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HOW TO BE A WOMAN

Models of Masochism and Sacrifice in Young Adult Fiction

Buffy, Bella, Veronica, Katniss, Clary, Tris and Saba[1]: For two decades post-feminist heroines have faced life-threatening trials as part of their progress to womanhood. In this chapter I consider how young adult popular fictions operate as forms of pedagogy for young women by offering them particular models of maturity and womanhood. I explore the recurrence and reformulation of a persistent pattern of behaviour in which heroines engage in risky and/or masochistic behaviorsfor which they are emotionally rewarded.. These recurrences function as a form of vicarious experiential learning in which readers and viewers learn that emotional gratification and adult status are conferred through self-harm and self-sacrifice. Popular culture is not a monolithic form and young adult fictions are no exception. An analysis of fictional examples of this behaviour pattern challenges the idea that heroines today are empowered agents as a result of the legacy of feminism. At the same time, the analysis belies any notion that fictions are universally hegemonic and oppressive – fictions can and do disrupt and interrogate this pattern of emotional masochism. Scholars of public pedagogy have explored the complexities, contradictions and subtleties of the pedagogical process. Sandlin O'Malley and Burdick (2011) in their review of public pedagogy literature acknowledge that some scholarship has demonstrated how "the teaching and learning inherent within daily life can be both oppressive and resistant" (p. 144). Jubas and Knutson (2012) also see public pedagogy as an arena where contradictions and tensions are in play. They argue that we can see "New examples of dialectic or tensions … between the authority of the producer and the consumer; between traditional structures which ground identities and help people make sense of cultural texts, and personal agency which frees people to choose and invent identities and meanings" (p. 86). This analysis aims to contribute to understandings of the complexities of public pedagogy by showing how fictions aimed primarily at young women both resist and accommodate patriarchy.

The analysis focuses primarily on Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga* (book and film versions), particularly *Breaking Dawn* (Meyer, 2008) and the episodes "Anne" (Whedon, 1998) and "Dead Man's Party" (Noxon, 1998) from the television series

[1] Buffy from the TV series, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Veronica from the TV series Veronica Mars, Katniss from the films and books The Hunger Games, Tris from the films and books, the Divergent Trilogy and Saba from the Dustlands trilogy (optioned for movie production).

A.N. Other, B.N. Other (eds.), Title of Book, 00–00.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer (*BTVS*), created by Joss Whedon, as these offer contrasting treatments of this theme of self-harm/self-sacrifice, reflecting the complexity of public pedagogy generally and young adult fiction in particular. I aim to demonstrate that Whedon and Noxon's work, in line with the avowedly feminist intentions of the series, resists rewarding its heroine for her self-inflicted suffering, presenting mature womanhood instead in terms of responsibility and leadership. Meyer, by contrast, creates a heroine who matures only through self-inflicted suffering in which all her agency and determination is directed towards self-abnegation.

ROMANCE AND THE RUNAWAY HEROINE

Cawelti (1976) wrote influentially about repetition compulsion in popular fictions, arguing that their popularity was predicated on the existence of unresolved psychic conflicts, which drive readers back, repeatedly, to texts that offer fantasy resolutions to these problems. This idea was taken up in the 1980's and 90's by critics of popular romance such as Radway (1984), who argued that women read romances in order to get the perfect parenting they long for – the hero provides the nurturing attention they crave in real life, and Modleski (1982), who discussed heroines' predilection for running away and falling into danger as forms of childish revenge, executed by women who feel powerless to get the love and attention they deserve in a male-dominated society. Heroes, she argues, are made to suffer for not loving, or not showing their love, by facing the possible loss of the heroine.

The romance genre is responsive to changes in women's position in society and can be inventive and subversive (Regis, 2011; Tapper, 2014; Wendell & Tan, 2009) and contemporary romance features fewer subservient heroines who need to force all powerful heroes into admissions of undying devotion by risking their lives than was the case in the 1960s and 70s fiction examined by earlier critics. Nevertheless, the theme of female self-endangerment leading to male nurturing persists widely in young adult fiction, but is continuously remodelled and can accommodate aspects of feminism which overtly endorse female independence, choice and courage. This reflects the contradictory nature of a society in which girls and young women are told that male attention is not the object of their existence, whilst actually rewarding them highly for conformity to fashion and beauty ideals and for success in attracting male admiration. It is perhaps not surprising, given the compelling analyses of girls and young women's lives offered by cultural and communication scholars such as McRobbie (2009, 2013), that elements of this passive aggressive approach to seeking (particularly male) attention continue to feature strongly in young adult fiction. In addition to the analyses of the texts mentioned above, I refer briefly to variations of this coercive self-harming across a range of contemporary young adult fiction to reinforce the point that this is a widespread and endlessly transforming characteristic of the genre.

