

The Modern Vampire as Romantic Hero: Acceptance, Love and Self-Control

by

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Abstract

The vampire has existed since the beginning of civilization as a metaphor for societal issues and beliefs concerning life and death. Throughout the centuries, the vampire has evolved to suit societal trends, transforming from the bloodthirsty monster of early mythology to an alluring and complex creature of modern times. The thesis explores the popularity of the vampire in twenty-first century literature and film by evaluating two of the most popular vampire series of the time, L.J. Smith's *Vampire Diaries* series (1991, 2009) and Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series (2005-2008); these texts characterize the vampire as a romantic superhero whose driven to protect those he loves. The modern vampire has rejoined society by becoming more human than ever in his ability to give and receive love. Smith and Meyer challenge traditional vampire mythology even further by making once helpless female victims into strong, driven heroines. The romance between vampire and mortal proves profound and redeems the protagonist into a champion of Christian virtue, embodying complete selflessness and self-control in their relationships. The modern vampire is an evolved form of the aristocratic vampire who is at once superhero, ideal lover and Christ-like, rather than monster.

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Introduction: Origins of the Vampire

"For a creature that is supposed to be dead, the vampire remains surprisingly, stubbornly and vibrantly alive"-David Skal, Romancing the Vampire

The vampire is a fascinating mythological figure that has endured in literature since the eighteenth century and established itself in the modern world of television and film. However, the primitive vampire is far from the romantic hero of contemporary young adult literature, as seen in L.J. Smith's *Vampires Diaries* series (1991, 2009) and Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series (2005-2008). Vampires were originally portrayed as monsters, malignant beings that fed off the life force of others. In the ancient world, vampirism was primarily attributed to the wholly inhuman, demonic entities that tormented humankind. It wasn't until Christianity began to solidify in Medieval Europe that the vampire adopted the form of the revenant (i.e. reanimated corpse) and spread suffering and disease at the devil's bidding. The vampire's steady transformation from demon to more recognizably human allowed the vampire to be used in eighteenth century literature as a metaphor for societal issues, including religious and class struggles, as the vampire of myth became a cunning aristocrat no longer hiding in the shadows but walking freely among the public and masquerading as gentleman. Undoubtedly the most well-known portrayal, the Dracula-lian archetype, is the epitome of the vampire aristocratic—seductive, intelligent, and utterly sinister. It is Bram Stoker's nineteenth century masterpiece that paved the way for the twentieth century's embrace of the vampire as a misunderstood, even sympathetic creature, as seen through the work of Anne Rice and films such as

Dracula (1992) and *The Lost Boys* (1987). Vampire mythology prior to the twenty-first century largely regarded the vampire as a creature of darkness, an outsider to the human world, which makes contemporary vampires defined by their strict moral code that much more intriguing.

Although lots of critical and mythological work has been done on vampires from prior centuries, my thesis proposes to join the conversation by looking closely at how the twenty-first century's vampire fits into the critical conversation. I propose that it is the twenty-first century vampire's ability to give and receive love that distinguishes it from its predecessors; love has redeemed the monster by transforming it from villain to romantic hero. Unlike the literary vampires of the past who subvert Christianity—Lord Ruthven, *Dracula*, *Carmilla*—contemporary vampires like Edward Cullen (*Twilight*) and Stefan Salvatore (*Vampire Diaries*) are part of the aristocratic tradition but deviate significantly in their ability to embody Christian virtue. Meyer and Smith suggest the vampire reconnects to its humanity by learning to control its urges, often referred to as an inner darkness. Meyer's intention to create the next evolution of vampires is made clear in *Twilight* through Bella's Google inquiry of the Cullens, where amidst the flood of search results preoccupied with the tradition of blood drinking demons, bodiless spirits and fearful revenants, she focuses on the Romanian *stregoni benefici*, defined as such: "An Italian vampire, said to be on the side of goodness, and a mortal enemy of all evil vampires" (Meyer 135); here, Meyer sets up a clear distinction between the Cullens and other vampires, and presents the possibility that vampires can be heroes, and not the monsters previously

depicted in history. Smith's series works to the same end, toying with the premise of vampires choosing good over evil, love over lust, and self control over self destruction. By exploring the long tradition of the vampire, it is possible to demonstrate how Smith and Meyer's have honored the tradition but created the next evolution of the vampire, namely by making a once feared monster into a beloved hero of the twenty-first century.

My thesis will analyze the evolution of the vampire beginning with representations in the ancient civilizations of Greece, Rome, Babylon, China, Romania and ending with the romanticized versions of the twentieth century in order to illustrate how the modern vampire has departed from a predominately nefarious tradition through its ability to be a member of the human community—to love and be loved, a factor contributing most to its status as a romantic hero. Smith and Meyer use this love to transform their female protagonist into strong, intelligent and selfless women who refuse to be the victim commonly portrayed in early vampire mythology.

