga; physical consummation in the context of marriage only comes at the end of the series after many, many pages of emotional turmoil.

A representation of coming-of-age girlhood that depicts a girl struggling with and against her own sexual desire, along with the soulful and mortal consequences of other life-and-death decisions, speaks to the kinds of dilemmas faced by everyday girls in this postfeminist moment. In her analysis of the saga, Platt does recognize that girls are not only encouraged to be sexual, but also to control their sexuality (84). Anita Harris has also recognized how the discourse of "can-do" girlhood mandates that successful girls will practice "safe" sex, reinforced by birth-control initiatives, to delay motherhood until they have achieved professional success (23–25). Perhaps, then, we can read in the saga a subtle critique—probably not even acknowledged by Meyer herself—of safe-sex initiatives that have discursively constructed girlhood as a site of sexual control.

The melodramatic representation allows Bella to feel deeply and in exaggerated ways. This may validate the depth of feeling many girls experience as they weigh the consequences associated with human experiences (such as sex) to which society has attached great moral weight. The construction of female sexuality as a moral dilemma for coming-of-age girls upholds the kind of nineteenth-century mores that Jane Eyre also navigates. The maintenance of these messages explains why Jane's narrative still holds appeal for contemporary readers while underscoring melodrama's critique

today: Victorian attitudes toward femininity and female sexuality persist in discursive constructions of twenty-first-century girlhood.

Paranoia, Vampiric Revelations, and Moral Feelings On-Screen

In Hardwicke's *Twilight*, voice-overs are one cinematic technique that articulate the protagonist's subjectivity. These on-the-nose expressions frequently replicate memorable lines from the novel and pinpoint its melodramatic impulses, especially those related to revelation, secrecy, and moral feelings. Even so, Bella's subjectivity is also displaced onto the mise-en-scéne in more complex ways. Urgency is heightened in dream sequences whose editing amplifies the Gothic sensibility and the viewer's understanding of Bella's obsessed curiosity with Edward. This cinematic expression of Bella's paranoia leads to revelation and the articulation of moral feelings as in the novel. Recognizing *Twilight*'s adherence to the film subgenre "the paranoid Gothic," a category of "the woman's film," offers theoretical grounding for locating Bella's erotically charged paranoid subjectivity in the mise-en-scéne, situating this *Twilight* film within a particular cinematic tradition.

Melodrama is a mode that transcends genre and whose appeal is not exclusive to women. *Twilight* invokes a more particular generic melodramatic category, the paranoid Gothic woman's film—which, once again, recalls the legacy of Brontë's novel. Morey observes, "*Jane Eyre* is one of the forebears of the contemporary romance just as it is of the paranoid woman's film, also an important precursor of the 'Twilight' series" (15). Recognizing this heritage calls our attention to the most legendary cinematic *Jane Eyre*, the 1944 adaptation directed by Robert Stevenson and starring Joan Fontaine and Orson Welles. This adaptation invokes the film noir style popular in the 1940s, which also saw the rise of the "woman's film," a Hollywood film genre whose melodramatic sensibilities addressed themes related to femininity, motherhood, and domesticity to appeal to women viewers in the mid-twentieth century.

Within the melodramatic genre of the woman's film is the subgenre of the Gothic romance, to which *Jane Eyre* belongs, along with Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940). That film and its source text, Daphne Du Maurier's novel, are also derivative of Brontë's novel; the adaptation even stars Fontaine. In Stevenson's *Jane Eyre* and in *Rebecca*, the curiosity of

the female protagonist is baited again and again by the mysterious home where she comes to live: while the unnamed protagonist of *Rebecca* is haunted by the deceased title character (the former wife of her husband), Jane is haunted by the mysterious sounds of Bertha Mason, the still-living wife of Jane's almost- and eventual husband. Both novel and film versions of *Twilight* similarly portray a protagonist's incessant wonderings in the context of a domestic space, specifically Bella's bedroom, an intimate setting that is also a recurring motif in girls' media.

Twilight adheres to the trope of domestic confinement in the paranoid Gothic woman's film; theoretical insight into that film subgenre leads to the identification of Bella's subjectivity in the mise-en-scéne. Scholars have critiqued the 1944 *Jane Eyre* for not presenting a protagonist assertively discoursing on the subject of equality, as she does in the novel. Fontaine's performance is particularly criticized for its passive and anxious weepiness (see Ellis and Kaplan). This portrayal, however, may be a product of its historical moment. In terms of cinematic Gothic romances of the 1940s, Waldman recognizes that they responded to women's changing roles in relation to the home and the workplace, in addition to anxiety about men returning home from war since many husbands were unknown partners given the abundance of speedy prewar marriages. Waldman notices a validation: "the films of the war and post-war period place an unusual emphasis on the affirmation of feminine perception, interpretation, and lived experience" (29). Waldman recognizes point of view not only in the narrative itself, but also in costuming, gestures, and music, technical elements that enhance the viewer's recognition of feminine subjectivity. Waldman concludes, "With its emphasis on the ambivalence or abhorrence of the heroine toward the house itself [...] the war-time Gothic comes close to voicing a critique of the sexual division of labor of the bourgeois family, with its restriction of women to the domestic sphere" (35–36). The critical capacity of the paranoid Gothic woman's film also relates to its representation of female sexuality. As Doane explains, the subgenre recognizes that erotic desire exists in the female protagonist, but this desire is thwarted by obstructions, certainly consistent with nineteenth-century melodramatic convention. By never allowing the woman to overcome those entrapments, Doane claims that the films replicate "the impossible position of women in relation to desire in patriarchal society" (*The Desire* 122). The first *Twilight* film, along with its literary counterpart, conforms to this filmic subgenre in its presentation of Bella's curiosity, which is linked to her sexual desire.

Although the literary *Twilight* has the space to afford lengthy representations of Bella's curiosity about Edward, the film has less time to establish this tension. Instead, the cinematography and editing communicate melodramatic subjectivity, specifically Bella's paranoia, a feeling that amplifies urgency for the resolution of the mystery. Hardwicke's *Twilight* offers flashes of images that appear to be the projection of Bella's imagination and memory and are the Edward-related clues she will fit together to complete the puzzle of his vampiric identity. For example, Bella dreams about Edward after the mysterious way he saves her from a skidding van. She is singularly focused on the mystery of Edward's superhuman strength, carrying those anxieties into her dreams, waking up breathless after an extreme close-up shot of Edward's face, bathed in gold—clearly understood as the subject of Bella's dream. As she wakes up, however, she sees Edward across the room staring at her in bed. Although we come to find out that this is no dream, Bella turns on her light and he is gone. Seated on her bed, she runs her fingers through her hair in a kind of sensual frustration, revealing in voice-over: "That was the first night I dreamt of Edward Cullen."

Bella's frustration with Edward's mysterious behavior continues to suggest thwarted sexual arousal, which is cause for more frustration. Bella's curiosity is peaked again by another Edward-saving: he rescues Bella from a gang of men who have, true to melodramatic form, entrapped and encircled her in order to assault her. Once she is safely at home, the film presents a montage of vampiric images that juxtapose her own memories of Edward with images she is viewing on the computer. For example, the camera zooms in on the word "strength" and cuts to a flashback (accompanied by whooshing sounds from the film's score) to Edward stopping the van. In this vampire-montage sequence, the film casts highlighted words onto the screen. In Meyer's novel *Twilight*, Bella recalls briefly the "scary movies" about vampires that do not come out in sunlight (134). The literary Bella's imagination is not piqued by images of vampires from those films, but the cinematic Bella's vampire research leads directly to an erotic fantasy.

The Gothic montage culminates in an erotically charged dream that envisions Edward as a Bela Lugosi-style vampire descending over a sleeping Bella reclined on a Victorian couch. He sensuously bites her neck, then turns toward the camera with blood dripping down his face. The references to earlier cinematic vampires are reinforced by the illusion of old film stock, but then we cut to Bella waking up startled at her computer desk.

Because of the film's use of montage, the viewer initially perceives Bella's dream without realizing she is asleep. Overwhelmed by the onslaught of images and the vampiric fantasy, the viewer is swept into Bella's interior space. The effect of montaging vampire research into a dream fantasy, then, is a melodramatic translation of emotional morality expressed in the book. The images position the viewer alongside Bella's subjective experience of realizing Edward's dangerous identity—but choosing to love the vampire regardless of his monstrosity. The dream also functions as an erotic fantasy of submission and physical penetration, an expression of sexuality Bella is denied elsewhere in the film—a perfect illustration of melodrama's capacity to articulate repressed and unspoken desire.

Immediately following this Gothic montage is the forest scene that depicts Edward's most dramatic revelations. This sequence indicates that Bella's erotic fantasy motivates her to confront Edward; in the film she wordlessly demands they walk into the forest whereas the novel's characters had an excursion planned, lessening the immediacy. Edward reveals his vampirism by exposing his unique skin sparkling in the sunlight: a close-up of Bella's enthralled face, a bit out of breath and openmouthed as she pants, "Like diamonds." The camera cuts to a close-up of Edward's bare sparkling stomach, then slowly traces the line of his upper body, and finally rests on his cringing face looking at Bella. The camera cuts back to the original close-up of Bella's face as she says breathlessly, "You're beautiful"; the camera cuts again to a close-up of Edward's sparkly stomach, again tracing the line from his stomach to chest to his face (more quickly this time) and he disagrees: "Beautiful? This is the skin of a killer, Bella." He turns to leave as the camera cuts back to Bella, whose openmouthed expression still indicates fascination and wonder, but with some worry now since Edward has broken their eye contact. A few moments later, she clumsily moves toward Edward, tripping over her shoe at one point, as he, moving gracefully and sometimes in superspeed, evades her, trying to convince her of the danger he poses. Camera work and editing articulate Bella's desirous gaze, situating the viewer alongside Bella's anxious yearning. At the same time, Edward denies her an unimpeded view of his body and her movements are thwarted, outcomes that speak to the broader cultural denial of girls' sexuality.

As in the novel, the scenes that involve Edward's revelations confirm Bella's suspicions about his supernatural identity, but they also reveal his bloodthirsty and romantic desire for the protagonist. Following these revelatory sequences is a short scene that takes place in Bella's bedroom, the

morning after the two have spent the night together there; they realize that, even though they can kiss each other, more intense physical contact is too tempting for Edward. In the next scene, the two are apart: Bella looks out of her bedroom window at Edward. Her voice-over asserts the expression of moral feelings with the same lines from the novel: "About three things I was absolutely positive: first, Edward was a vampire. Second, there was a part of him—and I didn't know how dominant that part might be—that thirsted for my blood. And third, I was unconditionally and irrevocably in love with him." As the cinematic Bella proclaims her feelings, the viewer is directed to look at Edward through her point of view: he is leaning against his car, wearing dark sunglasses, and smiling in a mischievous way, the consummate Byronic bad boy. He looks back at Bella at her window, then the camera cuts to his vantage point, so the viewer sees Bella behind the window pane, framed by its bars. Again, Bella's gaze is obstructed by the window, the obstacle representative of thwarted sexual agency.

Conclusion

In both Jane's and Bella's cases, moral truth is recognized through affective feelings inspired by revelations that expose deep, dark secrets. This emotional morality is also complicated by the body. The pressure to uphold the corporeal "goodness" of the female body speaks to the way melodrama negotiates past values in the midst of modernity and social change. Both Jane and Bella struggle with their bodily desire, which is positioned as a threat to virtue in both texts. The very fact that a twenty-first-century female protagonist is still dealing with such a conflict illustrates melodrama's ongoing relevance and critical applicability. The film *Twilight* maintains its literary predecessor's emphasis on emotional interiority as a site of moral truth and agency, especially through sensual vampire imagery. Recognizing this leads to the consideration of melodramatic conventions specifically associated with the Gothic, which even more obviously critique social pressures facing girls.

Notes

1. Abigail Myers also uses the Byronic hero as the basis for a comparison between Rochester and Edward: "There is an implied immortality to the figure of the Byronic hero; Meyer's use of Byronic characteristics for Edward, immortal as both a vampire and a Byronic hero, show a deeper level of

meaning to the book series that has swept the tween population in the United States" (149). It is not enough to claim, however, that a figure that appealed to nineteenth-century readers, particularly girls and women, continues to appeal to similar kinds of audiences today; such a claim does not adequately reveal why such appeal continues. Interpreting the Byronic hero within a consideration of the continuity of melodrama in girl culture, especially these figures attractiveness to Jane and Bella, does offer that explanation.

2. "While we may understand the brooding and apparently rejecting Edward is a classic manifestation of the Byronic hero and a lineal descendent of Mr. Rochester, the tender and solicitous Edward is another manifestation of the Byronic hero, in this case as descendant of the Man of Feeling. As Peter Thorslev observes, '[t]he Byronic Hero … is invariably courteous toward women, often loves music or poetry, has a strong sense of honor, and carries about with him like the brand of Cain a deep sense of guilt'" (Morey 18–19).

CHAPTER 6

Melodrama's Gothic Remnants: Nightmares and Vampire-Girl Doubles

From Slavic folklore to Romantic art and poetry to Victorian literature to contemporary media, the nighttime encounter between vampire and victim invokes our fear of the unknown during one of our most vulnerable states: sleep. James Twitchell's now-canonical study, *The Living Dead*, explains, "The actual 'attack' is almost always the same: it is nighttime, probably midnight, the bewitching hour" (10). Weakened after nights of unrest, the drained victim often wonders if the whole thing was a dream, as Lucy Westenra does in *Dracula*: "It is as if I had passed through some long nightmare" (Stoker 149). The vampire-victim nighttime encounter, then, involves two Gothic motifs beloved by the melodramatic mode: nightmares and vampires.

Melodrama frequently heightens the drama between good and evil with elements of the Gothic. This is not coincidental since the Gothic novel and melodrama both arise from the same "early" Romantic moment and "nourish one another" (Brooks 17). Brooks however makes an important distinction:

> [Melodrama] tends to diverge from the Gothic novel in its optimism, its claim that the moral imagination can open up the angelic spheres as well as the demonic depths and can allay the threat of moral chaos. Melodrama is indeed, typically, not only a moralistic drama but the drama of morality: it strives to find, to articulate, to demonstrate, to "prove" the existence of a moral universe which, though put into question, masked by villainy and perversions of judgment, does exist and can be made to assert its presence and its categorical force among men. (20)

K. Kapurch, *Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Century*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-58169-3_6

Melodrama's penchant for optimism in the face of moral chaos is, however, still accentuated by Gothic villainy—and this is especially true in vampire texts with girl protagonists and visible girl audiences. Williamson, who recognizes the melodramatic and soap-opera-like tendencies in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, suggests: "the youthful world of adolescent humans and sympathetic monsters is contrasted to the monstrousness of the adult world" (79). In girl culture, Gothic remnants respond poignantly to social pressures facing girls, especially those related to age and femininity.[1]

In the case of *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight Saga*, melodrama's exposure of oppression is accomplished through Gothic motifs, especially nightmares and female vampires who function as doubles for the protagonists. The *Jane Eyre*-*Twilight* connection demonstrates how these antagonizing forces enable melodrama's critique of social pressures associated with coming-of-age girlhood. The *Twilight* films, especially *New Moon*, generally uphold their literary counterparts' representations, so in this chapter I make brief references to the adaptations alongside the literary works. Specifically, nightmares validate over-the-top fears about change, especially aging and motherhood, exposing the crippling effects of postfeminism's emphasis on feminine youthfulness. At the same time, female vampires serve as agential foils to the protagonist, especially when she is inactive. Girl fans even report *Twilight*-themed dreams and fantasies, especially about villainous female-vampire doubles, alternate subject positions that help girl readers negotiate change in their own lives.

Nightmares about Motherhood, Aging, and Change

Jane and Bella are both characters consumed with habitual self-doubt and self-consciousness; these anxieties are reflected in melodramatic terms through dreams, specifically nightmares. Melodrama is "preoccupied with nightmare states, with claustration and thwarted escape, with innocence buried alive and unable to voice its claim to recognition" (Brooks 20). Thus, in many ways, the nightmare as a melodramatic moment elucidates truth; dream states reflect sincere human experiences.

In the nineteenth century, Brontë's "pre-Freudian" (Berg 9) use of dreams articulates Jane's tacit anxieties and fears about change, marriage, and motherhood. Before Jane and Rochester's marriage ceremony, she tells him about one of her most troublesome dreams in melodramatic and nightmarish language, deviating from her usually straightforward discourse. Jane's dream anticipates the impediment to their marriage—"some

barrier dividing us" (Brontë 281). Jane also foresees her self-imposed expulsion from Thornfield when she reveals to Rochester (and the reader):

> I was following the windings of an unknown road; total obscurity environed me; rain pelted me; I was burdened with the charge of a little child: a very small creature, too young and feeble to walk, and which shivered in my cold arms, wailed piteously in my ear. I thought, sir, that you were on the road a long way before me; and I strained every nerve to overtake you and made effort to utter your name and entreat you to stop—but my movements were fettered; and my voice still died away inarticulate, while you, I felt, withdrew farther and farther every moment. (281)

Jane's incapacities are consistent with the melodramatic convention of muteness as an obstacle. Jane's is bound and unable to hear due to the screams of the baby, who could represent her anxiety as she approaches her wedding night and the possibility of motherhood. Gilbert and Gubar offer another interpretation:

> it seems clear that the wailing child who appears in all of [Jane's dreams] corresponds to the child Jane herself, the wailing Cinderella who pilgrimage began in anger and despair […] And though Jane wishes to be rid of the heavy problem her orphan self presents […] until she reaches the goal of her pilgrimage—maturity, independence, true equality with Rochester (and therefore in a sense with the rest of the world)—she is doomed to carry her orphaned alter ego everywhere. (358)

Because Jane is positioned as an innocent child oppressed by her relatives (see Chap. 3), the dream baby reminds us here of Jane's simultaneous virtue and feelings of powerlessness, the characteristics of melodrama's heroines. Following, the baby also symbolizes an ungovernable part of Jane, who, striving to uphold her moral convictions, must mother herself through the trial of leaving Rochester.

Bella also negotiates her repressed fears and anxieties through predictive dreams in the saga. In *Twilight*, a frightening dream facilitates Bella's realization about Edward's vampiric nature, along with Jacob's future as a part-time wolf. Bella's Jane-like anxiety about entering a marriage as an unequal partner is also manifest in dreams of a baby in peril at the beginning of the last novel of Meyer's saga, *Breaking Dawn*. These dreams foreshadow the vampire-human baby to whom she eventually gives birth—and who sets off a chain of events that puts preparation for a

vampire world war in motion. Bella reveals this dream to the reader, rather than Edward:

> It wasn't that I was afraid for myself—I was afraid for the boy. He wasn't the same boy as that first dream—the vampire child with the bloodred eyes who sat on a pile of dead people I loved. This boy I'd dreamed of four times in the last week was definitely human; his cheeks were flushed and his wide eyes were a soft green. But just like the other child, he shook with fear and desperation as the Volturi closed in on us. In this dream that was both new and old, I simply had to protect the unknown child. There was no other option. At the same time, I knew that I would fail. (Meyer, *Breaking* 105)

Bella's prophetic nightmare confirms suspicions about the impossible (pregnancy from human-vampire sex as well as the Volturi's continued wrath) in the way that her *Twilight* dream substantiated supernatural possibilities. Bella's pregnancy and her subsequent choice not to terminate (despite a fetus that is killing her) have been read as a cautionary tale against unprotected sex and an antiabortion allegory (Silver, "*Twilight*" 129–33). Considering dreams as a melodramatic convention, then, encourages a reading that takes seriously the emotional angst associated with such issues of adolescence.

Motherhood represents a site of anxiety for Jane and Bella, scenarios that bring up another vital melodramatic impulse related to maternal themes. Angst about motherhood has its roots in nineteenth-century melodrama. As Modleski explains, "The connection between melodrama and mothers is an old one. Harriet Beecher Stowe, of course, made it explicit in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, believing that if her book could bring its female readers to see the world as one extended family, the world would be vastly improved" ("Search" 14). Bella's sacrificial stance for her child—as well as for her own mother in *Twilight*—enhances the saga's connection to the nineteenth century, a period in which the sacrificial mother enjoyed a "representational heyday" (Kaplan 76). In her study of the novel *East Lynne* and its stage and film adaptations, E. Ann Kaplan suggests: "the mother-sacrifice paradigm may expose the oppressive aspects of the patriarchal positioning of the mother; the text may reveal how the mother strives to gain unmet gratifications by establishing a fusional relationship with her child" (77). I reference Bella's connection to *East Lynne*'s anguishing mother-heroine Lady Isabel in Chap. 7, but here I explore motherhood's connection to dreams. Exposed through nightmares, anxiety about motherhood can

reflect feelings about one's own mother, as well as the looming prospect of motherhood for oneself; often these feelings exist all at once. Both Jane's and Bella's dreams foreshadow their own motherhood, a frightening prospect for the teen girls.

Jane's maternal anxiety reflects angst about the unknown; her own absent mother offers no template of motherhood, an idealized feminine position in Victorian culture. Similarly, Bella's angst about motherhood is rooted in discursive constructions of ideal femininity, derived, in part, from what she learned from her own mother, Renee. As Silver summarizes,

> From the opening of the series [...] Meyer depicts Bella as inappropriately mothered. Twilight is a series very much concerned with the practices of mothering, and in Renee's abdication of her role, Meyer provides room for Edward's adapted mother Esme to become an alternate mother figure, and [...] offers Renee as a foil and anti-role model for Bella. ("*Twilight*" 124)

More specifically, Renee's pregnancy (with Bella) necessitated an early marriage, which bound her to the small town of Forks. This is a future Bella does not see for herself: "I'm not *that girl*, Edward. The one who gets married right out of high school like some small-town hick who got knocked up by her boyfriend!" (Meyer, *Eclipse* 275). In *Breaking Dawn*, Bella also worries that her family, as well as the community, would assume "teen pregnancy" was the reason for her early marriage: "I'd told Edward that people would immediately jump to this conclusion! What other possible reason would sane people have for getting married at eighteen?" (15).

Bella's judgments about teen pregnancy reflect an internalization of competing discourses of the "can-do" girl and the "at-risk" girl, constructions of postfeminist girlhood circulated by the media, education, and government sources. According to Anita Harris, "Can-do girls are encouraged to delay childbearing until their careers are established but not to renounce motherhood altogether [...] These measures are increasingly related to the disciplining of the bodies of privileged young women" (23). Bella has internalized these messages as she worries about being perceived as an "at-risk" girl, who Harris also defines:

> The panic over teen motherhood is a prime example of the regulatory focus on a disordered pattern of consumption and the personalizing of failure [...] Even if planned (and sometimes especially if it is planned), it is always read

> as a mistake. […] It is the most prominent example of the dire consequences that will befall them if young women fail to plan properly and indulge in disordered leisure. (30)

We might read melodramatic nightmares as reflections of Bella's anxiety in response to such social pressures facing girls, an interpretation that demonstrates how melodrama critiques contemporary social expectations of girlhood by confirming girls' frustration with them.

The baby in Bella's dreams in *Breaking Dawn* may suggest anxiety about actual motherhood and the uncertainty such a change represents. Earlier in the series, Bella's angst about aging is apparent in another dream that incorporates a maternal figure. The saga's second novel foregrounds the concept of nightmarish dreams in both its preface and in the first chapter's opening line: "I was ninety-nine point nine percent sure I was dreaming" (Meyer, *New Moon* 3). Chris Weitz's *The Twilight Saga*: *New Moon* also begins with this scene, following a cinematic prologue that replicates Meyer's use of *Romeo and Juliet* in an epigraph. In the film, Bella's voice narrates impending doom: "These violent delights have violent ends/And in their triumph die, like fire and powder/Which, as they kiss, consume." This voice-over, paired with a black screen featuring a large moon, gives weight and depth to the forthcoming nightmare.

The literary and cinematic Bella's dream begins in the idyllic meadow setting, the secret spot where she and Edward share intimate revelations in *Twilight*. For readers and viewers, this meadow space immediately recalls the memories of novel and film versions of *Twilight*, evoking nostalgia for that romantic setting. This sacred green world will soon, however, become a setting of nightmarish realizations. Although Bella believes she is introducing her grandmother to Edward, she soon realizes her mistake: "With a dizzying jolt, my dream abruptly became a nightmare. There was no Gran. That was *me*. Me in a mirror. Me—ancient, creased, and withered. Edward stood beside me, casting no reflection, excruciatingly lovely and forever seventeen. He pressed his icy, perfect lips against my wasted cheek" (Meyer, *New Moon* 6). Weitz's *New Moon*, however, accomplishes her realization without words, visualizing Bella's horrific realization revelation through characters' interaction and the score.

Alexandre Desplat's *New Moon* score is more conventional than Burwell's *Twilight* score: even though both composers privilege piano melodies, Desplat favors more classical instrumentation and sweeping orchestral movements over the tribal, pulsating percussion and electric

guitar slides in Burwell's *Twilight* score. As Phares explains, "Desplat takes a more traditional approach, favoring soft string passages highlighted by flute, piano and occasional brass for his cues, which are lush and often lengthy" (*New Moon*). Desplat's score often prefers the "ostinato" patterns, in which a backing rhythm is repeated continuously—as if the sound is going in circles. This is a musical expression of claustrophobic spaces. "Bella Dreams," the song accompanying the opening dream-meadow scene, concludes as stringed orchestration builds to a tense pitch before an abrupt gasp, ending unresolved when the camera cuts to Bella sleeping. The literary and cinematic Bella awakens to her eighteenth birthday, so both literary and cinematic expressions of her dream preface her anxiety about aging past the perpetually teen-aged Edward.

Consistent with the melodramatic nature of Jane Eyre's incapacitating dream, Bella's inability to recognize herself speaks to her sense of being trapped by her own humanity. The mirror, especially when it is visualized on-screen in Weitz's film, is a melodramatic expression of that entrapment. Since Edward refuses to change Bella into a vampire at the end of *Twilight*, her *New Moon* dream represents the silencing she feels in relation to that choice. The nightmare also overtly reflects Bella's self-consciousness and fear about Edward continuing to love her as she ages. Thus, the dream reflects her anxiety over what she perceives as an unequal match between absolutes: Edward's vampiric splendor in looks and strength versus her ordinary human frailty. In this case, Bella, not Edward, is the monster; although Bella has always acknowledged her own awkward clumsiness, in *New Moon* her aging human body becomes monstrous. The yearning for equality, presented in this fantastical context of vampire immortality, is a desire similar to what Gilbert and Gubar notice about orphan baggage in Jane Eyre's dream (358).

A point of identification for many girl readers, the vampire's immortality places the very real prospect of aging in perspective. Bella's desire to turn vampire so she cannot age past Edward's seventeen expresses a fear of the unknown presented by the aging process. This fear also speaks to the precarious social capital that Western culture grants youth. As Roberta Seelinger Trites keenly observes,

> Indeed, adolescents occupy an uncomfortable liminal space in America. Adolescents are both powerful (in the youthful looks and physical prowess that are glorified by Hollywood and Madison Avenue; in the increased economic power of middle-class American teenagers as consumers; in the

> typical scenario of teenagers succeeding in their rebellions against authority figures) and disempowered (in the increased objectification of the teenage body that leads many adolescents to perpetrate acts of violence against the Self or Other; in the decreased economic usefulness of the teenager as a producer of goods in postindustrial America; in the typical scenario of teenagers rebelling against authority figures to escape oppression). It is no wonder that the body of literature linked to this population pursues the exploration of power relentlessly. (xi)

Vampires, who are also simultaneously powerful (immortal, beautiful, strong) and disempowered (limited by their blood-cravings and other supernatural restrictions) are perfect metaphors for Trites's description of the paradoxical construction of adolescence. Bella's desire to do violence against her own body (becoming a vampire) is an expression of frustration that may appeal to adolescent readers similarly frustrated with the double bind that being young presents in Western culture.