TEXTS, AUTHORS AND ANALYSES

Some of the excitement for me in analysing texts as public pedagogies lies in marrying different theoretical traditions, moving between educational theory, communications theory and literary theory, and holding these in tension. The analyses in this chapter are predicated on a synthesis of theoretical approaches to texts. They take from New Historicism (Veeser, 1989) in so far as they recognise that texts are situated in historical moments, and as such can illuminate and be illuminated by the historical and social context. This underpins my belief that popular fictions give insights into tensions and contradictions relating to social values, attitudes towards gender, and more specifically, what it means to be a young woman in Western society. I am mindful, for example, of the work of writers such as Baker, (2010), Harris (2004), Pomerantz, Raby and Stefank (2013), and McRobbie (2009, 2013), who resist arguments that suggest that feminism is no longer relevant to young women and problematize the idea of choice and agency. The analyses seek to demonstrate that mass media popular fictions continue to be sites where the concept of womanhood is created, resisted, and interrogated. The chapter also assumes that the analysis of texts is a valid activity in itself. The existence of mass popular culture suggests that texts have what Hall (1980) called preferred or dominant meanings; there will be some widely shared responses and experiences when certain television or films are viewed, or books are read. That is not to say that there are no resistant meanings or alternative readings, or that people will not filter texts through their own frames of reference.

I also want to consider the resurrection of the author, or at least the resurrection of creative teams. Barthes (1977) in *Death of the Author* argued that authors' intentions were not relevant. Whilst I agree that interpretations cannot be confined to those intended by authors, I would still argue that creators of popular fictions can be positioned as pedagogues engaged in a deliberate process of communication. Some set out to influence and change perspectives. This certainly applies to the two authors whose work is considered in this chapter. Meyer, who studied at Brigham Young University, states in her interview on Amazon's *Twilight* page that, "The book with the most significant impact on my life is the *Book of Mormon*" (Meyer, n.d.). She says that she "put a lot of (my) beliefs into the story, free agency is a big theme, as is sacrifice" (Morris, 2005). It is clear that the books reflect her Mormon values, something Dietz (2011) has carefully delineated. Meyer recalls, for example, refusing to include pre-marital sex in the story (Morris, 2005). Whedon is an outspoken communicator with a huge, well-informed fan following. He joins in on-line discussions and gives regular interviews in which he makes it clear that he is focused on telling powerful stories but also on using them to present his political and social perspectives (see the edited collection of interviews by Lavery &Burkhead, 2011 or the biography by Pascale, 2014, for some examples). One of the best known is his speech to the international human rights organisation, Equality Now, in which he provided a series of answers to the repeated question, "Why do you always write such strong women characters?" In answering that question, he stated, "Because equality is not a concept …. Equality is like gravity – we need it to stand on this Earth as men and women, and the misogyny that is in every culture is not a true part of the human

condition" (Pascale, 2014, p. 274). Putting this all together then, creators of popular fictions actively seek to offer us certain perspectives on the world. In doing so they produce works designed to be read in particular ways by the communities and groups they target. Close examination of their work will give us some indication of what is being taught, how those ideas are being conveyed, and how they relate to historical and contemporary debates.

