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Lindén, Claudia

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Virtue as Adventure and Excess: Intertextuality, Masculinity, and Desire in the *Twilight* Series

By Claudia Lindén

Abstract

The vampire is still primarily a literary figure. The vampires we have seen on TV and cinema in recent years are all based on literary models. The vampire is at the same time a popular cultural icon and a figure that, especially women writers, use to problematize gender, sexuality and power. As a vampire story the *Twilight* series both produces and problematizes norms in regard to gender, class and ethnicity. As the main romantic character in *Twilight*, Edward Cullen becomes interesting both as a vampire of our time and as a man. In a similar way as in the 19th century novel the terms of relationship are negotiated and like his namesake Edward Rochester, Edward Cullen has to change in important ways for the "happy ending" to take place. In spite of a strong interest in sexuality and gender norms in relation to vampires very few studies have focused exclusively on masculinity. This article examines the construction of masculinity in relation to vampirism in the *Twilight series*. It offers an interpretation of Stephenie Meyer's novels and the character of Edward as part of a broader field of feminist (re-)uses of the vampire in modern literature with its roots in the literary tradition from Austen and the Brontë-sisters as well as from classic Gothic fiction.

Keywords: *Twilight* Series, Stephenie Meyer, masculinity, vampires, werewolves, *Midnight Sun*, Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, feminist theory, queer theory, gothic.

Introduction

Virtue is no longer something you believe in,
Its seduction power is lost,
to reintroduce it one would be forced to advertise it
in a strange kind of form as adventure and excess.

Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*

In the rainy summer of 1816 in Italy, two monsters were born that ever since have been living in our popular culture: Frankenstein and the vampire. John Polidoris's *The Vampyre: A Tale,* came to being in the same ghost story pact as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* 1816 (Shelley 1985: 6). The audience associated it with Lord Byron because Polidori suggested that the inspiration for the vampire protagonist Lord Ruthven came from Byron himself (Polidori 2005: 10). This settled the image of the vampire as a noble, dark-haired and melancholic womanizer that continues his un-dead life among us even today.

The vampire is still primarily a literary figure. The vampires we have seen on TV and cinema in recent years are all based on literary models, and the amount of novels about vampires is increasing every year. Today the vampire is at the same time a popular cultural icon and a figure that, especially women writers, use to problematize gender, sexuality and power (Whisker 2009). If, as Nina Auerbach claims, "every age embraces the vampire it needs", we can ask what Edward Cullen, the romantic hero of *Twilight*, says of our time (Auerbach 1995:145)? In spite of a strong interest in sexuality and gender norms in relation to vampires very few studies have focused exclusively on masculinity. As the main romantic character in *Twilight*, Edward Cullen becomes interesting both as a vampire of our time and as a man. It is actually the fact that he is a vampire that makes him so alluring as a romantic hero. This article examines the construction of masculinity in relation to vampirism in the *Twilight series* focusing on the ways it reconfigures many traits from nineteenth century novels by women writers in relation to gender and class. It offers an interpretation of Stephenie Meyer's novels and the character of Edward as part of a broader field of feminist (re-)uses of the vampire in modern literature with its roots in the literary tradition from Austen and the Brontë-sisters as well as from classic Gothic fiction.

The vampire story affirms and challenges our culture. As someone who transgresses boundaries, breaks down categories "and upsets the very premises upon which systems of normality are structured" the vampire is by tradition also a queer figure (Kane 2010: 103). Anna Höglund points out in her cultural study of vampires that the vampire figure "seems to be particularly suitable for power improvisations." As a vampire story the *Twilight* series both produces and problematizes norms in regard to gender, class and ethnicity. Even though the plotline follows a traditional romance scheme, ending with the protagonist's marriage and a child, as in *Jane Eyre,* it is all about what happens before that "happy ending". *Twilight's* challenge to our culture lies partly in the twists and turns of the plot

itself. In a similar way as in the 19th century novel the terms of relationship are negotiated and like his namesake Edward Rochester, Edward Cullen has to change in important ways for the "happy ending" to take place. Stephenie Meyer's wildly popular but despised *Twilight Series* is, despite its love theme, also a power improvisation on the vampire figure. In this text I will suggest that even Meyer's romanticized vampire series can be read as part of a larger context of feminist rewriting of the vampire genre.

The Twilight Research and the Problem of Edward's Abstinence

The Twilight series has been hailed by readers and criticized by critics. When I wrote an article on the *Twilight* series three years ago it was still difficult to find research articles on it (Lindén 2010).[1] The only critical and academic exploration of Meyer's novels at that time were *Twilight and Philosophy, Vampires, Vegetarians, and the Pursuit of Immortality* (Housel & Wisneski 2009). During the past three years a vast field of serious, interesting research of the book series and the films as well as on the world of *Twilight* fan fiction has exploded.[2] But within those borders the interpretations differ wildly especially in regard to gender norms. Delighted readers are drawn to the *Twilight* world for multiple reasons, and Bella, Edward and Jacob become, as Yvonne Leffler puts it: "More than admired and idealized celebrities, they become close friends." (Leffler 2011: 111). Critics on the other hand criticize the flat language and what they see as moralism, sexism, and excessive abuse of adjectives.

Many writers criticize *Twilight* for being conservative, gender-reactionary, and even possibly anti-feminist or "post-feminist" in its tendency (Wilson 2011: 82; Whitton 2011; Mukherjea 2011: 70; Miller 2011: 165; Taylor 2012). The criticism is often focused on Bella's passivity and the story ending in marriage and childbirth as examples of how *Twilight* tells a story of conformity to traditional values. Anthea Taylor is typical of this view:

> why might consumers of popular fiction, and teenage girls in particular, "need" a masculine vampiric figure parasitically feeding on a heroine whose anxieties, insecurities and self-doubt immobilize her to such an extent that the only (culturally sanctioned) choices she is able to make include marriage, motherhood and a masochistic relationship whose end point is (un)death? (Taylor 2012: 43)

In contrast to this view, and at the other end of the scale of interpretations, are those researchers who, like myself, think that the novels open up to a more complex reading. As Natalie Wilson has pointed out, *Twilight* is most exhaustively examined in relation to females and femininity, since the common assumption is that the vast majority of the fans are female the phenomenon will be understood in relation to girls and women. Therefore she continues, "it is crucial to consider males and masculinity in relation to *Twilight*" (Wilson 2011: 83). In spite of this claim Wilson still sees Edward as someone inscribing traditional gender norms

rather than challenging them. Following Wilson in her emphasis on the importance of masculinity for understanding *Twilight*, but differing from her interpretation I would suggest a reading of *Twilight* as a text that actually challenges gender norms. But to be able to do so it is necessary to focus on Edward instead of Bella.

However, even though Edward naturally is discussed in many texts, only few texts in the vast field of *Twilight* research focus exclusively on Edward. In *Twilight and History* there are two articles that examine Edwards relation to his human time in early 20th century in interesting ways and to the literary references in Meyer's novels. They focus on courting rituals in Edward's time and how the *Twilight* series reflects this (Coker 2011: 77) and on Edward's relation to the concept of the Byronic hero (Cochran 2011: 14). Actually several researchers point out Edward as a Byronic hero (Myers 2009; Groper 2011; Pollack 2011), some like Meyer also showing how he deviates from that role.

