

# Trabajo Fin de Grado

Masculinity and the Female Gaze in the *Twilight* Saga

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2022

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## 1. ABSTRACT

This essay offers an analysis of the concept of the “female gaze” and its relation to the ways in which masculinity is portrayed in movies; taking as an example the *Twilight* saga, particularly *Twilight* (2008), *New Moon* (2009) and *Eclipse* (2010). The purpose of this dissertation is to illustrate how the female gaze does not necessarily offer a feminist perspective, and how it can still be influenced by patriarchal ideas.

The essay includes an explanation of Laura Mulvey’s theory about the male gaze and the female gaze, as well as other theorists’ complementary ideas related to this topic (particularly Steve Neale’s, and Mary Anne Doane’s theories). The essay is divided into two sections, one focused on the concept of “scopophilia”, and the other on the process of identification. In those sections, by using examples from the movies, the author of the dissertation will try to illustrate its thesis.

## 2. INTRODUCTION.

In a world ruled by the motto “reinvent or die”, artists often find themselves looking for new ways to tell old stories. The 2000s were a time marked by the revision and redefinition of concepts such as femininity, masculinity, desire, love, and personal expression, in all sorts of different artistic forms, including cinema. It is precisely in the early 2000s when the adaptation of the first book in Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight* saga sees the light of day, in charge of indie director, Catherine Hardwicke. At the moment of the film’s release nobody was aware of the everlasting impact it would have in the years that followed.

The first movie of the saga, based on the homonymous novel, sets the foundation for the love story between high school student, Bella Swan (Kristen Stewart), and her mysterious classmate, Edward Cullen (Robert Pattinson). A tale as old as time, this romance becomes anything but conventional by putting together fantastical elements, a universe full of creatures of the night, a repressed love between a human and a vampire, and vast amounts of teenage angst. It offers a subversive take on classical romance fiction and redefines many of the conventions associated with the genre.

*Twilight* (2008) was gladly received by young spectators at the time, particularly those who were already loyal followers of the novels, as well as by the ‘emo’ subculture of the time, who found the dark and twisted aesthetic of the film incredibly appealing. However, critics tended to despise the film. Manohla Dargis, from *The New York Times*, defined it as “a deeply sincere, outright silly vampire romance for the hot-not-to-trot abstinence set” (2011) and critic Laremy Legel described it as an example of “toothless cinema” (2011). Critical consensus after the release of the first film, was that the movie was nothing more than a sappy and shallow product, targeted at teenage girls, and easily forgettable. Even some of the cast and crew of the movie commented on, years later,

their initial thoughts on the first film, claiming that its success and impact in popular culture took them by surprise. The male lead, Robert Pattinson, claimed in an interview in 2019 for *Variety* magazine that he assumed *Twilight* would be a small-scale project because of the people involved in it:

To me, Catherine Hardwicke, who directed it, had done 'Thirteen' and 'Lords of Dogtown.' They were little movies, and they were kind of hard-core. (...) Kristen [Bella Swan] was in stuff as well; she'd been in 'Into the Wild' and some other things. And it was very indie.

However, the movie became a teenage sensation overnight, which resulted into the production of its sequel only one year later, this time with a male director.

*The Twilight Saga: New Moon* (2009), directed by Chris Weitz, set records for advance ticket sales, causing some theatres to add additional showings. It also became the biggest midnight opening in domestic (United States and Canada) box office history, grossing an estimated \$26.3 million, and breaking the record previously held by *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2009).

The fan phenomenon caused by the movies became one of the greatest in pop culture history, growing more with each release, as well as the budget and production of the films increased simultaneously. However, critical opinion on the films remained the same, or even worsened, as these became more mainstream. Riese Bernard from *Autostraddle* talks about the third movie of the saga, *The Twilight Saga: Eclipse* (2010), years after its release, claiming that: “*Eclipse* was cool and entertaining, once you got over the whole 'how the hell did this totally masochistic love affair become a worldwide phenomenon' thing” (2021). Bernard’s comment proves that, even if the general opinion on the saga and its followers has become less critical years after the release of the last movie, some of the prejudices remain.

