

How to Domesticate a Vampire: Gender, Blood Relations and Sexuality in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*.

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Abstract:

My paper argues that Stephenie Meyer's now cult work, *Twilight*, suggests a domestication of the vampire. This process of domesticating the undead, it argues, is worked out through the themes of masculinity, the family and sexuality. In my first section, 'vampiric masculinity', I examine the portrayal of Edward, arguing that he represents a supernatural masculinity in drag. In section II, on vampire families and their blood relations, I explore the domestic relations and arrangements of vampires, to propose that the family becomes a key mode of, and moment in, the domestication-socialization of the vampire. I then turn to sexuality in the novel, arguing that *Twilight* appropriates two positions, of the threatened teen from conventional Gothic fiction and the teen as threat from contemporary Gothic, with touches of SM and necrophilic fantasies, and where the channeling of sexuality is a mode of domestication. In my conclusion I speculate on the cultural imaginary and anxieties of race and gender, blood lines and kinship, and racial mixing that *Twilight* seems to encode.

Who are my kin in this odd world of promising monsters, vampires, surrogates, living tools, and aliens? How are natural kinds identified in the realms of technoscience? What kinds of crossings and offspring count as legitimate and illegitimate, to whom and at what cost? Who are my familiars, my siblings, and what kind of livable world are we trying to build?

- Donna Haraway (1997: 52)

The cult status acquired by Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga (2005-2010), described as a 'romance ... with a paranormal twist' (Backstein 2009: 39), has been offset by criticism that savages its stereotyping, sexism, limited vocabulary, pathetic storyline, and several other aspects. Meyer may be, in my opinion, rightly accused of all these, yet she has managed to persuade customers to queue up all night waiting for bookstores to open so they can get their hands on the new volume. Meyer represents, with all her flaws, a significant moment in teen romances, and merits study just for the popularity the saga has accrued.

I assume here that popular culture is the site of struggle over meanings. Cultural Studies which deals with popular texts examines the practices, institutions and modes of representation through which norms and values are circulated and instilled in populations.

Attention must therefore be paid to works like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Twilight*, the popular fiction of Brett Easton Ellis (seen as heralding a new Gothic with *American Psycho*, 1991) and horror writer Stephen King to see what kinds of meanings and values are generated in their work – meanings that constitute, through a slow but steady osmotic absorption, the *cultural imaginaire* and frames of reference in public culture, offering us a repertoire of images and ideas from which we draw and which we use to interpret the world. We therefore need to examine *popular* modes such as television, fiction and film through which culturally accepted social relations or sexual norms are made available. Thus Rebecca Feasey's 2008 study of masculinities on popular television looks at teen programming, reality TV, crime and police drama, sports, lifestyle, situation comedy on TV in order to examine the 'norms' and 'models' of masculinity that are being suggested to us viewers. The present essay is one such preliminary exercise, an anterior moment in what could be studies of masculinity, gender relations, the familial and sexual politics of popular vampire tales.

Terry Spaise (2005) in an innovative reading of the cult TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* makes a persuasive argument for the 'domestication of the vampire' in modern horror/Gothic (I use the terms interchangeably though clearly there are major differences in the two forms). Spaise proposes that there has been a radical shift in modern representations of the vampire. We see the emergence of the suave form of the vampire in the 20th century, as opposed to the 19th century versions, where the vampire is a sex object, and a monster *who looks like us*. This modern vampire disturbs the distinction between humans and vampires, Spaise suggests, and marks 'domestication of the vampire'.

This domestication of the vampire, my paper argues, is worked out through the themes of masculinity, the family and sexuality with a concluding speculation on new forms of kinship in Stephenie Meyer's vampire tale. In my first section, 'vampiric masculinity' I examine the hegemonic masculinity of the protector male, who is also a fashion icon and a superbly fit one, and marks a *supernatural masculinity in drag*. In section II, on vampire families and their blood relations I explore the domestic relations and arrangements of vampires, arguing that the family becomes a key mode of, and moment in, the domestication-socialization of the vampire. I then turn to sexuality in the

novel, arguing that *Twilight* appropriates two positions, of the threatened teen from conventional Gothic fiction and the teen as threat from contemporary Gothic, with touches of SM and necrophilic fantasies and where the channeling of sexuality is a mode of domestication. In my conclusion I speculate on the cultural imaginary and anxieties of race and gender, blood lines and racial mixing that *Twilight* seems to encode.