The Introductory Chapter focuses on early vampire mythology, beginning with the origins of the vampire through an exploration of the widespread and often independent mythologies influencing the modern American vampire myth. "Ancient Vampires: Defying the Gods and Preying on Humans" provides an overview of ancient civilizations whose myths primarily concerning blood-drinking demons share undeniable similarities to the modern American vampire. The idea of beautiful vampires luring unsuspecting men to their deaths is a frequent theme in these myths, as the *lamia*, *empusa* and *mormo* of ancient Greece warn against unbridled female

sexuality. These myths may have influenced later tales of female vampires who use their beauty to prey on others, such as the "weird sisters" in Stoker's *Dracula* and Le Fanu's *Carmilla*. Smith and Meyer continue the deception of beautiful predators but expand the notion to include alluring male vampires. Other ancient myths disregard sexual politics in favor of spiritual or religious concerns; the ancient Romanian *strigoi* and the ancient Chinese *kuang-shi*, alike in repulsiveness, result from varying degrees of sacrilege. Furthermore, the *strigoi* is perhaps the first instance of a revenant who can be destroyed by bodily destruction, making it more vulnerable than its demonic counterparts. By studying ancient vampire mythology, one creates a basis for the vampire's beginning and transformation throughout the years. The second part of the introduction focuses on the revenant vampire of the European Middle Ages who appears quite simple in comparison with the highly complex vampires of the modern world. I will emphasize how Catholicism played a role in the vampire myth by aligning the creature with the devil himself using Beresford's *From Demons to Dracula*, Bunson's *The Vampire Encyclopedia*, and McNally & Florescu *In Search of Dracula: The History of Dracula and Vampires*, which provide a strong background on early vampires. The third part of the introduction, "The Seducer and Death in Disguise," shows how the vampire evolved from a simple, plague-carrying peasant to a familiar undead figure who brings only death to the individuals it once desired, drawing on Ossenfelder's *Der Vampir* (1748), Bürger's *Lenore* (1773), and Goethe's *Die Braut von Korinth* (1797). "The Nineteenth-Century Vampire: The Aristocratic Antichrist" focuses on the transformation of the vampire from peasant to aristocrat

using John Polidori's *Vampyre* (1819), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872). The aristocratic vampire gives new complexity to the vampire tradition in being a highly intelligent, lustful and morally vacant killer who delights in bringing misery to others. The final part of the introduction, "The Twentieth Century Vampire: Sympathy for the Devil" focuses on one of the most popular vampire texts of the time, Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), and the vampires presence on film, including Francis Ford Coppola's *Dracula* (1992) and *The Lost Boys* (1987) as a creature who isn't devoid of all emotion but has the ability to suffer like a human.

The second chapter focuses on Smith's *Vampire Diaries* and Stefan's struggle to vanquish the monster within. Smith's vampire borrows more from the traditional vampire myth but communicates well with Meyer's texts in the sense that both protagonists are described as romantic heroes that sacrifice everything for the women they love. Both texts express an antithesis to the original tenants of vampirism: lust, godlessness, and self-indulgence. Edward and Stefan promote spiritual love, self sacrifice, and faith in a higher power. The deeply religious undertones continue into the following chapter where the focus is on Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series and how Edward Cullen is an evolved form of the aristocratic vampire that acts more like a superhero than monster. I will attempt to show how Meyer has created a vampire of profound goodness and purity who demonstrates the power of human love in redeeming the monster of past sins. The concluding chapter will summarize these findings and reemphasize how contemporary vampires have become adored figures

that fit more easily into society by being more human than monster, more hero than vampire. Karen Backstein's "(Un)safe Sex: Romancing the Vampire," Jeffrey A. Weinstock's "Vampires, Vampires, Everywhere!" and Kathleen Rout's "Who Do You Love? Anne Rice's Vampires And Their Moral Transition" all explore the popularity of the contemporary vampire but overlook important distinctions regarding its challenge to the traditional myth, primarily the power of love in humanizing and redeeming the vampire.

Vampires Throughout the Ages

The vampire enjoys a long and varied history, known by as many names as there are definitions. The broadest definition of a vampire is provided by Rosemary Ellen Guiley, and that is "an entity or a person, living or dead, who takes your life force" (Animal Planet "Lost Tapes: *Strigoi*"). However, David Skal suggests, "the vampire we recognize today belongs to a particular class of revenants—beings once alive, now dead, who nevertheless return from their graves to haunt, torment or prey upon the living" (11). Although its etymology proves complex and suggests the influence of multiple languages, scholars generally agree that the word "vampire"—arriving in the English language in 1732 from a translation from German of the case of Arnold Paole of Meduegna—is Slavic in origin, possibly deriving from the Slavic *upir* or *upyr*, which may relate to the Turkish *uber*, meaning "witch" (Beresford 8). While the Western vampire does resemble the eastern European undead in many ways, belief in these beings appears to be universal and dates back to ancient

civilization; therefore, it is not unlikely that the western vampire was influenced by cultural beliefs from all around the world—from the blood drinking demons of ancient Greece, Rome and Babylonia, to the hopping corpses of China, to the blood fixated ancient Egyptians, as well as the shape-shifting *strogoi* of Romania.