However, the *Twilight* saga was not only relevant because of its cultural impact, it also redefined concepts related with masculinity, desire, and how those are perceived by the audience. In this essay, I will explore the portrayal of the male characters in the first three movies of the saga, *Twilight*, *New Moon* and *Eclipse*, with the purpose of understanding how the female gaze works in order to explore whether this female gaze represents a type of female empowerment or is still influenced by patriarchal notions. This essay starts with a section on Laura Mulvey's theory on the male gaze in classical Hollywood cinema. Mulvey's theory is forty-seven years old but it still remains a foundational text to analyse the relation between the gaze and pleasure in the cinema. The analysis of the films is divided into two sections: one focusing on the concept of scopophilia and how visual pleasure is conceived in these films, and the other being dedicated to identification with the female character and the behavioural reasons behind the male characters' desirability.

### 3. LOOKING AND BEING LOOKED AT.

The relationship between the gaze and notions of pleasure in the cinema has been a key one in film studies since the publication of Laura Mulvey's essay: "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in 1975. In this essay, Laura Mulvey explains how classical Hollywood cinema reflects the dominant ideological concepts of a patriarchal society which constructs women as passive subjects, constantly being looked at, while men are active agents and the bearers of the gaze. Mulvey insists on the fact that this does not only reflect society's patriarchal ideas, but it also reinforces them. This display of women made by and for men, which is usually referred to as the "male gaze", is usually done in an eroticized and objectifying way. As a result, the place of female characters in those films is either to entertain the male characters and spectators (of course, regardless of their gender), through the representation of a male fantasy, or to inspire them in their own journey (4).

Laura Mulvey links this theory with the role of pleasure and distinguishes two different types of pleasures in relation to it. One of them relies on identification, particularly on how this process of identification almost always takes place with the male characters, while the female ones remain a mystery. This process of identification usually takes place around the main focalizer in the movie which, most of the time, according to Laura Mulvey, is a man. On the other hand, there is an almost masochistic desire in demystifying the unknown, which would otherwise be feared. As a result, women in classical movies tend to become a blank space to project the male character's and spectators' own desires. Women are pretty much seen as a mystery, which is found desirable in itself.

The second type of pleasure refers to what is called "scopophilia", the pleasure in looking. This is related to spectacle, and it is the reason behind why women, in classical Hollywood movies, are usually objectified. Whereas men in cinema history

have tended to use their bodies to showcase certain skills (such as dancing), there is a tendency to display women's body for the sake of it, usually in an erotic manner.

Film scholars did not take long to further elaborate on some of the aspects of Mulvey's theory. Feminist scholar, Mary Anne Doane (1988), responded claiming that there are several examples of "women's films" in the 1940s, where women look at men, such as *Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1940), *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (Max Ophüls, 1948) or *Jezebel* (William Wyler, 1938), among others. Nevertheless, in this type of movies, women still lack a sense of control over what they are observing, it is a different type of look, and it reinforces women's submission even more.

Steve Neale (1983) takes yet another approach to some issues involved in Mulvey's theory. He particularly focuses on identification, as he refers to John Ellis' textbook, *Visible Fictions* (1982), in which those issues were already covered. In said book, Ellis explains how the process of identification with fictional characters is not simply a matter of gender, and he distinguishes between two types of identification. First, he talks about the sort of identification related to the character's position inside the fiction, a more fantastic identification that is not necessarily related to gender. On the other hand, he introduces the concept of narcissistic identification, also referred to as gender identification, which, for men, involves fantasies of power, omnipotence, mastery and control. This is particularly noticeable in movies that evoke a sense of nostalgia about old masculinity codes, such as westerns. It is important to have this approach in mind when analysing the *Twilight* saga, particularly since Edward Cullen, being a centuries-old immortal creature, is a character that often portrays certain mannerisms that were historically associated with men, as will be discussed further in this essay.



#### 4. THE *TWILIGHT* SAGA AND SCOPOPHILIA.

As has been already stated, Hollywood films have, for a long time, represented (and also helped to construct) a world ordered by sexual imbalance in which men are active agents and women passive subjects. It could be argued that independent cinema--a tradition in which the first movie of the saga, *Twilight*, could be included due to its industrial credentials (Holly, 2021)--can be a space for films that are different from the mainstream in a political and aesthetic way. However, the *Twilight* saga takes a contradictory approach when it comes to the issue of pleasure and “scopophilia”. While Mulvey’s views on the objectification of women and the power dynamics in relation to gazing are not completely dismissed, these movies introduce some new aspects. Both these approaches are worth analysing.

