University of Melbourne, Australia

Kristal Lowe

Time and the making and remaking of the feminine gendered subject in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga

Abstract:

Philosophy has a long tradition of speculating on the complexities of time and its impacts on individuals and a number of theorists have identified the critical role of temporality in the process of becoming and being a coherent and unified self or subject. Writers have a strong record of unpacking these ideas. The role and importance of temporality in becoming and being a female gendered subject has also been the topic of some recent feminist debate, and theorists such as Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray and Elizabeth Grosz have argued that specific configurations of temporality, such as more linear configurations, with separated zones for the past, present and future, have proved challenging to the process of being and becoming a female gendered subject. Popular creative writing is an excellent mirror to reflect the dominant concepts, beliefs and values of its society, and a critical reading of popular fiction productions provides interesting insight into the complex way that time enables and disables the female gendered subject. Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga is a tale of female becoming, and chronicles the development of the awkward and vulnerable teenager Bella Swan into the confident and invulnerable adult vampire Bella Cullen. Time and its effects on the female subject play an interesting role in the motivation for – as well as the process of – Bella's subjective becoming, and factors such as aging and the decaying female body, as well as childbirth and maternity and their relationship to cyclical configurations of time, are crucial to Bella's transformation.

Biographical note:

Kristal Lowe is a PhD candidate in the School of Culture, Communication and Gender, University of Melbourne. Kristal's research interests lie in the intersection of gender and feminist theory and philosophy, her PhD investigates the role of temporality and fictionality in the process of creatively transforming limiting gender constructions and associations.

Keywords:

Creative writing – Popular fiction – Myer, Stephenie – *Twilight*

Fig. 1. Ulrike Sturm, *Broken Mirror*, linocut, 2016

Introduction

The *Twilight* saga, written by Stephenie Meyer, includes *Twilight* (2005), *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse* (2007) and *Breaking Dawn* (2008), and is one of the most popular and successful fiction series of recent times. According to Anne Morey, by November 2009 book sales for the series had reached 70 million, and in the first quarter of 2009 book sales for the series accounted for 16 percent of all book sales in the United States (2012: 1). The saga tells the story of a first love between the human heroine Bella Swan and her vampire hero Edward Cullen, from their first meeting at a dreary high school in Forks, concluding with their marriage, parenthood and (presumably happily ever after) adult life. Recent criticism rightly identifies that the central narratives within the saga seem to advocate for some very traditional gender norms (Silver 2010: 122). Bella is frequently depicted as a weak damsel in distress, needing the protection of her stronger boyfriend; the relationship between the pair is often depicted as controlling (from Edward) and co-dependent (from Bella); and the sexuality of young women is often depicted as dangerous, if it occurs outside of the confines of heterosexual marriage. Nonetheless, some recent critics also rightly identify that, despite its sometimes questionable gender constructions, the *Twilight* saga also tells the story of a young woman's success in creating a coherent subjectivity and selfhood of her own striving (Jameson and Dane 2014: 245).

Philosophy has a long tradition of speculating on the complexities of time and its impacts on individuals, and recent theorists have identified the critical role of temporality in the process of becoming and being a coherent and unified self or subject (Ricoeur [1984]1985, 1991). Time is a very prominent theme in the *Twilight* saga, and appears to be crucial to the motivation for – as well as the mechanics to enable – Bella to transform from a young and vulnerable human girl into a mature and invulnerable vampire woman. Feminist scholars have noted the incompatibility of female subjectivity, understood as maternal and generative, with linear or Western temporal configurations, and the *Twilight* saga is a contemporary cultural narrative that both presents and tries to resolve this problematic issue. In its depiction of new temporal configurations, which are crucial to Bella's ability to transcend her vulnerabilities as a female and to creatively re-signify her subjectivity, the *Twilight* saga can provide food for thought for future dialogues in gender and feminist scholarship.

