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Religious Iconography in "Twilight": Veneration and Fandom

Erratum

Author would like to avoid copyright issues with imagery and withdrew them from original submission.

Religious Iconography in *Twilight*: Veneration and Fandom

Jacqueline Swaidan
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Abstract

The mysterious and dark atmosphere, the overwhelming focus on the main characters, and the constant contrast of dark and light in Twilight (2009) recall traditional Christian religious imagery. But more than that, this paper will argue that Twilight, the first of the romantic fantasy films adapted from the successful book series by Stephenie Meyer, draws explicitly on traditional Catholic religious imagery and ceremony to engender religious devotion in its fans. Images from the first Twilight film suggest that the creators of Twilight used religious imagery to captivate their audience. Christian constructs such as Eden's eternity, Edward's Christ-like abstinence, and Bella's wonder and submission, like the Virgin Mary's, all parallel traditional Catholic art and reinforce the story line, while also providing a twenty-first century audience with a new spiritual experience. Twilight uses well-known Catholic tropes to subconsciously encourage viewers to venerate the images, and the story. Recent work on the Gothic literature of the twenty-first century strongly contends that the Gothic's supernatural is a new spiritual movement for secular society, and Twilight's iconography uses this new trend to market itself.

There is some obviously Christian imagery in the *Twilight Saga* films. The mysterious and dark atmosphere, the overwhelming focus on the main characters, and the constant contrast of dark and light recall traditional religious imagery. *Twilight* (2009), the first of the romantic fantasy films adapted from the successful book series by Stephenie Meyer, draws explicitly on traditional Catholic religious imagery and ceremony to engender religious devotion in its fans. Images from the first *Twilight* film suggest that the creators of *Twilight* used religious imagery to captivate their audience. Recent work on the Gothic literature of the twenty-first century strongly contends that the Gothic's supernatural is a new spiritual movement for secular society. This is not to say that audiences recognize every instance of Bella's paralleling the Virgin Mary, or Edward's Christ-like suffering. But I do argue that the filmmakers chose powerful compositions and iconography that have a long history in the Christian tradition. The filmmakers found these images compelling, and they must have thought that audiences would as well. Christian constructs such as Eden's eternity, Edward's Christ-like abstinence, and Bella's wonder and submission, like the Virgin Mary's, all parallel traditional Catholic art and reinforce the story line, while also providing a twenty-first century audience with a new spiritual experience. *Twilight* uses these well-known Catholic tropes to subconsciously encourage viewers to venerate the images, and the story.

The Gothic and Post-Secular Media

Twilight's religiosity as Gothic fiction is unquestioned. Numerous literary scholars have analyzed the Gothic tradition, of which *Twilight* is a part, as a new religion for a secular age. Victoria Nelson, Lori Branch, Kelly Hurley and numerous other researchers contend that the Gothic generally, and Meyers's story specifically, demonstrates that young people are attracted to the supernatural as a form of spirituality. I will argue that with religious iconography in the *Twilight* Saga films, chiefly in *Twilight* (2009), the filmmakers build upon the audience's expectations of a religious experience, and the imagery of the *Twilight* text.

Historically, the religion of the supernatural, the Gothic, was a spiritual reaction to Enlightenment rationalism. England's anti-Catholic purges of the sixteenth century sought to eradicate superstitious beliefs linked to Catholicism. The Enlightenment excluded the supernatural from nature, finding rational explanations for natural phenomena. The church demonized anything in nature that remained unexplained, such as ghosts and premonitions.¹ Before works like *The Twilight Saga*, the Gothic genre was "sheer terror, with no prospect of salvation."² Over time, as Nelson and other scholars show, authors of Gothic fiction brightened the supernatural into a sublime otherness, in response to growing attraction to the supernatural as a new source of spirituality. When Bella becomes an immortal vampire, she undergoes a "self-divinization" process that Nelson argues is highly appealing to teens today, giving them both spirituality and agency.³ The Gothic, from its inception in religious turmoil to its transformation into a religion of its own, now flourishes as a cultural phenomenon.

Today, we are in a movement of "Post-Secularity," in which young people raised without a religion hunger for spirituality, and find it in the supernatural via mass media. In post-secular society, God is on the periphery, and "the human spiritual capacity longs for exercise."⁴ This work presupposes a human search for spirituality and religion, and uses the supernatural's recent fanatical following to prove that the American public yearns for sublime, otherworldly, deeply irrational and emotional fulfillment. Scholars of the Gothic, notably Annette Kuhn and Kelly Hurley, argue that the Gothic has "cultural instrumentality" in that it is "a cyclical genre that reemerges in times of cultural stress in order to negotiate anxieties for its readership by working through them in displaced (sometimes supernaturalized) form."⁵ Readers of *Twilight*, Nelson argues, are mostly young enough have experienced real terror by experiencing the supernatural, usually in popular culture.⁶ Readers of *Twilight*, she argues, "crave" the "supernatural religiousness" of "love, life, and forgiveness" that they have not ever experienced in a church or a holy book.⁷ Fans of the series, Nelson and her colleagues argue, seek a mysterious religious past through the *Twilight* story, and I argue that film iconography using recognizable Christian imagery and ideas draws audience deeply into the authority and reality of the films.

¹ Victoria Nelson, *Gothicka: Vampire Heroes, Human Gods, and the New Supernatural* (Harvard University Press, 2012), 12.

² *Ibid.*, 17.

³ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴ John Granger, "Mormon Vampires in the Garden of Eden: What the Bestselling *Twilight* Series Has in Store for Young Readers," *Touchstone*, December 2009, <http://www.touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=22-08-024-f>.

⁵ *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema* (London; New York: Verso, 1990), 1; Kelly Hurley, "British Gothic Fiction, 1885-1930," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (New York: CUP, 2002), 189-208, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion-us&rft_id=xri:lion:rec:abell:R04554732.