##### 4.1 Bella as the object of the gaze

Firstly, it is important to clarify that instances of scopophilia towards women, particularly Bella, are still present in the *Twilight* saga. Bella is constantly being looked at throughout the movie, she is the new student, and in words of her friend Becca, she is “the shiny new toy”. This gaze, however, is portrayed in different ways depending on the character who is looking. Bella has many suitors at her high school, but most of them act in a respectful manner towards her and simply gaze from the distance (except for one incident at the beginning of *Twilight*, when a boy kisses her on the cheek without her consent). In contrast to this attitude, there is a scene later in the movie that portrays an attempted sexual assault by a group of men on Bella, who ends up being saved by Edward. Everything in this scene works in favour of presenting the contrast between the different male characters and how they interact with Bella. The camera angle and editing portray the group of men in a very menacing way, while Edward, when he appears, is presented in a heroic manner. All these characters gaze at Bella with

desire at some point in the movie, however, where the strangers try to overpower and abuse her, Edward constantly controls himself, staring at Bella longingly from the distance, in fear of hurting her. Throughout the saga, Edward will constantly fight against his natural instincts, and try to reverse his assigned role of the predator, acting precisely as a protector of Bella. However, as will be further discussed, he will struggle to do so, not only because of his status as a vampire, but because of Bella's own resistance.

As was mentioned above, for most part of the first film Edward stares at Bella from the distance, even in secret, being constantly afraid of hurting her. Throughout *Twilight*, there are several instances where Edward enters Bella's bedroom without her knowledge, while she is sleeping. At first, she thinks she sees him in her dreams, and she only finds out the truth once she learns he is a vampire, then she asks him if he has been doing that a lot, to which he responds: "Just the past couple of months. I like watching you sleep, it is kind of fascinating to me". This is an example of gazing at women in the most literal sense of the expression. It is also one of the most evident examples of the control and surveillance behind this scopophilia.

Nevertheless, there are other instances of the surveillance inflicted by Edward towards Bella that are not manifested in such a literal form. In order to illustrate this, I will be analysing a few scenes from the second movie, *New Moon*. In this film, Edward decides to leave Bella to protect her from his lifestyle, however, he refuses to fully give up control over her, and remains ghosting her, particularly whenever she puts herself in dangerous situations. She discovers this when a stranger offers her a ride on his motorcycle and sees Edward's reflection urging her to stop. However, the movie steers away from the classical conception of this surveillance, which would technically put Edward in a position of power over Bella, and once she sees him, instead of listening to

his advice and leaving, she accepts the ride. From that point on, Bella retakes control over the situation, and starts to purposely put herself in adrenaline-inducing situations in order to see Edward--for instance, she becomes interested in motorcycles or activities that would be labelled as "manly". In a way, this is a reversal of the stare present in the previously mentioned "women's films": Edward is constantly gazing at Bella, however, always from the distance, and never being capable of stopping her from putting herself in danger. He is the one who looks, but he cannot interfere with the object of his gaze, which makes him suffer. In fact, it can be argued that most of the times when Bella is subjected to Edward in the film, it is not against her will, but because of her own personal decisions. She often puts herself in positions of dependence, despite Edward's constant attempts at keeping her away from himself and his family, and she is willing to abandon her own personal circle, family, and life, to be with him. It is hard to decide how much of these personal decisions work as a step towards Bella becoming a strong female character with control over her own life, or precisely against it. The freedom of choice seemingly gives her more power, however, she is still subjecting her personal decisions to a man, often putting her own life in danger by doing so. One of the most evident examples of this being when she jumps off a cliff in order to produce adrenaline and see Edward's reflection once again.

## 4.2 Men as objects of the female gaze.

### 4.2.1 Edward Cullen.

Moving on, what is even more ground-breaking in these movies is the fact that women are not the only ones being looked at. In this section I will focus on analysing scopophilia regarding the character of Edward Cullen.