Ancient Vampires: Defying the Gods and Preying on Humans

The belief in vampires may stem from humankind's fixation with blood (Beresford 21-23), and both Meyer's and Smith's text focus on the requirement of blood for survival. In ancient Egypt, blood was revered for its restorative and healing properties. The pharaohs bathed in human blood to prevent diseases such as leprosy (Beresford 27). The ancient Egyptian warrior goddess Sekhmet drank blood, and Anubis, god of the underworld, presided over burial rites that included elaborate provisions for the dead, who were believed to be "eternally hungry" (Skal 12). Blood plays a critical role in ancient folklore and figures quite prominently in classical texts. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* mentions demons that feed on the blood of children, and Homer's *Odyssey* depicts Odysseus offering ram's blood to the shades, or spirits of the underworld (Beresford 22). Because the dead no longer have life-giving blood, they must covet it from others. The Bible also regards blood as sacred and warns against its consumption, with the curious exception of the Eucharist, which is arguably more symbolic than literal. In Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the Count is originally old and feeble but regains his vitality by feeding, explaining in a quote borrowed from Deuteronomy 12:23, "the blood is the life." Blood is the ultimate source of sustenance for the

undead creature the western world calls vampire. However, in ancient times, the word vampire did not exist, and these entities were often associated with flesh eating demons that tormented humankind.

As Inanna Arthen points out in "few cultures in the world have a vampire folklore tradition as long-standing and carefully analyzed by scholars as Greece" ("May The Ground Not Receive Thee"), and it is in Greece one finds a connection to the beautiful but deadly vampires of Smith's and Meyer's texts. The original vampires of ancient Greece and Rome, *lamia*, *empusa* and *mormo*, were demons often disguised as beautiful maidens. *Lamia*, as defined by Mathew Bunson, was said to be the scorned lover of Zeus who lost her children at the hands of Zeus' jealous wife, Hera (150). The ancient Greeks and Romans feared *lamia*, because in her grief, she transformed into a child-eating demon. Later, *lamia* evolved into a half-snake, half-woman monster that lured young men to their deaths; Keats immortalized these creatures in his poem "Lamia." Similarly, *Empusa* was a bronze-footed demon with flaming hair that seduced men in order to feast on them. *Mormo* enjoyed similar habits, but delighted in frightening children; it later evolved into the modern "bogyman" (Bunson 180). The demon vampires of ancient Greece and Rome were almost exclusively female and lured victims with their overpowering beauty. They are mistakenly perceived as nonthreatening because beauty is associated with virtue. These early myths may be a reflection of male infidelity or an attempt to account for the high mortality rates of children—as suggested by Meyer herself in *Twilight* (134)—, but whatever the cause, the original Greek and Roman vampires serve as a

basis for future female vampires who often emerge as femme fatales: incredibly attractive but highly dangerous. They challenge all preconceived notions of beauty [e.g. "beautiful is greater than Good, for it includes the Good (Goethe) and "beauty is truth" (Keats)], because *lamia* and her kin are negations of goodness and truth.

Continuing the theme of patriarchal concerns over female sexuality, is the Hebrew Lilith, who is believed to have evolved from *lilitu*, a female demon of Babylonian mythology who preys upon babies, pregnant women and men. She often appears as a succubus, the ultimate symbol of sexual temptation. Michelangelo portrays Lilith like the *lamia*, as half-woman and half-serpent, coiled around the tree of knowledge. According to Jewish folklore, she was Adam's first wife who was banished from the garden after refusing to be Adam's subordinate (McNally & Florescu 118); interestingly, this made her a hero to modern feminists who initiated the "Lilith Fair" and romantics such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Johann von Goethe whose prose works revel in her beauty. Lilith was once a cautionary tale for women to remain subservient to men who were believed to be superior according to the Catholic faith, but evolved into a feminist hero for her refusal to be dominated. The Torah strictly forbids the consumption of blood, so Lilith was considered a great evil. Demons like *lamia*, *mormo*, *empusa* and Lilith were originally frightening subversions of femininity, where beauty is perverted and the protective figure of wife and mother becomes the destroyer. It wasn't until the romantic period that creatures like Lilith were embraced as empowered women and men became the seducers; although bearing little but beauty in common with these ancient vampires, the main

characters of Smith's and Meyer's texts are both male.

Ancient Chinese vampires, although still belonging to the demon class, lack the allure attributed to the ancient vampires of Greece, Rome and Babylonia, but contribute to the vampire myth a common concern one finds in modern vampires like Edward and Stefan, such as preoccupation with the soul (i.e. the incorporeal essence of an individual). Chinese vampires like the *kuang-shi* (or *chiang-shi*) are repulsive in appearance in order to demonstrate the consequence of spiritual imbalance. Based on the Chinese belief in two souls--a benevolent (*hun*) and inferior/malevolent (*p'o*)--a *kuang-shi* is created when the malevolent soul remains in the human world instead of leaving the body after death. The *kuang-shi*, which literally means "stiff corpse" ("Chinese Concepts of the Soul") is known for its red eyes, sharp fangs and greenish-white fur. It has the ability to fly, transform into mist and become invisible—abilities that will be adopted by future vampires, such as Count Dracula. It requires human blood to sustain itself and often rips its victims to pieces. The *kuang-shi* adds an element of superstition to the vampire myth in that it is said to arise after a corpse being struck by a bolt of lightning, or when a pregnant cat leaps across the coffin. Furthermore, the *kuang-shi* shares its garlic aversion with the European vampire because it is "believed to possess healing powers" (Bunson 104-05).

The *strigoi* (feminine *strigoica*) of Romanian mythology is similar to the *kuang-shi* in that it is easily identified as a monster with its red hair, blue eyes and two hearts. Its contribution to vampire mythology lies in its special abilities, ones that have been adopted by the modern American vampire to make them good hunters.

