Tim Atkins, "Entry on: Breaking Dawn (Twilight, 4) by Stephenie Meyer ", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/906. Entry version as of October 31, 2026.

Stephenie Meyer

Breaking Dawn (Twilight, 4)

United States (2008)

TAGS: Hero(es) Katabasis Triumvirs Underworld Werewolves





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Breaking Dawn (Twilight, 4)
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Worldwide.
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2008
First Edition Details	Stephenie Meyer, *Breaking Dawn*. Boston: Little Brown and Company, 2008, 756 pp.
ISBN	9780316067928
Official Website	stepheniemeyer.com
Genre	Fantasy fiction, Paranormal fiction
Target Audience	Crossover (Teenagers and young adults, some crossover readership into adulthood)
Author of the Entry	Tim Atkins, Victoria University of Wellington, timjosephatk@gmail.com
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Creators



Stephenie Meyer by Gage Skidmore. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 (accessed: January 5, 2022).

Stephenie Meyer , b. 1973
(Author)

Stephenie Meyer was born 1973 in Hartford, Connecticut, and was raised in Arizona. She attended Brigham Young University, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in English. She is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Days Saints and strictly follows her Mormon faith. Her religious beliefs show in her works. Her first novels were the *Twilight* saga (four books released annually, 2005 through to 2008). Meyer claims that the premise of the books came to her in a dream. Meyer has also published other novels, supplementary literature and a novella to the *Twilight* saga, and as well as being involved in smaller video and film projects, maintaining a blog, and continuing to write more books. She is married, with three children, and lives in Cave Creek, Arizona.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: September 12, 2019).

Profile at Wikipedia (accessed: September 16, 2019).

Bio prepared by Tim Atkins, Victoria University of Wellington, timjosephatk@gmail.com

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Additional information

Adaptations	*Breaking Dawn Part One* – 2011 film, directed by Bill Condon, starring Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson and Taylor Lautner. *Breaking Dawn Part Two* – 2012 film directed by Bill Condon, featuring the same cast. The last film of the franchise. It made over $830 million. The highest grossing film of the franchise.
Translation	Translated into 38 languages, including: Dutch: *Morgengrood*, trans. Carry Oomis, Van Goor, 2008. German: *Biss zum Ende der Nacht,* trans. Sylke Hachmeister, Carlsen, 2008. Indonesian: *Awal Yang Baru*, trans. Monica Dwi Chresnayani, Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2008.
Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs	Part of the *Twilight* Saga; preceded by *Twilight* (2005), *New Moon* (2006), and *Eclipse* (2007).
Summary	*Breaking Dawn* is the fourth of Meyer's *Twilight* series. The novels deal with a young woman, Isabella (Bella) Swan, as she discovers a world of werewolves and vampires that lies within her own world. The novels explore the consequences of the mortal Bella venturing into this world and crossing the boundary between her mortal world and the immortal world. The text employs narrative patterns, names, and creatures from Graeco-Roman mythology in order to heighten the fantasy of the narrative, as well as working with patterns from European folklore and mythology, that also contribute to the novel. *Breaking Dawn* differs structurally from the three previous books, all of which are told from the perspective of Bella the teenaged mortal protagonist. *Breaking Dawn* is instead separated into three parts, the first and third of which are narrated by Bella. The second is narrated by Jacob Black, a friend and former romantic interest of Bella who is a

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Native American shapeshifter. He can transform to and from a massive wolf at will. The books are set in the town of Forks, in Washington State, USA. The first section deals with Bella's marriage to Edward Cullen, her immortal vampire husband. When Bella falls pregnant with a half human, half vampire baby that grows at an accelerated rate, the couple return to Forks, to the care of Edward's adoptive vampire father, Carlisle Cullen, who practices medicine within the mortal world.

The narrative voice then switches to that of Jacob Black, who, misunderstanding a conversation, believes Bella has been turned into a vampire, and attempts to kill her and the Cullen family for breaking a treaty between the Vampires and the Native American Werewolf Shapeshifters that the vampires would not create any new vampires.