Femininity and vulnerability in the *Twilight* saga

The *Twilight* saga opens with a scene of casual violence. The narrator, yet unnamed, speaks of looking into the eyes of a predator – who smiles in a friendly way – as he saunters forward to kill (Meyer [2005]2008: 1). This opening scene turns out to be a glimpse into a terrifying encounter that is described in much more detail later on in the story:

> I was definitely sick now. There was pain coming, I could see it in his eyes. It wouldn't be enough for him to win, to feed and go. There would be no quick end like I'd been counting on. My knees began to shake and I was afraid I was going to fall.

> He stepped back, and began to circle, casually, as if he were trying to get a better view of a statue in a museum. His face was still open and friendly as he decided where to start …
>
> I couldn't help myself – I tried to run. As useless as I knew it would be, as weak as my knees already were, panic took over and I bolted for the emergency door.
>
> He was in front of me in a flash. I didn't see if he used his hand or his foot, it was too fast. A crushing blow struck my chest – I felt myself flying backward, and then heard the crunch as my head bashed into the mirrors …
>
> He was over me at once, his foot stepping down hard on my leg. I heard the sickening snap before I felt it. But then I *did* feel it, and I couldn't hold back my scream of agony. I twisted up to reach for my leg, and he was standing over me, smiling ([2005]2008: 391–92).

This scene depicts the weak and vulnerable teenager Bella Swan being hunted, trapped, terrorised and violently assaulted by James, the worst kind of cruel and sadistic predator. While James is a vampire, and much of the terror of the scene has been sublimated due to its dissociation from the real world and its incursion into the realm of vampires and fantasy, the *Twilight* saga unfolds in a world where violence, and particularly violence against women, is normalised and common.

There is more than one attempted, or actual, gang rape of a woman in the saga. On Bella's trip to Port Angeles with some friends, she finds herself on a deserted street after wandering off to find a bookshop. Bella realises after a little while that she is being followed, or 'herded' by a group of four men (Meyer [2005]2008: 139) who are at the point of attacking when Edward shows up to save the day. Bella is saved from the violent assault because she is lucky enough to have a love interest who possessively and obsessively tracks her every move, and jumps in to interfere and intervene when she is threatened by another. Before she became a vampire, Rosalie Cullen was not so fortunate with her love interest, and was gang raped and almost murdered by her fiancé and his friends one night on her way home from visiting a friend. Heterosexual relationships can be very dangerous for the human women in the *Twilight* saga, and nowhere is this more evident than in Bella's relationship with Edward. Despite his best intentions and constant efforts to keep her safe, Edward's natural instinct is to murder Bella and drink her blood, and she constantly puts her life at risk to be with him. Physical intimacy with Edward is particularly dangerous and life threatening and Bella is covered with bruises and looks like a horrifying victim of domestic violence following their first sexual encounter (Meyer 2008: 88). And then there is the violence that Bella perpetuates against herself when she believes she has lost Edward's love. Bella's response to this loss of love is to deliberately put her life at risk in increasingly dangerous scenarios, such as jumping off a cliff, into a stormy and turbulent sea. Bella's is an obsessive, unhealthy love from the beginning. Despite the danger of violence that this love brings to Bella's life, there is nothing more terrifying to her, nothing, 'more excruciating than the thought of turning away from [Edward]' (Meyer [2005]2008: 217).

With the threat of violence against women constantly simmering beneath the surface of its otherwise somewhat conventional romantic plot, *Twilight* instructs us that human women are vulnerable, and in constant danger in a hostile world. Based on the instances and episodes where this violence against women boils over and intrudes on the romance plot, it would seem that *Twilight* is also instructing us that this vulnerability results from the inherent weakness of some of the characteristics that are associated with the female gender, especially those characteristics that are associated with ideal expressions or manifestations of femininity. This point is illustrated nicely by the female vampires in the Cullen family; each of whom need to be transformed from vulnerable human women into fierce and deadly vampires, in order to overcome the feminine traits that had put them in grave danger. The human Bella is an example of a more traditional construction of ideal femininity: she is described as soft, breakable and fragile; it is an ongoing battle to maintain her frail mortality against varied external forces, including her partner and his family, her best friend, her pregnant body, her predators and her frailty coupled with her accident prone nature. Bella seems to conform to constructions of ideal femininity from an earlier time: she is frequently described as – and frequently tries to take on the role of – a martyr, to the point where she is repeatedly willing to sacrifice her body for someone else. Jacob says of Bella 'the girl was a classic martyr. She'd totally been born in the wrong century. She should have lived back when she could have gotten herself fed to some lions for a good cause' (Meyer 2008: 187). The path to removing this innate vulnerability is for Bella to become a fierce and deadly vampire, who while still willing to sacrifice herself for others, is at least able now to put up a good fight.