Given postfeminism's obsession with girlishness, the deleterious consequences of privileging youth are even exacerbated for actual girls. Mass media try to bewitch adult women into striving for youthful beauty in the ongoing project that is the self (Gill 149; Tasker and Negra 21). Creams, lotions, injections, surgery—each measure is more drastic and invasive than the previous one in the unending and futile battle against the unavoidable curse of wrinkling skin. Films and television shows like *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Sex and the City* portray adult women questing for this youth, health, and beauty while they are also encumbered by the trials and tribulations of dating—scenarios that associate youthful beauty with romantic worth.

Moreover, adult women are encouraged to maintain their girlishness through co-opting girls' own culture. As Diane Negra observes, "the princesshood phenomenon is being extended to adult women with the marketing of a line of bridal gowns linked to female Disney characters and the notable success of films like *Enchanted*," which "reinforc[e] the centrality and value of youth to femininity" (49). Bella's anxiety, then, reflects a real problem facing girls. What are postfeminism's consequences for twenty-first-century girls, who are told repeatedly by mediated texts that adult women's happiness relies on their youthfulness? Youth disappears with each passing day, as Bella repeatedly observes, but postfeminist media culture tells girls that youth will be the object of their obsession when they are old. The *Twilight Saga*'s depiction of its protagonist's real

and nearly debilitating anxiety about aging is a melodramatic expression of this predicament. Bella's nightmares poignantly accentuate the angst caused by a youth and beauty-obsessed culture, and the extremism of melodramatic conventions inspires broader social critique. It is no wonder that the prospect of becoming a powerful vampire—who can avoid aging altogether—occupies Bella's ambitions. Vampires are also the subject of pleasurable fantasies for girl readers. In this way, attention to melodrama reveals how *Twilight* is representative of—but, more accurately, a *reaction* to—postfeminist discourse.

Female Vampires as Villainous Foils

Despite the presence of male antagonists, whose villainy I explore in Chap. 3, a female villain occupies a special place in the female bildungsroman because she serves as a double for the disempowered heroine. As Modleski explains, "The villainess embodies the 'split-off fury' which, in the words of Dorothy Dinnerstein, is the 'underside of the 'truly feminine' women's monstrously overdeveloped talent for unreciprocated empathy'" (*Loving* cxix). The legacy of nineteenth-century female villainy as unpredictable and out of control, evidenced by Bertha Mason, continues in the *Twilight Saga*, especially through Victoria. Even though the descriptions and actions of female villains are filtered through Jane's and Bella's unforgiving points of view, this does not prohibit the reader from imagining different subject positions. Moreover, the villain's alternate subject position can also be read as another position for the narrator.

Nightmares and vampires are Gothic remnants that often coexist in the same melodramatic narrative; they work hand in hand to unearth anxiety and that which is repressed by inspiring fear, awareness, and even action in the protagonist. Immediately following the narrator's recollection of her nightmares, Jane correlates Bertha with a vampire. Jane's narration renders Bertha Mason a Gothic Other, relating her encounter to Rochester. She describes Bertha's "discoloured face," "red eyes," "lips […] swelled and dark," and "bloodshot eyes," all of which remind her "[o]f the foul German spectre—the Vampyre" (Brontë 284). True to vampiric form, Bertha has snuck into Jane's bedroom in the middle of the night and then she destroys the protagonist's wedding veil. Bertha's efforts to wreak havoc on Thornfield—from setting fire to Rochester's bed to ruining Jane's veil to eventually burning the place down—suggest intentional malevolence.

Brontë's novel situates Bertha's viciousness as even more objectionable given her earlier infidelity. Following Bertha's exposure after the interrupted wedding, Rochester's description also offers a demonic characterization. Viewing his marriage as the product of manipulation and deceit, Rochester casts Bertha as a drunken, philandering, and verbally abusive woman before her eventual descent into madness. Bertha's wicked lunacy necessitates her confinement to the attic, according to Rochester, who confesses: "Bertha Mason,—the true daughter of an infamous mother,—dragged me through all hideous and degrading agonies which must attend a man bound to a wife at once intemperate and unchaste" (306). Descriptions of Bertha in Jane's narration highlight the madwoman's villainy, as well as her lack of humanity, which reinforces her monstrous Otherness.

Sympathetic against-the-grain readings of female villains in melodramatic texts appreciate the origins of their rage. Jean Rhys's 1996 novel, *Wide Sargosso Sea*, offers a prequel to *Jane Eyre* and accounts for white patriarchy's complicity in the madness of Bertha, whose real name is Antoinette Cosway; the renaming is an obviously symbolic gesture of imperialism that aids in the novel's postcolonial critique. Gilbert and Gubar also understand Bertha's anger and treachery as expressions of supreme frustration with patriarchy, which denies women's agency:

> Bertha has functioned as Jane's dark double *throughout* the governess's stay at Thornfield. Specifically, every one of Bertha's appearances—or, more accurately, her manifestations—has been associated with an experience (or repression) of anger on Jane's part. Jane's feelings of 'hunger, rebellion, and rage' on the battlements, for instance were accompanied by Bertha's 'low, slow ha! ha!' and 'eccentric murmurs.' […] Jane's disguised hostility to Rochester, summarized in her terrifying prediction to herself that 'you shall, yourself, pluck out your right eye; yourself cut off your right hand […] comes strangely true through the intervention of Bertha, whose melodramatic death causes Rochester to lose both eye and hand. (Gilbert and Gubar 360)

Understanding Bertha's role as a double for Jane involves reading Bertha as the expression that Jane denies herself and is denied by others.

The melodramatic mode encourages the expression of female villainy in Gothic terms because, as a vampiric monster, Bertha's villainy is more extreme. In terms of her novel's Gothic sensibilities, however, Brontë herself actually reassessed *Jane Eyre*'s representation of mental illness:

> It is true that profound pity ought to be the only sentiment elicited by the view of such degradation, and equally true is that I have not sufficiently dwelt on that feeling; I have erred in making horror too predominant. Mrs. Rochester indeed lived a sinful life before she was insane, but sin is itself a species of insanity: the truly good behold and compassionate it as such. (*Selected* 96, emphasis in original)

Brontë's sensitivity to such issues in her own writing reflects an authorial self-consciousness shared with her own protagonist. A female villain's certifiable insanity is a recurring motif in Victorian melodrama, especially popular sensation fiction turned stage production. In Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), the female villain is censured with confinement after evil deeds, which include sexual impropriety. Lady Audley, after all, is a bigamist and a murderer. Yet these evil deeds also function as a source of pleasure for female readers, who, as Modleski claims, may love to hate the villain while appreciating her rebellious agency ("Search" 16). Modleski's 1979 analysis recognizes how this audience reaction continues to account for the appeal of conniving women in soap operas, citing Elaine Showalter's explanation:

> The brilliance of *Lady Audley's Secret* is that Braddon makes her would-be murderess the fragile blond angel of domestic realism.... The dangerous woman is not the rebel or the blue-stocking, but the 'pretty little girl' whose indoctrination in the female role has taught her secrecy and deceitfulness, almost as secondary sex characteristics. (qtd. in Modleski, "Search" 16)

From this explanation, Modleski concludes: "the villainess is able to transform traditional feminine weaknesses into the sources of her strength" ("Search" 16). Female villains offered nineteenth-century readers, especially girls and women who took pleasure in villainy's subversion, with liberatory reading experiences. Sympathy for the villainess is made even more possible because these female villains are sometimes granted legitimate motivations; in Lady Audley's case, she is essentially abandoned by her husband, which gives her cause for reinventing an identity that will facilitate another marriage and upward class mobility. Here is another example of how melodrama critiques that thing it represents, in this case, women's social and economic conditions that require their dependence on men.

Realizing that female villains offer agential counterpoints to female heroines is necessary for appreciating how *Twilight* upholds these nineteenth-century melodramatic conventions. Although Bella's sexual desires are thwarted throughout much of the saga, female villains' devouring impulses are granted full reign. Acting as doubles for good girls, these bad girls continue to offer contemporary readers an empowering reading experience. Jane Volturi certainly exists as an evil foil to Bella:

> Interestingly, Jane is described as 'slim and androgynous,' like a 'young boy' (*New Moon* 456). "Little Jane" (*New Moon* 474), as she is often called is small, her voice 'like a baby's cooing' (*New Moon* 464). Bella is the only character in the series who, even as a human, can resist Jane's power to inflict agonizing pain, and she does so because she is in control of her own mind […] Here, the mature woman, the mother, is proved to be more powerful than the androgynous, sexless little girl whose only power is negative rather than positive. (Silver, *"Twilight"* 134)

Jane Volturi's controlled and youthful exterior aligns her with Lady Audley's brand of female villainy. Nevertheless, Victoria's persistence throughout the series offers a doubling for Bella that even more precisely corresponds to the doubling in *Jane Eyre*.

Victoria is simultaneously chaotic and calculating, a paradoxical foil to Bella, whose desires are out of control, but whose physicality is constantly restricted. Victoria appears in *Twilight*, accompanied by James and Laurent when they interrupt the Cullens' baseball game. From a distance, Bella notices one of Victoria's key physical features: "her hair was a startling shade of red" (375). Once she sees Victoria up close, Bella again mentions the vampire's fiery hair: "the woman's brilliant orange hair was filled with leaves and debris from the woods" (376). When she compares Victoria with the two male counterparts, Bella again notes Victoria's hair, along with her animal-like physique: "The woman was wilder, her eyes shifted restlessly […], her chaotic hair quivering in the slight breeze. Her posture was distinctly feline" (376). Such attention-grabbing and wild hair is suggestive of power and freedom and is a physical feature that stands in direct opposition to the lackluster appearance Bella gives herself in the beginning of the novel. Bella also notices Victoria's keenly observant nature: "her eyes flickered edgily from face to face" (380). Their watchfulness is, then, a characteristic that aligns these two female characters.

Throughout *New Moon* and *Eclipse*, rage drives Victoria, who is committed to avenging her "mate" James's death. The use of the word "mate" not only suggests that they are sexual lovers but also that they share an animalistic kind of intimacy. Such out-of-control sexuality stands again in contrast to Bella's experiences with Edward during the first three books during which Victoria's out-of-control vengeance also foils Bella's repressed desires. After James's death at hands of Edward near the end of *Twilight*, Victoria is unrelenting in her efforts to murder Bella. In *New Moon*, Bella worries:

> Victoria was already hunting me. It was just luck that she hadn't found me yet—just luck and five teenage werewolves. I exhaled sharply. No matter what Jacob said, the thought of him coming anywhere close to Victoria was horrifying. I didn't care what he could turn into when he got mad. I could see her in my head, her face wild, her hair life flames, deadly, indestructible … (Meyer 316)

Bella, like Jane Eyre, renders Victoria Other through the connection to fire, a hard-to-control element of nature—and a favorite destruction technique of Bertha Mason. Bella continues to perceive Victoria in terms of elemental violence: "Victoria had always seemed like a force of nature to me—like a hurricane moving toward the coast in a straight line—unavoidable, implacable, but predictable. Maybe it was wrong to limit her that way. She had to be capable of adaptation" (Meyer, *Eclipse* 387). These elemental associations accentuate Victoria's activity, which starkly contrasts Bella's lying-in-wait passivity. Moreover, Victoria's relentless pursuit is predatory and animalistic: "Victoria was never going to give up till I was dead. She would keep repeating the same pattern—feint and run, feint and run—until she found a hole through my defenders" (Meyer, *Eclipse* 80). The pattern of Victoria's predatory pursuit foils Bella's prey-like position and reminds us again of the circular escalating pattern melodrama embraces: villainy allows innocence to let down its guard only to attack again and again.

In the saga's film adaptations, Victoria's changing hairstyle and costuming are a melodramatic expression of her role as a double for the protagonist. In Hardwicke's *Twilight*, Bella has just learned about the supernatural world, and her sexual desire has just been awakened. At this time, the cinematic Victoria's wild look is consistent with Meyer's description: the actress Rachel Lefevre's unbrushed red hair is a wild mane of loose curls.

Barefoot, she wears a furry and white (but dingy) cloak of sorts over a green t-shirt and jeans, a juxtaposition that bespeaks her nonnormative and nomadic lifestyle. In the next film, Weitz's *New Moon*, Bella's emotions spiral into grief and mourning, so Victoria's aesthetic becomes a bit more controlled: her hair is dyed a brighter shade of red and the curls are smoother, less frizzy, so the hair still looks luxurious, but managed. Similarly, *New Moon*'s Victoria wears formfitting clothes that are not mismatched and that show her graceful, coordinated movements during fight scenes with the werewolves. Her black, sleek pants and long coat evoke images of the classic nineteenth-century melodramatic villain. This costuming is generally the same in *Eclipse*—but not the actress since the franchise opted for Bryce Dallas Howard to play the vampire in David Slade's *Eclipse*. Howard's hair is shorter, just below shoulder length and her large red curls look as though they are permed. So when Bella reaches her most out-of-control emotional chaos (having to choose between Edward and Jacob), and the supernatural world is at its most vulnerable (threatened by Victoria's army), the villain's aesthetic is at its most controlled. This foiling offers another example of how melodramatic subjectivity is cast into the mise-en-scène in film.

Victoria's liberated sexuality and murderous tendencies align her with portrayals of wicked nineteenth-century female villains like Bertha Mason and Lady Audley. Victoria's association with sexual experience recalls Bertha's infidelities. Victoria's relationship to sex also resembles the controlled, calculated efforts of Lady Audley, who uses sex to gain power through class mobility: "Lucy Graham marries Lord Audley after her first husband runs away; when he unexpectedly returns, she pushes him down a well. She never pretends to love Lord Audley but coolly goes about securing her own position within his family and the community" (Vicinus, "Helpless" 134). Similarly, after Victoria's solitary maneuvers to kill Bella in Forks prove unsuccessful in *New Moon*, she plans a more complicated attack by creating an army of newborn vampires in *Eclipse*. In fact, she even creates a new vampire lover, a young man from Forks, to serve as Captain of her army; she uses him to infiltrate the town more effectively, a manipulation Edward points out to Riley: "She knows that I will kill you, Riley. She wants you to die so that she doesn't have to keep up the pretense anymore. Yes – you've seen that, haven't you? You've read the reluctance in her eyes, suspected a false note in her promises. You were right" (Meyer, *Eclipse* 544). Victoria uses one lover to avenge another, and her creation of more vampires is akin to breeding, actions that reinforce

Victoria's unchecked sexuality. Like other melodramatic female villains, Victoria uses sexuality to subvert the Cullen family, the model of vampiric restraint and control.

Bella's awareness of Victoria's perspective reinforces their doubling. Bella imagines Victoria's motivations, which haunt the narrator until their final altercation:

> She was so close to what she wanted—the focus of her whole existence for more than a year now was just *so close*. My death. Her plan was as obvious as it was practical. The big blond boy would attack Edward. As soon as Edward was sufficiently distracted, Victoria would finish me. It would be quick—she had no time for games here—but it would be thorough. (Meyer, *Eclipse* 542)

Victoria rarely expresses her motivation through dialogue; instead, her point of view is usually filtered through Bella's narration. When Victoria does finally speak (a last-ditch effort to retain Riley's loyalty), Bella is surprised that her imagined, Othered perception of Victoria is wrong: "Her voice was not the strong, wild, catlike growl I would have put with her face and stance. It was soft, it was high—a babyish, soprano tinkling. The kind of voice that went with blond curls and pink bubble gum. It made no sense coming through her bared, glistening teeth" (544). In many ways, Victoria's girlish humanity weakens her in the eyes of Bella, who then stabs herself in order to provide the necessary diversion that helps Edward kill Victoria, momentarily distracted by the scene of Bella's blood. Victoria's doubling function is solidified as she and Bella trade places when the protagonist takes an active role in her own defense.

The potential for readers to take pleasure in reading about female characters' anger and agency in melodramatic narratives warrants consideration. Bella's desire for physical intimacy with Edward is unsatisfied, but Victoria engages in multiple sexual relationships outside of marriage. As such, Victoria provides a meaningful foil to Bella, whose constrictive circumstances make it difficult for her to effect change in her own life. Bella cannot have sex with Edward, who also refuses to turn her into a vampire, so she does not have the supernatural strength to fight off villains in the way her undead and werewolf friends do. Feminist critics have made much over the saga's explicit messages about sexuality as dangerous for Bella. Silver recognizes that Meyer actually suggests sex outside of marriage is dangerous for all of the characters who engage in it outside matrimony,

concluding: "Meyer's avowal of abstinence is not to every contemporary reader's taste, but she is clear on one point: abstinence is the model for both boys and girls. Love and lust, for both sexes, should be intertwined and should be made permanent by marriage" ("*Twilight*" 129). Silver's accurate reading does not go far enough: her interpretation ignores the possibilities of against-the-grain readings that appreciate Victoria's agency and active sexuality.

Obviously, one could view Victoria's demise in line with the disciplining that usually happens to "bad" girls, especially in horror films. Victoria is ultimately sanctioned when Edward kills her in *Eclipse*, just as Lady Audley is confined to a mental institution and Bertha falls to her death after setting fire to Thornfield. Nevertheless, this final punishment does not prohibit readings that take pleasure in reading about the extremism of her thirsty appetite—for sex, for Bella's blood, and for revenge for her lover's death throughout the many pages of *New Moon* and *Eclipse*. Indeed, girl readers themselves articulate the pleasures of reading about these villainous deeds.

Girls' Vampire Dreams

Similar to Bella, some girl readers also dream about vampires or fantasize about becoming a vampire. The girl readers cited throughout this book seldom express the desire to be Bella in imagined real-world scenarios. They do report dreams and fantasies in which they role play as Bella—as well as vampires such as Victoria. Girls' vampire-themed dreams and fantasies, then, illustrate how Gothic remnants are pleasurable and empowering forms of expression in the melodramatic mode. All three fan communities—TwilightTEENS, TheTwilightReader, and the Bella Cullen Project—offer illustrative examples of girls' *Twilight*-themed Gothic dreams.

On TwilightTEENS, the thread "Has anyone had Twilight related dreams?" offers a good example of how melodramatic discourse informs girls' speech practices. One girl relates a dream full of performative exaggeration, particularly the spectacle of dancers, whose conflict is heightened by the dreamer's tears and her sense of maternal feeling. According to twilight.dreams, whose location is listed as "dreaming of twilight…in Australia,"

> I had a reallly weird dream, its barely means anything. Im afraid to tell you all because you think Im a weirdo but everyone tells me that when i tell them my dreams—there **always** weird.

> So the other night I had one about Twilight.
>
> Well, its started off at my (ex) dance studio and there were two groups of dancers; team Jacob and team Renesmee (I think). And well, there was a dance off ^^. I was really passionate and emotional because Renesmee was my daughter (I know, weird) and I was crying for her and my team to win (I was on team Renesmee) And so the dance started and it was really weird and hard to explain, the dancers were really tall and egyption like. I *think* my team won but Im not sure because the dream swerved off onto other dance related dream.
>
> Well, that was it. Dont worry, I dont get it either: S. ("Has")

This girl's emotional recollection of her dream offers some vivid points of connection with melodramatic conventions in Meyer's saga. Imagining herself as the mother of Bella's daughter in the context of the reader's former dance studio may signal the kind of anxiety about change and aging apparent in Bella's nightmares. The strangeness of the competition and its unfamiliar participants suggests a fear of the unknown, which the dreams of Jane and Bella both reveal. Twilight.dreams's excessive apologies reflect anxious awareness about others' perceptions of her dream's strangeness, feelings much like those of the self-conscious Bella. Another girl, however, offers a validation, which is typical of TwilightTEENS's community. BlondeFanpire14 responds: "^- thats actually not the weirdest dream ive ever heard haha, so no worries there! Thats a pretty cool dream" ("Has"). Here, melodramatic hyperbole has clearly created an opportunity for girls to validate other girls' feelings.

Girls' *Twilight*-dreams also illustrate melodrama's capacity to encourage sympathy with multiple points of view. When girls talk about their dreams, they report assuming different subject positions, an experience similar to what Williams observes about melodrama and film spectatorship. Identifying with multiple subject positions at once (e.g., with the female protagonist and the female villain) allows the spectator to identify with the contradictions of those female and feminine roles; this recognition validates frustration with gendered limitations ("Something" 313–14). In addition, talking about dreams is an opportunity for girls to share private, interior experiences. For example, mrs.cullen1901 shares three dreams:

> Haha I have had 3.
>
> 1. I was Bella, and there was Edward, who fell in love with me (not an extremely exciting one …)

> 2. Same thing, but we got married, but at our wedding, I only had one shoe :[
>
> 3. We were married, and at the mall with Alice. Then, Victoria and James come looking for me (no clue where Laurent is …) and in order to be safe, i have to make myself look like Victoria by running up and down the escalators a few times. I hide, and James looks over me because I am now Victoria. My disguise fades, so Edward, Alice, and I have to go upstairs onto this … 5 inch wide ledge in front of the windows. "Duck!" Alice yells. She and I duck, but Edward didn't, and the baseball that is flying through the window cuts his hand off: '[it was sad. ("Has")

This recollection is fascinating for its specificity, especially details that suggest imagery in both "Cinderella" (the shoe bit), as well as *Jane Eyre* (Edward's lost hand). In her dream, this reader shifts from Bella's role as married wife of Edward to the more active villain Victoria, Mrs. Cullen 1901 reflects a fluidity of subject positions that is consistent with theories of melodrama and spectatorship. In fact, this *Twilight* reader experiences the doubling of heroine and villain that is available in both *Twilight* and *Jane Eyre*. The dreamer locates agency in assuming Victoria's guise, suggesting female villainy offers an empowering expression of femininity, a finding consistent with Modleski's study of female soap opera viewers ("Search" 16).

The melodramatic extremes associated with female villainy offer girls multiple reading subject-positions, an outcome also exemplified in the Bella Cullen Project's musical discourse. One song, "Victoria's Lament," adopts the perspective of the evil vampire Victoria when she returns to Forks to try to kill Bella in exchange for her lover James's death in *Twilight*. The chorus explains how the conflict begins ("He's gone, she's not") and then threatens to get even ("Mate for mate she will be taught/ How to finish someone off!"). Sympathizing with Victoria's motivation as retribution for the loss of her own partner signals that girls' sympathy extends past the protagonists' view even though the reader's knowledge of Victoria is always filtered through Bella's narration. The BCP's song appreciates Victoria's agency, even her sexual agency with the reference to "a new man." The female villain, then, offers a dramatic opportunity for girls' own subversive performances.

TheTwilightReader also locates agency in the assumption of villainy's guise, especially when she role-plays as the saga's female vampire-villains. One video records the audio of a prank call in which Liza pretends to be Victoria; the video's description reports, "the lady thought i was her

daughter and then got embarassed when i was Victoria HAHA!: D" ("Victoria"). In another video ("Jane Gym… FEEL THE BURN!"), Liza imagines the villainous Jane Volturi as a merciless workout instructor. Liza plays the part of both "Jane Gym" and her physically taxed workout subjects. The description of the video advises, "WARNING MAY CAUSE DEATH!" These videos reaffirm girl readers' pleasure in the subversive activities of an agential female villain—even if that villain is censured at the narrative's conclusion.

TheTwilightReader's saga-themed fantasies resemble the dreams reported on TwilightTEENS: they allow Liza to reconcile real-life changes through vampire fantasy. In the ninth video posted to her *YouTube* channel, Liza wonders, "Can vampires have braces?" Anticipating the orthodontic work she herself is about to undergo, Liza addresses the camera with a series of questions:

> Ok, here's a question I want to ask you guys, my viewers. Can vampires have braces? Really, I mean, do they? Wouldn't it ruin the whole effect of like, "their skin is pale white and ice cold. Their eyes change colors. They never go out in the sunlight, and sometimes they speak like, like they're from a different century. How old are they?" Sorry, I just must quote sometimes. But, wouldn't it ruin the whole effect of all of that if they had braces? I'm asking because it'd be awesome if I were a vampire (I know, right?) and I'm getting braces soon, so if I have braces is it impossible to change into a vampire? Is it? Because I don't know, I mean, when you see pictures of vampires whether they're from *Twilight* or, I dunno, *Interview with a Vampire*, or anything, you never see a vampire with braces, do you? I mean, if you have leave a comment because I want to see a picture of a vampire with braces, I mean—NOT photoshopped. But, can vampires have braces? Really, can they? I wanna know. That-that's just like something I *need* to know. That's a necessary question. Please, please tell me the answer, *pleeease*.

By asking viewers questions about *Twilight* vampires with a kind of mock serious meant to be funny, Liza is also asking her community to help her come to terms with getting braces. As she anticipates the orthodontic work, a rite of passage between childhood and adulthood, Liza associates vampires with the change and pain that she anticipates with braces. In this revelation, then, Liza calls upon the melodramatic extremes of *Twilight* vampires to deal with a major transition in her real life.

Approaching the subject of braces with the life-and-death seriousness of vampires is a perfect example of how melodrama helps validate the gravity of seemingly trivial coming-of-age experiences. Braces are so common for many American middle-class preteens that we may forget their significance. This mouth-work is not only rather painful, but metal braces also make speaking, eating, and kissing difficult, often self-conscious experiences; the braces are always "there." Throughout the process, braces are continuously monitored, tightened, adjusted. Metal braces are thus an oxymoronic temporary-permanent change: they disrupt one's appearance and normal activities, but they do promise straight teeth, a beauty standard in mainstream America. A vampiric transformation, however, promises *immediate* beauty according to Meyer's *Twilight Saga*. Both conversions are painful, but the former guarantees permanent youth, a goal for postfeminist representations of adult women's efforts at girlishness.

In this way, melodramatic excess shines a critical light on pressures facing girls, who are expected to stay youthful as they grow up and adhere to certain standards of beauty, such as straight teeth, and to undergo significant discomfort for beauty. Melodramatic discourse, however, is a way for girls to encourage each other in relation to these experiences. Liza's "real-life" friend, natty406 (who actually appears in a few of TheTwilighReader's other videos), posts a response in the comments section: "they might have fake ones [braces] so people wouldn't think they were vampires … but I think if you changed into a vampire while you have braces I think they would get tore up during the 2–3 days of changing and you would have to get them removed, or you can take them off yourself." Exchanges like this show how melodrama is a mode of discourse that fosters intimacy and friendship between girls as they navigate a contemporary postfeminist culture. The exchange also reminds us that the melodramatic mode's hyperbolic tendencies are also occasions for humor.

Conclusion

Bella's dreams reflect anxiety about change, especially aging past the immortal Edward's 17-year-old exterior because she questions her lovability without her youth. Bella's anxiety about aging offers critical commentary on postfeminist media culture, which demands that women stay ever youthful. Nightmarish representations validate the gravity of those coming-of-age female experiences for girls faced with these postfeminist pressures. Female vampires, however, are freed from those fears;

their powerful, immortal bodies are free to explore all sorts of emotions and experiences human girls cannot do without considerable social risk. It is no wonder, then, that girl readers take pleasure in dreaming about the female villain's perspective.

Note

1. Exploring the reception of Meyer's contemporary series, Melissa Ames argues, "Twilight borrows from a long-standing tradition of narratives criticized for their portrayals of gender and sexuality and thus inherits similar critiques" (50). While Ames acknowledges *Twilight*'s cultural specificity, associating its conservative values with a corresponding "ideological swing" and "waning interest in women's rights within youth of the United States" (50), she emphasizes the series connection to its undead predecessors: "perhaps the world consuming the Twilight Saga is not all that changed from that which read Rice's series or Stoker's canonical text" (51). Although Ames makes some insightful connections, my own analysis complicates those fixed interpretations in relation to girl readers, who may encounter vampire texts as validations of the struggles required to navigate the current postfeminist context.