A key question to understanding Edward is how one interprets his will and ability to abstain from human blood as well as sex. His abstinence is a central part of the narrative, both withholding action (sex between Edward and Bella) and driving it forward (Edwards leaving Bella, his attempted suicide, marriage, and in the end Bella becoming a vampire). Nietzsche's words in the beginning of this article of virtue advertised "as adventure and excess" seems very fitting for Edward. Edward's abstinence has even been referred to as the "erotics of abstinence" or "abstinence porn" of the series (Larsson 2011: 68). Is Edward exerting power over Bella or over himself? Most scholars find Edward's abstinence problematic on one level or another. Some see it as an expression of the traditional western Christian and philosophical mind/body split (Kärrholm 2011; Nykvist 2011). Others say, for example, that the appeal of Edward is mainly an expression of the mentality of people living in the modern consumer society. We live with our fear of aging, our forbidden craving for food, and our urge to consume. Undeniably the anorexic tendencies and the celebration of control and self-discipline of the modern vampire say something about life in the consumer culture era (Wilson 2011: 186).

A few scholars, like myself, find Edward's abstinence central for the understanding of the *Twilight* series. In "I know what I saw" Mariah Larsson investigates how Edward's abstinence opens up for Bella's activity as well as her desiring gaze, making the films into a staging of the "male pin up" as well as of an active female desiring gaze (Larsson 2011:75). In a sense the whole world of *Twifics* that is the virtual fan communities, builds on Edward's abstinence, when fans rewrite the stories to put in sex where it is not in the canon (Isaksson & Lindgren Leavenworth 2011). Another text that also center on Edwards abstinence is Sommers' and Hume's "The *Other* Edward: *Twilight's* Queer construction of the Vampire as Idealized Teenage Boyfriend" sees Edward's abstinence as queer in the sense that it makes him Other. They claim it is possible to read Edward as a

gay boyfriend, or at least as "a lonely, selfless, and self-imposed Other" (Sommers & Hume 2011: 162). In "Of Monsters and Men: Toxic Masculinity and the Twenty-first Century Vampire in the Twilight Saga" Tracy Bealer examines how Edward's abstinence changes his masculinity during the course of the series while still upholding a phallic identity through his vampirism that makes him strong and hard (Bealer 2011: 145).

Like Bealer I read Edward in relation to his abstinence, seeing how he has to change during the development of the plot. But I differ from Bealer in my interpretation of Edward's vampirism, reading him in a context of other contemporary vampires. In the same way I follow many other scholars who have pointed out the references to the canon of the 19th century novel. But since I read Austen and the Brontë sisters as part of a theoretical tradition challenging and criticizing gender norms I see these intertextual references as providing a context both of texts and of centuries of readings that challenge gender norms. The critical potential of *Twilight* lies, I suggest, in the construction of Edward's masculinity and how it changes in his relationship to Bella for his longing for marriage and family to come true. Through Edward's and Jacob's characters and the way they are pitted against each other, masculinity is reworked in relation to class, sexuality and desire.

The Vampire as a Feminist Ally

With the brooding and over-scrupulous vampire Louis in *Interview with a Vampire* Ann Rice opened up for a new kind of vampire in the 1970s (Rice 1976); the "human-vampire" who is the main character in the story. Since then, the genre has changed drastically. The modern vampire is handsome, sexy, intelligent and educated; the characteristic trait of the Byronic hero as irresistible seducer who cannot refrain from causing suffering to those who love him is not visible anymore. The Byronic trait lingers on in the vampire's solitude and melancholy brooding over a former life of evil (Pollack 2011). But loneliness also makes the lovelorn vampire anything but a horror figure. Edward Cullen is a typical modern vampire, beautiful, lonely, an ascetic romantic, anorectic "vegetarian" and an ex-monster, not only with exceptionally high moral standards, but with an outspoken ambition to be a good (human) being. Edward is dangerous, he has the strength to kill but not in a Byronic way. In fact he is rather an anti-Byronic hero "obsessed with making morally correct choices" as Jessica Groper puts it (Groper 2011: 135).

Edward is portrayed in a way that both affirms and challenges traditional masculinity. Therein lies his attraction. Admittedly, he is strong, educated, rich and supernaturally beautiful and depicted by Meyer with something close to a pornographic female gaze (Larsson 2011). However, it is not his beauty but his behavior that is interesting. Edward changes in crucial ways throughout the series. Like a certain Mr. Darcy, he must overcome his prejudice, jealousy, class complex and

will to dominate. It is telling that it is Edward that emphasizes the relationship between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* as a true love story in comparison with Cathy and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* that is Bella's preferred reading. Hela Shachar sees that "Edward's characterization in relation to both Rochester and Heathcliff reveals the *Twilight* Series' use of past ideals of gender" (Cochran 2010: 24; Shachar 2011: 157). To see these references as only past ideals of gender is to ignore how these nineteenth century novels also took part in a critique of gender, not only when they were written, but in the way they were *read* for a very long time afterwards. The critique lies in the way the hero has to change before the heroine can accept him in marriage. Meyer's open reference to the more agreeable of these nineteenth century romance heroes, Mr Darcy, also reveals how and in what way Edward has to change during the course of the novels. As Eric Silverman writes "In the end, it is the very combination of Edward's moral imperfections along with his moral aspiration that makes his story so attractive, intriguing, and compelling" (Silverman 2009: 104). That Edward is a vampire, and the way he is a vampire, are critical to Edward's ability to develop.

Nina Auerbach argues that male vampires need the woman to stage his monstrosity, making the vampire stories often "turn their demonic designs into female plots" (Auerbach 1995: 7). According to Auerbach the vampire is a feminist ally. Höglund points out young women's identification "with the vampire and its world thus prompting them to build their identity on the otherness that causes their exclusion, rather than to conform to society's normative model of femininity" (Williamson 2005: 146; Höglund 2010: 358). Gothic texts like *Twilight* can both express the anxiety of a particular time and portray an alternate reality, and thus imply a critique of the current state, even if everything returns to order at the end. William Hughes and Andrew Smith state that: "Even where conventional moralities and identities are proclaimed as ultimately triumphant in a Gothic text, the very fact that they have been challenged signifies that they have been interrogated and, if their boundaries have been tested, they have equally been contemplated" (Hughes & Smith 2009: 1).

The vampire stories' use of features from classic Gothic literature, with themes such as alienation and destabilizing of traditional gender identity, is precisely the critical potential that can make the vampire a feminist ally. Especially since masculinity and patriarchal power are problematized in the Gothic genre, which stages a "coded and veiled critique of all those public institutions that have been erected to displace, contain and commodify women," according to Diane Long Hoeveler (Hoeveler 1998: xiii). Cyndy Hendershot also notes that "masculinity as a masquerade may be articulated through Gothic texts, which frequently reveal the fragility of traditional manhood" (Hendershot 1998: 4).