When Jacob discovers the truth of her pregnancy, and the harsh toll it is taking on her due to the fast rate of growth, he believes the unborn baby was a monster and threat to human life. He informs his werewolf pack of this potential threat, and the pack order him to kill Bella. Refusing to kill the girl he loves, Jacob breaks away from his original wolf pack, and forms his own pack which is allied with the Cullen vampire-family.

Bella goes into labour. The hybrid foetus has taken such a harsh toll on her body that it breaks her back during labour. After delivering the baby-girl, Edward turns Bella into a vampire by injecting his venom and so prevents her from dying. Jacob, believing Bella to have died in labour, plans to kill the baby as he blames her for Bella's apparent death. However, upon seeing the newborn, he 'imprints' upon it (feeling a platonic love, and a fierce sense of attachment to the newborn). He views the newborn girl Renesmee as his soul mate and sees it as his sacred duty to care for and protect her. The hostile werewolf pack, that Jacob had left, returns to kill the Cullens believing did that they killed Bella and that the hybrid baby would be a threat to human life, being the child of a vampire. However, Jacob's imprint saves Renesmee and the Cullens, the object of a wolf's imprint being immune to all harm by other wolves.

The narrative then shifts back to Bella's transformation into a vampire and then details her first few days as an immortal and the heightened sight and hearing, and as well as super strength and speed she now possesses. Renesmee grows very quickly and is misidentified as an immortal child, i.e. a child who has been turned into a vampire and is

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unable to control herself, so threatening the secrecy of the paranormal world. Thus the Volturi, a group of vampires who fashion themselves as lawmakers and enforcers, are called in order to punish the Cullen clan. The Volturi, led by three ancient vampires Caius, Marcus and Aro, gather their armies and come to punish the Cullens. The Cullens have gathered their allies to protect Renesmee. However, all is resolved when it is demonstrated that Renesmee is not an immortal child, but she will stop growing when she reaches physcial maturity,and, like her parents, will be immortal. Moreover, Reneesme will not be a threat to the peace and secrecy of the hidden paranormal world.

Analysis

In the entire *Twilight* series, the protagonist Bella follows the monomyth structure of a hero. She discovers an unknown, hidden world where she makes a home and finds her true self, being out of place in the mortal world. *Breaking Dawn* focusses on the last part of the monomyth structure, from the death and rebirth to the return to normality.

The entire series is based around the idea of a young girl who does not fit in, a theme common to young adult literature, harnessing the restlessness and anxiety of youth. This trope of young adult literature is melded with classical and fantasy elements, such as mythological monsters, creating a supernatural fiction. These mythological monsters help to heighten the supernatural element and sense of danger, instead of fighting for high school popularity, as is common in young adult fiction, Bella is fighting for her life, against these monsters.

Meyer's vampires draw on contemporary conceptions of vampires, but they also echo raditions of Graeco-Roman myths, such as the *strix* of Book six of Ovid's *Fasti*:

"their feathers blotched with grey, their claws fitted with hooks. They fly by night and attack nurseless children, and defile their bodies, snatched from their cradles. They are said to rend the flesh of sucklings with their beaks, and their throats are full of the blood which they have".

(Ovid, *Fasti* VI. 133–140)

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Other sources are the *lamia* and *empusa* of Philostratus of Athens' *Life of Apollonius*:

"Vampires also feel love, but they love human intercourse and human flesh above all and use intercourse to catch those they want to devour."

"This woman appeared to be beautiful and very refined".

(Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* IV. 25)

The "woman" of Philostratus' writings is the *empusa*. She has tricked a traveler into falling in love with her. The Twilight vampires, like their classical sources, drink blood and possess supernatural beauty. For the young adult audience, the more gruesome parts of the classical examples are omitted from Meyer's creations. Despite drinking blood, the Cullen family do not drink human blood, a trait which marks them as different from the rest of their kind and which makes them more palatable to the reader. They control their thirst to kill humans, making them more empathetic, understanding, and more human in the eyes of the reader.