CHAPTER 7

Suffering, Separation, and Crying: Melodrama, Tears, and Girls' Emotional Empowerment

"You make me feel like a villain in a melodrama—twirling my mustache while I try to steal some poor girl's virtue," complains Bella (Meyer, *Eclipse* 452–53). In the third novel of the saga, she and Edward debate whether to have sex before marriage: she wants to, he does not. In a self-aware role reversal, Bella casts herself as the bad guy. Soon after this exchange with Edward, however, Bella cries, realigning herself with the melodramatic heroine, whose suffering and loss induce tearful expression—from both the protagonist and her readers. The representation and evocation of tearful suffering is melodrama's most definitional response—but crying is also a denigrated expression when it comes to girls.

Bella's crying after Edward's denial of physical intimacy offers a snapshot of *Twilight*'s genre blending within the melodramatic mode. Linda Williams draws a line between the three lowliest film genres, horror, pornography, and melodrama, by making parallel the fluid that each genre favors: blood, sexual secretions, and tears. Williams explains, "Visually, each of these ecstatic excesses could be said to share a quality of controllable convulsion or spasm—of the body 'beside itself' with sexual pleasure, fear and terror, or overpowering sadness" ("Film" 4). Intriguingly, the possibility of Bella and Edward's premarital sex invokes the ecstatic potential of all three generic categories.

The penetration of Edward's teeth is an obvious metaphor for sexual penetration, which Bella anxiously desires as much as she yearns for the vampiric bite promising immortality. Yet Bella wants actual sexual

K. Kapurch, *Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Century*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-58169-3_7

penetration. If this pornographic scenario is attempted, Edward may lose control and penetrate her body with his teeth, drawing blood and killing Bella in the vein of a horror film's monster. The fluids associated with pornography and horror are, then, consistently denied throughout much of the saga. So instead of losing blood or her virginity, Bella cries. Her tears flow freely, the only fluid she is allowed to secrete—and the one binding *Twilight* to the melodramatic mode.

An analysis of girls' tears (from both characters and readers) reveal how crying is an empowering and even erotic form of expression in girl culture. The *Jane Eyre-Twilight* connection reveals how suffering associated with the loss of a relationship validates the gravity of coming-of-age experiences. In the *Twilight Saga*, suffering encourages affective responses from girl readers who report crying in empathy. Then, pinpointing moments of the protagonists' own tears in both *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight Saga* shows how this melodramatic convention validates emotional expression, promotes intimacy between girls, and even critiques the limitations that produced such affective responses in the first place. Although girl readers respond to Bella's tears with empathy, as well as some critical opinions, the cinematic *Eclipse* eliminates Bella's crying altogether, silencing her emotional expression in the same way girls are shamed for their real-life tears.

Melodramatic Tears: Girl Heroines and Readers

The representation of a heroine's emotional life has specific roots in nineteenth-century melodrama. According to Booth, "The meaning of *East Lynne* is contained in the emotional life and suffering of Lady Isabel. The suffering heroine is a melodramatic archetype" (*Theatre* 160). Affective reactions that go along with suffering, namely, screaming and crying, are the very reactions for which melodrama is denigrated. Although Victorian culture permitted men to weep openly in theaters,[1] changing attitudes by the end of the century resulted in crying's association with the feminine; in the next century, the moniker "woman's weepie" was given to "Hollywood's lowliest form" (Gledhill, "Melodramatic" 11).[2] In their study of audiences' reported reactions to films in post-World War II Britain, Sue Harper and Vincent Porter discover that "The men seem to feel that the wholeness and security of their personalities was threatened by the act of crying, whereas women conceived of themselves as more varied and fractured creatures, for whom crying was a natural expression of vulnerability and subjectivity" (154). The denigration of crying is perhaps most

profound when we consider its relationship to girls, whose tears are often considered weakness and are, thus, the subject of mockery and ridicule.

Crying and the suffering associated with loss are melodramatic impulses that respond to restrictive social conditions. In *The Desire to Desire*: *The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (1987), Mary Ann Doane explains why the maternal melodrama is so linked with "the label 'weepie'":

> The plight of the mother with respect to her child, the necessary separations, losses, humiliations she must suffer are always moving and often "move" the spectator to tears. The films obsessively structure themselves around just-missed moments, recognitions which occur "too late," and blockages of communication which might have been avoided. In this sense, the pathetic text appears to insight that the gap between desire and its object is not structural but accidental and therefore to re-confirm the possibility of a fullness in signification—a complete and transparent communication. Tears testify to the loss of such a fullness but also to its existence as a (forever receding) ideal. (90)

Doane underscores tears' connection to ongoing loss. She goes on to suggest that what makes a spectator cry in response to the woman's film is consistent with Franco Moretti's findings about boy's literature: "For boys and women are 'presubjects'; they are denied access to the full subjectivity bestowed on the adult male within a patriarchal culture. Occupying the margins of the social field, they are both allowed to cry" (*Desire* 90). Recognizing the key gender difference, Doane ultimately suggests that boys must simply wait to gain full subjectivity as men in a patriarchal culture (a process consistent with the *Bildungsroman*). Women's desires, however, are always unfulfilled; access is continually denied, even at the end of the film, so "no *Bildung* takes place" (*Desire* 90). These differences are important to keep in mind when one is considering a text about a coming-of-age girl. Still, Doane's and Moretti's findings do not account for girls, who occupy a different social position than boys and women.[3]

In girl culture, tears can be empowering. *Twilight* readers' discussions of crying recall the empathetic responses Mitchell notices about nineteenth-century girls' engagements with melodramatic literature. Mitchell theorizes girls' affective reading experiences, especially melodrama's ability to heighten awareness of social issues. Mitchell uses an example to reinforce this finding:

> The avid response to *Jessica's First Prayer* created a school of "city arab"[4] fiction about poor, outcast waifs. Part of the fascination surely lay in the exposure of secrets about drink, poverty, unhappiness, and family dysfunction,

> topics unmentionable even among girls who experienced them. Fiction about the downtrodden also appealed to charitable motives and thus permitted even the minimally comfortable to feel superior. Most essentially (I would argue) it allowed readers to cry, and thus to express their own unnamed and inexplicable sadness while also projecting themselves into child heroes powerful enough to make adults realize the errors and change their ways. (*New* 157–58)

Mitchell's explanation about melodrama's appeal for girls highlights some of the most essential aspects of the mode's rhetorical potential in girl culture. First, tears are a powerful consequence of melodrama since, while such texts may encourage feelings of supremacy, they also inspire empathy. Second, tears validate young people's struggles in the face of adult oppression, illustrating melodrama's critical capacity—as well as its progressive potential to inspire change.

Crying is evidence of girls' agency when it involves imagining the transcendence of powerlessness through empathetic reading experiences, a finding consistent with Williams's theory of tears. Williams's "Melodrama Revisited" paves the way for appreciating girls crying—as audiences and as characters. Disrupting Steve Neale's psychoanalytic explanation, which uses a Freudian model to justify tears as "the fulfillment of our own infantile fantasy" (Mercer and Shingler 92), Williams rejects the one-to-one assumption that supposes a character crying means an audience is crying:

> A melodrama does not have to contain multiple scenes of pathetic death to function melodramatically. What counts is the feeling of loss suffused throughout the form. Audiences may weep or not weep, but the sense of loss that implicates readers or audiences is central. And with this feeling of 'too late,' which Peter Brooks has explained as the longing for a fullness of being of an earlier, still-sacred universe, time and timing become all important. ("Melodrama" 70)

Drawing on Brooks, Williams's theoretical insight directs our attention, once again, to melodrama as a modern mode with particular applicability to contemporary experiences. As such, Williams also recognizes the hopeful, truth-seeking rhetorical dimensions of melodrama through the redemptive potential of tears: "Both Moretti and Neale note that tears are a product of powerlessness. It seems to me, however, that because tears are an acknowledgement of hope that desire will be fulfilled, they are also a source of future power" ("Melodrama" 71). Williams's suggestion

that tears indicate "future power," or belief in the transcendence of powerlessness in the present, is a potent one because it allows us to recognize tears as agency in girl culture.

Suffering and Separation

The most tear-jerking moments of *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight Saga* are the heart-wrenching breakup sequences that result in suffering and separation. Describing melodrama on the nineteenth-century stage, Booth explains, "One of the rules is that the hero and heroine must suffer distress, persecution, and separation, and that their suffering must continue unabated till a few moments before the final curtain, when they emerge happy and united" (*Hiss* 10). This rule remains as true in *Twilight* as it does for the nineteenth-century *Jane Eyre*. Suffering validates the gravity of affect, especially emotions associated with certain coming-of-age experiences.

To this point, all of the melodramatic conventions I have outlined in previous chapters lead to or predict moments of intense suffering caused by characters' separations from each other. Jane's and Bella's dreams, which suggest barriers to their romantic relationships, foresee this suffering. Rochester's and Edward's expressive revelatory discourse regularly highlight their anxiety about being separated from Jane and Bella respectively. Rochester, anticipating the misery of Jane leaving Thornfield begs, "remember, you leave me here in anguish. Go up to your own room; think over all I have said, and, Jane, cast a glance at my sufferings—think of me" (Brontë 318). Likewise, Edward is continually struggling with the concept of separation, concluding near the end of *Twilight*, "I don't seem to be strong enough to stay away from you, so I suppose that you'll get your way … whether it kills you or not" (473). At Bella's hospital bedside, he then promises, "I told you I'm not going anywhere. Don't be afraid. As long as it makes you happy, I'll be here" but soon adds a caveat: "as long as it's what's best for you'" (478). Just as Rochester foresees his separation from Jane, so too does Edward, who, motivated by a concern for Bella's well-being, leaves town at the beginning of *New Moon*.

Throughout the novel, Jane has suffered in various degrees of intensity, particularly as a child at the hands of the Reeds and at her boarding school when Helen dies. She suffers, too, throughout Rochester's charade of a courtship with Blanche Ingram. Although Rochester reveals his affection for Jane in a marriage proposal, temporarily allaying her anguish, the couple is doomed to commence suffering for most of the remaining

pages of the novel. Throughout the *Twilight Saga*, Bella and Edward also experience periods of separate and parallel suffering prior to happy reunions at the conclusions of each of the four novels. This elliptical pattern allows for more intense suffering—and more intense resolutions—as the series goes on.

Perhaps the most dramatic suffering in response to loss occurs when Edward leaves Bella at the beginning of *New Moon*, comparable to Jane Eyre's heartbreak after the revelation of Bertha in the attic. Both Jane and Bella enclose themselves within their bedrooms and then describe the crush of grief in water and burial imagery. When she learns that Rochester is already married, Jane confesses: "My eyes were covered and closed: eddying darkness seemed to swim round me … I lay faint; longing to be dead … That bitter hour cannot be described: in truth, "the waters came into my soul; I sank in deep mire: I felt no standing; I came into deep waters; the floods overflowed me" (Brontë 296). Bella's narration presents her sorrow with similarly crushing and exaggerated diction longing for a loss of consciousness: "I hoped that I was fainting, but, to my disappointment, I didn't lose consciousness. The waves of pain that had only lapped at me before now reared high up and washed over my head, pulling me under. I did not resurface" (Meyer, *New Moon* 84). These selections are so similar that one wonders if Meyer intentionally constructed her text with *Jane Eyre* in mind. The use of water here is significant; the rising waves are suggestive of tears, which the narrators do not report on these particular occasions. Moreover, the oceanic sorrow suggests an unending elliptical feeling of loss comparable to the pattern of anxious sexual yearning Jane and Bella previously experienced in relation to music and their Edwards (see Chap. 4). The connection reinforces the permission melodrama affords sensational feelings related to girls' physical and emotional desires.

Just as Jane's expressive passage appears at the end of volume two, Bella's descent into grief marks a temporary end to her narration, since the text of the following four pages only includes the individual names of months (October through January) to signify her loss of voice. Bella's silence is furthermore characteristic of the melodrama, as Brooks explains: "Mutes correspond first of all to a repeated use of extreme physical conditions to represent extreme moral and emotional conditions" (57). Additionally, the actual space physically produced in the texts provides an exaggerated pause for readers to grieve with the heroines before they resurface to resume narration. These melodramatic maneuvers position the reader to experience the suffering alongside the protagonist.

One might expect Jane and Bella to cry immediately after they suffer these crushing losses: the interrupted wedding for Jane; Edward's breakup for Bella. Following these events, however Jane and Bella exhibit a kind of stoicism. After Jane shuts herself in her room, Rochester is surprised: "you have not wept at all! I see a white cheek and a faded eye, but no trace of tears. I suppose, then, your heart has been weeping blood? (Brontë 298). The notion of a heart's interior pain is upheld in *New Moon*; Bella's post-breakup suffering is accompanied by her involuntary nighttime screaming: "It didn't stop me from screaming myself awake, night after night. The hole in my chest was worse than ever. I'd thought that I'd been getting it under control, but I found myself hunched over, day after day, clutching my sides together and gasping for air" (Meyer 228). In fact, the protagonist's isolated, empty muteness, accentuated by the *lack* of tears, is perhaps even more tear-inducing for the reader, as the readers cited in the next section illustrate.

Chris Weitz's *The Twilight Saga*: *New Moon* translates the nearly blank pages of the novel, as well as the protagonist's hysteria. The film uses the same font in the literary text to project the months' names onto the screen to indicate time passing. The sequence titled "a hole in my chest" begins with an establishing shot of Bella's house and cuts to the inside of her room. The word "October" appears while the camera slowly circles Bella, one 360-degree rotation for each of the four months that passes. These rotations allow the viewer to see what Bella sees: seated, she watches the changing seasons, another example of the film using her bedroom window to signal entrapment (see Chap. 5). Her expression is the same—a deadened blank stare—each time the camera monotonously circles her. This monotony is heightened by Lykke Li's contribution to the soundtrack, "Possibility," whose lyrics suggest, "There's a possibility that all that I have is all I'm gon' get." The super-slow delivery of lyrics, sung in a voice that is at once womanly and childlike, is accompanied by the heavy plodding of one low note on a piano (an ominous "dum, dum, dum" sound) present throughout the *entire* song. The dizzying camera work, coupled with a song that is at once tedious and jarring, is true to melodramatic form because it suggests—in hyperbole—that Bella is so devastated that she has not moved from that chair for several months. Once that uncomfortable effect is achieved, a montage of scenes depicts images of a emotionless Bella during the school day, a hysterical Bella screaming at night, and her concerned father, Charlie, getting up to comfort her. This sequence of scenes characterizes Bella's emotional anguish through extreme polarities

(silence and screaming), conforming to a convention of the woman's film: "The hysterical body is inaccessible to the male protagonists, often a doctor or psychiatrist who fails to understand it adequately, to explain it, or to cure it" (Cook 254). Pam Cook's finding explains why Bella's father's sincere attempts to comfort her nighttime screams are futile.

Weitz's sensitivity to cinematic portrayals of extreme feelings signals his appreciation for filmic melodrama. Weitz himself acknowledged the emotional dimensions of his subject matter:

> There is some complex emotional geometry […] and Bella's situation is one of the things I responded to, honestly. It sounds sad but I have been where Bella has, having been dumped. I think everybody has had that experience, unless they are very, very lucky. I often make movies that involve depression or deep holes of sadness, although there are also these other great things in *New Moon*, like this epic set-piece at the end of the film in Italy. (qtd. in Lawrence)

Weitz's account of his own heartbreak (similar to Burwell's recollection of the genesis of *Twilight*'s score) is another example of an adult filmmaker's disposition toward feelings as legitimate. Weitz's film upholds the novel's validation of girls' emotional lives.

Weitz's capacity to portray both sensational scenery and suffering is exactly in line with the melodramatic film tradition. Weitz visualizes emotion through lush landscapes, dream sequences, circular and symphonic scores, and over-the-top depictions of depression and bodily hysteria. Indeed, some of Weitz's visual and musical choices are so over-the-top they are almost "Sirkian," a term used to describe that director's characteristic ornateness, especially with color, when it comes to the projection of a character's feelings. As Elsaesser notices of Douglas Sirk's *Written on the Wind*,

> the colour parallels black/black, green/green, white concrete/white/lace curtains provide an extremely strong emotional resonance in which the contrast of soft silk blown along the hard concrete is registered the more forcefully as a disquieting visual association. The desolation of the scene transfers itself onto the Bacall character, and the traditional fatalistic association of the wind remind us of the futility implied in the movie's title. (53)

Elsaesser's analysis encourages an appreciation for the repetitive combinations of colors from scene to scene; colors, then, link characters and

concepts together for a critical effect. Weitz's connection to director Sirk's melodramatic film techniques is not coincidental: Weitz's mother, Susan Kohner plays Sarah Jane in Sirk's *Imitation of Life* (1959). The Weitz-Sirk association offers an intriguing link between the saga and one of the most famous melodramatic films of all time.

Akin to Sirk, Weitz favors solid blocks of colors, especially yellows, reds, and purples in objects that pop against neutral landscapes in his adaptation of *New Moon*. In fact, the aerial shot of post-breakup Bella curled up and lying on the ground in her yellowish brown coat suggests a kind of moon imagery most relevant to the film. This visual, along with the loud crashing music on the score, is a cinematic parallel to a poignant breakup scene in Sirk's *Imitation of Life*. In that film, Sarah Jane's white boyfriend discovers she is black even though she has been passing as white. He physically strikes her with an open hand until she falls sobbing into a dirty puddle, her light yellow dress a visual contrast with the dark ground. The scene, which takes place in a shadowy back alley, is harrowing, reinforced by the music, which is an almost absurdly loud and hysterical accompaniment: brass instruments swirl loudly as Sarah Jane descends into the same curled position as Bella does in *New Moon*. Sirk's use of flamboyant music feels like audible slapping, an empathy-inducing strategy that positions the viewer alongside the devastated girl, facilitating a critique of mid-century American racism. Weitz's empathy inducing portrayal of Bella's pain and devastation, then, invokes similar strategies that take heartbreak seriously, subtly critiquing the cause of Bella's powerlessness at the same time.

Through such empathy-evoking portrayals of suffering, both the literary and cinematic *Twilight* texts uphold the legacy of nineteenth-century melodrama's capacity to confirm the weight of everyday experiences: "the melodramas that matter most convince us that the dramaturgy of excess and overstatement corresponds to and evokes confrontations and choices that are of heightened importance, because in them we put our lives—however trivial and constricted—on the line" (Brooks ix). For many contemporary girl readers, Jane's and Bella's extreme desolation and depression takes seriously the affect associated with an often trivialized coming-of-age experience: a teen relationship's breakup. Confirming the gravity of heartbreak, melodramatic techniques (e.g., those blank pages and circular camera work) authorize the lengthy four-month duration of Bella's mourning.

Both Jane and Rochester suffer separately once Jane resolves to leave Thornfield, and this separation is in accordance with Booth's observation

melodrama's rules for the hero and heroine. Jane wanders the moors for days and is physically and mentally exhausted once she reaches a town, whose inhabitants rebuke her meager requests for bread. In her anguish, Jane offers theatrical discourse, which is actually akin to the kind of theatrical pleas Rochester issues:

> "My strength is quite failing me," I said, in soliloquy. "I feel I cannot go much farther. Shall I be an outcast again this night? While the rain descends so, must I lay my head on the cold, drenched ground? I fear I cannot do otherwise: for who will receive me? But it will be very dreadful: with this feeling of hunger, faintness, chill, and this sense of desolation—this total prostration of hope. In all likelihood, though, I should die before morning. And why cannot I reconcile myself to the prospect of death? Why do I struggle to retain a valueless life? Because I know, or believe, Mr. Rochester is living: and then, to die of want and cold, is a fate to which nature cannot submit passively. Oh, Providence! sustain me a little longer! Aid—direct me!" (329)

Considering the possibility of death is extreme, but not unrealistic given the harsh moors over which Jane wanders. Bella, like Jane Eyre, resumes narration, which also involves coming to terms with life without Edward, but not forgetting the pain or its source: "And yet, I found I could survive. I was alert, I felt the pain—the aching loss that radiated out from my chest, sending wracking waves of hurt through my limbs and head—but it was manageable. I could live through it. It didn't feel like the pain had weakened over time, rather that I'd grown strong enough to bear it" (Meyer, *New Moon* 118). Both *Jane Eyre* and the saga take seriously the female narrators' devastation while illustrating their efforts to survive in spite of the emotional pain and hopelessness. These melodramatic expressions legitimize heartbreak by elevating it to life-and-death extremes, validating the struggle it takes to overcome the loss of a relationship.

Part of the heroine's survival involves resuming speech and confiding her feelings, another way that melodrama's revelatory impulses promote intimacy between girls. Jane, however, does not confide deeply in St. John Rivers and his sisters (the siblings who nurse her through a recovery and who turn out to be her cousins). Comparably, Bella does not confide in detail in Jacob or other friends about Edward. Both heroines prefer to avoid the subject of their past with those intimates. Significantly, however, Jane and Bella do confide in their narration and, consequently, in the

reader, with whom they have already established intimacy. These expressions of interiority remind us how readers are constructed as girlfriends who are confidants via the melodramatic mode.

In Jane's absence, Rochester suffers a dramatic plentitude of loss. Bertha sets fire to Thornfield; during the destructive blaze his unsuccessful efforts to save her result in his loss of a hand as well as his vision. While Bella suffers at home in Forks and readers are privy only to her experiences throughout *New Moon*, they later learn that Edward grieves abroad and that his absence was inspired by his moral convictions about upholding Bella's soul-endowed humanity. Booth's explanation of nineteenth-century stage melodrama once again explains Edward's absence in *New Moon*, throughout which Bella negotiates Victoria's pursuit without his help: "The heroine comes in for more persecution than the hero, especially as possession of her is frequently the villain's main object. In fact the hero is often of little use to her, either being in prison, or across the sea, or tied up in a cave, or without a weapon at inconvenient times" (*Hiss* 10). Thus, Edward's attempts to track Victoria in an effort to prove his existence worthwhile are futile; Victoria is in Forks stalking Bella. Melodrama's tendency to focus on the heroine and her suffering suggests why this mode of discourse has remained vital to girl culture; in spite of melodrama's extreme and predictable characterizations of the heroine, the female character plays a central role in suffering and eliciting empathy from the audience.

Girls Crying for Bella

When Edward breaks up with the literary Bella, she describes the process of going "numb" throughout the devastating realization (70). Even after the initial devastation, Bella does not talk about crying, and the cinematic adaptation upholds Bella's tearlessness in these moments. But, over and over again, girl readers respond empathetically to the novel's portrayal of suffering by crying for Bella's heartbreak.

The Bella Cullen Project projects tears onto Bella in the song, "My Little Moon." Imagining Bella as more assertive and confrontational than the novel allows, the song is Bella vocalizing her disappointment directly to Edward, justifying her decision to turn to Jacob as a means for survival after the vampire leaves her alone in the woods: "Edward if I recall/ You left me crying on the floor." Although no tears appear in the novel, the BCP imagines them there, essentially crying for Bella in

their recollection of the breakup. Just as they revise Bella's tears, they revise Bella's reaction to the broken promise: "I thought we were in love. /You told me you would protect me, /But I guess you didn't care enough." They taunt Edward with a repetitive chorus alluding to Jacob ("My little sun keeps me warm when I am cold"), which is not how Bella interacts with Edward when they are reunited at the conclusion of *New Moon*. The literary Bella recognizes the agony Edward experiences in his self-imposed expulsion from Forks. Nevertheless, the Bella Cullen Project's musical composition revises Bella's emotional reactions, showing how the saga's exaggerated representation provides room for girls' to vocalize an alternate scenario of Bella's agency—both through her tears and through her words.

Girl readers participating on TwilightTEENS's discussion forum talk about their own tearful responses to the Bella-Edward breakup in *New Moon* more than any other melodramatic moment in the *Twilight Saga*. Girls' repeated references to their own tears prove Williams's theory: these readers' tears are not motivated by the portrayal of the protagonist's tears. But the loss associated with the breakup does inspire empathetic responses that hope for an optimistic solution and the transcendence of powerlessness. Such affective expressions prove melodrama's critical capacity: not only does talking about crying inspire intimacy among girls, but their crying confessionals also suggest that tears are an emotional response for which they are often ridiculed by dominant culture.

On the TwilightTEENS discussion forum, there are numerous threads and hundreds of responses that confess to crying while reading about Edward breaking up with Bella. Many posts reference the blank pages with the names of the months, as well as the "hole" Bella imagines in her body. One discussion thread, "I cried," offers a coherent illustration of girls' responses to melodramatic loss with a discussion of their tears. In the initial post of a thread team_edward_4_ever confides: "I cried and curled up in my bed. I was so sad I didnt come out of my room all weekend. Then when I went back to school my friends said they did the same the thing. After I got over the shock I read on and cried when Bella saved him. I want to see new moon throught his POV" ("I cried").[5] Although team_edward_4_ever's comment does not actually specify Bella and Edward's breakup, the succeeding 30 responses in the thread interpret "the shock" as the sudden and unexpected manner in which Edward rejects Bella. As EdwardsBrunette shares, "ha. i had to remind myself that edward WAS coming back. it kept me reading. Haha." Despite their initial

surprise, girls (in this thread and others) report that the promise of the happy ending (guaranteed by the melodramatic mode) motivated their continued reading.

Posted 17 minutes after team_edward_4_ever's initial posting, the second response to the thread "I cried" also recalls the actual placement of words in *New Moon*. manuela agrees: "yeah, new moon is a very sad book. whenever Bella thought of the holes edward left in her, I felt so sad!! and I remember this one paragraph after edward left in which Bella said something like: time passes, every aching second, even for me. I cried: /haha." And in another post to the same thread, Manuela goes on to explain: "the only thing that kept me going was knowing that Edward HAD to go back, because without him the book was just … dead." ashleylovesedward also shares manuela's empathetic reaction: "When i read Newmoon i cried like crazy. When edward left i felt like someone broke up with me, and when i read he might die i freaked out and skipped to the end to make sure he didn't lol." Likewise, ms.singsinhersleep confides: "i cried. and cried. and cried. in the begining i didnt even want to read anymore and i cried when she jumped off the cliff and her imaginary edward was telling her to swim. then in the end when bella saves him i cried and cried and cried somemore lol. [line break] that whole book devistated me. [frown emoticon]." Melodramatic responses such as these, which repeat and echo previous girls' statements in the same thread, indicate how girls share the pain associated with the separation and suffering of hero and heroine; this closeness, in turn, enhances intimacy between actual girl readers.

The sensational crying reactions reported by team_edward_4_ever's initial post are, thus, echoed in most of the following comments on the thread she started. The girl fans consistently express empathy since they feel as though they experience Bella's loss. MyMortalRevolution confides,

> Ahhh! I cried soo much! I couldn't trust Edward for soo long after reading New Moon. It wasn't until I finished reading Eclipse that I believed he was staying.
>
> I was such a depressed emo child during the days that I first read it. I wouldn't eat or talk to anyone….I'm surprised I still have friends actually. [winking emoticon]
>
> New Moon was probably my favourite though. ("I cried")

In spite of her pain—or perhaps because this sensation is pleasurable, too—MyMortalRevolution prefers *New Moon*, and this girl's friends tolerate

her extreme reactions. Similarly, abbielove shares a personal reaction to Edward's departure:

> omg yes i cried! i thought new moon was so depressing when Edward left, which he was crazy for leaving her bcuz i felt like he was leaving me too, in a sense lol, but then comes Jacob nd it got a lil interesting. omg when i read that part that he left i swear that day i read it i felt soo pissy nd sad nd mad lol. kinda funny actually bcuz everyone would ask "whats wrong with you?" nd i would say he left. lol but yeah i still liked new moon. ("I cried")

EdwardsBrunette also shares, "i actually felt physical pain when edward had bella in the woods telling her that he was leaving her. haha." This physical sensation of empathy speaks to the bodily ways readers experience melodramatic fiction. In turn, sharing such responses allows girls to corroborate each other's reactions.