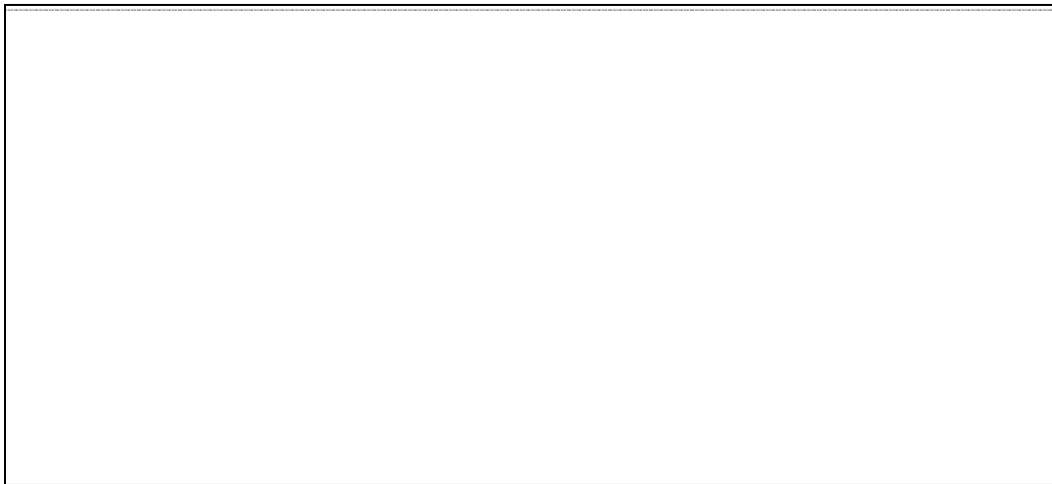
⁶ Nelson, *Gothicka*, 18.

⁷ *The Twilight Mystique: Critical Essays on the Novels and Films*, Critical Explorations in Science Fiction and Fantasy 25 (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Co, 2010), 74.

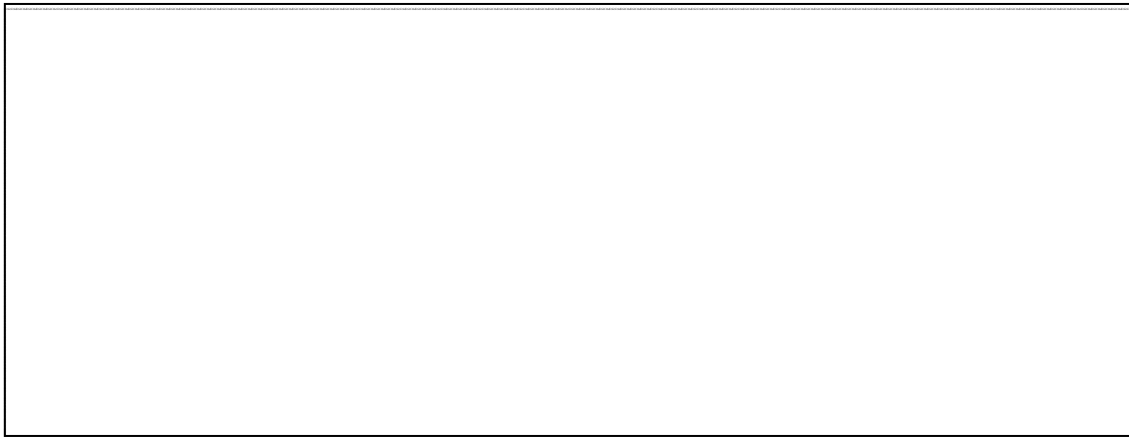
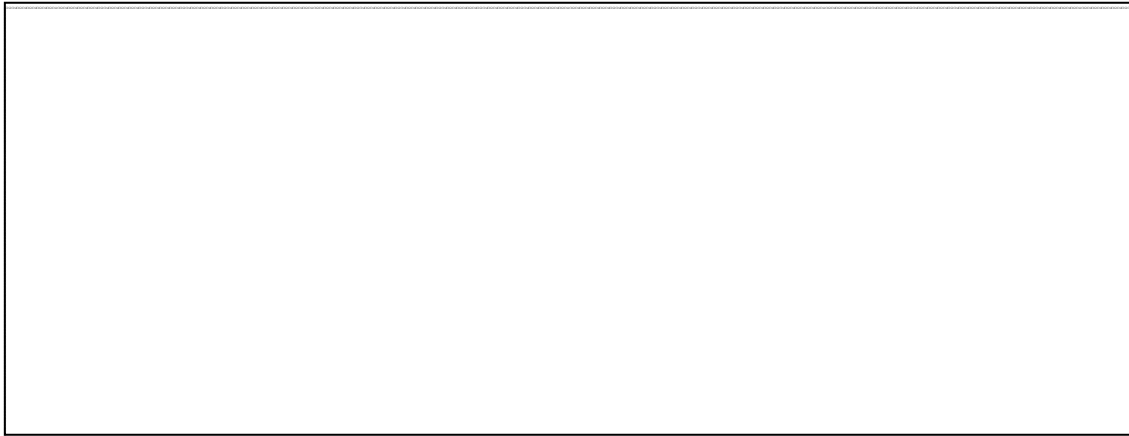
Iconic and recognizable Christian images permeate the *Twilight* film, using Christianity's lore and connotations of both power and spirituality to cement the story's hold on audiences. *Twilight* fans take the *Twilight Saga* books as their holy text. The films are their ritual religious ceremony. Film is a medium particularly suited to spreading religious messages. It can perform a religious role, offering "ritualized experiences with religious power" to the audience, allowing the audience to "participate vicariously in redemptive suffering."⁸ Thus the audience experiences *Twilight* religiously, consciously or unconsciously absorbing the culturally charged religious references and lavishing fandom on this new secular religion.