The work began with a moment of recognition. I was familiar with the phenomenon of the runaway/self-harming heroine as a result of my earlier studies in popular romantic fiction, including YA popular fiction. I was also conscious of the prevalence of strong, powerful heroines in recent decade, particularly Buffy the Vampire Slayer herself. When I encountered the *Twilight* books and films, the behaviour of Bella seemed to exemplify, even exaggerate the runaway heroine motif and the popularity of this kind of masochism puzzled me. It occurred to me that Buffy also ran away very dramatically, and I began systematic readings of both texts to consider how they represented these acts. I viewed the television series and the films and read the books repeatedly. I took a critical feminist approach; my analysis was concerned with the representation of womanhood and with questions of power and identity in gender relations. In line with the theoretical discussion above, I assumed that it was possible to identify preferred readings and to offer *a* textual analysis without undertaking audience research. Through a process of iterative engagement with these texts I noted how superficial similarities (running away, putting oneself into danger) were used as parts of stories that were about maturing and how the stories modelled mature womanhood differently. Both texts I discuss here were immensely popular. *Twilight,* four novels and five films, was a phenomenon, topping best-seller lists and box office receipt (Box Officemojo). The TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* ran for seven seasons (from 1997 until 2003 in the US), acquired cult status and has probably had more academic attention than any other television series in history (Lametti, Harris, Geiling, & Matthews-Ramo, 2012). Eleven years after its conclusion, articles and books continue to be published. My discussion considers the way that the heroines' apparently masochistic acts are interrogated or endorsed by the context and emotional tenor of these texts. There are obvious parallels between them. Bella, the heroine of *Twilight* has just turned 18, Buffy is 17, both are still at school, initially (Bella has left by the time *Breaking Dawn* begins) and both havas their first, intense love, powerful vampires, who appear to be young men, but who are actually over a hundred years old, and have dark and murderous pasts. My analyses suggest that Bella's risky behaviour is rewarded and even applauded in the *Twilight* saga whereas *BtVS* presents a critique of Buffy's decision to run away in response to anger and disappointment.. Readers learn very different things about the effectiveness of this kind of masochistic revenge/ emotional blackmail.

Bella learns that the more she suffers, the more she will be rewarded with love, attention and protection, and that she can bypass normal requirements of growing up and move straight to their material and social rewards, provided by a wealthy and powerful male, if she makes him sufficiently worried she might hurt herself.Buffy learns that emotional blackmail can backfire and learns to keep fulfilling her public responsibilities to wider society, even when she feels unhappy and rejected personally.

BELLA

My discussion of Bella in this chapter concentrates primarily on her pregnancy as a form of self-endangerment and self-sacrifice. I have discussed elsewhere Bella's deliberate risk taking and its relationship to the complexities of contemporary girlhood (Jarvis, 2013). As Edwards (2009, p.29) says, "everyone wants Bella, to own, to love, to protect, to hurt" She is constantly rewarded for risking her life, which makes her the focus of attention and concern, particularly the concern of her vampire lover, Edward. Her ultimate reward comes when she is estranged from him in *New Moon* (Meyer, 2006). Following a series of misunderstandings, Edward believes Bella is dead, so tries to kill himself. They are re-united and he makes vows of undying fidelity and love. She gets what she wants – Edward's declaration – by hurting herself. Bella and Edward marry in *Breaking Dawn*. A conventional romance might end here, but the trauma and heightened emotion continues. Meyer uses what is for many an ordinary part of womanhood, pregnancy and motherhood, to continue to present a story about Bella being at extreme risk and Edward being terribly worried about her.

Though superficially indicative of maturity (the move into motherhood), pregnancy enables Bella to evade the more obvious maturing process that had been expected of her (going to college to take her degree, becoming an independent young woman). She promised Edward she would go to college, but made it clear she really wanted to become a vampire and live with his (very patriarchal) family. Becoming pregnant on her honeymoon enables her to get her way. Whitton's (2011) superb analysis of motherhood in the *Twilight* Saga, argues that in line with Meyer's Mormon beliefs, it is shown to be "the only role in which they (women) can find true fulfilment" (p. 125), but that the mother is always secondary to the father. She argues that *Twilight* valorises a form of motherhood that "is intrinsically masochistic" and ultimately, "the only good mother is a dead mother" (p. 127). Wilson (2011) also notes the *Twilig*ht Saga conveys the message that "woman does (or at least should) equal womb" (p. 79).

The half vampire child grows unnaturally quickly, kicking in the first few days and making Bella very ill. The book relates the story in the first person at this early stage in the pregnancy, so that the reader can share Bella's frenzy of emotion, including her overwhelming response to the prospect having "a tiny Edward in my arms" (Meyer, 2008, p. 116), and her tortured anxieties. The film also shows this stage predominantly from her perspective (looking at Edward to see his reactions,

looking at her body for signs of pregnancy). Because the reader is inside her head at this stage, he or she experiences her behaviour as entirely altruistic; its manipulative effect is disguised. Hearing everything from Bella's perspective helps to suggest that, once again, Bella is in danger through no direct "fault" of her own – no-one believed a vampire could impregnate a human. She expresses concern for Edward, but also describes him as "an angry tornado" made almost crazy by his worry for her. The reader shares the pleasure of seeing this intense love and concern, without bearing responsibility for causing it. Edward rushes Bella home so that his surgeon "father" can, in Edward's words "get that thing out before it can hurt any part of you" (p. 120). Rather than replace the first person narrative with dialogue, the film relies on long silences and the telling expressions of the actors to convey Bella's astonishment, her protectiveness towards the baby, and Edward's horror and guilt at the pregnancy. She stares at her stomach in the mirror with wonder in her eyes and watches Edward as he moves with frantic and supernatural haste around the house preparing for their departure. We see his set jaw and anguished expression as he prepares to leave. The film also intensifies the emphasis on the wealth and power of the Cullens; this wealth and power is now at Bella's service and is mobilised to protect her as soon as the pregnancy puts her in danger. The private island, belonging to Edward's mother on which they honeymoon is visually stunning. In the book Edward rings the airport to arrange a speedy departure; in the film they take a private jet.