Girls' descriptions of crying while reading *New Moon* also certifies melodramatic texts' relationship to girls' lived experiences. Even the physical copies of *Twilight* novels interact with girls' everyday lives. In addition to being curious about Edward's point of view, team_edward_4_ever's initial post on the thread temporarily stopped reading and then sought the insight of school-friends before returning to the novel. She later seeks the validation of her online community through the creation of the thread. Bella's gap in narration, signified by blank pages with only the names of the passing months, creates a literal space for such a pause, confirmed by bell mari's description of reading *New Moon*:

> i cried during the part where bella asked edward if he didn't want her and edward said no … for me, that's where the depression started … oh my gosh, my heart was beating fast and there was a huge lump in my throat … then my tears just let themselves go … it was strange having felt what must be like hell for her … i kept saying no no no edward you can't leave bella! you can't do it! but he did and i felt depressed … then i tried to read nm really fast hoping to get to the part where edward comes back … but in between the pages I just felt sooo sad for bell … doing things that edward disapproves of just so she could hear his voice inside her head. i mean that's what most girls that are hopelessly in love would do … it was literally painful to read nm because bella's the one narrating and the way she described what she's going thru felt very real … it makes your chest ache because sobs tend to build up inside you and you can't stop them …("I cried")

bell mari's poignant account proves how the saga's melodramatic expression influences a reader's emotional and physical response. Even though this girl reader does hypothesize that girls in love might behave akin to Bella, she does not suggest that such behavior would be *caused* by Bella's example. Rather, bell mari speculates about Bella's actions as consistent with those of a girl with a broken heart. This kind of imaginative empathy recalls Mitchell's theory of nineteenth-century girls' reading experiences with *Jessica's First Prayer*.

Girls participating on this and other threads frequently couple phrases such as "haha" or "lol" or smiling emoticons as counterpoints to explanations about crying. These caveats, which may or may not signal actual laughter at all, could indicate *Twilight* readers have a sense of humor about their extreme responses to fiction. Laughter may be a tension release, a correlating extreme to tears. After all, these emotional swings between the tragic and the comic are conventional to the nineteenth-century onstage melodrama, whose stock characters provided points of levity amid the tear-inducing suffering of the hero and the heroine (Booth, *Theatre* 127–28).

Through the laughing qualifiers, however, contemporary girl readers may also assume their tears will make others laugh at them, so their own laughter may be efforts to deflect criticism. (If girls laugh at themselves, others cannot laugh at them.) Who are these others, those who might laugh at girls writing about crying? Are they girl fans on the forum or outsiders at large? Given the public scrutiny of female *Twilight* fans, the laughter seems more like an effort to displace outsiders' criticism—of which girls are conventionally socialized to be constantly aware. Such awareness reaffirms Vicinus's theory about melodrama as a touchstone for the powerless ("Helpless" 128). Understanding suffering's capacity to invoke empathy and intimacy among girl readers is a foundational tenet melodrama's appeal because it confirms the mode's ability to champion powerlessness through sensational feelings.

A Heroine's Tears

Crying as an empowering expression among many girl readers of *Twilight*, a finding that confirms Williams' theory of tears as a source of "future power" in filmic melodrama ("Melodrama" 70). But what of the heroine's tears within the fictional text? Because Jane Eyre's narrative voice is so strong and authoritative, many forget that she actually cries quite a bit

throughout the novel. *Twilight*'s author, for example, overstates Jane's stoicism in her comparison of Jane and Bella:

> Because actually, I do think there's a Bella-*Jane Eyre* relationship. Jane Eyre's a stoic. She does what she thinks is right, and she takes it—and she doesn't mouth off about it. You know, in her head, maybe, she suffers, but she never lets that cross her lips. And I do think that there's some of that stoicism—not in the same way, but there's a little bit of that—in Bella. (Meyer, "Conversation" 41)

Brontë's narrator emotes powerful feelings expressed through tears throughout the entire novel, as does Bella. Cataloguing moments of crying continues to reveal tears' empowering potential, as well as its erotic expression, justifying the appeal of the melodramatic mode in girl culture.

Whenever Jane cries as a child, these girlhood tears are motivated by the injustice of social conditions for children in nineteenth-century domestic and educational realms. As a child, Jane cries a variety of times in response to her aunt's, cousins', and schoolmaster's ill treatment—although they are usually "secret tears" (Brontë 60) wiped away before punishing and cruel adults can notice. When she is unjustly penalized in the frightening and possibly haunted red-room, Jane silences her crying: "I wiped my tears and hushed my sobs, fearful lest any sign of violent grief might waken a preternatural voice to comfort me, or elicit from the gloom some haloed face, bending over me with strange pity" (17). Later, at Lowood Institution, Jane cries: "While I tried to devour my tears, a fit of coughing seized Helen," who dies soon after from an illness caused by the school's unhealthy and dangerous living conditions (81). In front of Helen, Jane does not have to dismiss her tears, a portrayal that suggests crying is an affective response that is safe for girlfriends to share with each other—but unsafe in front of adults.

In girl culture, crying fosters intimacy between girls, expresses frustration with adults' cruel demands, and expresses hope for freedom from those restrictive injustices. As an adult, Jane's tears continue to respond to social injustice, especially those related to girls' and women's conditions in the domestic sphere. Jane's tears punctuate her frustration with restrictive social conditions for young females without social status or economic security, especially governesses who were subject to much abuse and mistreatment in their in-between positions in households during the nineteenth century. As a young adult, Jane's tears also stem from feeling unloved, a reaction that recalls her orphaned childhood.

Crying and its simultaneous expression of frustration and future power are perhaps most obvious when Jane finally confesses her romantic feelings for Rochester through a stream of tears. At first, Rochester carries on with his ruse about marrying Blanche, an emotional manipulation that brings on so much distress for Jane that she outright admits that the prospect of being away from Rochester is the source of her sadness: "I said this almost involuntarily, and, with as little sanction of free will, my tears gushed out. I did not cry so as to be heard, however; I avoided sobbing" (Brontë 251). When Rochester feigns incredulousness at Jane's revelation, she is "roused to something like passion" and protests openly to Rochester—and the reader:

> Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automaton?—a machine without feelings? and can bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips, and my drop of living water dashed from your cup? Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless?—You think wrong!—I have as much soul as you, –and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty, and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. (253)

This retort underlines the cultural conditions confining Jane: she lacks all of the social capital—beauty, class, economic and family connections—that could facilitate a marriage with Rochester. Instead she asserts equality on the basis of their shared humanity: "I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh: it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal—as we are!" (253). Although Jane has assured the reader that her tears are once again silent ones, they continue throughout the lengthy exchange between Jane and Rochester—even when he begins to confess that he actually does love her.

In this case, tears underscore Jane's frustration with social and economic conditions restricting her agency; at the same time they accentuate her sexual awakening. As Williams suggests, crying can function as an erotic release instigated by ecstatic feelings ("Film"). Rochester entreats Jane to "be still" because she is "over-excited" and she observes: "The nightingale's song was then the only voice of the hour: in listening to it, I again wept" (Brontë 254). At long last, after toying with Jane's emotions,

Rochester makes clear his intentions to marry Jane, not Blanche. These sudden declarations of commitment result in a passionate physical embrace and "The rain rushed down" (256). This water imagery punctuates the saturating quality of Jane's sensational and erotic emotional release in the context of romantic intimacy. At the same time, her tears now anticipate a better future.

Following this climactic scene of passionate, rather drenched revelations, Jane's tears continue to spill out of her. In the very next chapter, Jane notes how she cries in response to Mrs. Fairfax's "coldness and scepticism": "tears rose to my eyes" (265). After she realizes she must leave Rochester, Jane once again cries, marking her decision to leave: "I had been struggling with tears for some time: I had taken great pains to repress them, because I knew he would not like to see me weep. Now, however, I considered it well to let them flow as freely and as long as they liked. If the flood annoyed him, so much the better. So I gave way and cried heartily" (302). Jane even acknowledges tears' excess when she turns in empathy toward the reader, her confidant:

> Gentle reader, may you never feel what I then felt! May your eyes never shed such stormy, scalding, heart-wrung tears as poured from mine. May you never appeal to Heaven in prayers so hopeless and so agonised as in that hour left my lips; for never may you, like me, dread to be the instrument of evil to what you wholly love. (322)

As a melodramatic convention, tears punctuate Jane's characteristic insecurity as well as her affective agency, encouraging empathy and understanding from the reader, who comprehends the torment of leaving Thornfield.

Later in the novel, Jane's tears appear again, another prelude to another marriage proposal. Jane cries upon realizing that Mrs. Fairfax has not returned her correspondence, which cues the narrator's insecurity. She has made a new life with her cousins, the Rivers siblings, and her teaching position; she also has newfound economic security from a sudden inheritance. Still, Jane remains unsure of Rochester's livelihood:

> The bitter check had wrung from me some tears; and now, as I sat poring over the crabbed characters and flourishing tropes of an Indian scribe, my eyes filled again. St. John called me to his side to read; in attempting to do this my voice failed me: words were lost in sobs […] My companion

> expressed no surprise at this emotion, nor did he question me as to its cause; he only said—"We will wait a few minutes, Jane, till you are more composed." (Brontë 400)

St. John's reaction to Jane's tears contrasts starkly with Rochester's appeals for her to calm down, illustrating the difference between the passionate master of Thornfield and the dispassionate clergyman who asks Jane to marry him as a platonic partner for missionary work. St. John has previously elicited tears from Jane when he inquires about her past (346) and she worries about him noticing tears when he inquires about her living and working conditions (360). Thus, although Jane recognizes St. John's beautiful features and takes seriously his offer of marriage, her tears are a precursor to her return to Thornfield to locate Rochester. Thus, when isolated as a melodramatic convention, crying underpins Jane's hope and the agency she exerts to change her own life.

Similar to Jane, Bella's tears expose her insecurity, underscore her sexual awakening, and cue her affective agency. In earlier novels, Bella shares the kind of shame Jane feels about her tears. In *Twilight*, Bella cries in her bedroom (confessing tears to the reader just as Jane does) when she anticipates the transition between schools (11). Later on, after Edward yet again encourages Bella to stay away from him, he notices Bella's tears and seems "appalled" (Meyer, *Twilight* 190). She confesses to the reader: "I hadn't realized the moisture in my eyes had brimmed over. I quickly rubbed my hand across my cheek, and sure enough, traitor tears were there, betraying me" (190). Referring to tears as the body's betrayal is a depiction that appeals to many girls who, as the readers in the next section report, also recognize tears' social consequences and their association with weakness. Bella specifically shares with Jane an embarrassment about crying. Despite this embarrassment—or perhaps because of it—crying also positions the girl reader intimately alongside the protagonist. In addition, Bella's tears cause Edward to take Bella's reaction seriously, in the same way that Rochester responds to Jane crying. As such, tears function again as a source of agency.

Eclipse offers an even more exaggerated depiction of the narrator crying. This novel is explicitly haunted by Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, which amplifies the conflict between Bella's light and dark love interests. Blackford reads this allusion through the lens of the Persephone myth, a larger informant of both novels and, for that matter, many literary texts featuring girls. The maintenance of Persephone narrative tropes proves the

ongoing relevance of stories about girls' ambivalent transitional journeys between childhood and adulthood. *Wuthering Heights* thus becomes a point of discussion between characters and parallels Bella's internal conflict when she is forced to choose between Edward and Jacob.[6] The heightened drama of this love triangle corresponds to melodramatic convention and inspires Bella's outpouring of tears.

The progression of Bella's tears occurs alongside her process of deciding on a romantic partner; in the same way that tears cue Jane's agency, Bella's crying precedes her efforts to take control of her life. Bella asks Jacob, "How can we be friends, when we love each other like this?" (*Eclipse* 597). Realizing the reality of that question's consequences, Bella struggles with tears: "I clenched by teeth together, glad he wasn't looking at my face, fighting against the sobs that threatened to overtake me again. I needed to be strong, and I had no idea how" (597). After finishing that conversation with Jacob and determining the end of their romantic attachment, Bella is so overcome with crying that she cannot drive. Edward arrives to comfort her and internally she rebels, confessing to the reader: "At first it was worse. Because there was that smaller part of me—smaller, but getting louder and angrier every minute, screaming at the rest of me—that craved a different set of arms. So then there was fresh guilt to season the pain. He [Edward] didn't say anything, he just let me sob" (606). Throughout the rest of the final chapter of *Eclipse*, Bella continues to battle tears. Similar to Jane's efforts at restraint, Bella gains enough control to cry without sobbing: "There was just enough [strength] for me to quiet the sobs—hold them back but not end them. The tears didn't slow. I couldn't seem to find any handle to even begin to work with those" (606). Bella commences crying for the remainder of the night while Edward stays by her side, through what she describes as "weeping" and episodes of "hysteria" (609). Finally coming to a solution by the end of the night, Bella realizes her tears have helped her "make the adjustments I needed to make" (609). Thus, Bella uses tears to arrive at a Jane-Eyre-like "measure of control," acknowledging pain of losing Jacob, but reaffirming her choice of Edward (609).

In *Eclipse*, Bella's tears can be read as an expression of her pain about hurting Jacob. If we read her Edward-or-Jacob either/or choice literally, Bella's overwhelming overflow of tears communicates the loss she feels in relation to losing Jacob's intimacy and friendship when she chooses Edward as a final romantic partner. In this way, melodrama confirms the

gravity of everyday experiences associated with many teen relationships. Bella's tears validate the emotional weight of a lost relationship.

Another reading, however, of Bella's crying is available: tears as a reflection of frustration with her limited options of romantic partners. Moruzi also reads the Edward-or-Jacob choice as an either/or choice associated with postfeminism:

> Edward and Jacob, as well as the communities with which they are associated, thus represent two different options for Bella. Her participation in the vampire community involves a transformation from human to vampire. […] It also presents Bella with the chance to develop the special skill that is suggested by her human form, her invulnerability to vampires. […] Although Jacob is a werewolf, he nonetheless represents the warmth of human relations that Bella must give up. (55)

Bella's excessive crying encourages a reading that critiques contemporary pressures facing girls. Bella has presented herself with the either/or choice of romantic partners, which, like nightmares, are another melodramatic response to her internalization of either/or discursive constructions of girlhood.

If male characters are "choices," they reflect the limited options facing girls, specifically in the discursive construction of girlhood that Harris notices: the "can-do" and "at-risk" tracks. As I discuss in relation to nightmares' association with motherhood (see Chap. 6), Bella fears falling into the at-risk category. She warns Edward that marrying right after high school looks as though she is "some small-town hick who got knocked up by her boyfriend!" (Meyer, *Eclipse* 57). Paradoxically, the very opportunities Edward offers represent the can-do track: he encourages college and travel, delayed vampire conversation (symbolizing marriage and procreation), and the promise of consumerism through vampire wealth.

The option of marrying Jacob, however, represents the "at-risk" track: staying in Forks and likely no college, an early marriage and presence of children. Living on the Quileute reservation, Bella and Jacob's working-class socioeconomic status would not allow for the enjoyment of the incredible luxuries available with the Cullen family's wealthy lifestyle. Bella seems to realize this when her night of crying inspires a reflection: "I'd been wrong all along about the magnets. It had not been Edward and Jacob that I'd been trying to force together, it was the two parts of myself, Edward's Bella and Jacob's Bella. But they could not exist together, and

I never should have tried" (608). When Bella chooses Edward, Bella chooses the part of herself that aligns with the "can-do" path of education, a career, and delayed motherhood, the track society tells girls is the only avenue for success. Choosing Edward means no motherhood—or so Bella thinks.

Ironically, Bella then becomes the teen mother so associated with the at-risk girl, the girl with the disordered patterns of consumption, early motherhood, and limited career opportunities—which were part of her vision of being Jacob's spouse. Moruzi interprets "Bella's conscious choice" for Edward as evidence she is "a postfeminist agent" (55), but this conclusion misses the emphasis on the affective component leading up to Bella's choice. Bella has spent significant emotional energy debating the consequences of her choices—and criticizing herself. Tears upon tears are shed, and these force us to pay attention to the significance of excessive emotional energy, which is a major reason for *Twilight*'s popularity. It might be surprising that Bella always sees her options about Edward and Jacob in black and white terms considering the many options girls today supposedly have at their disposal. Bella never contemplates choosing *neither* boy. Recognizing melodrama's critical capacity, then, might suggest that saga critiques the thing it represents. In this case, the saga comments on discursive constructions of postfeminist girlhood through Bella's melodramatic crying: girls today are told they have many choices, but are their actual choices really closer to the kinds of choices girls had in the nineteenth century? To Jane's choices between Rochester and St. John? Do girls *feel* that they have limited choices? Crying offers a critique of postfeminism by validating Bella's frustration—and the frustration girls may feel in relation to such contradictory messages. Bella's tears, then, reflect a similar frustration with social expectations that Jane expresses in her nineteenth-century narrative.

Girls Reading About Crying

In response to the Bella-Edward breakup in *New Moon*, in which Bella does not explicitly cry, girl readers over and over again report their own empathetic crying on the TwilightTEENS discussion forum. In response to Bella's crying in *Eclipse*, however, girls do not generally report crying at the exact moment they are reading the narrator's account of her tears, a finding that proves Williams's theory about melodrama: just because characters are crying on-screen does not mean these tears automatically

inspire tears in the audience ("Melodrama" 71). Girls empathize, as well as offering their own critical interpretations when they actively engage the saga's messages about girls' limited options, the Edward-or-Jacob choice. Often, these girl readers work to see Bella's emotions in the context of her particular supernatural experiences; this contextual awareness defies assumptions that girls reading about Bella's weakness become passive themselves. Instead, girl readers often offer empathy and understanding, tolerating Bella's crying as they express the desire for others to tolerate their own emotional responses. Once again, the melodramatic mode affords girl characters and readers sensational experiences dominant culture often denies them.

The initial post of the thread, "Crying," addresses *Eclipse*. HayleyHale observes Bella's tears throughout that novel:

> I'm just about finished reading through the whole series for the second time when i stopped to realise how much Bella cries in just about every chapter she cries atleast once (well in Eclipse) it just seems stupid to notice it now, but yeah just thought I'd mention and see if any one else has noticed just how much Bella really does cry.

The responses to HaleyHale's initial comment discuss Bella's constant crying, especially in relation to the love triangle. Despite fantastical elements within the novel itself, the fictional experience of such a conflict matches the real-life prospect of being caught between two love interests, a connection made by the girl readers on the thread. As Johanna rationalizes, "I guess she's [Bella] just a very emotional person. And if I had to choose between to great guys, I'd cry too." In fact, many readers resemble HayleyHale and Johanna, who initially failed to notice Bella's crying, which might suggest that crying is so ubiquitous in girl culture that it does not stand out as an oddity. Moreover, girls' responses report repeat readings of *Eclipse* (as with the other *Twilight* novels), indicating that the practice of rereading results in the pleasures of discovery and interpretation. Melodrama's pain-before-pleasure sequence encourages audiences to repeat the cycle, dwelling with characters' suffering throughout the novels again and again.

Although some girl fans empathize with Bella after they notice her tears, other girls find Bella's crying funny (even bothersome), approaching the topic with a sense of humor. Their humor is another reaction that disrupts assumptions about girl readers of *Twilight* as passive and

hysterical dupes. LaTuaCantante realizes, "lol i definitely realised that she cries a lot. im trying to imagine kristen stewart crying so much" and Hogwartsherms exclaims, "She does cry A LOT!!! I noticed it too. I think her and Harry Potter would make a good couple … they are both so whiney! Lol" These responses jest at Bella's excessive tears, demonstrating the pleasures of intertextuality at the same time. They imagine future or alternate scenarios, comparing the literary Bella to her on-screen counterpart and to the male protagonist of a different fantasy series for young readers. This active production of meaning, especially the "poaching" of texts to imagine a Bella-Harry coupling (Jenkins), shows how girl fans disrupt outsiders' assumptions about their cultural engagements. Offering critical interpretations of the aesthetic experience of reading *Eclipse*, these girls prove Blackford's theory of girls' engagements with literary narratives. Moreover, girls finding melodramatic excess funny furthermore proves how the mode's exaggeration inspires a critique of social pressures facing girls.

Although a few comments at the beginning of the "Crying" thread laugh at Bella's fictional crying, subsequent comments interpret *Eclipse* with empathy for Bella's situation. For example, ms.singsinhersleep entreats others on the forum to consider Bella's point of view, offering herself as a point of comparison: "bella does cry alot, but think of all the stress on her. i would be crying just as much in her situation. (but i am also someone who cries when i get upset/stressed)." VampireWeakness also empathizes:

> never really paid much attention to it … but thinking about yeah Bella does cry a lot … but then i think about being put in a situation where you find the love of you life … lose him … get him back but lose your very best friend and then get him back but then they both go off and almost get killed because of you … having your family in constant danger because of the choices you make … I would cry a heck of a lot too … ("Crying")

VampireWeakness points out several ideas that are significant when thinking about melodrama in girl culture. Importantly, her recognition about the pressures facing Bella shows how melodramatic excess critiques social demands on girls, whose choices are weighed down with the moral significance society attaches to them, the "can-do" and "at-risk" tracks represented by Edward and Jacob. Even the *Twilight* phenomenon itself seems to be situated in the "at-risk" category by adult critics who discredited the

saga's girl fans for their disordered patterns of consumption and denied girls' emotional responses at the same time.

Although a few subsequent posts vacillate between sympathy and annoyance with Bella, other responses reflect definite empathy. Requiem confides,

> I've always been tough, but unfortunately I cry a lot, under all the pressure and stress I face for all kinds of different reasons, there's only so much you can handle in life, and you get sick of forcing yourself to be the tough one all the time, sometimes you can no longer control it. I cry more now than I ever did in my childhood. ("Crying")

Requiem's confession inspires immediate agreement from Alice: "Exactly. Sometimes you just need to let it all out. I am the same. Try handling the fact that your boyfriend is a vampire and could kill you easily. It would make you a bit fragile. [smiling emoticon]" True to melodramatic form, revelations of emotional vulnerability are validated. These confirmations are often accompanied by emoticon smiley faces to imply support, and, like laughter, they displace an outsider's ability to assume girls take the vampire subject matter too seriously.

The girls' posts in the thread "Crying" do not elevate Bella to a role-model status; rather, they work to understand and even critique the female character's options and choices in the context of her fictional world. IsabellaMarieCullen concedes, "Hm… I guess you're right. (: But sometimes she has good reason to cry, others she brings it upon herself, and sometimes, i'm wondering why she's crying and not donig something about the situation, ya know?" In the final post of the thread, EdwardLove responds, "Maybe i do have something in common with Bella after all:) Sometimes, you just have to cry through and there's nothing you can do about it. She goes through a lot." Girls locate points of identification, but they also show how considering other perspectives can lead to a changed mind, proving that melodrama's characteristic extremes actually promote understanding between girls.

All of the responses on the "Crying" thread reflect a sharing of perspectives: posts validate each other, especially when a girl is using Bella's experiences as an opportunity to communicate about the reader's own personal experience. None of the responses hierarchically privilege one girl's interpretation over another. Furthermore, girls' confessions about their own tears are revealing: according to some, tears are something to

navigate delicately in adolescence since crying is not deemed appropriate in public. Requiem's use of the term, "unfortunately" signals a regretful consciousness about tears' unacceptability in teen girlhood, a commentary on the social regulation of girls' emotions. Girls' defenses of crying—of Bella's and their own—demonstrates how melodrama validates girls' interior, emotional experience, which they see dominant culture denying them.

Conclusion

Crying is melodrama's ultimate affective response, accentuating the notion of suffering as well as all of the other excess and heightened sensation totalizing the melodramatic experience. In *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight Saga*, the protagonists suffer, especially in their separations from their Edwards. Both narrators' tears reflect their insecurities and self-loathing; crying, like music, is intimately connected to Jane's and Bella's sexual desires and anxious longings. Although the female fluids of erotic desire are not described (given the obvious generic and cultural constraints of both *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight Saga*), crying, on the other hand, is a related and more socially acceptable (although still denigrated) release. As such, crying gives voice to frustration with restrictive social conditions, especially those related to girls' sexuality. In this way, tears become a source of affective agency for the narrators while encouraging sensational responses, as well as empathy and social awareness, from girl readers.

Although crying is an expression with a particular appeal to girls and girl culture, the third cinematic adaptation, *The Twilight Saga*: *Eclipse*, eliminates Bella's tears and, in doing so, undercuts melodrama's critical capacity. This cinematic choice is consistent with *Eclipse*'s other adaptation strategies: in general, the film prefers vampire action over Bella's emotional conflict about deciding between Edward and Jacob. More screen time is devoted to the former. Not coincidentally, the timing of this film coincides with a marked decrease in girls' online *Twilight* fan activity. Prior to the third film's release, girls were already expressing major disappointment. Responding to the trailer, girls on TwilightTEENS recognize the "tone" of actors' speech as one dimensional and agreed that the preview looked "boring"—despite the novel being a favorite among some of these girl readers ("Eclipse Trailer!!"). By the time Summit Entertainment released *Eclipse* in June 2010, no girls posted responses on the discussion forum. And when Bill Condon's *The Twilight Saga*: *Breaking Dawn-Part*

1 premiered in November 2011, TwilightTEENS was no longer an active website—in line with the downturn of many other girls' *Twilight*-oriented online activity.

Although the franchise chose David Slade for his edginess (*Hard Candy*) and vampire violence (*30 Days of Night*), his film was not the box office success Summit had hoped it would be. For the next and final two cinematic installments, Summit (in a melodramatic swing of their own), chose Bill Condon, a director with great affection for cinematic melodrama and its connection to female viewers. Condon's *Breaking Dawn-Part 1*, for example, depicts Bella's tears in a close-up shot that makes sure their presence is not lost on the viewer. Condon's invocation of melodrama leads us to a consideration of the saga's—and the film franchise's—ending in the next chapter.

Notes

1. "Because it produced contradictions for the ideology of masculinity, the realm of 'feeling' was assigned to women. The heroine, idealized as 'Angel in the House' and focus of the 'Cult of True Womanhood' was often of more significance to the drama than the hero in her capacity to evoke and legitimate emotion. The obverse side of idealization was fascinated horror at the prospect of the heroine's fall and subsequent degradation. Victorian patriarchy could weep publicly over the female victim, in demonstration of renewed feeling and virtue" (Gledhill, "Melodramatic" 34).
2. "The two major strikes against melodrama were thus the related 'excesses' of emotional manipulativeness and the association with femininity. These qualities only began to be taken seriously when excess could be deemed ironic and thus subversive of the coherence of mainstream cinema" (Williams, "Melodrama" 43).
3. Recent studies have continued to theorize the gendered dynamics of crying, considering men's crying reactions to melodramatic texts. In "Men's Tears and the Role of Melodrama" (2002), Tom Lutz posits, "Like 'women's films,' 'male weepies' were constructed in order to induce tears, and they did so […] by staging crises and fantasy resolutions of role performance. Men's tears at male melodramas […] are overdetermined by pressures to strive to fulfill and at the same time reject the dominant male roles of the time" (186). Similarly, in *Love, Tears, and the Male Spectator* (2002), Kenneth MacKinnon locates the appeal of melodrama for men in a similar conclusion about patriarchy's constrictive demands on male masculinity. Studies like Lutz's and MacKinnon's, as well as Staiger's "Film Noir as Male Melodrama" (2008), have made important inroads in the recognition of

melodrama as one not exclusively bound to women's films or women's experiences.

