

**Kirsten Stevens**

**Meet the Cullens: Family, Romance  
and Female Agency in**

***Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Twilight***



[1] In terms of their literary and even filmic origins, tales of the vampire emerged to be consumed first and foremost by adult readers and viewers. Certainly the exploits of Count Dracula, whether revealed by Bram Stoker (1897) or Tod Browning (1931), [1] were intended primarily to frighten and caution the 'grown-ups' of late nineteenth and early twentieth century society. As Jörg Waltje reveals, it was not until the emergence of horror comics in the 1940s that the vampire was presented intentionally to a younger, adolescent audience, and even here the move was met with resistance (Waltje 2005, 87). Concerns about adult themes of sex and violence implicit and explicit in the figure of the vampire were seen as potentially harmful to the juvenile audience. The resulting controversy saw the figure of the vampire once again barred from juvenile literature, not to re-emerge for the youth audience for close to two decades (Waltje 2005, 87).

[2] In light of this early reluctance to introduce the vampire to youth markets, it is then interesting to note that in the last dozen years, two of the most successful vampire franchises have been unashamedly located within the 'teen genre'. The two 'franchises' of which I speak, and which will provide the key area of focus and comparison for this paper, are the long running WB television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga.

[3] Both *Buffy* and *Twilight* join a growing trend towards the location of the vampire within the teen and juvenile sphere. While certainly in the context of film this trend seems an inevitable result of what Thomas Doherty describes as the 'juvenilisation' of the American Hollywood cinema (Doherty 2002, 2), this trend also reflects the ability of the vampire to articulate many of the issues faced in adolescence and the fears implicit in growing up and entering the adult world (Wilcox 2005, 21). *Buffy* and *Twilight* then join the likes of Joel Schumacher's *The Lost Boys* (1987) and Tom Holland's *Fright Night* (1985) in offering teenaged vampires to teenaged audiences, and perhaps more importantly, offering these vampires as the teenagers themselves.

[4] While undeniably teenaged, the worlds of *Buffy* and *Twilight* present distinctly different views. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, conceived by creator/writer/ director Joss Whedon, takes up the story of Buffy, a blonde sixteen year old Californian teenager, whose sacred duty it is to fight and slay the vampires and all things which go bump in the night. The story is taken up in season one as Buffy arrives at Sunnydale High, having recently been expelled from her L.A. high school for burning down a gymnasium full of vampires—I mean asbestos ('Welcome to the Hellmouth', 1001). She soon falls out of the popular crowd at her new school and into the socially marginalised friendship group which provides the enduring characters and friendships for the show's seven seasons. This group, known as the Scooby Gang, consists primarily of the Slayer, Buffy Summers, her friends Xander Harris and Willow Rosenberg, and her Watcher Rupert

Giles. While these characters are joined at various points and for various seasons by a mixture of additional characters it is this core group of four friends who remain consistent throughout the show's duration. Across the series' seven seasons, only the first three of which take place in the teen-pic staple location of the high school, Buffy and her friends must fight demons, stake vampires and go through the sometimes literal hell of growing up. The demons of the Buffyverse are often literalisations of conflicts within the lives of the show's key characters. The vampires, who look human until the feed or the need to fight is upon them, provide perhaps the most common but certainly not the most confronting of evils in the show, which has a monster scenario for everything from predatory older women to the dangers of alcohol consumption ('Teacher's Pet', 1004 and 'Beer Bad', 4005).

[5] In contrast to the always-sunny California town of Sunnydale, the *Twilight* Saga is set in the perpetually overcast town of Forks, Washington. Written by first-time author and acknowledged Mormon, Stephenie Meyer, the *Twilight* series of novels consist of four books released between 2005 and 2008: *Twilight*, *New Moon*, *Eclipse*, and *Breaking Dawn*. The first of these novels was released as a film in 2008, while *New Moon* and *Eclipse* are scheduled for future release. [2] Directed by Catherine Hardwicke, the film adaptation of *Twilight* highlights several deviations from the teenage vampire narrative presented in *Buffy*, and it is this version of the story which will provide for my comparison to Whedon's work. My choice to compare the film adaptation of the *Twilight* novel to the *Buffy* television series is in part a result of the similarity of media, primarily their similarity in the visual medium. While Meyer's books provide a more expansive discussion of Bella and Edward's world, there are some differences between these texts and the film. My interest lies in comparing the discursive power of the *Twilight* film to that of *Buffy* rather than in a discussion of the corpus of Meyer's works. While there is certainly room for others to explore comparisons between *Buffy* and the complete literary saga, the intention of this essay is to look specifically at the discrete film text of *Twilight*.

[6] The film *Twilight* follows the story of exceptionally pale Phoenix teenager Bella Swan, who moves to live with her father in the small town of Forks after her mother and stepfather take to the road following the minor league baseball tryouts. Arriving at her new high school Bella soon catches the eye of Edward Cullen, the attractive yet reclusive member of local doctor Carlisle Cullen's adopted family. Edward is ultimately revealed to be a vampire, and he and Bella soon fall into an unconventional love. Unlike the vampires of the Buffyverse, who are constructed as soulless demons devoid of goodness and humanity, Meyer's vampires are constructed as able to choose for themselves how they wish to live. As such the Cullen vampire family constructs themselves as 'vegetarians', living off the blood of wild animals rather than that of humans. Yet Bella's association with the 'good' vampire family soon brings her within the sights of the more traditionally monstrous vampire clan that is moving through the Forks area. Bella becomes the hunted prey of a predatory vampire named James, who lours her away from the protection offered by the Cullen family. Edward and the Cullens ultimately save Bella, but not before a bite from James threatens to transform her into a vampire. Edward in turn drinks of Bella's blood to save her life, sucking James' venom from her veins. Saved and still human Bella is nursed back to health and returned to Forks just in time to participate in that all-important rite of passage for the American teenager: the prom. Bella and Edward's love is then reaffirmed and her wish for an eternal life with her beloved is denied while threats of future dangers lurk on the horizon.

[7] While these two texts are marked by distinct differences, their respective narrative

foci providing perhaps the most obvious point of difference between them, it is useful to consider the ways in which the liminal figure of the vampire has been harnessed within each narrative to address and explore the challenges of adolescence. The specific interest in this paper then lies in the use of the vampiric, and more broadly the supernatural, in the treatment of adolescent relationships, both romantic and familial, as well as the presentation of teen identity through the lead female characters' expression and experience of agency.

[8] At this stage it is perhaps important to acknowledge the differences that exist between these two texts. While certainly there is romance within *Buffy*, it by no means garners the same attention as the relationship between Bella and Edward does in providing the overriding narrative concern of the *Twilight* film. Similarly, while this paper will consider developments from the expanse of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer's* seven seasons, with particular attention paid to the first three teen-focussed seasons, my interest in the *Twilight* narrative is limited to only the first filmic rendition available at the time of this article. The obvious disparity between such a comparison lies in the ability of *Buffy*, in its serialised form, to explore a myriad of concerns and thematic threads that the feature film format of *Twilight* ultimately cannot sustain. Yet the interest in a discussion of these two texts lies beyond a simple comparison of the treatment of the teen vampire narrative structure. Rather it is a specific interest in how these two visual texts position the family, construct the central teen romances and present female agency within their widely received teen narratives which drives my interest and discussion.

[9] Elevating these two texts above other contemporary vampire narratives is the wide-spread popularity that they have achieved, and as such the implicit suggestion that the construction of their teen experiences can find resonance in a global audience. Emerging only a decade apart, the differences between how *Buffy* and *Twilight* approach the construction of character and teen relationships within their respective diegeses presents an interesting area for discussion. As such, it is the three key areas of family, romance and female agency which will provide the focus and structure for my comparison of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Twilight*.

## Family

[10] Within the world of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, representations of the family prove particularly interesting, being almost universally categorised in negative terms—at worst evil and at best dangerously dysfunctional. As Kristina Busse reveals, within *Buffy* “the word ‘family’ appears more often in connection with vampiric relations than it does with human ones” (Busse 2002, 209). Through aligning conceptions of family with different characters and creatures within the series, *Buffy* interrogates the impact various familial structures have on teenagers in America. The various constructions of the family unit within the Buffyverse serve to express the dangers which lurk within the domestic spaces of the show's teenagers and ultimately suggests, as does Nicola Nixon, that the American family is an ideological construct (Nixon 1997, 120). Whether it is the nostalgic vision of the American family idealised through the tradition of televisual families or the fractured heterosexual family of suburbia (Owen 1999, 25), *Buffy* identifies the dysfunction and corruption that is inherent in conservative constructions of family. Through revealing the artifice of the cohesive family unit, *Buffy* reveals the threat that instability in the domestic space poses to children, and more specifically, to adolescents. In particular, of all the constructions of the American family, it is the traditional patriarchy which poses the greatest threat to Sunnydale's teens.

