

Managing Hunger and Desire

Self-Restraint and the Body in Stephenie Meyer's
Twilight Series

Puck Sumelius
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Faculty of Arts
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Abstract

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract <p>Stephenie Meyers fyrdelade bokserie <i>Twilight</i> (2005–2008) om tonårsflickan Bella Swan och hennes kärlek till den evigt unga vampyren Edward Cullen var en kommersiell storsuccé och böckerna gav upphov till såväl filmatiseringar som populärvetenskapliga och akademiska studier. Ett bärande tema i böckerna är självkontroll: Edward och hans vampyrfamilj vägrar dricka människoblod av etiska skäl. I stället livnär de sig på djurblod. Edward älskar Bella men samtidigt törstar han efter hennes blod. Han och Bella är därför tvungna att vara fysiskt avhållsamma trots den stora passion och kärlek de känner för varandra.</p> <p>Edward Cullens vägran att ge efter för sina drifter och dricka människoblod är inte ett nytt fenomen i vampyrlitteraturen. Han ingår i en lång tradition av motvilliga, ”sympatiska” vampyrer, en trend som fick sitt stora genombrott med Anne Rices <i>Interview with the Vampire</i> (1976) och som nu är en etablerad fåra inom genren. Den moderna vampyren är ung, vacker, rik, odödlig och törstande. Den uttrycker i många avseenden konsumtionskulturens ideal och paradoxer men också kampen mellan att styra sina drifter eller styras av dem. Det som gör <i>Twilight</i> till ett säreget fenomen är att Stephenie Meyer är medlem i Jesu Kristi Kyrka av Sista Dagars Heliga, dvs. mormon. Böckerna har därför av många analyserats ur det perspektivet, inte minst på grund av deras budskap om sexuell avhållsamhet.</p> <p>I min avhandling undersöker jag temana kropp och självkontroll i böckerna samt vilka berättartekniska och andra strategier Meyer använder för att konstruera sina karaktärer. Som referensramar använder jag såväl mormonismens läror i tillämpliga delar som akademiska texter om konsumtionskulturens relation till kropp och självkontroll. Min tes är att trots att <i>Twilight</i> uttrycker tydliga ideal i Meyers tro så öser hon även ur konsumtionskulturens ideal och navigerar mellan dessa två på ett mångskiftande sätt.</p>		
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Abbreviations

T = Twilight

NM = New Moon

E = Eclipse

BD = Breaking Dawn

MS = Midnight Sun

Interview = Interview with a Vampire

VL = The Vampire Lestat

QD = Queen of the Damned

1 Introduction

1.1 Aims and Methods

Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series is the love story of a teenage human girl and a vampire boy and the obstacles they face in their struggle to be together. The first novel in the series, *Twilight*, was published in 2005. It was followed by *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse* (2007), and *Breaking Dawn* (2008). The *Twilight* series became a global sales success and cultural phenomenon, and it was a prominent part of the "vampire craze" of the early millennium years. In terms of genre, *Twilight* falls under the labels of fantasy, romance, and young adult fiction. Its readers are not just tweens and teens, but also adults. A prominent feature of the series is its message of sexual abstinence and self-restraint. The vampire hero abstains from human blood and must resist physical temptation for fear of killing his human beloved. This is a marked – but not novel – departure from the traditional image of the vampire as sexual predator.

Critical and public reception to the *Twilight* series has varied. The books have been criticized for their poor writing, their perceived messages, and the representations of the characters. Feminists have criticized the series for its stereotypical gender roles and the messages about relationships it sends to young female readers. Aficionados of vampire fiction have dismissed the books because of their representation of vampires. The author's religious affiliation (Meyer is a devout Latter-day Saint) and its perceived relevance for her work, including her credibility as an author, has also been the subject of much debate. Regardless of the books' literary merits, *Twilight* has become the subject of both academic and popular studies.

In this thesis, I will discuss and locate *Twilight* in the vampire tradition and show how the main vampire characters relate to the literary figure I call "the sympathetic vampire." My focus is on the role of self-restraint in the representations of the key characters, which I examine from the perspectives of Meyer's religious faith and consumer culture. Although *Twilight's* motives for self-restraint are ethical, a great deal of attention is devoted to the aesthetic aspects of the body. Using the method of close reading, I study how bodies are presented and what ideas about the body and self-restraint are at play. My aim is to show how the body is regarded in (mainstream) consumer culture and in Church gospel, and how these notions are reflected in *Twilight*. My primary material consists of the four novels and the unfinished draft for a fifth. My secondary sources include seminal texts on the literary

vampire, academic and popular studies on *Twilight*, and a miscellaneous set of supporting texts.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints discourages the use of words such as “Mormon” or “LDS” to describe the faith, the Church or its members. Departures from that principle are for reasons of brevity or readability. My primary sources and certain other texts are referred to by their acronyms as presented above.

1.2 Introducing the *Twilight* Series

In *Twilight*, seventeen-year-old Isabella (Bella) Swan moves from her mother’s house in Phoenix, Arizona to live with her father in Forks, Washington. There she is immediately drawn to the mysterious Edward Cullen. She learns that Edward and his family are vampires who subsist on animal blood for ethical reasons. Bella and Edward fall passionately in love, but their relationship must remain chaste due to the immense temptation posed by the scent of Bella’s blood. When Bella is bitten by a vampire named James who feeds on humans, Edward saves her life. Bella wants to become a vampire herself in order to be with Edward forever, but he is against it.

In *New Moon*, Edward and his family abruptly leave Forks, because he believes their relationship is putting her life in danger. Bella falls into a deep depression, from which she partially recovers only with the help of Jacob Black, a teenage Quileute Indian from the nearby reservation. She discovers Jacob is a shapeshifter who can turn into a wolf, as can several others in his tribe. Bella and Edward are dramatically reunited. It is agreed that Bella will eventually be turned into a vampire to protect her from other vampires and from the Volturi, evil rulers of the vampire world.

In *Eclipse*, the Cullens join forces with the Quileute wolves to defeat an army of other vampires who are led by the late James’s vengeful mate Victoria. Edward and Jacob are both in love with Bella. Bella ultimately chooses Edward over Jacob and agrees to marry him.

In *Breaking Dawn*, Bella and Edward are married, and their love is finally physically consummated. On their honeymoon, she discovers she is pregnant. The birth of her half-vampire, half-human daughter Renesmee practically kills Bella, but Edward saves her by turning her into a vampire. Bella turns out to be a very strong vampire with hitherto unknown mental powers. These powers she successfully uses to protect her vampire family and the werewolves in the ultimate battle against the Volturi.

Midnight Sun is a retelling of the initial events in *Twilight*, narrated by Edward Cullen.

1.3 The Vampire's Transformation from Villain to Hero

The *Twilight* series was born out of a very vivid dream that Stephenie Meyer had. This dream became the key scene in *Twilight*.

In my dream, two people were having an intense conversation in a meadow in the woods. One of these people was just your average girl. The other person was fantastically beautiful, sparkly, and a vampire. They were discussing the difficulties inherent in the facts that A) they were falling in love with each other while B) the vampire was particularly attracted to the scent of her blood, and was having a difficult time restraining himself from killing her immediately. (stepheniemeyer.com/the-story-of-twilight-getting-published/)

The vampire's struggle with conflicting urges is the core of *Twilight* and a common theme in vampire narratives. Although Meyer's vampires bear little to no resemblance to Count Dracula, and a vampire coven that lives as a loving family is not a common feature of the genre, the theme of abstinence and the dilemma of to bite or not to bite is an old one.

Stephenie Meyer does not acknowledge any debt to the literary or cinematic vampire tradition, preferring to cite several classics from the English literary canon (including *Pride and Prejudice*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre*) as her sources of inspiration. Meyer, who according to herself has never been "into the horror genre" was "fairly free of preconceived notions" when she was writing the *Twilight* series (quoted in Granger 63). Her mythology is "much more influenced by superheroes than by monsters" (Granger 63). She has also acknowledged that her Mormon faith is a strong (albeit at times unconscious) influence on her writing. The character of Edward Cullen is inspired by romantic heroes like Heathcliff and Edward Rochester, who in turn were inspired by Lord Byron. In fact, the latter was also the alleged model for John Polidori's predatory aristocrat Lord Ruthven, the first vampire in English prose fiction.

There is a strong strand of the Byronic hero in the vampire's history: one sub-archetype is the Byronic vampire, described by Deborah Wilson Overstreet as "handsome, dark, brooding, emotionally unavailable, physically perfect [...] a loner, often consumed by guilt over a life fraught with violence and seduction" (25). Natalie Wilson observes that Meyer's dream claim "circumvents allegations regarding the saga's derivative nature" (*Seduced* 28) and that Meyer "deflects responsibility regarding how her saga echoes earlier vampire texts" (*Seduced* 28). Wilson also suggests Meyer "wants to distance herself from vampire narratives

in general” by emphasizing the influence of Austen or Brontë (*Seduced* 210n). Regardless of Meyer’s sources of inspiration or her previous knowledge or ignorance of the vampire canon, her “vegetarian” vampires are not the first to abstain from human blood, and her conflicted vampire hero conforms to an established tradition: that of the sympathetic vampire.

The vampire has undergone many transformations during its existence in the human imagination, reflecting and reproducing human fears and desires, preoccupations and social change. Vampire narratives and the nature of vampires are the products of the social and cultural contexts in which they are written, and the vampire’s transformations reflect the ideological and cultural shifts that have taken place over time. Nina Auerbach has noted that “every age embraces the vampire it needs” (145). The vampire of European folklore was a revenant that rose from its grave to prey on humans and livestock, and the Gothic imagination gave birth to Count Dracula who was the threatening external antagonist, “the earthly embodiment of supernal Evil” (Zanger, *Blood Read* 18). But the contemporary vampire can be both friend and foe, lover, ally, and hero. Alongside the traditional figure of the evil vampire we now have various kinds of “sympathetic” (sympathetically constructed or depicted) vampires, and the “good” vampire has become a commonplace.

Vampire images have proliferated and diversified, and so has vampire fiction. The genre uses elements from many other genres including science fiction, detective stories, erotica, comedy, young adult fiction, and romance, and each subgenre has its own characteristics and conventions. The vampire’s sexuality has expanded from the role of sexual predator and now also allows for vampires who are romantically inclined or searching for their soulmates. Like the Byronic “fatal man” and “good bad boy” vampire, this kind of vampire is by now a staple in the genre of paranormal romance. The vampire character has also been of interest to feminist authors.

The modern vampire has more human traits than its predecessors and a greater degree of social and psychological complexity. Some vampires are reluctant or conflicted, others liberated, and their ethical positions range from moral to immoral or amoral. In many cases, they are more humane than some of the human characters.

The literary vampire has traditionally been physically more appealing than its folkloric ancestor (Overstreet 21), and this aspect is even more pronounced today. Deborah Wilson Overstreet notes that “[s]ince our culture is so focused on physical perfection, this is reflected in our vampires, who are now beautiful, erotic, hedonistic, powerful, and young” (4). One thing remains virtually unchanged: the vampire’s dietary needs. This is also the primary ethical conflict for the sympathetic vampire, and the focus of conscious self-restraint.

The history of the vampire narrative includes several texts from the twentieth century and before, in which the vampire is given an ambiguous or even sympathetic treatment, but the sympathetic portrayals did not become prominent until the latter half of the twentieth century. Anne Rice's 1976 novel *Interview with the Vampire* is by many considered a turning point in the development of the modern vampire character. It tells the story of Louis de Pointe du Lac, a Creole planter who is turned into a vampire against his will and never feels comfortable with what he has become. Louis is tormented by his bloodlust and searches for a meaning to his vampire existence. His maker, Lestat, is portrayed by Louis as vicious and insatiable. Louis tries to avoid taking human lives by living off small animals, but eventually gives in to his thirst for human blood. Lestat, on the other hand, indulges in indiscriminate orgies. In later volumes, Lestat is the narrator, and the image of a Byronic hero emerges as we learn about his struggles, his search for meaning and the reasons behind his actions. His initial status as evil becomes more sympathetic, as do his feeding habits. Rebellious, self-centered, and passionate, Lestat is the Brat Prince or *enfant terrible* of the vampire world, roaming the earth and the heavens in search for answers to his existential questions, and disrupting the entire vampire universe and its rules and conventions in the process.

Rice's work was pivotal both for the genre as such and for the development of the sympathetic vampires we see today. Martin J. Wood identifies four ways in which Rice revised the vampire narrative: (1) She dispensed with or revised many traditional conventions and mythology, (2) she changed the nature and character of her vampires from simple, single-minded evil to complex, fully developed personalities, (3) she brought the vampire into a more modern, urban setting, and (4) her narrative technique brings the vampire closer to the reader both spatially and psychologically (60-61).

Thus, Wood claims that "[i]nstead of a ruthless monster driven by appetite, readers find a lonely, anguished creature yearning for understanding" (64). Rice's vampires have human desires, anxieties, and personalities. They are also cultured, intelligent, and self-reflective, powerful, physically beautiful, and often spiritually profound. They are often wealthy beyond mortal imagination. Their "brutal acts seem little more than unsavory traits [...] their violence, their predation, their murder is human violence on a grand scale: we, too, kill that we might live, though our victims are less thrilling, less challenging, less sentient. [...]. According to [Rice's] new code, vampires might be seen as a more admirable, more subtly evolved version of humans" (Wood 67).

The transformation process that was fueled by Rice's work made the vampire attractive, even enviable. It was also a process of demythologization and secularization. In the process,

the vampire gained a wider range of human emotions and behaviors (Zanger 22). It also gained what Jules Zanger describes as “a kind of social space around the bloody central drive that insists on our seeing them as somehow less ‘other’. That social space is usually depicted as specially privileged. [...] But this world of privilege is only given weight by the bloody central act of murder it revolves around” (22). Zanger compares this with a similar shift in the image of the mafioso:

Like the new vampire, the mafioso has become the civilized, socialized killer, capable of self-doubt, of regret, of loving flowers, success, and music. Seen in the context of the redemptory social space provided for him by the popular myth, the mafioso, like the new vampire, permits us to approach him on a kind of neutral turf on which the murderous activities that make his existence possible become shifted to the periphery where their moral enormity becomes obscured. There they remain, necessarily visible, but decently decentralized. (*Blood Read* 24)

A vampire subsists on the blood or other life-force of living beings. This traditionally harms the other party, leading to death or transformation. In order to construct the vampire as a sympathetic character, the author must address the issue of feeding. What does the vampire’s feeding mean in the context of a particular narrative universe? Narrative strategies include refiguring the character or nature of the vampire, its intentions, the implications of its activities, and their impact on humans, as well as the nature of the human characters.