Bella is adamant from the moment of conception that she will persist with this pregnancy. It is particularly important from a pedagogical point of view that the narrator switches from Bella to her friend and suitor Jacob once she arrives back at the Cullen house and her condition worsens. It would be difficult for Bella to discuss her extreme pain and the misery it causes and to revel in the attention she gets without appearing perverse and egocentric. Through Jacob's eyes, the reader/viewer sees Bella in the best possible light. The film also shows events predominantly as he sees them, although it occasionally switches to show us Bella as observed by Edward or another member of her family. The perspective moves between images of adoration and suffering. Jacob gives an excellent description of her power over everyone else. He himself is obsessed with her and her pain: "I heard Bella's voice, cracked and rough and I couldn't think of anything else" (p. 156). The first thing he sees is "six vampires standing in a group by the white sofa" (p. 157) – the entire Cullen family is looking at and looking after Bella.. Rosalie, the sister-in-law who had been highly critical of Bella is now, "hovering in a strange protective way" (p. 158). The film emphasises this by only offering Jacob and the viewer glimpses of Bella initially, because she is hidden/protected by Rosalie, who blocks Jacob's access and has to be instructed by Bella to let Jacob come to her. The film charts the progress of the pregnancy through shot after shot of Bella reclining on a sofa while one or more of the family looks on with concern, and in the case of Edward, anguish and guilt. Becoming pregnant and dangerously ill makes Bella the most important member of this family.

Jacob's descriptions show us her danger and the suffering it causes Edward. He describes her grotesque appearance in considerable detail, her dark circled eyes,

emaciated face, fingers and hands and the swollen torso, "ballooning out in a strange sick way … like the big bulge had grown out of what is sucked from her" (p. 160). The camera zooms in on her discoloured abdomen, before she pulls her top down to cover it. It focuses on her lifeless hair, gaunt face and on the dark circles under her eyes that look almost bruised. She is dying slowly from lack of nourishment as the child absorbs her body. Edward's expression is "beyond agony"; his eyes are "all tortured looking" (p. 158). Just in case we miss the point Jacob tells us, "This is the face a man would have if he were burning at the stake." (p. 162). Jacob, hating Edward as he does, is able to represent Bella's concern for Edward as indicative of her selflessness; "she was beating herself up about hurting his feelings; the girl was a classic martyr" (p172). Robert Pattinson, who plays Edward in the film, perfected the art of the tortured expression – the downward turn of the lips, the tightening of the jaw and the large, haunted eyes. Kristen Stewart, playing Bella, combines wincing and gasping to show her pain, with little martyred smiles and a soulful expression.

As the pregnancy progresses, Jacob narrates, in great detail, increases in Bella's suffering. He finds watching this unbearable, but Bella keeps him there. She says, "It's just not whole unless you're here" – even though she rejected him for Edward, she expects his love and attention. In a rare moment of insight he says, "How about, Jacob, I get a kick out of your pain" (p. 273). By suffering she manages to maintain the love triangle that fuelled the first three books, even after marriage and throughout a disfiguring pregnancy. The film, though primarily shown from Jacob's perspective at this stage, is able to incorporate additional scenes; at one point Bella looks at herself in the mirror slipping the robe she is wearing from her shoulders, so we can see how emaciated her limbs are – Edward comes up behind her and shows his dismay as she hurriedly shrugs the gown back on.

The pregnancy culminates in a ghastly, graphically described birth. Jake hears the strangest, muffled, ripping sound from the center of her body … she went totally limp … Bella screamed ... a blood curdling scream of agony. The horrifying sound cut off with a gurgle, and her eyes rolled back in her head. Her body twitched, arched in Rosalie's arms, and then Bella vomited a fountain of blood (p.318-319). This goes on, and includes cutting her open with a scalpel before any anaesthetic has taken hold, a "shattering crack" as the baby breaks her spine (p. 323), followed by death, CPR, recovery, Edward tearing the womb open with his teeth and Bella dying again.