Vampiric Masculinity

The vampire tale's gender politics have been discussed far too often to bear repetition here (see Moers 1978, Hoeveler 1998, Heiland 2004, Spooner 2006). Gender identity is at the root of the horror film genre itself, where the horror hunts down the women – often eliminating male ‘protectors’ in their pursuit of the women. The over-sexualized vampire story, from Bram Stoker's classic *Dracula* (1897) to films like *Underworld* (2003-09) and *Blade* (1998) has portrayed the woman as victim of the male vampire in a coded representation of sexual intercourse as bloodsucking.

The ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (a term popularized by RW Connell to refer to the specific *kinds* of masculinity that gain dominance over other kinds in specific cultural, historical and political contexts, see Carrigan et al 1985) of the *Twilight* ‘men’ folds fashion into fitness, corporeal perfection into sartorial elegance. The vampires have to dress *like us*, merge and blend in *with us*, even when they wear expensive clothing. Excess strength, heightened senses and rare speed mark out Edward. Edward represents a condition that I term *supernatural masculinity in drag*. His superior speed, strength and senses, all attributes of being a *vampire*, enable him to perform the ‘traditional’ functions of the *human* male. Thus Edward's supernatural masculinity works, ironically, within frames of a human and hegemonic masculinity: commodities, fashion, looks, protectionism. He mimics the human male with his clothing, protector role, self-control and rationality despite being a vampire with heightened abilities. He is a vampire in human clothing, a supernatural macho-man in drag.

One is struck by the sheer physicality of Edward Cullen's appeal to not only the protagonist, Isabella, but to every one else in the school and town (appropriately termed ‘Forks’). The words ‘perfect’ and ‘beautiful’ are used frequently to describe his looks. The hegemonic masculinity of *Twilight* is the stereotype of the physically strong

protector male, but one who is also iconic of the ‘well dressed male’. Edward is the ‘dark, brooding, romantic hero; tormented by his past and so protective of the woman he loves that he willingly pushes her away for her own good’ (Backstein 2009: 39). True masculinity, as the leading theorist of masculinity, RW Connell has argued (1995), is thought to proceed from their bodies. This implies both *appearance* and *health*. The former in Meyer’s saga is coded as fashionable and appealing *social appearance* and the latter as a *biological condition*. What Isabella notes first about the entire Cullen clan is the extreme physical beauty. It is important, however, that it is not just Isabella to whom Edward Cullen is physically attractive. Jessica tells her:

That’s Edward. He’s gorgeous, of course, but don’t waste your time. He doesn’t date. Apparently none of the girls here are good-looking enough for him. (22)

The clan’s ‘devastatingly, inhumanly beautiful’ appearance, writes Meyer, ‘were faces you never expected to see except perhaps on the airbrushed pages of a fashion magazine. Or painted by an old master as the face of an angel’ (19). What I want to draw attention to here is the emphasis on a certain socially *acceptable* appearance. Not for Meyer’s masculinity the foul-smelling, creepy looking vampire. This vampire’s masculinity, unlike Dracula’s, is that of an Armani model (Backstein 2009).

The material-corporeal dimension of vampire masculinity draws upon not the traditional Gothic or horror-fiction vampire but on the ‘airbrushed’ masculinity of lifestyle magazines. Edward Cullen draws attention throughout the tale not as a vampire – his biological condition, if you will – but due to his looks. Meyer shifts focus away from the character of the vampire to the appearance of him. The references to fashion magazines and painting both suggest a certain air of cosmetically modified masculinity. I have elsewhere argued (2008), in a reading of men’s magazines, that masculinity is also constructed through a process where sex, women and consumer objects are all seamlessly woven into a circuit of desire and consumption. It is notable that Isabella’s first ‘introduction’ to Edward and the vampire family is through their unique family car, the silver Volvo in the school parking lot (14). We are also frequently given information about how particular clothes, styles and colours suit Edward, with the descriptions appearing as though from a fashion catalogue. Later, on their first official date together,

Edward comes to fetch her in a ‘monster jeep’, with metal guards, spotlights and a shiny red hardtop (359). Edward has to lift Bella into the vehicle and help her strap the seatbelts. The entire description situates the mutual sexual attraction of the human, the male vampire and the object within a circuit of desire. The monster jeep seems to partake of the monster (vampire) with both contributing to each other’s hypermasculinity.

