

2007/Dec STEPHENIE MEYER - Publishing News

There are certain signs that an author has moved up into publishing's stratosphere, one of the most telling of which is that their tour schedule goes from countrywide to transcontinental. This shifting up in gear has recently been the experience of US author Stephenie Meyer, whom I'm meeting in the hushed, marble-floored foyer café at 1 Aldwych. Her debut novel, 2005's vampire romance, *Twilight*, not only set the cash registers ringing Stateside, it also garnered stellar reviews and literary bouquets as well and went on to spawn two more titles - *New Moon* and *Eclipse* - which become a bestselling trilogy. All this because Meyer woke up on the morning of 2 June 2003 - a date she says she has diarised - from the most vivid of dreams.

"I had the core chapter of *Twilight* in my head; to me now it's the central part of the book, but it wasn't the whole the plot," explains Meyer, who comes across as very at ease with her celebrity. "It was a scene with a beautiful vampire boy in love with this kind of ordinary girl, and it was the complexity of their relationship that really made me want to write, to see what would happen to them." The scene she had dreamed turned out to be Chapter 13, from the middle of the story, and Meyer proceeded to carry on writing to the end of the book, and then started at the beginning. It's unusual, but it certainly worked.

At this time Meyer, who had majored in English at college but never written anything before, was an Arizona mom at home looking after two children under five, with all that that entails. "Three months later I had the book finished," she says, "because it was the kind of story I wanted to read myself; when I was writing it I was like a reader, in that I really *needed* to discover how it all turned out in the end. I had to write the book to find out and I just couldn't put it down, so to speak...I worked all hours of the night while the kids were sleeping."

The book was, then, written for herself and no one else and she had no idea anyone would ever see it, let alone publish it. That it has hit such a resonant chord with its primarily teen girl audience has a lot to do with

Meyer's fanciful yet edgy blend of pink lit and blood-red storytelling - High School hi-jinx meets undead cool, with sangfroid and aplomb to spare. "The way my mind works, I like to take things that are kind of dark and make them lighter; that's the sort of world I'd rather live in, where even the bad guys try hard to be good guys and I like to suggest there's beauty in things that are really ugly."

When Meyer set off, intent on writing about what occurred when sweet Isabella Swan met the beautiful, golden-eyed and very dangerous Edward Cullen, along the way it seems she also, somewhat inadvertently, rewrote the vampire myth; this is a world a definite step sideways from that created by Bram Stoker. "It was never my intention to do this, I was just writing my vampires the way I wanted them to be - I don't watch horror movies and I'm not a *Buffy* fan. I never got into the TV show, and once I had a reason to get interested in it I couldn't because I was writing about vampires and didn't want to be influenced." Had she had any adverse comments from vampire purists? "I expected some, but I got just one comment about my having 'white-hatted' vampires and even the Goth kids I meet at events are fans."

In Meyer's mind *Twilight* was always supposed to be a standalone novel but, when she'd finished the book, she then wrote three different epilogues, each of them over 100 pages long. "One of them turned into the sequel as it became fairly clear to me that I was not done with the characters." In fact she's still not done with them and is about three quarters of the way through a fourth and, she says, final book titled *Breaking Dawn*. Is this really 'The End'? "Book four will wrap it up."

While Meyer sees the characters she's brought into being as friends who might possibly come back to visit at some point in the future, she feels in no way trapped by and in the world they inhabit. "I have a new, completely different novel coming out next May, called *The Host*; it's mainstream, adult and sort of science fiction with a whole new cast of characters, and I have a file full of other ideas...I don't feel trapped at all!"

Success does bring with it a lot of things, not least, very often, amazement that it has happened at all - what, I wondered had been the most surprising part of her journey? "The fact that my work has translated

so well to so many languages [20 so far] and other cultures that I wouldn't have thought would be interested; the most recent thing is that people have wanted the story to go certain ways and get really upset if it doesn't. There's a lot of stuff on the web with people writing things their own way, even a piece of fan fiction, written by 'Harry Potter', where the characters at Hogwarts are reading *Twilight!*"

Going from homemaker to record breaker in three years, Meyer's rise has been a fast one, so fast that there have been moments, like when she had to fill in the space on the card to get into the UK that said 'Occupation', that she has had to stop and think "...Oh, I should put writer, shouldn't I!". Her only worry, she says as we finish up, is not that she'll ever run out of ideas, but that she will run out of time to write all the ones she has.