The other leading female vampire characters in the saga were saved from the death that was likely to befall them, mostly due to the vulnerability they experienced because of their femininity. The human Esme was strongly maternal, and her powerful maternal feelings led her to attempt to commit suicide after the loss of her child. Alice was gifted with strong intuitive capabilities, 'a hundred years earlier and she would have been burned at the stake for her visions' (Meyer [2005]2008: 391). In her current social world, the human Alice is institutionalised for her intuitive capabilities instead. And the human Rosalie was raped and almost murdered by her fiancé and his friends, according to her, because she was too desirable an object. Rosalie says of her gang rape and attempted murder, 'it took some time before I began to blame the beauty for what had happened to me – for me to see the curse of it' (Meyer 2007[2008]: 162). What is clear is that idealised constructions of the female gender, including being self-sacrificing, being caring and maternal, being intuitive, and, importantly, being beautiful, are depicted as vulnerable, and the way to remove this vulnerability in *Twilight* is to transform these feminine constructions into something else, something inhuman and unreal.

In another article in this Special Issue, Rachel Franks argues that a women's body is not entirely her own, and is frequently a contested space that oscillates between being a commodity, a vehicle for self-expression or a vehicle for reproduction. Franks' work focuses on re-telling the story of – and giving bodily presence to – Mary Jane Hicks and Louisa Collins, whose bodies were taken from them in acts of violence to service

specific agendas. A. Andreas Wansbough investigates the same themes of agency, violence and the female body, and argues that Lars Von Trier's *Nymphomaniac* (2013) depicts a female protagonist who willingly subjects her body to debasement and defilement as a means to uncover her own agency. According to Wansbough, *Nymphomaniac*'s Joe finds her agency, 'by making herself into an object, but an object of subjective power, and not an object within a masculine, institutionalised framework' (2016: 13). At the core of both articles is the concept of creative transformation: from lost to found, from object/objectified to subject. And from 'no' body to 'some' body. Creative transformation is also at the core of the ridiculously popular cultural narrative that is the *Twilight* saga. Vulnerable women like Bella, who are under a constant and pervasive threat of violence just because of who or what they represent as women, can and do transform themselves into fierce and deadly superheroines, who no longer need masculine protection and patronage. I argue that the *Twilight* saga is a cultural narrative that depicts an attempted creative re-signification of the female gender construction, and it does this through giving the female a new body and a new freedom to create and define the boundaries of her subjectivity, following her alignment with a new and different temporal order.