The film reflect the horror and gore of this very faithfully, although it has to be mindful of its wish to retain a 12 certificate. There is no fountain of blood, but Bella collapses in an unnatural way, suggesting her back is broken at this stage rather than later, and we hear a tearing sound as the placenta detaches. She twitches and shakes horribly and screams as the knife goes in and the baby is extracted. Edward's mouth is covered in blood as he rips open the womb. Several long shots are taken from above the scene once Bella is dead, showing a deep womb-shaped blood stain and blood covering the whole of the underside of the bed on which she lies.

Metaphorically and symbolically a lot seems to be going on here that relates to contemporary concerns about domestic abuse and teenage pregnancy. Patterns of behaviour characteristic of domestic abuse can be seen throughout the films in the way Edward repeatedly hurts Bella, directly or indirectly, including during their sexual encounters, suffers for this, is exonerated and comforts her for her suffering. This graphic description of childbirth might be expected to deter young women readers from procreation. The monstrous growth of the child mirrors the often suppressed feeling women may have that the child they carry is a kind of parasite, draining their life. Wilson (2011) links it to the idea of foetus "as cannibal" (p. 79). Its parasitic, life-draining qualities, and the fact that Bella is resurrected with a different identity – that of a new born vampire – also reflect anxiety that a woman may lose her identity as a result of becoming a mother. There is no doubt that becoming a mother is presented as a major sacrifice. However, the shifting narrative viewpoint and the focus on the intensity of Edward and Jacob's love for Bella, her presentation as a martyr, caring about everyone, and sacrificing herself for the baby, actually create a tremendous degree of masochistic gratification for the reader. The story suggests that women's fears about pregnancy and childbirth are entirely justified, but that by enduring and embracing this suffering and loss of self, the woman will be rewarded with obsessive love, and it enables the reader to live vicariously through that reward. Her persistence also sends a conservative anti-choice message; even if being pregnant will kill her, a real woman will want to protect the baby at any cost. It suggests that a young woman's life is less valuable than that of a newly conceived foetus but gives great narrative pleasure by allowing the reader to experience how adored and important Bella becomes as a result of making this ultimate sacrifice.

The story also resonates with debates about deliberate teenage pregnancy. Politicians and popular media have expressed concern that deliberate pregnancy reflects lack of aspiration and a lack of alternative opportunities for young women (Goodchild & Owen, 2006).Researchers have challenged the stereotype of teenage pregnancy as a negative experience for young women. They report that young women use this as a rite of passage to adulthood which gives them status, responsibility and helps them to mature (Kreager, Matsueda, & Erosheva, 2010). Bute and Russell (2012) analyse discourses surrounding teenage pregnancy, noting that it is presented as a "disruption to the social ordering of time" (p. 719), as well as a choice young women have a right to make, and as way of taking responsibility and acting like an adult. *Twilight* endorses the idea of motherhood as a route to instant importance, making the teenage mother the centre of concern and attention. Bella certainly disrupts "the social ordering of time" by evading some generally accepted elements of growing up. She does not have to get her degree(s), establish herself in a career, or prove that she can earn a living. Her status as an adult is conferred instantly through motherhood.

The story makes it clear that Edward is not responsible for Bella's suffering. He did not want to have sex with her in case he hurts her; but he does, and is devastated by her bruises. He did not want her to become pregnant, or to continue with a pregnancy that will kill her. Nevertheless, the pattern that plays out has

much in common with that seen in domestic abuse. He hurts her, then comforts her. She has to re-assure him that he has not hurt her too much. It appears to encourage the reader/viewer to take pleasure from the love and guilt an abuser expresses. It appears to endorse a form of gratification in relationships based on "hurt/comfort."