Reluctance and moral awareness are common markers. Milly Williamson observes that “[r]eluctance and the refusal to ‘feed’ has become an important development in the conventions of the sympathetic sub-genre of vampire fiction and are symbolic of the vampire’s misrecognized innocence” (43). Margaret L. Carter notes that “[t]he ‘good’ vampire is one who interacts ethically with human characters” (166).

If the author chooses to let the vampire feed on human blood, there are several options. The feeding may be refigured as consensual, non-fatal, or not dangerous. Sometimes blood is drawn or exchanged willingly, as an act of love (*Vampire Diaries*) or within the context of a desirable sexual encounter (*True Blood* and the Saint-Germain series): Chelsea Quinn Yarbro’s Count Saint-Germain gives erotic pleasure as he takes blood (Jones, *Blood Read* 164), thus finding “greater satisfaction in a consenting partner than a passive victim” (Pharr 93). Feeding can be described as an exchange. In Jewelle Gomez’ *The Gilda Stories*, Gilda takes blood without killing, and reciprocates in the form of thoughts or impulses inserted into the mind of the donor. Other strategies include having the vampire draw only small amounts

of blood from the victim: the 700-year-old Sterling O'Blivion in Jody Scott's *I, Vampire* (1984) requires only six ounces a month to remain immortal. Vampire blood is often described as powerful and even desirable (*True Blood*). If there is violence, it is presented as justifiable, or not portrayed (the readers know it is there, but it is off-screen). Some authors make the vampire hero a vigilante who only preys on villains or criminals. A strategy described by Carol Senf involves portraying humans as much more ethically flawed, horrible, and violent than vampires, making the need for a little blood now and then pale beside the carnages of war, weapons of mass destruction, rape, murder, and torture (201-202). Sometimes the good vampire is contrasted with an evil one. In many texts, appetite is underplayed in favor of other aesthetic factors, such as beauty, sensuality, or power (Pharr 93).

Vampires can also practice abstinence or choose other food sources such as animal blood (*Twilight*, *Vampire Chronicles*, *Vampire Diaries*), synthetic potions (*Fevre Dream*, *True Blood*), or blood banks. Whatever the strategies, the modern vampire is no longer a mindless slave to the hunger: vampires possess free will and are capable of self-reflection and self-regulation. But their restraint does not seem to extend further than their feeding habits: As regards their other characteristics and attributes, vampires can be as excessive as they – that is, *we* – like. With few exceptions, the abundance is still there: an abundance of powers, wealth, sophistication, physical perfection, and seductiveness (not only in comparison with humans but also in the hierarchy among supernaturals). Nor is their sexual or erotic prowess in any way diminished.

In later chapters, I examine how *Twilight* fits into this tradition.

1.4 Critical Background

My general overview of the shift in the vampire tradition and the characteristics of the contemporary sympathetic vampire is based mainly on selected essays in the collections *Blood Read*, *The Blood Is the Life*, and on Anna Höglund's *Vampyrer*, a popularized edition of Höglund's doctoral thesis. I employ them to trace the evolution of the sympathetic vampire and its characteristics. For *Twilight*, I employ articles or interdisciplinary collections of essays on *Twilight* and on the vampire figure in literature and other media. The contributors are scholars from a variety of fields such as literature, popular culture, culture studies, and women's studies.

In my theoretical framework, I draw on the work of scholars from different fields. For LDS views on the body, I rely on both official Church doctrine and other sources. My presentation of the body in consumer culture is based on the work of scholars such as sociologists Mike Featherstone and Bryan S. Turner, and the feminist philosopher Susan Bordo. I also engage with other scholars in essays specifically related to *Twilight*.

The approach of placing self-restraint in relation to consumer culture is useful in the case of the vampire, who is a *consuming* being, and it is also applicable to the human characters that inhabit this culture. In the case of the werewolves, this approach is not applicable. Consumer culture operates on an endless stimulation, suppression, and gratification of appetites, but the *Twilight* wolves are driven by anger rather than hunger, and Jacob Black does not have access to the world of material consumption in the way the Cullens do. My analysis of werewolf restraint therefore departs from this framework and focuses on the role of the wolf as foil to the vampire.

1.5 Latter-day Saints and the Body

The body holds an important place in the Latter-day Saints belief system. Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon faith, and his followers developed a theology that recognizes Jesus Christ as the Savior, but otherwise departs radically from other Christian denominations in terms of cosmology and the role of the human body in it.

Latter-day Saints believe that all human beings are spirit children of heavenly parents, with whom they lived in a premortal existence before their life on Earth. As part of God's plan, spirits are born into human bodies created in God's image. After death, the body is in due time resurrected in a perfected form, reunited with the spirit, and proceeds to eternal life in one of three heavenly kingdoms. God and Jesus Christ are themselves material, with bodies of flesh and bones "as tangible as man's" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 130:22), whereas the Holy Ghost is "a personage of Spirit" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 130:22). Spirits are also material, but of a finer and purer matter (Brown and Holbrook 294).

The importance of marriage and family for Latter-day Saints can hardly be exaggerated. The family is the fundamental unit of society both on earth and elsewhere. Heavenly Father has a wife, Heavenly Mother; spousal and parental relationships persist into the afterlife; family is "an eternal institution ordained by God" and "central to the salvation of the human race" (Porter para.1, 3). The purpose of life on earth is to learn, grow, and progress toward godliness through the experience of having a physical body: "To become like God, his

children, too, must obtain physical bodies” (Van De Graaf para. 3). Despite its imperfections and frailties, the human body is more powerful and developed than the spirit existence (Givens 260), and it has been given the power of procreation. One purpose of mortal embodiment is to create long-term relationships with other embodied individuals: “LDS theologies orient thinking about and behavior around bodies toward the facilitation of long-term relationships” (Brown and Holbrook 293).

Because the body is a sacred gift from God, it must be treated with respect and taken well care of. Dietary regulations serve to manage physical health, and bodily appetites are governed with the aid of sexual abstinence. Self-mastery is important: “Man’s work on the earth is to learn to govern his bodily appetites and keep them within the bounds the Lord has set” (mormonwiki.com/Law_of_Chastity).

Chastity and diet are regulated by specific guidelines. The LDS diet draws on a section of Mormon scripture known as the Word of Wisdom that is based on a divine revelation received by Joseph Smith. In accordance with the Word of Wisdom, Mormons abstain from tobacco, alcohol, “hot drinks” (which in WoW refers to tea and coffee), and other stimulants as well as illicit prescription medications and illegal or recreational drugs. Harmful or addictive substances are to be avoided. Mormons are encouraged to maintain a healthy weight. Their diet is based on grains, vegetables, fruit, and dairy, and meat and poultry are to be consumed sparingly (*Doctrine and Covenants* 89).

The Law of Chastity regulates sexual behavior by prohibiting all sexual relations outside heterosexual marriage. Sexual sins are considered “most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost” (*Book of Mormon*, Alma 39:5). Chastity is framed as protection, sexual activities as risk. Latter-day Saints are counseled to avoid “all thoughts, intents, and actions that arouse passions leading to improper sexual conduct” (mormonwiki.com/Law_of_Chastity), and to dress and behave with modesty. Bodily discipline and modesty in dress and behavior are signs of religious commitment and function as a reminder to the person of their covenant with God. “Conservative, upper-middle-class attire” is the recommended style for boys and girls alike (Brown and Holbrook 302). For women, the dress code means no bare chests and shoulders, no tight-fitting or skin-baring clothing, and legs covered above the knee. Many Mormons wear a set of sleeved and legged undergarments (“sacred” garments) under their regular clothes, a practice that influences their clothing choices. Manipulation of the body is strongly discouraged other than for medical reasons (Namie 229). This includes tattoos and piercing (except for one piercing in each ear for women). Although not endorsed by Church leaders, cosmetic surgery is not

explicitly forbidden. It is used by Mormon women in similar numbers to non-Mormons (Brown and Holbrook 303).

Although Church *doctrine* emphasizes respect for the body and the development of a healthy inner self, certain aspects of Latter-day Saint *culture* – such as the importance of finding a marriage partner, the modesty dress codes, the conservative gender roles, and the self-discipline and perfectionism described as inherent in the faith (Namie 239) – are paradoxically used to encourage attention to outward appearance. For LDS women, cosmetics, fashion choices, and plastic surgery are a means to progress in the faith by attracting a partner and having a family, but also a way to simultaneously navigate the demands of their own culture and appear “normal” in the eyes of mainstream society. LDS women do not appear to have a beauty standard peculiar to their faith. In a 2013 study of plastic surgery among LDS women in Utah, Joylin Namie notes that “it is unclear where [the informants’] ideas about what constitutes ‘beautiful’ for Mormon women come from” (235). However, it appears they are immersed in and influenced by the same aesthetic ideals as the mainstream culture: one informant describes how looking at a swimsuit model in *Sports Illustrated* made her opt for a breast augmentation (236).

1.6 The Body in Contemporary Consumer Culture

Self-restraint and bodily discipline are also a feature of secular Western society and consumer culture, albeit with different motives. Body management is not motivated by retribution or reward in the afterlife, but rather by the rewards it is expected to yield in mortal life, such as longevity (or prolonged youthfulness), health and wellbeing, an improved appearance, and social acceptability. However, body management requires self-control, which collides with an ethos of consumerism and creates contradictory messages that are hard to reconcile, especially for women. The focus of abstinence is not on sex, but on food.

Bryan S. Turner argues that the motives for body management and discipline have shifted from the ascetic to the aesthetic (*Regulating Bodies* 47). Diet is no longer what Turner calls “an attempt to control the inner body as the arena of passion.” Today, the focus is on the outer body: “[m]odern diets, cosmetics and other systems of body maintenance are aimed at the outer body: looking good is equivalent to feeling good in a society based upon the dominance of the representational self” (*Medical Power and Social Knowledge* 24). Body maintenance is framed as the key to living longer, enjoying life more, achieving better health, and an altogether improved quality of life. Individuals are encouraged to assume

responsibility for their health and their appearance: the body is seen as an investment and a personal resource. It is also a social symbol that sends messages about a person's self-identity (Shilling, *Body and Social Theory* 4-5). Appearance is important, since individuals are judged by how they look, especially by their size: Markula, Burns, and Riley note that "personal characteristics are attributed to individuals based upon their physical dimensions" (1). Body shapes, body maintenance, and eating practices are also imbued with cultural and persuasive meanings (Markula et al. 1-2). In this landscape, individual choices around food choices also become loaded with meanings, identity, and morality. Chris Shilling notes that "puritan values of bodily abstinence and purity continue to inform the attitude [...] among the urban middle classes in the USA and Europe, that the consumption of 'healthy food' is a marker of ethical worth" (*Culture* 156).

In consumer culture, the body perfect and the material good life are marketed as central life goals (Dittmar 1-2). The body beautiful is prominently featured in consumer culture imagery, and associated with themes such as hedonism, freedom, beauty, leisure, luxury, enjoyment, romance, and the like (Featherstone 170, 174). Airbrushed and enhanced bodies in mass media and advertising communicate what Helga Dittmar calls "lifestyle and identity instructions to consumers, providing cultural ideals of beauty, success, and happiness" (12). With body work, it is suggested, individuals can achieve or at least approximate those ideals.

The body perfect is beautiful, healthy, youthful, fit, sexy, and toned. Susan Bordo describes the modern ideal as a "tighter, smoother, more contained body profile" (188). This type of body is extremely hard to achieve for most people (Bordo 202; Shilling, *Culture* 162), but we are encouraged to think it is *within reach* and a matter of personal choice. The body is malleable: Featherstone observes that "the tendency within consumer culture is for ascribed bodily qualities to become regarded as plastic – with effort and 'body work' individuals are persuaded that they can achieve a certain desired appearance" (178). Diet and exercise are everyday examples of body work. Science and medicine offer further options, such as cosmetic and weight loss surgery. Body work ostensibly transforms both the body and the self and gives the person better abilities to "move through interpersonal spaces and [...] enjoy the full range of lifestyle opportunities and pleasures on offer" (Featherstone, *Body, Image and Affect* 196). Media of all kinds are filled with "before-and-after" testimonials and accounts of the physically and mentally transformative effects of body work, in which the individual's "true" (or even improved) self is revealed through their new appearance. The flawed self has been corrected through the acquisition of a more acceptable body. Both identity and body can be transformed according to one's wishes and designs. Chris Shilling and Helga Dittmar both

describe the body and self-identity as projects that are worked on and achieved (Shilling, *Culture 2*; Dittmar 12). Shilling asserts that in the West, the body is seen as “a *project* that should be worked at and accomplished as part of an *individual’s* self-identity” (*Body and Social Theory 4*, italics original). Dittmar makes the same argument about identity: “Instead of being *ascribed*, identity is increasingly *achieved* by the individual her- or himself” (12).

Body management is made harder by the paradoxical coexistence of discipline and hedonism in consumer culture. Individuals are simultaneously required to be rational, disciplined producers *and* irrational, impulse-driven consumers.

On the one hand, as producers of goods and services we must sublimate, delay, repress desires for immediate gratification; we must cultivate the work ethic. On the other hand, as consumers we must display a boundless capacity to capitulate to desire and indulge in impulse; we must hunger for constant and immediate satisfaction. The regulation of desire thus becomes an ongoing problem, as we find ourselves continually besieged by temptation, while socially condemned for overindulgence. (Bordo 199)

Applied to the body, this means that people must simultaneously work hard for their appearance and yet give in to indulgence, only to be reproached when their impulses lead them to gain weight. Featherstone, however, argues that “[d]iscipline and hedonism are no longer seen as incompatible, indeed the subjugation of the body through body maintenance routines is presented within consumer culture as a precondition for the achievement of an acceptable appearance and the release of the body’s expressive capacity” (171). In fact, Nick Crossley maintains that consumer culture rewards the perfect body, thus encouraging self-discipline (55). Crossley also points out that the degrees of expected or acceptable abstinence and hedonism vary in different domains of society (55). The perennial debate about body weight, size, and acceptability suggests that hunger and food remain controversial subjects.