The vampire's historicity is such a subversion of traditional masculinity. The vampire is always an old man, yet he is rarely anachronistic. He is changing,

adapting to the times, and thus points to masculinity's historical and constructed nature. In the vampire mythology it is often said that the vampire's personality has been difficult to change, and when it does, when he falls in love for example, it will not change. But this is contradicted by his adaptability to the time around him. Only failed vampires cling to the old. Unlike ordinary men who, according to masculinity researcher Stephen Whitehead, often do not see a profit, materially and in terms of power, in change, the vampire however understands the importance of change and adaptation to new life forms.

The vampire's age and experience also seem to make him willing to accept strong, independent women. From *Dracula* to contemporary *vampire romance*, the vampire has a special relationship with the heroine without counterpart in her relationships with human men. The vampire is often both a traditional man and a transgressor of gender norms. After a long life where much has been predictable, it is the woman's independence that stimulates the vampire's curiosity. In the vampire literature there seems to be a correlation between the heroine's degree of independence and non-traditional female behaviour and the vampire's age: For Bella, an ordinary girl with unusually great integrity, it is sufficient with a 100-year-old vampire. Charlaine Harris Sookie Stackhouse (Sookie Stackhouse's series is the basis of the TV series *True Blood*) who is a mind reader and immune to the mental tricks of vampires, starts out with a relationship with 150-year-old Bill. Then after slaying a few vampires herself, and rescuing several others she moves on to a thousand-year-old Erik. Buffy the vampire slayer has a love affair with Angel who is also over 150 years old. For Laurell K Hamilton's Anita Blake who is a necromancer, vampire killer, and cold-hearted killer of supernatural beings that do not stay in their place, it takes Jean Claude a 400-year-old French vampire to match her. And in Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's series the main character the vampire St. Germain is 3500 years old. Nina Auerbach writes that St. Germain's non-phallic thirst for intimacy "is the symptom of a despairing social critique" (Auerbach 1995: 147).

The vampire's advanced age gives him experience that makes him both free of prestige and sincerely interested in being intellectually challenged. But, perhaps most importantly, he knows what loneliness is. Many contemporary vampire stories explore loneliness, alienation and longing for a love that is both accepting and confirming. When love comes his way, he meets it with joy and gratitude, for he knows how rare it is. Edward says that waiting for love, that is, for Bella, taught him patience: "I've had a hundred years to gain it. A hundred years of waiting for her"(Meyer 2007: 497). The vampire is located oceans away from the world of soap-operas, rom coms and magazines where the man, who must be lured into a solid relationship, always longs to return to single life and life with the boys. The man Whitehead describes as "[F]or many men it is the very spontaneity of intimacy – and trust – that is so threatening and precarious" (Whitehead 2002: 174). This is not the case in the vampire world. Decades, sometimes centuries of loneli-

ness, make the vampire unusually willing to value and affirm love, often more so than the heroine. It is the vampire who wants to marry, create bonds, release latches and share psychic abilities. Edward is typical of this contemporary vampire characteristic. He, not Bella, is the one who knows it is eternal love, he is the one who wants to marry, and he is the one who wants to manifest their relationship in front of both the vampire world and the human world of Forks. All of this is Edward's desire. So what does he have to do in order to get what he wants?

Vampire, the Heroine and the Affirmation of the Other

Edward and Bella are not just vampire and human but they also have different class backgrounds, something that also links *Twilight* to the 19th century novel. There are structural similarities between the classic Gothic novel such as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* or *The Italian* and the novels of Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters and contemporary Anglo-American vampire stories like *Twilight*. In the bourgeois novel the heroine often comes from a lower class than the hero. In that way she became the bearer of an ideal of bourgeois virtues in opposition to the aristocracy's affectation and debauchery. Therefore, she is portrayed as less mannered, more unpretentious and straightforward than other women in the hero's environment – except for his sister. In Austen's novels the heroine's close relationship with the hero's sister always works as a guarantee for the man's (hidden) quality. Like Mr. Darcy and Mr. Tilney, Edward has a friendly sister, the enthusiastic Alice. When Bella and Edward are getting married Alice is the bridesmaid, and Bella calls her "my best girlfriend and soon-to-be sister" (Meyer 2008: 39). Above all, the heroine in 19th century novels has integrity. She is fearless and has the ability to see beyond the surface. In Austen's and Charlotte Brontë's novels this is shown trough the heroine's audacity to speak up to the hero, but also her ability to see his good sides below the rough surface.

In the vampire story this classic characteristic of the heroine is manifested in two ways; first through the heroine's ability to see the man in the monster rather than vice versa, and second when she, contrary to all other human beings, cannot be affected by vampire tricks. Both the vampire and the heroine meet someone who deviates from the norm – and embrace that deviation. In *Twilight* Edward can read minds, with one exception – he cannot read Bella's thoughts. It turns out then that Bella is also immune to other vampire tricks.

Bella is otherwise an ordinary girl, who never perceived herself to be beautiful, even though Edward says she is. She dresses simply in jeans and a sweater and is often without make up. Edward is drawn to Bella in the first place because her blood smells so enticing, and then later she becomes an intellectual challenge to him because he cannot read her thoughts. Bella is curious about the silent, almost aggressive guy who at one point saves her life, in a way that should not have been possible. She senses that there is something wrong with him. When she finally

approaches the truth, she has already become so interested that she cannot turn back. In the same way as Bella's blood smells particularly good to Edward, Bella finds Edward's scent unusually attractive. The only thing that is special about Bella in the beginning of the story is her lack of fear of the fact that Edward is a vampire, and her ability to see a lonely soul where all others see a disdainful and superior guy.

Part of the erotic tension in the beginning of the first novel builds up around Edward's enigma; when is Bella going to find out that he is a vampire, and what will she do when she finds out? In the beginning Bella is constructed as a detective searching for answers on the net and in books, as Larsson and Leffler have pointed out (Larsson 2011: 71; Leffler 2011: 174). She is even flirting with Jacob in order to manipulate him to give her information about the "cold ones". Finding out that he is a vampire and that he is interested in her goes hand in hand, and when the truth is revealed it becomes a confirmation of their beginning love story that Edward's vampirism no longer matters. When Bella and Edward for the first time spend a long time alone, after he saved her a second time, she confronts him with her suspicions. He admits to being a mind reader, but avoids her other questions. In the back of the car, in the dark on a lonely forest road, Bella slowly realizes that her most spectacular suspicions are justified. Although she understands that she is alone in the car with a vampire, she is not afraid. When, driven by his concern for what she really thinks of him, Edward finally asks what exactly her theory is about him, she answers that it no longer has any importance.