Strigoi possess invisibility, overpowering strength, speed, and are shape shifters that can transform into animals or sparks of light (Animal Planet "Lost Tapes: *Strigoi*"); overpowering strength and speed would later be adopted by Meyer and Smith as heroic rather than villainous qualities. Unlike other ancient vampires, the *strigoi* best resembles the Western undead in the sense that they are not demons but revenants. Meyer and Smith both use the idea of an individual returning from the grave as the basis of their texts. Most likely a derivation of the Roman *strix*, an owl that fed on flesh, the *strigoi* is a witch or evil soul that rises from the grave to prey upon the living. Like other ancient vampires, its only desire is to sustain itself through human blood (Animal Planet "Lost Tapes: *Strigoi*"). Similar to the *kuang-shi*, one may become a *strigoi* through both spiritual and religious abandonment, including suicide, witchcraft, immoral lifestyle, death at the hands of a vampire, being the seventh son, being born with a caul, having a cat jump over one's grave, being stared at in the womb by a vampire, dying unmarried with an unrequited love (Bunson 247). The gypsy method of stopping a *strigoi* is to exhume the corpse, remove the heart, nail the forehead, place garlic in its mouth and smear its body with pig fat and turn it face down (Animal Planet "Lost Tapes: *Strigoi*"), which resembles the more modern notion of staking vampires through the heart. The *strigoi* is often associated with disease and illness and thus bears a close association with death. Although they were once human, they have lost all humanity and are doomed to walk the earth forever hungry. Romanian *strigoi* is the very embodiment of death in appearance and manner.

The roots of the modern vampire go back to ancient cultures, and perhaps even earlier to when humankind first discovered the link between blood and life. The Ancient vampires of Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, Romania and China are not the complex or sympathetic representations found in modern times, but appear to be a reflection of man's early darkness and fears. They are powerful monsters that lack any vestige of humanity; their sole purpose being to take life from others. They are dangerous and like the dead of Egypt, they are constantly hungry. These ancient myths serve as the basis for the modern American vampire which began to take shape in Europe during The Middle Ages.

The Middle Ages Vampire: Bringer of the Plague

The vampire's uneasy relationship with Christianity, which writers like Meyer and Smith challenge in the modern day by making their vampires embody Christian virtues, solidified during The Middle Ages. The church itself promoted the existence of supernatural beings by claiming the devil and his minions were real; an utterly devastating occurrence that led to the witch trials of central Europe (1450 to 1750). For villagers who feared what Cotton Mather referred to as the "invisible world" (*From the Wonders of the Invisible World* 1693), it was not far-fetched to assume that vampires were responsible for society's ills. Vampires were even blamed for the bubonic plague that devastated Europe's population in the 1300's (Bunson 200). Prior to germ theory, no one knew how disease spread. Furthermore, diseases that presented symptoms that may have easily been associated with vampirism—*anemia,*

rabies, catalepsy, and porphyria—may have contributed to early vampire myths, since villagers did not yet understand them (Beresford 104). By claiming that vampires were real and in league with the devil, the Church presented itself as humankind's only defense, which explains the vampires sudden fear of holy water and the cross. It's also been suggested that the vampire's fear of silver stems from the influence of Christianity, since silver is a pure metal used in crosses (Beresford 240). Villagers often dug the graves of suspected vampires and staked, decapitated and burned them as a means to destroy the monster who thus far had alluded the public (Beresford 244, McNally & Florescu 119). Some of the earliest accounts of vampires took place in Europe during the Middle Ages when cattle mysteriously died or an illness claimed many lives, and later, the aforementioned case of Arnold Paole was used as evidence of a real vampire who murdered his neighbors. Benjamin Radford suggests, "villagers combined their belief that something had cursed them with their fear of the dead, and concluded that perhaps recently-buried people might be responsible, having come back from the graves with evil intent" ("The Real Science and History of Vampires"). In these instances, the vampire was almost exclusively peasant-born, which the church justified thusly: "because men of education and men of quality are not so easily deceived as idiots of low birth and therefore do not so easily allow themselves to be fooled by appearances" (Beresford quoting Archbishop Giuseppe Davanzati 16). The plague-carrying revenant who feasted on livestock and villagers became more insidious with the arrival of the eighteenth century, seducing loved ones only to lead them to untimely death. To the dismay of the church, the vampire no longer became

limited to the form of peasant, but slowly became associated with the aristocrat, suggesting that the devil could reach anyone.

The Eighteenth-Century Vampire: The Seducer and Death in Disguise

Immanuel Kant defined the Enlightenment as "man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity" (1784), and it is at this point that scholars discredited the existence of many folkloric beings as a product of superstition; however, vampires were still discussed among writers who used the monster as a metaphor for class and religious issues, leading to the first vampire craze in Europe (Skal 27). It's during the eighteenth century that the vampire was adopted as a poetic figure of German Gothicism in such texts as Ossenfelder's *Der Vampir (The Vampire)* (1748), Bürger's *Lenore* (1773), and Goethe's "Die Braut von Korinth" ("The Bride of Corinth") (1797). Vampiric motifs such as nocturnalism, bloodsucking and seduction--many of which continue into the present-day works of Meyer and Smith--define the first literary vampires. Literary representations of the vampire transformed them from peasants spreading disease to predators seducing loved ones. *Der Vampire* is one of the earliest poems about vampires and is about a male vampire who preys upon a respectable maiden that has refused him:

And as softly thou art sleeping
 To thee shall I come creeping
 And thy life's blood drain away.
 And so shalt thou be trembling

For thus shall I be kissing
And death's threshold thou'lt be crossing
With fear, in my cold arms (13-19)

The vampire in question seduces his victims where they are most vulnerable. The fact the setting is at night and in the bedroom also reflects the behavior of the succubi of ancient times. The act of draining her blood is erotic even, described as an embrace and kiss. He threatens Christianity itself when not even "the long-held teaching of a mother ever true" (3-4) can save the young woman from the vampire's charm. The woman is even given the name "Christine" to strengthen the religious metaphor.

The "Bride of Corinth" by Goethe inspired such poets as Byron, Shelly, Keats, Polidori and Coleridge. It is the first poem about a female vampire and a male victim. The ballad takes place at the onset of Christianity in Corinth where opposing theologies separate an engaged couple. The young woman dies of grief after she is forbidden by her Christian mother to marry the man she loves, who is considered a "heathen" (11) for worshipping the old Greek gods. Goethe, like Ossenfelder, writes of a vampire who has returned from the grave at night to feed off the ones she loves. The vampire appears to her lover as a beautiful bride dressed all in white, but pale, cold and "no heart is beating in her breast" (125). She is not the disease-spreading plebian previously described in the seventeenth century, but a tragic, if not romantic, figure. Religious undertones set vampire against Christianity once again; she will not eat the bread which signifies Christ's body and blames her mother for her untimely death. Goethe also draws on traditional folklore by using silver, a pure metal, against

the vampire, as the bride refuses the silver chalice offered by her lover. Her return appears to be to marry the man she loves, but in joining with her, the man ultimately resolves to die. Goethe speaks to the theme of unrest; as a vampire, the bride will never find peace, but be forced to harm those she once loved: "from my grave to wander I am forc'd, still to seek The Good's long-sever'd link, still to love the bridegroom I have lost, and the life-blood of his heart to drink" (176-79). When he dies, she will be forced to move on to other victims. As with the vampires of the Middle Ages, Goethe writes that she will only find rest through bodily destruction, and the bride asks her mother to burn her remains, "that the flames may give the lovers rest!" (193).

Like "The Bride of Corinth," Bürger's *Lenore* (translated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti) describes the dead returning from the grave to prey on loved ones. It also features a female victim, one who forsakes God after losing her love, William, and consequently brings death, literally, upon her door. Like others before him, Bürger chooses night as the setting of his dark tale, in which a form that appears to be William takes Lenore on an eerie ride through the countryside, claiming to hasten to the marriage bed with the famous line, "denn die todten reiten schnell" or "for the dead travel fast," which would be borrowed by Bram Stoker in *Dracula*. Lenore thinks she will be married, but the ride is reminiscent of a funeral procession. At sunrise, they arrive at a cemetery, not a church, and death appears in his true form: "fleshless and hairless, a naked skull" (237) with a scythe and sandglass. Lenore's soul is put in immediate jeopardy as she faces the lesson never to question god:

"Patience, patience, when the heart is breaking; With thy God there is no question-making." (253-54). Although not overtly about a vampire, Burger's *Lenore* emphasizes the undead as a being without God's grace. Lenore inadvertently endangers her soul by questioning God. She also is in a state of great vulnerability in grieving over her lost love, which makes her susceptible to the temptation presented by William. This notion of temptation and sin is further explored in the nineteenth century when the vampire appears almost exclusively as an alluring aristocrat who has infiltrated and fooled society—exposing an underworld of debauchery among the upper-class.

The Nineteenth-Century Vampire: The Aristocratic Antichrist

Religion continues to play an important role in vampire mythology of the nineteenth century. Vampires in this era were seen as antichrist figures who epitomize a life of sin, a characteristic Meyer and Smith take great care to deviate from in their texts in order to make their vampires romantic heroes. The nineteenth-century aristocrat takes the religious disaffection of the eighteenth century to the whole new level by actually becoming God-like in the acquirement of powerful supernatural abilities. John Polidori's *Vampyre* (1819) is widely believed to be the most influential vampire tale of its time and centers around the aristocratic vampire, Lord Ruthven, who deceives society with his charm by masquerading as a gentleman only to be discovered by our protagonist, Aubrey, as a complete fiend who partakes in all of the vices of the nineteenth century, such as gambling and womanizing. He

literally feeds off of innocence by first draining a young woman of her dowry, so that he may continue to rise up the social ladder, then draining the girl of life; this may be a reflection of England's elite upper-class whose greed left many impoverished.