Time and the female body in the *Twilight* saga

A number of early twentieth-century, and more contemporary, theorists assign to temporality an important – even crucial – role in subjective becoming and the development of a coherent identity. Donald Hall provides a good overview of subjectivity and its distinction from identity (2004: 3–4), where identity is what gives one a consistent personality or mode of social being, and subjectivity incorporates the myriad of limitations and unknowable/unavoidable constraints on our ability to fully comprehend and express identity. Another way to explain this would be to say that identity expresses what subjectivity allows, promotes or authorises when it comes to one's personality or mode of social being. As for the role that temporality plays in the development of subjectivity and identity, Paul Ricoeur's concept of a narrative identity elucidates how the self is not feasible – conceptually or discursively – without temporality ([1984]1985: 246–49). For Ricoeur, an individual's interpretation of itself as a self, and its subsequent articulation of this interpretation in acts and words, is grounded in temporality to the extent that this interpretation can only be framed and represented in narrative terms, for instance in the stories that one tells or hears about one's life. Indeed, Ricoeur argues that these narratives not only rely on, but are activated by temporality, in the sense that they require an unfolding, or the delivery of parts in an organised sequence of moments that grow out of each other, in order to be coherent and understandable. Moreover, the concept of narrative identity is what allows for a coherent and unified articulation of unique selfhood and subjectivity throughout time. The temporal orientation of Ricoeur's narrative identity is linear, where a subject can articulate a singular and coherent self by causally linking the sequence of moments in the life that has passed (the history), arranging this in some kind of order and story (fiction), and through this arrangement, developing both a current and future outline of character to represent this self ([1984]1985: 246–49).

It is clear that specific configurations of temporality are paramount in the *Twilight* saga plot. There are two very different configurations of time in the *Twilight* saga that are compared and contrasted, and that enable and disable the subjective experience of their characters. The first of the temporal configurations is bound up with the vampires and other mythical creatures, and the second is bound up with being human, and in particular, with being a human woman. The temporal configuration for the vampires and other mythical creatures devolves around the construct of eternity, which in *Twilight* is in sharp contrast to the linear, segmented and forward moving construct of time that is in effect for the humans. The temporal construct of eternity in *Twilight* is associated with the a-temporal, or an untimely state, which has some interesting ramifications for concepts of subjective being and becoming. In this mythical a-temporal order, time does not have the usual impact of change on its subjects. The vampires that live in this a-temporal order have no need for sleep or other forms of self-renewal, their development is arrested and they are frozen at the age in which they are turned, meaning they are, in a physical sense at least, 'never changing, never moving forward' (Meyer 2008: 27).

In this mythical a-temporal order time also stops being divided into regular segments or units, such as a past, present and future. Instead, the segments of time are all mixed and meshed up together, such that they lose their conceptual singularity. Billy Black, one of the elders of the local Quileute tribe who lives in this mythical temporal order, epitomises this a-temporal configuration in the contrast and mismatch of both the old and the new, simultaneously, in his physical description. Billy is described as, 'a much older man, a heavy set man with a memorable face – a face that overflowed, the cheeks resting against his shoulders, with creases running through the russet skin like an old leather jacket. And the surprisingly familiar eyes, black eyes that seemed at the same time both too young and too ancient for the broad face they were set in' (Meyer [2005]2008: 205).

What is interesting about this a-temporal mythical configuration in the *Twilight* saga is that it is simultaneously construed to have the same temporal features operative in stories or fairy tales. In fact, *Twilight* seems to make the point that the temporal configuration of the fictional world, or the once-upon-a-time of fairy tales, is the necessary temporal feature to allow for the mythical creatures to come to life. Bella makes this point when she connects the timelessness of the local area of Forks with the potential for mythical creatures to exist there. Bella notes how in Forks, 'nothing had changed in this forest for thousands of years, and all the myths and legends of a hundred different lands seemed much more likely in this green haze than they had in [her] clear-cut bedroom' (Meyer [2005]2008: 119). A number of critics have investigated the particular temporal co-ordinates of the work of fiction. Most critics agree that the fictional world presents a unique temporal configuration in that it tries to conjure a past tense, whether through its narrative style, or its sentence and verb structure, but it conjures something that it simply cannot have, because its events and characters never existed in the real world (Hamburger [1973]1993: 64, Ricoeur [1984]1985: 66). When it comes to the mythical creatures in *Twilight*, this lack of a true past tense is evident in the vampires, who on transformation to their immortal bodies, lose their previous

human memories or past tenses. It is also epitomised in a life that constantly revolves around repetition and *déjà vu*. The Cullens keep a collage of graduate caps in their home, a painful reminder of the number of times they have had to continually repeat their high school graduation in different locations, to hide that they are not aging and to maintain their anonymity.