4. "It was not until the 1850s that a stable commercial infrastructure for children's fiction was established. This involved setting up magazines such as the RTS's *Sunday At Home* and the emergence of name novelists such as George E Sargent whose *Roland Leigh*, *The Story of a City Arab* (1857) pioneered a string of similar chronicles of ragged but indomitably virtuous heroes. The 1850s also saw the emergence of Charlotte Maria Tucker* ('ALOE'), the most gifted writer of children's fiction to date. Hesba Stretton* (i.e. Sarah Smith) represents another high point of the evangelical style (see *Jessica's First Prayer**, 1867)" (Sutherland 122–23).
5. Although team_edward_4_ever uses the verb "see" instead of "read" she is most certainly referring to the reading experience of *New Moon* since the film adaptation of *New Moon* had not yet been released at the time of her posting on October 11, 2008.
6. "[Bella's] appreciation for the novel is distinctly gendered; her lover, Edward Cullen, does not appreciate the book. A man who has lived nearly one hundred years without satisfactory relationships and full acceptance in communities does not find flattering the implicit parallel Bella draws between him and Heathcliff. The creature of twilight and exile presents a beautiful narcissus object for Bella; he offers the same paradoxical fantasy of development and escape from the conditions of Bella's existence. […] They drive Bella's creation of a soul-mate in darkness, her pleasure in abduction by chariot, and her internal poetics of guilt, despair, and lamentation, akin to the elegiac, passionate monologues of Brontë's Catherine" (Blackford, *Myth* 199)

CHAPTER 8

Melodrama's Happily Ever After? Girls, Rereading, and Resistance

"The popularity of melodrama is not difficult to understand. Presenting its public with a world of fulfilled dreams in contrast to a miserable monotonous reality in which virtue did not necessarily prosper, nor villainy suffer, melodrama nullified distress and danger by directing them to the ultimate happy ending," explains Booth, referring to melodrama's appeal to nineteenth-century audiences (*Hiss* 40). Booth's statement applies, of course, to *Jane Eyre*'s Victorian readers, but the same can be said for today's girl audiences and the *Twilight Saga*. Melodrama's happily ever after is often facilitated by coincidence and romantic couplings, reinforcing the relationship between nineteenth-century audience's expectations and those of many girl readers today.

When it comes to the *Twilight* phenomenon, however, closure also functions ironically: even though it is a major point of appeal, girl readers often resist the ending through rereadings and reinterpretations of the ending; the impulse to reimagine the series is, in fact, replicated in the final cinematic installments of the saga. Such resistant stances, encouraged by melodrama's extremes, defy interpretations that focus too much on the ideological implications of the saga's conservative conclusion.

K. Kapurch, *Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Century*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-58169-3_8

Supernatural Improbability and Coupling: A Postfeminist Ending?

True to nineteenth-century melodramatic form, Jane experiences a sequence of improbable circumstances prior to the novel's conclusion. After she leaves Thornfield, Jane does recover outwardly through the benevolent assistance of St. John Rivers and his sisters, who coincidentally turn out to be her cousins. St. John secures Jane a teaching position, and, later, she receives a—surprise!—substantial inheritance from an uncle she only recently learned about. Inwardly, however, she still yearns for Rochester and, in another improbable and supernatural turn of events, hears his voice calling to her: "Jane! Jane! Jane!" (419). She recognizes "a known, loved, well-remembered voice—that of Edward Fairfax Rochester; and it spoke in pain and woe, wildly, eerily, urgently" (420). Jane cries out, "I am coming!" (420), and soon departs the home of her cousins, returning to Thornfield to find it burned down, and eventually locating Rochester, blind and without one hand, despairing in a smaller residence, Ferndean. The supernatural elements of improbability are clear, even more so in Rochester's confession to calling Jane's name:

> "I was in my own room, and sitting by the window, which was open: it soothed me to feel the balmy night-air; though I could see no stars, and only by a vague, luminous haze, knew the presence of a moon. I longed for thee, Janet! Oh, I longed for thee both with soul and flesh! I asked of God, at once in anguish and humility, if I had not been long enough desolate, afflicted, tormented; and might not soon taste bliss and peace once more. That I merited all I endured, I acknowledged—that I could scarcely endure more, I pleaded; and the alpha and omega of my heart's wishes broke involuntarily from my lips, in the words—'Jane! Jane! Jane!'" (447)

In relation to the supernatural source of the voice's transference, here Brontë performs one of her fascinating rhetorical maneuvers, which placates readers who may be skeptical about her novel's Christian sensibility. Rochester overtly begs God for assistance; many Victorian readers would have read this and accepted their reunion as evidence of grace and forgiveness. Yet careful readers may also note that it is the moon's presence that shines on Rochester. Indeed, the moon has been previously associated with the maternal source that guides and comforts Jane. Through the moon's magical interference, Brontë is again suggesting an unconventional moral compass that subverts Christianity while seeming to uphold it.

Consistent with the melodramatic mode, *Jane Eyre* draws its final curtain on the image of Jane and Rochester happily married. Jane directs the glad ending to her audience in one of literature's most memorable lines: "Reader, I married him" (Brontë 448). In the concluding chapter, Jane goes on to confide:

> No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. I know no weariness of my Edward's society: he knows none of mine, any more than we each do of the pulsation of the heart that beats in our separate bosoms; consequently, we are ever together. To be together is for us to be at once as free as in solitude, as gay as in company. We talk, I believe, all day long: to talk to each other is but a more animated and an audible thinking. All my confidence is bestowed on him: all his confidence is devoted to me: we are precisely suited in character; perfect concord is the result. (450–51)

Brontë defines marital bliss as true partnership, the complementary merging of the passionate bodies and intellectually engaged minds of two people who are still individuals. The reader's sense of their unity (both domestic and sexual) is solidified by the birth of their child: "When his first-born was put into his arms, he could see that the boy had inherited his own eyes, as they once were—large, brilliant, and black" (451). Rochester continues to be redeemed by his son and the return of one of his eye's sight.

Marriage and family are common to the endings of popular art and literature, but melodrama takes coupling to the extreme: one happy twosome is not enough. Jane's marital bliss is buoyed by the domestic contentment of her female cousins: "My Edward and I, then, are happy: and the more so, because those we most love are happy likewise. Diana and Mary Rivers are both married: alternately, once every year, they come to see us, and we go to see them" (452). Other nineteenth-century works like Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* and Wood's *East Lynne* also provide closure largely through final images of couples happy in each other's company. In those works, melodramatic resolution depends on pairings of individuals who are the rejected points of complicated romantic triangles, meaning the third wheels of two triangles are now matched together in coupled contentment. These resolved endings distract the reader from other textual ambiguities that are difficult to reconcile, especially empathetic feelings for the punished woman in the case of both Braddon's and Wood's novels.

Meyer's saga's last novel, *Breaking Dawn*, upholds marriage and couplings as resolutions for romantic entanglements and markers of happy finality. Bella and Edward's union is solidified by their marriage, as well as the sexual bliss that Bella's vampire conversion makes possible. Their fantastic vampire sex is so different from their previous efforts as mismatched human and vampire: "He was all new, a different person as our bodies tangled gracefully into one on the sand-pale floor. No caution, no restraint. No fear—especially not that. We could love together—both active participants now. Finally equals" (Meyer, *Breaking* 482). Resembling Jane, Bella recognizes equality as a condition for satisfying physical intimacy. Moreover, just as Jane recognizes mental unity as a condition of marital closeness, in the final chapter of *Breaking Dawn*, Bella offers Edward a glimpse of her mind, the interiority that, to this point, only the reader had really experienced: "I pressed my hands to his face again, hefted the shield right out of my mind, and then started in where I'd left off—with the crystal clear-memory of the first night of my new life … lingering on the details" (754). In this way, Meyer, following Brontë, defines romantic and erotic connection through physical and intellectual companionship.

As in *Jane Eyre*, Bella and Edward's domestic contentment is also accentuated by their child, Renesmee, a vampire-human hybrid, whose existence shocks the supernatural world. Despite the supernatural circumstances, Renesmee's magical existence is just as improbable as Rochester's voice is in *Jane Eyre*. Audiences today generally do not accept *deus ex machine* interventions, but such improbability underscores the antiabortion rhetoric that feminist critics rightly criticize in *Breaking Dawn*'s. In her analysis of the saga's expression of conservative pro-life religious and political values, Silver summarizes: "Meyer grants the fetus consciousness and emotion; she fictionalizes the key anti-abortion argument that personhood occurs before birth. And, because the initially wary Edward comes around to this position, Meyer prods the reader to come to that conclusion, as well" (*"Twilight"* 132). Here we see melodrama's tendencies toward family and motherhood employed in very conventional ways; reading the saga in such a with-the-grain fashion shows how melodrama serves conservative ends, especially through the valorization of traditional motherhood, harkening back to Victorian values. Meyer does not do the clever rhetorical maneuver that Brontë does when she subverts traditional Christianity through the pagan moon reference.

Just as this voice puts in motion the events that will lead Jane back to Rochester, Bella's pregnancy with Renesmee facilitates Bella's

vampiric conversion and leads to a romantic resolution for Jacob, the sympathetic third wheel of the saga's love triangle. Just as nineteenth-century melodramatic conclusions pair off the losing party of romantic triangles, Jacob's fate in love is similarly determined. Jacob imprints on the baby Renesmee. Imprinting, an uncontrollable werewolf practice, means that he will remain a devoted, brotherly friend until she is ready and wants him as a romantic partner. In this way, Jacob's heartache is finally alleviated since he gets the next best thing to Bella—her daughter. The promise of an eventual romantic relationship between Renesmee and Jacob, albeit disconcerting to Bella (and many readers), squarely locates the saga's final curtain within the melodramatic mode. Kathryn Kane's critique has criticized such an ideological emphasis on heteronormative pairings. In addition, romantically pairing a child, albeit one who ages in superspeed, flaunts the same pedophilia taboos about age difference with which Edward and Bella's age difference flirts. Such sensationalism, however, is another point of appeal, since social taboos make for titillating reading material.

After cataloguing the saga's shared nineteenth-century conventions with *Jane Eyre*, these outcomes are not startling; they are conservative endings consistent with the melodramatic mode. Although conventional and predictable, marriage and children are conditions of happiness, so they reinforce the vanquishing of evil and suffering, which melodrama takes extensive pains to overcome. Thus, at the end of *Breaking Dawn*, evil is precisely in its place since the Volturi have been thwarted once and for all—just as Bertha falls to her definite death. If the melodramatic mode pervades popular American media to the degree that Gledhill ("Rethinking") and Williams ("Melodrama") suggest, these outcomes are to be anticipated in the central mode of modernity.

Expecting these happy endings is not simply a point of appeal for many of the *Twilight* readers I discuss in the next section. These girls' responses indicate that their own emotional reactions (such as crying or physically hurting along with Bella's heartbreak) were assuaged primarily by the very promise of such a conclusion, which sustained their continued engagement with the saga. One outcome of melodrama's final coupling, then, relates to a satisfying conclusion. The pleasure in a fulfilling ending in which pain ceases cannot be overlooked given melodrama's capacity to side with the powerless. The hope that life will get better after suffering—or in spite of suffering—is a powerful rhetorical dimension of melodrama in girl culture.

In terms of discursive constructions of girlhood, however, what does the saga's melodramatic ending say about postfeminist girlhood? As a vampire, Bella certainly ends up living some of the restrictive goals of postfeminism: she will live forever, an adult woman in a perpetual state of exterior youthfulness. Bella's vampire conversion has offered the ultimate, permanent makeover. Moreover, she has it all: the house, the man, and the daughter (who ages in super-speed and therefore becomes less and less of a dependent). Silver is especially critical of the saga's final privileging of motherhood (*"Twilight"* 133). Yet readers, especially young ones, may be alienated from this representation. In fact, *Breaking Dawn*'s narration by Jacob for a good portion of the book moves readers away from Bella's interiority. This says something interesting about melodrama's capacity to critique itself through the very extremes it depicts. Such an interpretation might explain why some girl readers express dissatisfaction about Meyer's ending, which, by rendering Bella a vampire, offers a resolution that is so over-the-top that it cracks the semblance of reality to which the saga was already, at this point, hanging by threads. Perhaps these fantastical happy endings defy reality to such a degree that readers are obligated to reject them. Although the endings are happy, they are also unbelievable according to the conventions this fantastical world established over the course of three previous novels. This may be the reason that girls mourn the end of the saga with such emotional intensity: when Bella becomes a vampire mother, girl readers lose their human girlfriend, Bella. This is an outcome girl readers' responses in the following section will illustrate.

Still, another aspect of the saga's melodramatic ending relates to the eroticism of emotion in girl culture. Morey's conclusion considers the significance of emotions in relation to the series' outcome: "In uniting superhuman strength with a new sensorium, in which her senses and emotions are better than they were in her human life, Bella-as-vampire suggests that what is inadequate to the demands of an ideal feminism in the human girl is not her 'weak and feeble' body. Rather, it is her emotions" (Morey 26). I argue, however, that analyzing the series through a melodramatic lens has required attention to those extreme emotions *throughout* the series. In this way, emotions appeal to readers and advance a critique of social constraints, just as they do in *Jane Eyre*. The saga's outcome does not change the way the female protagonists' emotional extremes have been validated and those sensations have been replicated for the reader throughout Brontë's novel and Meyer's series.

Remembering that melodrama's excess facilitates cultural critique also explains the happy ending's appeal through supernatural couplings.

Perhaps these very unrealistic outcomes—Bella as a vampire wife and mother—is a conclusion that renders her neither a can-do girl nor an at-risk girl. This is a solution to the discursive constructions of girlhood that have plagued Bella, who has successfully defied the either/or construction of girlhood by entering into a neither/nor space. Bella's early marriage and unplanned, early pregnancy certainly illustrate the "disordered" types of pleasure ascribed to at-risk girlhood (Harris 28). And yet, Bella offers instrumental help in the model of can-do girlhood when she uses her mind shield to save her family and the other good vampires. Furthermore, Bella and Edward continue to negotiate and struggle in light of these conflicts, another possible metaphor for the problem of postfeminism, which assumes equality has been achieved and that feminism (i.e., the struggle) is no longer necessary. After Bella's marriage to Edward, equality has still not been achieved; it is only at the very, very end of the novel in the chapter "Happily Ever After" that Bella and Edward finally find some equal ground when they share physical and mental intimacy—akin to Jane and Rochester. Kristine Moruzi concludes: "Bella's agency invites us to reconsider her position with regard to patriarchal and heterosexual norms and to see her in a less conservative light that embraces her sexuality and remains alert to the paradoxes and possibilities of postfeminism" (62). Following, the ongoingness of struggle and its correlating affect are what melodrama forces us to pay attention to and, I argue, reasons for the *Twilight*'s appeal. Moreover, Bella's conflicts throughout the series have already emphasized the often-contradictory discourses of postfeminist girlhood. Melodrama offers the critical lens for recognizing these extremes and their critical capacity.

Girls Reread: Resisting the End

The promise of a happy ending is a major point of appeal among girl readers, who report being motivated to read by the promise of such a conclusion. Yet girls also report a resistant stance to the ending as they promise to reread the series in order to dwell in the midst of the saga, rather than the end.

In response to the saga's ending, girl readers on TwilightTEENS discussion boards report personal expressions of grief similar to their tearful reactions to the Edward-Bella breakup (see Chap. 7). In the first post on the thread "Post Breaking Dawn Depression Support Thread"_dazzled confides,

I don't normally have depression, but after Breaking Dawn, I do now.
I am happy with how it ends, but it's just so bittersweet with it being Bella's last book, and all I want to do is cry.
If you're similar to me, come here, and get a virtual hug:]
It's okay, you're not alone.

In response this initial post, loveyouwantyouNOW agrees:

OMG i know.
Im very sad its all ending so quiickly.
:[I wanted to ball me eyes out.
But at least we still have Midnight Sun to look forward to, and hopefully some others.
nessie?
Bella has really became a part of me too, It is like a part of my life isnt there like it was. But I can always just REREAD the series!
and look forward to the movies, But those wont even compare.
:[[[*virtual hugs to all*
cries
sucks it up
reads them again

These *Twilight* readers offer sympathetic support for each other as they come to terms with the ending of the series. The intimacy between girls on an online forum resembles the kind of narrator-reader intimacy established in both *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight Saga*. Even though losing their friend Bella feels like a real loss of friendship, as loveyouwantyouNOW suggests, rereading the series is a way to defy finality. This promise to reread is repeated over and over on this and other threads.

The title of the thread "The end," which also addresses *Breaking Dawn*, is not crying-specific. Nevertheless, the initial post on "The end" inspired responses that frequently illustrate girls' crying reactions to the final pages of the *Twilight* Saga, as well as other melodramatic conventions discussed throughout this book. Infamous begins: "Did anyone do something major when they finished the book? I cried at random parts of my whole day, and I came super exiled. I also refused to touch the books for another couple days until I calmed down (then I reread the series again). Anyone do anything jurastic? (Say throwing your book out the window?)" ("The end"). Revealing that she cried upon finishing the novel, infamous's comment also shows how the novel impacted her "real" life. Moreover,

she suggests the pleasures of rereading and pausing while reading, which resemble posts in other threads. Melodrama is appealing not so much for its conclusion, but for the mode's characteristic ups and downs, sensations pleasurable to experience again and again. These highs and lows are assuaged by the resolved ending girls know is waiting for them.

Significantly, infamous's account of her own emotional reaction functions as an invitation to other readers to explain how they read and reacted to the conclusion of the saga, proving again how melodrama encourages intimate and revelatory conversation between girls. The next response does not report crying, but certainly articulates a passionate response, which happened during the school day. Fishloveseagle reports:

> I didn't really do anything major, I couldn't because when I finished it I was at school [frowning emoticon]
> But I did throw a spaz when some stupid guy in my class tried to spoil it for everyone by reading the last page [frowning-devil emoticon]
> I whacked him on the head with my science book and grabbed BD back [smiling emoticon]. ("The end")

The presence of the book itself, then, creates an opportunity to resist interference, in this case, a boy anti-fan. This scenario resembles the melodramatic narrative's classic opening conflict: evil attempts to infiltrate innocence's safe space (see Chap. 3). In this case, and recalling the child Jane, the victimized party issues back. That males are often seen by *Twilight* fangirls as intrusive and oppressive is a theme TheTwilightReader addresses when she attempts to create a *Twilight* girl-space on YouTube (see Chap. 3). Girls' reported that reading of the *Twilight* novels during the school day is a frequent theme recurring throughout threads on the forum (also present in TheTwilightReader's discourse), which again suggests that the melodramatic narrative offers a haven or escape from the drudgery of school requirements. This is exactly the function melodrama has played in popular culture since the nineteenth century. In the same way that working-class audiences sought refuge in theaters, or women have sought refuge from the oppression of domesticity in daytime soap operas, girls sought refuge in *Twilight*. Melodrama offers a haven for the powerless.

Girls' reading pace is another opportunity for resistance when it comes to reading the saga. Julian tried to read *Breaking Dawn* slowly, unlike liz(zie), who confides, "I devoured BD, pretty much as fast as I could.

And then, when I saw 'The End' I started crying. A lot. It was kind of pathetic, especially since I was in like, mourning for a full week xD I didn't even want to do anything for a few days." Repeated feelings of "shock" or being "dazed" characterize many of the responses on "The end." Melodrama's escalating strife—relieved only in the few moments before the final curtain—offers readers an aesthetic experience that encourages and even permits a "time out" in order to recover.

Once more, girls posting to the thread "The end" reflect an explicit awareness about how their extreme reactions bother outsiders, but these fans resist through solidarity with other girl fans. Liz(zie)'s comment (above) is followed by several comments whose interaction is necessary to consider:

> REQUIEM. Nothing drastic … I just kinda sat there and said "Wow …" to myself. And sat there dazed for a little bit thinking the book over.
>
> RPATTZISMYHUSBAND. I cried. I was on the train, and I was bawling my eyes out. People got freaked out.
>
> I < 3EDWARDCULLEN. I didn't do anything major. I cried a little but when I finished I was kind of in shock I just laid on my bed staring at the ceiling because I couldn't grasp the fact that it was over.
>
> I sound psycho next to you guys … [frowning emoticon] hahahah
>
> I < 3EDWARDCULLEN. ^It's okay Lizzie we all react differently. Plus I think some non-Twilighters think we're all a little psycho. My mom thinks I'm crazy sometimes. ("The end")

Reinforcing the idea that outsiders misunderstand girls' feelings, the fans here illustrate how melodramatic excess confirms the weight of seemingly trivial circumstances, such as the ending of a novel. This kind of supportive intimacy between girls in the face of adults' criticism conveys melodrama's empowering potential.

Consistent with Blackford's finding about girls reading for narrative and aesthetic pleasure rather than character identification, BiteMeEdward considers the nature of the novel's closure when she reflects:

> Even thought it was a "Happily Ever After" ending, i was still so sad! The two last words on the last page really hit me. The. End. I went into a three day depression phase where i was kinda just really quiet and not talking as much cos i didn't know what to do with my life anymore!! I kept thinking to myself, "Now what am I supposed to read?!"
>
> but i snapped out of it and read the whole series again! ("The end")

Comparable to responses in the "I cried" and "Crying" threads (see Chap. 7), BiteMeEdward's detailed reaction demonstrates how daily life is impacted by engaging melodramatic narratives. The confession signals a melodramatic response that is certainly emotional, but with justification. There is certainly a level of devotion to the text some might term "obsession," but responses like BiteMeEdward's articulate why and how an affective reaction took the shape it did. These girl fans take an active role in deciding how to participate with the text through rereading.

BiteMeEdward's and other girls demonstrate how the ending of the series itself inspires tears, a response that signals "future power" (Williams, "Melodrama" 71), a belief in the transcendence of current hopelessness. Iheartedwardcullen explains,

> I cried when I read "The End." It was so tragic cuz I knew that meant the series was over and it was very depressing!!! When I was getting close to the end I tried putting it down for a few hours or so, making plans with some friends 2 keep me from finishing it so fast. Lol. But then it got 2 much and I just finished it:] it's so sad that it was the end but atleast we have some *Twilight* movies going 2 b coming out in the future. Only 12 more days!!! [smiling emoticon]

As with other girls participating in TwilightTEENS's fan forum, iheartedwardcullen seems to display a sense of humor that displaces criticism about her strategies for avoiding the ending. Her conscious refusal to experience the novel's conclusion is an act of defying norms learned in school that dictate the prompt conclusion of a literary text. Alluding to the first cinematic installment *Twilight* is also a way for fans like iheartedwardcullen to defy finality.

EdwardLove offers an over-the-stop statement that elevates the reading experience to life-and-death terms, which is so conventionally melodramatic: "It was so scary and sad to see those words. I died. Just sat and cried for ages. But it's never really going to be over. We'll keep reading it over and over again" ("The end"). While girls on TwilightTEENS' discussion forum generally avoid speaking for others, by doing so in this case, EdwardLove signals solidarity in the face of disappointment. Interestingly, girls' responses to *Breaking Dawn*'s melodramatic ending differ from the kind of responses male audiences have reported in relation to melodrama. Janet Staiger notices how male fans of Daniel Craig's first James Bond film were moved to tears upon the death of Vespa, Bond's love interest (who turns out to be evil).

Surprised by their emotional reactions, some male fans went to online discussion forums seeking confirmation that their crying was "normal." This validation-seeking is a practice girls illustrate, but Staiger finds that males rationalize the sad ending as a necessity of serialization ("The First").[1] *Twilight* girl fans on this forum, rather, defy endings by promising to reread, dwelling with melodramatic moments within and throughout the series.

Girls reread to reexperience the intense feelings of Bella's frustration and pain throughout her trials and tribulations as a human in love with a vampire. They spend more time empathizing with these emotions than time considering the conclusion of the series. The importance of these rereading practices cannot be understated because scholars often judge a text in relation to its final outcome. In *Twilight*'s case, Moruzi determines the saga's ending, in which Bella is an immortal and beautiful vampire, who is also married and a mother, positions Bella as a perfect "postfeminist agent," the woman who has it all (55). If girls are spending more time within the series itself, as their responses suggest, the saga's appeal rests not in its final heteronormative and postfeminist outcome, but in the conflicts about a human girl's frustration with her own humanity and those very postfeminist pressures in the preceding three novels.

Rereading suggests that girls return to the saga and communicate with each other to encounter melodrama's validation of feelings, especially frustrations with their own real-life restrictions. In girl culture, melodrama validates the gravity of the mundane. Girls' repeat readings of the saga offer key insight to an interpretation of the saga's melodramatic conclusion, which, like *Jane Eyre*, involves a marriage and a baby. Through rereading, girls may in fact be rejecting an ending that Driscoll also argues that they are indeed shut out of:

> *Breaking Dawn* brings multiple closures to Bella's narrative: resolved love and marriage; sex, maternity, and childbirth; death and the end of physical change. These closures are sparingly used in teen film, and generally in order to be undone or questioned, as in the endless returns from the frontier of death by numerous teen film monsters and their final girls. Considered on its own, *Breaking Dawn* is a fantasy novel with no special attention to girls—not even its terror of the maternal body or its obsessive representation of sex behind euphemistic cuts to the next morning is especially about girls. ("Girl" 110)

Recognizing these melodramatic impulses in conversation with other melodramatic conventions encourages us to spend more time considering the appeal of spiraling whirls of affective discourse *throughout* the series.

Flashbacks and Revisions On-screen: Critiquing the End

After they read the last book, girl fans report going back to the beginning in order to experience the saga's sensations again and again. In fact, through musical and visual flashbacks, *The Twilight Saga*: *Breaking Dawn-Parts 1* and *2* indulge the same impulses, offering closure, but "rereading" previous installments of the saga at the same time. Just as girls use these rereading strategies to reject the saga's conclusion (in spite of taking pleasure in it) the final film rehearses a rejection of its own ending that solidifies an appreciation for melodrama's critical capacity in girl culture.

The *Twilight* franchise's awareness about its own melodramatic tendencies is fascinating to consider in an examination concerned with the films' melodramatic expression of coming-of-age female subjectivity. Condon expresses an explicit appreciation for melodrama as a film genre:

> I am a big fan of classic Hollywood genres, and melodrama is a genre that has fallen out of fashion. But some of our greatest directors worked in that form. It allows you to be immersed in emotion. To do that with camera and design and music and color… I very much embraced that. Also, because it often puts women and women's concerns at the center, I think it is often devalued, which is a shame. ("Bill")

In another interview, Condon reiterates his attentiveness to women: "I think there is a great fantasy element to movies in general. And I think that women don't get to fantasize as much as teenage boys do. […] Especially in these bigger tentpole movies, they are all boy movies" ("Exclusive"). Condon goes on to agree with the interviewer's question that he targeted "every generation" rather than "just teenage girls" ("Exclusive"). Condon, an openly gay man, is attuned to feminine discourse and women (although not necessarily girls in the way the Hardwicke is) and brings a campy sensibility to his adaptations. The flashback sequences and reprisals of songs from the previous three films make Condon's adaptations seem aware of themselves in postmodern and self-reflexive ways. This self-reflexivity is exactly how Condon's own Sirkian melodramatic tendencies will critique that which they represent.

Condon's Sirkian sensibility is immediately apparent in the film's coloring. Similar to Weitz's *New Moon* (see Chap. 7), Condon's *Breaking Dawn* films favor the kind of stark coloring we associate with Sirk, especially

whites, reds, and yellows. Elsaesser describes Sirk's use of color as "visual metaphors" in *Written on the Wind*:

> a yellow sports-car drawing up the gravelled driveway to stop in front of a pair of shining white doric columns outside the Hadley mansion is not only a powerful piece of American iconography, especially when taken in a plunging high-angle shot, but the contrary associations of imperial splendour and vulgar materials (polished chrome-plate and stucco plaster) create a tension of correspondences and dissimilarities in the same image, which perfect chrysallises the decadent affluence and melancholic energy that give the film its uncanny fascination. (Elsaesser 53)

In both *Breaking Dawn* films, the luxurious and indulgent uses of color not only create aesthetic beauty. Their starkness actually also renders the characters and settings almost cartoonish; although Condon reprises the settings and shot compositions of previous films (e.g., Bella and Edward in their meadow; a view that looks out onto the water from the beach; aerial views of the forest), the colors, even in the naturalistic settings, are so distinctive that they crack the semblance of reality. Over-the-top coloring, then, begins to move the saga's major outcome—eternal heterosexual vampire love epitomized by a human-vampire hybrid child—into the realm of the ridiculous.