One of the main differences between how both male and female characters are gazed upon and desired, lies on the lack of scenes portraying non-consensual

interactions in which men are the victim. Edward Cullen is extremely popular between his peers, however, all the girls stare at him fascinated from the distance, none of them intrudes his personal space, as is the case with Bella. Furthermore, it is not just that Edward is looked at with more respect and never taken advantage of, but that he is deemed as unapproachable in general, or unattainable, to put it in other words. There are several scenes in the movie which work in favour of presenting the Cullens, and particularly Edward, as a group of fascinating and beautiful beings, who do not blend it with the rest of the school. This gives a sense of otherness in a metaphorical way, but also in a literal one, since it only adds up to the fact that they are not humans. This is best exemplified at the beginning of *Twilight*, when the Cullen family is first introduced in the cafeteria: everything, from the use of slow motion to the soundtrack, builds up an atmosphere that sets these characters as utterly different. Moreover, the scene keeps on building up suspense, particularly with the use of the song, (as well as dialogues and editing), until Edward first appears on scene. He is depicted as someone different even inside his own social group: firstly, he is the only one that walks in without a partner, he is also the last one to be introduced and, as it has been previously mentioned, the music becomes more intense and louder when he appears. When Bella asks about him, Becca explicitly expresses this sense of otherness and aloofness that surrounds him: "He's totally gorgeous, obviously, but apparently nobody here is good enough for him (...) Don't waste your time". There are other instances where women directly approach Edward, for example a scene at a restaurant in Portland, however, these never suppose a threat to his physical integrity, as happens with Bella. Where Bella is seen as a prey, Edward is looked upon with respect.

Despite this difference, the ways in which the movie deals with scopophilia are not so different for men and women, both have something in common, which reminds

us of Mary Ann Doane's exploration of 1940s "women's films": women may look at men, but they never control the object of their gaze and, as a result, their gaze turns out to be masochistic, since it makes them suffer. Bella sees Edward as an unattainable and superior creature who would never be interested in her, and even if she looks at him as an object of desire throughout the saga, this is never rooted in control or power dynamics, quite the opposite, since he would clearly overpower her in strength, age, intellectual abilities, etc. However, this lack of control is even more notorious in the case of Edward who, used to controlling what other humans think and do, finds out Bella is an exception. This lack of control happens in a metaphorical way: as has been previously mentioned, he tries to protect her throughout the whole saga, but Bella always finds a way to ignore his warnings and does what it takes to be with him, (even if that means putting herself in danger). But moreover, this is also portrayed in a literal way: Edward can read minds, however, he cannot read Bella's mind, as he states at the restaurant scene in Portland.

As has been mentioned, the way in which Edward is looked at in these movies is never a threat to him. Yet, there is an exception to this. The issue of being looked at becomes a problem for Edward in *New Moon*, when he reveals that vampires cannot make a spectacle out of their vampirism, or else they will get killed by the Volturi clan. At one point of the film, he tries to purposely show one of his glowing skin in public to kill himself, and he almost achieves it. According to Neale, Mulvey denies men a role as erotic objects because she sees them as active omnipotent figures, but she does not consider the signification of authority in the male figure from the point of view of an economy of masochism. Mulvey quotes Paul Willem's article: "Anthony Mann: Looking at the Male", in which he argues that spectacle around Mann's films (*Winchester '73*, *Bend of the River*, etc.) are partially structured around the pleasure in

seeing the male mutilated. In this article Willem also writes about the figure of social authority and the narcissistic pleasure in going against said authority. All these theories were used to describe mostly western films; however, they can be utilised to analyse some of Edward's actions in *New Moon*. Edward decides to go against the highest exponent of authority in his world: the Volturi, whom he will later on defy again by not turning Bella into a vampire until he has no other choice. Furthermore, he does this as an attempt to kill himself, after hearing that Bella has allegedly died. This is sado-masochism at its highest peak, and it is also the climax after two movies in which Edward has been repressing himself in a masochistic way--from containing his thirst for blood, to moving to a different country--all to avoid hurting Bella. As he himself states in *Twilight*:

“And so, the lion fell in love with the lamb

What a stupid lamb.