> "I decided it didn't matter," I whispered.
>
> "It didn't *matter*?" His tone made me look up – I had finally broken through his carefully composed mask. His face was incredulous, with just a hint of the anger I'd feared.
>
> "No," I said softly. "It doesn't matter to me what you are."
>
> A hard, mocking edge entered his voice. "You don't care if I'm a monster? If I'm not *human*?"
>
> "No." [...] (Meyer 2005: 184)

Bella here demonstrates what Gina Whisker sees as a prominent trait in the vampire story: "A mutual recognition of the Other as a subject, however similar or different" (Whisker 2009: 134). Bella does not care about *what* Edward is, but *how* he is. In the same ways as Elizabeth Bennet finally sees Mr. Darcy's personality, his goodness, under the surface of aristocracy, wealth and arrogance, Bella looks beyond Edwards "surface", the fact that he is a vampire. In the last part, *Breaking Dawn*, it is ultimately only his soul she sees:

> I imagined I could see all the way into his soul. It seemed silly that this fact – the existence of his soul – had ever been in question, even if he *was* a vampire. He had the most beautiful soul, more beautiful than his brilliant mind or his incomparable face or his glorious body (Meyer 2008: 24).

To see the "man in the monster" is such an important part of contemporary vampire stories that it is interesting to ask what this recognition signifies for our time. In the 19th century novel this recognition from the heroine did not come until after the hero had shown that he actually had changed, or was somehow different than first perceived. Elisabeth realizes that Mr Darcy is a good person when he rescues her sister Lydia from social disaster. In contemporary stories with the human-vampire this recognition of the vampire's inner goodness often take place before the beginning of the (love) story (Rice 1976; Hamilton 1993; Harris 2001; Smith 1991) The fact that the vampire is accepted in his/her otherness before s/he has actually done any good deeds could be understood in the same terms as Janice Radway meant that women accept men's masculinity in its traditional way and only want to add some important character features: "because they indicate that their reserved and cruel heroes are, in truth, compassionate and kind individuals from the start, they only pretend to explore creatively the way to ideal male-female relationships" (Radway 1984: 129).

However, Edward differs from the hero in the romance literature that Radway refers to in several important ways. According to Radway the harsh ways and ruff manners of the hero is due to earlier disappointment in love, and he is also much more sexually experienced than the heroine (Radway 1984: 130). Edward has no such experiences at all, being almost more innocent than Bella (he has not even kissed a girl before). His harshness comes from his knowledge of a discrepancy between what he is (a vampire) and what he wants to be (a good human) and his own self-loathing comes from not feeling worthy of Bella's attention. This is in direct opposition to the hero of romance literature who initially does not think the heroine worthy of his interest, since he does not believe in women any longer. In romance literature the heroine therefore needs to be innocent to save the hero back to love (Radway 1984: 130) To be non-human and be accepted for that is very different from having an inner goodness.

The vampire's definition as a non-human, rather than dead human or ex-human, is interesting. Many of the modern vampires that choose not to kill humans, like Edward or Bill in True Blood, have an outspoken ambition to keep some trace of their lost humanity. This is shown trough the choice not to kill and trough their love for the heroine. When the human, like Bella, accepts the vampire as other, that is as a non-human monster, it works as an impetus for the vampire to behave more like a human. It therefore has the function of a moral imperative in the story. Pierre Wiktorin has pointed out that: "Intentionally or not, popular culture, like the *Twilight* series, has become the basis for ethical and religious discussions" (Wiktorin 2011: 294). But *Twilight* is also "tightly bound up with the logic and discourse of consumer society" as Karin Nykvist ponts out (Nykvist 2011: 36). In *Twilight* like in so many series that have gained international success Wiktorin writes, "you are what you eat and how you behave" (Wiktorin 2011: 288). Edward has for a long time abstained from killing humans, but Bella's ac-

ceptance of him puts him to a test; can he not only abstain from killing but also love a(nother) human? The contemporary vampire story's paradoxical question is: can one both be a good consumer, that is only body and looks, and at the same time be a good Christian? Even though *Twilight* ends with Bella becoming a vampire the throbbing question throughout all four volumes is about Edwards ("human") soul. Here I disagree with Karin Nykvist who reads Bella's vampirism as a never ending body project, which in the end becomes her salvation (Nykvist 2011: 43). The "happy ending" would not be possible without Edward's "beautiful soul".

The monster produces both fear and the notion of normality, as Judith Halberstam has pointed out. Through its monstrosity, that is its non-humanity, the monster produces what is human through a discursive effect (Halberstam 1995: 45). So what is this notion of humanity that the vampire story produces? And in what sense is Edward's humanity intrinsic part of his masculinity and his attraction? In *Midnight sun*, Meyer's unfinished story from Edward's perspective that was published as a draft on her homepage 2008, he meditates on how his desire to kill Bella threatens to take away the little humanity that he has left. "In that instant I was nothing close to the human I'd once been; no trace of the shreds of humanity I managed to cloak myself in remained." (Meyer 2008b: 9) Tracy Bealer sees a connection between sexual desire and humanity in *Twilight*. "In interesting ways, the novels seem to conflate what Edward calls his 'human instincts […] buried deep, but they're there' with a conception of heterosexual desire that is not predatory and dominative but empathic." (Bealer 2011: 144) In the beginning when Edward is already interested in Bella but knows nothing of her feelings he says in *Midnight Sun*: "I was a monster. /…/ Bella could never see me the way I wished she would. Never see me as someone worthy of love. Never. Could a dead, frozen heart break?" (Meyer 2008b: 108). In the way Halberstam showed Edward the vampire produce Edward the human soul through a discursive effect when he points out that he is a monster but with a heart that can break. Besides not to kill humans, humanity seems to be the ability to love.

To Eat or Not to Eat

An important aspect of the human-vampire story is of course that the vampire does not kill people for their eating. Often, he, or she, as Edward's sisters, has killed in the past, but they do not eat people. Even Louis in *Interview with a Vampire* felt guilty about his desire for human blood and tried in periods to survive on animal blood or starve completely (Rice 1976). In those stories where vampirism is not contagious the human-vampire can use of voluntary human or synthetic blood as in *True Blood*. In the Swedish author John Ajvide Lindqvist's *Let the Right One In* (Lindqvist 2004/2007) as well as in *Twilight* the vampire infects her or his victim with the first bite. In *Twilight* voluntary feeding on humans is there-

fore not an option and the Cullen family call themselves jokingly for "vegetarians" because they only eat animals.

Along with the rest of his "family" Edward belongs to a group of vampires who voluntarily renounced killing. "I do not want to be a monster," Edward declares to Bella (Meyer 2005: 186 p.). Carlisle Cullen, Edward's father and creator, was the son of a clergyman, and has devoted his eternal life to rescuing and caring for people in his capacity as physician. Overall the Cullens cultivate a humanitarian, non-violent lifestyle, loyalty and commitment to the family in direct contrast to other vampires. The Cullens' lifestyle could be interpreted as a rejection of traditional, violent masculinity. But it lasts only until the hostile vampires show up. Then violence, in a way that we recognize from American popular culture, both becomes legitimate and a necessity to defend the family and they all turn into veritable death machines. The violence of the vampires is an example of what Whitehead calls "a discourse that is particularly powerful in that it serves to legitimize male violence as voyeuristic entertainment" (Whitehead 2002: 38). Although female vampires and werewolves fight just as well as men, violence is portrayed as a fun game for men. It must have something to do with the Y chromosome, Bella says to herself, and thereby confirms the link between masculinity and violence (Meyer 2007).