However, the hegemonic masculinity of Meyer’s text also constructs the male body as a superb specimen of strength and fitness. (Recent research shows how image, style, and appearance are crucial markers of identity for contemporary men’, as one essay on men’s lifestyle magazine puts it. Ricciardelli et al 2010: 76.) Lifestyles magazines frequently present an ageless male body, and suggest steps to achieve this. Meyer seems to put all the advice from *Men’s Health*, *Maxima* and other lifestyle magazines for men to good use in her construction of the sculpted body of Edward. We are given pen portraits of the men of the Cullen ‘family’: one is ‘muscled like a serious weight lifter’, another ‘was taller, leaner, but still muscular’ and the last is ‘more boyish’ (18). These do not require food or sleep – but of course they are *vampires*. *Twilight’s* hegemonic masculinity – problematized by the fact of their being vampires – is thus a clever mix of product biographies and life stories.

Fred Botting points out that things are never what they seem in the traditional Gothic, but in the postmodern versions, ‘things are not only what they seem: what they seem is what they are (1996: 170-1). In *Twilight*, this seems to be an apposite description of the ‘vegetarian’ vampires (as Edward Cullen describes their kind: they drink animal blood and feed on animals, but not on humans, in vampire terminology this is the equivalent of vegetarianism): they seem like harmless college kids and professionals and that is exactly what they are.¹ There is a persistent attempt, I believe, to demystify the vampire, to convert it into one more component of everyday life in the school or small town. The folding of the vampire into a ‘regular’ school kid (of course with some extraordinary powers and conditions) dressed fashionably and the object of female attention (Meyer steers clear of a possible homosexual attraction that Edward might

¹ This ‘vegetarianism’ of the vampire is not without its ethical problems, as Jean Kazez points out, for it assumes that animals are meant to cater to humans, and vampires. Edward needs to kill to survive, and he opts for a non-human animal (2009: 25-7).

engender in school mates) is part of what I shall later argue is a process of the domestication of the vampire. For now, I want to turn to the Gothic uncertainty of Edward's story.

What strikes the very ordinary-looking Isabella is the beauty of these boys and girls. Yet it is this material beauty that has a fantastic history. There is a materiality of the undead in all vampire fiction, and Meyer is no exception. Alison Milbank in a reading of nineteenth century vampire stories and *Wuthering Heights* proposes that 'the materiality of the undead who drains the lifeblood of the living is an ultimate figure of a negative natural supernatural' before going on to argue that the vampire is a 'feudal relic, battenning financially and politically on the social body' (2002: 163). Milbank's argument gestures at the *social* sources and settings of the vampire. Edward informs Isabella: 'But the younger we pretend to be, the longer we can stay in any given place' (289). Human qualities, he says, are carried over into the next life and are 'intensified' (307). The fantastic here is the routine amplified. Meyer thus refrains from constructing parallel worlds. Instead what she does is to construct a vampire ethos that *extends* human concerns, aptitudes and attitudes in the Cullen family. This suggests a thinning of the boundaries between the human and the non-human (undead) worlds.

At one point Edward accuses Isabella of 'taking everything so coolly' and declares, 'it's unnatural' (198) which, coming from a vampire, is ironic, surely. But that is the point: the vampire has been socialized in the ways of the humans.²

Vampiric masculinity, one could argue, is supernatural masculinity in drag: abandoning their 'natural' looks and sartorial tastes, they have taken to imitating human masculinity through dressing down, in jeans, sneakers and tee-shirts! Kathy Gentile notes, via Judith Butler, that drag is the construction of hyperbolic gender (2009: 17). Judith Butler has argued that 'drag is subversive to the extent that it reflects on the imitative structure by which hegemonic gender is itself produced and disputes heterosexuality's claim on naturalness and originality' (1991: 125). In effect, supernatural masculinity in drag in Meyer's work reinforces human masculinity – which is the

² There has been a debate about whether vampires are humans. Nicolas Michaud argues that the vampires in *Twilight* meet all the five criteria that define the 'human': consciousness, reasoning, self-motivated activity, the capacity to communicate, and the presence of self-concepts (2009: 41).

hegemonic gender of the humans. While this might seem an over-reading, I would like to propose that vampires' opting for human dress codes suggest a drag culture, but one which can be said to reflect on the dominant gender role: masculinity. Supernatural masculinity in drag also facilitates the domestication of the vampire because it blends them into not only human culture but also into hegemonic masculinity.