Breaking Dawn-Parts 1 and *2* use a variety of flashback techniques to reread the series, rehearsing some of the most memorable melodramatic impulses from the previous films—and even unpublished literary texts. Condon's films invoke backstory flashbacks, cutaway scenes that appeal directly to reader-fans of *Twilight*. One of these cutaway scenes involves Edward telling a story from *Midnight Sun*, which is Meyer's famously leaked unpublished manuscript of *Twilight* from Edward's perspective. This addition to the *Breaking Dawn* narrative offers a backstory about the vampire's former penchant for murdering and feeding on men who are rapists, a reaffirmation of Edward's virtue.

True to the melodramatic form, the cinematic *Breaking Dawn*'s flashbacks are not just narrative scenes—they are musical, too. Actual songs from the soundtrack are reprised, especially during *Part 1*'s wedding and reception scenes. These musical choices are over-the-top, hitting the viewer over the head with the meta-commentary on the film itself. For example, a reprisal of Iron and Wine's "Flightless Bird, American Mouth" plays during the wedding ceremony. In the first *Twilight* film, this song

had played as background music during the prom scene in which Bella and Edward dance together alone in the gazebo. The idea that Bella—and possibly also Edward—are recalling this song and that moment is suggested by the camera that is circling them. Close-up shots of their faces, as well as the empty seats of once-occupied benches, signify their perception of sharing another intimate moment alone with each other. In addition, songs that were non-diegetic music in the first three films are now played in the background of the reception. Following the logic of the saga, Alice Cullen, who planned the wedding, would have asked a string quartet to cover songs such as "My Love" and "All Yours" (both from *Eclipse*'s soundtrack). The film, then, implies that the fictional characters are aware of music that audiences have known, building intimacy between those on-screen and off through music.

Interestingly, there is some famous melodramatic textual precedent for *Breaking Dawn*'s non-diegetic to diegetic musical choices during the wedding. The popular 1970s BBC drama, *Upstairs, Downstairs* (a precursor to today's *Downton Abbey*), also concludes with a wedding scene. In it, Georgina Worsley (Lesley-Ann Down), one of the latter seasons' "upstairs" characters, walks down the aisle to the show's theme song, "The Edwardians," which was composed specifically for the show. Recalling this song in this moment is a poignant choice given a preceding traumatic incident involving one of the main characters, James Bellamy, a World War I veteran, who suffered severe posttraumatic stress from the gas bombs and, later, the loss of his wife. Although he recovers slightly and asks Georgina to marry him in the final season, she rejects his offer. He commits suicide, most of the original members of the Bellamy family, who had once occupied the setting of the drama, 165 Eaton Place, are dead; the remaining members leave to live in a smaller residence elsewhere. The ending is a poignant commentary on the changing British society at the beginning of the century. Thus, when Georgina walks down the aisle to the drama's theme song, her association with the music signals hope and continuity in the face of radical change and endings. Such redemptive qualities of music are upheld in *Breaking Dawn*'s wedding scenes, which recall Bella's former self-consciousness and struggle to be with Edward and the melodramatic impulses that critique limiting discourses of girlhood.

In another melodramatic maneuver that heightens emotional intensity through musical flashbacking, Burwell returned to score the final two films, allowing for the reprisals of songs, melodies, and leitmotifs from his foundation score. Immediately, from the film's opening seconds,

Burwell's signature sounds remind the viewer of the first *Twilight* film, the one that started the franchise. Musical continuity is also important to the narrative because Edward writes another lullaby for their daughter, "Renesmee's Lullaby"; Burwell's signature sounds evoke the idea that Edward has composed the new song. Yet Burwell's score is familiar, so it is also predictable, losing some of its urgency and surprise when it is reprised. Nevertheless, bringing Burwell back to the franchise allows for the reprisal of his composition, "Bella's Lullaby," the song Edward composes for Bella in *Twilight*.

Although "Bella's Lullaby" is reprised in various degrees throughout Condon's films, its role in the final sequence of *Part 1* is most significant. Emaciated and seemingly dead, Bella lays perfectly still; the camera begins to take note of her body's changes, images that are interrupted with a CGI visual of venom pulsing through her veins and healing her broken bones. This cartoonish red blood and bone imagery is another Sirkian choice; while indicative of her physical interiority, the graphics do not match the rest of the film's aesthetic. Once Bella has undergone her complete transformation (and beautification), the score transitions to the recognizable melody of "Bella's Lullaby." The camera offers a close-up shot of her vampire face, reminiscent of Snow White, before cutting to black. The flashback sequence then begins with a close-up shot from the first film, Bella's face as she lies down next to Edward in the meadow. The music and imagery is magnetized to Bella's interiority, suggesting her life flashing before her eyes. Including scenes from the previous films, the stylized montage is overlaid with blood droplets and falling snow, recreating the sensation of watching a scrapbook. The images fluidly blend into each other, overwhelmingly affective, directing the viewer to remember alongside Bella as she recalls the joy and pain of loving Edward. At the end of this sequence, younger versions of Bella's parents hold a baby, presumably Bella. The image of a three-person family parallels Bella's new family with Edward and Renesmee.

Obviously, this flashback sequence recreates a sense of Bella's interiority and her memories. They also cue a *Twilight* reader-viewer-fan's own memories: for girls who were in their early teens/preteen years when the first *Twilight* film premiered, it may feel as if they grew up alongside the 5-year-film franchise. So, Bella's on-screen growth and development may coincide with that of girl audiences; as they remember Bella's past, they may also remember their own. Evoking nostalgia is certainly a sentimental melodramatic impulse.

But melodramatic flashbacks work in another critical way, too. Just as girls resist the ending (and the outcomes) by promising to reread, the last two films use flashbacks to critique the conventional and conservative ending they are depicting. In melodrama, flashbacks facilitate an elliptical narrative structure and evoke a sense of claustrophobia. Susan Hayward offers a concise summary of melodrama's penchant for flashbacks that is applicable to the cinematic *Breaking Dawn* films:

> The melodrama is an oxymoronic product in that it has to produce dramatic action whilst staying firmly in place; this gives it an inherently circular thematic structure, hence often the recourse to flashbacks (Cook, 1985: 80). This circularity also signals claustrophobia. The melodrama is played out in the home or in small-town environments. Time is made to stand still, suffocating the child, teenager, young adult—especially women. (Hayward 234)

Through flashbacks, the films critique their own presentation of heteronormative domestic bliss by rendering it stifling. If this is the shining moment the saga has all been leading up to, why rehearse the past to such a degree? *Breaking Dawn-Part 2* continues to offer more flashbacks. *Part 2* even flashbacks to its own *Part 1* at the end when Bella offers Edward a window into her mind. Edward, along with the viewer, witnesses images from the previous films dissolving and fading into each other—from their initial meeting in *Twilight* to the much more recent wedding ceremony. Following this flashback montage, the film's credits even offers a curtain-call flashback, reviewing all of the actors (featured with their real and character names) who had played major roles in every film of the saga. The abundance of flashbacks is an emotional onslaught so over the top it is suffocating.

Breaking Dawn-Part 2 takes the questioning of its own ending a step further, offering an alternate vision of the future not available in the novel. Bella imagines her entire Cullen family killed in the vampire battle. But the events only appear to be happening; when they are over, we understand them as Bella's imagination waking nightmare, her projection of fear. The alternate ending is sensational and startling for readers of the series (e.g., when I saw the film in theaters, people in the audience screamed). The sequence allows the film some on-screen action that the novel denies because the battle is averted largely due to Bella's and Alice's cleverness and quick thinking.

This alternate ending is also a shattering of the conservative ending of happy vampire couples having happy vampire sex for eternity. The franchise effectively kills itself: five years ago, these characters were sexy

and intriguing and new, now the culture is bored with them—what better way to experience the catharsis of melodramatic feeling than by killing them all? The film is akin to a Shakespearean tragedy's ending: everyone onstage is lying down dead, but then the actors all get up and do their little dance, so that a "happy" ending is still there. The happy ending is a performance, so unrealistic it cracks the semblance of reality to such a degree that critiquing the trite and conventional representation of coupling and motherhood is unavoidable.

Driscoll recognizes how the literary *Breaking Dawn*'s ending trades in a thematic subject matter with no particular appeal to an existing girl culture and, at the same time, recognizes that *Twilight* has become girl culture—so it follows that the saga's ending would, then, enter into girl culture. Published prior to the final film's premiere, Driscoll's speculations about the cinematic adaptations' treatment of the saga's conclusions are, then, surprisingly accurate: "Bella's surmounting of both adolescence and girl culture certainly still leaves a place for the girl audience, but this place is the one for official witnesses—mourners at a funeral—rather than fellow-travelers" (110). Flashbacks and alternate endings work together to allow for funeral-like mourning. It is not just the culture at large that is over *Twilight*; many girl fans themselves have moved on. The girls who grew up with the series may remember their affection for it, but they may not love it in the same way or for the same reasons that they did in 2008. Those flashbacks recall the initial excitement of the franchise—and, like a lullaby, put it to bed at the same time.

Conclusion

Girls reread the *Twilight* series to dwell within the saga, to reexperience melodramatic conflicts such as suffering, which validates emotion, particularly frustration with social pressures facing girls. Critical interpretations that focus too much on *Twilight*'s final conclusions (which girls sometimes reject or reinterpret) ignore the pages and pages of emotional struggle *throughout* the literary series, as well as its five cinematic adaptations. Attention to melodramatic impulses, then, encourages examinations that are attuned to affect rather than outcomes. Analyses of *Twilight* (and other melodramatic texts in girl culture) would be aided by understanding melodrama's power to critique that which it represents, as Condons films clearly do. The complex rhetorical outcomes of melodrama, which also include the validation of frustration with the social constraints facing girls in their historical moments, account for melodrama's sustained popularity.

Note

1. In her study of males' affective responses to *Casino Royale*, Staiger sees Williams's finding about tears as future power as "a bit optimistic" ("First" 18). Staiger demonstrates how Moretti's conclusions about tears and readers of literature are more consistent with her study of male viewers and *Casino Royale*:

> I really like this idea of tears as a defense mechanism, something to which Moretti alludes as well within his essay. Applying the idea to *Casino Royale*, I would postulate that the unconscious wish is not for the success of the love affair, but for Vesper's death, which allows the availability of Bond as an action-hero who will endure more tortures and more sexual liaisons. Recall the viewers' responses acknowledging the narrative necessity as well as payoff for Vesper's death. Her removal from the story offers up Bond as the redeemed protagonist to continue the story. It is significant that, in this era of filmmaking, creating franchises and serializing protagonists are part of what viewers expect. ("First" 19)

That Staiger's findings are consistent with Moretti's conclusions about boys and literature is not too surprising—both are based on the experiences of younger males. When girl readers explain their tears, however, they do not present exactly the same kind of resignation to melodramatic loss in the service of serialization; I argue girls articulate more resistance. Thus, as Mercer and Shingler note, the gendered aspects of crying in response to melodrama have not been fully addressed: "The question of whether male and female viewers cry at the same things in a melodramatic film has barely arisen within film scholarship, constituting another uncharted area" (91).

Epilogue: In the Post-Twilight Afterglow

Girls, Excess, and Defenses

A mode of excess, melodrama is often judged harshly for its over-the-top tendencies, especially when these exaggerations relate to girl characters and audiences. Once catalogued, Bella's and Jane's ongoing persecution and presentations of feelings might seem over-the-top. The expressive discourse uttered by Rochester and Edward might be deemed excessive. The couples' happy endings might be disregarded as clichéd happily ever afters. Yet through their unrealistic realism, melodramatic impulses validate emotion, promote intimacy between girls, and shine a critical light on restrictive social constructions of girlhood. Melodramatic conventions, such as a plot driven by villainy in order to delineate good and evil, and conventional impulses such as music, expression, moral feelings, dreams, female villains, suffering, crying, and closure are perhaps predictable. At the same time, they are comforting, especially for many girl readers. These impulses, inherited from the nineteenth century, work together, bleeding into each other and collectively feeding the melodramatic mode in girl culture.

Girls' preferences for melodramatic texts need defense in a culture that marginalizes girls' emotions and questions their choices. Importantly, however, girls themselves defend their cultural preferences, as one girl's conflict with a school librarian illustrates:

> :o Okay … So me & my friends read twilight end of last year … and like all the rest of you guys … fell in love with it, and it wasnt soon before long that we were edward cullen obsessing …. After having finished reading Eclipse

K. Kapurch, *Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Century*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-58169-3

> for the 7th time a couple of weeks ago … I thought "HEY maybe I should read Twilight again …" So I asked my friend to borrow it and she said sorry I don't have it, I went to the school library and *gasp,schock,horror* They didn't have it … So I walked straight up to the librarian and asked to request it … this was her reply
>
> "TWILIGHT?!?!" (basically screaming)
>
> "You are the tenth person today asking for this god-damned book … I WILL NOT HAVE IT in my library … no I will not, this is a catholic school and I will not tolerate a story on vampires and romance and nonsense, I will never ever get that book for this library … no siree … it is BANNED by the principal"
>
> Is this the most ridicolous thing you have ever heard?!?!
>
> Do you think that this is fair?! :(Or do you think that it is understandable … considering it's a catholic school? Personally I think that it is ridicolous!! Me and my friend were soo angry that we wrote twilight-stephenie meyer 100 times on a blank sheet of paper, cut them out and put them in the request box … ("WHAT?! Twilight banned from library! :-0")

e.c_obsession_syndrome's passionate recollection documents the resistance that one girl and her friend encountered—as well as the resistance issued back by the girls themselves. Whether or not the librarian actually used this exact language, the account offers a girl's perception of how melodramatic texts are derided as "nonsense," an attitude available in so many of the clichés adults use to belittle a young person's feelings, such as "You're just being melodramatic." Even if e.c_obsession_syndrome is exaggerating the librarian's word choice, this is yet another example of how girls themselves use melodramatic discourse to negotiate feelings of powerlessness.

The sexist and ageist dismissals of the melodramatic saga and its girl readers do not exist in a vacuum; they are part of a public discourse that seeks to control girls. The assault on girls' popular culture preferences echoes the broader attack on girls' and women's abilities to make choices, especially about the pleasure and health of their bodies. The 2012 US presidential contest illustrated this clearly. During the years leading up to the election (which occurred during the same month as the final *Twilight* film's November premiere), the USA was embroiled in disputes about contraception access connected to government mandates for health care providers to cover female birth control. This controversy continues as the Affordable Health Care Act has gone into effect and debates about

defunding Planned Parenthood persist, creating a climate in which the female body remains a heated and public site of contest.

Perhaps one of the reasons *Twilight* is so troublesome to some adult critics is that this coming-of-age narrative is about a girl who is consumed with decisions about her own mortal body. (These decisions include whether or not to have sex with a vampire, whether or not to be bitten by a vampire, whether or not to jump off a cliff in order to feel close to the vampire, etc.). Admittedly, this obsession with the body is often directed toward boy-girl romance, a heteronormative privileging that feminist scholars should question—but not at the cost of denying the complex appeal of romance and melodrama for girls. A story about struggling to gain bodily sovereignty in light of physical constraints may resonate with girls, whose bodies are sites of discursive contest. According to Ruth Saxton, "The body of the young girl—whether athlete or potential Miss America—is the site of heated battles, not only among parents, teachers, coaches, but also those who would exploit her sexuality, lure her to internalize their fantasies and purchase their products" (xxi). Following this line of thought, perhaps one of the reasons *Twilight* fans, who cried and screamed in public, are so alarming to some adults is that these girls' bodily reactions seem to be outside of adults' control—just as those screaming Beatlemaniacs were in the 1960s. Recognizing melodrama's critical capacity and empowering functions advances an appreciation for the progressive potential of this pervasive mode of discourse in girl culture.

Future Research on Melodrama, Girls, and Youth

This book is about *Twilight*—but it's not really about *Twilight*. By exploring novels, films, and girl readers' responses together, this book begins a conversation about melodrama and girls. How does melodrama function in works representing, consumed by, and created by girls (and youth) in the nineteenth century, throughout the twentieth century, and in the new millennium? This book only scratches the surface of that question. For scholars of children's and adolescent literature, exploring this historical trajectory could have important consequences for understanding the development of literary genres for young people. Historically, both melodrama and children's and adolescent literature have suffered from low expectations from classist, ageist, and sexist critics, who belie the texts for the audiences to whom they appeal. Contemporary YA literature, however, is rife with melodramatic impulses. The "problem novel," which has

been a standard in adolescent literature since the twentieth century, generally follows melodramatic form; it finds contemporary expression in the John Green's YA repertoire. Understanding and naming works as "melodrama" is not a diminishment of those novels and young people's problems. Rather, melodrama's inclinations to side with the powerless remains one of the reasons these novels appeal to both young people and adults.

Following my comparative treatment of *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight Saga*, a more comprehensive treatment of melodramatic impulses in literature for young people is a logical next step. Not only would this kind of study expose the cultural biases that have diminished melodrama and children's literature alike, but it would also recover an important historical legacy in the development of literature for young people. The nineteenth century is considered the "Golden Age" of children's literature, and the Victorian era also gave rise to melodrama, which informed the development of drama, the novel, film, and television. Recognizing how these roots grew out of the same soil would be a fascinating project.

In addition to the study of children's and adolescent literature, this book's findings have implications for the study of Victorian literature and girlhood. Given my focus on the nineteenth century's legacy in contemporary novels and film, this conversation is particularly relevant to scholars of neo-Victorian literature and other arts. Furthermore, the prevalence of the Brontës novels in contemporary popular culture, especially literary texts consumed by girls, is another area on which future scholarship can expand. Do continual references to *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* in young adult literature say something significant about the representation of twenty-first-century girlhood and girl readers? I suggest scholars invested in the study of girlhood, the nineteenth century, and the Brontës might expand on my findings to explore further the legacy of nineteenth-century texts in girl culture.

Finally, throughout this book, I highlight melodrama's sensational potential, supported by theories that associate tears with a kind of erotic release or agency in a broader aspect. This reinforces the bodily properties inherent in the melodramatic experience. We could continue following the trajectory from *Jane Eyre* to *Twilight* to the most popular and mainstream erotic trilogy, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, which began as *Twilight* fan fiction and has received its own Hollywood adaptation. An analysis of E.L. James's novel's inheritance of *Twilight*'s melodramatic impulses may continue to affirm the fluidity between tears and other ecstatic responses. Realizing melodrama's validation of coming-of-age female sexual desire through the melodramatic mode, then, has powerful implications to the study of popular culture.

Notes

1. Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz, Melissa A. Click, and Jennifer Stevens Aubrey's "Relating to Twilight: Fans' Responses to Love and Romance in the Vampire Franchise" does reflect a girl-centered ethnographic approach to fandom research concerned with genre. Behm-Morawitz et al. offer insightful contributions to the study of *Twilight* female fans (both girls and women), by revealing their varying perspectives on romance, as well as their critical evaluation of representations of romantic relationships in Meyer's series. Yet the study's authors employed "an online survey and focus group interviews with self-identified Twilight fans" in addition to including adult subjects (142). Thus, fan responses are largely the result of adult researchers' framework for soliciting responses. In another reception study, Ananya Mukherjea does not speak of tween or younger teen girls, but she examines young women and gay male readers' use of *Twilight* to negotiate complex issues related to feminine subject positions, feminist thought, and power. These discoveries parallel some of the findings in Behm-Morawitz et al.'s aforementioned study, whereby girl and women readers' higher levels of feminist identification resulted in decreased attachments with the Bella-Edward relationship. However, as I have noted, methodologies associated with the interviewer's direct influence can be problematic since responses are directed to the researcher as audience for participants' discourse. As a result, I encourage an approach that examines girl-authored texts, whose primary audiences are not adult researchers, but, rather, other girls.
2. Staiger raises the question of validity related to ethnographic methods based on the researcher's presence:

   > One of the most widely praised recent methods for searching out audience effects and meaning-making is ethnography, which, however, also has a strong record of criticism. Throughout their book, John Tulloch and Henry Jenkins (1995) discuss problems with investigating audiences and fans, including the power differential between ethnographers and their subjects and more specific matters such as leading audiences and interviewees toward answers that the interviewers desire. Factoring in the influence of being studied is necessary. (*Media* 14)

   Anxiety over the researcher's status contributing to hierarchical relations and a dominating influence of the observer over the observed becomes even more relevant when adult researchers engage youth cultures. I advocate an ethnographic approach that does not include an adult researcher's instigation of girls' discourse.
3. There is a methodological precedent for speaking alongside fans of melodrama in ethnographic research. Ellen Seiter et al.'s "'Don't treat us like

we're so stupid and naïve': Toward an Ethnography of Soap Opera Viewers" demonstrates how the genre operates "in the context of everyday life for women working the home" (223) and reveals complex viewing strategies, especially multilayered identification strategies. Seiter et al.'s commitment to speaking alongside their fan participants in scholarship is a feminist approach to ethnography echoed in Driscoll's explanation of girls' studies research: "Ethnographers have more recently turned to a model of the ethnographic encounter that stresses the role of research subjects as active participants in, rather than passive objects of, the ethnographic encounter. Feminist ethnographers have been particularly interested in this strategy, which seems compatible with a feminist ethics" (*Girls* 165). This is an approach I bring to the study of *Twilight* girl culture; as much as possible, I present girls' voices in uninterrupted and unedited passages.

4. In general, to locate girls' online fandoms, one needs to be attuned to where on the web girl fans may go. In her study of girls' online fandom, Sharon Mazzarella offers a "snowball sampling procedure" that begins with a Google search and concludes with a sample of 10 girls' websites (145). In order to search effectively, an ethnographer needs a definite familiarity with the texts around which girls are cohering as fans, especially in order to be conversant with their shared languages. In fan communities, as in speech communities, a common language is a means of community building, establishing hierarchy, and excluding outsiders. Staiger notes, "Talk of several types occurs among fans" and that one particular type, "*recognition*" is "the use of catch phrases or insider information that would identify the depth of knowledge that a 'true' fan would know, creating a system of marking who does and does not belong to the fan community or establishing degrees of fan knowledge" (*Media* 108). For example, "Team Switzerland" is a moniker fans of Meyer's *Twilight* will know (whether they are girls, adult women, or males) as a neutral position in the Team Edward/Team Jacob debate. Knowing the origin of the reference to Switzerland relies on insider knowledge from Meyer's saga (the third novel, *Eclipse*, to be exact). Furthermore, other communicative practices such as makeup, dress, and deportment similarly function as a kind of language to articulate membership in the fan community. Lisa A. Lewis' book-length study of girl fans of Madonna recognizes the importance of fan style in relation to girls' fandoms.

   Fan-specific websites are a good place to start when locating girls' online fandoms, but sometimes, particularly in the case of written text, it is not always clear whether participants in online forums are indeed girls. TwilightTEENS offers a unique opportunity since the forum is organized with the majority of subtopics and threads delineated for girls under age-18. Sometimes, the process of discerning girls' online fan activity involves

recognizing adult-generated places for girls to talk about mass media (*Seventeen* magazine's website for instance) or girls' participation in sites previously considered the domain of adults (such as YouTube). Furthermore, YouTube, MySpace, and Facebook offer unique opportunities since these sites often allow girls' to project their own images through pictures and video.

5. Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson's explain electronic communication's capacity to overcome previous limitations for fan communication, especially for young fans: "Fan texts are now overwhelmingly electronic, and many are transient. Moreover, demographics have shifted: ever younger fans who previously would not have had access to fannish culture except through their parents can now enter the fan space effortlessly; financial resources have become less of a concern because access to a computer is the only prerequisite; and national boundaries and time zones have ceased to limit fannish interaction" (13).
6. My reception data is necessarily limited to girls who access online spaces, which may bespeak certain class privileges. Middle-and upper-class girls likely have more access to the necessary technology in their homes, especially in their bedrooms. In addition, filmmaking and other artistic endeavors are often facilitated by technological equipment (cameras, instruments, and editing software) along with spare leisure time. This leisure time also reflects class privileges related to family income and other means of support, which afford girls the space and time to participate regularly in a fandom. Still, with better accessibility to computers, the Internet, and digital literacy programs in schools and libraries (and increased wireless access in many public places), in addition to the falling costs of personal computers and other hardware, girls have more contact with online spaces and technology than ever before (Kearney, "Productive" 134). Also, although one might initially assume that a specific concern with girl fans of US author Meyer's *Twilight* indicates an exclusive focus on American girls, or at least English-speaking girls, the phenomenal appeal of the saga as a worldwide sensation is visible through the diverse participants in online fan communities like TwilightTEENS. While TheTwilightReader and the members of the Bella Cullen Project are American, white, and appear to be middle class, the same cannot be assumed for girls participating on TwilightTEENS website or for the saga's fan-base as a whole.
7. The community associated with the website TwilightMOMS remained active longer than its teen subsidiary, which no longer exists. Although TwilightTEENS has a Twitter account, no tweets have been issued since 2011, the same year the website fell off. This offers insight into the nature of the *Twilight* phenomenon in popular culture. In many ways, older women "took over" the *Twilight* fandom from girls, a perspective that

some girls on the discussion forum articulate when they discuss their own mothers' fascination as in competition with their own. Nevertheless, other girls recognize these shared mother-daughter interests as a positive point of connection, rather than the subject of a turf war (see Leogrande). Still, the shift in girls' preferences also reflects girls' tendencies to move more quickly onto other, more current cultural phenomena.

8. All of the passages include original spelling, capitalization, and grammatical errors, as well as line breaks in an effort to reproduce girls' writing in a form as close to the original as possible.
9. In their study, "Moved to Tears: Weeping in the Cinema in Postwar Britain," Sue Harper and Vincent Porter distinguish "crying" from "weeping": "When Mass-Observation asked its respondents whether they ever cried in the cinema, it was using a scientifically imprecise term. For although the word crying was used in common parlance to include a wide range of physiological activities, the term used by most scientists is that of weeping, which can vary in intensity from a lump in the throat, by way of a moistening of the eye, to tears accompanied by sobbing" (153–54).
10. Over the year, Liza's collection of *Twilight* merchandise, in addition to her own creative productions, grows exponentially. Liza's collection, spills over into every part of her bedroom and is certainly not confined to the shelf she calls her "*Twilight* Shrine" ("My twilight shrine"). In terms of fan behavior, Staiger suggests a category, "**the extension of fan partialities into everyday living**" (105, bold in original), which encapsulates the process of collecting: "Collections of material—books, videos, photos, everyday items such as cups with star images—make up a part of the physical world that a fan experiences in daily living" (Staiger, *Media* 106).
11. Liza solicits viewer participation to foster connection and maintain community using the types of fan-talk that media scholars have observed: "*recognition*" talk is "the use of catch phrases or insider information that would identify the depth of knowledge that a 'true' fan would know"; functioning together, "*request*" and "*diffusion*" talk relates to how "People ask for and receive information" (Staiger, *Media* 108, emphasis in the original).
12. Liza's YouTube activity is somewhat consistent with what Sarah Banet-Weiser has observed in relation to girls' use of YouTube. Banet-Weiser's examination of 100 girl-produced *YouTube* videos locates the girls' efforts to "brand" themselves as activities particularly representative of postfeminist discourse (279). Banet-Weiser explains how the videos she examines "both support and perpetuate a commercial post-feminist discourse in which girls and young women are ostensibly 'empowered' through public bodily performances and user-generated content" (278). Given the postfeminist context, however, Banet-Weiser ultimately argues girls' empowerment only goes so far—especially given the punitive function of the user

feedback, which she argues "is crucial to the logic of self-branding" (279). Banet-Weiser includes a close treatment of this user feedback, especially noting the comments' disciplinary and evaluative functions. She does not, however, deal enough with girls' further negotiation of those disciplinary evaluations: What happens when girls talk back to the user feedback? How do we make sense of girls' online engagements and empowerment when they delete comments or respond to comments with their own? comebacks Liza's efforts to market herself as TheTwilightReader and to accumulate subscribers are consistent with the postfeminist themes Banet-Weiser notices. Yet Liza does not present herself in exactly the same way as the girls in videos Banet-Weiser examines; Banet-Weiser's girls often dance to music, offering their bodies for public scrutiny and often receiving ugly, hateful, and sexist feedback in the comments sections. Liza actively works to exclude viewers who are not interested in *Twilight* and promises to delete hateful comments ("10 Reasons"). Further, when Liza disagrees with a viewer comment, she—and her friends—often actively defend her choices, particularly for melodrama.