The vampire's self-discipline when it comes to controlling his or her hunger is however an important aspect of today's vampire stories. A human-vampire can always check their hunger if required, sometimes to the extent that the consequences are harmful for the vampire himself. Stefan in *The Vampire Diaries* starves himself so that he becomes very weak and cannot defend himself against his ill-natured brother. When Bella is sick and pregnant and Edward does not dare to leave her, he abstains from hunting for so long that he gets all washed out and hollow-eyed. There is a long tradition of interpreting the vampire's bite as an analogy to sexuality, but as Anna Höglund notes, sexuality is no longer hidden, but openly described in contemporary vampire stories. It is food and eating that is the main problem for the modern vampire, not sexuality. Several human-vampires have "developed apparent eating disorders" Höglund writes (Höglund 2009: 335).

Anna Höglund makes an interesting connection between the vampire's asceticism and eating disorders and our position in the consumer society, when she points out that the vampire's control of eating echoes of our culture's fear of losing control of body weight, appearance and age. But the vampire story's ascetic vampire also offers something else: "In the vampire story, what is characteristic of love as it should be is that it is free from consumer culture demand for the perfect surface" (Höglund 2009: 365). In its focus on love that goes beyond the surface the contemporary vampire story mixes a critique of consumer society with traces from the 19th century novel's demand for gender equality in a notion of love as an equal meeting between two souls. Edward's transformation of his desire to eat Bella to his desire to love Bella is the point where those two discourses meet.

Edward's Restrained Sexuality

Edward controls not only his hunger but also his sexuality. Throughout three books Edward refuses to have sex with Bella. In the beginning it is because he is afraid he will bite her, or hurt her by mistake. Later on it is ultimately because of his wish to marry her first. All to Bella's rising frustration: "you are bizarrely moral for a vampire" (Meyer 2007: 536).

The restrained sexuality in *Twilight* has been much discussed as mentioned earlier (Diamond 2011: 45; Donelly 2011: 182; Larsson 2011: 69). It is often perceived as a moral issue and linked to Meyer's background as a Mormon. But in many ways *Twilight* echoes the same kind of criticism of human sexuality as we find in the much more explicit *True Blood*. The humans are often more perverted in their sexuality and are looked down upon by the vampires. This is very clear both in the books and in the TV show. Overall, uncontrolled excess is problematic for the contemporary vampire. Bella's male classmates, and Jacob are trapped in their unconscious desire in a completely different way than Edward. It is no longer the vampire that stands for perverted sexuality but man. The modern vampire man, writes Höglund, "has been transformed from ruthless womanizer with a taste for violent and perverted sex, to an ascetic romantic who thirsts for intimacy and true, genuine love." (Höglund 2009: 333)

One of the reasons for *Twilight's* attraction is that Edward's restrained sexuality offers the teenage girl Bella the possibility to experience her desires and her longing in a permissive way. Bonnie Mann writes that Meyer offers teenage girls "stories of male accountability and female pleasure without penalty" (Mann 2009: 140). The books are narrated in the first person and Bella's desire, or rather her body's reactions to Edward's kissing and touching are described from her point of view. She gets dizzy, has heart palpitations, gets hot, flushed and panting. Edward is just as inexperienced as Bella (here he definitely differs from other vampires!) and her reactions, as well as his own, are as new and surprising for him as for her. When they kiss her for the first time, they are both overwhelmed by her strong erotic response:

> "I was thinking there was something I wanted to try." And he took my face in his hands again.
>
> I could not breathe. [...] And then his cold marble lips pressed against mine.
>
> What neither of us was prepared for was my response. Blood boiled under my skin, burned in my lips. My breath came in wild gaps. My fingers knotted in his hair, clutching him to me. My lips parted as I breathed in his heady scent. Immediately I felt him turn to unresponsive stone beneath my lips. His hands gently, but with irresistible force, pushed my face back. I opened my eyes and saw his guarded expression. "Oops," I breathed.
>
> "That's an understatement." (Meyer 2005)

This scene establishes what turns out be a recurring pattern between them. It is always Bella who wants more, who is swept away, and it is always Edward who

says no. Although it is Edward who draws the line, Bella is never morally reproached for her desire. Not even the underlying religious ethic that it is better to wait with sex until after marriage, applies to Bella. Even Bella's dad takes for granted that they will have sex with each other. Sex is also the only human experience Bella does not want to miss before she becomes a vampire. It is not for the sake of her virtue they should wait, it is because of *his*. It is Edward, seventeen in 1918, who worries about his soul's immortality. Sex before marriage is the only taboo he has not broken.

The fact that Edward is a vampire with his particularly strong desire for Bella's blood allows Meyer to construct a man who wants nothing more than to marry, who is very responsible and manages to avoid anything beyond kissing – but whose eyes are black, and whose voice is hoarse of suppressed desire. Especially in the first books one gets the impression that in intimate situations with Bella, Edward is on the verge of losing control all the time. Edward's way of saying that he cannot have sex with Bella because he dares not lose control with her, also suggests that Edward has a wild and violent side that he just barely controls.

Edward's fear of his own sexuality is implicitly hinted at in *Midnight Sun*. Right after meeting Bella, Edward flees from Forks to Tanya and her sisters, the other "vegetarian" family of vampires. Tanya tries to seduce him and when he says no she mockingly shows him, through her thoughts, memories of sex with human men. Her choice not to kill humans is also connected to her love of human men: "Unlike Carlisle, Tanya and her sisters had discovered their consciences slowly. In the end it was heir fondness for human men that turned the sisters against slaughter. Now the men they loved…lived" (Meyer 2008b: 25). Even though *Midnight Sun* is written after the whole *Twilight* series, it is interesting to learn that according to this text Edward knows already from the beginning that vampires can have sex with humans without killing them. So his fear of having sex with Bella seems to be a more personal fear of his own sexuality than of the risk that he could kill her!

Masculinity and Self-control in the *Twilight* Series

Edward's self-control over his desire to eat Bella and / or to give in to Bella's lust is the point where *Twilight's* different levels of being at the same time gender-traditional *and* feminist intersect. As mentioned earlier, hunger and sexuality are *not* exchangeable in the contemporary vampire story. Control of hunger and sexuality therefore becomes the intersection where Edward can manifest a classic masculinity and simultaneously problematize contemporary discourses of masculinity. Edward's refusal to have sex leads Bella to ask with suspicion if he really is attracted to her "in *that* way?" This makes Edward jump to defend his heterosexuality over his humanity: "I may not be a human, but I am a man" (Meyer 2005: 311, my emphasis). A strangely queer statement that undermines more than it se-

cures, when it suggests that human and man are not necessarily the same thing. Edward's unwillingness to have sex makes him deviate from a contemporary image that often conflates masculinity with constant interest in sex.