[11] Patriarchal structures are revealed throughout the series as a re-occurring threat towards the central characters of Buffy and the Scooby Gang. Uniformly associated with ancient and monstrous figures throughout the show's development, the patriarchal family unit threatens the Slayer and her crew, and subsequently must be destroyed to guarantee their safety. The evil patriarchies of *Buffy* reveal themselves in multiple forms throughout the entirety of the series, from the murderous computer salesman Ted Buchanan ('Ted', 2011), or the demonic mayor Richard Wilkins III (season 3), to the bureaucratic evils of the Watcher's council that repeatedly interfere and endanger their own slayer ('Helpless', 3012; 'Checkpoint', 5012). Yet the most explicit portrayal of the evils of patriarchy is revealed through the figure of season one's vampire Master. My discussion will then focus on the patriarchy of the Master and in doing so highlight the connection drawn throughout the series between traditional paternal family values and constructions of evil, in particular articulating the dangers that traditional constructions of the family pose for the teenagers of Sunnydale.

[12] The term 'family' first appears within *Buffy* in relation to vampires and this association is carried on throughout the series. In the opening episode, 'Welcome to the Hellmouth' (1001), the vampire Darla flirts with her victim-to-be Jesse, answering his question "Are you from around here?" with "No, but I have family here". Her family, which is revealed to be the vampire clan of an ancient vampire king known as the Master, provides the first and arguably the most terrifying representation of the traditional patriarchal family. As Rhonda Wilcox states, "There could hardly be a nastier incarnation of the patriarchy than the ancient, ugly vampire Master" (Wilcox 2005, 27). The Master embodies both familial and societal constructions of the patriarchy, with his followers, a vampire cult known as the Order of Aurelius, representing both his loyal subjects and his children whom he must teach, care for and discipline as father and ruler. The positioning of this grouping as a family and the Master as a terrifying father figure is made overt in 'Angel' (1007). In this episode the Master instructs his protégé, the young 'anointed' vampire child Collin, in the ways of both vampiric society and of Collin's own place within the hierarchy of the Master's family. Not only does the Master's teaching of the boy directly identify the vampire clan as a family—"You see how we all work together for the common good? That is how a family is supposed to function"—but the action of teaching and instructing the young directly references the father/son interaction idealised within nostalgic imaginings of the American family. Yet the idealised family the Master's clan represents is ultimately revealed as corrupt. As Holly Chandler argues, "the actual lessons [the Master] imparts in his persona as a parent concerned with his kid's education label his family as dysfunctional" (Chandler 2003). In reference to one of his surrogate children, Darla, the Master magnanimously states, "How can my children learn if I do everything for them?" ('Angel', 1007). While a perfectly respectable familial lesson, the corruption and dysfunction of the Master's family is revealed as this lesson is imparted in the context of murder—Darla having been granted an opportunity to kill fellow vampires. The Master's care and instruction of his 'children' represents an idealised patriarchal familial relationship, yet the reality of the instruction given undermines this. The Master is cast as irrevocably evil, and the lessons he imparts are ones of murder and corruption. The association of the patriarchal family with such dangerous and undesirable figures as the show's recurrent evil: vampires, suggests that the patriarchal family is as dangerous as the demons themselves.

[13] This argument gains further currency as patriarchal families are progressively represented within successive seasons of *Buffy* as increasingly evil and threatening. The

patriarchal vampire family returns in the second season with the transition of Angel to Angelus ('Surprise' 2013/'Innocence' 2014). Following his conversion from the 'good' Angel, the evil Angelus is welcomed back to his old crew by Drusilla, who announces "We're family again" ('Innocence', 2014). The family of Angelus, Drusilla and Spike becomes an intimate patriarchy, the corruption of which is reflected and necessitated by Angel's own corruption. Devoid of a soul Angel can re-assume his role as sire and patriarch within the vampiric family, his own evil further illuminating the evil of the patriarchal structure.

[14] Such vampiric patriarchies not only reveal their un-desirability through their direct association with the monstrous but further align their structures with evil through the direct threat they pose to the safety of the Sunnydale teenagers. Both the Master and the evil Angelus pose particularly potent threats to Buffy and her friends, each not only succeeding in destroying part of the teens' inner circle—Jessie is turned into a vampire at the Master's bidding to bait Buffy ('Welcome to the Hellmouth', 1001/ 'The Harvest', 1002), while Jenny Calender is murdered by the sadistic Angelus ('Passion', 2017)—but also have a powerful hold over the slayer herself. While ultimately the slayer and her pals vanquish these vampiric patriarchs, Buffy is, at first encounter, powerless to land the killing blow. While it is Buffy's love for Angel that stays her hand against Angelus ('Innocence', 2014), the Master imposes a much more alarming control on the teenaged warrior. It is the power of the Master himself, his authority as patriarchy-incarnate, which commands the obedience of the young slayer. Through his hypnotic control over Buffy, the Master is able to remove her ability to fight back, to defend herself against being penetrated by his bite. This control and thrall which the vampiric patriarchy exercises over the slayer suggests the attraction that traditional structures still hold for the teens of Sunnydale. However, the appeal of the patriarchy is again undermined by the inherent corruption of the Master. Rather than offering security and safety for the teens of Sunnydale, the Master's family is intent on their destruction. The artificiality of the traditional family is revealed through the Master's bite which violates and drains the life, albeit temporarily, from a disempowered Buffy. Far from providing security and structured guidance for the teenaged Buffy and her friends, patriarchies within the Buffyverse threaten to destroy them, bringing chaos and corruption to their ordered suburban world.

[15] Just as the conception of the traditional patriarchal family unit as cohesive and stable is revealed within *Buffy* as a construction and ultimately artificial, so too is the world of the cohesive suburban family revealed to be a fabrication. While certainly the human families of the show's protagonists are located as 'good' compared to the monstrous patriarchy, even these family units are loaded with negative connotations. The families of Buffy, Willow and Xander represent the dysfunction and disintegration of the American nuclear family, highlighting, as Owen explains, the fear of "the fragmented heterosexual, middle-class family unit, and the failures of the rational world paradigm" (Owen 1999, 27). Each of the show's protagonists' families are represented as fragmented. Buffy is part of a divorced, single parent household where her absent father is constructed as disinterested in the family he has lost, choosing to enjoy a European vacation with a new fling rather than support his family through Buffy's Mother's illness ('Family', 5006). Willow's family is little better. While it is implied that both her mother and father are still present within her domestic space ('Passion', 2017 and 'Gingerbread', 3011), the audience is only ever introduced to her mother, Sheila Rosenberg. Sheila, constructed as an academic intellectual in 'Gingerbread,' seems dislocated from her daughter, failing to remember her friends' names or notice changes in her appearance. [3] Further, when Willow's

interest in the occult is revealed in this episode, Sheila's response locates Willow's actions not in terms of her daughter as an individual but rather as a de-identified statistical behaviour pattern. As she calmly explains:

This is hardly a surprise...Identification with mythical icons is perfectly typical of your age group. It's a classic adolescent response to the pressures of incipient adulthood. ('Gingerbread', 3011)

Willow's exclusion from the nurturing mother-daughter relationship is highlighted in her subsequent plea to her mother: "Mum, I'm not an age group. I'm me, Willow group" ('Gingerbread', 3011). The fragmentation of Willow's family is revealed as the split between the parent and child, where the mother is located as distant and uninterested in the child or her role as parental carer. This fractured parent/child relationship is made even more apparent through the series' treatment of Xander's family who are also constructed as absent from the child's life if still present within his domestic space. References, both implied and direct, to his unstable home life complete with parental alcohol abuse and fights, suggests, as Kristina Busse reveals, a context for neglect if not abuse within his family unit (Busse 2002, 209). Similarly to Willow, Xander's family is constructed as dysfunctional to the point of absence. It is telling that, aside from Sheila's short-lived interest in parenting her child in 'Gingerbread', neither Xander nor Willow are ever grounded or inconvenienced by their parents in regards to fulfilling their Slayerette duties. This is particularly contrasted by Buffy's continual need to sneak out of her home and her multiple groundings.

[16] It can then be understood, as Cynthia Bowers argues, "real threats to teens' stability comes from within their own families" (Bowers 2001). This is particularly evident in the case of Buffy's familial situation, where Joyce's mothering poses a greater threat to Buffy than merely the uncertainty of the fractured family unit. As J. P. Williams argues, Joyce fails to provide a strong female role model for her daughter, and further through her misinterpretations of Buffy's problems and her obliviousness in the face of her daughter's true identity, she fails to protect Buffy from the dangers of growing up (Williams 2002, 65). Joyce, failing to discover Buffy's Slayer identity for close to two seasons, further fails to realise the perils her daughter faces and instead relies on the 'received knowledge' gained from parenting tapes to discipline and 'properly' raise her daughter (Williams 2002, 65). Here Joyce makes the same mistake that Sheila does in consigning the individual experiences of her daughter to generalised statistical interpretations of 'teenagers' as a whole. Joyce's reliance on parenting books and tapes instructs her on the generic handling of a teenaged daughter but denies her ability to recognise what is going on in the life of her own. When Buffy does finally reveal her true identity at the end of the second season, Joyce's response is to continue to deny her daughter's identity, belying her assertion to Buffy in an earlier episode that "you can tell me anything. I've read all the parenting books. You cannot surprise me" ('Passion', 2017). Relying on the 'age group' paradigms of her parenting books hinders Joyce in recognising her daughter's individual challenges and leaves her unable to cope with Buffy's revelation. Unable to accept or recognise her daughter's challenges, Joyce is unable to protect Buffy from the dangers and challenges the monsters of Sunnydale represent.