What a sick, masochistic lion.”

Another difference in this masochistic way of displaying the male body lies on the fact that the look towards Edward, especially in this scene, is portrayed from the perspective of other characters and marked by their feelings, not of arousal or entertainment, but of fear in the case of Bella, and hatred in the case of the Volturi.

This sado-masochistic charged scene, which substitutes the repressed explicit eroticism, is enhanced by certain technical aspects. For instance, the use of slow motion allows the audience to deeply understand the fear that Bella is feeling in that moment, as well as the alternation between shots of Bella and close ups of Edward taking his shirt off. Make-up is also important, since Edward's pale and glowing skin is even more distinctive in comparison to the multitude of people wearing red robes. It is also worth

mentioning that in this scene Edward is saved by Bella, which could be considered a reversal of more traditional gender roles.

#### 4.2.2 Jacob Black.

In relation to the portrayal of male characters as the object of the female gaze, it is also relevant to analyse the presence of the other main love interest in the saga, and in what way the way in which they are looked at differs from the ways in which Edward is looked at.

Jacob becomes the object of the gaze especially from *New Moon* onwards. However, in contrast to Edward, whose body is put on display in a sadomasochistic manner, Jacob is observed in a similar way to that of women in classical Hollywood films. There are several scenes in this movie that feature Jacob's naked body without any apparent reason. This constant showcasing of Jacob's body is technically the film's way of portraying his transformation into a werewolf, by linking the physical change into a more masculine figure with another type of shift. However, the detractors of the saga found this nothing but a cheap fanservice strategy. General consensus regarding critics' reviews was that all the nudity scenes featuring the character of Jacob were gratuitous: Larsen, from *LarsenOnFilm*, said the trade-off for *New Moon* was "Taylor Lautner and his relentless shirtlessness" (2010); similarly, Christopher Smith, from *The Bangor Daily News* wrote about his experience watching the film on the cinema: "Had the audience at my screening heaving and sighing so often, here's a recommendation: Bring an oxygen tank. You'll need it and a mask, particularly in the presence of so much heaving and sighing and busy shirtlessness" (2009).

The criticism regarding Lautner's shirtlessness in *New Moon* was so prominent that the following movies of the saga included some moments of comedic self-commentary, in which the characters directly addressed this constant exposure of

Jacob's body; for instance, at one point in *Eclipse*, Edward sees Jacob standing shirtless and sarcastically asks if he does not own a shirt.

Moreover, some have linked this character's portrayal with racial stereotypes, an article from the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture website describes Jacob's "continual depiction without a shirt" as an instance of how "over sexualized, exoticized, and macho the fictional Quileute wolfpack is" (D. Dartt-Newton, 2010.)

All of this, added to the fact that up until this movie Jacob is never seen as a possible love interest by Bella (in contrast to Edward, who caught her interest simply with his mysterious and charming personality), seemingly demonstrates how the gaze inflicted into his character is much more related to objectification, or even exoticization, than it is to masochism.

However, there are more nuances to this. Firstly, there are some scenes which feature a shirtless Jacob in relation to instances of violence or masochistic tendencies, in the most literal sense of the word, such as him ripping his shirt off and transforming into wolf to fight against his own pack and protect Bella, which takes the audience back to fight scenes in mainstream action movies. Moreover, the fact that Jacob is seemingly objectified in these films, can be understood on account of the archetypical definition of masculinity he represents, and not solely as a marketing strategy. Jacob embodies classic masculine ideals such as physical strength, leadership and protection. Edward, however, seems to embody a different type of masculinity since he tries to provide this sense of protection and security to Bella throughout the movies, but finds himself standing at a crossroads, torn apart between his natural instincts as a predator, and his feelings towards Bella.



## 5. THE *TWILIGHT* SAGA AND IDENTIFICATION.

### 5.1 Bella as the main focalizer.

According to Mulvey, the process of identification in classical Hollywood movies almost always took place around the male characters, who were the main focalizers of the stories, in contrast to the female character, who remained a mystery, (which made them even more desirable). In contrast to this, the *Twilight* saga makes Bella, not only the main, but the only focalizer of the story. While the male characters remain secretive and mysterious (Edward trying to hide his “vampireness”, and Jacob trying to hide his family secret and transformation into a werewolf), Bella is an open book.