During the nineteenth century there came a tendency to "emphasize the intensity and strength of the male lust at the same time as it became common to talk about sexuality in terms of 'natural inclinations'," writes Jonas Liliequist (Liliequist 2006: 176). The idea that it could be dangerous to men's health to abstain from these "natural inclinations" emanates from the early sexual science during the latter half on 19th century and was used as an argument to defend prostitution. It was believed, as Yvonne Svanström points out, that if "men abstained from sex before marriage they could become sick" (Svanström 2004: 219 my transl.). The idea of man's "natural inclinations", his biological drive, which he cannot, will not and should not stop, have completely taken over in our time, says masculinity-scholar Jørgen Lorentzen. He describes it as a biologizing of male sexuality that "rests heavily over men's self-understanding".[3] (Lorentzen 2004: 155)

For a man in nineteenth century it was not just the issue of his biological drive. The fear of falling was also there. David Tjeder writes: "men could at any time give in to passions and lose character." (Tjeder 2006: 67) Although the ideal was a control of passions, there was also, Tjeder shows, a parallel concept of youth who must have its fling and a Don Juan-ideal that still saw the man as an active seducer constantly on the lookout for women (Tjeder 2006: 69).

By controlling his hunger for Bella's blood Edward manifests, like the other not- human-blood-drinking-vampires, the traditional link between mastery, masculinity and power. Restraint of hunger and restraint of sexuality has completely different implications today than in the nineteenth century. Abstaining from food has high status, while abstaining from sex has rather low status. Sara Kärrholm also reads Edward's control of his hunger and sexuality as an example of traditional values of masculinity in Western culture. In her way of elating Edward's sexuality to a suppression of drives she also confirms Lorentzen's point that male sexuality is seen as inherently biological. Edward's body is not associated with giving in to the forces of nature:

> Instead it is associated with traditionally idealized masculine values in Western culture, where the suppression of primitive drives is interpreted as the most difficult and therefore also the noblest sacrifice a man can make in order to uphold civilization. It is however also important that the sex drive is strong to begin with, otherwise the effort of denying it would not be so great and his masculinity could be questioned. In portraying Edward as a predator, his masculinity is secured and the nobility of his civilized manners becomes even more apparent. In this respect Edward is a typical example of the new kind of vampire that has become frequent in modern vampire stories. /…/ Edwards version of the vampire can be paralleled with Van Helsing's in Stoker's *Dracula*; as the male guardian of female chastity with enough strength and skill to ensure that the perils of female sexuality will not be let loose (Kärrholm 2011: 50).

Even though I share Kärrholm's analysis of Edward's control as manifesting idealized masculine values I disagree with her on interpreting Edward as a guardian of female chastity. Höglund's remark that hunger should not be seen as an analogy to sexuality in the contemporary vampire story makes it possible to interpret Edward's abstention from sex as a subversion of the very kind of masculinity that he manifested in his hunger control. When Edward controls his sexuality he makes it a question of will and not biological drive. A contemporary conception of masculinity understood, according to Lorentzen, as a sexuality that is primarily driven by an innate biological drive is thus undermined.

Tracy Bealer points out that Edward's way of abstaining from both eating Bella and having sex with her makes him a masochist, and that this is the point where his abstaining becomes radical because it is a matter of choice.

> Because Edward is a vampire, as long as Bella is human he must repeatedly submit himself to the ain of denying his desire to consume her or consummate their relationship physically. He must suffer every time he sees her. What makes male vampires who fall in love with humans, and Edward in particular, potentially politically progressive is precisely the *repetition* of this masochistically painful disavowal of the hypermasculine penetrativeness and lethality of the body. Discarding normative gender roles is not something one does once. Social expectations are as pernicious and powerful as Edward's bloodlust, and must be constantly challenged and negotiated. (Bealer 2011: 145)

Through his abstinence Edward shows that sex and love is a question of culture, that there are different approaches and possible ways to be a sexual being. In his role as vampire Edward can simultaneously stage a traditional, self-controlled masculinity with all the connotations of power, and a new masculinity that rejects equating masculinity with sexual drive. It is the vampire Edward, not human boys, who offers an alternative masculinity, rooted in culture, and possible to change.

Bella's desire to become like Edward, to remain the same age as him, equal with him, makes her really want to become a vampire. Edward does not want to expose her to his own fate, but reluctantly agrees, on the condition that she marries him. At the same time he postpones the consummation of their relationship until after their marriage.

> "I was not born yesterday." He chuckled in my ear. "Out of the two of us, which do you think is most unwilling to give the other what they want?" [...] I exhaled with a loud huff. "I have to marry you first?" "That's the deal – take it or leave it. Compromise, remember?"(Meyer 2007: 450)

A theme in the nineteenth century novel, like Austen's, Brontë's and Eliot's, is the importance of freedom in order for love to be genuine. Unconditional love requires unconditional freedom. Both Bella and Edward must be free in relation to each other before they can actually meet. Bella does not hesitate about her love for Edward, but she dislikes all the fuss around a wedding. Deffenbacher and Zagoria-Moffet, who has made a comparison between *Jane Eyre* and *Twilight*, writes that "The greatest danger that their respective Edwards pose to the heroines

of *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight* saga is to their sprits, to their independence and will" (Deffenbacher & Zagoria-Moffet 2011: 36). In their different ways both heroines have to resist their Edwards in different ways, so that in the end their actions can "lead to the Byronic Edwards recognizing their selfishness and amending their ways" (Deffenbacher & Zagoria-Moffet 2011: 37). One of the amends Edward Cullen has to do is to stop deciding over and for Bella and let her decide and choose for herself.

At the end of *Eclipse* Edward finally takes in Bella's feelings and withdraws his demand for marriage. He is willing to complete their relationship anyway: "I've clung with such an idiotic obstinacy to my idea of what's best for you, though it's only hurt you. [...] I don't trust myself anymore. You can have happiness your way" (Meyer 2007: 617). At last Edward is willing to make love to her. He realizes that he has made his own desire to marry before sex to a norm that he has forced on Bella under the notion that it was "best for her" when it was actually all about him. At last Edward understands that Bella has to decide for herself what she wants.

When Edward finally gives Bella freedom, she can *choose* to give him what he wants. With an effort, Bella says no to sex there and then in the meadow. Instead she decides to affirm his wish of marriage in its entire extent with mom, dad, sisters, friends – everything. There are several aspects of this scene. One is of course the effect that the no-sex-before-wedding still remains. But what is more interesting is that first when Edward gives Bella freedom, can she really say yes to marrying him. In fact Edward's granting Bella the freedom and responsibility to choose for herself is the ultimate necessary condition for the story to realize its "happy end". Edward has to stop clinging to "my idea of what's best for you". He has to prove his love by taking the risk of not getting what he wants, namely marriage. Edward has to give Bella the freedom to choose and to reject him if she wanted too. Based on that freedom it becomes possible for Bella to let go of her resistance to marriage and say yes. When Edward grants Bella the freedom to choose for herself, she can take in the situation in its entirety: Edward's needs, her parents' need of a farewell, the vampire family's needs of human experiences. She does exactly what Alice Cullen explained what a Cullen must be able to do: "Part of being a Cullen is being meticulously responsible" (Meyer 2007: 581). When she has the freedom of choice she can see the marriage in a much larger context, based on other people's desires as well as her own. Her "yes" is therefore not a young girl's consent to a strong man's desire, but an adult woman's mature, informed decision to unite her life with another being.