Meyer and Smith contradict this image entirely with vampires who take nothing from their heroines. Unlike his predecessors, Ruthven is active in the daytime; although it is said in passing that nighttime is the time of "vampyres in their nocturnal orgies and denounced the most heavy evils as impending upon him who dared to cross their path" (12). Polidori suggests that the vampire may not be as primitive and distanced from society as previously depicted but walks among us as a member of the upper-class. However, while Ruthven sits atop the social ladder, he is described as being apart from society in the sense that he is an enemy of joy: "he gazed upon the mirth around him, as if he could not participate therein. Apparently, the light laughter of the fair only attracted his attention, that he might by a look quell it and throw fear into those breasts" (7). He spreads misery wherever he goes. Aubrey when he first sees him imagines he is the hero of a romance, but discovers Ruthven is "dreadfully vicious, for that the possession of irresistible powers of seduction, rendered his licentious habits more dangerous to society" (10). Ruthven's appeal lies in his charm, but it is described as Aubrey as "the serpent's art" (17)—a reference to the Devil. Ruthven also possesses some degree of mind control, an attribute of the *stigoi*, which he uses to silence Aubrey from revealing his secret. As Mary Shelley states in her introduction to *Frankenstein*, "I busied myself to think of a story... One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature and awake thrilling horror," which is

clearly what Polidori has done by creating a story that shines a dark light on aristocratic society.

Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) is unique because it portrays a female aristocrat vampire, Carmilla, who feeds off young girls she has manipulated into loving her. Like Lord Ruthven, Carmilla easily assimilates into society because there are no perceived differences in her appearance and sunlight does not destroy her, although she is strengthened by the moonlight; Meyer and Smith boy toy with this idea of vampires living among humans. Le Fanu adopts the shape-shifting element of the vampire myth by making Carmilla appear as "a sooty-black animal that resembled a monstrous cat" (29) at times. Her transformation into a cat is particularly clever, since it shows just how cunning a predator she is—as a cat she can invade a household and feed off her prey under the guise of what many consider a beloved pet. It is Carmilla's girlish appearance that makes her most welcomed, and therefore dangerous. She is described as "absolutely beautiful" (11) with large eyes and dark hair. She appears just like any other young girl, "except that her movements were languid—*very* languid" (16), which makes her appear vulnerable, as a child in need of care and not a bloodthirsty killer. Her beauty is also mistakenly equated with innocence, just like Claudia, the perpetual child from *Interview with the Vampire*. Le Fanu continues the tradition of vampires feeding off loved ones and family. He wrote that the act of feeding is a twisted form of intimacy. The vampire's bite does not kill the victims immediately or turn them into vampires, which enables Carmilla to feed slowly from Laura and savor the moment. Carmilla strengthens the element of

eroticism alluded to in earlier tales.

A clear comparison can be made between Carmilla and future female vampires who revel in their sexuality and use it, like *lamia* or Lilith, against their victims. Carmilla adopts Ruthven's "serpent tongue" when she seduces Laura with her words: "I have been in love with no one, and never shall... unless it should be with you" (26). Laura senses that Carmilla is not who she claims to be: "There was a coldness, it seemed to me, beyond her years, in her smiling melancholy persistent refusal to afford me the least ray of light" (16). However, Carmilla, like Ruthven, possesses some degree of mind control, which helps get by Laura's defenses: "murmured words sounded like a lullaby in my ear, and soothed my resistance into a trance" (17). Carmilla faults her actions to her inability to fight her vampire nature, as we saw with "The Bride of Corinth" who explains "to wander I am forc'd" (Goethe 176). Carmilla explains, "I obey the irresistible law of my strength and weakness... I cannot help it; as I draw near to you, you, in your turn, will draw near to others, and learn the rapture of that cruelty, which yet is love" (17). La Fanu speaks to the vampire's accountability, which is something that Meyer will do through Edward Cullen and his refusal to be "a monster."

Carmilla stands in opposition to Christianity, which goes beyond her disdain for Christian hymns and prayer. She is described as being a "monster" (52) and using a "demon's lips" (55) to seduce innocent girls. Her crimes are seen as evil (in opposition to Judeo-Christian morality) because her crimes are so heinous they destroy innocence itself. Her death as the murderer of these girls is seen as "a service

to mankind" under "the vengeance of Heaven" (43). While Carmilla claims to love, her definition of love is selfish and cruel. Carmilla is cunning and intelligent like Lord Ruthven, which she uses to manipulate Laura. Laura explains, "I did feel, as she said, 'drawn towards her', but there was also something of repulsion... She interested and won me; she was so beautiful and so indescribably engaging" (15). Carmilla's seduction of Laura is described in terms of a nightmare, which makes Carmilla not unlike the succubi of the ancient world who visited their victims at night and fed on their sexual energies. Le Fanu is clearly drawing from traditional vampire myths, especially when considering Carmilla's end. In her coffin, she appears alive and immersed in seven inches of blood. She is destroyed using methods commonly employed during the Middle Ages (i.e. staked, decapitated and burned).

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) was likely influenced by Le Fanu's Carmilla, and clearly influenced the work of Smith who adopts Dracula's supernatural powers. It had the most impact on our perceptions of vampirism given its impressive afterlife in both literature and film. Dracula epitomizes the century's vampire as a damned figure by creating a classic story of "good" versus "evil"—Dracul meaning "devil" in Romanian (Beresford 78). American critic Clive Leatherdale once described Count Dracula as a negative reflection of Christ:

Christ was a humble carpenter: Dracula a vainglorious aristocrat. Christ offers light and hope, and was resurrected at dawn: Dracula rises at sunset and thrives in darkness. Christ's death at the 'stake' was the moment of his rebirth: for the vampire the stake heralds 'death' and oblivion. Christ

offered his own life so that others might live: Dracula takes the lives of many so that *he* might live. The blood of Christ is drunk at the Eucharist by the faithful; Dracula reverses the process and drinks from *them*. Both preach resurrection and immortality, the one offering spiritual purity, the other physical excess" (*Dracula, the Novel and the Legend* 190)

Stoker even makes Dracula a devil in appearance, considering his red eyes, pale skin, pointed ears and sharp fangs. He is animalistic, almost wolfish with "hair growing scantily round the temples but profusely elsewhere" (Stoker 52). Like Carmilla and Ruthven, he is also an aristocrat preying on the peasant public. His need for blood is immediately hinted upon through Jonathon Harker's first account of Dracula, when he notices his lips "showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years" (Stoker).