[17] Of all the constructions of the family unit, the most successful and enduring model within the Buffyverse is then the family of the Scooby Gang itself. As Kristina Busse argues, "Traditional

nuclear families in the Buffyverse are mostly corrupt, and among the humans the healthiest relations occur in substitute families" (Busse 2002, 208). The central substitute family in *Buffy* is that formed organically, if not biologically, by the show's enduring character collective—the Scooby Gang. With the biological families of the Scooby Gang failing to provide the stability and safety they require, the teenagers must look elsewhere for constructive familial relations. The fracturing of the traditional family unit results in the expansion of other relationships to compensate for its absence, manifesting in the adoption of friends as family.

[18] The understanding of the Scooby Gang as a surrogate or chosen family is a theme taken up by a number of *Buffy* scholars. In particular, Ananya Mukherjea, Jes Battis, and Agnes Curry and Josef Velazquez variously identify the construction of the Scooby Gang family as a reworking or reinterpretation of traditional nuclear structures into something else. For Mukherjea, the Scooby Gang is an overwhelmingly positive construct which can be likened to the non-traditional and non-nuclear family-like networks common amongst gay/lesbian movements or open adoption and communal parenting circles. Mukherjea locates these non-traditional networks as chosen families which can be identified despite their lack or confusion of biological ties. She posits:

A family is, however, a group of people who have long-lasting commitments to each other, who, to some extent, grow up together (even as adults), and who make deep investments in their family unit. (Mukherjea 2008)

Through such a definition, the grouping of Buffy and her friends can clearly be identified as representing a family. The family of the Scooby Gang is marked by their commitment to each other and to protecting the identity of the Slayer. The bonds which form throughout the seasons, and in no small part resulting from shared experiences of the evils of Sunnydale, reflect Mukherjea's familial qualities of growing up together as the characters both physically age and also mature in one-another's company.

[19] While the bonds between the members of the Scooby Gang can thus be considered as representing a non-traditional family, this break from traditional structures does not necessarily represent a break from nuclear codings. In his book *Blood Relations: Chosen Families in Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Angel*, Jes Battis reveals that while certainly representing a non-traditional and non-biological family, the Scooby Gang's place within the (economically) sheltered suburban world of Sunnydale limits the extent to which they can be seen to deviate from more traditional televisual constructions of the normative American nuclear family. While certainly presenting a non-nuclear alternative through their acceptance of the lesbian coupling of Willow and Tara (and later Kennedy), and the acceptance of demonic and inter-dimensional beings as both familial and romantic relations, the Scooby Gang rarely ventures too far beyond the nuclear norm. Battis qualifies his discussion of the nuclear family explaining:

By "nuclear family," I am referring not simply to the statistical two-parents-under-one-roof definition, but to the connotative criteria of all nuclear families on television which remain always beneath the surface but never quite overt: race, sexuality and economic access. (Battis 2005, 69)

For all that the Scooby Gang family queers traditional nuclear codings of sexuality, there is little done to subvert the elements of race and economic access in the formation of *Buffy's* leading chosen family. Ex-demonic qualities aside, *Buffy's* family of friends is almost universally white, privileged and middle-class. The privileged economic status of the Scooby Gang is of particular interest in locating its recourse to connotative qualities of the nuclear family. As Battis reveals, the economic improbability of a single mother maintaining a three-story home in a gentrified, middle-class suburban neighbourhood only becomes visible following the death of *Buffy's* mother Joyce, and then only temporarily as *Buffy* moves from privileged middle-class female, through the stereotypical single-mother stint in the fast-food outlet, back to familial provider through an unlikely job as a high school counsellor (Battis 2005, 72). Poverty within the *Buffyverse* is limited and transitory, couched in the knowledge that there will be a swift return to financial security. From the unlikely scenario of Joyce providing for her two daughters to *Buffy's* equally unlikely recovery from 'near' destitution, the economic access of *Buffy* never strays too far away from the norms of Battis' connotative nuclear family. Nor is such assumed economic security limited to the experience of the Summers women. Despite a general lack of employment and no noticeable financial support from their biological families, Scooby Gang members Willow and Tara similarly enjoy an economic status that provides for their college tuition, an ever growing wardrobe and a mass of expensive spell ingredients without apparent concern or explanation. Such lack of interest in discussing the realities of money within the *Buffyverse*, and within the context of *Buffy* and her friends in particular, squarely locates the seemingly non-nuclear Scooby Gang family within conservative nuclear codings and middle-class socio-economic assumptions. The easy access to economic stability and the sanitised concession to a middle-class 'poverty' typify the American televisual family's adherence to the 'middle-class economic moral values' of the traditional nuclear family, and, as Battis reveals, "*Buffy's* family, both biological and extended, is no deviation from this norm"(Battis 2005, 69).

[20] Despite fiscal inconsistencies which confuse the non-nuclear status of the Scooby Gang family, both Battis and Mukherjea ultimately valorise the chosen family of the *Buffy* and her friends. Drawn together through their shared experience of demons and suburbia, the Scooby Gang represents not only the locus of the show's most positive and enduring interpersonal relationships, but also by far the most successful construction of a family grouping within the *Buffyverse*. Yet the bonds between the members of the Scooby Gang could also be interpreted in a much more sinister light. In their chapter "'Just a Family Legend": The Hidden Logic of *Buffy's* "Chosen Family"' Curry and Velazquez identify the Scooby Gang as a collective bonded by 'eschatological glue' (Curry & Velazquez 2009, 146). Where Mukherjea casts the shared experience of the chosen family as an element that reinforces the familial bonds of a non-biological unit, Curry and Velazquez suggest that the shared experience of extreme danger and the constant pressure of life on the hellmouth is responsible for creating a dependence on comrades such as that exhibited within a military unit or devout religious sects (Curry & Velazquez 2009, 146). In this sense the reassuring image of the chosen family takes on the more threatening association of a cult. This is furthered through Curry and Velazquez's second coding of the *Buffy* chosen family as proto-fascist, by which they argue, "the chosen family is held together by its opposition to a racially different and totally evil Other" (Curry & Velazquez 2009, 146). The Scooby Gang's opposition to the various demons of Sunnydale and the otherwise unmistakably white, middleclass make-up of the group subverts the idealised vision of the chosen family, suggesting instead a closed system of exclusion and reliance on one another in the preservation of a privileged status quo.



[21] While Curry and Velazquez's interpretation suggests that the relationships between Buffy and her friends are predicated by the fears of white, suburban America, the understanding of the Scooby Gang as a family is nevertheless articulated throughout the series as the characters recognise their familial bonds and perform the roles associated with family—sharing holiday celebrations and comforting one-another in times of crisis. As Busse argues, "both during Joyce's surgery and after her death, it is Buffy's friends who are there to help and to mourn with her" (Busse 2002, 209). The figure of Joyce in particular provides a locus for this implied familial relationship as she herself represents the surrogate mother to the Scooby Gang's family. While, as previously discussed, Joyce's mothering of Buffy can be seen as dysfunctional, at times dangerously so, Joyce also represents a stabilising maternal figure and one of the few sustained female role-models of the series. The extent of Joyce's role in nurturing and parenting the Scooby Gang is revealed best through her death and the subsequent challenges faced by Buffy who is left then to assume the maternal role in raising Dawn and maintaining her household. While certainly still representing the fractured family and oblivious parent, Joyce holds an important role in shielding both Buffy and the Scoobies from the harsher realities of the non-demon world. Miraculously providing for two children and a house in the suburbs with a single wage, Joyce maintains a safe and stable home environment in which Buffy and later Dawn can operate. In her absence, Buffy alone is unable to meet the challenges of parenting Dawn and meeting the financial burdens of the home. She is reliant on her chosen family of the Scooby Gang to help fill the void left by the removal of Joyce's parental presence in both disciplining and instructing Dawn, repairing her demon damaged house and meeting the economic burden of single parenthood.

[22] Along with such implicit associations between the Scooby Gang and family, the series also makes these associations explicit. In 'Something Blue' (4009), Buffy asks her surrogate father Giles to perform a duty associated with fatherhood and walk the bridal Buffy down the aisle. She explains, "my father's not that far away, I mean, he could—but this day is about family—my real family—and I would like you to be the one to give me away". Despite Buffy's biological father being 'not that far away,' Buffy acknowledges the familial bond between her and Giles as more *real* to her than that of her birth father. This prefacing of familial bonds with friends over those of blood relatives is reiterated a season later as the Scooby Gang welcome Tara, Willow's partner, into their family. When Tara's blood relatives come to take her home with them under the pretence that she is part demon, Buffy and the Scooby Gang resist ('Family', 5006). In response to Tara's father's demand, "We are her blood kin! Who the hell are you?" Buffy, supported by the Scooby Gang, responds, "We're family". As in 'Something Blue', this episode reveals that the familial bonds of the Scooby Gang are stronger than those of the biological family. Within the Buffyverse, then, it is the chosen family which provides for the most supportive and important relationships (Mukherjea 2008).