Class and Gender Order in the World of Werewolves and Vampires

If Edward is an old-fashioned gentleman Jacob Black is not. Class difference, character difference, and the battle for Bella's love between Edward and the quilote and later werewolf Jacob is a theme through all the books. Unlike Edward Jacob does not control his desires. He forces Bella to kiss him. Even if he is there for Bella when she needs him, he is not below trying to manipulate her into loving him. Bella feels strongly about Jacob. They are close friends. Jacob becomes very important to Bella especially during the period when Edward has left her. But she never feels the same intense physical attraction for Jacob as she feels for Edward.

The relationship between werewolves and vampires are a recurring theme in contemporary vampire literature. The antagonism between werewolves and vampires, as well as the heroine's romantic wavering between them, is one of several similarities between the Charlaine Harris series about Sookie Stackhouse, Laurell K. Hamilton's series about Anita Blake and Meyer's *Twilight* series. Another similarity is the class difference between the vampire's upper class and the werewolf's working class. Edward is no exception. His family is rich, well educated, they are wearing fashionable clothes and live in a big, beautiful house, where they play music and read books. In this respect Edward connects to the tradition from Polidori's Lord Ruthven over Stoker's Dracula. The story seems to take for granted, as both Edward and Jacob does, that Bella, whether she chooses one or the other, will follow her husbands lead and be a part of *his* live rather than creating her own. The romantic choice between Edward and Jacob therefore hides implicit questions of class and race. Sara Kärrholm has pointed out that Bella's constant comparisons between the skin colour of the vampires and the werewolves calls attention to her own shortcomings and feelings of being incomplete: "in order to become beautiful she needs to either add colour to herself or become *as white as* the vampires. These options are, in a way that is typical for the romantic genre, described as a choice between two men." The traditional notion that the woman conforms to her husbands name, class and lifestyle in *Twilight* confirms discourses of white middleclass supremacy.

As the daughter of the chief of police Bella's class position is somewhere between Edward and Jacob. The issue of class recurs several times. The first time is when Bella is going to visit Edward's parents and she worries that they will not accept her as Edward's girlfriend. "'I'm not afraid of *them*.' I explained. 'I'm afraid they will not ... like me. Won't they be, well surprised that you bring someone ... like me ... home to meet them?'"(Meyer 2005: 316). Although what is referred to here is her humanity, you cannot mistake the class reference. Even though Bella feels uncomfortable with the difference in financial situation between herself and Edward's family it is never really questioned that she will be a part of the same lifestyle as soon they are married. The difference between Bella

and Edward in relation to class resonates of the relationship between Lizzie and Mr Darcy and Jane and Rochester. Here I agree with Hela Shachar that *Twilight* "signifies a dominant aspect of the romance mode that has been explored from its inception: the idea that love is inherently linked to economic status and security" (Shachar 2011: 157).

In contemporary vampire stories the werewolf is initially depicted as a regular, good guy, in contrast to the vampire's sophistication, which can also be associated with perversion and gender transgression. This also applies to Jacob, especially before he becomes a werewolf. In the beginning he is portrayed as a nice guy working with motorbikes. Even later when he has become a werewolf, he describes himself as the "natural" choice for Bella:

> "I am exactly right for you, Bella. It would have been effortless for us – comfortable, easy as breathing. I was the natural path your life would have taken ..."[...] "If the world was the way it was supposed to be, if there were no monsters and no magic ..." [...] "He is like a drug for you Bella [...] But I would have been healthier for you. Not a drug."(Meyer 2007: 598)

The question is whether Jacob would really have been healthier for Bella? Although they know each other since childhood and their fathers are best friends, and Jacob can give Bella a life with family and children, is a life on the reservation right for Bella? The fact that Jacob is a Native American who lives and goes to school on the reservation is hardly commented on in the novels, and very little in the research around *Twilight*.[4] Natalie Wilson points that out: "Bella never sees race, never reflects upon the mixed race connotations of her relation to Jacob. Her failure to recognize her own racially based privileges results in a text that renders white privilege invisible" (Wilson 2011: 58)

Jacob is portrayed as a pretty ordinary guy despite all the werewolf mythology, and does not have to play the mysterious Native American. It is a reflection of both class difference and a very real racism that Native Americans are restricted to specific areas and both materially and culturally poorer than people around. The difference between the well-travelled Carlisle Cullen who is a doctor, and Jacob's father in his wheelchair who spends his days fishing and watching baseball on TV is very telling. The Cullens are white and beautiful and have "all sorts of privileges that echo real world white privilege or the social capital afforded to those with white skin" (Wilson 2011: 56)

However, there is another, more cruel, but feminist, aspect where class and ethnicity matter. Werewolves are pack animals, and werewolf men will always sooner or later be drawn into pack politics. The pack's homosocial community is controlled by its own laws and rules. Both Sookie Stackhouse and Anita Blake leave their werewolf lovers in favour of the vampire since the werewolf is too controlled by and absorbed in the male community of pack politics. In *Twilight* werewolves in their wolf shape form a single consciousness that follows the leader. In love, they are also remarkably controlled by their wolfishness because they

are conditioned to stay with their partner and once, a pair relation is formed it cannot be changed. Werewolves, unlike vampires, appear to have no free will.

In *Twilight* there are vampires of both sexes. Werewolf women occur but are rare and they are subordinate to men. In the werewolf world there is domestic violence. Sam once lost control and tore up the face of his wife Emily. Since then she is heavily scarred. But Emily with the ruined face is still sweet and kind and cooks for all the werewolves. It can be compared to the home of the Cullens were Rosalie, Edward's sister, lies under a sports car and does the repair while her husband sits beside the car and hands her the tools (Meyer 2007: 342). Besides education and a comfortable life the vampire world also offers a much wider variety of gender constructions.

Would Bella really marry the Native American guy who does not have any plans for further education and settle with him on the reserve as Jacob sees as her natural choice? Would her father accept it, when it came down to it? As Natalie Wilson points out "This choice [between two men] read in the context of the racial ideologies that shape US society reinforces messages of white superiority" (Kärrholm 2011: 55). Jacob, the Native American quielote, is there just to be refused. It is the Native American and not the vampire who is "the other" in this story.

However, Jacob has a structurally important role: his significance for Bella forces Edward to get over his jealousy. Like Mr Darcy or Edward Rochester Edward must learn that he cannot decide for his partner, however good his intentions are. As the controlled gentleman Edward is, he never admits to being jealous, but he tries to steer Bella's visits to Jacob in a variety of ways. Bella rejects Edward's rules and meets Jacob anyway and Edward is forced to accept her wishes and choice of friends.