1.7 The Contemporary Vampire

The modern vampire reflects and resists the ideals of consumer culture. It is a *consuming* figure: always hungry, always struggling to control its urges. It embodies both the yearning to let go and the struggle for control. The contemporary vampire possesses the qualities consumer culture presents as ideals and the keys to happiness, success, and power: it is beautiful and desirable, eternally young and invincible. Unlike humans, it has no need for body maintenance or repair. And yet its status as outsider and freak is something many readers can relate to, especially readers who feel they do not measure up to the demands of

consumer culture. For them, the vampire is an ally (Höglund 432-433). Contemporary vampire fiction positions the vampire as someone who can offer us a better life than what we have (401).

The vampire's role as metaphor for sex has changed along with our attitudes toward sexuality. The vampire used to represent forbidden, dangerous, or deviant sexuality. Today, the vampire's sexuality is just another thing about it (Day 5). In the subgenre of vampire romance, the contemporary male vampire has been transformed from a merciless seducer with a taste for violent and perverted sex to an ascetic romantic who yearns for intimacy and true love (Höglund 363). This vampire usually looks beyond the surface exterior of its human love interest and offers a love that is free from consumer culture's demand for the perfect surface (Höglund 408). Paradoxically, however, its own appearance usually conforms to conventional standards of beauty (Höglund 405).

2 Ethical and Flawless: Edward Cullen and Family

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the vampires in *Twilight* and their relationship to the vampire tradition, the Latter-day Saint faith, and consumer culture, with a focus on Edward Cullen. I argue that Meyer's portrayal of her vampires as sympathetic is based, not only on traditional strategies presented in the introductory chapter, but also on four specific aspects: abstinence, appearance, affluence, and affiliation (i.e. family). I use the first three aspects to examine how the vampire characters illustrate or challenge the ideals and ideas of self-restraint and the body in LDS doctrine and consumer culture. I also apply two observations by Karin Nykvist that I feel are particularly relevant. Nykvist argues that "the *Twilight* story is one of salvation, physical and spiritual, where the instrument of salvation is the body" (30), and that "[the] idea of the body surface being a readable sign is as important to the *Twilight* series as it is in contemporary culture at large" (30, series title not italicized in the original).

2.2 Narrative Strategies and Themes in the *Twilight* Series

Stephenie Meyer has retained the vampire's savage appetite and its negative impact on humans, but has refigured her characters' intentions and morality. She constructs the Cullens as non-monstrous and attractive through a blend of human, humane, and superhuman, but also underscores Edward's self-control and heroism by presenting his potential for great monstrosity. The virtues of the Cullen family are demonstrated not only overtly, that is, by

their aesthetics, actions, and choices, but also through a blend of highlighting, obscuring and underplaying various elements in favor of others.

Like others before her, Meyer has done away with traditional conventions such as coffins, transformations, and the aversion to garlic, religious artifacts or daylight, thus retaining only immortality, superhuman abilities and the need for blood. Her vampires have sharp teeth instead of fangs and can pass for human, but only on a rainy day (they avoid sunshine because it brings out the crystal sparkle of their cold marble skin, thus exposing their otherness). They live among humans as a family, attend school and work, and enjoy a family game of baseball. They have human personalities that bring them closer to our frame of reference, and human interests (that they excel in): Edward Cullen is an accomplished pianist and has two graduate degrees in medicine, Alice is the consummate fashionista and party planner, and Rosalie is a talented car mechanic. Meyer invites us to read them as less ‘other’ but also as benignly superior. They are close enough to human and more: throughout the series, Bella on several occasions refers to them as “angels.”

The vampires are described through the biased eyes of Bella, the main narrator who falls in love with Edward. Through Bella, Meyer frames the Cullens and their way of life as both seductive and attractive. They are intelligent, beautiful, gifted and wealthy, and they lead an exclusive and privileged life that sets them apart from the town’s mortals. What sets them apart from other vampires in their universe (and quite possibly in the vampire tradition) is their focus on family. Dietary abstinence makes the Cullens capable of loving and making choices, feeling empathy and living together, which also marks them as good vampires. Not only are they favorably contrasted to the non-vegetarian vampires, who are described as animal (Victoria and her group), corrupt and coercive (the Volturi) or simply frightening, they also surpass the human supporting characters such as Bella’s parents and schoolmates. In some respects, they also surpass the wolves, which I will discuss further in chapter 3.

In terms of ethics, the Cullens fit the description of “good.” They are “vegetarians,” which means they feed only on animals, although human blood is more satisfying. In the *Twilight* universe, the vampire bite is venomous, bringing death or an excruciatingly painful transformation, and the feeding is savage. Moderation—to only feed a little, without killing the victim—is not possible. The scent or taste of human blood is so intoxicating that it is impossible to take just a little sip. As Alice Cullen puts it, “We’re also like sharks in a way. Once we taste the blood, or even smell it for that matter, it becomes very hard to keep from feeding. [...] [T]o actually bite someone, to taste the blood, it would begin the frenzy” (*T* 362). Feeding on animal blood is the only ethically tenable option.

For Anne Rice's vampires, feeding is an erotic and sensuous act, in which compulsion and pleasure are fused. In Meyer's world, feeding is killing, and it is separated from sex; instead, vampires are sexually capable and enjoy sexual intercourse.

Abstaining from human blood is Meyer's main marker of virtue, but she also uses other markers and strategies. Edward Cullen is a romantic and (initially) Byronic hero who has yet to find his romantic destiny and soulmate. Höglund notes that this characteristic is shared by many contemporary vampire heroes (363). In the early stages of his vampire life, Edward has fed on humans, but Meyer makes him a vigilante: "Rationalized, justified murders. A killer of killers, a killer of other, less powerful monsters. [...] I had fed on human blood, but only by the loosest definition. My victims were, in their various dark pastimes, barely more human than I was" (*MS* 12). Here we have the comparison in the vampire's favor, since he kills for justice and not for enjoyment. Edward's guilt over his vigilante past also provides an explanation for his reluctance and current self-loathing, implies a high moral standard, and constructs him as the dangerous hero who is now trying to keep to the straight and narrow.

Jules Zanger observes that "with each demythologizing transformation, the new vampire moves more firmly in the direction of that single perceptual domain we call the 'human,' into greater contiguity with us as readers" (20). He goes on to note that "one function of the new vampire's contiguity is ... to conceal, to obscure, to misdirect our attention from his most salient characteristic as a murderer, while at the same time retaining that characteristic for its essential, defining function" (20). This is also true for *Twilight*. Although the overt signs of the Cullens' supernatural state are not erased, the monstrous is downplayed in favor of aesthetic mortal elements such as physical beauty, designer clothing, expensive cars, and a beautiful white mansion with huge windows and open spaces. Edward's good looks and general superiority are mentioned repeatedly, even obsessively, but Bella also admires his personality, calling him "the most loving and unselfish and brilliant and *decent* person [she's] ever met" (*E* 98). The Cullen family bond and outwardly human lifestyle bring them closer to the human frame of reference, but it is all built on their vampirism. If their thirst was not so lethal and terrible there would be no heroism in abstinence.

Throughout the *Twilight* books, vampire bloodlust is both present and unseen, simultaneously highlighted and obscured. Bella's relationship with Edward is defined by this bloodlust: if they get too intimate, his self-restraint could give way and he might kill her. However, the feeding itself is conspicuously absent for most of the story—the Cullens go on out-of-town feeding trips when their thirst becomes too great, and Bella is not allowed to watch them feed. Because Bella does not see any feeding while she is human, neither do the

readers – and when Bella and Edward finally hunt together, they prey on mountain lions and deer. Even when the Volturi kill their human victims, they do so behind closed doors: “Edward set a pace that had me running to keep up. But we still couldn’t get through the ornate door at the end of the hallway before the screaming started” (*NM* 426). Vampirism and bloodlust are simultaneously foregrounded (as the obstacle to the love affair and its consummation) and obscured (in part through focus on the Cullens’ human and virtuous lifestyle).

Even when the Cullens are involved in violent battles against other vampires, there is a difference in how their fighting is described, compared with that of the others. When James attacks Bella in *Twilight*, readers are given a graphic account of how he throws her against a wall of mirrors that slash her scalp and skin. He also breaks her leg and infects her by biting her hand, but when the Cullens save her and James is finished off by Emmett and Jasper (while Edward sucks the venom from Bella’s hand), all we hear are the sounds: “... an awful tumult that my mind shied away from. A vicious bass growling, a shocking, snapping sound, and a high keening, suddenly breaking off...” (*T* 394-395). This is explained by making the focalizer Bella barely conscious at that point. However, the allocation of graphic violence to the other characters continues. In *Eclipse*, the evil vampire Victoria wants Bella dead in revenge for the death of her mate James, and she has created and mobilized an army of newborns for this purpose. During the showdown between Victoria and Edward, in which a young werewolf named Seth takes on Victoria’s helper Riley, the action between Riley and Seth is described in detail. Seth dismembers Riley bit by bit: “something [tears] with a hideous, grating screech” and heavy “white chunks” fly around (*E* 484), not to mention that Riley’s torn-off arm tries to crawl across the ground by itself (*E* 489). Edward and Victoria, on the other hand, move faster than the human eye (since the narrator Bella acts as focalizer). They are described as doing a dance, a “violent ballet” (*E* 486) with “footwork” and “perfect concentration” (*E* 484) accompanied by “snaps and tears,” “gasps and shocked hissings” (*E* 487). Edward finally kills the retreating Victoria (conveniently for the readers, they now appear to be moving slowly enough for Bella to see what is happening although he speeds after Victoria like “a bullet from a gun”). It is described thus:

Edward’s mouth brushed once across her neck, like a caress. The squealing clamor coming from Seth’s efforts covered every other noise, so there was no discernible sound to make the image one of violence. He could have been kissing her. And then the fiery tangle of hair was no longer connected to the rest of her body. The shivering orange waves fell to the ground, and bounced once before rolling toward the trees. (*E* 490)

Except for Riley's lone arm that Edward tears off – "It had looked like Edward planted his foot against Riley's back, and heaved" (*E* 488) – and throws at Victoria to cripple her attack, no graphic details are attached to Edward or the Cullens. While Edward is dancing the dance with Victoria, the other Cullens are finishing off her newborns offstage. Meyer makes Edward "snarl" and "growl" throughout the series, but overall, he is described as more self-disciplined than his vampire siblings or werewolf counterparts.

My point of departure was to examine the vampires in *Twilight* in the context of the vampire tradition. As I have shown above, the Cullens' abstinence and the strategies that Meyer uses to construct them as sympathetic are common features in contemporary vampire fiction. Let me now examine how they express and challenge the ideals of the Mormon faith and consumer culture.

2.3 Abstinence

In the previous section, I have outlined several narrative strategies that Stephenie Meyer uses to frame her vampires as virtuous and sympathetic. Abstinence is a common marker of virtue in contemporary vampire fiction, and in *Twilight* it is the focus of the story and the most defining marker of virtue. It propels the plot and defines who the Cullens are in the *Twilight* universe. Carrie Anne Platt identifies two different kinds of abstinence that are key to the novels' premise and narrative progress: the Cullens' denial of their natural instincts, and Edward and Bella's premarital chastity (77). The former is dependent on the individual vampires' self-restraint and the power of family ties; the latter is placed on Edward's shoulders.

The Cullen family's abstinence is based on the values and beliefs of Carlisle Cullen, who as a human was the son of an intolerant Anglican pastor in seventeenth-century London (*T* 289). Carlisle was accidentally turned into a vampire while he led a vampire hunt that his father had ordered. Horrified at his transformation, he by chance discovered animal blood as an alternative food source and resolved never to drink human blood. Over the centuries, he perfected his self-control and instilled his values in the new vampires who became his family: Edward, Esme, Rosalie, and Emmett, whom he created in order to save them from an otherwise certain death; and Alice and Jasper, who joined the family of their own accord. The Cullen lifestyle is based on the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." Carlisle believes in God and in an afterlife, and he believes vampires have not lost their souls. "[N]ever, in the nearly four hundred years now since I was born, have I ever seen anything to make me doubt

whether God exists in some form or other. [...] By all accounts, we're damned regardless. But I hope, maybe foolishly, that we'll get some measure of credit for trying" (NM 32-33).

Carlisle has perfected his self-control to the point that he can work as a doctor at the local hospital. When Bella marvels at how effortlessly he stitches her bleeding arm, Carlisle replies, "Like everything in life, I just had to decide what to do with what I was given" (NM 31).

Carlisle's values have made the Cullens a family as opposed to a coven. Abstinence enables them to form human bonds of love and empathy; conversely, it is supported by these bonds. In *Midnight Sun*, Edward narrates how the Cullen siblings fight over whether they should kill Bella to preserve their own safety. Edward has just saved Bella from being killed by a van that has skidded on ice in the school parking lot, and his siblings are afraid he might thereby have exposed them. Bella has witnessed his superhuman strength and speed, and she knows something is different about Edward. Killing humans is not an option for the Cullens, but potential exposure is a threat to the life they have managed to build in Forks. Jasper and Rosalie are convinced that Bella must be killed, and Rosalie offers to take care of it (she is a practiced assassin, having taken her revenge on the men who raped her and left her to die). But Carlisle replies, "I know you mean well, Rosalie, but...I'd like very much for our family to be *worth* protecting. [...] If we make exceptions to protect ourselves, we risk something much more important. We risk losing *the essence of who we are*" (MS 82-83; the former emphasis original, the latter emphasis mine). When Rosalie replies it would be the responsible thing to do, Carlisle corrects her, saying it would be callous (MS 83).

Abstinence is the essence of who the Cullens are, and family goes before all else. Edward's relationship with his vampire father Carlisle – "my creator, my mentor, my father in all the ways that counted" (MS 13) – is the strongest force in his life. After an initial period of rebellion, during which he left the family and fed on evil humans, such as rapists and murderers – his "vigilante" period, the memory of which later causes him much shame and regret – Edward returned to the fold, and from then on, his self-control has been impeccable. Then he meets Bella. The scent of her blood is an even greater torture than he could have imagined. It is the sweetest blood he has smelled in eighty years (MS 10), and his decades of self-control are almost undone.