Eden and Original Sin: Recognizable Christian Images and Teen Marketing

Two of the most famous Christian concepts are the Garden of Eden, and the fall from grace by Original Sin in Genesis. The covers of the four *Twilight* books refer, sometimes explicitly, to Genesis, and one of the most famous climactic moments in *Twilight* (2009) is consciously biblical and draws on Eden imagery. These overtly Christian elements recall ancient images in the popular memory, and evoke feelings of eternity, temptation, love, sin, and fear: emotions attractive to a secular teen audience.



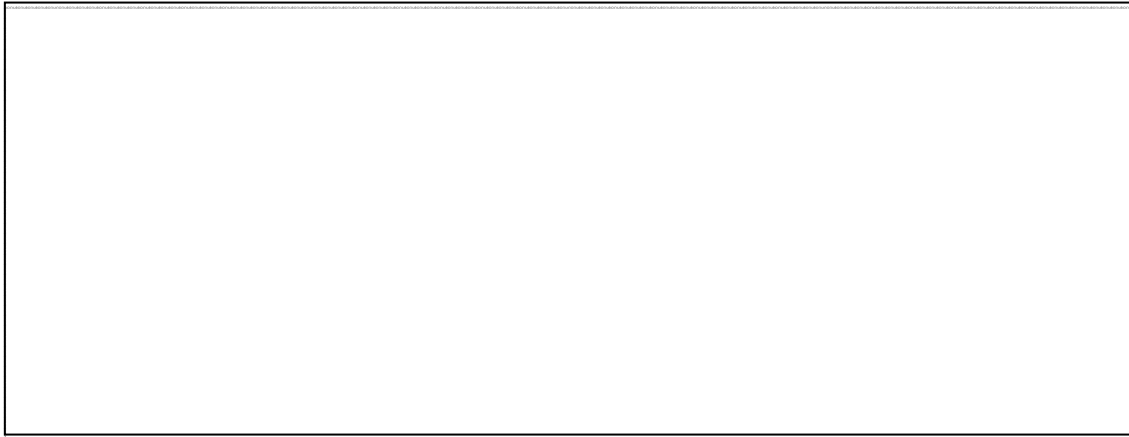
⁸ Kent Brintnall, "Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals: Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals," *Film Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (June 2005): 3–4, doi:10.1525/fq.2005.58.4.60.



At the start of their relationship, Bella and Edward experience all the iconographic pleasures of Eden. The “meadow scene,” in which Edward and Bella lie lovingly and chastely in a flowered clearing after deciding to date, clearly recalls the Garden.⁹ It is obvious that Edward and Bella are in a paradise of love: they stare into each other’s eyes and lay side by side as if they were in bed together. They seem oblivious to the dark woods surrounding them: all the dangers of their forbidden love are not yet apparent to them. But as the camera zooms out and up, they seem small and insignificant in the dark and mysterious forest. The biblical Eden iconography reveals their naiveté about the struggles to come, and also their deep emotional and sensual attraction to each other, which excludes all else. Nothing else matters, and to a teen audience collectively stunned with the beginnings of their adolescent sexuality and first romances, love truly is forever.

⁹ Summit Entertainment et al., *Twilight* videorecording (Summit Entertainment, 2009), Scene 12.

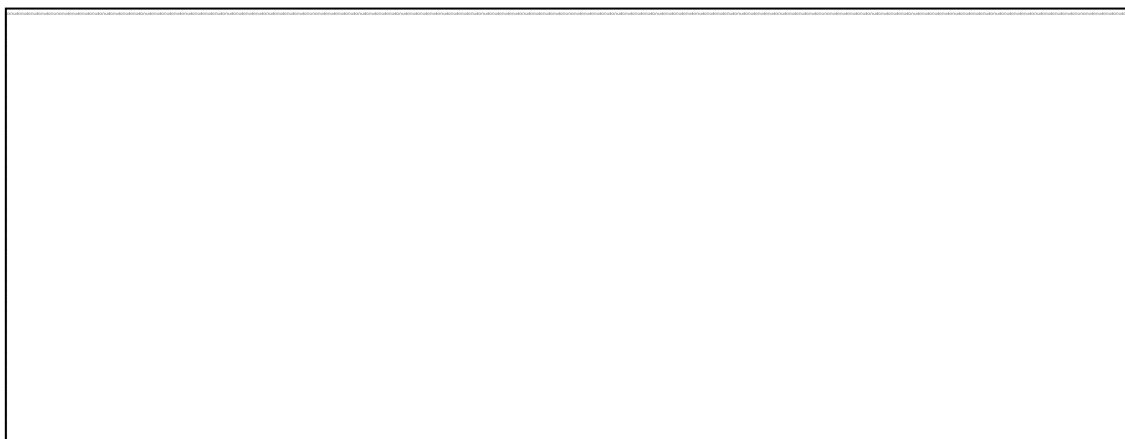
The cover art of the four *Twilight Saga* books give a brief and useful visual synopsis of the stories. The apple, the bloody flower, the torn ribbon, and the game of chess tell the *Saga* story briefly: Edward and Bella meet. Tempted mutually, they begin their forbidden relationship, symbolized by the blood-red apple. The bleeding flower represents Bella's bleeding heart after their break-up in *New Moon*. The torn ribbon suggests a thin artery almost severed, symbolizing Bella's journey ever closer to the bloodless life of a vampire. After several dangerous near-death experiences, and having borne a genetically unique child, Bella becomes the most powerful vampire of all. The powerful white Queen chess piece, contrasted with the lowly red pawn, symbolize Bella's perfect bloodless immortality, and her bloody human life receding in the background.