[23] The prefacing of the chosen family structure above all others in *Buffy* can be understood as further demonising the hierarchical structures of the traditional family. The Scooby Gang's chosen family denotes an egalitarian formation which in its very structure repudiates the evils associated with the failed hierarchies we have already discussed. To appropriate the argument which David A. Hedrich Hirsch mobilises in relation to Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*, the family of the Scooby Gang can be understood to represent idealised revolutionary republican family. The chosen family of the *Buffy* teenagers successfully achieves what Hirsch describes as the fraternally and sorrowfully egalitarian state free of conflict which failed to be achieved through

the overtaking of the “age old systems of aristocratic and monarchical rule” implicit in the figure of Frankenstein’s monster (Hirsch 1996, 137). As Hirsch argues, while Frankenstein aimed to create a new species of human free from the constrictions of the traditional conservatism of familial reproduction, his monster ultimately represented a terrible re-affirmation of the bonds he had tried to eliminate (Hirsch 1996, 132). In contrast to the monster, however, the chosen family of the Scooby Gang provides for an egalitarian familial model that does not rely on the hereditary transmissions of power and status which apply within the traditional patriarchal family (Hirsch 1996, 122). Constructed of “family-like networks that support those who may have been ousted by the families in which they grew up” (Mukherjea 2008), the chosen Scooby Gang family represents the ultimate egalitarian denial of hierarchy through the construction of a familial unit devoid of a reliance on structures of procreation.

[24] While *Buffy* clearly constructs hierarchy and patriarchy as dangerous if not outright evil, and the egalitarian ‘chosen’ family as the desirable familial structure, *Twilight* seemingly embraces the idealisation of the traditional family unit. Unlike *Buffy*, *Twilight* is hesitant to judge any family construction as implicitly evil. Rather the familial structures within the *Twilight* film merely suggest a varying degree of desirability. While particular family constructions are not demonised by *Twilight*, several parallels can be drawn between the families of *Buffy* and those within *Twilight*. Similarly to *Buffy*, the representations of family in *Twilight* can be easily divided between the human/fractured family and the vampiric/patriarchal family. Yet unlike *Buffy*, the vampiric family is not demonised within *Twilight*, but rather is revered and desired by the protagonist Bella.

[25] By far the strongest and most successful construction of family within *Twilight* belongs to the Cullens. The Cullen family, consisting of the parental couple Carlisle and Esme, and their adopted children Rosalie, Jasper, Emmet, Alice and Edward, is fore-grounded within the film as cohesive, supportive, and overwhelmingly desirable to the film’s teenaged heroine Bella Swan. The vampiric Cullen family provides an interesting point of reflection and rejection of the *Buffy* family paradigm, both echoing the associations of a patriarchal family structure with vampires, yet also implicitly rejecting the demonic connotations this produces in the Buffyverse.

[26] The Cullen family is first and foremost a patriarchal family. The undisputed head of the family is Carlisle Cullen, a doctor at the local hospital and the eldest of the vampire clan. Carlisle is both father figure within the Cullen family and also legitimate sire to both his wife and Edward, responsible for having brought each into the fold and turning them into vampires. As Edward reveals, the act of siring vampires is a challenging task. In describing his own transformation into a vampire Edward explains:

The venom was excruciating. But what Carlisle did was much harder. Not many of us have the restraint to do that...When we taste human blood a sort of frenzy begins. It’s almost impossible to stop. (*Twilight*)

Yet, as Bella points out, Carlisle did stop and in doing so was able to sire and create his family. Here the role of Carlisle as paternal leader of the Cullen family begins to emerge. Carlisle’s position as head of the Cullen hierarchy is in part due to his ability to control the ‘feeding frenzy’ and successfully propagate, literally siring his unusual family. He embodies self-control, stability and power over his own desires, providing a mentor and leader for his familial collective. In this sense a parallel can be drawn between the leadership

displayed by Carlisle and that of the more malignant vampire Master of *Buffy*.

[27] As already discussed, the Master commanded the loyalty and obedience of his followers, and further to this provided fatherly guidance and instruction to his children. Through instructing the Order of Aurelius and his chosen companions Darla and Collin in the ways of vampires, the Master embodied the role of the paternal instructor, laying down the laws by which the society and the family should operate. While the Master's teachings display the demonic aspect of the *Buffyverse* vampires, the figure of Carlisle Cullen presents a decidedly more benevolent patriarchal figure. Like the Master, Carlisle provides instruction to his family, teaching the Cullens the ideals of clean living and self-control, most notably present in the vampires' self-styled 'vegetarian' diet which excludes the feasting on humans. The patriarchy of Carlisle Cullen then reflects the construction of the vampiric family which is presented within the *Buffy* narrative, yet *Twilight* still rejects the evil qualities associated with such structures by avoiding the corruption of the typically monstrous aspects of the vampire—here morality replaces murder in the wisdom imparted by the paternal Carlisle Cullen.

[28] The idealisation of the traditional patriarchy implicit in the Cullen family finds further resonance within the *Twilight* narrative through recourse to the author Stephenie Meyer's acknowledged Mormon faith. The sanctity of family, and marriage in particular, is central to the to the followers of the Church of the Latter Day Saints, which holds the belief that marriage is eternal, existing for both mortal and immortal relations. As Edwin Arnaudin reveals in his Master's dissertation 'Mormon Vampires: The *Twilight* Saga and Religious Literacy,' "The basic unit of the Church of LDS is the family, which is only possible through marriage" (Arnaudin 2008, 54). The Cullen family unit is then offered up within the diegesis of *Twilight* as the most desirable construction of a familial unit through its categorisation as cohesive and whole. Further to this, as immortal vampires the Cullen family can be understood as the embodiment of the eternal marriage and familial bond idealised within the Mormon faith. Quite literally, the Cullen family and the couples within it are bonded through their un-death for eternity. The Cullen family is then located not only as the idealised construction of the family within in the narrative of the film but further as a representation of the idealised Mormon family structure.

[29] Such an alignment of the Cullens' as Mormon ideal is furthered through their associated Agency. Agency, or rather self-determination, is constructed within the Mormon faith as "the power and freedom to make choices, right or wrong" (Agency). The implied emphasis being on the ability of an individual to make good choices, the agency of the Cullens is revealed through their choice to not feed on humans, but rather to construct themselves as 'vegetarian' vampires who exist on the blood of animals. The importance of the visible Agency of the Cullens lies in its ability to definitively locate the vampiric Cullen family as 'good', assuaging the doubts raised by the monstrous tradition of vampire narratives. Through displaying Agency, as it is understood within the Church of LDS, the Cullens reveal their ability to resist the temptations of evil. Far from embodying evil then, and despite Edwards conviction that he is the villain not the superhero, the Cullen vampires within *Twilight* can be understood as embodying righteousness and are thus cleansed of the evil associations which persist within the imaginings of vampire families in *Buffy*.

[30] In contrast to the idealised cohesive vampiric patriarchy of the Cullens is Bella's own fractured human family which is revealed in the opening scenes of *Twilight*. As Bella reveals, her family is divided between Bella's "loving, erratic, hare-brained mother and her new husband" (*Twilight*) and Bella's father Charlie. Bella's parents are divorced and the beginning of the film reveals that she has lived most of her life with her mother and stepfather in Phoenix, Arizona. When Bella's mother follows her new husband onto the road to follow his minor-league baseball tryouts, Bella must move to live with her father in Forks, Washington. The film then codes Bella's familial relations as unstable as she is uprooted from her familiar world of Phoenix into an unfamiliar town and an unfamiliar familial relationship with her father.

[31] In contrast to her descriptive introduction of her mother, Bella tellingly introduces her father as "my dad's Charlie, he's the Chief of Police" (*Twilight*). Such an introduction, juxtaposed as it is to Bella's description of her 'loving' mother, highlights clearly the distance which exists not only physically but emotionally between herself and her father. To Bella, Charlie is father and head of police. While occupying the space of patriarchal figure both in familial and societal manifestations, the association of Bella to Charlie as paternal figure is long removed, kept at the distance of the impersonal first name rather than a familiar or familial noun. We soon discover that the best quality Bella can attribute to her father is his ability to continue to give Bella space despite their new proximity—"one of the best things about Charlie, he doesn't hover" (*Twilight*). Here the biological family of Bella is seen as distant and fractured, removed from emotional kinship into the realm of housemates or colleagues who share a common space.

[32] The location of Bella within such a fractured family has particular relevance when considering the film's Mormon coding of familial structures. As previously discussed, family and marriage are central to the teachings of the Church of LDS, and each are seen as essential elements in the attainment of eternal life. Through divorce, the family unit is irreparably fractured and as such the deconstructed family is coded as dangerous not only within the Mormon faith but also within the *Twilight* narrative. As the teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley, fifteenth president of the Church of LDS, reveal:

The disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets. (Hinckley 1995)

While within the teachings of the Church of LDS there is a clear association between the failed family unit and the apocalypse, within the *Twilight* narrative the danger of the failed family is expressed in milder terms. In much the same way as within *Buffy*, the danger of the fractured family is revealed in *Twilight* through its inability to provide the teenaged child with a space safe from the threats of the adolescent world. In Bella's case, the danger of her fractured family is realised through the inability of her father to protect her against the predatory advances of the vampire tracker James.