Dracula possesses many of the abilities attributed to vampires today, such as shape-shifting, inhuman strength and mind control. Stoker may also be responsible for familiarizing the public with the notion that vampires require an invitation to enter a home and have difficulty passing running water (qualities attributed to Smith's vampires). However, Stoker seems to focus on the religious aspects of the tale by emphasizing more thoroughly than Polidori and Le Fanu the vampire's status as a damned figure (i.e. one without God's grace). Stoker's vampire rejects God and the gift of spiritual immortality—a soul—in favor of an alternative form of physical immortality. Dracula's fear of holy water and crucifixes makes sense because they are sacred to Christianity. He cannot survive in sunlight because he is a creature of darkness, like the demon vampires before him; in this respect it is easy to see why he

casts no reflection, since, according to superstition, mirrors reflect the soul (Bunson 176). Christianity is the means of Dracula's destruction, and the novel's heroes are Christians. However, as Brooke Allen discusses in her introduction to *Dracula*, having been written on the brink of the nineteenth and twentieth century, it was affected by the strain between science and religion, to the point where both are needed to defeat Dracula; Van Helsing's science and the love shared among the group is needed. However, Mina notes that after Dracula is staked through the heart, "a look of peace" (Stoker 405) overcomes his face, which implicates Christian salvation is available to all, even vampires. Lucy also appears to regain her soul after death, as Stoker writes how her "sweetness and purity" (Stoker 248) returns after the body is destroyed.

Stoker's *Dracula* continues the tradition of a vampire's lust, as Dracula is unable to attain real love, which is noted by "the weird sisters" after they attack Jonathan Harker: "you yourself never loved. You never love!" (Stoker 74). Love is seen as a powerful force in the novel with the characters on the side of good. The male characters all give blood to women, which is seen as an act of love: "No man knows till he experiences it, what it is like to feel his own life-blood drawn away into the woman he loves"; however, Dracula takes blood. He is only capable of lust, or physical love. The sisters, sometimes referred to as Dracula's brides, are highly sexualized with "voluptuous lips" (Stoker 72) and alluring beauty—a clear reference to the ancient Greek, Roman and Babylonian vampires who also seduced and destroyed men. Harker is attracted and repulsed by the sisters at the same time. He

struggles to maintain his virtue knowing that it is wrong to give in to sexual temptation: "There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips" (Stoker 72). The sisters also devour innocence like the *lamia*, feeding on small children. Lucy, who was once sweet and kind, becomes a seductress and child-eating vampire in an effort to show what happens to a woman who gives in to the call of lust. Jeffrey Weinstock suggests, in what is perhaps the most fitting definition of the nineteenth-century vampire, that "vampires are pure id, libidinal energy incarnate, and this makes them both dangerous and dangerously attractive" ("Vampires, Vampires, Everywhere!"). While the nineteenth century defined vampires as devils devoid of humanity, the twentieth century almost seeks to give humanity back to him through the sympathetic renditions of authors and filmmakers.

The Twentieth-Century Vampire: Sympathy for the Devil

The twentieth century was an era that transformed the vampire from an antichrist to a Byronic hero in both literature and film. Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) portrayed the vampire as a tragic hero through its characterization of Louis—a vampire driven by a strong sense of morality. According to Kathleen Rout, Rice transformed the vampires so that "no longer are vampires mindlessly evil... Since they eliminate dangerous people, they actually perform a social service, so both they and the human characters may be the foci of the reader's sympathy" ("Who Do

you Love? Anne Rice's Vampires and Their Moral Transition"). Rice brilliantly chooses first person narration to allow Louis to disclose his tale of woe and evoke sympathy from the reader. Louis continues the tradition of the aristocratic vampire as a wealthy plantation owner in Louisiana whose slaves inevitably revolt, but unlike his predecessors Lord Ruthven and Carmilla, he is humanized by his ability to suffer. His story is marked by great tragedy, where after losing his family, he becomes vulnerable to Lestat's promise of a new beginning, failing to realize he is surrendering to a fate worse than death—a living hell. Louis' conflict is between his vampire and human nature; he feels the urge to kill, but still possesses his human knowledge of right and wrong making him unable to thrive completely as either vampire or human. Through her vampires, Rice holds a philosophical debate on the true nature of evil. While Louis' maker Lestat believes "evil is a point of view" and "God kills, and so shall we; indiscriminately... for no creatures under God are as we are, none so like Him as ourselves," (Rice 88), Louis comes to the conclusion, "what constitutes evil, real evil, is the taking of a single human life... Because if God does not exist, then life... every second of it... Is all we have" (Rice 237). Rice de-glamorizes the vampire through Louis' laments of his state as a fall from grace and warns the reader to beware: "How do we appear? Do you think us beautiful, magical, our white skin, our fierce eyes?... Drink you tell me. You haven't the vaguest conception under God what you ask" (Rice 261). Louis emphasizes the same lack of control and selflessness attributed to earlier vampires. He fleetingly attempts to find compromise by killing animals instead of humans, which is seen as merely surviving instead of living