Her scent hit me like a wrecking ball, like a battering ram. There was no image violent enough to encapsulate the force of what happened to me in that moment. In that instant, I was nothing close to the human I'd once been; no trace of the shreds of humanity I'd managed to cloak myself in remained. I was a predator. She was my prey. There was nothing else in the whole world but that truth. [...] I hadn't imagined such a scent could

exist. If I'd known it did, I would have gone searching for it long ago. I would have combed the planet for her. I could imagine the taste... Thirst burned through my throat like fire. My mouth was baked and desiccated. The fresh flow of venom did nothing to dispel that sensation. My stomach twisted with the hunger that was an echo of the thirst. My muscles coiled, ready to spring. (*MS* 9-10)

Then two things happen: he sees his reflection in her eyes, and a chance whiff of fresh air clears his head. In his mind, he sees two images: one is himself, a red-eyed monster in himself, the other is the face of Carlisle. That day, Bella's life is spared. Edward resolves not to let "an insignificant little girl" (*T* 237) ruin the life he and his family have in Forks. Nevertheless, she fascinates him, not least because she is the only human whom he has ever met whose mind he cannot read. Soon they are in love, and Edward discovers he has other desires too, "[h]ungers I don't even understand, that are foreign to me" (*T* 243), but they cannot be indulged.

Edward abstains from both wrong food (human blood) and wrong (premarital) sex. The Cullens see human blood as a defiling substance because it makes them feel and behave less like humans (Schwartzman 125). As I noted in the introductory chapter, the connection between food choices and morality is a feature of both Latter-day Saint and mainstream culture. Edward's sexual abstinence, however, makes him LDS rather than mainstream. Claudia Lindén observes that abstaining from sex has rather low status in our contemporary world, whereas abstaining from food has high status (227). In the introductory chapter, I also noted that Latter-day Saints are counseled to avoid "all thoughts, intents, and actions that arouse passions leading to improper sexual conduct" (mormonwiki.com/Law_of_Chastity). It feels like Meyer is treading a fine line between chastity and purity on the one hand and steamy expressions of romance and sensuality between her two characters on the other. Edward and Bella give in to their desire for physical closeness, albeit in limited and chaste ways. They touch, they kiss, they embrace. In this way, he is desensitized to her scent and his self-control grows stronger.

Margaret M. Toscano argues that Meyer's allegiance to LDS beliefs and practices are neither straightforward nor quite pure in her work, and that there are elements in the texts that subvert and challenge Church dogma: Meyer puts love before obedience, and "rejects the principle that moral purity is maintained by exclusion, by the avoidance of even the appearance of evil" (21). Free will or agency is an important element of the faith. However, Toscano asserts that according to Church authorities, "free agency is the right only to make

right choices” (23). The Church booklet *For the Strength of Youth* states: “Righteous choices lead to lasting happiness and eternal life. Remember, true freedom comes from using your agency to choose obedience; loss of freedom comes from choosing disobedience” (3). In choosing to be physically close with Bella, Edward deviates from the LDS principle of total avoidance. It proves to be transformative.

A vampire who insists on chastity and marriage is not a common feature of the genre, certainly not to the extent that it is a major element in the plot. Edward’s insistence on marriage before sex is logical given Meyer’s religious beliefs. In the text, it is explained by the fact that he was born in 1901, when people married before they had sex. When Bella tells him that she is not “that girl,” the kind of girl who marries straight out of high school, Edward replies that he would have been “that boy,” the boy who would have gotten on his knees and proposed to her (*E* 244, 246).

Although Meyer obscures the Cullens’ bloodlust for most of the series in order to make them more relatable and attractive, the power of the thirst is also emphasized in order to highlight Edward’s *potential* for great monstrosity and the magnitude of his restraint. His heroism is further emphasized by his actions: he saves or protects a bleeding or wounded Bella several times in the series, right up to the climactic and bloody birth scene in *Breaking Dawn* when he saves her from death by turning her into a vampire. He is portrayed as unique among vampires, and even Aro of the Volturi marvels at his restraint (*NM* 416).

But Edward’s heroism is also dependent on Bella’s compliance. He restrains, not only himself, but her – and not only sexually but in other aspects of her life as well. Several critics have pointed out the controversial aspects of Edward’s personality and conduct, and the inequality in his relationship with Bella. Her safety is his paramount concern, but his behavior toward her is extremely controlling, and obsessive to the point where it clouds his judgment. He dictates the limits of their physical relationship, monitors her movements, and limits her time with Jacob. He even tries to decide when and how she is to die (Donnelly 186), i.e. the terms of her transformation, and makes plans to abort their unborn child without Bella’s permission (Miller 169) – all in the name of keeping her safe from harm. Melissa Miller argues that *Twilight* “promotes a dangerous and damaging ideology of patriarchy that normalizes and rationalizes the control of women by men” (165). But Meyer lets him change through his interactions and negotiations with Bella as the series progresses and Bella comes into her own. Several scholars have remarked on Edward’s character development. His domineering behavior and insistence that he knows what is best for Bella gradually change, and he realizes he must let her decide for herself what she wants.

In the introductory chapter, I quoted Bryan S. Turner on the shift in motives for body discipline from the ascetic to the aesthetic (*Regulating Bodies* 47), and from the inner arena to the outer body (*Medical Power and Social Knowledge* 24). Edward and Bella illustrate this difference in their approaches to self-restraint: he represents an ascetic, traditional approach to diet that seeks to control the passions, whereas her ulterior motive is hedonistic and aesthetic, and her compliance is motivated by her desire to freely indulge her passion once she is transformed. (I analyze Bella in greater detail in chapter 4.) Self-control is the axis around which the characters of Edward, Bella, and Jacob are contrasted. Danielle Dick McGeough observes that “Edward’s and Bella’s contrasting bodies represent the dualities of discipline and chaos, restraint and excess, as well as mortality and immortality” (87). Edward and his rival Jacob Black are contrasted in terms of self-control/unruliness, mind/body, culture/nature, race, class, and physicality.

In constructing Edward as restrained, and Bella as the actively desiring party, Meyer flips the cultural script of the sexually aggressive male versus the passive, reluctant female (Wilson, *Seduced* 115-116). There are also other scripts at play. Bordo notes that “throughout dominant Western religions and philosophical traditions, the capacity for self-management is decisively coded as male. By contrast, all those bodily spontaneities – hunger, sexuality, the emotions – seen as needful of containment and control have been culturally constructed and coded as female” (205-206). Edward’s self-restraint can be read as an expression of traditional values of masculinity in Western culture that idealize the suppression of primitive drives (Kärrholm 50). It can also be read as challenging a traditional, normative masculinity in which the male is constantly interested in sex. Bealer reads Edward’s repeated denial of his thirst and his sexual desire as a “masochistically painful disavowal of the hypermasculine penetrativeness and lethality of the vampiric body” (145). Claudia Lindén also connects Edward’s abstinence to his masculinity, arguing that his masculinity must change for the happy ending to take place (215). His love for Bella and the negotiations of their relationship are critical for his character development.

2.4 Appearance

The beauty of vampires is a commonplace in contemporary vampire fiction. Anne Rice’s protagonist Lestat de Lioncourt is described as “a tall, fair-skinned man with a mass of blond hair and a graceful, almost feline quality to his movements” who spellbinds “by the sheer beauty of his appearance” (*Interview* 13, 17). In his own words, Lestat “can’t help being

a gorgeous fiend. [...] The bastard monster who made me what I am picked me on account of my good looks” (*QD* 6). The other vampire characters in the *Chronicles* are likewise “all of them magnificent in their own way” (*QD* 277). One of them muses, “Was nobody ugly ever given immortality? Or did the dark magic simply make beauty out of whatever sacrifice was thrown into the blaze?” (*QD* 277). Rice lets an ancient vampire, Marius, give Lestat the following explanation: “[W]e were both chosen for immortality for the very same reason [...] that we were the nonpareils [...] taller and more finely made than other men” (*VL* 384).

Bella catches her first glimpse of the Cullens in the school cafeteria. They are sitting apart from the others and she sees them from a distance. The vampires’ physical attributes conform to conventional Western standards of beauty: the males are muscular, and the females are slim. The female Rosalie is “statuesque” with “a beautiful figure, the kind you saw on the cover of the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue, the kind that made every girl around her take a hit on her self-esteem just by being in the same room” (*T* 16). Alice is described as “pixielike, thin in the extreme” (*T* 16). Their faces are all “devastatingly, inhumanly beautiful. They 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” (*T* 16-17). Bella’s thoughts are confirmed in a comment about Edward made by her friend Jessica: “He’s gorgeous, of course, but don’t waste your time” (*T* 19). In a later cafeteria scene, the Cullens look “more like a scene from a movie than the rest of [the humans there]” (*T* 35). Edward is described thus: “...he looked like he’d just finished shooting a commercial for hair gel” (*T* 37). Meyer’s references place the Cullens in the world of celebrities and fashion with a touch of high culture. Bella looks at them from afar, as you would look at images in the media or paintings hung in a gallery. Looking at them, Bella muses, “I couldn’t imagine any door that wouldn’t be opened by that degree of beauty” (*T* 28). She voices one of the basic truths of contemporary society: when outer appearance forms the basis for character judgment, beauty is currency.

Appearances are signals, capital, and readable signs in the *Twilight* universe. The Cullens have all the attributes that consumer culture tells us are desirable: youthfulness, a slim but muscular or toned body shape, divine faces straight out of fashion magazines. There is the beauty of angels, and Bella refers to them in those terms on several occasions. Beauty alone is not indicative of virtue, however. Other, less virtuous vampires in the series are also beautiful. Meyer therefore consistently uses other signs or wording to convey positive or negative judgment. In *Twilight*, the nomadic trio Laurent, Victoria, and James are described in terms that associate them with animals, indicating they are less human: their gait is catlike,

they are barefoot, Victoria is “feline,” and her hair is “filled with leaves and debris from the woods” (*T* 329). All have eyes that are “a deep burgundy color that [is] disturbing and sinister” (*T* 329). When Carlisle uses the word “home” to describe how the Cullens live, the nomads look surprised (*T* 330). The nomads are uncivilized, and the Volturi are framed as cultured but corrupted by their power. In *New Moon*, Bella describes one of their leaders, Aro, in a way that makes him look quite inhuman: his skin is papery, “translucently white, like onionskin,” and his eyes are red but clouded and milky (*NM* 411). Another vampire, Jane, who can inflict intense pain on her victims with her mind, is “insignificant in size,” with short, lank, pale brown hair and a slim, androgynous body. But her “wide-eyed, full-lipped face would have made a Botticelli angel look like a gargoyle. Even allowing for the dull crimson irises” (*NM* 402). Heidi is exceptionally beautiful, dressed in an ultra-short miniskirt and a close-fitting red vinyl top, an immodest outfit by LDS standards (*NM* 426-427); she acts as bait to lure unsuspecting tourists into the tower where the Volturi live, whereupon they are slaughtered.

In the *Twilight* universe, vampires’ dietary virtue is signaled by the color of their eyes. The vegetarian Cullens have golden eyes that darken to black when they are hungry, whereas the carnivores’ eyes are red. One of the first things Bella notices about Edward are his eyes: when they first meet, his eyes are almost black, but a few days later they are a dark gold. In the days between their first and second encounter, Edward has glutted himself on animal blood in order to withstand her scent. Edward’s eyes are mentioned several times in the novels. Kathryn Kane argues that Meyer focuses on the good vampires’ eyes instead of their lips, drawing attention to rationality, thought, and soul, rather than sexuality (107). The color of the Cullens’ eyes reflects their morality, “the ability to ‘exist without being a demon’ that comes when one resists desires and pleasures and embraces moral order” (Kane 109).

Meyer also uses clothing to focus the readers’ attention on the vampires’ superior bodies. The Cullens are outfitted by Alice, who dresses the whole family according to her expensive tastes, rarely allowing anyone to wear the same article of clothing twice. While the Cullens may favor dressing “simply, but in clothes that subtly [hint] at designer origins” at school (*T* 27), readers are treated to quite a different look at the prom. Here, LDS dress standards that bar “any clothing that is tight, sheer, or revealing in any other manner [...], and clothing that does not cover the shoulders or is low-cut in the front or the back” (*For the Strength of Youth* 7) obviously do not apply:

The other dancers pressed to the sides of the room to give them space — no one wanted to stand in contrast with such radiance. Emmett and Jasper were intimidating and

flawless in classic tuxedos. Alice was striking in a black satin dress with geometric cutouts that bared large triangles of her snowy white skin. And Rosalie was ... well, Rosalie. She was beyond belief. Her vivid scarlet dress was backless, tight to her calves, where it flared into a wide ruffled train, with a neckline that plunged to her waist. (*T* 424)

The difference between Rosalie and Alice on the one hand, and the seductively dressed Heidi on the other, is that while Heidi uses her looks to lure humans to certain death, Rosalie and Alice are securely committed to their monogamous, heterosexual relationships with Emmett and Jasper. Their dress is such that it creates a boundary between them and the rest of the students at Forks. Here, I would argue that Meyer departs from the LDS modesty dress code in order to provide yet another example of the Cullens as rather divine.

Humans in consumer culture are encouraged to regard their bodies as projects, and to practice body maintenance in order to stave off illness, old age, and death. Edward's body is not a project, it is completed. His body is cold, hard, strong, beautiful, and impenetrable. It is the static, resurrected and perfected immortal body of LDS belief: "A perfect statue, carved in some unknown stone, smooth like marble, glittering like crystal" (*T* 228). He embodies the contemporary ideal that Bordo describes as "a body that is absolutely tight, contained, 'bolted down,' firm: in other words, a body that is protected from eruption from within, whose internal processes are under control" (190). Bordo describes the firm, developed body as "a symbol of correct *attitude*" that implies "willpower, energy, control over infantile impulse" (195; italics original), and "Muscles express sexuality, but controlled, managed sexuality that is not about to erupt in unwanted and embarrassing display" (195).

Edward dresses well, but not ostentatiously. With very few exceptions, he is clothed throughout the series. His glittering skin provides the perfect excuse: to show skin would be to risk being exposed as a vampire. Meyer's decision to have Edward clothed throughout the series can be read as an expression of LDS modesty, but she also lets Bella and the readers see the contours of his body: "...he wore an ivory turtleneck sweater [that] fit him snugly, emphasizing how muscular his chest was" (*T* 147). His clothed and civilized body is also contrasted with that of Jacob Black, who runs around semi-nude for much of the series. Through the eyes of Bella, Meyer dwells on Edward's looks, thus creating a female gaze that is the opposite of the customary male gaze of the visual arts and fiction, in which the woman is the object of sexual desire (Shaw 235).