Other critics have read Bella's behaviour as indicative of female choice and agency. Coker (2011) and Moruzi (2012) describe Bella's choices, including the decision to embrace young motherhood, as forms of post-feminist agency. Meyer herself focuses on Bella's choosing the role of wife and mother above all others, as indicative of her independence. I have interpreted her behaviour instead as a manipulative response to the exigencies of patriarchy. Her choices confine her to a permanent state of adolescent dependence on male concern. Her situation seems indicative of "the way in which everyday forms of power are organised, and function to both create the illusion of equality and the idea of activity, and the idea of choice and the idea of empowerment" (McRobbie, 2013, p. 3). The Saga constitutes part of the raft of what Pomerantz, Raby and Stefank (2013) call "celebratory postfeminist narratives, such as Girl Power and Successful Girls" which "produce a view of girlhood that is beyond the need for help politics or a language of opposition with which to name gender injustice" (p. 202). Bella is indeed successful and exerts her will to get her own way. She chooses to suffer. I would argue that the texts present an exaggerated and horrific overt description of the pain and sacrifices associated with pregnancy and early childbirth, but counter this with a narrative that makes the girl/woman doing the sacrificing actually the most important person in the world, and that doing this teaches girls an important paradox: In order to have the love and attention they seek, that might validate their sense of their own identity and importance, they actually have to sacrifice themselves to the continuance of the patriarchal family.

BUFFY

Buffy's misery is not so well rewarded. She runs away from home after a verbal fight with her mother and a physical fight with her lover. Her vampire lover, Angel, fought with Buffy against the "forces of darkness" the Slayer traditionally battles, until he lost his soul and switched sides. He rejects her brutally and humiliatingly at this point. He plans to end the world by awakening the demon, Acathla, who will suck the world into a demon dimension through a mystical vortex. Some of her friends feel her relationship with Angel was a bad choice and are not as sympathetic and supportive as she would like. In the midst of this crisis she has to reveal to her mother, Joyce, that she is a vampire slayer. Joyce wants Buffy to give up this role and delivers an ultimatum as Buffy prepares to leave to stop Angel: If she leaves the house again she need not return. Buffy leaves anyway. Angel awakens the demon and the vortex begins to open. The only way Buffy can avert the end of the world is to kill Angel and push him into the vortex. Just before she does so, Angel's soul is restored to him and Buffy has to kill him knowing this. Devastated by these experiences, and feeling misunderstood and rejected by everyone, she leaves Sunnydale for LA. At this point the episode has very much

the feel of the runaway trope Modleski (1982) discusses: The heroine runs away both as a reflection of her own misery and self-loathing and (subconsciously) to punish others for not caring enough. In the episode, "Anne" at the beginning of Season Three we find her working as a waitress in LA, having given up her old role and her old life. She uses her middle name, "Anne," something Wilcox (2006) suggests reflects "her wish to hide within herself and lose her pain" (p. 62). She runs away from being Buffy, making no contact with those who love her and fear for her safety.

She meets other runaways. This begins to undermine the psychological pleasure offered by the runaway motif. The runaways are presented as sad, often deluded creatures; neither Buffy nor the viewer who identifies with her can take satisfaction in being counted amongst them. She discovers that these vulnerable individuals are being exploited by a cult which purports to love them but uses them as slave labour. The episode's critique of certain aspects of religion also contributes to undermining the psychological pleasures of self-abnegation. The cult echoes concepts central to the mystical formulations of various religions, which teach that only through complete abnegation of self can the soul find its true identity through absorption into a divine consciousness. The runaways, like Buffy, have already abandoned their old identities. The cult insists they abandon *all* sense of self. They are asked, "Who are you?" and have to reply, "I am nothing, I am no-one." If they say their name they are beaten. This episode suggests that self-denial, far from leading to a fuller life, leads to enslavement. Its purpose is to ensure that the devotees have no will and no resistance, so can be used as slave labour. Once stripped of their identity, they are made to work until they are prematurely aged and ready to die. They are ripe for exploitation by those who appear to offer them the love and attention they crave. The pedagogy here does not suggest that Buffy will find happiness or love by abandoning her identity and responsibilities.

And indeed she reclaims her identity. She sees the exploitation, investigates the cult and is captured. In spite of running away from her relationships, as a result of the misery and anger they caused her, her identity as a relational human being re-asserts itself when others are endangered. When the cult captors ask Buffy, "Who are you?" instead of giving the expected reply, "I am no-one" or even "I am Anne," she claims her name and her role: "I'm Buffy. The Vampire Slayer. And you are?" She defeats her captors and frees their prisoners. Wilcox (2004) notes that the series "repeatedly equates naming with existentialist choice" (p. 63). This may appear paradoxical at first. Buffy did not determine her own name; rather, she was given it. She did not decide to be a slayer; she was chosen. At various points in the series, however, Buffy owns this role and this identity. She exercises agency, not by running away from the responsibilities that have been given her, but by embracing them. The choice she faces here, between surrendering herself to a higher authority or fighting for her fellows and her identity is characteristic of the way Whedon portrays what Richardson & Rabb (2007) call his "radical existentialist ethics" in which "nothing relieves you of your responsibility for your choices" (pp. 69-70 of 3065). Having constantly to make the choice to be the Slayer is an "authentic existential choice" (291of 3065). Her self-worth, however

damaged by Angel's rejection and by the lack of understanding from friends and family, is not dependent on stimulating their anxiety and love, but on her role as a leader with responsibilities to others and growing up is defined by making moral choices that focus on responsibilities to others.