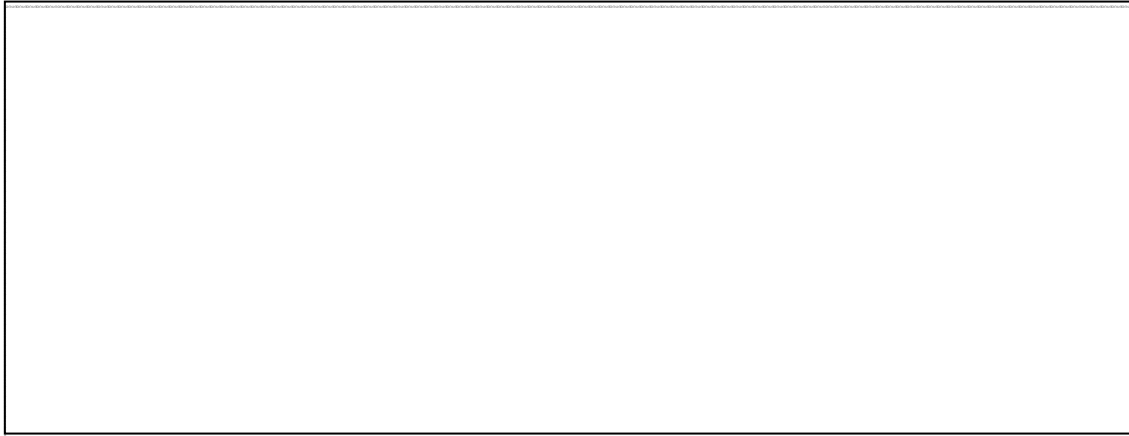
The covers of the *Twilight* books are simple, sensual, and cheekily Christian, referring both to Genesis and to Edward and Bella's relationship. To young audiences, the religiousness of the images, however obvious or muted, might seem appropriately matched to the seriousness of their first experiences with love and sexuality. The first cover is an abstract Genesis, using many traditional biblical and artistic facets to connect Bella to Eve and to Christian iconography. The theme of temptation in the novel is shown strongly with Christian iconography in the cover of the book, and in the film. Meyer writes on her website that the apple represents "choice."¹⁰ The apple represents the mutual temptation that Edward and Bella feel to surrender to their forbidden love: they both choose to take the dangerous route. The bright red fruit on the book

¹⁰ Stephenie Meyer, "Frequently Asked Questions: Twilight," *StephenieMeyer.com*, accessed December 5, 2012, http://stepheniemeyer.com/twilight_faq.html.

cover, offered to the viewer by delicate but androgynous hands, manages to convey both biblical and textual narratives. However, in the text and film, Edward offers Bella an apple after she has dropped it. Edward tempts Bella as much as she tempts him. If the hands are feminine, it is Eve who offers the apple. By extension, Bella is Eve, and she tempts Edward to bestow immortality upon her. Lindsey Averill analyses the apple cover image, pointing out that it is “unbitten” and thus represents the moment of choice before sin.¹¹ This draws the viewer into the tension of the image, offering us the choice as Bella and Edward offer it to each other. Should we be tempted by this new religion?



¹¹ Lindsey Issow Averill, “Un-biting the Apple and Killing the Womb: Genesis, Gender and Gynocide,” in *Theorizing Twilight: Critical Essays on What’s at Stake in a Post-vampire World*, ed. Maggie Parke and Natalie Wilson (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Co, 2011), 224.



The authors of the Judeo-Christian Genesis story intended their believers to learn about the dangers of female sexuality from the Eden story. Similarly, Edward must resist Bella's scent, and his desire, to keep her alive. Traditional Christian iconography of Adam and Eve emphasizes Eve's destructive sexuality. Lucas Cranach the Younger's *Adam and Eve* (post-1537) offers an early German Protestant view. Eve proffers apples in both hands seductively. Adam holds the apple, persuaded by Eve to bite, but he scratches his head in hesitation and worry. It was probably Eve's sensuality that persuaded Adam: her nudity, an uncommon sight in the Renaissance, and the resemblance of the apples and Eve's breasts, suggest that her bodily charms won Adam. By giving Eve agency, this painting recognizes her slyness and her power. Bella too has intense sensual power over Edward. Averill argues that Eve rejected male authority and fully claimed female sexuality and fertility for herself by biting the apple.¹² Eve also persuaded Adam to eat an apple himself, thus exerting power over him. But the Biblical Fall ended badly for Adam and Eve: Eve's agency caused them to be expelled from the garden. Thus Edward, as Adam, works to restrain his passion.

¹² Lindsey Issow Averill, "Un-biting the Apple and Killing the Womb: Genesis, Gender and Gynocide," in *Theorizing Twilight: Critical Essays on What's at Stake in a Post-vampire World*, ed. Maggie Parke and Natalie Wilson (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Co, 2011), 224.

Finally, this iconography also clearly introduces Edward as Adam, a flawed but ultimately sympathetic character, led by his sometimes demonic sexual passions to break rules.¹³ A reader of the nineteenth century would have expected to find parallels between Edward and Satan, as in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. A vampire, after all, seems hellish and heathen. In *Twilight*, however, the vampires are beautifully pale, spotless and sparkling white, instead of deathly livid: the outpouring of fan love for the actors demonstrates that they are indeed attractive.¹⁴ And Edward, most importantly, is the character who must restrain himself. He does not offer the metaphorical apple, as Satan did, but resists it, like Adam. If anyone is offering the apple, it is Bella, or, in a meta-narrative, Meyer and the filmmakers, whose hands reach out to us, offering beautiful pale vampires, rescued from the oblivion of heresy, and presented to us as thoroughly modern anti-heroes who are, literally, their own demons.

More abstractly, the hands on the book's cover offer the reader a temptingly appetizing spirituality by way of the supernatural. It is even couched in an overtly Christian image. Our desire for the apple, the story, and the spirituality, is transgressive because we live in a proudly secular society. Still, if you are looking at the cover, you have probably already sinned a bit. Why not open the book, and succumb?