2.5 Affluence

“Edward had a lot of money – I didn’t even want to think about how much. Money meant next to nothing to Edward or the rest of the Cullens. It was just something that accumulated when you had unlimited time on your hands and a sister who had an uncanny ability to predict trends in the stock market” (*NM* 12). This quote shows that the Cullens are wealthy beyond imagination, and this is a prominent feature of the story. Wealth and luxury are present in every aspect of the Cullens’ lives: in their mansion, designer clothing, fast cars, not to mention the private tropical island that Carlisle gave Esme as an anniversary present. They seem to have a penchant for leaving money lying around the house, like their predecessor Count Dracula, who had a heap of gold lying in a corner (Stoker 55): “Not even taking into consideration the bloated accounts that existed all over the world with the Cullens’ various names on them, there was enough cash stashed all over the house to keep a small country afloat for a decade” (*BD* 600). The petty cash in Alice and Jasper’s room alone yields “twice the yearly income for the average American household” (*BD* 624). Their wealth has been amassed with the help of Alice’s clairvoyance which has enabled them to predict and play the stock market to their benefit. Edward gives expensive cars as presents on several occasions: Alice gets one as a bribe for keeping Bella safe while he is out of town, and Bella gets one as an engagement present and another after her transformation. On one of the mornings when Bella rides to school with Edward, she notices a flashy car in the school parking lot. It belongs to Rosalie. When she asks Edward why they drive cars like that if they are looking for privacy and trying to blend in, he replies, with an “impish” smile: “An indulgence. We all like to drive fast” (*T* 175).

Bella’s statement that money means next to nothing to the Cullens seems disingenuous. If it means nothing, why go to the trouble of acquiring it? Their wealth is prominent, but its acquisition is obscured; it happens somewhere in boardrooms, via transactions, on computers, and in Alice’s visions. Meyer appears to have no problems with the ethics of her vampires’ wealth, how this wealth was acquired, or how they spend their money. Neither do her vampire characters. Bella is uncomfortable with the contrast between her position and theirs, and she is against expensive presents being lavished on her – but the reason lies in the perceived contrast between her and them, not in the ethics; Bella never questions the Cullens’ money or their need to amass it. One thing wealth affords the vampires is shelter and security: they can keep a certain distance to the human population, and if they need to leave town in a hurry, they can. Meanwhile, they can cultivate hobbies, skills, and leisure pastimes. Carlisle is the only one

engaged in any productive work that benefits the community. He works as a doctor because he wants to, but the rest live a life of music, books, art, fast cars, and fashion.

By positioning her vampires as upper class, Meyer conforms to the tradition of the vampire as aristocrat. Anne Rice's vampires are likewise wealthy beyond belief and imagination. Still, whereas Meyer lets the Cullens use their wealth for personal amusement, Rice turns her vampires into guardians of culture: Lestat is described as enamored with what money can buy, but he and his kind also appreciate beauty, and their hideouts are packed with priceless cultural artifacts.

Several scholars have noted the role of wealth in the series. Lori Branch observes that “[p]erhaps the most problematic aspect of the series is the way that for all its monogamous, vegetarian asceticism and its hope for supernatural, redemptive, non-consuming love, it cannot imagine that love without an expressly capitalistic form of wealth” (Branch 76). Clare Reed is critical of the ways in which the Cullens make their fortune. She argues that Alice's ability to see the future creates a form of insider dealing, and likens the Cullens to economic parasites: “For all the benignity, beauty and peaceful desires of the Cullens they are, in the issue of money, as avaricious, acquisitive and parasitic as Dracula” (144).

2.6 Concluding Remarks

As the designated hero, Edward functions as “the apex of vampire flawlessness” in the series (Wilson, *Seduced* 34). His body is perfected and resurrected, and he abides by an ethical standard. Although Edward has passed the stage of human embodiment and has already gained control of his appetites, his spiritual progression toward godliness is only completed through his love for Bella. His salvation comes through the body: he learns about sex through having a body, albeit a non-human one. Through control of his appetite, he forges a long-term relationship with Bella and gains an eternal nuclear family of his own. It could also be argued that at the end of the series, he has already advanced to a symbolic celestial kingdom according to LDS theology. On Earth, his physical and material attributes embody the ideals of consumer culture. With one foot in the spiritual and the other in the material, he offers readers opportunity for multiple interpretations.

3 The Shape-Shifting Wolf as a Noble Savage: Jacob Black

3.1 Introduction: Werewolves versus Vampires

In chapter 2, I have argued that the virtue of the good vampires in the *Twilight* series centers on their self-restraint. Self-restraint is also a motif in the representations of the Quileute werewolves, but Stephenie Meyer does not allow her wolves the same virtues as the vampires. The wolves are constructed as uncontrolled and volatile, and they also function as contrasts to the Cullens in other ways. This is especially apparent in Jacob Black, who is Bella Swan's best friend and Edward Cullen's rival.

Sixteen-year-old Jacob lives with his father on the Quileute reservation in La Push near Forks. He and Bella become friends after she is abandoned by Edward Cullen, and he helps her heal. Bella describes Jacob thus: "Jacob was simply a perpetually happy person, and he carried that happiness with him like an aura, sharing it with whoever was near him. Like an earthbound sun, whenever someone was within his gravitational pull, Jacob warmed them" (NM 128). There is a relaxed and effortless friendship that soon develops into love on Jacob's part. Unknown to them both, Jacob carries the Quileute shapeshifter gene, a hereditary condition that is based on and triggered by the presence of vampires in the area. Carriers transform in their teens and are then able to turn at will into giant wolves, also called werewolves. The wolves are peacekeepers and protectors, whose ancient duty is to protect their tribe against vampires.

When he discovers he is a shapeshifter, Jacob is shocked that the ancient legends he has never believed in are true. Despite peer support from the other wolves in the La Push pack, he is unhappy about his own perceived monstrosity and lack of control. Jacob's transformation is both physical and psychological. He grows big and muscular, reaching physical maturity at record speed. His body temperature is higher than that of humans, and his appetite is voracious. His temperament changes from happy and easygoing to aggressive and belligerent, but his ties to Bella endure. Over the course of the novels, Jacob competes unsuccessfully for Bella's love, and defends her against evil vampires and the prejudices of his own kind. He gains control over his transformations and comes to accept his wolf-self. Due to his initially unrecognized birthright as the true alpha wolf, he is eventually able to defy the pack leader in defense of Bella and leave the pack. When others join him, he refuses to lead his new pack by domination. In the last novel, Meyer resolves the love triangle by letting Jacob find his soulmate in Bella's young daughter Renesmee, who becomes his future love interest.

The *Twilight* wolves are technically shapeshifters, but their attributes are a blend of werewolf and mythical shapeshifter or guardian spirit. Meyer blends werewolf lore and actual Quileute legend but relies heavily on her own imagination. The wolves are not dependent on the lunar cycle and do not transform from men into complete wolf-beasts. Rather, they maintain their human perceptions and thinking when they are in wolf form (Jensen 93), and gain wolf instincts and abilities and a shared consciousness with other pack members. But although the wolf is depicted positively in many cultures and myths, including Native American mythology, Meyer chooses to emphasize the negative, werewolf aspect in her characters. Natalie Wilson observes that “rather than the wolf as regal protector that is found in indigenous myths, we have aggressive and animalistic wolves who fight amongst themselves and harm others, or, modern descendents of the werewolf” (Parke 195).

Unlike the vampires, the wolves are not a threat to humans by design, and they do not have to work to retain their humanity because their human core is never lost. Their threat to humans lies in their temperament. Changing into wolf form is often triggered by anger, and the wolf may accidentally harm anyone who comes too close during the transformation. Especially fledglings have a hard time managing their temper. This volatility is given a lot of space in the text and is presented as natural. When the other members of the pack discover that Bella knows their secret, one of them explodes in anger and Jacob, also reacting in anger, transforms to protect her. The two wolves fight violently while the other pack members stand around bantering and betting on who will come out on top. Later, the two rejoin the others unscathed and with no hard feelings. The wolves’ attitude toward their own fighting and violence is casual, even forgiving, perhaps because of their considerable self-healing powers. They fight, but they heal from their injuries in no time, and so there is no harm done. But sometimes a human gets in the way, as in the case of pack leader Sam Uley’s fiancée Emily, who was disfigured when Sam lost control and she happened to be standing too close. Similarly, when Jacob first transforms, he nearly rips his father’s face off by mistake. And so, like the vampire, the wolf must learn to control itself so as not to harm others.

Jacob’s and his wolf brothers’ self-control is treated differently than that of the vampires. When Edward exercises self-control and conquers his inherent savagery, it is presented as heroic, a result of decades of unrelenting practice, an act that leads to greater humanity, and a civilizing process. When a wolf achieves self-control, it is not heroic. Jacob’s lack of self-control as a fledgling wolf receives much more textual attention, while his later self-mastery is presented casually: “It was easy now, something I just did, natural. The red haze didn’t wash over my eyes. The heat didn’t shiver down my spine” (*E* 551). Meyer lets

Edward obsess about self-control – his and others’ – throughout the novels, whereas the werewolves’ approach is less dramatic. Anne Torkelson observes that both vampires and wolves treat the wolves’ violence as something unfortunate and inevitable (214). This is not to say that the wolves treat the danger to humans lightly. Sam’s guilt and anguish over Emily’s scarred face is a daily reminder of what can happen. Overall, the self-control they possess is presented as unreliable, and it receives much less attention than their volatility. Edward warns Bella, “Werewolves are unstable. Sometimes, the people near them get hurt. Sometimes, they get killed” (*E* 26). Violence, it is intimated, is a part of the wolf life.

Jacob’s passionate temperament and tenuous self-restraint are contrasted with Edward’s icy, unrelenting self-control. Jacob is always the underdog when the two of them meet, and he is often on the brink of exploding into his wolf form in sheer rage. Meyer also uses numerous other binaries to contrast Edward and Jacob. They are opposites in terms of mind, body, class, race, and temperament. Jacob is the “noble savage” to Edward’s civilized gentleman, working class to Edward’s aristocrat; he is an immature boy and Edward (who, despite his seventeen-year-old body, is more than one hundred years old) is a man.

The wolves are constructed as foils to the vampires. Wilson argues that *Twilight* “can be read as upholding traditional ideas of mind versus body and culture versus nature” (Click 63). In this setting, the vampires are associated with mind and culture, and the wolves and the Quileute with body and nature (Click 63). The vampires are wealthy aristocrats, civilized, educated and cultured, and their bodies are hard, clothed, and controlled. The wolves are from a far less privileged background, and no mention is made of their educational or professional ambitions. For instance, Jacob is good at repairing cars and does not seem overly ambitious about school, since Bella has to remind him to study. The small house he lives in with his father is called “a tiny barn” (*NM* 115). Meyer makes the wolves group animals, an undifferentiated “pack,” in contrast to the Cullens who are a “family” of individuals who all look different from one another, but with “faces, so different, so similar, [...] all devastatingly, inhumanly beautiful” (*T* 17). After their transformation, the wolves look almost identical when in human form: “all tall and russet-skinned, black hair chopped short [...] They could have been brothers [...] The resemblance was only intensified by the strikingly similar hostility in every pair of eyes” (*NM* 231). They even move in synchronicity. Edward, Alice, and Jasper all have special abilities associated with the mind. Edward can read minds, Jasper can control people’s emotional states, and Alice can foresee the future. Jacob is placed firmly in the category of body, without access to power through his intellect. In general, the Quileute are described in terms of their bodies: the wolves walk around semi-nude when in

their human form, and their power lies in their physical strength and fighting abilities. Here it would seem Meyer echoes a common image. Referring to the observations of S. G. Larson on the representations of Native Americans in media texts, Wilson comments, “Even when such characters are positively depicted, their power derives not from their intellect but from their bodies or their closeness to nature” (Click 63).

Meyer even contrasts vampires and wolves in terms of rationality versus mythology. Although the series does not explain the origin of vampires, Carlisle the doctor represents the voice of science. He analyzes samples of werewolf and vampire blood and discovers that vampires have twenty-five chromosomes and werewolves have twenty-four, compared with humans who have twenty-three. In contrast, the origin of the Quileute wolves is explained with a blend of heredity and legend.

3.2 The Unruly Wolf Body

Jacob’s size, muscles, body heat, and skin color are constantly underscored in the books. They are markers of his otherness, not only in the implicitly white setting of Forks, but also in comparison to the vampires, who are framed as the ideal. When Jacob comes to Bella’s school to speak to Edward, Bella remarks on how her classmates react to him:

I noticed how their eyes widened as they took in all six foot seven inches of Jacob’s long body, muscled up the way no normal sixteen-and-a-half-year-old ever had been. I saw those eyes rake over his tight black T-shirt – short-sleeved, though the day was unseasonably cool – his ragged, grease-smearred jeans, and the glossy, black bike he leaned against. Their eyes didn’t linger on his face – something about his expression had them glancing quickly away. And I noticed the wide berth everyone gave him, the bubble of space that no one dared encroach on. With a sense of astonishment, I realized that Jacob looked *dangerous* to them. How odd. (E 69)

Jacob is dangerous, and his body is an unruly body – a body that is constantly threatening to erupt in anger and turn into his wolf form. It is also an unclothed body: Meyer lets Jacob and his pack brothers walk around wearing next to nothing, ostensibly for practical reasons – phasing into wolf form is an explosive transformation that tears all one’s clothes to shreds, so in order to minimize wardrobe loss one wears as little as possible. This focuses the reader’s attention on Jacob’s body, and the unpredictability of the transformations underscores the wolves’ inadequate self-control. Jacob’s nudity is presented as natural to him (Wilson in Parke 200). In contrast, Edward – whose body is hard, muscular and “sculpted”

but not as big – is always immaculately dressed, and his skin is rarely bare. Bella tends to dwell more on Jacob’s body, whereas her gaze rests on Edward’s head, particularly on his eyes (Wilson in Click 65). Wilson observes that “the werewolves’ lack of clothing further emphasizes their status *as* bodies” (Click 64). Quoting van Lent, Wilson notes that the tradition of representing Native Americans without clothes is an old one that continues in modern films, “where indigenous peoples seem to be in a permanent state of undress” (*Seduced* 174).

Jacob’s muscles and wardrobe (or lack thereof) also indicate his class status. In a discussion on the cultural meanings of muscularity, Susan Bordo observes that muscles were formerly associated, not only with masculine power, but also with “manual labor and proletarian status” and with “the insensitive, unintelligent and animalistic,” and muscles “have often been suffused with racial meaning” (195). Here Bordo refers to film representations of black slaves and prizefighters and their “sweating, glistening bodies” (195). Today, the muscular body has taken on new meanings and is now “a symbol of the correct *attitude* ... suggesting willpower, energy, control over infantile impulse...” (195). However, muscles developed to extremes are still associated with “brute, unconscious materiality” (195).