Familial Blood Relations

The family is the space of horror in too many films (*The Exorcist*, *The Brood*, *The Omen*, among others) to require elaboration now. The dysfunctional family becomes the site of horror – and the fact that Isabella's parents are separated seems to suggest a continuation of this theme.

In what is a shift from the horror of the solitary vampire preying on innocent girls we now see families of vampires (though there is a suggestion in Stoker's text that the women vampires now constitute a 'family' along with Dracula as patriarch-husband). The vampire creates families through non-traditional means, of course, where the mixing of blood marks the making of blood-relations (literally so). Candace Benefiel (2004) points out the slightly incestuous nature of vampire families, where daughters and brides are interchangeable (263). There is just a hint about the unconventional relationships within the Cullen family. After Isabella has just noticed the Cullen teens in the cafeteria Jessica says:

They're all *together* though – Emmett and Rosalie, and Jasper and Alice, I mean. And they *live* together.

And Isabella thinks, 'I had to admit that even in Phoenix, it would cause gossip' (20-1, emphasis in original).

With Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), as Benefiel argues, the nuclear family of vampires becomes a commonplace theme. This vampire family becomes in some sense a mirror image of the 'standard' human family as well, despite their other predilections. The Cullens are a family. It was founded by Carlisle, who 'chose' and 'transformed' (the Meyer term for the process of 'becoming-vampire')

Esme.³ So Carlisle and Esme are the ‘parents’, Rosalie and Emmett, says Edward, ‘sometimes live separately from us, as a married couple’ (289). Rosalie, Edward says, was ‘never more than a sister’, though Carlisle had hoped the two would have a different relation. Even werewolves hang out as family units. In *New Moon*, for instance, Jacob and his fellow wolves are referred to as ‘brothers’.

Once again contributing to the process of domestication, the theme of vampire family shows the sociability and socialization of vampires. We are told that other vampires who do not locate themselves in a family structure, or ‘belong’, such as James the tracker in *Twilight*, are seen as aberrations. Edward explains:

Most won’t settle in any one place. Only those like us, who’ve given up hunting you people [humans] ... can live together with humans for any length of time... (290)

In her review of *Twilight*, the film critic Karen Backstein argued that the ‘bad vampire’ (James) ‘throws the hero’s chivalrousness into relief’ (38). But Edward’s character also suggests a human/non-human linkage here, a model of mutual racial coexistence but one based on a denial of the vampire’s true nature. Kathleen Rout has argued in a perceptive essay (2003) that much of Anne Rice’s recent work focuses on love rather than killing, and her vampires are keen on *not* being monsters. We see Edward repentant at hurting Isabella, seeking to win her over and a vampire family built on love rather than anything else. Carlisle, despite being a vampire, works in the life-saving profession of medicine. The Cullens, to adopt Rout’s terminology, have developed a ‘moral code’ that allows them to coexist with human beings. This is the domestication of the vampire who,

having given up his thirst for human blood, can live with humans. And when a vampire forms a family then, these contemporary vampire chronicles from Meyer and Rice suggest, there is little to fear – a theme that foregrounds the centrality of the family to the development of the individual, even when that individual is a vampire.

We are told that in his first ‘version’, Carlisle, having become a vampire, ‘strayed as far away as he could from the human populace ... wandered by night, sought the loneliest places, loathing himself’ (337). (I would like to draw attention to the echo of

³ It must be noted that the ‘creation’ of the vampire is itself through a version of sexual intercourse.

Frankenstein's monster here in Meyer's description.) Later, having discovered that he could prey on animals instead of humans, he realizes that 'he could exist without being a demon' (337). 'He found himself again', writes Meyer (337). But what exactly is this 'himself'? I want to propose that the vampiric masculinity and solitariness of the monster are erased in favour of a return to the identity of a harmless human. The route to this humanization of the vampire, in Carlisle's case but also in the case of Rosalie, Emmett, Alice, Jasper, Esme and of course Edward, is the family.