In order to further illustrate this point, I will be referring to Murray Smith’s theory regarding character building and identification. In his book *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema*, Smith divides the process of identification with a fictional character in three stages. The first one is recognition: it deals with the necessity of the character to be distinguishable within the narrative (they have to be given a name and a place on the narrative). The second process is alignment: spectators are granted access to a character’s subjectivity. Finally there is allegiance: the audience has to believe that what the character thinks or does is morally correct. The character of Bella meets all these criteria. Practically every character inside the narrative disagrees with Bella’s actions throughout the saga (from the Cullens to the Volturi, even her school friends, Jacob, or Edward). Most of the time this disagreement is a result of Bella and Edward breaking social expectations with their relationship. However, the audience, being granted access to Bella’s thoughts and feelings, is able to align with her and even feel allegiance towards her. This sense of allegiance towards Bella is

accentuated by the fact that she is one of the few human characters (until the last movie of the saga), which makes her more relatable to spectators.

Bella's role as a focalizer is also enhanced by technical aspects. For instance, the movie uses several times the resource of the voice-over, which gives access to Bella's feelings in the most direct way possible. She is not only the focalizer, but also the narrator at some points. The movies also use point of view shots, particularly when Bella is looking at Edward or in situations when she is afraid, to better convey her emotions. There is a scene in *New Moon* that perfectly encapsulates the ways in which the movie portrays Bella's emotions, even without the dialogue. After Edward leaves her, the movie features a montage sequence in which the camera is constantly rotating around her. Only her face and the view from her window are visible in this scene, but the fact that the view from her window changes with the passing of seasons while Bella remains the same, conveys the idea that her feelings for Edward remain the same: she is waiting for him to come back and can do anything else apart from looking out of her window. This scene exemplifies how the movie builds up Bella's role as the focalizer, allowing the audience to know her feelings and thoughts in different ways.

### 5.2 Understanding Bella's feelings: Desire and masculinity.

In relation to audience identification and the character of Bella, it is important to understand not only what she feels, but the reasoning behind some of her convictions, since these feelings may mirror the lurking emotions of some spectators. Specifically, by analysing the reasons behind Bella's interest in Edward and Jacob, we can also theorise about the reasons behind the saga's popularity, particularly in regards to its male leads and how they appeal to its target demographic.

It has been previously discussed how the movies use the female gaze to look at the male character, sometimes in a masochistic or a desirable manner. In this section of the essay, I will look at other ways in which the movies portray this desire.

In the case of Jacob, it is simpler since the character's desirability relies mainly on his physical appearance, particularly on a classical masculine perception of an attractive man, as previously mentioned. However, these virile traits go beyond his physical appearance, and they manifest in the form of certain character traits which the character of Edward lacks, for instance, a sense of protection that Edward fails to provide due to his condition as a vampire. Throughout the movies, Jacob represents the more mundane life that Bella could have if she chose him, this is especially notorious in *New Moon*, film which features the two characters bonding over motorcycles and other human hobbies. Despite Jacob being non-human as well, he seems to offer Bella a safer life. While Edward is always keeping the distance, Jacob is presented as reliable and always ready to lend a helping hand. This difference between Edward's colder demeanour and Jacob's sense of protectiveness is explicitly stated in a scene in *Eclipse*: Bella is freezing on a tent and Edward cannot offer her his body warmth, since his skin is cold as ice, therefore she must lie next to Jacob to stay warm, this scene represents the differences between the two male leads regarding what they can provide to Bella.

Edward Cullen is a more complex character. He does not embody the classic image of hyper-masculinity: he is pale, relatively skinny, and he rarely resorts to nudity. Therefore, his desirability is rather focused on his mental capacities. He is superior to Bella on age, wealth, status, and intellect; in the words of Jessica Taylor, he is the embodiment of the "hyper" romantic hero (J. Taylor, 2014). He fights against his own carnal desires and constantly practices self-control when he is around Bella. Moreover, his creaturely condition makes him mysterious, and therefore attractive (as mentioned

above a certain lack of focalization can increase a character's desirability) All of these characteristics set him aside from Bella's regular classmates, and allow him to be perceived as desirable, not only by the characters inside the narrative, but also by the audience. According to some critics, this new conception of desirability and masculinity works as a search for the missing discourses of desire for women (F. Diamond, 2011) which takes form on these films thanks to the use of the female gaze.