Appendix. Methodology: Girls' Online Fandom

Methodology and Rationale for Three *Twilight* Fangirl Online Communities

By observing girls' online fan discourse at the same time that I was examining the *Twilight* novels and films, I recognized the ubiquity of the melodramatic mode in girl culture. I did not go looking for melodrama in girls' fan discourse. Rather, the theory emerged when I was observing *Twilight* fandoms as a separate project from my interest in the *Twilight* literary and cinematic texts. What I came to realize was that these projects were not separate at all—and that the melodramatic mode explained the affect and intensity of emotion in each realm of adult and girl-generated girl culture. Throughout this book, I refer to three online communities of girl fans: TwilightTEENS, TheTwilightReader, and the Bella Cullen Project. Their fan discourse illustrates affective reactions to—and pleasure in reading—the saga's melodramatic impulses. These girls' own discourse invokes the melodramatic mode, a discovery that warrants a theory of melodrama as a pervasive mode of discourse in girl culture.

Methodologically, my analysis of girls' online discourse is similar to scholarly explorations of girls' diaries (see Introduction), whereby the adult researcher has access only to the girl-authored text, but not to the girl herself. In this way, I am also working to discern melodrama's significance based on what girls have to say "*on their own terms,*" as Janice Radway puts it (qtd. in Modleski, *Loving* xv, emphasis in original). Other reception studies of *Twilight* fans have gained insight into the phenomenon by interviewing

K. Kapurch, *Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Century*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-58169-3

and surveying girls and women.[1] But such studies set out to uncover what readers think about certain ideological aspects of the saga (especially heterosexual romance) instead of allowing insight to emerge from the discourse of girls themselves. Interpretations of girl readers' responses are, then, also influenced by the researcher's position as an adult in a semi-authority position.[2] As much as is possible, I incorporate girls' responses in order to give their voices space, an effort to speak alongside them rather than for them.[3]

Much like diaries' immediacy to life experiences, girls' online discourse documents the current moment of their fandom, rather than retrospective accounts. Thus, although I have compiled, selected, and organized girls' responses to *Twilight*, I have not prompted these responses, which range from written dialogue on an online forum to musical compositions to short vlogs (video blogs) and films. This cultural production shows how girls themselves offer a range of discourse certifying popular texts' appeal. And, in the case of the *Twilight* phenomenon, girls favor heightened expression and emotion when they respond to particular melodramatic moments in the saga. Through their own melodramatic expression (which, in turn, affirms the empowering qualities of *Twilight*'s melodramatic impulses), girls themselves offer the evidence that debunks some adults' explanations of their interpretive strategies.

From 2007 to 2012, I observed girls' *Twilight*-oriented fandom on the web, noting recurring themes and trends. Because of my familiarity with texts associated with the *Twilight* phenomenon, I did not necessarily set out to find TwilightTEENS, TheTwilightReader, and the Bella Cullen Project in my efforts to locate girls' voices. Instead, these particular communities of girl fans emerged as a part of my regular observations of online expressions of *Twilight* fandom.[4] When I began to engage the three communities in a more studied way, especially through daily and weekly observations, I realized that *Twilight* readers' fan activities defied adults' role-model concerns and critiques about the saga's aesthetic quality. These girls also consistently draw upon melodrama to articulate their cultural preferences, to build community with other girls, and even to reject outsiders' criticism of their pro-*Twilight* stance.

Why these three online communities of *Twilight* girl fans? In short, they offer a representative picture of girls' *Twilight* fandom given the timing and type of their fan activities. None of these communities required memberships or special logins to access the site, so all of the texts provided were public—even though the discourse tends toward the personal. The public nature of this online activity indeed lends itself to melodramatic

performance.[5] As evidenced by public user profiles, girls from all over the world participated on TwilightTEENS's discussion forum. This online space opened the door for global encounters, illustrating not only how the *Twilight* phenomenon transcended its American roots, but also how melodrama in girl culture is not limited to girls in the USA. While TheTwilightReader (Liza) and the girls of the Bella Cullen Project are American girls who are white and middle class, those who participate on their websites may represent more diverse backgrounds.

Of course, *Twilight* girl fans are still participating in online spaces and in other venues—but not on the level they were prior to 2010. The three communities of fans I address in this book adhere to that pattern of activity: they were very active in 2008 and 2009, when the first two *Twilight* films helped explode the phenomenon's popularity, but their activity waned beginning in 2010. By 2011, their online activities were no longer *Twilight*-oriented; much of their discourse is no longer available on the web due to website and account deactivations. The data presented in this book were collected prior to its removal, a transience that warrants urgency about researching on girls' fandom and their cultural productions. The ephemerality of online discourse should motivate researchers of youth culture to notice what young readers put on the web for the public to view. Without an adult researcher's influence, these *Twilight* girls are documenting their own preferences for the melodramatic mode. Admittedly, the three communities of *Twilight* girls presented here do not speak for all girls who have read *Twilight*,[6] but these responses are invaluable records of actual girls' twenty-first-century pop cultural participation. Without scholarly explorations of girls' online activity, twenty-first-century girls' fan practices might be impossible to recover in the future. As a result, critics' published fears about girls' reading preferences might dominate an interpretation of the *Twilight* phenomenon as one harmful to girls.

TwilightTEENS: An Online Discussion Forum

"Twilight Teens Forum: A Teenage Twilight Fan Forum" was a discussion board on the now-defunct website TwilightTEENS. Until 2011, when activity on the site dropped off, the website was "Your #1 teen source for everything Twilight." TwilightTEENS eventually appealed for sponsorship to maintain the website in late 2011, but by 2012 the web address, twilightteens.com, was no longer valid. Still, especially around 2008–2009, when *Twilight* fan activity among girls was at a high point,

TwilightTEENS offered a popular online venue for girls' *Twilight* fandom. By December 2010, prior to the site's decline in activity, TwilightTEENS had 3,268 registered members, a substantial international following for an independent, girl-operated website ("Statistics").

Melodrama often invokes maternal themes, especially a mother character's sacrificial investments in her daughter's future (see Williams, "Something"; Kaplan). In fact, TwilightTEENS owes its existence to a "mother" website, emerging in April 2008 as an offshoot of the more successful fansite, TwilightMOMS, which now exist on Twitter and Facebook platforms.[7] TwilightTEENS's cofounder, Sara, known as FirstSight, explains how her idea developed:

> The idea of TwilightTEENS started back in March during March Break. The original idea of creating a forum came from TwilightMOMS, a site for mothers and fans who are over the age of twenty-five. They inspired me, you could say.
>
> I wanted to create a forum that provided teens and young adults, like myself, with a forum of their own to discuss Twilight and Stephenie Meyer related topics.
>
> So, with this idea, I gathered a few of my Twilight-obsessed friends (Jenni, Casey, Meg, and Michelle) and we created what you see before you! A forum for the teenage population of Twilight fans!
>
> Just after we had created the forum, I contacted TwilightMOMS about our little project. Lisa, the creator of TM, to our excitement, was more than happy to support us. We soon had formed an affiliation and the TwilightTEENS was official.
>
> Over the last month and a half, we have more than tripled in size thanks to the many people willing to advertise our forum. Now, with the help of our administration and the TwilightMOMS backing us up, we have created for you, an official TwilightTEENS website! ("About")[8]

As this description proves, the cofounders recognized the need to define a space for girls to engage *Twilight* that was distinct from the one for adult women. Although forum moderators were in their late teens and early twenties, they group themselves with "teens," a definition of adolescent girlhood that reinforces its socially defined nature (see Driscoll, *Girls*). From the beginning, moderators espoused a collaborative stance, encouraging participants to share why they joined TwilightTEENS

and suggestions for the website's improvement. This spirit of community extended beyond discussions of *Twilight*. In threads such as "The Frustration Thread" and "The Confessions Thread," girls offered each other guidance about non-*Twilight* related problems ranging from depression and relationship woes ("Miscellaneous").

On the discussion forum, girls had the opportunity to cultivate personas, projecting an online identity with made-up screen names and graphics. With such masks, girls were safe to explore topics related to their "real" lives. Online personas are also generated by the identification of a regional affiliation; in the case of these fans, their location often included a *Twilight* reference (such as "Dreaming of Forks in Florida"). Graphics and literary quotes also functioned as "signatures," appearing with each post that includes counters tallying how many times a participant posted to the forum. All of these factors contributed to the active creation of an online persona. Even though girls participating on TwilightTEENS frequently chose signatures and screen names that referenced *Twilight*, more often they playfully mixed and matched images and quotes from *Twilight* with texts such as *Harry Potter*, *The Tudors*, and *True Blood*. This variety of images immediately disrupts the limiting assumptions that girls who love *Twilight* somehow engage exclusively with the saga and its protagonist Bella.

Data presented and analyzed from the discussion forum on TwilightTEENS show how melodrama characterizes girls' conversational interaction through written discourse, especially when girls' justify *Twilight* novels in relation to their everyday, lived experiences. This finding is similar to Susan Murray's in "Saving Our So-Called Lives: Girl Fandom, Adolescent Subjectivity, and *My So-Called Life*." Murray finds:

> Although *MSCL* fans range in age, race, class, and gender, it was these teen girls who consistently and emotionally voiced the importance of the text's proximity to their own lives in their on-line writing. … The ways in which these girls make meaning involves the processes of participatory spectatorship, identification, the development of a relationship to an ideal self, and girl-culture activism. (222)

One of the factors initially motivating Murray's girls was a desire to convince ABC not to cancel *My So-Called Life*. Even though girls on TwilightTEENS were not explicitly resisting a dominant structure (like a television studio), my analysis reveals how these girls still offered resistance to (adults') limiting views of *Twilight* girl readers and fans.

The diversity noticed by Murray's research of an online girl fandom is also evident on TwilightTEENS. As suggested by their bios, forum moderators reported being in their mid-to-late teens and early twenties and not only from the USA, but also Europe, Australia, Norway, and other specified regions. Participants in the discussion forum also cited countries of origin as Brazil and Japan, as well as fictional places such as "Hogwarts" and "Forks." Because the forum included a separate thread division for "Twilight Guys," the forum's organizational strategies promoted a girl-only space in most of the forum.

Girl fans participating on TwilightTEENS consistently respond to melodramatic impulses in Meyer's saga (those shared with *Jane Eyre*) and then use melodramatic discourse to articulate their own feelings. These fans feel intimacy with Bella's perspective and they also call upon melodramatic conventions (like dreams) to articulate *Twilight*'s applicability to their everyday lives. In numerous threads on this forum, girls address the concept of crying, a hallmark of melodramatic expression. Passing references to crying (during both the reading experience and the cinematic viewing experience) are scattered among multiple discussion threads throughout the forum, but crying is the specific focus of individual threads, such as "I cried" and "Crying" which I reference in Chap. 7. Although girls' affective responses to melodramatic impulses in the novels surely include a variety of emotional reactions, the term "crying" is one frequently used by these fangirls to specify a particular affective reaction, which might include actual tears, weeping, sobbing, or an expression of a certain feeling.[9]

On TwilightTEENS, girls' responses reveal how melodramatic impulses in the saga—especially excessive suffering and separation that is finally alleviated by a happy ending—appeals to girl readers in the context of their everyday lives. The saga's representation of excess and extremes offers sensational pleasure as well as opportunities to question social constructions of girlhood. Girl fans' own revelations of their interior, emotional lives function as confessions, promoting closeness, understanding, and empathy between girls. Indeed, as with the literary saga offers, girls invoke melodrama to build community among other girls, offering positive support for each other. Moreover, just as Bella is aware of her emotional excess as something for which she could be ridiculed, these girls' melodramatic discourse also reflects a consciousness about their affective responses. Through solidarity and sometimes through laughter, these fans

demonstrate efforts to resist affectively outsiders' critique of their extreme emotional expressions, further proving melodrama's capacity to champion the powerless.

TheTwilightReader : A YouTube Community

Over the course of a year (2009–2010) "Liza," also known as "TheTwilightReader," directed, edited, and posted more than 80 videos to her personal YouTube channel, which started as a project to celebrate the novels, characters, films, songs, and actors associated with the *Twilight* phenomenon. Often filming herself addressing a handheld camera, Liza's production studio, what she calls a "stage," was her bedroom. Heightening the spectacle of her bedroom as a performance space, her room's swelling collection of memorabilia and homemade artwork honors the *Twilight Saga*; the display is epitomized in a video in which she shows off her "shrine" ("My twilight").[10] Liza's passion for the vampire romance inspired her to decorate her personal space. She also vaulted this personal space into the public, a trend consistent with Kearney's observation about girls' public distribution of media produced in their private bedroom spaces ("Productive" 137). Liza's audio-visual media, particularly short films, then, facilitate an online community for *Twilight* fans similar to herself. But suddenly in March 2010, Liza took a month-long hiatus from posting; when she resumed her YouTube activity it was (and continues to be) no longer *Twilight* oriented. In this book, I reference her *Twilight*-themed videos, especially those posted in 2009.

In her early videos, Liza consistently works to accumulate viewers to support her new channel and resolutely acts to exclude and deny access to the "haters," anti-fans who leave negative and disparaging comments. Liza does not explicitly exclude boys, but her discourse certainly privileges feminine experiences and positions her ideal viewer as a girl like herself.[11] The comment spaces, YouTube feedback sections below each video, enable a dialogue with and among her viewers, particularly other girls who share her *Twilight* interests. Creating a safe space for *Twilight* girl fandom is a melodramatic move I will explain in my analysis of her first video (see Chap. 3).

Although TheTwilightReader posted a considerable number of *Twilight-themed* videos, in this book I refer to specific videos and their comment sections that reveal how melodramatic impulses in the saga—especially the form of the melodramatic narrative—appeals to a girl reader in the context of her everyday life. Liza especially appreciates the sensational elements

of the saga's plot, particularly the separate suffering of Bella and Edward and the Bella-Edward-Jacob love triangle. She frequently offers her takes on the books' variety of melodramatic moments in a series of "Twilight Discussions" in which she offers her interpretations of the books as well as questions to inspire discussion from viewers, as if she is a teacher or book club moderator. Such moves underscore one of Liza's primary rhetorical aims, evident in almost every single video: to solicit participation and feedback from her viewers in order to create a unified community of *Twilight* fans. Whether she is entreating viewers to let her know what they think about sensational moments in the novels or to submit their own artwork so that she can create a compilation video ("Midnight"), she calls upon the saga's melodramatic moments to build solidarity. Liza even performs a "chant," a kind of cheer (accompanied by arm motions) with which she closes several videos: "Comment, Rate, and Subscriiiiibe!" ("Twilight Cover"). The playful quality of her discourse underscores the more serious objective of creating a space for *Twilight* fans.

Liza is particularly performative, evidenced by skits she writes, performs, and films, which exemplify melodramatic expression. From video collages to mock public service announcements to music videos to animated shorts to original musical compositions, as TheTwilightReader, Liza demonstrates considerable artistic dexterity. Her videos thus represent diverse media-production skills. Kearney's research encourages scholars to appreciate this kind of girl-made media given historical disparities: until recent developments in film technology which made it more accessible to girls and women, filmmaking was a domain of boys and men (*Girls* 191–196).[12] TheTwilightReader shows how melodramatic moments in the saga create a space for girls' productive interpretive engagements; in Liza's case, she often films revealing parodies and musical texts to articulate her extreme responses and her interior view, falling in line with so many filmmakers who invoked the melodramatic mode before her.

The Bella Cullen Project: A Fan Band

The third community of girl fans is the most famous in the *Twilight* sphere: the Bella Cullen Project. As a group of singing girlfriends, the "BCP" is a powerful reminder of the vitality of melodrama in girl-group musical discourse: musical texts written and sung by its girl members are most immediately recognizable as melodramatic given the mode's intimate connection to music.

Most active at the height of *Twilight* girl fandom in 2008 and 2009, the Bella Cullen Project was an all-girl band composing and playing what they termed "Acoustic/TwiRock" (Bella, *Facebook*) and "Vamprock" (Bella, *MySpace*). In addition to the obvious influence of *Twilight*, the BCP were also influenced by another fan-oriented genre, "Wizard Rock," played by primarily boys and young men paying tribute to the *Harry Potter* series. Yet the BCP is notable for its girl-only membership of three teen best-friends: Chandler Nash (vocals/guitar/piano), Tori Randall (vocals/guitar), and Ally Kiger (vocals/bass guitar/percussion). The BCP's sound does not resemble most Wizard Rock bands, especially the well-known Harry and the Potters, whose "DIY" indie rocker-style is often characterized by loud, repetitive vocals and keyboards (Zumbrun and Geis). The Bella Cullen Project's style is folksier, as their introspective poetic, narrative lyrics and acoustic guitars are more like their contemporary Taylor Swift and harken back to the tradition of female singer-songwriters.

According to the biography on their now-defunct Facebook page, the musical trio formed in 2007 when then 13-and-14-year-olds composed a *Twilight*-inspired song, "Sexy Vampire," during a sleepover. Just as Liza's videos reveal how girlfriends' sleepovers offer an opportunity for creative filmmaking, the BCP's foundation is the same kind of creative social activity so common in girl culture. In just 2 years, the BCP had created two full-length albums, *The Bella Cullen Project* (2008) and *Tick, Tick, Tick* (2009), several music videos for the songs "Out of the Blue" (2008), "Safety First" (2009) and "Let It Go" (2009), which MTV premiered. In fact, MTV promoted the band as part of the network's "Twilight Tuesdays" (Carroll, "'Twilight' Tribute"). The girls also performed at multiple local venues for book releases, in addition to large fan conventions, such as "TwiCon" in Dallas, where they played their last official show as the BCP in 2009. To give a sense of the timeframe for all of this creative production and performance: the girls started the band when they were entering high school in 2007; by the fall of their junior year in 2009, they had disbanded.

Based in Arlington, Texas, the Bella Cullen Project's public, global visibility among *Twilight* fans was helped by MTV and *Seventeen*, just two of the media outlets with whom the girls had interviews (Carroll; "Bella Cullen Project"). Yet the band's remarkable rise to fame was not initially elevated through the endorsement of an adult with industry influence. Rather, Nash, Randall, and Kiger attribute their success to the social network MySpace. After their first gig at a small-town bookstore's midnight release of *Eclipse* in 2007, the girls report:

> We soon had well over 1 million myspace profile views and song plays and even caught the attention of MTV and had our very own concert filmed by MTV and featured on TRL, including a music video of our song "Out of the Blue". Other media sources soon followed, such as ABC's Nightline, and we were also featured in popular magazines like CosmoGirl, Esquire and People Magazine. We traveled all over the country, performing for thousands of people along the way, and were privileged enough to meet many prominent people associated with the Twilight universe such as Stephenie Meyer, actor Robert Pattinson, and most of the other cast members from the Twilight Saga movies to name a few. (Bella, *Facebook*)

Similar to TheTwilightReader, the band's originally private artistic productions gained public visibility through online social networking spaces (Bella, *Facebook*). Solidifying their standing in the *Twilight* universe, the BCP is featured on *Twilight in Forks: Saga of the Real Town*, a DVD sold in tandem with the DVD release of the cinematic *The Twilight Saga: New Moon* in 2010. The Bella Cullen Project's subsequent interaction with the *Twilight* franchise provides a fitting example of how girls shape popular culture through their back-and-forth interaction with mass media (Inness 4). The musical trio also provides an important exemplar of how girls' engage texts through melodramatic discourse, specifically music.

In this book, I show how the Bella Cullen Project's songs respond to precise melodramatic moments in the saga and then how the girls' themselves use melodramatic discourse to explode those moments into songs of their own. Although I focus primarily on lyrics and my analysis is largely word based, I do treat certain musical sounds and images from the music videos when they are relevant. The Bella Cullen Project's albums, the 13-song *The Bella Cullen Project* (2008) and 12-song *Tick, Tick, Tick* (2009), offer many illustrations of melodramatic discourse, so I am specific to some of their most popular songs. Although the songs often empathize with Bella's point of view, the band's negotiation of meaning is much more complex. Thinking of each song as an explosion of a particular melodramatic impulse shows how the mode encourages girls to dwell with moments of excess—but at the same time to think critically about them.

The BCP's musical discourse reveals how melodramatic impulses in the saga—especially moments of extremes—correspond to coming-of-age experiences. As readers interpreting Meyer's text, the Bella Cullen Project imagines feelings and tensions associated with melodramatic impulses the *Twilight Saga*, especially moments of heartache, suffering, and yearning.

Their original lyrics (that incorporate direct allusions to Meyer's saga) and music are characterized by vocal harmonies and acoustic guitars. As with the other *Twilight* fan communities, the band also illustrates an intensely empathetic perspective. This point of view is not one that seeks to idolize Bella's actions, but to comprehend them (along with the motivation of other characters) in the context of the series. In doing so, the girls reveal how melodrama is both a path to creative expression, as well as female friendship.

Bibliography

Abel, Elizabeth, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland. Introduction. *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*. Hanover: Dartmouth, 1983. 3–19. Print.

"About TwilightTEENS." TwilightTEENS.com, Web. 26 Jun. 2008.

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women*. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1868 and 1869. Project Gutenberg, Web. 25 June 2014.

Ames, Melissa. "Twilight Follows Tradition: Analyzing 'Biting' Critiques of Vampire Narratives for Their Portrayals of Gender and Sexuality." Eds. Melissa A. Click, Jennifer Stevens Aubrey, and Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz. *Bitten by Twilight: Youth Culture, Media, and the Vampire Franchise*. New York: Peter Lang, 2010. 37–53. Print.

Auerbach, Nina. *Women and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982. Print.

Banet-Weiser, Sarah. "Branding the Post-Feminist Self: Girls' Video Production and YouTube." *Mediated Girlhoods: New Explorations of Girls' Media Culture*. Ed. Mary Celeste Kearney. Ed. Mary Celeste Kearney. New York: Peter Lang, 2011. 277–94. Print.

BCPMusic. "The Bella Cullen Project (official band site)." *YouTube*. YouTube, 18. Oct. 2008–7 May 2012. Web. 1 Aug. 2012.

Behm-Morawitz, Elizabeth, Melissa A. Click, and Jennifer Stevens Aubrey. "Relating to Twilight: Fans' Responses to Love and Romance in the Vampire Franchise." Eds. Melissa A. Click, Jennifer Stevens Aubrey, and Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz. *Bitten by Twilight: Youth Culture, Media, and the Vampire Franchise*. New York: Peter Lang, 2010. 137–54. Print.

The Bella Cullen Project. "Bella's Lullaby." *The Bella Cullen Project*. Freshly Squozen Sounds, 2008. CD.

K. Kapurch, *Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Century*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-58169-3

The Bella Cullen Project. "Charlie's Answering Machine." *The Bella Cullen Project*. Freshly Squozen Sounds, 2008. CD.
The Bella Cullen Project. *Facebook*. Facebook, 2011. Web. 9 July 2011.
The Bella Cullen Project. *MySpace*. MySpace, 8 Jun. 2007. Web. 9 July 2011.
The Bella Cullen Project. "Out of the Blue." *The Bella Cullen Project*. Freshly Squozen Sounds, 2008. CD.
The Bella Cullen Project. "My Little Moon." *The Bella Cullen Project*. Freshly Squozen Sounds, 2008. CD.
The Bella Cullen Project. "Vampwolf." *The Bella Cullen Project*. Freshly Squozen Sounds, 2008. CD.
The Bella Cullen Project. "Victoria's Lament." *The Bella Cullen Project*. Freshly Squozen Sounds, 2008. CD.
The Bella Cullen Project. "When It Rains, It Pours." *Tick, Tick, Tick*. Freshly Squozen Sounds, 2009. MP3.
"The Bella Cullen Project." Interview. *Seventeen*. Hearst Communications, Inc., 2008. Web. 11 Mar. 2012.
"The Bella Cullen Project's 'Safety First.'" *MTV.com*. Viacom, Intl., 31 Jul. 2009. Web. 11 Mar. 2012.
"The Bella Cullen Project's 'Let It Go.'" *MTV.com*. Viacom, Intl., 30 Oct. 2009. Web. 11 Mar. 2012.
Berg, Maggie. *Jane Eyre: Portrait of a Life*. Woodbridge, CT: Twayne Publishers, 1987. *Google Books*. Web. 3 May 2010.
"Biology Class…." *Twilight Teens Forum*. TwilightTEENS.com, 24 Nov. 2008–18 Jun. 2009. Web. 6 Dec. 2010.
Blackford, Holly Virginia. *Mockingbird Passing: Closeted Traditions and Sexual Curiosities in Harper Lee's Novel*. Knoxville, TN: U of Tennessee P, 2011. Print.
Blackford, Holly Virginia. *The Myth of Persephone in Girls' Fantasy Literature*. New York: Routledge, 2011. Print.
Blackford, Holly Virginia. *Out of this World: Why Literature Matters to Girls*. New York: Teacher's College P, 2004. Print.
Booth, Michael R. *Hiss the Villain: Six English and American Melodramas*. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964. Print.
Booth, Michael R. *Theatre in the Victorian Age*. Cambridge UP, 1991. Print.
Borie, Charlotte. "From Shrine to Stage: Inner Space and the Curtain in Jane Eyre." *Brontë Studies* 34.2 (2009): 107–16. Print.
Bousquet, Marc. "Harry Potter, the War against Evil, and the Melodramatization of Public Culture." *Critical Perspectives on Harry Potter*. Ed. Elizabeth E. Heilman. 2nd ed. New York: Taylor and Francis, 2009. 177–96. Print.
Braddon, Mary Elizabeth. *Lady Audley's Secret*. 1862. Ed. David Skilton. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. 1847. Ed. Margaret Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.

Brooks, Peter. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, and the Mode of Excess*. 1976. New Haven: Yale UP, 1995. Print.

Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1993. Print.

Brumberg, Joan Jacobs. *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls*. New York: Random House, 1997. Print.

Burwell, Carter. "Carter Burwell's Notes." "Twilight." *Carter Burwell*, Web. 30 Jun. 2014.

Burwell, Catherine. "Editing for Emotion: The Visual Aesthetics of Young Women's Fan Videos." Society for Cinema and Media Studies. The Drake Hotel, Chicago. 9 Mar. 2013. Conference Presentation.

Busse, Kristina and Karen Hellekson. "Introduction: Work in Progress." *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*. Eds. Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2006. 5–40. Print.

Cahir Costanzo, Linda. *Literature into Film: Theory and Practical Approaches*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006. Print.

Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. "Form and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism: An Introduction." 1978. *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*. Ed. Carl R. Burgchardt. 3rd ed. State College, PA: Strata, 2005. 400–17. Print.

Carroll, Larry. "Bella Cullen Project Premiere Their Final Video, For 'Let It Go.'" *MTV.com*. Viacom, Intl., 30 Oct. 2009. Web. 11 Mar. 2012.

Carroll, Larry. "'Twilight' Tribute Band The Bella Cullen Project: From 'Sexy Vampire' To Debut Album." *MTV.com*. Viacom, Intl., 8 Jul. 2008. Web. 11 Mar. 2012.

Carroll, Larry. "'Twilight' Trio The Bella Cullen Project Premiere 'Safety First' Video." *MTV.com*. Viacom, Intl. 1 Aug. 2009. Web. 11 Mar. 2012.

Cart, Michael. *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism*. 2nd Ed. Chicago: American Library Association, 2011. Print.