[33] After seeing the human Bella with the vampire Cullen family and the protective Edward, James becomes obsessed with hunting her down. With the violent and murderous James in hot pursuit, it soon becomes clear that Bella has become James' "most exciting game ever" (*Twilight*). It is also clear, as Edward quickly points out, that Bella's domestic space will not be able to protect her from her new hunter. Despite Charlie's role as paternal protector of the Forks community in his position as police chief, as Bella's father he is revealed as defenceless against the vampiric threat. Like the human parents in *Buffy*, Charlie is revealed as oblivious to the

presence of the demonic vampires and is as such powerless to defend his daughter from their unwanted advances. In particular, Charlie's inability to solve the two murders already committed by James' violent vampire companions, suggests his impotence in the face of the dangers they present.

[34] In contrast to the impotent human family, Bella is offered security and protection through the Cullen family. The idealised cohesive patriarchal structure of the Cullen family is reaffirmed through its ability to protect Bella from the dangers of James. Yet such protection also necessitates a conversion on the part of Bella, both in a literal sense of joining with the Cullen family while abandoning her own fractured biological one, and also in the sense of the film's religious associations. Bella leaves her father's house, entering into the Cullen family and heading away from Forks to escape James. Bella's transition into the Cullen family is revealed in a telling exchange following Bella leaving her father's house. Edward's 'sister' Rosalie questions her need to help the human, asking "what is she to me?" (*Twilight*). The paternal Carlisle clarifies the transition of Bella's relationship to the family, revealing "Bella is with Edward, she is part of this family now. We protect our family" (*Twilight*). True to his word the vampire family do protect Bella, ultimately destroying James and the threat he poses to their newest family member.

[35] Yet within Bella's choice to physically leave her father's house, there is an implication that Bella has not only left a fractured family but has also converted to the Mormon ideals encapsulated by the Cullen family. In this sense Bella's choice to leave her father's house is representative of her choice to achieve a religious conversion. Arnaudin aligns Bella's conversion to the Church of LDS with her desire to become a vampire herself, arguing:

The decision to join either the Mormon Church or an eternity as a vampire is not to be taken lightly. In each case, a new lifestyle awaits and it is one that is commonly met with a break from one's former life, habits, friends and family. (Arnaudin 2008, 69)

While within *Twilight*, Bella's inclusion within the Cullen family does not necessitate her conversion to a vampire, she clearly breaks with her biological family in order to enjoy the protection of the cohesive structures of the traditional patriarchal family.

[36] Bella's biological family is then located as inferior to the idealised construction of the Cullen family unit. As immortal vampires, the Cullen family can be understood to reflect the idealised construction of the Mormon family, eternal and cohesive. Unlike *Buffy*, which constructs the patriarchy as evil and dangerous, for Bella and the characters of *Twilight*, patriarchy is seen to be the most desirable familial state. Bella is welcomed into the Cullen family, even in her human form, and chooses to abandon her own family to enter the protection the Cullen family offers. Bella then, who seems to only loosely associate with her friends, desires the close familial bonds of the Cullens, idealising the traditional hierarchical family over any suggestions of the egalitarian chosen family of *Buffy*. *Twilight*, through denying the monstrous nature of the 'vegetarian' vampires, saves the patriarchy and constructs it not as evil or dangerous but rather as desirable and safe.

## **Romance**

[37] The various relationships within *Buffy* have received much scholarly attention—see articles from by Ananya Mukherjea, Carolyn Cocca, & Rhonda Wilcox to name a few. While there is much to discuss in relation to this topic within the Buffyverse, in an effort to highlight the similarities and disparities between the romances of *Buffy* and *Twilight* this section will primarily focus on the relationships of Buffy and Angel and Bella and Edward. Of all the relationships within *Buffy*, that between Buffy and Angel most closely resembles the central romance in *Twilight* between Bella and the vampire Edward. In both cases a young, teenaged girl falls in love with a vastly older, if still youthful, vampire. In each instance this love is constructed as fated yet doomed, and, despite the ever-present danger the relationship entails, the young females are displayed as willing victims to their bitten beaux.

[38] The alignment of the female protagonist as victim within these relationships is most overtly established within the *Twilight* narrative. From the very beginning Bella Swan is established as not only the focus of the film, but also the focus of all gazes, all desires, and the cause of all emotions provoked (Edwards 2009, 29). She locates herself from the outset as both our point of identification for the unfolding story, yet also the object of our gaze and our desiring. In the opening sequence of the film Bella's first-person narrative informs us that her death is imminent. She states in a resigned voice-over:

I never gave much thought to how I would die, but dying in the place of someone I love seems like a good way to go. (*Twilight*)

Juxtaposed with Bella's fatalistic declaration is the image of a deer, alone and isolated within its natural habitat. The deer, accompanied by Bella's voice, locates the point of identification for the audience as the deer/Bella. The serenity of this image is broken as the camera and the viewer shift, rushing the deer as though a hunter pouncing on its prey. The deer takes flight, fleeing the predatory gaze of the camera/viewer which pursues the deer's frantic escape until the creature finds its demise at the hands of a man-shaped figure. The intended correlation between the position of the doomed animal and the film's protagonist is made clear as the image of the captured animal shifts to a shot of Bella's face. As Kim Edwards elucidates:

The power of the first-person narrative voice is at odds with the words spoken and the blatant analogy: Bella is depicted as helpless sacrifice and natural victim. (Edwards 2009, 28)

Here Edwards highlights the dual perspective which operates throughout the film. The viewer is placed at once as the predator hunting the deer/Bella, and yet is also invited to identify with the victim, as Bella is to be the film's protagonist and narrator. This early indicator of Bella's position as both heroine and victim of the film resonates within the relationships developed throughout the film. Bella is constructed as the object of gazes and desires, the prey which is hunted in various ways throughout the film.

[39] In particular Bella is the focus of two overt hunts within the film: the monstrous James seeks her death, while the amorous Edward hunts her for romantic ends. While James' hunt is clearly acknowledged as such within the film's diegesis, Edward's advances are couched in more endearing terms. As Jonathan McIntosh laments, Edward's obsessive and predatory behaviour is interpreted within the *Twilight* narrative as romantic rather than threatening (McIntosh 2009). Yet Edward's romantic advances are undeniably predatory and reflect the

characteristics of the hunt depicted within the film's opening scenes.

[40] Despite his apparent coldness towards her, Edward is obsessed with Bella from the moment she arrives at Forks high school. From the moment he sees her, Edward seems incapable of shifting his gaze, and like the deer in the forest, Bella is unaware of the danger implicit in her being observed. Edward stalks his prey quite literally throughout the film, observing her without her knowledge or consent while she sleeps, shops and moves about her daily life. Yet while Bella eventually discovers this covert observation, she is not perturbed. As with the hunter in the forest, Edward seeks out his prey, watching and learning about it without its knowledge. Yet unlike the hunter, Edward resists the urge to pounce. It is ultimately Bella who offers herself up to the hunter as a willing victim. As Bella's narration reveals:

About three things I was absolutely positive. First, Edward was 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. (*Twilight*)

Despite Bella's knowledge, not only of Edward's naturally predatory nature, but his specific interest in her own blood, she willingly enters into a relationship with her hunter, even desiring the (un)death her being caught would entail.

[41] This role of Bella as willing victim is echoed in her relationship with her other hunter, James. As James grows nearer, Bella willingly goes to the death he promises, albeit under a false impression that in doing so she would save her mother. Here Bella chooses to locate herself once more as the victim, passively accepting her position as 'helpless sacrifice and natural victim'. It is then Edward's refusal to conclude his hunt and not Bella that saves both her life and her humanity. While Bella actively desires her own death and conversion to vampiric form, the hunter resists his prey's willingness to submit; Edward choosing to suck James' venom from Bella's arm rather than see her converted to an immortal like himself.

[42] Within the relationship of Bella and Edward, Bella is constantly positioned as the victim. Yet this position is ultimately revealed as voluntary, and further it is left to the predatory Edward, who stalks, desires and ultimately bites Bella, to resist the enticements of his prey. While Bella's role as passive prey and willing victim seems an unlikely parallel to the empowered figure of Buffy with her Slayer abilities, the nature of Buffy's relationship with Angel echoes that of Bella and Edward in many ways.

[43] As with Bella, Buffy can be seen as the willing victim of her and Angel's romance. This aspect is made explicit in 'Reptile Boy' (2005) in which an exchange between herself and Angel reveals Buffy's willingness to be endangered in order to be with her vampire.

*Angel:* This isn't some fairy tale. When I kiss you, you don't wake up  
from a deep sleep and live happily ever after.

*Buffy:* No. When you kiss me I want to die.