The domesticated vampire family, as we can think of the Cullens, is like any human family. First, Edward informs Isabella, that they are not like the 'other' vampires who are nomadic. The Cullens put down roots, on occasions, for long periods of time. Meyer takes great pains to show how the vampires are a regular American family. Carlisle works as a physician (and, despite being a vampire, is not aroused by blood), and they all play baseball. When Isabella asks: 'vampires like baseball?' Edward responds with 'it's the American pastime' (347). They live in a palatial house and, Edward emphasizes:

No coffins, no piled skulls in corners; I don't even think [sic] we have cobwebs... (329)

There is even a gigantic cross in the house (330), much to Isabella's surprise. The domesticated vampire family is also distinguished by their clothing, looks and manners. Take the following description of the 'regular' vampires who arrive when the Cullens are playing baseball:

As they approached, I could see how different they were from the Cullens. Their walk was catlike, a gait that seemed constantly on the edge of shifting into a crouch. They dressed in the ordinary gear of backpackers: jeans and casual button-down shirts in heavy, weatherproof fabrics. The clothes were frayed, though, with wear, and they were barefoot. Both men had cropped hair, but the woman's brilliant orange hair was filled with leaves and debris from the woods ... Her [Victoria's] posture was distinctly feline ... [Laurent's] eyes moved appreciatively over Carlisle's refined appearance ... (376-8)

Several things stand out in this account. Meyer aligns the new vampires with animals – their catlike gait, and their propensity to shift to a crouch, which suggests animal rather

than human posture and locomotion. The Cullens, in contrast, are described as possessing, in the paragraph immediately following this description, ‘the more polished and urbane stance’ (330). The newcomers are badly dressed. They are, like animals, barefoot. The woman’s hair has debris from the woods. All these contribute to the animal-esque nature of the new vampires, as opposed to the suave urbanity and fashionable clothing of the Cullens. The newcomers are surprised when Carlisle informs them that they have a ‘permanent residence’ in the town (377). James goes into a crouch in order to attack whereas Edward, writes Meyer, ‘bared his teeth, crouching in defence’ (378). Here Edward, Meyer suggests, doing what all humans would do: defend his family. The contrast with the predatorial James is underscored for us in the account of the domesticated Cullen family’s reactions.

The family stands by its own, in Meyer’s account, even a vampire family. As the first volume drifts to a close, we see how every single member of the Cullen family exerts himself or herself to protect Isabella who, despite being a human, has been co-opted into the vampire family. In a symbolic moment, Esme the vampire mother and Isabella exchange clothes (402), suggesting a sharing of materials, memories and, as Meyer puts it, smells. With this one act Isabella is incorporated into the Cullen house. Renée, her mother, notes Edward’s over-protectionism in *Eclipse* when she says: ‘the way he watches over you – it’s so ... protective. Like he’s about to throw himself in front of a bullet to save you or something’ (2009 [2007]: 60). Jacob, likewise, calls Edward ‘overprotective’ and declares: ‘you’re [Bella] not allowed to have fun, are you?’ (*Eclipse* 73).

Sexuality and its Discontents

Vampire stories are highly erotic and have serious sexual overtones as numerous studies have shown (Craft 1984, Twitchell 1985). *Twilight* is a tale of adolescent love and sexuality, set in the high school (the location of innumerable horror films from Hollywood). Sexuality and the body constitute two of the perpetual themes in both, the traditional Gothic and contemporary horror cinema. David Punter has argued that contemporary horror with morphing, damaged, broken and mutilated bodies on screen hold an attraction for the adolescent because it ‘provides duplicate images for the

adolescent's disgust with the changes in his or her own body' (Punter 1996, 2: 150). Catherine Spooner has argued that the contemporary Gothic marks a shift from the threatened teen of the traditional Gothic to the *teen as threat* (2006: 107). Spooner's argument is borne out by the numerous films of dormitory, college, school horror (including spoofs like *Scream*).

In the traditional Gothic the virgin was always under threat. It is important (but may be strictly coincidental) that the heroine of Meyer's saga is named Isabella – the name of the heroine in what is often taken to be the first true Gothic novel, Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). While the earlier Isabella is constantly besieged, the Meyer version presents a different kind of sexuality.

Isabella's evident, emphatic desire for Edward is thwarted sexuality. Edward whose constant refrain is that he might hurt her, is always on the verge of making love – they have progressed to a kiss – but refuses to make love. In what is an interesting shift within the horror/Gothic genre, Meyer's saga refrains from anything more than foreplay until Edward and Isabella are married. Several possible readings emerge here: that Meyer is proposing a conservatism around teen sex is the most popular. But I want to focus on something else here (and I am following Terry Spaise in this).