Christian-Smith, Linda. *Becoming a Woman through Romance*. London: Routledge, 1990. Print.

Clarke, Amy M. "Introduction: Approaching Twilight." *The Twilight Mystique: Critical Essays on the Novels and Films*. Eds. Amy M. Clarke and Marijane Osborn. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010. 3–14. *Google Books*. Google Books. Web. 1 Jan. 2012.

Clarke, Micael. "Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and the Grimms' Cinderella." *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 40.4 (2000): 695–710. Print.

Click, Melissa. "'Rabid', 'obsessed', and 'frenzied': Understanding Twilight Fangirls and the Gendered Politics of Fandom." *FlowTV*. U of Texas at Austin, 18 Dec. 2009. Web. 20 Dec. 2009.

Click, Melissa A., Jennifer Stevens Aubrey, and Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz. Introduction. Eds. Melissa A. Click, Jennifer Stevens Aubrey, and Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz. *Bitten by Twilight: Youth Culture, Media, and the Vampire Franchise*. New York: Peter Lang, 2010. 1–17. Print.

Coats, Karen. "'The Beat of your Heart': Music in Young Adult Literature and Culture" *Contemporary Adolescent Literature and Culture: The Emergent Adult*. Eds Mary Hilton and Maria Nikolajeva. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012. 111–25.

Cook, Pam. "Melodrama and the Women's Picture." Imitations of Life: A Reading on Film and Television Melodrama. Ed. Marcia Lindy. Wayne State UP, 1991. 248–62. *Google Books*. Google Books. Web. 3 May 2010.

Condon, Bill. "Bill Condon Talks Melodrama in 'Breaking Dawn.'" Interview by Anonymous. *Fear Net*. Horror Entertainment, LLC., 12 Nov. 2012. Web. 13 Nov. 2012.

Condon, Bill. "Exclusive Interview with 'Breaking Dawn' Director Bill Condon." Interview by Rebecca Murray. *About.com*. The New York Times Co., 17 Nov. 2012. Web. 17 Nov. 2012.

Crowther, Barbara. "Writing as Performance: Young Girls' Diaries." *Making Meaning of Narratives in the Narrative Study of Lives*. Eds. Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Lieblich. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.1999. 197–220. Print.

"Crying." *Twilight Teens Forum*. TwilightTEENS.com, 5 Nov. 2008–28 Apr. 2009. Web. 4 Nov. 2010.

Cvetkovich, Ann. *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism*. Rutgers UP, 1992. Print.

Daly, Maureen. *Seventeenth Summer*. 1942. New York: Simon Pulse, 2010. Print.

"Dancing in the Dark." *My So-Called Life*. Perf. Claire Danes.1994. *My So-Called Life: Complete Series*. Shout! Factory, 2007. DVD.

Day, Sara K. "Narrative Intimacy and the Question of Control in the 'Twilight' Saga." *Genre, Reception, and Adaptation in the "Twilight" Series*. Ed. Anne Morey. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012. 65–78. Print.

Diamond, Fleur. "Beauty and the Beautiful Beast: Stephenie Meyer's Twilight Saga and the Quest for a Transgressive Female Desire." *Australian Feminist Studies* 26.67 (2011): 41–55. Print.

Doane, Mary Ann. *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940's*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987. *Google Books*. Google Books. Web. 10 Jul. 2012.

Doane, Mary Ann. "The 'Woman's Film': Possession and Address." *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. London: BFI, 1987. 283–98. Print.

Driscoll, Catherine. *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory*. New York: Colombia UP, 2002. Print.

Driscoll, Catherine. "Girl Culture and the 'Twilight' Franchise." *Genre, Reception, and Adaptation in the "Twilight" Series*. Ed. Anne Morey. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012. 95–112. Print.

Drotner, Kirsten. "Intensities of Feeling: Modernity, Melodrama and Adolescence." *Theory, Culture & Society* 8.1 (1991): 57–87. Print

Durham, Meenakshi Gigi. "The Girling of America: Critical Reflections on Gender and Popular Communication." *Popular Communication* 1.1 (2003): 23–31. Print.

"Eclipse Trailer!!" *Twilight Teens Forum*. TwilightTEENS.com, 11 Mar. 2010–14 Apr. 2010. Web. 15 Jun. 2010.

Ehrenreich, Barbara, Elizabeth Hess, and Gloria Jacobs. "Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun." *Re-making Love: The Feminization of Sex*. Garden City: Anchor Press, 1986. 10–38. Print.

Ellis, Kate, and E. Ann Kaplan. "Feminism in Brontë's Novel and Its Film Versions." *The English Novel and the Movies. Ed. Michael Klein and Gillian Parker*. New York: Ungar, 1981. 83–94. Print.

Elsaesser, Thomas. "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama." *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. London: BFI, 1987. 43–69. Print.

"Exclusive: Stephen King on J.K. Rowling, Stephenie Meyer." *Who's News Blog. USA Weekend*. USA Weekend, 2 Feb. 2009. Web. 30 Nov. 2010.

"Favorite Character." *Twilight Teens Forum*. TwilightTEENS.com, 9 Oct. 2009–4 Jul. 2009. Web. 6 Dec. 2010.

Friedman, Lester D. and Daniel B. Wood. "Movie Magician Spielberg May Score Big at 2013 Oscars." *The Christian Science Monitor*, 24 Feb. 2013. Web. 30 Jun. 2014.

Gilbert, Sandra M. "*Jane Eyre* and the Secrets of Furious Lovemaking." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 31.3 (1998): 351–72. Print.

Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. 2nd ed. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2000. Print.

Gill, Rosalind. "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility." *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10.2 (2007): 147–66. Print.

Gledhill, Christine. Introduction. *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. London: BFI, 1987. 1–4. Print.

Gledhill, Christine. "The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation." *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. London: BFI, 1987. 5–39. Print.

Gledhill, Christine. "Rethinking Genre." *Reinventing Film Studies*. Eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams. London: Arnold, 2000. 222–43. Print.

Glen, Heather. "'Dreadful to Me': *Jane Eyre and History." Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre: A Case Book*. Ed. Elsie B. Michie. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006. Print.

Hadley, Elaine. *Melodramatic Tactics: Theatricalized Dissent in the English Marketplace, 1800–1885*. Stanford UP, 1995. Print.

Hardwicke, Catherine. *Twilight Director's Notebook*. New York: Little, Brown, 2009. Print.

Harper, Sue and Vincent Porter. "Moved to Tears: Weeping in the Cinema in Postwar Britain." *Screen* 37.2 (1996): 152–73. Print.

Harris, Anita. "The 'Can-Do' Girl versus the 'At-Risk' Girl." *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Routledge, 2004. 13–36. Print.

"Has anyone had Twilight related dreams?" "Twilight Teens Forum: A Teenage Twilight Fan Forum." *TwilightTEENS*. Zenutech, 6 Oct. 2008–2 Jul. 2009. Web. 6 Dec. 2010.

Hayward, Susan. *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*. 4th ed. New York: Routledge, 2013. Print.

Help Save the Next Girl. HelpSavetheNextGirl.com. Web. 20 Jun. 2012.

"Help Save The Next Girl - National PSA." *YouTube*. YouTube, 14 May 2012. Web. 15 May 2012.

"Home." TwilightTEENS.com, Web. 9 Jun. 2008.

Hubler, Angela. "Can Anne Shirley Help 'Revive Ophelia': Listening to Girl Readers. *Delinquents and Debutantes: Twentieth-Century American Girls' Cultures*. Ed. Sherrie A. Inness. New York: New York UP, 1998. 266–84. Print.

Hunter, Jane. "Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family: Diaries and Girlhood in Late-Victorian America." *American Quarterly* 44.1 (1992): 51–81. Print.

"I cried." *Twilight Teens Forum*. TwilightTEENS.com, 11 Oct. 2008–10 Dec. 2008. Web. 4 Nov. 2010.

Inness, Sherrie A. Introduction. *Delinquents and Debutantes: Twentieth-Century American Girls' Cultures*. Ed. Sherrie A. Inness. New York: New York UP, 1998. 1–15. Print.

Jane Eyre. Dir. Robert Stevenson. Perf. Joan Fontaine and Orson Welles. 1944. Fox, 2007. DVD.

Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Kane, Kathryn. "A Very Queer Refusal: The Chilling Effect of the Cullens' Heteronormative Embrace." Eds. Melissa A. Click, Jennifer Stevens Aubrey, and Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz. *Bitten by Twilight: Youth Culture, Media, and the Vampire Franchise*. New York: Peter Lang, 2010. 103–18. Print.

Kaplan, Carla. "Girl Talk: Jane Eyre and the Romance of Women's Narration." *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 30.1 (1996): 5–31. Print.

Kaplan, E. Ann. *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama*. London: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Kapurch, Katie. "'Unconditionally and Irrevocably': Theorizing the Melodramatic Impulse in Young Adult Literature through the *Twilight Saga* and *Jane Eyre*. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 37.2 (2012): 164–87. Print.

Karlyn, Kathleen Rowe. *Unruly Girls, Unrepentant Mothers: Redefining Feminism on Screen*. Austin, TX: U of Texas P, 2011. Print.

Kearney, Mary Celeste. *Girls Make Media*. New York, Routledge, 2006. Print.

Kearney, Mary Celeste. "Productive Spaces: Girls' Bedrooms as Sites of Cultural Production." *Journal of Children and Media* 1.2 (2007): 126–41. Print.

Kramer, Margaret. "The Wolf in the Woods: Representations of 'Little Red Riding Hood" in *Twilight*." *Bringing Light to* Twilight*: Perspectives on a Pop Culture Phenomenon*. Ed. Giselle Liza Anatol. New York: Palgrave, 2011. Print. 15–30.

Kuhn, Annette. "Women's Genres: Melodrama, Soap Opera, and Theory." *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*. 2nd. Ed. Berkshire, England: Open UP, 2008. Eds. Charlotte Brunsdon and Lynn Spigel. 225–34.

Lawrence, Will. "Twilight: interview with director Chris Weitz." *The Telegraph*, 12 Nov. 2009. Web. 30 Jun. 2014.

Leogrande, Cathy. "My Mother, Myself: Mother-Daughter Bonding via the Twilight Saga." Eds. Melissa A. Click, Jennifer Stevens Aubrey, and Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz. *Bitten by Twilight: Youth Culture, Media, and the Vampire Franchise*. New York: Peter Lang, 2010. 155–72. Print.

Lewes, George Henry. Unsigned review. *Fraser's Magazine* (1847): 686–95. *The Critical Heritage: The Brontës*. Ed. Miriam Allott. London: Routledge, 1974. 83–87. *Google Books*. Google Books. Web. 30 Nov. 2010.

Lewis, Lisa A. *Gender Politics and MTV: Voicing the Difference*. Temple UP, 1990. Print.

Luckett, Moya. "Girl Watchers: Patty Duke and Teen TV." The Revolution Wasn't Televised: Sixties Television and Social Conflict. Ed. Lynn Spigel and Michael Curtin. New York: Routledge, 1997. Print.

Lutz, Tom. "Men's Tears and the Roles of Melodrama." *Boys Don't Cry?: Rethinking Narratives of Masculinity and Emotion in the U.S.* Eds. Milette Shamir and Jennifer Travis. New York : Columbia UP, 2002. 185–204. *Google Books*. Google Books. Web. 10 Jul. 2012.

Marche, Stephen. "What's Really Going on With All These Vampires?" *Esquire*. Hearst Communications, 13 Oct. 2009. Web. 30 Oct. 2009.

MacKinnon, Kenneth. *Love, Tears, and the Male Spectator*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated UP, 2002. *Google Books*. Google Books. Web. 10 Jul. 2012.

Mazzarella, Sharon R. "Claiming a Space: The Cultural Economy of Teen Girls Fandom on the Web." *Girl Wide Web: Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005. 141–60. Print.

McRobbie, Angela. *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*. London: Sage, 2009. Print.

McWilliam, Rohan. "Melodrama." *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*. Ed. Pamela K. Gilbert. Blackwell, 2011. 54–66. *Google Books*. Web. 28 January 2012.

Mercer, John and Martin Shingler. *Melodrama: Genre, Style and Sensibility*. London: Wallflower P, 2005. Print.

Mettinger-Shartmann, Elke. "John Brougham's Stage Adaptation of *Jane Eyre*—a Marxist Reading of Brontë's Novel?" *A Breath of Fresh Eyre: Intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of* Jane Eyre. Eds. Elke Mettinger-Shartmann and Margarete Rubik. New York: Editions Rodopi, 2007. 375–90. *Google Books*. Google Books. Web. 30 Nov. 2010.

Meyer, Stephenie. *Breaking Dawn*. New York: Little, Brown, 2008. Print.

Meyer, Stephenie. "A Conversation with Shannon Hale." *The Twilight Saga: The Official Illustrated Guide*. New York: Little, Brown, 2011. 1–65. Print.

Meyer, Stephenie. *Eclipse*. New York: Little, Brown, 2007. Print.

Meyer, Stephenie. "Frequently Asked Questions: *Twilight*." *The Official Website of Stephenie Meyer*. StephenieMeyer.com, 1 Apr. 2010. Web. 1 May 2010.

Meyer, Stephenie. "Interview: *Twilight* author Stephenie Meyer." Interview by William Morris. *A Motley Vision: Mormon Literature and Culture*. 26 Oct. 2005. Web. 28 Aug. 2008.

Meyer, Stephenie. *Life and Death: A Reimagining of the Classic Novel*. New York: Little, Brown, 2015. Kindle file.

Meyer, Stephenie. *Midnight Sun*. Unpublished Manuscript. *The Official Website of Stephenie Meyer*. StephenieMeyer.com, 28. Aug. 2008. Web. 28. Aug. 2008.

Meyer, Stephenie. *New Moon*. New York: Little, Brown, 2006. Print.

Meyer, Stephenie. *The Short Second Life of Bree Tanner: An Eclipse Novella*. Little, Brown, 2010. Print.

Meyer, Stephenie. *Twilight*. New York: Little, Brown, 2005. Print.

Millgate, Jane. "Narrative Distance in 'Jane Eyre': The Relevance of the Pictures." *The Modern Language Review* 63.2 (1968): 315–19. Print.

"Miscellaneous." *Twilight Teens Forum*. TwilightTEENS.com, Web. 6 Dec. 2010.

Mitchell, Sally. *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England 1880–1915*. New York: Colombia UP, 1995. Print.

Mitchell, Sally. "Sentiment and Suffering: Women's Recreational Reading in the 1860s." *Victorian Studies* 21.1 (1977): 29–45. Print.

Modleski, Tania. *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass Produced Fantasies for Women*. 1982. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2008. *Google Books*. Google Books. Web. 1 Apr. 2010.

Modleski, Tania. "The Search for Tomorrow in Today's Soap Operas: Notes on a Feminine Narrative Form." *Film Quarterly* 33.1 (1979): 12–21. Print.

Montgomery, James. "Paramore Singer (And 'Twilight' Superfan) Hayley Williams Says She Relates To Bella." *MTV.com*. Viacom, 13 Nov. 2008 Web. 30 Jun. 2014.

Montgomery, Lucy Maud. Anne of Green Gables. L. C. Page, 1908. Project Gutenberg, Web. 25 June 2014.

Morey, Anne. "'Famine for Food, Expectation for Content': *Jane Eyre* as Intertext for the 'Twilight' Saga." *Genre, Reception, and Adaptation in the "Twilight" Series.* Ed. Anne Morey. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012. 15–27. Print.

Moruzi, Kristine. "Postfeminist Fantasies: Sexuality and Femininity in Stephenie Meyer's 'Twilight' Series." *Genre, Reception, and Adaptation in the "Twilight" Series.* Ed. Anne Morey. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012. 47–64. Print.

Mukherjea, Ananya. "Team Bella: Fans Navigating Desire, Security, and Feminism." *Theorizing* Twilight*: Critical Essays on What's at Stake in a Post-Vampire World*. Ed. Maggie Parke and Natalie Wilson. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011. 70–86. Print.

Mulvey, Laura. "Notes on Sirk and Melodrama." 1977/8. *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. London: BFI, 1987. 75–79. Print.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16.3 (1975): 6–18. Print.

Murray, Susan. "Saving Our So-Called Lives: Girl Fandom, Adolescent Subjectivity, and *My So-Called Life*." *Kid's Media Culture*. Ed. Marsha Kinder. Duke UP, 1999. 221–235. Print.

Myers, Abigail E. "Edward Cullen and Bella Swan: Byronic and Feminist Heroes… Or Not." *Twilight and Philosophy: Vampires, Vegetarians, and the Pursuit of Immortality*. Eds. Rebecca Housel and J. Jeremy Wisnewski. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2009. 147–62. *Google Books*. Web. 1 Apr. 2010.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*. Ed. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1967. Print.

Nikolas, Akash. "Yes, Mad Men Is a Soap Opera—and That Shouldn't Be an Insult." *The Atlantic*, 5 Jul. 2013. Web. 4 Jun. 2014.

Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey. "Minnelli and Melodrama." *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. London: BFI, 1987. 70–74. Print.

Nudd, Donna Marie. "The Pleasure of Intertextuality: Reading *Jane Eyre* Television and Film Adaptations." *Jane Eyre*. Ed. Richard J. Dunn. New York: Norton, 2001. 522–29. Print.

Parramore, Lynn Stuart. "Why Lana Del Rey is the Perfect Artist for an America in Decline." *Salon*, 8 Jul. 2014. Web. 9 Jul. 2014.

Phares, Heather. Rev. of *Twilight [The Score]*, by Carter Burwell. *AllMusic*, AllMedia, Web. 30 Jun. 2014.

Phares, Heather. Rev. of *The Twilight Saga: New Moon [The Score]*, by Alexandre Desplat. *AllMusic*, AllMedia, Web. 30 Jun. 2014.

Platt, Carrie Anne. "Cullen Family Values: Gender and Sexual Politics in the Twilight Series." *Bitten by Twilight: Youth Culture, Media, and the Vampire*

Franchise. Eds. Melissa A. Click, Jennifer Stevens Aubrey, and Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz. New York: Peter Lang, 2010. 71–86. Print.

"Post Breaking Dawn Depression Support Thread" *Twilight Teens Forum*. TwilightTEENS.com, 16 Sept. 2008–4 Aug. 2008. Web. 15 Jun. 2010.

Radway, Janice A. *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1984. Print.

Ralph, Phyllis C. *Victorian Transformations: Fairy Tales, Adolescence, and the Novel of Female Development*. New York: Peter Lang, 1989. Print.

Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. New York: Norton, 1966. Print.

Rowe, Karen E. '"Fairy born and human bred": Jane Eyre's Education in Romance', in *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*. Eds. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland. Hanover: Dartmouth, 1983. 69–89. Print.

Saxton, Ruth O. Introduction. *The Girl: Constructions of the Girl in Contemporary Fiction by Women*. Ed. Ruth O. Saxton. New York: St. Martin's P, 1998. xi-xxix. Print.

Schweiger Daniel. *Film Music Magazine*. 11 Dec. 2008. "Twilight." *Carter Burwell*, Web. 30 Jun. 2014.

Seiter, Ellen, Hans Borchers, Gabriele Kreutzner, and Eva-Maria Warth, "'Don't Treat Us Like We're So Stupid and Naïve': Toward an Ethnography of Soap Opera Viewers." *Remote Control: Television Audiences, and Cultural Power*. Eds. Ellen Seiter, Hans Borchers, Gabriele Kreutzner, and Eva-Maria Warth. New York: Routledge, 1989. 223–47. Print.

Showalter, Elaine. "Desperate Remedies: Sensation Novels of the 1860s." *The Victorian Newsletter* 49 (1976). Print.

Shuttleworth, Sally. Introduction. *Jane Eyre*. Charlotte Brontë. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. vii-xxxiii. Print.

Silver, Anna. "*Twilight* is Not Good for Maidens: Gender, Sexuality, and the Family in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* Series." *Studies in the Novel* 42.1&2 (2010): 121–38. Print.

Silver, Anna. *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print.

Staiger, Janet. "Film Noir as Male Melodrama: The Politics of Film Genre Labeling." *The Shifting Definitions of Genre: Essays on Labeling Films, Television Shows and Media*. Eds. Lincoln Geraghty and Mark Janovich. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008. 71–91. Print.

Staiger, Janet. "'The First Bond Who Bleeds Literally and Metaphorically': Gendered Spectatorship for 'Pretty Boy' Action Movies." *Feminism at the Movies: Understanding Gender in Contemporary Popular Cinema*. Eds. Hilary Radner and Rebecca Stringer. New York: Routledge, 2011. 13–24. Print.

Staiger, Janet. *Media Reception Studies*. New York: New York UP, 2005. Print.

"Statistics." *Twilight Teens Forum*. TwilightTEENS.com, 6 Dec. 2010. Web. 6 Dec. 2010.

Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. 1897. Ed. Brooke Allen. New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2003. Print.

Stoneman, Patsy. *Jane Eyre on Stage, 1848–1898: An Illustrated Edition of Eight Plays with Contextual Notes*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007. *Google Books*, Web. 30 Jun. 2014.

Sutherland, John. "Children's Fiction." *The Stanford Companion to Victorian Fiction*. Standford: Stanford UP, 1989. 122–23. *Google Books*. Google Books. Web. 10 Jul. 2012.

Tasker, Yvonne and Diane Negra. "Introduction: Feminist Politics and Postfeminist Culture." *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*. Eds. Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra. Durham: Duke UP, 2007. 1–26. Print.

"The end." "Twilight Teens Forum: A Teenage Twilight Fan Forum." *TwilightTEENS*. Zenutech, 30 Oct. 2008–28 Apr. 2009. Web. 4 Nov. 2010.

TheTwilightReader [Liza]. "10 Reasons Why I Love Twilight." *YouTube*. YouTube, 10 Apr. 2009. Web. 1 Mar. 2010.

TheTwilightReader [Liza]. "Can vampires have braces?" *YouTube*. YouTube, 15 Mar. 2009. Web. 7 Mar. 2010.

TheTwilightReader [Liza]. "Jane Gym… FEEL THE BURN!" *YouTube*. YouTube, 26 Jul. 2009. Web. 7 Mar. 2010.

TheTwilightReader [Liza]. "My twilight shrine is getting full." *YouTube*. YouTube, 15 May 2009. Web. 7 Mar. 2010.

TheTwilightReader [Liza]. "TheTwilightReader 's Channel." *YouTube*. YouTube, 7 Mar. 2009. Web. 9 Aug. 2012.

TheTwilightReader [Liza]. "Victoria wants James (prank call)." *YouTube*. YouTube, 29 Jun. 2009. Web. 7 Mar. 2010.

TheTwilightReader [Liza]. "Welcome to my videos and channel!" *YouTube*. YouTube, 7 Mar. 2009. Web. 7 Mar. 2010.

TheTwilightReader [Liza]. "You know you're obsessed with twilight when...." *YouTube*. YouTube, 29 Mar. 2009. Web. 1 Mar. 2010.

"Things that people say to you that remind you of twilight" *Twilight Teens Forum*. TwilightTEENS.com, 27 May 2008–21 Aug. 2008. Web. 15 Jun. 2010.

Twitchell, James B. *The Living Dead: The Study of the Vampire in Romantic Literature*. Duke UP, 1981. Print.

Trites, Roberta Seelinger. *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2000. Print.

Twilight. Dir. Catherine Hardwicke. Perf. Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson. 2008. Summit, 2009. DVD.

Twilight in Forks: The Saga of the Real Town. Dir. Jason Brown. Summit, 2010. DVD.

The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn-Part 1. Dir. Bill Condon. Perf. Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson, and Taylor Lautner. 2011. Summit, 2012. DVD.

The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn-Part 2. Dir. Bill Condon. Perf. Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson, and Taylor Lautner. 2012. Summit, 2013. DVD.

The Twilight Saga: Eclipse. Dir. David Slade. Perf. Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson, and Taylor Lautner. 2010. Summit, 2010. DVD.

The Twilight Saga: New Moon. Chris Weitz. Perf. Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson, and Taylor Lautner. 2009. Summit, 2010. DVD.

Valby, Karen. "Stephenie Meyer: 12 of My 'Twilight' Inspirations." *EW*. Entertainment Weekly Inc., 29 Sept. 2009. Web. 1 Oct. 2009.

Vallone, Lynn and Claudia Nelson. Introduction. *The Girl's Own: Cultural Histories of the Anglo-American Girl, 1830–1915*. Eds. Claudia Nelson and Lynn Vallone. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1994. 52–70. Print.

Vicinus, Martha. "'Helpless and Unfriended': Nineteenth-Century Domestic Melodrama." *New Literary History* 13.1 (1981): 127–43. Print.

Vicinus, Martha. "Models of Public Life: Biographies of Noble Women for Girls." *The Girl's Own: Cultural Histories of the Anglo-American Girl, 1830–1915*. Eds. Claudia Nelson and Lynn Vallone. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1994. 52–70. Print.

Waldman, Diane. "'At Last I Can Tell It to Someone!': Feminine Point of View and Subjectivity in the Gothic Romance Film of the 1940s." *Cinema Journal* 23.2 (1984): 29–40. Print.

Warwick, Jacqueline. *Girl Groups, Girl Culture: Popular Music and Identity in the 1960s*. New York: Routledge, 2007. Print.

"WHAT?! Twilight banned from library! :-0" *Twilight Teens Forum*. TwilightTEENS.com, 23 May 2008–2 Jul. 2008. Web. 15 Jun. 2010.

"What are your favourite chapters in Twilight?" *Twilight Teens Forum*. TwilightTEENS.com, 24 May 2008–24 Aug. 2008. Web. 15 Jun. 2010.

"Why are these books so popular?" *Twilight Teens Forum*. TwilightTEENS.com, 1 Feb. 2009–11 Oct. 2009. Web. 6 Dec. 2010.

Williams, Linda. "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess. *Film Quarterly* 44.4 (1991): 2–13. Print.

Williams, Linda. "Melodrama Revised." *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory*. Ed. Nick Browne. Berkeley: U of California P, 1998. 42–88. Print.

Williams, Linda. "'Something Else Besides a Mother': *Stella Dallas* and the Maternal Melodrama." *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. London: BFI, 1987. 299–325. Print.

Williamson, Milly. *The Lure of the Vampire: Gender, Fiction and Fandom from Bram Stoker to Buffy*. London: Wallflower P, 2005. Print.

Wilson, Natalie. "Civilized Vampires Versus Savage Werewolves: Race and Ethnicity in the Twilight Series." Eds. Melissa A. Click, Jennifer Stevens

Aubrey, and Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz. *Bitten by Twilight: Youth Culture, Media, and the Vampire Franchise*. New York: Peter Lang, 2010. 55–70. Print.

Wilson, Natalie. *Seduced by Twilight: The Allure and Contradictory Messages of the Popular Saga*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011. Print.

Wood, Mrs. Henry [Ellen Wood]. *East Lynne*. 1861. Ed. Elisabeth Jay. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.

Wynne, Deborah. "Readers and Reading Practices." *The Oxford History of the Novel in English: Volume 3: The Nineteenth-Century*. Eds. John Kucich and Jenny Bourne Taylor. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. 22–36. *Google Books*. Google Books. Web. 15 Apr. 2012.

"You Might be Twilight Obsessed if…" *Twilight Teens Forum*. TwilightTEENS.com, 1 Jun. 2008–28 Aug. 2008. Web. 15 Jun. 2010.

Young, Susan C. "Bella No Match for Sookie at Vampire Love: Subservient 'Twilight' Heroine a Terrible Role Model for Pre-Teen Girls." *MSNBC*. MSNBC, 10 Jun. 2009. Web. 11 Jun. 2009.

Zumbrun, Joshua and Sonya Geis. "Wizard Rock Has Fans in Hogwarts Heaven." *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 8 Jul. 2007. Web. 1 Jul. 2012.

Index

K. Kapurch, *Victorian Melodrama in the Twenty-First Centuryt*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-58169-3