3.3 Sexuality and Masculinity

Meyer’s construction of Jacob as less restrained than Edward also extends to his masculinity and sexuality. Jacob is prey both to his anger and to his love for Bella. He knows how to control his anger, but not his desire. In his relationship with Bella, he is both the insistent suitor who wants to make Bella love him, and the caring friend who refuses to hurt her. Because he wants Bella, Jacob feels entitled to act on his desires and pursue her, even to the point of disrespecting her physical boundaries. In romance novels, this is often what the male protagonist does: overcome by his desire, he imposes his will on the heroine, and she responds, surprising herself. He “knows” she desires him, but she refuses to admit it. The breaching of another person’s physical boundaries is framed as mutual arousal, which is eventually followed by an equally mutual declaration of love. In *Eclipse*, Jacob forcibly kisses Bella, whereupon she punches him. He insists she kissed him back, then eventually apologizes. When she later refers to this incident as an assault, his comment is, “Ouch. That’s cold” (*E* 422-423). Later, he manipulates her into a mutually passionate kiss by intimating he will otherwise let himself be killed in the upcoming battle against Victoria’s vampire army (*E*

466). In contrast, Edward constantly suppresses his vampiric and sexual desires in order to keep Bella safe. Edward is associated with what Sara Kärholm calls “traditionally idealised 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” (50). Kärholm goes on:

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. (Kärholm 50)

Both male protagonists are constructed in the same fashion as many romance heroes: extremely masculine and macho on the outside but soft and caring on the inside, and capable of paying attention to the heroine and intuitively understanding her (Wilson, *Seduced* 85). The difference lies in their sexual self-restraint. Edward and Jacob offer different perspectives on masculinity and on the idea of the male sex drive as an unstoppable force of nature. Whereas Jacob gives in to his desires, Edward transcends nature and leaves room for a new, non-predatory masculinity: “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” (Lindén 228). Jacob is assigned the role of the adolescent male, whose masculinity demands a conquest and whose sex drive “once triggered cannot take responsibility for itself or take no for an answer” (Rich, quoted in Torkelson 212). Sexual self-restraint becomes a key aspect of the ideal masculinity that Meyer offers in the shape of Edward. Because Edward never gives in to temptations of the flesh and Jacob does, Jacob cannot be allowed to win.

Throughout the series, Bella stubbornly defends her right to be friends with Jacob, describing him as her “personal sun.” Jacob finally renounces his claim on her, saying: “I would have been healthier for you [...] I would have been the air, the sun. [...] But I can’t fight with an eclipse” (*E* 531). Although Meyer lets him have a good run, the cards are stacked in Edward’s favor from the very beginning.

Twilight constructs ideal masculinity in a variety of ways, one of which is through self-control. As a non-white male, Jacob is framed as sexually more dangerous and uncontrolled. Since Edward’s powers of self-restraint are so much greater than Jacob’s and since they are framed as much more heroic, it would seem Meyer is saying that self-control is the property of the white male, and that the masculine ideal is white.

3.4 The Rewards of Self-Restraint

The werewolf and its image of bodily eruption can be read as anxiety about internal processes out of control. In the werewolf genre, “a new, alien, libidinous, and uncontrollable self literally bursts through the seams of the victims’ old flesh” (Bordo 189). This can be read as symbolizing the transition from childhood and adolescence into adulthood, with all its concomitant anxieties about the changing body and its new, sometimes uncontrollable desires. Jacob Black comes to terms with his new self and begins to assume control of his mind and body. He also assumes future responsibility for Renesmee, who according to the laws of the *Twilight* universe is destined to become his soulmate. His image thus changes from volatile werewolf to noble guardian shapeshifter over the course of the novels. (Wilson notes the same shift in how the wolves are presented over the course of the novels, as quoted in Parke 194). A psychological interpretation might be that he has reached adulthood and has incorporated responsibility as a new aspect of himself. However, the wolf identity is portrayed as bestial, violent, and even dangerous. What does this say about sexuality and masculinity, and what is the role of ethnicity? And what rewards is Jacob offered in return for his self-control?

Here I would like to return to Karin Nykvist’s description of *Twilight* as a story of physical and spiritual salvation, in which the body is the instrument of salvation (30). While the body can certainly be read as an instrument of salvation in the case of Bella and Edward, it can also be an instrument of access to power for vampires and wolves alike. Jacob’s wolf identity offers him authority, masculinity, and physical power. Self-restraint, however, is the key to salvation, according to Latter-day Saint doctrine. For a vampire, self-restraint through the exercise of free will yields family, humanity, civilization, eternal love, and the redemption of the soul. As a bonus, the vampires gain access to eternal and unlimited hedonism and material consumption. Meyer rewards her vampires for overcoming their inherent nature, but the wolves are not given the same opportunity. Their capacity for self-restraint is discredited and Meyer also denies them free will as a species. Individuals who become wolves lose their free will, when they transform and join the pack. They are subordinate to the alpha wolf, and disobedience is mentally and physically impossible. Jacob asserts his own will and leaves the pack, but he can only do so because he is the true alpha by birth. The wolves do not even control their choice of whom to love. In the *Twilight* universe, wolves have a predestined soulmate, and when they meet that person, they recognize the connection immediately (an event Meyer calls “imprinting”), regardless of the circumstances. Neither the wolves nor the person they imprint on have any say in the matter, and it is intimated there will be little resistance. A few wolves, including Jacob, find true love this way, and it can be speculated

that this will encourage them to control their temper for the sake of their human beloved – but it is not a reward for self-restraint as such. Free will and the ability to make moral choices – especially in matters of love – is a key theme in *Twilight*, but Meyer circumscribes the wolves' capacity for this. So, is free will only for the select few?

3.5 Racial Aspects

For both wolves and vampires, the body is an instrument of access to power, but wolves are not offered salvation. Another reward that is not offered equally is privilege. With or without soulmates, the Quileute wolves are destined for a life on the reservation, “perpetually violent/naked,” as Wilson puts it (*Seduced* 171). On the other hand, being a vampire opens the doors to a life of wealth and privileges that, Wilson argues, “echo real-world white privilege, or the social capital afforded to those with white skin” (*Seduced* 171).

Seen from a racial perspective, making the werewolves Native Americans is problematic, due to the historical framing of indigenous peoples as less civilized. Wilson asserts that “*Twilight* furthers the representation of Native Peoples as savage [...] by presenting them as wolves” (*Seduced* 163). The attributes and characteristics assigned to the Quileute wolves as opposed to the vampires are also problematic. The white vampire protagonists are unequivocally framed as the heroes, whereas the non-white wolves are a blend of good and bad. Meyer underscores the uncontrolled nature of the wolves at the expense of their positive attributes such as courage, strength, and guardianship. They are described as violent and potentially dangerous to women. Although the wolves are given the opportunity to be both important and heroic, this shift only comes through their association and alliance with the vampires.

In *Twilight*, the body surface is a readable sign (Nykqvist 30). Edward's and Jacob's bodies are not constructed just to satisfy the readers' desire for attractive male protagonists, but also as symbols of the nature/culture divide that separates wolves and vampires. In this context, nature is non-white, and culture is white. Edward and the other vampires are consistently associated with whiteness. Their skin is whiter than simply pale, and they are clearly marked as different variations of Caucasian. For instance, their eyes are golden, and their house and home décor are white. In combination with their other actions, attributes and pursuits, this creates a representation where, as Wilson points out, whiteness is associated with civility, wealth, intellect (Click 56), rationality, culture, progress, and particularly godliness (Click 60). The “russet-skinned” and dark-eyed Jacob and the Quileute are

associated with the indigenous and with animals, primitivism, savagery, irrationality, and the past (Wilson in Click 56, 60).

Brianna Burke comments on Meyer's obsessive and gratuitous mention of Jacob's "russet" skin color: "Jacob's skin color is important not only because it marks him as the exotic sexual Other, but also because it stands in contradistinction to *whiteness*, which is really what the books endorse" (211). According to Burke, "[i]t is no mistake that Bella repeatedly chooses Edward, or *consuming* whiteness, since it is accompanied by palatial estates and luxury cars that distinguish the buying power of only the wealthiest white elite" (211). Self-control is not the only thing being endorsed: Wilson also describes *Twilight* as a story "that works to glorify whiteness and wealth on the one hand, and to perpetuate notions of indigenous peoples as noble but beastly savages on the other" (Parke 195). This also has implications for the characters' humanity. Although the wolves never lose their human core, Meyer frames the non-human Cullens as more benign, enlightened, and peace-loving than the wolves, and hence more humane. Wilson asserts that Meyer's blend of wolf "builds upon imperial, white supremacist notions of native peoples as animalistic others and perpetuates the notion of white humans as *more human*, more civilized, than people of color" (*Seduced* 38; italics original).

These conclusions are not surprising, considering the connotations of whiteness in LDS teachings. McKeever and Johnson point to wording in the *Book of Mormon* that suggests that dark-skinned "Lamanites" (Indians) who embrace Mormon teachings will find their skin becoming lighter: "...their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes; and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and a delightsome people" (2 Nephi 30:6, quoted in www.mrm.org/white-and-delightsome). The *Book of Mormon* contains several references to the connection between dark skin color and "iniquity." The wording "white and delightsome" was changed to "pure and delightsome" in 1981. Although many insist that the change was a clarification, and that "white" meant to refer to "a cleaner state of heart" rather than a lightening of skin color, McKeever and Johnson observe that other contradictory passages in the *Book of Mormon* remain. They conclude: "To say 2 Nephi 30:6 was altered merely for clarification, and had nothing to do with skin color, is certainly not supported by comments from past LDS leaders, or from current readings in the Book of Mormon" (www.mrm.org/white-and-delightsome).

4 Perfected and In Control at Last: Bella Swan

4.1 Introducing Bella

In this chapter, I examine how Bella Swan in her human and vampire form conforms to and/or challenges the ideals and ideas of self-restraint and the body as presented in the LDS faith and in consumer culture.

The reader's first view of Bella Swan is when Bella, who until then has lived with her mother in Phoenix, looks in the mirror upon arriving at her father Charlie's house in rainy Forks, Washington:

Maybe, if I looked like a girl from Phoenix should, I could work this to my advantage. But physically, I'd never fit in anywhere. I should be tan, sporty, blond—a volleyball player, or a cheerleader, perhaps—all the things that go with living in the valley of the sun. Instead, I was ivory-skinned, without even the excuse of blue eyes or red hair, despite the constant sunshine. [...] Maybe it was the light, but already I looked sallow, unhealthy. My skin could be pretty—it was very clear, almost translucent-looking—but it all depended on color. I had no color here. (*T* 9)

She describes herself as someone who does not fit in, neither physically nor otherwise: “I had always been slender, but soft somehow, obviously not an athlete; I didn't have the necessary hand-eye coordination to play sports without humiliating myself—and harming both myself and anyone else who stood too close” (*T* 9) [...] “I didn't relate well to people my age. Maybe the truth was that I didn't relate well to people, period. [...] Maybe there was a glitch in my brain” (*T* 9-10).

Bella has already learned that looks are a personal resource, and that she doesn't measure up. She acknowledges that she is slender, but then counters that with “but soft somehow,” neither athletic nor tanned. Like many teens, she is awkward and ill at ease in her human body. She is also uncommonly clumsy, even by human standards, and this is repeatedly brought to the readers' attention. However, Meyer drops enough hints to make the reader see that Bella is not physically unattractive at all: in addition to being slim, she has beautiful skin and a full head of long, dark hair. For whatever reason (personal integrity, lack of vanity, or low self-esteem), she makes no effort to enhance her appearance other than basic hygiene; she is aware of fashion but makes her own choices; and she sleeps in old sweats and prefers jeans and baggy sweaters. Her wardrobe is described as modest. The only times she is described as showing an interest in clothes is when she wants to look nice for Edward. Her general strategy is to reject fashion rather than try to enhance her appearance. Sarah Heaton

reads this rejection as an expression of Bella's "teenage angst surrounding her femininity" (82). It also serves as "a narrative tool to emphasize [Bella's] 'unknowing' natural beauty" (82).

Bella is an academic achiever and a dutiful daughter: a conscientious, responsible, and self-controlled person, who has effectively been parenting her scatterbrained mother in Phoenix and who now shoulders the housekeeping responsibilities at her domestically inept father's house. Then she falls in love with Edward Cullen. From then on, throughout the rest of her human life, her body is described as out of control. It begins with how she reacts to Edward's touch, beginning with the first time they kiss:

Blood boiled under my skin, burned in my lips. My breath came in a wild gasp. 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. (*T* 247)

This sets the tone of their physical contact from then on. Throughout the series, her physical reaction to his touch is intense: her heart races, she faints, she is unable to focus on anything else, and she forgets to breathe. In lust and in love, her human body is framed as unruly and in need of control. She is framed as unable to regulate herself: "Though I respected the need for maintaining a safe distance between my skin and his razor-sharp, venom-coated teeth, I tended to forget about trivial things like that when he was kissing me" (*NM* 15). Bella's desire is restrained and policed by Edward for the sake of her safety and his soul, and she has no power over her body or her sexuality. She complies grudgingly, but she also actively pushes against the boundaries he sets in terms of physical contact.

Edward controls the physical side of their relationship and continues to do so until Bella becomes pregnant. At that point, Bella's body is out of his control and hers. He tries to arrange for Carlisle to perform an abortion, but Bella enlists Rosalie to help her protect the baby. The pregnancy is difficult and accelerated, and Bella is nothing but a suffering vessel until she goes into labor and dies as the result of a very violent birth that saves the baby, but leaves her a "broken, bled-out, mangled corpse" (*BD* 326). As Bella lies dying, Edward injects her with vampire venom, and her three-day transformation begins. She suffers in silence throughout the excruciating process, not wanting to cause Edward pain by screaming in agony. When the transformation is completed, she sees herself for the first time in the mirror, "a carving of a goddess" (*BD* 372):

The alien creature in the glass was indisputably beautiful [...] She was fluid even in stillness, and her flawless face was pale as the moon against the frame of her dark, heavy hair. Her limbs were smooth and strong, skin glistening subtly, luminous as a pearl. (*BD* 371-372)

Bella is stronger and even more graceful than the other vampires. She also turns out to be an exceptionally self-controlled vampire: she feels the burning thirst, but has no trouble controlling herself, much to the amazement of the others. On her first hunt, she suddenly smells humans, “a fragrance so attractive that there was no choice” (*BD* 385), but instead of giving in, she stops in her tracks and runs away from the scent. When she meets her father for the first time since her transformation, she feels “a hot stabbing of desire”: “Charlie smelled more delicious than anything I’d ever imagined [...] And he was just a few feet away [...] But I wasn’t hunting now. And this was my father” (*BD* 469). Self-control comes naturally to her, and her mind turns out to be her special power: in the final showdown with the Volturi, she casts an invisible, protective shield around herself and her loved ones. The Volturi back down, and Bella saves the day. The story ends with Bella getting absolutely everything: eternal youth, beauty and wealth, motherhood, and a never-ending sexual heaven with Edward in their luxurious cottage in the forest.