The time of the mythical creatures is in sharp contrast to the time of the humans, and in particular to the female humans. Growing old and ageing, and its link to decreased sexual attractiveness, are prominent concerns for Bella, despite her youth and beauty. *New Moon*, second instalment of the *Twilight* saga, opens with a dream sequence where Bella believes she is watching Edward with her grandmother, but later realises she is actually seeing herself as an old woman, hand in hand with a still young and beautiful Edward. Bella says, 'with a dizzying jolt, my dream abruptly became a nightmare. There was no gran. That was me. Me in a mirror. Me – ancient, creased and withered. Edward stood beside me, casting no reflection, excruciatingly lovely and forever seventeen' (Meyer [2006]2008: 6). Bella continually and passionately decries her fear of getting older, right up until she is changed into a vampire, the viable solution offered in *Twilight* to her ageing issues. Bella, we are told, has a 'horror of getting older' (Meyer 2007[2008]: 501), which is a very warped sense of horror in the context of other events occurring in the saga. To mitigate her horror of getting older, Bella cannot wait to join the a-temporal world of the mythical creatures. I would argue this wish, or as Bella terms it, this 'violent desire' (Meyer [2006]2008: 263), is motivated in some part by a wish to be removed from the vulnerabilities associated with being a human woman in a temporal order that places limitations on her subjective becoming and expression of identity.

In the *Twilight* saga, the human women appear to be incompatible in linear time, because its forward momentum ages and decays, decreasing sexual attractiveness. In addition, linear time is a temporal construct that is at odds with a different temporal order, the cyclical temporal order, which is necessary for the function of maternity. Consider the following passage in *Breaking Dawn*:

> I thought of Esme and especially Rosalie. Vampires couldn't have children. If it were possible Rosalie would have found a way by now …
>
> Of course Rosalie could not conceive a child, because she was frozen in the state in which she passed from human to inhuman. Totally unchanging. And human women's bodies had to change to bear children. The constant change of a monthly cycle, for one thing, and then the bigger changes needed to accommodate a growing child. Rosalie's body couldn't change.
>
> But mine could. Mine did …
>
> And human men – well they pretty much stayed the same from puberty to death … Men had no such thing as child bearing years or cycles of fertility (Meyer 2008: 126).

In this passage, we are told that human women have to exist in the linear temporal order so that their bodies can change to accommodate a baby. The paradox is, however, that the cyclical temporal order of maternity, with its regular cycles of menstruation,

gestation, lactation or the cycles of nature, appears to be at odds with the linear temporal order, with its ceaseless changes and forward momentum that ages and decays the female woman, and provides her with a horror of ageing. This horror of ageing might be related to the fact that linear time limits and makes finite what is supposed to be intrinsic and natural to the female gender construct: her maternity. In short, the female gender construction's link to maternity aligns her with cyclical time, or the time of nature, but the same construct's imprisonment in linear time, at the same time, and quite cruelly, puts a limit on women's ability to express their supposedly innate femininity to 'child bearing years or cycles of fertility'. *Twilight* also makes the point that this temporal incongruence is something specific to the female gender, again, because of its maternal associations. Human men, as the passage reminds us, 'pretty much stayed the same from puberty to death'.

A number of social and feminist theorists have argued that linear time has been the dominant experience of time in Western contexts, and that female subjectivity has, either an uneasy relationship to this conceptualisation of time, or is completely antithetical to it or excluded from it (de Beauvoir [1949]1997, O'Brien 1981, Johles Forman 1989, Kristeva [1993]1995, Irigaray [1994]2004, Odih 1999). Some of these theorists identify the female bodily functions, such as periods and birthing and lactation, which follow more of a cyclical rather than linear temporal flow, as instrumental to their complicated relationship to linear temporal orderings; other theorists identify the traditional female roles of mother and caregiver, whose time outputs are ongoing and unlimited, and not reducible to schedules or designated clock times, as instrumental to their complicated relationship to linear temporal configurations.

