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Claudia Bucciferro, ed. 2014. *The Twilight Saga. Exploring the Global Phenomenon*. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press. 253 pp. ISBN: 978-08-1089285-9.

María Mariño-Faza
Universidad de Oviedo
marinomaria@uniovi.es

In the last few years, the vampire seems to have become a ubiquitous figure in popular culture. From young adult literature to television, the cinema or the Internet, these supernatural creatures seem to be everywhere and this recent fascination owes much to the huge success of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* novels—*Twilight* (2005), *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse* (2007) and *Breaking Dawn* (2008)—which were soon turned into a series of blockbuster films: *Twilight* (2008), *The Twilight Saga: New Moon* (2009), *The Twilight Saga: Eclipse* (2010), *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn-Part 1* (2011) and *The Twilight Saga: Breaking-Dawn-Part 2* (2012), respectively directed by Catherine Hardwicke, Chris Weitz, David Slade and Bill Condon. But the appeal of this saga has not only generated a highly profitable merchandise market but has also opened a debate on this global phenomenon that has been analyzed from a variety of perspectives, focusing on the relation between this series of novels and films and social and cultural trends in the twenty-first century.

This book results from the Popular Culture/American Culture Association national conferences held in Boston in 2012 and Washington DC in 2013. It is structured in five different but interrelated sections that, as Claudia Bucciferro explains in the introduction, intend to offer an interdisciplinary social and cultural analysis of the *Twilight* saga, which is understood not only as a mere text, but also as a pop culture product that has transcended its own boundaries and expanded into different media.

The first section includes three chapters intended to contextualize the fascination *Twilight* exerts in its audience and construct the foundations for theoretical approaches to the saga from a variety of perspectives. In "Mythic Themes, Archetypes, and Metaphors: The Foundations of *Twilight*'s Cross-Cultural Appeal," Claudia Bucciferro gives a lengthy comprehensive account of the main issues discussed by scholars regarding the saga and the growing interest it has generated. It is intended to establish the general theoretical lines that will be used in the following chapters as well as offer some hints as to what makes it a worldwide success. In that sense, it opens the debate on some of the controversial issues regarding the saga which will

prove to be highly informative for those interested not only in this series of novels and films, but also in Cultural Studies in general. The next chapter, "Manifest Destiny Forever: The *Twilight* Saga, History, and a Vampire's American Dream," by Michelle Maloney-Mangold, draws attention to Stephenie Meyer's belonging to the American literary tradition, and how her presentation of the vampire family—the Cullens—as the perfect embodiment of American exceptionalism underlines an ideology that links it to current US political and social policies, as well as the nation's own history of imperialism. This section closes with a study carried out by Barbara Chambers and Robert Moses Peaslee, "Reading *Twilight*: Fandom, Romance, and Gender in the Age of Bella." The similarity of themes and appeals with Janice A. Radway's *Reading the Romance* (1984), means that this work was used as the foundation for Chambers and Peaslee's analysis of seventeen women ranging from seventeen to forty-five who participated in four separate focus groups. However, the results are not conclusive, not only because the sample was too small, but also because, as the authors themselves recognize, the research methods used were obsolete.

The second section of the book aims to provide further information on *Twilight*'s audiences and their influence on social networks. Laura K. Dorsey-Elson opens by exploring the origin of the term "Twilight mum" and looking for a number of reasons for the appeal of this series of novels and films to women aged forty to fifty: "'Twilight Moms' and the 'Female Midlife Crisis': Life Transitions, Fantasy and Fandom." Her detailed theoretical review tries to establish a link between the female midlife crisis and the appeal of the saga to this age group. However, it does not provide any specific details and offers instead her own personal experience in order to validate her point. In "*Twilight* Anti-Fans: 'Real' Fans and 'Real' Vampires," Victoria Godwin tries to rebut anti-fan criticism towards the saga by providing specific examples, and pointing at Bram Stoker's Dracula as the *real* vampire against whom anti-fans oppose Meyer's vampires. Unfortunately, not all the comments raised against the *Twilight* saga are discussed and she fails to acknowledge that part of the issue might arise not from contrasting the Cullens with other *real* vampires, but rather from the construction of Edward as a vampire, and the conservative ideology and values the narrative reinforces, which are based on Stephenie Meyer's own Mormon beliefs. Finally, in this section, Michelle Groover explores in "*Twilight* and Twitter: An Ethnographic Study" the impact of Twitter as a way of forming social connections among women who talk about *Twilight*, and illustrates how this social phenomenon is understood within this culture-sharing group.

Section three is devoted to some of the characters in the saga and their cultural referents. Lisa Nevárez concentrates on the figure of the vampire child in "Renesmee as (R)omantic Child: A Glimpse into Bella and Edward's Fairy Tale Cottage." She contributes to the further exploration of the romance of the series by focusing on the traditional traits of fairy tales present in *Twilight*, and explores the role of Renesmee—Bella and Edward's daughter—not only as a hybrid between human and vampire, but also as a romantic child. Her singularity is suggested here by comparing her to other

vampire children appearing in previous narratives, but, in addition, her isolation is demonstrated in terms of the Bella-Edward story and the narrative as a whole. Next, drawing on gender theories, Gaïana Hanser's "Isabella Swan: A Twenty-First-Century Victorian Heroine?" analyzes how femininity is constructed in current narratives. Positioning Bella as a female heroine while at the same time keeping in mind Meyer's own background, Hanser provides an insightful account of the tensions that arise from the contradictory messages about women that appear in current narratives, and how they must be reconciled with women's sense of self and what she calls "today's search for lost bearings" (135). The last chapter in this section, "'Doesn't He Own a Shirt?' Rivalry and Masculine Embodiment in *Twilight*" complements the previous one by offering a comprehensive analysis of the two male heroes in the story, Edward and Jacob. Nicole Willms offers a reading on the way masculinities are portrayed in terms of binary oppositions—white and upper-class *vs.* native American (Quileute tribe) and working class—and how this portrayal is successful with audiences. The anxieties present in the narrative regarding masculinity and its embodiment are analyzed and it is suggested that they are used to symbolize particular ideologies on race and class.