The following episode, *Dead Man's Party*, begins with her return home and tackles the idea that the runaway wanted to draw attention to her suffering – perhaps even to punish friends and family, albeit unconsciously. Conventionally, the runaway heroine (and the reader identifying with her) would be rewarded by the outpouring of love from those who had been anxious about her absence. The episode offers little scope for allowing Buffy to experience any satisfaction in her friends' pleasure at her return or distress at her absence. It shows that relationships are more complex than this. Her friends and her mother are relieved to see her, but the underlying aggression and selfishness of the running away and her self-destructive behaviour is foregrounded when they express their anger as well as their pleasure at her return. And of course there is no hero to embrace her. Her friend, Xander, does not reassure her when she worries that her Watcher, who is responsible for overseeing her work as a Slayer, might be "mad" she left, but says, "Mad? Just because you ran away and abandoned your post and your friends and your mom and made him lay awake every night worrying about you?"

She has hurt everyone, and cannot simply pick up where she left off. They have begun to move on and are trying to fulfil some of the obligations she walked out on; they have even taken on some of her Slayer duties. They did not put their lives on hold. Later, she feels like an outsider at a party in her own home, where her friends are concerned with their complex relationships with each other, rather than their relationships with her. Her friend Willow puts this neatly when she explains that she had needed Buffy, at a time when her (Willow's) life was difficult; she felt let down when Buffy left. Far from feeling guilty that Buffy is suffering, she is angry with her. Buffy's mother, Joyce, also engages with Buffy in a way that challenges self-obsession. At the party, Buffy overhears Joyce explaining how difficult she finds the relationship with Buffy. Buffy's reaction to this, and to her friends' pre-occupation with their own affairs, is to start to pack to run away again, until discovered by Willow, who is furious. When Buffy tells Joyce she ran away because of her reaction to finding out she was a slayer, Joyce is not apologetic:

Joyce: Buffy! You didn't give me any time. You just dumped this, this thing on me and expected me to get it. Well – guess what? Mom's not perfect. I handled it badly. But that doesn't give you the right to punish me by running away –

Buffy: Punish you? I didn't do this to punish you –

Xander: Well you did. You should have seen what it did to her.

….

Xander: Maybe you don't want to hear it, Buffy. But taking off like that was selfish and stupid.

Xander and Joyce home in on the idea that running away was an aggressive act. The series will not allow this heroine to position herself and her concerns as the

centre of the Universe. It shows that anger with her mother and friends forms part of the impetus for running away. Some of the psychology of the masochistic heroine is there, but Buffy, and the viewers going through the experience with her, do not get the big emotional pay-off for her self-destructive behaviour. It is precisely this lack of pay-off that gives the episode its pedagogical impetus. The viewer goes through this experience with Buffy as she learns to think about the world in a less egocentric way. As Willow says, "It's not all about you." This is a very different moral perspective from that delivered through *Twilight.* Buffy and her friends learn, throughout the series, that adulthood is about a different kind of sacrifice – not masochistic, attention seeking suffering, but the sacrifice involved in keeping going, even when you do not want to. As Reiss (2004) puts it, "on Buffy the real pain … is often simply to live in the world" and to do so out of "compassion for others" (p. 13).

IN CONCLUSION: BELLA, BUFFY AND SOME OF THE OTHERS

These analyses of *BtVS and Twilight* suggest it is possible to read them as representations of very different models of becoming an adult woman *Twilight* presents womanhood as a masochistic state in which women are rewarded for suffering with love and comfort. It appears to exonerate forms of childish behaviour in which women gain attention through self-harm, and presents motherhood as a rite of passage in which a woman's life is presented as secondary to the requirement to reproduce. *BtVS*, however, demonstrates that the heroine grows up by rejecting patterns of manipulative self-harm. Running away, damages her relationships and does not result in comfort or positive attention. Buffy is expected to face up to life's challenges and her responsibilities, even when she feels hurt or rejected. Respect comes from strength in standing up to oppression, alone if necessary, as shown in *Anne*.