Christ's Suffering: Edward's Temptation and Passion

Edward suffers physically as Christ suffered in his Passion. He suffers sacrificially as well: as Christ suffers for humanity, Edward suffers for the human Bella. However, Edward's restraint, which is implicitly sexual, makes him enormously popular among women: Nelson writes that Edward and Bella "enjoy endless foreplay" as a result of his abstinence.¹⁵ The Christian overtones of Edward's abstinence imagery give him a strong moral character in the film, offsetting his evil thirst for blood and making him desirable to the audience.

For his part, Edward resists Eve's temptation. He has to repress his bloodlust for Bella because Carlisle, Edward's adoptive father, has taught his coven the Christian idea that "desires of the body contradict Christian constructs of goodness."¹⁶ Literary theorists have long drawn connections between vampiric blood-drinking and the Eucharist: in this case, blood-thirst is a demonic parody of the mass, with Catholics consuming the blood of Christ, and vampires consuming blood. Victorianist Christopher Herbert argues that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) is "very likely the most religiously saturated popular novel of its time."¹⁷ However, Herbert argues that *Dracula*'s religious imagery was Stoker's argument against superstition and religiosity.

Contrasting Herbert with Nelson and other recent analysts of the search for modern-day spirituality shows that different societies, namely Victorian society and ours, interpret the same religious imagery in radically different ways. Herbert reads the blood imagery the idea of female sexual pollution as Stoker's argument against the evil "confusion of magic and religion" which *Dracula* represents.¹⁸ Herbert shows that Stoker's contemporaries were striving against an anti-Enlightenment trend towards superstition, the Romantic, and the Gothic. *Twilight* readers, however, learn that Carlisle Cullen believes in God and hopes that by avoiding drinking human

¹³ In response to a wonderful question posed at the CGU MMP Research Conference on January 25, 2013, as to why this paper does not see Edward as a Satan figure.

¹⁴ Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight*, 1st pbk. ed (New York: Little, Brown and Co, 2006), 277.

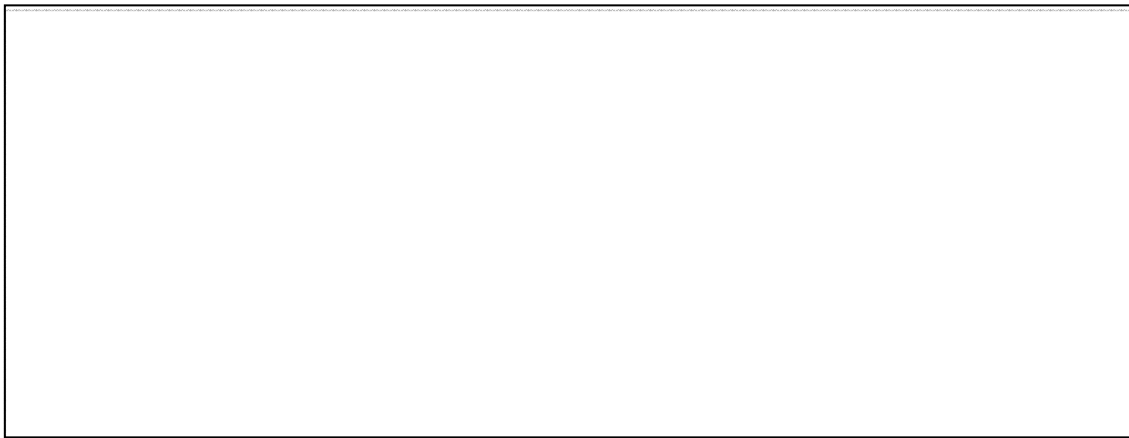
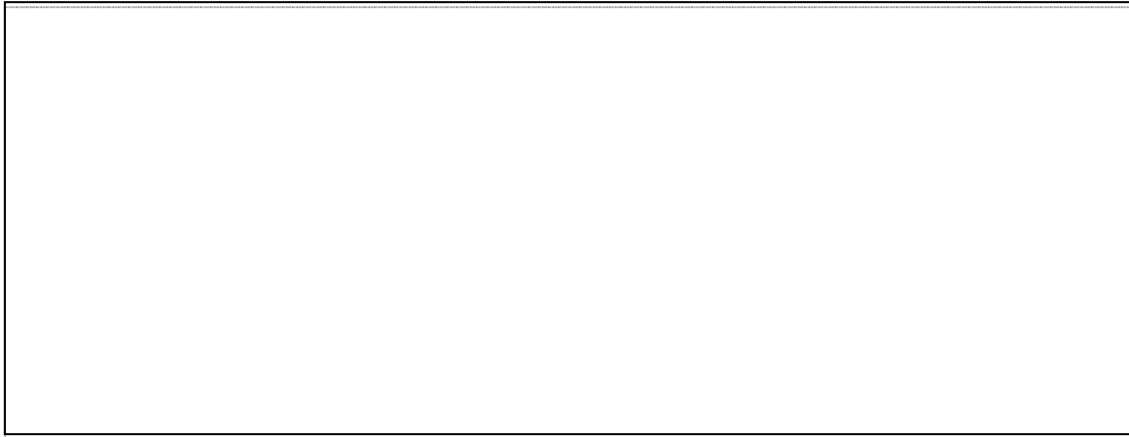
¹⁵ Nelson, *Gothicka*, 136.

¹⁶ Averill, "Un-biting the Apple and Killing the Womb: Genesis, Gender and Gynocide," 229.

¹⁷ Christopher Herbert, "Vampire Religion," *Representations* 79, no. 1 (August 1, 2002): 101, doi:10.1525/rep.2002.79.1.100.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.

blood, he will “get some measure of credit for trying.”¹⁹ This is an extremely moral argument. Edward himself describes his “vegetarianism” by saying “I don’t *want* to be a monster.”²⁰ *Twilight*’s vampires exhibit very Christian values: sexual abstinence, respect for human life, and belief in the soul and hell. Furthermore, their religiosity seems highly positive: Bella, and the audience, can accept Edward’s vampirism because he does not *like* it. It upsets him morally that he wants to murder, thus in the story he seems acceptably moral.