4.2 Bella and Church Gospel

How does Bella illustrate or challenge LDS ideas about the body and self-restraint? In chapter 1, I assert that Latter-day Saints hold that the purpose of life on earth is to learn, grow, and progress toward godliness through having a body, to create long-term relationships, to treat one’s body with respect, and to learn to govern one’s bodily appetites. I would argue that while Bella’s trajectory can be read as a process of learning, growth, and progression toward a symbolic godliness, and while she succeeds in creating long-term embodied relationships, she fails to treat her body with respect, and the governance of her appetites is not in her own hands during her human life.

Bella does not appreciate her human body, and she does not treat it well. During Edward’s absence from her life, she behaves recklessly on several occasions: she crashes her motorcycle and requires stitches; she jumps off a cliff and almost drowns because she wants to try cliff-diving; and she places herself in the path of a group of men who may want to molest her. She disparages her body throughout the series and makes no attempts to improve or enhance it through exercise or fashion. We never see Bella taking care of her health or her

body except for personal hygiene – but when Edward is staying the night, her bedtime routine is suddenly meticulous: she showers, brushes her teeth, and washes her hair (*T* 260). She is uninterested in food and seems more focused on keeping her father fed than herself. When she is supposed to eat, she never seems to enjoy her meal, but either picks at it or pushes it away (except on her honeymoon, when she suddenly develops a huge appetite that is soon explained by her pregnancy). Within the logic of the story, this can be explained by her lack of interest in mortal life. It can be argued that Bella's food intake is irrelevant for the plot. However, her lack of interest in food can be interpreted as a foregrounding of her later capacity for self-restraint when she smells humans, and her preparing her father's dinner indicates proper feminine domesticity. Her lack of interest in food means she takes no interest in unhealthy foods either. She does not do drugs, smoke, or drink; she has a "low tolerance for caffeine" (*NM* 435). She appears uninterested in human self-improvement, academic or physical. The only thing she wonders whether she will miss after her transformation is her capacity for sexual arousal: Will she still feel the same way about Edward?

Susan Jeffers describes the LDS concept of learning by human embodiment thus: "People are meant to learn to control their bodies and learn from the experiences gained from corporeality. The assumption is that people need to understand hunger, lust, broken bones, all the difficulties of being mortal, in a more than merely theoretical fashion" (141). Jeffers connects Bella's experiences and personal growth to her corporeality (141), which is emphasized in *Breaking Dawn*, where Bella has sex, becomes pregnant, gives birth, dies, suffers during her transformation, and finally comes into her own through the physical experience of being a vampire.

Bella learns about sex and desire through having a body. Meyer devotes a great deal of attention to how Bella's body reacts to desire, the physicality of being in love and in lust. On the one hand, the novels do not criticize Bella for *feeling* desire. On the other hand, she is presented as utterly incapable of regulating that desire herself. She does not learn to control her sexual desire; it is Edward who does the restraining. Meyer makes Bella an actively desiring protagonist who does not avoid thoughts and actions that arouse passions – but she gives her virtuous vampire control of the physical relationship and curtails Bella's agency. Meyer grants Bella a great deal of agency when it comes to making life choices and shouldering responsibility, but she does not let the human Bella have even a fraction of control when it comes to her sexuality and her physical interaction with Edward. It could be argued that Meyer, in the guise of Edward, is protecting her protagonist from making "wrong" or dangerous choices, since Bella is an adolescent who has yet to learn how handle her

sexuality, whereas Edward is more than one hundred years old. But Edward is also seventeen, and a virgin in terms of sexual experience. Why give the power to him? It could be speculated that Meyer is endorsing the superiority of the male in a relationship, and that she is promoting a view of gender in which males are rational and females are irrational. However, Bella's later transformation and her subsequent power of mind and body suggest that what Meyer is endorsing is equality in a relationship, and that Bella and Edward must be equals before they can fully enjoy sex. This is stated outright in *Breaking Dawn*, when Bella and Edward can finally enjoy each other completely: "We could love *together* – both active participants now. Finally equals" (*BD* 446).

Although having sex with Edward could kill Bella, sexual desire as such is portrayed as natural and positive – provided it occurs within the context of a monogamous, heterosexual marriage. Throughout the novels, Bella wants to have sex with Edward, but he refuses to have sex or turn her into a vampire before they are married. He wants to protect his virtue and hers, just in case it counts for something in the hereafter – it is the one area in which they are both equally spotless (*E* 402-403). Bella is against marriage and premarital chastity: she is already his. They go back and forth on this until the end of the third novel, when Edward suddenly gives in and says they can have sex without getting married. But at that point, Bella has already done an about-face and decided she wants to do things "responsibly" and "in the right order" (*E* 549) for the sake of Edward's soul. Bella has grown and progressed, and she is "following all the rules" (*E* 549). This scene is the only one where she is not completely carried away by Edward's kisses. Her sudden resolve is completely logical in the context of Meyer's faith, and it is necessary for Bella's progression according to it.

Premarital chastity is important for Latter-day Saints, because it directly impacts their life after death and the celestial kingdom that they will end up in. Chastity is considered particularly important for girls, because they have the power to tempt (Dietz 100). If they are not chaste, they cannot get a Mormon temple wedding, which "grants women entrance to the highest levels of heaven" (Dietz 100). Mormon temples are sacred places and only practicing and observant Saints have entry to them (Schwartzman 133n). A couple that is married in a temple is "sealed" to each other, which means the marriage will persist into and beyond eternity. Sealed marriages are a goal for Latter-day Saints, since the marriages lead to divine eternal life (Schwartzman 123), and young LDS women are taught that this is their only way to salvation (Schwartzman 128). In the Mormon faith, marriage and immortality are the key to reaching God (Dietz 103). When Edward refuses to have sex before marriage, he does so with an eye to the afterlife.

Bella's trajectory illustrates another LDS purpose of embodiment: to have a family. Family is important to Bella. She loves her parents, but her own family life has been lacking due to her parents' divorce and psychological ineptitude. She wants to become a part of the Cullen family, and when Edward leaves her in *New Moon*, she mourns not only the loss of his love, but the loss of his family. Anna Silver argues that the identity Bella finds at last is also through affiliation: in the *Twilight* series, identity is shaped not just by romantic love but by group or family affiliation rather than individual achievement (Silver 122, 127, 130). Silver reads Meyer as implying that "self is found in community" (133), which echoes the LDS idea that human embodiment is about forging relationships.

Does Bella learn, grow, and progress toward godliness? In a sense, yes. Her progress is her development into a wife and mother, the supreme goals for a woman. Her pregnancy, death, and resurrection can be read as the LDS progression toward immortality. Susan Jeffers likens the ending to a Mormon Celestial Kingdom on Earth: Bella's body is "glorified, perfected, resurrected" (147) and she lives with her eternal partner and her family in a "place of perfect peace, harmony, and joy" (147). Toscano goes as far as to assert that at the end of the series, Meyer "subtly, perhaps unconsciously" reveals "the image of a divine female in the unlikely person of Bella, who is now Bella the immortal, Bella the protective and spiritual, Bella drawn from a rich, complex, and paradoxical Mormon theology of a bygone era" (34).

4.3 Bella and the Body Project

The *Twilight* series is set in the small town of Forks and the nearby La Push reservation, with few excursions elsewhere. In the story, Forks and La Push are peculiarly set apart from the rest of the world. The adults go to their jobs, and the teens go to school. For shopping and leisure, they go to Port Angeles or Seattle. The worldliness of consumer culture seems, if not absent, at least distant. However, the same dynamics are in place: appearance is important to social success in high school. There is the usual gossip about boys and prom dresses and dates, there are cliques and a certain amount of superficiality. As a new student who moves to a small school from a big city, Bella gets a lot of attention from the other students, especially the boys, which sparks jealousy among certain other girls and makes Bella uncomfortable.

Karin Nykvist describes consumer culture as a "coded system of signs," in which "[c]ommodities are used to indicate wealth, status, and class [...] and the human body is the ultimate commodity, the individual's most important asset" (36). The body's worth as a personal resource is based on its appearance, and this is brought even more sharply into focus

for Bella, when the Cullens enter the story. Through Edward, she is introduced to a world of luxury and consumption, and the vampires' beauty and power make her feel even more insignificant than before. The Cullens are like the celebrities whose lifestyles ordinary people are encouraged to aspire to. Their looks, clothes, cars, and house all send signals about identity, but most of all Bella dwells on their beauty. The inadequacy of her body suddenly comes into focus. By virtue of being human, her body is deficient, clumsy, easily injured, breakable, soft, vulnerable – and less beautiful. But there is a solution: her malleable body can and must be transformed into the hard body of a vampire.

Although her desire for immortality is mainly motivated by the thought of eternal life with Edward, Bella (and Meyer) dwells at such lengths on the Cullens' physical perfection that her desire to become a vampire must also be interpreted as the quest for a new body. She wants to be strong and indestructible so the evil vampires can't kill her – “More than anything, I wanted to be fierce and deadly, someone no one would dare mess with” (*NM* 232) – and so she and Edward can be equals and have sex without fear of him killing her. She wants beauty too, so she can keep Edward interested: “I wouldn't let him be distracted. Maybe, when I was beautiful and strong, he wouldn't want distractions” (*NM* 386). Bella hopes that, as a vampire, she'll be “[s]trong and fast, and *most of all*, beautiful. Someone who could stand next to Edward and feel like she belonged there” (*E* 305, emphasis mine). Her objectives echo the reward for body work in consumer culture: “[not] spiritual salvation or even improved health, but [...] an enhanced appearance and more marketable self” (Featherstone 171).

The beauty industry tells us that a makeover or transformation will bring out the true you or an improved version of you. Bella does not turn to bodybuilding, cosmetics, or plastic surgery (which she could never afford): in the world of vampires and werewolves, human methods of self-enhancement are utterly ineffectual. She opts for radical body-shopping (Nykivist 31). Her new body is the antithesis of the old one and more: beautiful, strong, graceful, with enhanced senses. Her true self is unveiled, she gains confidence and agency, and the sensual aspects of being with Edward are even better than before (*BD* 388, 394). Now she can “release the temptations of the flesh” (Featherstone 171). Choosing the less delicious blood of animals is not a problem: after she's had her fill, she feels “sloshy,” but the burn of thirst in her throat is only muted. But she accepts that this is how it is, “thirst [is] just an inescapable part of this life” (*BD* 393). Abstaining from food is preferable to abstaining from sex.

Heike Steinhoff and Maria Verena Siebert analyze Bella's transformation in the context of makeover narratives such as seen on television. In makeover shows, the women and their bodies are presented as deficient and in need of fixing and self-control (5-6). The transformation into beauty is a "narrative of personal growth, empowerment, strength and discipline" (6). They argue that in *Twilight*, it is the human body that is monstrous, and the vampire body is the ideal (6). Here, Steinhoff and Siebert refer to Bordo's description of the modern ideal body (which I also describe in chapter 2), a "tighter, smoother, more contained body profile" (188), "a body that is absolutely tight, contained, 'bolted down,' firm" (Bordo 190). Steinhoff and Siebert reference feminist critics in their observation that "women, and especially female bodies, have a long history of being associated with the monstrous and the grotesque" (4). They argue that Bella's pregnancy and childbirth unleashes the monstrosity of the human female body in the text, which must then be contained. This is achieved through Bella's transformation (9). The birth is sudden and dramatic, and Edward is forced to perform an emergency C-section with his teeth to get the baby out. He injects the dying Bella with his venom, seals her body shut, and her transformation begins. Her new body is sleek, smooth, and closed, with no eruptions and no blood or other fluids leaking out through its boundaries. It is youthful, unchanging, and has lost the power to procreate. The perfected female body in the *Twilight* universe is thus a neutered body (13). Steinhoff and Siebert comment on the paradox that a text that in other respects is pro-life should offer such an ideal for the female body (13). However, this body is the very one that consumer culture idealizes: young, smooth, and slender, showing no signs of having borne children.

Bella's physical transformation is not her only makeover. Alice Cullen loves fashion, and despite their differing tastes, Bella lets herself be dressed by her for special occasions while she is still human, such as for her prom, graduation, and wedding, even her honeymoon. When Bella wakes up as a vampire, it is in an outfit that Alice has dressed her in during her transformation – a tightly fitted ice-blue silk cocktail dress (*BD* 377) that Bella promptly trashes on her first hunting trip. Alice's obsession with fashion and extravaganza – she even stocks Bella's new house with a gigantic closet full of silks and satins – is described with indulgent amusement: "Finding something normal to wear could take all day!" (*BD* 452). In contrast, Bella calls the clothes she has brought from her father's house "normal clothes" (*BD* 516). Bella's own relationship with clothes is based on practicality, even as a vampire, and on what pleases Edward. Angie Chau observes another function of clothing in the Cullen universe: it serves as an indicator of class (183). Bella gradually becomes aware of this and uses it to her advantage in *Breaking Dawn*. While the rest of the family is preparing for the

final fight with the Volturi, Bella secretly puts in place a plan to save Renesmee in case Bella and Edward are killed. She procures fake passports for Renesmee and Jacob with the help of the Cullens' connections. She meets with the human lawyer-purveyor twice. On both occasions, Meyer tells us what Bella is wearing: at his office, she is dressed in "a long cashmere sweater-dress" (*BD* 591), also described as a "fitted pearl gray sheath" (*BD* 592). Later, she meets him at an upscale restaurant, wearing a "calf-length ivory trench coat" and an "oyster satin cocktail dress" (*BD* 619). The lawyer is intimidated by her, but even more so by her ties to the fearsome Cullens. It could be argued that Bella is consciously playing the part of a wealthy, powerful Cullen and has chosen her dress accordingly. She herself comments: "I was wearing Alice's idea of appropriate attire" (*BD* 619). Bella has been socialized into the vampire world of consumption and hedonism, by Alice and by Edward too, with his gifts of cars. The need for luxury is never questioned.