('Reptile Boy')

This exchange between Buffy and Angel finds resonance in *Twilight* and a similar warning from Edward for Bella.

Edward: I've killed people before.

Bella: It doesn't matter.

Edward: I wanted to kill you, I've never wanted a human's blood so much in  
my life.

Bella: I trust you.

(*Twilight*)

In each of these exchanges the vampire warns their romantic prey of the dangers that their affections carry. Here both Angel and Edward's love is aligned with the threat of death, and yet both Buffy and Bella eagerly embrace it. This parallel between love and death is perhaps typical of the gothic nature of the vampire narrative, pairing desire and fear to at once entice and repel.

[44] This parallel between Bella and Buffy as willing victims is furthered through the realisation of the vampires' bite. Both Buffy and Bella become literal victims to their beloved vampires as both Edward and Angel feed from their respective teen. Interestingly, the depiction of the lovers' bite within both *Buffy* and *Twilight* is constructed around two essential elements: the saving of a life and the willingness of the victim. In *Twilight*, Bella is both the willing victim of and the life saved by Edward's bite. Poisoned by a vampire's venom, Bella is close to death and closer still to becoming a vampire herself. Having been bitten by the evil vampire James, the toxin, which will cause her transformation, spreads throughout her body. It is left to her 'paternal' protector in the form of her suitor Edward to suck out the toxin and save her life. Bella is then placed clearly within the Gothic construct of the heroine of sensibility (Callander 2001). As Michelle Callander explains, the heroine of sensibility is marked by her virtue, sensitivity and compassion, and is surrounded by men who wish to protect her from evil and who will ultimately save her in the end (Callander 2001). Such a characterisation is clear within the character of Bella, who as McIntosh reveals, "is written as passive, co-dependant and perpetually the damsel in distress" (McIntosh 2009).

[45] In contrast to this, Buffy is constructed as a more active and masculinised heroine. As Callander suggests, Buffy marks a new type of heroine, one which perhaps demonstrates the evolution of Bram Stoker's Mina from a female with a man's brain to one with his physical strength and narrative agency (Callander 2001). Buffy's position as this empowered heroine becomes apparent through her own experience as receiver of the vampire's bite. In the final episode of the third season ('Graduation Day', 3022), it falls to Buffy to save the poisoned Angel. Here already the roles are to some degree reversed from the typical Gothic construction of the heroine. Unlike Bella and her traditional Gothic counterparts, Buffy is not saved *by* but rather is the rescuer *of* her paternal figure. While Buffy still inhabits the position of willing victim she also finds agency through her role as saviour of her vampiric suitor. Having been poisoned by a vampire specific toxin known colloquially as 'Killer of the Dead,' only the blood of a Slayer can cure the infected Angel ('Graduation Day', 3022). After first attempting to slay rogue slayer Faith



to save her beloved, Buffy embraces her own ability to save her lover, actively initiating Angel's feeding of her blood. Buffy, then, not only takes the place of the willing victim but she actively offers herself up as prey. In this way Buffy represents a deviation from the traditional conception of the heroine epitomised by Bella. While still a willing victim, Buffy represents a new style of heroine who remains the active and controlling force of the narrative—no longer the damsel in distress but the knight dressed in stylish yet affordable boots.

[46] Yet another point of comparison between the constructions of romance in the *Buffy* and *Twilight* narratives presents itself through the actions of the desiring vampires. As with Edward, Angel repeatedly stalks the object of his desire, observing Buffy without her knowledge. Angel's obsession with Buffy again originated from the desire aroused by her position as object of his gaze, and like Edward, Angel is placed as the knowledgeable hunter. He sees Buffy and desires her long before she even knows of his existence, watching her covertly from a blacked out car at her LA high school ('Passion', 2017). Buffy, like Bella, is confused by the actions of her suitor who at first presents himself as someone the heroine should be cautious of. Edward, who disappears for a few days after meeting Bella, interlaces overtures of friendship with warnings that he and Bella cannot be friends. More coyly, Angel appears and disappears in Buffy's world bringing with him warnings of impending doom and labelling himself a friend, but not necessarily Buffy's friend ('Welcome to the Hellmouth', 1001).

[47] Both relationships are then constructed as existing in an imbalance. The vampire is positioned as the predatory elder who knows more about the young female than they perhaps do themselves, highlighting connotations between their predatory desiring and statutory rape. This is a position suggested by Carolyn Cocca as she explains, within America the general age of consent for sexual relations is between 16 and 18 years of age. A sexual partner who is more than three years the senior of someone below this age can be prosecuted as a felony perpetrator of statutory rape (Cocca 2003). With Angel somewhere in his mid two-hundred-and-forties and Edward a young one hundred and seven, their relations with their teenaged sweethearts are certainly taboo if not outright illegal. While within both *Buffy* and *Twilight* the female protagonists are constructed as mature enough to choose such a relationship for themselves, it is also clear that they enter the relationship at a disadvantage.

[48] This disadvantage is further highlighted by Angel's and Edward's ability to control what knowledge the young girls can access in regards to their past. While Edward's and Angel's stalking gives them insight and greater information about Bella and Buffy, the girls have only limited knowledge of their boyfriends' pasts. Bella must turn to local native legends, and Buffy to accounts within the Watchers' diaries ('Angel', 1007 and 'Halloween', 2006) in order to discover more about their respective vampires. The fragmented knowledge such sources impart is only partially clarified by Edward and Angel, who choose to limit how much can be known about them. Here again the imbalance between the knowledgeable older vampires and the young innocent females is apparent.

[49] Yet for all the similarities displayed in the behaviour of *Buffy* and *Twilight's* amorous vampires, there is one overriding difference which separates the two constructions of vampire human relations: that is the way in which such predatory advances are portrayed within the film or show's context. As previously mentioned, Edward's predatory impulses are constructed within *Twilight* as overwhelmingly romantic. His constant desire for Bella's blood and his inclination to

follow her and watch her sleep are constructed as endearing signs of his care and devotion for her. In contrast to this, such overt displays of predatory obsession are constructed within the Buffyverse as being threatening and undesirable. In particular this can be seen through a number of direct situational parallels between *Twilight* and episodes from *Buffy's* first and second seasons.

[50] The most apparent disparity between the treatments of predatory vampiric behaviour is the relative reaction that each protagonist has to being stalked. While Bella seems unfazed by Edward's admission that he follows her, watches her sleep and feels an overwhelming need to protect her, Buffy clearly registers her disapproval of such behaviour. In the opening episode of season two, 'When She Was Bad' (2001), Buffy walks alone at night down an empty street. She is stalked by a threatening and shadowy figure, yet rather than the typical response of a damsel in distress, or even one enamoured, Buffy confronts her pursuer. In witty Buffy style she retorts, "you know being stalked isn't really a big turn on for girls". While her pursuer is revealed to be the vampire closest to her heart, Angel, Buffy identifies the true nature of his actions. Angel is stalking Buffy, and unlike *Twilight*, in the Buffyverse this does not translate as romantic but rather as undesirable and unwanted attentions. This identification of the threatening nature of the stalker within Buffy is further revealed through the actions of the evil Angelus in the latter half of season two. Here again Angel stalks Buffy, or more appropriately he now hunts her with all the connotations implicit in the roles of the hunter exemplified by James and the deer-hunter of *Twilight*. Here Angel's behaviour more closely resembles that of Edward as he takes to entering Buffy and her friends' houses uninvited and sketching them asleep ('Passion', 2017). Unlike the romanticised vision of Edward watching Bella sleep, Angelus' presence within the unwary Buffy's room is constructed as alarming and threatening. Unlike *Twilight*, predatory behaviour is not tolerated within Buffy's world.

[51] This argument is taken up by video remix artist Jonathan McIntosh in his reworking of the *Buffy* and *Twilight* narratives through the interrogation of "what would Buffy do" if confronted by Edward Cullen. McIntosh's remix, posted online at WIMN's Voices and accompanied by a Blog discussion of the interaction of the *Buffy* and *Twilight* characters ([www.wimnonline.org](http://www.wimnonline.org)), posits the question of how would Buffy react to the behaviour of Edward. His inevitable conclusion is that Buffy would ultimately stake the *Twilight* vampire. As McIntosh reveals

In the end the only reasonable response was to have Buffy stake Edward—not because she didn't find him sexy, not because he was too sensitive or too eager to share his feelings—but simply because he was possessive, manipulative, and stalkery. (McIntosh 2009)

McIntosh recognises the disparate views on predatory behaviour within the *Twilight* and *Buffy* narratives. His video remix, which inter-cuts shots of Edward and Buffy, creates a dialogue between the characters. His intention, to discover what Buffy would do, is accomplished through the juxtapositioning of Buffy's own responses to Edward's behaviour. The appropriateness and believable nature of each character's role within this mash-up highlights the (un)acceptable nature of the predator within the two narratives. As McIntosh himself explains, "throughout *Buffy's* seven seasons, males that display the type of behavior Edward does are ridiculed or portrayed as dangerous (or both)" (McIntosh 2009). So while there are many similarities

between the predatory nature of romances within both *Buffy* and *Twilight*, it is the perception of their predatory nature and the ultimate acceptability of such behaviour that distinguishes them. Despite the correlation between the stalkery behaviour of both Angel and Edward, it is only within *Buffy* that this behaviour is deemed unacceptable and a hindrance rather than a furtherance of romance

### Female Agency

[52] The deviation between the passive heroine of Bella and the active heroism of Buffy can be understood as a broader reflection of the characterising modes of address within the two narratives. By this I refer not specifically to language but rather to the forms of communication or interaction which are privileged within *Buffy* and *Twilight*. In particular this opposition of passive versus active heroine can be understood as the privileging of the look and the voice within *Twilight* and *Buffy* respectively.