Technically, Edward is the undead vampire, and Isabella is in love with an animated corpse. It is a Gothic romance where sexuality has elements of necrophilia in addition to SM. Edward warns her that there will be pain when she is transformed (through sexual intercourse), thus suggesting SM. His frequent vice-like grip on her, encircling her wrists on more than one occasion, has echoes of bondage games. It must also be noted that Isabella is on show – as some kind of hero/ine – for her classmates *after* her association with EC begins. She seems to take pleasure in the threat he holds. In SM there is an unequal power relation, and a consensuality (Gary and Ussher in Spaise): Isabella consents to pain, but the power relations between the 'partners' are unequal. Gary and Ussher note that SM is an alternative reality to fill a lack (cited in Spaise 744-5). Isabella's lack of grace, her inability to dance or do sports mark her out as socially inept within the college (there is no explanation why, having been a disaster at her earlier school she suddenly turns into this fascinating creature in Forks). Her fascination for the perfect Edward, despite the threat of pain, is therefore, an alternative reality. Her relation

with Edward helps her escape the reality of her gauche, two-left feet kind of personality. For a person with no control over herself, the teen Isabella manages to exert considerable power/control over Edward. Is it that teens who do not fit the prototype must find alternative mechanisms to seek/assert control?

Within the theme of sexuality I have one more point to propose. Meyer, I argue, works with both themes: the threatened teen of the traditional Gothic to the *teen as threat* in contemporary horror.

Meyer revives the theme of the threatened teen in the persona of Isabella. First, Isabella is under the threat of pain (actual physical pain) due to her relationship with Edward. ‘it’s just that you are so soft, so fragile ... I could kill you quite easily ... I can never, never afford to lose any kind of control when I’m with you’ (310). She is here the teen of the traditional Gothic, her sexuality drives the male insane with lust and she is in serious danger of being ‘hurt’. Edward, we are told, spies on her, comes to secretly watch her while she is asleep, all suggesting the stalker theme of the traditional Gothic where the heroine is chased through labyrinths and lonely rooms. But – and this is important in the gendered reading of the tale – Isabella *consents* to the pain and the threat, thus making the relationship smack of SM. Unlike the heroine of the traditional Gothic with little agency of her own, Isabella volunteers herself to Edward’s supposed brute masculinity.

Second, Edward repeatedly tells her that he is unable to control himself, or stop himself due to her sheer physical presence. Edward offers a long speech on the threat she poses:

It was like you were some kind of demon, summoned straight from own personal hell to ruin me. The fragrance coming off your skin ... I thought it would make me deranged that first day ... But I resisted ... [In Alaska] it was hard to believe you were so irresistible ... I’d dealt with temptation before, not of this magnitude, not even close, but I was strong ... I took precautions... (269-272)

She ‘driv[es] him crazy’ (300). She makes him feel human emotions like jealousy (302). Her smell, he says, ‘is mouthwatering’ (306). At one point he even says: ‘you will be the death of me’ (363). This makes Isabella the teen-as-threat of contemporary horror. Her sheer physical attraction, Edward claims, makes it impossible for him to stop his ‘natural

craving'. She acknowledges the kind of threat she poses: 'I'll have to be on my guard, you see, so I better start learning what I shouldn't do' (274).

It is Edward's masculinity that holds back (itself, perhaps, a supernatural effort!), and once again returns us to the theme of the domestication of the vampire. As Stephenie Meyer put it in an interview, she had hoped to capture the 'sense of this innocent and unselfish love that is going on, but with the undercurrent of his natural desire to bite and kill her' (2006: 632). It is the subjugation of the instinct that leads to domestication, suggests Meyer in her portrait of Edward Cullen. Yet at one point he confesses to human urges: 'I may not be human, but I am a man' (311). He of course has the voice of an archangel (311) that somehow does not quite go with his vampiric status, or his quasi-human one. But Meyer erodes his vampiric masculinity by offering such urges, talents, and traits to demonstrate a domestication of the vampire.

Conclusion: The Vampire as Cultural Anxiety

I want to conclude this meditation on the domestication of the vampire with what might be seen as a hyperbolic reading of popular literature. However, keeping in mind that popular literature and culture, more than anything else, carries cultural anxieties, repressions and dreams, we could profitably locate these social imaginaries within texts such as Meyer's.