The three vampires who run the Volturi, have Latin names, Marcus, Caius, and Aro. Aro means to reap or cultivate. The name Marcus has associations to the war god Mars. Both Marcus and Caius are common names in Roman history. They are best known from Caius Iulius Caesar and his assassin Marcus Brutus. The role these three characters play, can also be likened to that of the Triumvirs of the First and Second Triumvirates. Much like Caesar, Crassus and Pompey, or Mark Antony, Octavian and Lepidus, these three vampires, Aro, Caius and Marcus, are the centre of power and the ones who enforce the rules in an ostensibly democratic society. Much as the Triumvirs framed themselves as the protectors of the Republic and of the Roman good, the Volturi frame themselves as protectors of the Vampire world.

The werewolves too, whilst framed as being an indigenous form of supernatural being, are clearly influenced by the classical tradition.

"His mouth of itself gathers foam, and with his accustomed greed for blood he turns against the sheep, delighting still in slaughter. His garments change to shaggy hair, his arms to legs. He turns into a

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wolf, and yet retains some traces of his former shape. There is the same grey hair, the same fierce face, the same gleaming eyes, the same picture of beastly savagery".

(Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I. 233–239)

"I looked round at my friend, he stripped himself and put all his clothes by the roadside. My heart was in my mouth, but I stood like a dead man. He piddled all round his clothes and suddenly turned into a wolf. Please do not think I am joking; I would not lie about this for any fortune in the world. But as I was saying, after he had turned into a wolf, he proceeded to howl, and ran off into the woods".

(Petronius, *Satyricon* 62)

The comic nature of Petronius' werewolf encounter closely mirrors that of one from the book, when Bella's father, Charlie, discovers Jacob is a werewolf. He is both scared by the sudden removal of clothes and shocked by the transformation. Despite the novel's dark content, Meyer uses indirect and direct classical allusions to add humour to *Breaking Dawn*.

Bella's transition to becoming a vampire can be viewed as a katabasis. Her worsening health during her pregnancy takes her closer and closer to death. It is during this downward journey that a reconciliation is forced upon her; between her and Jacob, a reminder of her mortal life, much as how in Book Eleven of Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus encounters Elpenor, who asks for a proper burial (Homer, *Odyssey*, 11.51–83). These encounters serve as reminders of the mortal consequences of the protagonists' actions. Elpenor begs for a proper burial, so that he may escape from a state of limbo, a situation of which Odysseus had been unaware. So too does Bella's katabasis free Jacob from his divided loyalties between Bella (whom he loves) and his pack of wolves. With Bella's change, and the birth of Reneesme is freed from his own state of limbo. The vampire blood injection removes Bella's mortality. This, however, is not a final death, but the beginning of a new, vampire life. It is from this experience that she emerges immortal, with super senses and abilities, similar to Achilles after being bathed in the River Styx, such as in Statius' *Achilleid* (1.133–136). It is this immortality that is the reward for her *katabasis*, definitively removing her from the mortal world, and placing her into the world of mythology. (Compare also Rick

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	Riordan's *Percy Jackson: And the Olympians*, p. 135).
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Hero(es) Katabasis Triumvirs Underworld Werewolves
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Conflict Death Family Friendship Gaining understanding Heroism Identity Justice Love Memory Morality Parents (and children) Past Relationships
Further Reading	Oliver, Kelly, "Conclusion: Twilight Family Values" in *Knock Me Up, Knock Me Down: Images of Pregnancy in Hollywood Films*, Columbia University Press, 2012, 191–208 (accessed: November 15, 2019). Kelly, Casey Ryan, "Melodrama and Postfeminist Abstinence: The Twilight Saga (2008–2012)", *Abstinence Cinema: Virginity and the Rhetoric of Sexual Purity in Contemporary Film*, Rutgers University Press, 2016, 24–53 (accessed: November 15, 2019). Silver, Anna, "'Twilight' Is Not Good for Maidens: Gender, Sexuality, and the Family in Stephenie Meyer's 'Twilight' Series", *Studies in the Novel* 42.1/2 (2010): 121–138 (accessed: Noveber 15, 2019).

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