[53] As Edwards argues in her article 'Good looks and sex symbols: the power of the gaze and the displacement of the erotic in *Twilight*,' within both the film, and Meyer's original novel, the look is central to the *Twilight* narrative (Edwards 2009, 26). Both looking good and the ability to look are key aspects of the construction of power, identity and agency within *Twilight*. As Edwards reveals, the world of Forks high school is constructed through the exchange of looks, and the identity of each character is reflected in who they look at and who looks at them (Edwards 2009, 26). This privileging of the look in the construction of characters in *Twilight* is no-where more apparent than in the case of Bella Swan. As Edwards explains:

Bella is the cause and object of all the other looks and emotions provoked. Part of her vicarious attraction to the audience is the fact that—whether families, lovers, enemies—*everyone* wants Bella: to own, to love, to protect, to hurt. (Edwards 2009, 29)

Bella is defined within the *Twilight* narrative through her position in being the perpetual focus of all gazes. If we understand, as Mulvey argues, that active looking is masculine while the object of the look is passive and feminine (Mulvey 1984, 11), then Bella, through her positioning as the perpetual object, is positioned from the beginning as the passive heroine.

[54] This understanding of Bella as the perpetual object of the gaze and passive heroine has interesting implications for her role within the *Twilight* narrative. Despite Bella's position as protagonist and narrator within *Twilight*, her own subjectivity is never fully realised. Bella's character is constructed not through her own narrative agency but rather through the agency she inspires in her paternal protectors—Edward, and to a lesser degree her father—and molesters—the vampire James. Bella's role within *Twilight* is then that of the traditional heroine described by Budd Boetticher. As Boetticher states:

What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance. (Boetticher quoted Mulvey 1984, 11)

Bella fulfils this role of the heroine, inspiring action in those around her but never forwarding the narrative herself. Bella is then both feminine and feminised by the *Twilight* narrative, identified as the object upon which the desires of the narrative agents focus. Bella is rendered vacant and passive, inspiring action but never initiating it herself.

[55] Bella's position as passive heroine and failed narrative-agent is further identified through *Twilight's* privileging of the gaze and the act of looking. The ability to look within *Twilight* reflects the power of the characters, not only through their position as active wielder or passive object of the gaze, but also through their ability to look and to see. According to Edwards, looking within *Twilight* is explored through concepts of not only 'how you *look*' but also '*how you look*' (italics in original, Edwards 2009, 28). It is then not only an investigation of a characters place in relation to the gaze, but also the ability to perceive from the gaze—good looking as opposed to looking good. Those characters that are able to see and to perceive then further deploy power in *Twilight*. In this sense, the privileging of looking within *Twilight* offers the passive heroine Bella an opportunity to regain some of the power stripped from her as perpetual object of the gaze.

[56] Despite her role as vessel for all looks and desires within the *Twilight* narrative, Bella is identified as more perceptive than the other teenagers at Forks high, in particular in her observations of her own observer: Edward. It is Bella who notices the changing colour of Edwards eyes—a vampiric trait—and who sees his extraordinary speed and strength when he saves her from a car crash. Yet, while Bella has unexpected power in looking at Edward, even her power in this sense is undermined. Specifically, Edward undermines Bella's power in seeing, denying the truth of what she claims to see. Following the avoided car crash Bella confronts Edward at the hospital. When she questions how it is that he could get to her so quickly and stop a car with his hand, Edward simply dismisses Bella, explaining she must be confused from hitting her head. As Bella demands, "I know what I saw," Edward refuses Bella's power in looking, replying "well, nobody's going to believe you" (*Twilight*). Through denying the truth of what Bella saw Edward undermines the power of Bella's ability to look. While the audience, whose viewing experience is tied to Bella's, can verify what Bella has witnessed, within the world of *Twilight* Bella's seeing is stripped of its power through the unbelievable nature of what she has observed.

[57] Ultimately, even this tenuous empowerment of Bella is denied as Bella's ability to see is refuted. Bella's looking is fragmented within the narrative and is undermined not only by Edward's denials and the invasive looks of other characters which constantly reposition Bella as object not subject of the gaze, but, as Edwards explains, by her "own victim experience and her idealised view of the world" (Edwards 2009, 29). During the film's climax, when Edward and the Cullen family rescue Bella and James is defeated, Bella's feminine swoon denies her ability to see, rendering James' fate and her own rescue out of focus. Bella is then unable to see clearly the violence and mayhem that is expected from the vampire and horror movie genre (Edwards 2009, 30). Further to this, as "the gaze denotes power and dominance, and the inability to see

clearly indicates weakness and submission" (Edwards 2009, 30), Bella's inability to see her own rescue places her squarely back within the role of passive heroine of sensibility who must rely on her paternal protector to both save her from harm and to see where she can't. It is then Edward, inspired by Bella to act and to save her, who is able to see in this scene and in doing so is able to fulfil the role of narrative agent and advance the story.

[58] So while Bella is able to activate her gaze, she is never completely successful in wielding it. Although she is able to see Edward's vampiric nature where others can't, she fails to ever distance herself from the gazes which construct her as the continual object of all desires within the film. Her ability to look is constantly brought in to question by Edward and she ultimately fails to see her own rescue at the hands of her paternal suitor. In this way, the privileging of the look within *Twilight* defines Bella's character in negative terms. It is Bella's inability to see clearly and her place as the perpetual object of the gaze that irrevocably positions her as passive and powerless within and with relation to the narrative. As the object of all gazes and all desires Bella inspires action but does not initiate it. As the heroine of sensibility, Bella finds herself cast within the role of the traditional Gothic female; passive and objectified she must rely on the paternal figures that surround her to advance her story.

[59] In contrast to Bella's passive position, Buffy is constructed as active and empowered through her use of language and her voice. Buffy denies her position as passive object of the gaze through her ability to manipulate language and actively contribute to the narrative. As Owen reveals, "[Buffy] talks back, she looks back, and she can take a blow as well as she can land one" (Owen 1999, 25). While Buffy is able to successfully wield the gaze, it is her ability to talk back that makes active her own position and refuses her being located as victim or damsel in distress. In this sense, if we can understand that the vampire's bite symbolises rape and the vampire a rapist (Chandler 2003), then Buffy's ability to 'talk back' becomes the symbolic verbalisation of 'NO,' the denial of patriarchal aggression. This is articulated throughout the show as Buffy couples her slaying of the symbolic rapist with witty puns and repartee. Slaying a vampire in season one, Buffy quips: "We haven't been properly introduced; I'm Buffy and you're history" ('Never Kill a Boy on the First Date', 1005). While later in season five, she counsels a frustrated vamp: "Tell you what, you find yourself a good anger management class. and I'll jam this pokey wood stick through your heart" ('No Place Like Home', 5005). In this way Buffy's language becomes the literal punch line to her slaying.

[60] The power of the connection between Buffy's use of language and her slaying is acknowledged within the series itself. An exchange between Xander and Willow at the beginning of the third season clearly identifies the importance Buffy's ability to 'talk back' plays in her ability to slay. With Buffy absent, the rest of the Scooby Gang—Xander, Willow and Oz—must step up to slay the vampires of Sunnydale. In one attempted staking Willow greets a newly risen vampire with the line "That's right, big boy. Come and get it" ('Anne', 3001). When the vampire proves unusually apt at acrobatics and escapes unscathed from the amateur slayers, Xander questions Willow's choice of language. Suddenly self-conscious Willow explains:

Well, w-w-well, the Slayer always says a pun or-or a witty play on words, and I think it throws the vampires off—and, and it makes them frightened because I'm wisecracking. ('Anne')

It is then Willow's inability to pun as much as her lack of strength and fighting prowess that sees

this vampire escape. Elsewhere within this episode Buffy successfully couples her slaying with her language, quipping to a soon to be slayed demon, "Hey, Ken, wanna see my impression of Gandhi?" And qualifying after she lands the killing blow, "Well, you know, if he was really pissed off" ('Anne', 3001). As Karen Eileen Overbey & Lahney Preston-Matto explain, "Buffy is easily able to play with language in this way—it is tied to slayage" (Overby & Preston-Matto 2002, 74). Where Buffy is able to manipulate language to complement her fighting style, Willow seems out of her depth and awkward with both slaying and punning. As Xander reveals, "I've always been amazed with how Buffy fought, but in a way, I feel like we took her punning for granted" ('Anne'). It is not merely Buffy's enhanced physical abilities which are noticeable absent in this episode, but her ability to manipulate language, and in doing so, defeat the evil patriarchies of Sunnydale.