Vampires blur family lines, mix races (Winnubst 2003). Studies of *Dracula*, for example, have noted the 'foreigner' angle to the tale (he has Jewish characteristics), thus converting the story into one about interracial relations. In Meyer's saga this 'mixing' becomes a code, I propose, for interracial coexistence. The vampire can co-exist, as we have seen, with humans. The Edward-Isabella 'connection' initiates a new 'line' as well. The 'family' now includes, as has been said of superheroes, individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. If Kal-El can 'fit' into the human race, and if superheroes can co-exist with the humans, then vampires, Rice and Meyer's work proposes, can also contribute to the society/race as professionals (Carlisle as the eminent doctor), and even miscegenate with humans. In Anne Rice's *Merrick* (2000) we have witches and vampires with African American antecedents. Merrick mourns how the later generation tried hard

to disown this genealogy: ‘they wanted to get their hands on anything that said they were colored and tear it up’ (27).

If Superman represents the ideal immigrant who Americanizes himself and takes on the burden of caring for his human relatives then the vampire, some time in the future, can also do so, if s/he abandons the strange cuisine and eating habits. The vampire, as I see it emerging in Meyer – and earlier in Anne Rice – both ‘promises and threatens racial and sexual mixing’ (as Donna Haraway put it, 1997: 214). Contemporary vampire fiction, therefore, in this reading, makes moves towards multiracial origins, multiracial families and questions, in some very literal themes, the origins of blood- and family lines. Isabella’s fantasies of life with Edward can be read as a coded fantasy of multiracial relations, and thus subverts the very idea of racial purity. (Indeed Karen Backstein argues that much modern vampire fiction caters exclusively to teen girl readers).

The point to be noted is that in contemporary contexts when masculinity is being constantly redefined, Meyer seeks to retreat into safer ‘moulds’ and stereotypes, almost in a reactionary masculinity where men are big and strong, play protector roles and are always in control. If *American Psycho* gave us a Gothic with consumerism inextricably linked to masculinity then *Twilight* is a nostalgia-inducing visit to older forms of the masculine. That it is a vampire who has ‘intensified’ his human characteristics (as Meyer herself puts it in the book) suggests a deeper politics: it is a particular set of masculine characteristics that even the undead embrace. David H.J. Morgan (2001) has proposed that in post-modern concepts of family there is an acceptance of fluidity and diversity in the familial structure. What Meyer’s text offers is a structure with very little fluidity. By showing how even vampire families seek stability and a ‘closed’ unit, she is suggesting, perhaps, a return to old-style family. Edward Cullen is of course a control-freak, he wishes to know everything about Bella, and is not above voyeuristically stalking her. His ‘protectionism’, which Bella approves of and admires, is a return to old-world masculinity – and this has attracted considerable criticism from feminist readers (McClimans and Wisnewski 2009). When he holds open a door for her she responds with ‘very human’ and he agrees, ‘it’s definitely resurfacing’ (292).

However, by showing how the vampire humanizes with ‘vegetarianism’, lifestyle choices and family-belonging, Meyer casts the vampire as a member of a different race

whose difference need not be feared: they can be educated and reformed. In some sense, therefore, Isabella's so-called fragility that makes Edward so nervous functions as an indexical sign of what he must abandon – his cultural and biological predilections, for example – if he seeks a life with this other-racial woman. 'Domestication of the vampire' here involves, on the other side of racial barrier, the reproduction of immortality for humans where Isabella becomes the symbolic marker for the *intentional* mixing of blood (as opposed to the forced mixing of 19th century vampire fiction). Mimicking narratives of motherhood as well as cosmopolitan interracial relations, *Twilight* generates a new cultural imaginary of mixed race lives, communities and cultures. Donna Haraway's meditation, used as the epigraph to this paper, suggests, kinship, sibling relations, the legitimacy of offspring are all now open-ended, and in a state of delicious uncertainty in the age of technoscience, cloning and genetic engineering. The feminist, lesbian psychoanalytic critic Judith Butler famously asked whether kinship is only heterosexual (2002). Vampire fiction in the work of Anne Rice, Stephenie Meyer and Jewelle Gomez, suggests that it needn't be.

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