The fourth section aims at foregrounding conceptual issues of gender, sex, class and race. The opening chapter "Chastity, Power, and Delayed Gratification: The Lure of Sex in the *Twilight* saga" attempts to offer a new perspective on the relationship between the two main characters, Edward and Bella. Unfortunately, Brynn Burskirk's interpretation of their relationship seems to be based on fans' perceptions rather than offering a valid reading from a theoretical perspective. Chapter eleven, "Alice, Bella, and Economics: Financial Security and Class Mobility in *Twilight*" seeks to analyze the link between the saga and materialism and consumerism in twenty-first century American capitalist society by focusing on the figure of Alice Cullen and her relation not only to Bella, but also to the rest of her family. Paul A. Lucas points to the social mobility present in Bella's transformation into a vampire. She comes from a relatively poor middle-class American family but her turning into a vampire means a new life of wealth and glamor and an acceptance of the materialistic world offered by the Cullens. However, Lucas does not read this financial dependence in terms of Bella's husband—Edward Cullen—but rather in terms of another female figure, Alice, who is the provider for the whole family, and gives them all financial stability. Using philosophy as the basis for her argument, Michelle Bernard discusses the question of otherness in the next chapter "'I Know What You Are': A Philosophical Look at Race, Identity, and Mixed-Blood in the *Twilight* Universe." By making race an issue, with the inclusion of the Quileutes and their war with the vampires, Bernard argues that the saga teaches "a lesson of tolerance" (186). But it is not this portrayal of racial others alone that the saga uses to promote the end of categorization and prejudice, but also the inclusion of Renesmee since she is the representative of this multi-racial society because of her status as a hybrid between her mother Bella (a human) and her father Edward (a vampire).

Section five moves away from the *Twilight* universe and engages with other related issues. Grounded on monster theory and discussing authors such as Ken Gelder (1994), Barbara Creed (1993) and Julia Kristeva (1982), "Mainstream Monsters: The Otherness of Humans in *Twilight*, *The Vampire Diaries*, and *True Blood*" offers valuable insights into current studies on the relation between vampires and otherness. Emma Somogyi and Mark David Ryan provide an outline of the evolution of the representation of the vampire since its first appearance in the nineteenth century until current times, emphasizing the change it has undergone in the last century. Nowadays, vampires have mainstreamed, as is proven through the careful analysis of different characters in the films and TV series mentioned. However, as they argue, the dichotomy between monstrous and virtuous vampire is still used in these narratives, and humans have now become the other. Chapter fourteen, "Individuality and Collectivity in *The Hunger Games*, *Harry Potter* and *Twilight*," written by Lisa Weckerle, is devoted to the exploration of these three sagas and tries to establish their links to current anxieties regarding individuality and collectivity. It is argued that in a context of globalization, they are constructed around contemporary concerns about privacy but also the potential of technologies for controlling individuals. In mythological terms, however, the heroes' journeys reflect a negotiation between the individual and the collective and point to the need of forming alliances among different groups in order to survive. On the whole, it is argued that they fulfil the function of being exemplary for their audiences. Sonia Baelo-Allué's "From *Twilight* to *Fifty Shades of Grey*: Fan Fiction, Commercial Culture, and Grassroots Creativity" delves into the complexities of online communities and their potential for changing commercial culture. Using E. L. James's fanfiction and its transition into the *Fifty Shades* series, the author draws connections between the original *Twilight* saga and this hugely successful series of novels that have also become a profitable franchise. This interesting analysis focuses on the different audiences the two texts are directed at and the cultural and ideological consequences of this. However, despite E. L. James's treatment of BDSM in her erotic novels, it becomes clear that it is still framed within a monogamous discourse with clear similarities to that appearing in *Twilight*.

This nicely edited volume brings together a variety of perspectives on the *Twilight* phenomenon in five separate sections that illustrate the underlying complexities of these narratives. While some of the contributions are more informative than analytical, the work explores the social and cultural context in which *Twilight* has originated, and addresses a series of issues related to this global trend and its impact on society. In her concluding remarks, Claudia Bucciferro does not deny the controversy that surrounds this franchise but focuses on its appeal to different audiences and how *Twilight* has paved the way for a new genre, the paranormal romance, which has become extremely successful in the last few years.

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Dr. María Mariño-Faza is a lecturer in the Department of English, French and German Philology at the University of Oviedo. She specializes in Early Modern and Victorian literature as well as Cultural Studies and her research lines focus on the representation of the supernatural in literature and the media.

Address: Departamento de Filología Inglesa, Francesa y Alemana. Universidad de Oviedo. Campus de Humanidades "El Milán." C/ Teniente Alfonso Martínez, s/n. 33011, Asturias, Spain. Tel.: +34 985104587.