In the introductory chapter of this thesis, I argue that body work in the context of consumer culture is motivated, among other things, by the rewards it yields in terms of appearance and social acceptability. An acceptable appearance is the key to success in many aspects of social life, such as sexual desirability. We are bombarded with messages about our bodies and how to look desirable, but how are we to explore our own desires and become subjects instead of objects in our own lives? This dynamic is present in the story, in the insecurity Bella feels about her body and about looking desirable to Edward. On the one hand, she is framed as an actively desiring individual who questions Edward's sexual norms; on the other hand, she is unable to question norms of beauty and see herself as desirable for and by herself. To Edward, marriage and premarital chastity are the answer; to Bella, the ultimate answer lies in becoming a vampire. Like so many in the real world, Bella believes she must be physically transformed in order to be fully acceptable. But she has no power over her own body: Edward controls their physical relationship, and Bella cannot be transformed into a vampire without help. She is thus effectively barred from fully exploring her desires, and her sexuality is not in her own hands. Bella only becomes a sexual agent through marriage, which triggers the chain of events that leads to her transformation.

Bella's quest for a new body is also a search for identity: whereas Edward's abstinence takes place in a discourse of ethics, Meyer places Bella's body project in an identity discourse. It is a process of becoming the one she is meant to be. Bella realizes this after her transformation when she beats Emmett at arm-wrestling and karate-chops a boulder to bits just for fun: "It was like I had been born to be a vampire. [...] I had found my true place in the world, the place I fit, the place I shined" (*BD* 485). Her trajectory can also be read as a quest

for power and equality. After Edward has saved her life for the third time by the end of the first volume, Bella tells him “[people in a relationship] have to save each other equally,” and that she can’t always be Lois Lane, she wants to be Superman too (*T* 412-413). By the end of the series, she has the power to kill, beat her vampire brother-in-law at arm-wrestling (thus putting a stop to his innuendoes about her sex life), protect everyone she loves from harm, and finally achieve equality in bed and in her marriage.

In *Twilight*, the key female characters only gain agency through their transformation by a male. The Cullen females have all been created by a male vampire (in most cases, Carlisle), and none of them had any power in their human state: Esme was coerced into an unhappy marriage (Wilson, *Seduced* 126), Rosalie was gang-raped by her fiancé and his friends, and Alice was locked up in an insane asylum at a young age because of her psychic abilities. Bella’s new body, and the identity, power, equality, and sexual agency it gives her, are all achieved through her relationship with Edward. However, there is one aspect in which Bella excels all on her own: her power over her own thirst. When she smells a human, she can stop her impulse easier and better than any other newborn vampire, even better than some mature vampires who still struggle. She excels at being a good vampire and beats the others at their own game. Not only is she a very self-controlled vampire, she also converts this power into a mental shield that protects everyone she loves in the final showdown with the Volturi. It could be argued that within the logic of the story, Bella must conform to Cullen standards of self-restraint so the happy ending can take place. Bella’s excellence can also be interpreted as a redressing of the balance in a story that up until then has focused on the supremacy of the male vampire. Earlier in this chapter, I speculated that Meyer could ultimately be endorsing equality – Bella’s special power places her on an equal footing with the telepathic Edward – but for Bella, this equality only comes through marriage. This leaves the emancipatory potential of her transformation open to interpretation.

4.4 Concluding Remarks

In the course of the series, Bella has achieved the things a woman should strive for according to LDS culture: she has remained a virgin until marriage, she is a wife and mother, she has a family and eternal relationships. She has been transformed into perfection, and she has symbolically ascended to a celestial kingdom together with her loved ones. She has also achieved consumer culture’s life goals (as described by Helga Dittmar in the introductory chapter): the body beautiful and the material good life. She is eternally young, strong,

beautiful, and wealthy, she needs no repair work, and she has a perfect, unlimited sex life. Although her body project is both completed and never-ending, she has resolved the conflict between consumption and restraint. All she needs to do is keep her thirst in check – forever.

5 Conclusions

In this thesis, I examine the role of self-restraint in the representations of the key characters in the *Twilight* series. I study how bodies are presented, what ideas about the body and self-restraint are present in Meyer's religious faith and in consumer culture, and how her characters express or challenge these ideas. I also show how her vampires fit into the tradition of vampire fiction.

During the writing process, it became apparent that there is no shortage of scholarly work on the body in a variety of fields and perspectives. The *Twilight* series has also been the focus of both academic and popular texts with a broad range of approaches. I chose to combine Meyer's prominent theme of self-restraint and her focus on her characters' bodies. Since Meyer acknowledges the influence of her religious beliefs on her work, it felt natural to include this perspective. What is more, because of my own interest in how our daily lives are affected by the expectations placed on us in terms of appearance, the body in contemporary Western culture (which I call consumer culture) became my other perspective. The vampire's status as a consuming being proved to be the link I needed. However, I soon realized that I lacked a comprehensive theoretical framework that would encompass all the things I wanted to examine. This thesis is therefore rather eclectic, since I use the aspects that I find relevant, make connections between perspectives, and attempt to present them in a coherent argument.

It also soon became apparent that I could not apply the same method or the same questions to all three characters. There was no one-size-fits-all method. The only thing they all had in common was that they had a body that needed to be restrained. I was forced to look not only at what they overtly expressed, but at what did not apply. Thus, one finding is that some things must be examined in terms of their absence. For instance, Jacob Black cannot be analyzed in terms of material wealth in the same way that Edward Cullen or Bella Swan can. Wealth is not a prominent aspect of who he is, but lack of wealth is one of the ways in which he is contrasted to Edward. Bella Swan may not be caught up in a vicious circle of dieting and bingeing, but still beauty ideals affect her life choices.

Despite Meyer's professed initial ignorance of vampire lore and conventions, the *Twilight* series has much in common with other works in the genre. It presents an easily recognizable, tormented, "sympathetic" vampire protagonist, who struggles to overcome his bloodlust and live an ethically tenable life. Meyer's assortment of narrative strategies and themes are also familiar to the genre, including her character's choice to subsist on animal blood. However, *Twilight* departs from conventions in crucial ways. Its vampires bear no

resemblance to the decadent, sexually transgressive beings who have for so long been associated with seduction and excess. Instead, the Cullens are associated with godliness. They adhere to a strict moral code of dietary abstinence and live in a heteronormative and patriarchal family structure. They surpass their predecessors in terms of self-restraint, and their monstrosity is all but obliterated in the text.

The *Twilight* texts are a collection of paradoxes and contradictions that encourage multiple interpretations, and they contain both religious and secular elements. Bella and Edward are chaste, and yet a large part of the novels is devoted to their physical interaction. Edward is framed as a gentlemanly and flawless hero, and yet his personality is easily interpreted as controlling and abusive. His abstinence is spiritual, but his lifestyle is material. He both upholds and challenges gender roles. Mastery of his natural instincts marks him as masculine, but at the same time it is a challenge to the phallic and penetrative aspects of masculinity. He is a vampire who is so virtuous he is a vampire in name only, and yet his bloodthirst is the foundation of the entire story.

Sex is both pleasure and danger, and premarital chastity is highly valorized in the texts. The plot revolves around it, and despite Bella's attempts to seduce Edward, the value of chastity is never questioned or subverted. Edward manages to tame his bloodlust for Bella early in the series, and from then on, abstinence is a question of abstaining from sex until marriage. Bella and Edward get to know each other by talking, negotiating, and discussing feelings and values. However, Meyer also lets them engage in plenty of sensual touching, kissing, and embracing, and she pays a great deal of attention to her characters' bodies. It is both chaste and erotic in thought and action, which suggests that rigid chastity norms may be subverted without formally breaking the rules. It is also an acknowledgement of the physical emotions and desires of young persons in love and in lust. Here, I would argue that Meyer is navigating carefully among a set of conflicting demands: the core tenets of her faith and her allegiance to them on the one hand, and the realities of adolescent love, her own potentially subversive thoughts, and the conventions of the romance novel itself on the other, not to mention feedback from her readership.

Jacob is the foil to Edward by virtue of his explosive temperament, his inadequate self-control, his skin color, and his association with animality and nature. Most importantly, his sexual restraint is inadequate. A crucial difference between Jacob and Edward is that Jacob is framed as unable to transcend his wolf status. His body is not the instrument of salvation – material or spiritual – that it is to the other characters. Instead, it becomes an instrument of power as he steps into his role of alpha male among the wolves. The wolf body is triggered by

anger, but the wolf is also a noble protector. From an angry adolescent and frustrated suitor, Jacob evolves into a mature and protective individual, who is rewarded by the promise of a future with Renesmee. Edward overcomes his hunger, and Jacob overcomes his anger. Jacob can be analyzed in terms of his body and his self-restraint, but although he learns through having a body, and gains a love interest in Renesmee, he does not ascend to godliness, nor is he rewarded with riches. Edward can choose abstinence, but Jacob is not even given a choice of whom to ultimately fall in love with.

Meyer's focus on Jacob's overly muscular human body, his skin color, semi-nudity, and animality are used to underscore his racial otherness. By portraying the wolves – and, by extension, Native Americans – as primitive, savage, and corporeal, Meyer perpetuates long-standing stereotypes that associate race and class with certain types of appearance and behavior. It is clear where her sympathies lie: with the white, privileged, upper-class vampires. Meyer's championing of white skin also echoes teachings in the *Book of Mormon*, in which dark skin is very literally associated with wickedness.

In *Twilight*, the vampire body is the aesthetic ideal: it is slender, muscular, and strong. It can be read as an expression of angelic or supernatural beauty, but it also conforms to contemporary, white beauty ideals in Western society. It is a body that is in control of itself, impervious to external and internal threats, and capable of sustained physical and sexual performance. Natalie Wilson argues that the *Twilight* series reveals “an obsession with the body beautiful – a timely obsession given our cultural context of bodily discipline and ‘improvement’” (*Seduced* 35). “In effect,” Wilson observes, “[the Cullens] are dream bodies for the 21st century – thin, beautiful, young and hard to kill” (*Seduced* 35).

Bella Swan's dissatisfaction with her body illustrates the reality of most Western women today. There is a discrepancy between her appearance and the ideal. Her trajectory in the story is overtly the story of overcoming obstacles to love, but at the same time it is the quest for physical and mental transformation. Anna Höglund argues that in modern vampire romances, the vampire offers a love that is free from consumer culture's demand for the perfect surface (408). In *Twilight*, the perfect surface comes as a bonus to true love. On the surface, one might think that Meyer is making some sort of statement by making her female protagonist non-consumer-oriented and comfortable with it. It is the vampires who are the ideal in the story, however. By making them physically flawless, and giving them the opportunity and the inclination to indulge in sports cars, designer clothing, houses, and tropical islands – and most importantly, by letting Bella become part of this privileged life herself, a vampire as beautiful, powerful, and immortal as the others – Meyer in fact sends a

clear message about the desirability of all these things. Bella is conscious of but not caught up in the endless cycle of body maintenance and appearance, but rather than have her subvert or successfully and consistently rebel against this pressure, Meyer constructs her fantasy so that Bella ultimately *does not have to* deal with any issues related to aging, looks, or media images. She is the ordinary girl who captures the heart of the good-looking vampire, which would seem to send the message that she (and, by extension, readers who identify with her) really is good enough just the way she is – but her transformation into a breathtakingly beautiful vampire belies this. Meyer may appear to prioritize true love and a meeting of souls rather than appearance, but her rather obsessive focus on beauty detracts from her message to the point of obscuring it. The need for beauty, wealth, or material consumption is never questioned. I am left with the impression that Meyer is either incapable of picturing a happy ending without these elements, or unwilling to do so.

The argument by Karin Nykvist that “the Twilight story is one of salvation, physical and spiritual, where the instrument of salvation is the body” (30) is valid from both a Latter-day Saint and a consumer culture perspective. Bodily discipline and self-control are the keys to salvation in both. They are also the keys to salvation for both Edward and Bella, who gain an eternal luxurious heaven in exchange for dietary abstinence. Although self-restraint is valorized in the series, it is a means to an end: discipline in the service of hedonism.

Twilight has been hailed as a novel version of the vampire story, and in its unrelenting focus on chastity, and its unapologetic championing of heterosexual marriage, it certainly is different. The characters have been purged of their monstrosity, and they are committed to moral order. In other respects, however, *Twilight* relies on all-too-familiar elements and stereotypical characters: the heroine is a duckling who is turned into a swan, the handsome hero is a tormented, good bad boy, and the indigenous rival is the opposite of the hero. Their bodies are modeled on dominant ideas of beauty. The characters’ capacity for self-restraint is linked to their gender, race and social class: the cultured, white male surpasses the humble, white female and the uncivilized, indigenous male. The characters cannot be dismissed as completely one-sided, and they can be interpreted in several ways, but overall, Meyer leans heavily on conventional gender roles, and her representations are problematic in terms of race.

Vampires reflect our fundamental needs and desires, such as immortality, knowledge, transcendence, excess, and hunger. In the hands of a talented writer, the vampire story provides a space where we can explore existential issues that, just like the vampire itself, do not die. The *Twilight* novels can be analyzed from a variety of perspectives, but in my opinion, the series’ inadequacies as a work of fiction hamper interpretation. It is hard to tell

whether certain idiosyncrasies – such as the excessive and repetitive use of adjectives, the constant harping on Edward’s godliness, and the belaboring of specific points – are due to conscious intent, or merely poor writing (and uncritical editing). Many critics have rightly noted *Twilight*’s lack of literary merit. Nevertheless, the novels have left their mark on vampire fiction. It is doubtful that any future vampire will be able to surpass Edward Cullen in terms of self-sacrificing abstinence and total absence of the transgressive qualities usually present in vampires. For better or worse, he is an extreme development of the sympathetic vampire. And it seems we are about to be treated to yet another dose of tormented, obsessive restraint: Stephenie Meyer has just announced that she has finally completed *Midnight Sun*, the unfinished manuscript that she put on hold in 2008, in which Edward narrates his side of the story. The new book will be released in August 2020 (*Guardian*, May 4, 2020). Although the vampire craze of which *Twilight* was a prominent part has passed, the Undead have a way of reawakening at regular intervals – and it seems *Twilight* is no exception. Nina Auerbach has noted that “every age embraces the vampire it needs” (145). Whether the world will again embrace Edward Cullen, fifteen years after his debut, remains to be seen.

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