[61] For Buffy, and in fact for all characters within the Buffyverse, the ability to manipulate language is a weapon in itself (Williams 2002, 63). 'Hush' (4010) provides the most overt example of language or the voice as weapon within the Buffyverse as this aspect is literalised within the narrative. The evil of 'Hush' appears in the form of the Gentlemen and their hunchbacked henchmen. These chilling demons steal the voices of Sunnydale so as to take the hearts of seven people in silence. Through an entertaining slide display, Giles reveals that within the fairytale of the Gentlemen, the demons were defeated when the young princess screamed. It is then the sound of the human voice which provides the literal weapon against these demons. Following discovering the demons base and recovering her captured voice, Buffy vanquishes the Gentlemen with a scream of her own.

[62] Buffy's scream in this episode reveals the agency of the character within the series in two distinct ways. It highlights the privileged nature of the voice, and therefore language, within the series—literalising the theme of language as weapon and locating Buffy's place as Slayer within her ability to wield this weapon. Further, and with greater specificity to the scream within 'Hush' (4010), Buffy's verbal articulation within this episode highlights the deviation her character embodies from the traditional female victim of the horror and Gothic genres. As Chandler argues, where the typical blonde female victim of a horror movie would scream helplessly, Buffy's verbalisations are playful and used to undermine the confidence of her enemies (Chandler 2003). Unlike the helpless female victims of more traditional vampire tales, who scream to be saved, Buffy's scream in 'Hush' is used to save not only herself but also her friends and her town. Buffy's scream can be seen then as active rather than passive, and as cementing her position as a new type of heroine. Where, as Callender explains, "Traditional heroines of sensibility rely on a paternal protector—brother, lover—to protect her from the villain" (Callender 2001), Buffy protects her paternal figures and saves herself. Through embodying the role of saviour and protector, Buffy distances herself from the passive heroines of sensibility and embraces the traditionally masculine role of actively forwarding the story. As Owen reveals, "The character of Buffy ruptures the action-adventure genre, in that a female is controlling the narrative and delivering the punches" (Owen 1999, 25).

[63] In contrast then to Bella, who is the ultimate passive female and object of all gazes, Buffy is made active through her use of language. As Overbey and Preston-Matto argue:

Buffy is the speech act. She is the utterance that communicates meaning, drawing on the linguistic capabilities of her companions: invention, playfulness,

contextualisation, archival knowledge, compilation, and translation. (Overby & Preston-Matto 2002, 83)

Buffy's ability to manipulate language and utilise it as a weapon highlights her place as a new resourceful and active heroine. Unlike Bella who, as the focus of other people's looking, does not initiate action, Buffy embodies the action of speech. Buffy, no longer the heroine of sensibility is one of agency, one who creates the action and advances the story. While Bella relies on being saved and inspiring the men around her into action, Buffy creates the action, more often than not saving the men in her life.

## Conclusion

[64] Despite the common premise of a teenaged girl arriving at a new school in a new town that happens to be the home of vampires, the teenaged worlds of *Buffy* and *Twilight* present distinctly different takes on the dangers and challenges of adolescence. *Buffy* highlights the artifice of traditional family structures and suggests that the teenagers must be able to rely on themselves to face the dangers of growing up in America. Hierarchy and controlling patriarchal figures are disavowed and in their place strong females display their agency, writing and advancing their own stories. In contrast the world of *Twilight* suggests an inversion of the Buffyverse. For all that it is set in contemporary small-town America, *Twilight* presents a nostalgic conception of the Gothic vampire narrative. Its heroine Bella Swan marks a return to the nineteenth century Gothic heroines of sensibility, who are defined and rescued by the paternal figures in their lives. Bella is the ultimate object, she is the focus of the gazes both within the film and before the screen, and her world reflects the desires for the re-affirmation of the patriarchal structures that provided a sense of security for the distressed damsels of traditional Gothic genres. In a post-*Buffy* world such a nostalgic and passive take on a twenty-first century heroine is jarring. The arguably pre-feminist world of Bella and the Cullens could not survive within the Buffyverse as its privileging of masculine dominance, patriarchal control and hierarchical relationships would construe themselves as the ultimate evil, demanding not only their demonisation but also their demise at the hands of the Slayer.

## Works Cited

"Agency—The Key to Growth." *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*. <<http://www.lds.org/hf/library/0,16866,4229-1,00.html?LibraryURL=/Curriculum/home%20and%20family.htm/family%20home%20evening%20resource%20book.htm/building%20a%20strong%20family.htm/agencythe%20key%20to%20growth.htm>> (7 September 2009).

Arnaudin, Edwin. "Mormon Vampires: The Twilight Saga and Religious Literacy." Master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2008. <<http://hdl.handle.net/1901/469>> (16 March 2010).

Battis, Jes. *Blood Relations: Chosen Families in Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Angel*. North Carolina: McFarland, 2005.

Bowers, Cynthia. "Generation Lapse: the Problematic Parenting of Joyce Summers and Rupert Giles." *Slayage: Online International Journal of Buffy Studies* 2 (2001): 25 pars.

<http://slayageonline.com/essays/slayage2/bowers.htm>.

Busse, Kristina. "Crossing the Final Taboo: Family, Sexuality, and Incest in Buffyverse Fan Fiction." In *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, edited by Rhonda V. Wilcox and David Lavery, 207-17. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.

Callander, Michelle. "Bram Stoker's *Buffy*: Traditional Gothics and Contemporary Culture." *Slayage* 3 (2001): 27 pars. <http://slayageonline.com/essays/slayage3/callander.html>.

Chandler, Holly. "Slaying the Patriarchy: Transfusions of the Vampire Metaphor in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*." *Slayage* 9 (2003): 62 pars. <http://slayageonline.com/essays/slayage9/Chandler.htm>.

Cocca, Carolyn. "First Word 'Jail,' Second Word 'Bait': Adolescent Sexuality, Feminist Theories, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*." *Slayage* 10 (2003): 39 pars. <http://slayageonline.com/essays/slayage10/Cocca.htm>.

Curry, Agnes B. and Josef Velazquez. "'Just a Family Legend': The Hidden Logic of *Buffy's* Chosen Family." In *Buffy Goes Dark: Essays on the Final Two Seasons of Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, edited by Lynne Y. Edwards, Elizabeth L. Rambo and James B. South, 143-66. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2009.

Doherty, Thomas. *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s*. Rev. and expanded ed. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002.

Edwards, Kim. "Good Looks and Sex Symbols: The Power of the Gaze and the Displacement of the Erotic in *Twilight*." *Screen Education* 53 (2009): 26-32.

Hinckley, Gordon B. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." *The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints*, 23 September 1995. <http://www.lds.org/ldsorg/v/index.jsp?locale=0&sourceId=1aba862384d20110VqnVCM100000176f620a&vnextoid=e1fa5f74db46c010VqnVCM1000004d82620aRCRD>.

Hirsch, David A. Hendrich. "Liberty, Equality, Monstrosity: Revolutionizing the Family in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*." In *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, edited by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 115-40. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

McIntosh, Jonathan. "What Would Buffy Do? Notes on Dusting Edward Cullen." *WIMN's Voices*, 1 July 2009. <http://www.wimnonline.org/WIMNsVoicesBlog/?p=1272>.

Mukherjea, Ananya. "When You Kiss Me, I Want to Die: Gothic Relationships and Identity on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*." *Slayage* 26 (2008) 45 pars. <http://slayageonline.com/essays/slayage26/Mukherjea.htm>.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." In *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, edited by Brian Wallis, 6-18. NY: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984.

Nixon, Nicola. "When Hollywood Sucks: Or Hungry Girls, Lost Boys, and Vampirism in the Age of Reagan." In *Blood Read: The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture*, edited by Joan



Gordon and Veronica Hollinger, 115-28. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: U of Penn. Press, 1997.

Overbey, Karen Eileen and Lahney Preston-Matto. "Staking in Tongues: Speech Act as Weapon in *Buffy*." In *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, edited by Rhonda V. Wilcox and David Lavery, 73-84. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.

Owen, A. Susan. "Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Vampires, Postmodernity, and Postfeminism." *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 27, no. 2 (1999): 24-31.

Waltje, Jörg. *Blood Obsession: Vampires, Serial Murder, and the Popular Imagination*. NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005.

Wilcox, Rhonda. *Why Buffy Matters: The Art of Buffy The Vampire Slayer*. London: I.B.Tauris, 2005.

Williams, J.P. "Choosing Your Own Mother: Mother-Daughter Conflicts in *Buffy*." In *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, edited by Rhonda V. Wilcox and David Lavery, 61-72. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.

#### Notes

---

[1] Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*, written in 1897, was adapted into a film of the same name in 1931, directed by Tod Browning and released by Universal Pictures.

[2] At the time this essay was written only the first *Twilight* film had been released.

[3] In 'Gingerbread' (3011), Sheila Rosenberg refers to Buffy as Bunny and reveals that she has failed to notice her daughter's hair-cut for nearly half a year.