¹⁹ Stephenie Meyer, *New Moon*, 1st pbk. ed (New York: Little, Brown, 2008), 36–7.

²⁰ Meyer, *Twilight*, 187.

Edward suffers throughout the *Twilight Saga* while he restrains himself from Bella, and it is his abstinent Christ-like suffering which makes him so attractive to female audiences. Edward faces his first, unexpected test when he smells Bella's blood-scent in Biology class. In the film, he stiffens dramatically as the fan wafts her fragrance towards him. His hands fist, and he clamps his fingers over his mouth and shuts his eyes in passionate resistance. Many other times, he frowns at her, his dark eyebrows contracting in an effort to keep from biting her. The concentration, the passion, and the disgust on Edward's face mirrors Passion of Christ images. Traditionally shown in torment on the cross, or while carrying his cross, Christ's face portrays a mixture of acceptance, resignation and pain. Similarly, Edward's rapid changes between plaintive pleas for Bella's understanding, alternating with his insistence that "I'm a killer!" show his similarity to the tortured Christ.²¹ Edward tells Bella that he "can never, never afford to lose any kind of control" with her, and thus refrains from having sex with her.²² If he did "lose control" with her, and have sex, he might accidentally bite her. With Christian compositional elements, Edward's battle for morality becomes epic and eternal, and very attractive to a secular audience searching for spirituality and moral lessons.

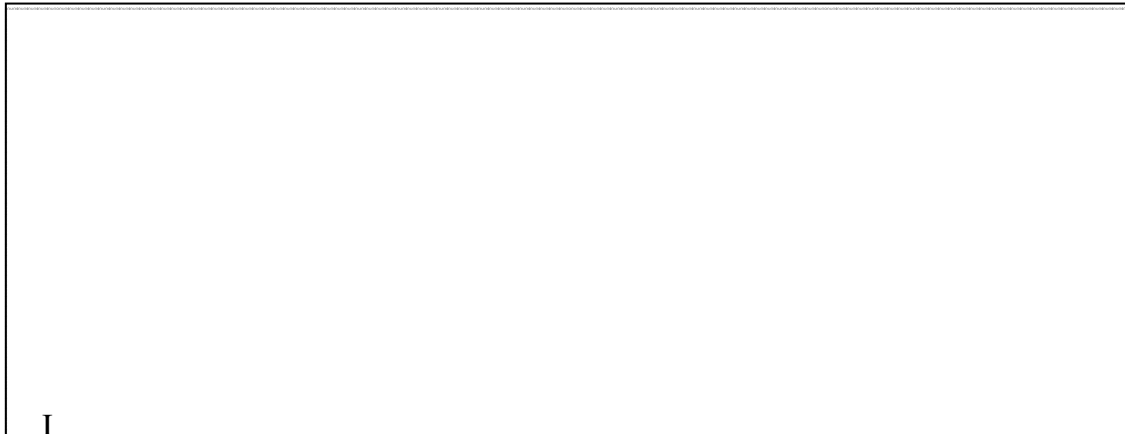
The film heightens Edward's suffering by giving him more lines and more screen time than Bella, and also by exaggerating his facial features. The "meadow scene" in the film is significantly different from that of the book: the focus is all on Edward's torment. In the film, Edward has the vast majority of the lines. In essence he gives a monologue about his dangerous and damned vampirism. In contrast, Meyer gives them relatively equal speaking parts in the book, and their conversation lasts over forty pages. Meyer does certainly depict Edward's torture: he has a "martyred" expression," he says he has felt "tortured," he calls the possibility of her death "unendurable."²³ He gives a "confession," and lift[s] his glorious, agonized eyes to [Bella]" to declare his love.²⁴ The filmmakers take all this and concentrate it into an iconic image of Edward as a tortured anti-hero of a god. Even if Edward is not recognizably Christ-like to every audience member, the cultural resonance is clear.

²¹ Summit Entertainment et al., *Twilight*, Scene 11.

²² Nelson, *Gothicka*, 136.

²³ Meyer, *Twilight*, 253, 273.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 272, 273.



In the film's "meadow scene," all the focus is on Edward's tortured face and body. Meyer allows Bella to describe Edward's face in the scene, as she touches it for the first time: he as a "perfect nose," "flawless lips," and a "purple shadow in the hollow under his eye."²⁵ Like Jesus, he is beautiful yet doomed. It is his extreme whiteness, contrasted with the dark eyes, which the filmmakers use to emphasize Edward's suffering. Meyer's inclusion of the shadow under Edward's eyes suggests sleeplessness and restless nighttime thoughts. However, Edward does not need to sleep: he is an immortal vampire. There is no bed in his room.²⁶ The shadows under his eyes are probably not possible for a vampire to have, but Meyer gives him this mark of tiredness to humanize his otherwise immortal beauty and to amplify his suffering for love. The film glories in Edward's dark eyes and pale face. He looks perpetually drawn, tense, tired and wired at the same time. He delivers the dramatic news about his vampirism with furious eyes, leaning towards Bella hungrily, half-lost in his own longing, near the end of a long description of how badly he wants to kill her, and how dangerous and deadly he is. His face is drawn, extremely white, and his eyes are as dark and shadowed as the surrounding forest. Here and throughout the film, Edward always seems reluctant to look at Bella, and yet drawn to her too.

Edward's sideways glances, and the tilt of his head, convey his desire and repression equally. His extraordinary abstinence, like Christ's, makes him clearly superhuman, and makes his love eternal. Like Christ, Edward suffers mortal torments of the body, but he does so as a sacrifice to frail and mortal humans, like Bella.