What is at root in the arguments of the different social and feminist theorists is that it is the particular fixtures of the female gender construction, particularly those that fix this construction as generative and maternal, that are incompatible with a linear temporal configuration. This tells us something interesting about the crucial ingredients of a given discursive construction of the female gender. It also tells us something about the importance of temporality in discursive gender constructions generally. For some theorists, and particularly those who interrogate the more philosophical paradigms of temporality, the female gender construct is precisely what is antithetical to the primary experience of time in a Western context, and the corresponding untimely feminine construction leads to some debilitating consequences for processes that enable subjective development and evolution.

The *Twilight* saga definitely highlights the problematic relationship that human females have to a seemingly incompatible temporal order that is, paradoxically, the life blood required for their subjective becoming. That opposing temporal configurations are a prominent concern is highlighted by the titles selected for the *Twilight* saga. The first and final titles – *Twilight* and *Breaking Dawn* – are clearly associated with linear, countable, clock times; the second and third titles – *New Moon* and *Eclipse* – have clear linkages with female configurations of temporality, with phases of the moon and its corresponding links to the cycles of fertility and childbirth. While *Twilight* clearly and vividly tells the story of its female subjects' temporal angst, and the corresponding issues this causes for their subjective becoming, *Twilight* also attempts to offer a

solution to this problem through Bella's transformation from a vulnerable (in time) human girl, to an invulnerable (in time) adult female vampire.

Time and female subjective re-signification in the *Twilight* saga

We have seen how the *Twilight* saga depicted the subjective vulnerabilities for the female gender construct due to women's need to operate within two contradictory temporal orders: the linear temporal order with its emphasis on past tenses that generate the future; and the cyclical temporal order with its emphasis on repetition and natural maternity. The subjective vulnerability of the untimely female gender construct in *Twilight* is combined with a physical vulnerability of the female body, particularly when it is expressing more idealised constructions of femininity. I have argued that the leading female vampire characters in the saga were saved from the death that was likely to befall them, mostly due to their expression of some of the more idealised constructions of femininity, including maternal tenderness, self-sacrifice, intuition and beauty. These idealised constructions of femininity are depicted as vulnerable, and are like the physical manifestation of a more profound kind of vulnerability for the female gender: one that limits and curtails subjective development because of its untimely associations. The way to remove the varied vulnerabilities of the female gender in the *Twilight* saga is to increase the bodily power and physical strength of the woman (the newly transformed Bella becomes a physical match for even the strongest male vampire in the coven), and importantly, to place her in a new temporal order: one where she is not at the mercy of a maternity that is tied to the world of nature and cycles, and one where she is not at the mercy of a relentless forward moving linear time. The *Twilight* saga is not only a story of female becoming, but a story of self-stylised female becoming, where vulnerable females like Bella can turn themselves into something more, something improved, a 2.0 model that can triumph over their intrinsic vulnerabilities. While giving women the kind of superhuman physical strength enjoyed by the female vampires in *Twilight* is the stuff of fantasy or science fiction, improving their opportunities for creative transformation and subjective re-signification through new temporal alignments is definitely worthy of further investigation. Indeed, I believe that *Twilight* presents a cultural narrative of self-stylised female becoming that proffers one possible solution to the temporal angst that inhibits female subjective re-signification currently. *Twilight* proffers this solution in the characteristics and associations of the new Bella 2.0, who is an unnatural mother, or a mother who is no longer tied to the world of nature, as well as in her daughter Renesmee, who is a master of time.

One of the ways that the *Twilight* saga tries to reconcile the female gender construct's temporal vulnerability is to remove Bella from the usual linear temporal order that besieges woman, to give her a child before this happens, and to remove any linkages between Bella's parentage and a natural maternity. Bella's motherhood is more of an unnatural one: she carries a child to term in a fraction of the usual time, her newborn child is a sentient and intelligent being at birth, and Bella herself claims, 'it was still difficult to think of myself as a mother' (Meyer 2008: 487), even months after the birth of her child. Bella's child Renesmee is not like the typical vulnerable female gender

construct in that she has some mastery over time. Renesmee grows and changes in linear time up to the point that she reaches peak maturity, which becomes her preservation age, and the point at which she becomes immortal. In addition, Renesmee is born with a special power that allows her to play with and manipulate time: whenever she wishes, she is able to visually communicate her memories, to make the past present and real to onlookers, at the touch of her hand.