Patterns of behaviour whereby love and attention are secured by putting the heroine in danger are frequently found in in young adult fiction that focuses on young women's transition to adulthood Veronica Mars, the lead character of a novel, TV series and film, has plenty of reasons to adopt the kinds of masochistic revenge strategies beloved of romantic heroines (see Silver, Thomas, Ruggiero, Gwartz, & Stokdyk, 2004). She is misjudged, ostracised and publicly humiliated on a regular basis. Her boyfriends cheat on her and her friends betray her – but she generally settles for straightforward revenge and a stoic facing down of her enemies. In series three, following an attempted rape by a rapist haunting the campus, she appears on her couch, the object of her boyfriend and father's deep concern. She enjoys this momentarily, but the story goes on to show how stifling a relationship grounded in female vulnerability and male comfort and protection can be. She finds her boyfriend's continued protectiveness restrictive and demeaning and they break up.

But there are still many fictions for young adults that offer readers and viewers gratification based on causing suffering to others through self-sacrifice. This psychological manipulation can be found even in texts that feature strong self-

willed heroines. Katniss, the heroine of *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008; Jacobsen, Kilik, Ross, & Lawrence, 2012), is a brave, self-reliant young woman who provides for her family. Although she endangers herself by volunteering for, what for most of the participants, will be a suicide mission, hers is a heroic act, not something she does in response to feeling unloved or rejected. She volunteers to put herself in danger by taking her younger sister's place in the Hunger Games,., a fight to the death between champions from different districts of the dystopian country of Panem. She is far removed from the weak and helpless Bella Swan. However, some of the narrative gratifications that accompany the self-harming heroine are evident in this story. Self-sacrifice is what brings attention to her. She is immediately loved and respected by her whole community, even securing the attention of her mother, who had been almost catatonically uninterested in her since her father died. Moreover, although she, like Bella, overtly rejects, even mocks, the trappings of femininity (e.g., fashion, hair styles, make-up), she has spectacular make-overs, and her newly beautiful self is paraded on television and much admired. She becomes the object of a love triangle, and the darling of the masses. She does not endanger herself in order to gain adoration and attention, but that is what the risk achieves. So, although the narrative endorses female strength, intelligence, resourcefulness, independence and courage, the heroine still receives (and more significantly, the young female reader receives) considerable gratification from the admiration and attention she gets because she is beautiful and people fear for her safety.

In yet another text, Tris, from Roth's *Divergent* trilogy, (Roth, 2011; Wick, Fisher, Shabazian, & Burger, 2014), a world in which everyone lives in one of five factions, reflecting their character, would seem to be a good example of a heroine rejecting a sacrificial role for women. She leaves Abnegation, the faction whose over-riding characteristic is selflessness and sacrifice, and joins Dauntless, the faction that values courage. Yet even here, there are contradictions. She attracts love and attention by risking or harming herself. Although the hero admires her strength, it is her risky behaviour that keeps forcing him to show his feelings for her. At one point she runs away from the compound when he appears to reject her, causing him great concern; he says, "Sometimes I forget that I can hurt you. That you are capable of being hurt" (p. 366). Tris (and the reader/viewer) take pleasure from the reminder and the emotions he is forced to display.

As this entire discussion illustrates, young adult fiction is a dynamic form. There are many televisual and filmic texts in which young women who are transitioning into adulthood are shown models of courage, intelligence, assertiveness and independence. These texts reflect the multiplicity of roles and opportunities available to girls today. At the same time, there is a high prevalence of stories in which many of the narrative pleasures result from a kind of masochism, in which young women are rewarded with love and affection not for their courage or their achievements, but for suffering, sacrifice and pain.

I think a consideration of these texts has two implications for adult educators. First, it indicates how complex and contradictory teachings about adulthood, maturation and gender operate outside educational institutions, as part

of the everyday experiences of reading a book, watching television or visiting the cinema. Those interested in the study of adult education are concerned with how adult education operates outside as well as inside the classroom. Second, it suggests the potential for working with adults to develop the skills and knowledge that will enable them to interrogate these texts and evaluate their significance. Adult educators teaching those who work with young adults (for example, teachers or youth workers) may find it useful to explore these texts as ways of helping these professionals consider questions of gender, adulthood, and identity, and the interface between these and media representations of womanhood. Such professionals may well want to go on and use these texts themselves as the basis for discussion with the young adults with whom they work. Adult educators may also find these texts to be a rich source of material for introducing and discussing a range of challenging concepts, such as motherhood, domestic abuse, self-harm, gender and power, and the relationship between agency and sacrifice.

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