Submissive Receiver: Bella as the Virgin Mary

Bella is one of the most controversial characters in the *Twilight Saga*. Literary critics call her "shockingly" ready to sacrifice independence for love and family life.²⁷ By the fourth installment of the *Twilight Saga*, she is a teen bride with a high-school education, willingly

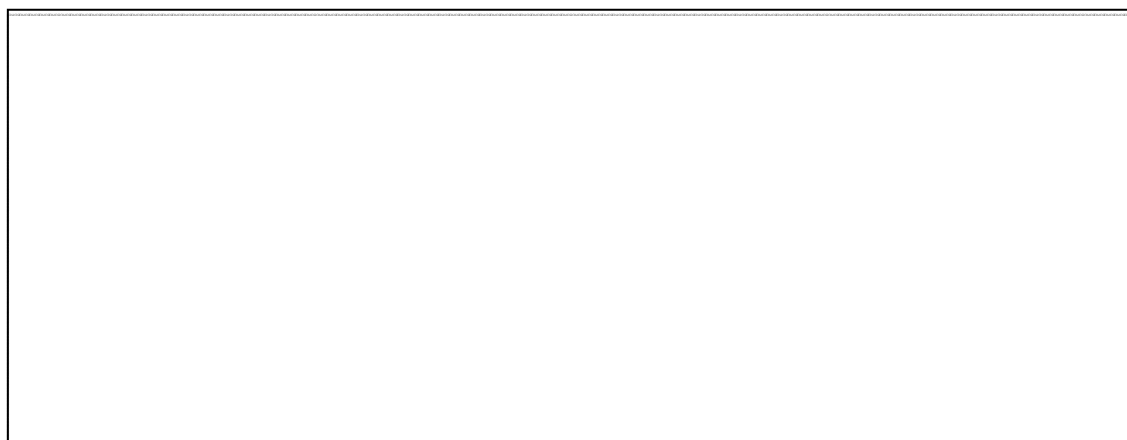
²⁵ Meyer, *Twilight*, 277.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 344.

²⁷ *The Twilight Mystique*, 65.

forgoing an acceptance to Dartmouth for marriage to Edward.²⁸ The imagery of Bella in the *Twilight* film paints her as humble, submissive, modest, and eager for enlightenment from Edward. Her iconography parallels the Virgin Mary's, particularly in traditional religious paintings of the Annunciation. Bella looks to Edward for everything in the books: "my life was about him," and she stares at him whenever he is onscreen in the film.²⁹ Bella's obsession with Edward encourages the audience to be equally obsessed with Edward, following her example, and to seek religious fulfillment in the story and his vampire spirituality.

Bella's iconographic fragility, modesty, and submissiveness in the *Twilight* film parallel the Virgin's. In Meyer, Bella cracks jokes and occasionally stands up to Edward, as when she jokes to him that she is his "heroin."³⁰ In the film, Bella has relatively simple, sometimes nonsensical lines (to Edward's assertion that "I've killed people before" she responds: "it does not matter"),³¹ and spends much of her time listening openmouthed to Edward give speeches about his love, his soulless torment, or his desire to kill her.



Bella's defining trait in the film is her love for Edward. She acts, and looks, extremely like the modest, submissive, and pious representations of the Virgin Mary, who exists not for herself, but for the men who define her life. Bella's whole character revolves around Edward, draws meaning from him, and awaits his cues to act. Even when Edward is not onscreen with Bella, she directs her gaze to him, constantly waiting for him to return. One morning Bella waits for him in the school parking lot, ostensibly to "confront" Edward to ask him why he dislikes her.³² It is difficult to imagine Bella confronting anyone. She waits in front of her old truck, isolated by headphones, declining an invitation to chat with nearby friends, pretending to read. She cannot be a part of normal society while she is waiting for Edward to arrive. She is wholly

²⁸ Meyer, *New Moon*, 225.

²⁹ Meyer, *Twilight*, 251.

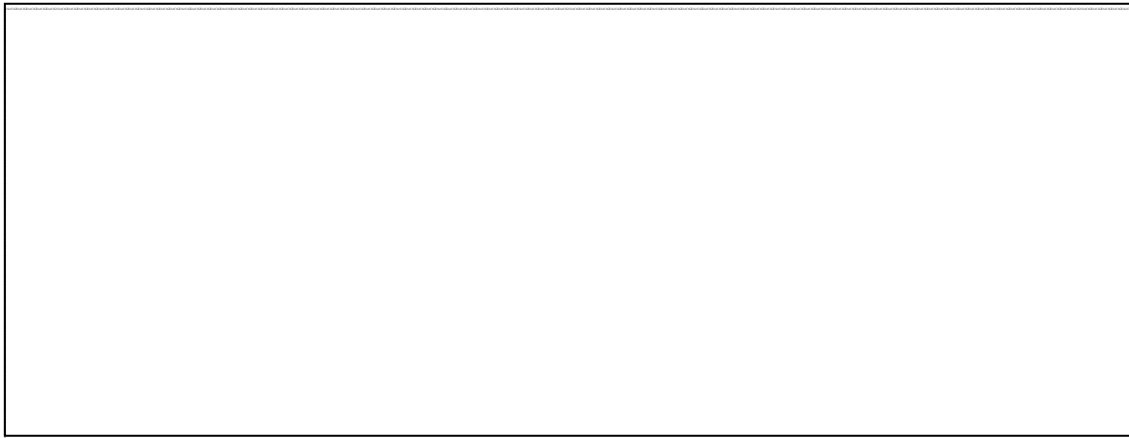
³⁰ *Ibid.*, 267.