The transformed Bella has a very different and unique experience of time, which is an important feature of her superhuman powers. In the first instance, time stops being linear, segmented and cumulative and becomes more unsegmented and immediate. Bella first perceives this new temporal experience through an awareness of her transformed body. Bella says, 'I was momentarily preoccupied by the way my body moved. The instant I'd considered standing erect, I was already straight. There was no brief fragment of time in which the action occurred; change was instantaneous, almost as if there was no movement at all' (Meyer 2008: 391). Time here is experienced as simultaneity rather than sequential and linear: a past event does not precede and lead to a present state, which then evolves into a future state. Rather, everything occurs in an ever present and pervasive now. Bella's experience of her transformed body influences her experience of time in other ways too. On awakening to her new superhuman state, Bella 'opened [her] eyes and gazed about [her] in wonder' (Meyer 2008: 386). 'New' is the title of the chapter where Bella first experiences her superhuman body, and this new Bella has become a sort of Irigaray-like subject of true sexual difference. Luce Irigaray's philosophy of wonder is focused on 'the surprise of the unexpected, that which strikes us immediately with the awe of its newness, its difference' (Grosz 2005: 166). The transformed Bella literally experiences everything as if for the first time, and in a state of wonder, meaning her perceptions are no longer discursively mediated or conditioned, and she can therefore be a truly autonomous subject.

Besides a move away from sequential, cumulative and linear time constructs, there is one other important facet of the new temporal order that the transformed Bella both experiences and lives within. This new temporal construct is best described as the time of the fairy tale. Bella observes that, 'Edward had always thought that he belonged to the world of horror stories', but his rightful place and where he actually belonged was, 'in a fairy tale' (Meyer 2008: 479). By the end of the *Twilight* saga, and after Bella has been transformed into the superhuman Bella 2.0, she is able to claim that she is now, 'in the story with [Edward]' (Meyer 2008: 479). Earlier I discussed the temporal dimensions of the fictional world or the world of the once-upon-a-time, and specifically its lack of a true past tense. Bella's allusion to her transformed life being the stuff of fiction or fairy tale is more than just an indication of her achieving her desires and potentially living happily ever after; it is also an indication of the necessity of a re-wired and reconfigured temporal order for her new self and her new life, a temporal order that moves away from linear temporal configurations, with their need for segmented and connected tenses of time, starting with a past tense. Importantly, this new temporal order is one where past tenses of time are negotiable and can be manipulated; it is a temporal order where time is simultaneous, almost virtual; and it is a temporal order where the existing discursive order is re-booted and re-configured, to the extent that

one can gaze about this same world with new perspectives, new knowledge paradigms and in a state of perpetual wonder.

Conclusion: time and the future of gender re-signification

Grosz argues that concepts of subjectivity, identity and culture all make underlying assumptions about history, the present and the forward momentum of time, without ever directly referencing their a priori temporal alignments or understanding what role these play in the original construction (2005: 1). In *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (2005), Grosz teases out new conceptualisations and configurations of temporality, as they are to be found in the works of specific theorists, to enable new ways of understanding subjectification and becoming, and in the case of feminist concerns, new trajectories for becoming female subjects that are not constrained by the subject-object binary. Simone de Beauvoir first conceptualised the links and dependencies between an inferior or limited female subjective experience based on current concepts of temporality and a woman's association with specific temporal configurations ([1949]1997: 94–7). Earlier in this article I also referred to other feminist theorists who have investigated this theme further in recent years. What Grosz has added to this dialogue is to draw focus on different, and sometimes startling and unusual temporal configurations, which, if applied or aligned with the process of individuation and subjective becoming, may in turn point to options to forge very different subjective realities for individuals or groups. Grosz reminds us that 'time is a mode of stretching, of protraction, which provides the very conditions of becoming' (2000: 38), and argues that an investigation of new or revitalised notions of temporality should 'open up new fields of feminist exploration' (2005: 10).