Overall, Edward and Jacob do not only represent two rival clans, but they also embody diametrically opposed types of male characters. Furthermore these differences are enhanced by the fact that they are involved in a love triangle with Bella. Despite this, it has been mentioned throughout the essay how both characters share some similarities, even if they are seemingly opposites: both of them are superior to their peers in different ways, moreover, both have some type of supernatural ability which sets them apart from the rest of the regular high school students. These shared qualities related to power, as well as the character's constant need to assert their dominance, opens up the question of whether Edward and Jacob are still governed by classical notions of masculinity, in spite of being subjected to the female gaze.

## 6. CONCLUSION.

This essay has explored the representation of desire in the first three films of the *Twilight* saga in relation to Laura Mulvey's, Mary Ann Doanne's and Steve Neales's theories on the relationship between gender and the look.

As has been argued, the ways in which these three movies deal with gender issues show several contradictions: the *Twilight* movies are adaptations of a book saga written by a woman, and the first film was directed by a female director; furthermore its prime target demographic consists of young female adults and teenagers, according to a survey of 5000 by movie ticket website "Fandango", 95% of the audience for the *Twilight* movie was made up of women (Marks, 2008). Moreover, in spite of the differences regarding the types of masculinity embodied by the characters of Jacob and Edward, and regardless of them being subjected to a female gaze, both characters are heavily influenced by classic ideas of masculinity: physical strength and a sense of possessive protectiveness in the case of Jacob; and a chivalrous attitude, as well as a need to control and surveil Bella, with reference to Edward. Taking all this into consideration, it is relevant to question why a movie that is heavily marked by a female perspective still clings to the influence of classic notions of masculinity and the male gaze.

Some critics have pointed out a noticeable change, particularly regarding the aesthetic of the movies, from the first film of the saga to the rest of them. This aesthetic shift is often attributed to the change of directors, from original female director, Catherine Hardwicke, to male directors, including Chris Weitz, Bill Condon and David Slade. According to Hardwicke, she tried to add some innovative ideas to the original story, but was eventually labelled as "difficult" and pulled from the project's future, the subsequent movies being directed by men. In words of Hardwicke; "At the time I didn't

understand when people were dinging me for being whatever, emotional or difficult. Yet they're praising all the male directors I've worked for for being passionate and visionary and sticking to their guns, fighting for what they want. But a woman is emotional, difficult, bitchy, whatever." (Hardwicke, 2018). It could be argued that the changes that came with the replacement of directors did not stick solely to the aesthetic aspect of the movies, since some changes regarding characterization, (such as Jacob's evolution), correspond chronologically to the switch of the director's gender. However, it is important to remember that the movies are based on an already existing saga of novels written by a woman; moreover, some of the ideas that contradicted the female gaze which have been discussed throughout this essay, were displayed from the first movie of the saga. This shows how, despite Hardwicke's intentions of creating an independent film and showing an alternative female perspective, the saga was still subjected to classic notions of gender from its beginning.

This opens the debate of whether it is possible or not to convey a story completely free from old gender conceptions, even if said story is narrated from a female perspective. It is undeniable that, even in the case of Edward, (who was conceived as the opposite of the classic "macho" represented by Jacob); these characters constantly overpower the female protagonist, who is often subjected to their decisions; and whose actions, despite being freely taken by herself, are very much influenced by her desire to be part of their supernatural world. The *Twilight* saga does not contradict classic gender roles, however, this was never the intention of the movies. These films are progressive in a different way: they give agency to the female main character by recognising female desire, a concept that had been constantly denied in the past; and by doing this, they reassure their female audience of their own desires. The *Twilight* saga gives voice to a missing discourse of female desire, through the use of focalization and

identification. However, it does not lose the influence of patriarchal ideas. In closing, the *Twilight* saga perfectly illustrates how the female gaze does not automatically equal a feminist perspective, but simply a female perspective, which is not necessarily a feminist one.

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