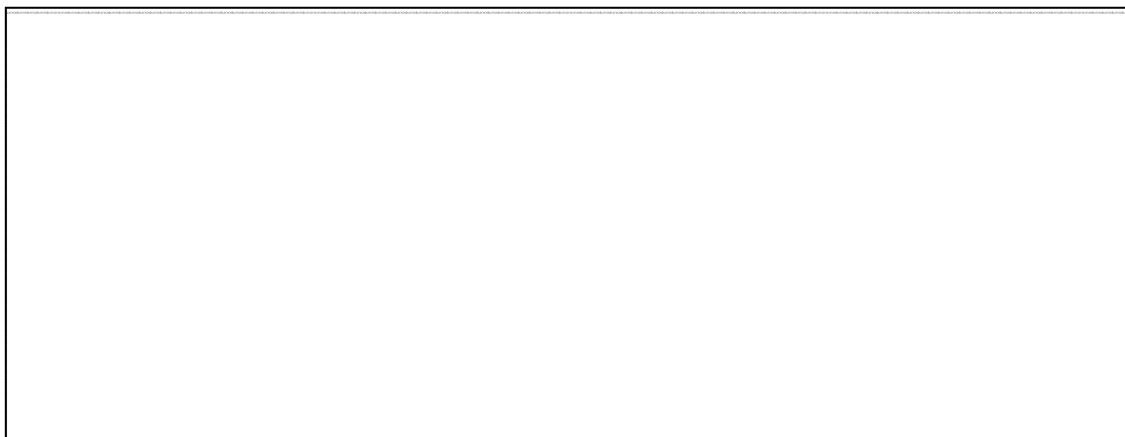
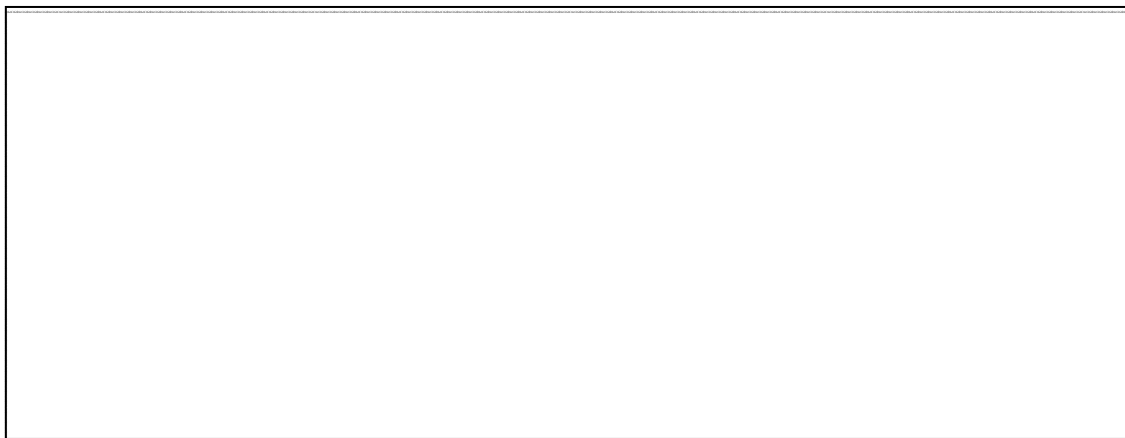
³¹ Summit Entertainment et al., *Twilight*, Scene 11.

³² *Ibid.*, Chapter 3.

absorbed in awaiting the object of her worship. Similarly, the filmmakers might be instructing the audience in a religious reaction to the film.

In Annunciation images, the Virgin Mary submits to the Angel Gabriel's news of her holy pregnancy quite passively. Mary is submissive, modest, and fragile. Thus in the Annunciation iconography, Gabriel nearly always finds Mary reading piously, at prayer. Gabriel comes to her from above, usually bringing a ray of divine light which angles down towards Mary's womb, symbolically impregnating her. Mary is always submissive, and sometimes apprehensive. She often holds her hand up in gentle protest, as if to say "I am unworthy to carry the son of God," for example in Rogier van der Weyden's *Annunciation* (1440). Other times, as in Edward Burne-Jones' *Annunciation* (1862) she simply listens to Gabriel's message with rapt attention. Mary often has a childlike, youthful face and body, with very pale skin. Bella too is childlike, pale, and looks weak.







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Bella receives Edward's wisdom, direction, and knowledge placidly, just as Mary accepts Gabriel's news: she is the initiate, and Edward is the teacher. The knowledge of immortal vampirism which he imparts travels down to her from above, as explicitly shown when, as he tells her about the horrors of vampirism, he dangles out of a tree, leaning down over her. His position above her, her eager upward gaze, and the passage of knowledge between them, parallel's Gabriel's annunciation to Mary. Gabriel's announcement to Mary simply informs her of a fact: his speech coincides with her pregnancy. The divine rays of light emanating towards Mary symbolically impregnate her as Gabriel speaks. Similarly, once Edward reveals his vampirism, Bella immediately decides that she too wants to be a vampire. The announcement coincides with the act: Edward's words have immediately impregnated her mind.

Thus Bella receives the knowledge of her future immortal glory in the same compositional format as Mary. They also learn that their paths to greatness are not all easy: Mary will have to see her son sacrificed, and Bella will give up the possibility of children. Mary will see her life become far more important but also more weighted with cares, as Bella will struggle with the hardships of being a vampire and leaving her mortal family behind.

Conclusion

The religious connotations of the scene above impress the viewer with all the previously discussed ideas of temptation, suffering, and above all a sense of initiation and enlightenment. This is what the filmmakers wish the audience to feel. Bella's openmouthed wonder at Edward's beauty and power is also the audience's wonder at the spirituality of the supernatural. Just as Bella, caught in a mundane existence in a dreary town, surrounded by awkward juvenile classmates and bitterly divorced parents, leaps at the opportunity to experience romance with an otherworldly being, audiences starved of religion and of fantasy by a secular world are rapt with awe at Edward's admissions of his immortality and magical powers. Audiences, indeed, may have a very romantic attachment to spirituality: the supernatural is a sexy twist on the

romanticized Christian past. And like Bella, once we learn about the supernatural, even if we cannot understand it all, we believe, and are immediately drawn in.

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