In some respects, the *Twilight* saga is problematic for future feminist politics because of its seeming celebration of some traditional and outdated constructions of gender, as well as its presentation of a female becoming narrative that is still grounded in a woman's need to be a relational object in order to achieve maturity. Nonetheless, the writing within the *Twilight* saga depicts a successful, self-stylised female transformation, and provides interesting insight into the temporal mechanics that enable and disable subjective becoming generally. *Twilight*'s solution to the vulnerabilities facing women, and the untimely aspects of the female gender construction, can be found in the new and improved characteristics of Bella, following her transformation. Notably, Bella is distanced from any kind of natural maternity, or a maternity that is linked to the world of nature and cycles. The new temporal configurations that enable Bella's transformation can also provide insight to feminist and gender scholars around the temporal alignments which may enable positive gender re-significations in the future. These include: less reliance on past and more reliance on future and fictional tenses of time in the creation of subjective identities, as well as alignments with more unusual or uncomfortable temporal configurations, including virtuality, multiplicity, randomness and wonder.

Works cited

de Beauvoir, S [1949]1997 *The Second Sex* London: Vintage

Franks, R 2016 'A Woman's Place: Constructing Women Within True Crime Narratives' *TEXT: Journal of Writers and Writing Courses* Special Issue 34

Grosz, E 2000 'Thinking the New: Of Futures Yet Unthought' K Ziarek and S Deane (eds) *Future Crossings: Literature Between Philosophy and Cultural Studies* Evanston IL: Northwestern UP, 27–51

Grosz, E 2005 *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* Durham: Duke UP

Hall, D 2004 *Subjectivity* New York: Routledge

Hamburger, K [1973]1993 *The Logic of Literature* Bloomington: Indiana UP

Johles Forman, F 1989 'Feminising Time: An Introduction' F Forman and C Sowton (eds) *Taking our Time: Feminist Perspectives on Temporality* Oxford: Pergamon P, 1–9

Irigaray, L [1993]2004 *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* London: Continuum

Jameson, C & J Dane 2014 'Bite Me! The Twilight Saga, a Fantasy Space of Self-Transformation as Self-Realisation' *Journal of Communication Inquiry* (38): 243–58

Kristeva, J [1993]1995 *New Maladies of the Soul* New York: Columbia UP

Meyer, S [2005]2008 *Twilight* London: Atom

Meyer, S [2006]2008 *New Moon* London: Atom

Meyer, S [2007]2008 *Eclipse* London: Atom

Meyer, S 2008 *Breaking Dawn* London: Atom

Morey, A 2012 'Introduction' *Genre, Reception and Adaptation in the 'Twilight' Series* Surrey: Ashgate, 1–14

O'Brien, M 1981 *The Politics of Reproduction* London: Routledge

Odih, P 1999 'Gendered Time in the Age of Deconstruction' *Time and Society* 8(1): 9–38

Ricoeur, P [1984]1985 *Time and Narrative* III Chicago: U of Chicago P

Ricoeur, P 1991 'Narrative Identity' *Philosophy Today* 35(1): 73–81

Silver, A 2010 'Twilight is Not Good for Maidens: Gender, Sexuality and the Family in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* Series' *Studies in the Novel* 42(1/2): 121–38

Vesth, L (producer) and L Von Trier (director) 2013 *Nymphomaniac: Voll I* Denmark: Zentropa Entertainments

Vesth, L (producer) and L Von Trier (director) 2013 *Nymphomaniac: Vol II* Denmark: Zentropa Entertainments

Wansbough, AA 2016 'Coitus Interruptus in Lars von Trier's *Nymphomaniac* and Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*' *TEXT: Journal of Writers and Writing Courses* Special Issue 34