> "I decided that you were right. My problem before was more about my ... Prejudice against werewolves than anything else [...] And ... most importantly ... I'm not willing to let this drive a wedge between us." (Meyer 2007: 190)

Circumstances force the werewolves and the Cullen family to cooperate when they are attacked, but at the heart of this is Bella's desire to maintain her friendship with Jacob, and Edward's maturity in terms of overcoming prejudice and jealousy.

In the last part, *Breaking Dawn*, when Bella is pregnant and very sick, a desperate and worried Edward who wants Bella to have an abortion without depriving her of the possibility to have children, offers Jacob to enter into a menage à trois with them. Jacob would then be the biological father of Bella's children. However, before Jacob has time to accept the offer, Edward suddenly connects to the child, whose thoughts he can read even in Bella's belly. Thus the polyamorous possibilities are averted in favour of a traditional heteronormative family. But as in the classic Gothic novel Edward's offer has still stretched the limits. A possibility averted is still a possibility known.

Even though this could have been an interesting solution to Bella's love for both Edward and Jacob this is also a sign that Edward once again tried to decide what is best for Bella. A deal between two men how to share a woman's body. Bella opted for another solution. Edward's first reaction to Bella's pregnancy is panic. Convinced that he fathered a monster it is impossible for him take on fatherhood. Bella responds by evading him and allying with Rosalie. The possibility of another kind of family, consisting of two women and a child, is suggested here. Like in the example above a possibility averted is still a possibility known.

Only a Vampire can Challenge the Gender-order

If Edward managed to realize that he had to give Bella the freedom to choose if she wanted to live with him within or outside marriage, he seems to forget this when Bella gets pregnant. Bella's pregnancy, just like Edwards abstinence, marks a point where *Twilight's* different levels of being at the same time gender-traditional *and* feminist intersect in a complex way. The brutal and dramatic depiction of Bella's pregnancy, giving birth, dying, and becoming a vampire has by many been interpreted as a normative signal that motherhood "is the only licit objective of womanhood" as Merinne Whitton puts it (Witton 2011: 125). Many share Whitton's view that motherhood in the saga "suggests a maternal ideal in which self-sacrifice amounting to masochism is inherent" (Whitton 2011: 125; Taylor 2012).

As in the case with Edward's abstinence I prefer to read Bella's pregnancy and motherhood as a more complex phenomenon situated within the story's narration, not only seeing this as a message to young women but as question of narration and plot. What does Bella's pregnancy cause within the plot? Bella's pregnancy has two ultimate functions within the story. First of all, it is the last test where Edward once and for all has to accept that he cannot "protect" Bella, that is decide what is good for her. Secondly the pregnancy, with its threat to Bella's life, works as an instrument in making Edward *want* to make her a vampire – something she has asked for from early on in their relationship, but which he has refused to do. Finally he is giving her all she has asked for in the relationship. In that last act, when he actually bites her, it is a gesture that has a completely different connotation than the threat that has been a theme throughout all four volumes, namely the risk of his eating, or biting her by accident from lack of control over his violent side. When it finally happens it is an act of love and care, as Jacob is a witness to: "It was like he was kissing her, brushing his lips at her throat, at her wrists, into the crease at the inside of her arm. But I could hear the lush tearing of her skin as his teeth bit through, again, and again, forcing venom into her system at as many points as possible." (Meyer 2008: 354-355). When Edward finally bites Bella it has nothing to do with being a predator and a lethal vampire. Edward shows, as Tracy Bealer writes: "what a constant negotiation between a phallic body and an

emphatic will might look like." (Bealer 2011: 149) During the course of the four books Edward has to amend his will to dominate, give Bella the right to make her own decisions and let her become an equal to himself in order for the story to complete its heteronormative "happy ending". Edward's change of character resonates of Edward Rochester's and of Mr Darcy's change from aggressive, manipulative and domineering. The reason for and the way in which he finally bites Bella makes Edward into an example of the contemporary male vampire's capacity to challenge notions of masculinity.

In the end Bella achieves what she sought; she could also save Edward:

> "A man and a woman have to be somewhat equal ... as in, one of them can't always be swooping in and saving the other one. They have to save each other equally. [...] I can't always be Lois Lane," I insisted, "I want to be Superman, too." (Meyer 2005: 473)

In the end, it is not only Mr Darcy who has changed, even Lois Lane has been allowed to grow and mature. That Bella actually becomes a vampire and therefore the same as Edward is the only thing that differs from the romance plot in the 19th century novel. In the *Twilight's* world of vampires the man learns to control his violent side, his jealousy and his need to dominate, and the woman becomes stronger and more equal when she has a child, and love can protect those who are close to you from all evil – a fairy tale for the twenty-first century.

During the two hundred years since Polidori's vampire Lord Ruthven stepped into our literature, the (usually male) vampire has continued to exert a special attraction for the woman in the story. In contemporary vampire literature it is precisely in the potential for transgressing and undermining gender that the vampire's allure lies. Even in *Twilight*, on the surface a conventional romance narrative, the vampire Edward is part of this tradition when his masculinity manifests itself as a fragile, temporary and changeable. Vampires seem to understand the importance of changing gender constructions as a condition of love's fulfilment.

Claudia Lindén is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at Södertörn University. Her research field is 19th Century literature, working from a gender and queer perspective. Her PhD thesis was *Om Kärlek. Literatur, sexualitet och politik hos Ellen Key* (Symposium 2002). She has published articles on Karen Blixen, Friedrich Nietzsche, Axel Munthe, Mary Wollstonecraft, Feminist Theory and edited books of and on Anne Charlotte Leffler's writings, *I krig med samhället* and together with David Gedin *Att skapa en framtid* (both Rosenlarv förlag 2013) Her current research concerns metaphors of temporality in feminist theory, in the project "Time, Memory and Representation." (The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation). E-mail: claudia.linden@sh.se

Notes

1 This article is an elaborated and extended version of my article ”Vampyren som Mr Darcy, Maskulinitet och begär i *Twilightserien*”, I litteraturens underland. Festskrift till Boel Westin Red. Maria Andersson, Elina Druker och Kristin Hallberg, Stockholm, Makadam, 2011

2 Collections such as Twilight and History (2010), Bitten by Twilight (2010) The Twilight Mystique (Clarke & Osborne 2010), Bringing Light to Twilight (Anatol 2011), Theorizing Twilight (2011) Interdiciplinary Approaches to Twilight (Larsson & Steiner 2011), and the monography Seduced by Twilight (Wilson 2011) all share an equal interest in Twilight as a contemporary cultural phenomenon.

3 Like Svanström, Jørgensen points out that the notion of men’s ”natural inclinations” or drives has also been used to legitimate prostitution and pornography (Lorentzen 2004: 156).

4 Naomi Zack, who points out that no one says that this is actually real people who exist and live in this place (Zack 2009: 124).

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