because he "knew peace only when [he] killed" (Rice 87). He knows the answer to his suffering and the suffering he inflicts on others is his own death, but unlike modern vampires, such as Stefan or Edward, who control their desire or sacrifice themselves to protect others, Louis refuses to end his sad existence. The one thing that makes his immortality bearable is his apparent love for Claudia. Rice reconstructs the vampire myth by making human emotions such as love possible and felt strongly in the vampire realm so as not to distance the vampire too far from humanity in order to excite sympathy. Unlike Dracula who cannot truly love, vampires like Louis are able to love each other and feel the need for companionship, for "who else, knowing us as we know each other, could do anything but destroy us?" (Rice 317). However, Louis' attempts at love and acceptance are futile, as he discovers, "you cannot have love and goodness when you do what you know to be evil" (Rice 336). Rice's vampire's ability to love leads only to suffering, and these relationships are often doomed—consider the death of Claudia. Love, in this case, fails to redeem the vampire as it does in Smith's and Meyer's text, but one may see how Rice's treatment of vampires challenges the vampire myth by making them appear flawed and more human in their ability to suffer.

Francis Ford Coppola's portrayal of Stoker's Dracula in the 1992 film was also instrumental in the more sympathetic reception of the vampire by creating a romance between Count Dracula and Mina; a romance that suggests the same intensity found in Meyer and Smith's text. Coppola gives Dracula a back-story in which he became a vampire after his love—reincarnated as Mina—commits suicide

believing he has fallen in battle; the church insisted her soul was lost, which prompts a broken-hearted Dracula to embrace damnation himself. He spends eternity searching for her, as the film's slogan states "love never dies." We cannot help but feel pity for his pain and loss. When he finally finds Mina, he hesitates to turn her into what he calls monster and damn her like him. Although they cannot be together, in the end, their love redeems Dracula, as Mina gives him peace. The theme of religion as a means of suffering continues in Dracula where the lovers are condemned but the church but find redemption through their love.

Up until now, the tradition has been discussed in terms of adult horror, or in the case of "Dracula" (1992), adult horror/romance. It wasn't long before Hollywood caught on to what promised to be a profitable trend, aiming the vampire genre toward younger audiences. Movies like "Fright Night" (1985), "Once Bitten" (1985) and "The Lost Boys" (1987) were preoccupied with the daily lives of teenagers—their concerns, struggles and plain old angst. "The Lost Boys" especially appealed to teens with its tagline: "Sleep all day, party all night. Never grow old. Never die. It's fun to be a vampire." The enigmatic gang of leather-jacket-wearing and motorcycle-driving vampires made vampirism look cool. Television series like "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" (1997-2003) also play on the drama that is high school, only empowering the female lead to fight back against the forces of evil, falling in love with vampires along the way. Vampire fiction and film leading up the twenty-first century has at times taken away moral and religious tension and loosened the moral boundaries which one was beginning to see at the advent of Rice's *Interview*. It is easy to how

these teen films paved the way Meyer's *Twilight* and Smith's *Vampire Diaries* where vampires are able to silence their vampire urges and reciprocate human emotion because it has become commonplace to think of vampires in less fatalistic terms.

While the twentieth-century embraced the vampire as a Byronic hero of sorts, its beginnings are of a more bestial nature. The vampire originated as a projection of humankind's fears concerning death and the afterlife. As McNally and Florescu write, "attitudes toward death and life have always been complex for all men, encompassing hate and love, attraction and repulsion, hope and fear. Belief in vampires is a poetic, imaginative way of looking at death and at life beyond death" (124). Vampire myths also serve as cautionary tales. The *lamia*, *empusa*, *mormo*, and *lilitu* of the ancient world exposed a destructive side to female sexuality and taught one to be weary of beauty, while the hungry dead of China and Romania warned against an immoral lifestyle and failure to obey superstition. The vampires of folklore (with the exception of the *strigoi*) were powerful demons that humankind had little hope of defeating. However, these attitudes changed in Europe during the Middle Ages where the monster no longer manifested as a demon, but a servant of Satan that could be sought out and destroyed using Christian icons. As a literary figure of the eighteenth century, the vampire stood in opposition to Christianity as a devious sexual predator who attacks us where we are most vulnerable, the heart, as loved ones return from the graves to torment the living. The nineteenth-century vampire built upon the seduction myth emphasized by the previous century; it is a charming yet deadly aristocrat. The twentieth century made the vampire a sympathetic, even popular figure with the

advent of television and film. Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* humanized the vampire by showing their capability to suffer. And Francis Ford Coppola's love story proved powerful enough to evoke sympathy for the character of the Count, who was originally seen as an antichrist. This paved the way for Meyer's and Smith's texts that made happy endings possible. *Twilight* and *Vampire Diaries* are part of a long literary tradition that originally demonized then humanized the vampire. These texts also challenge the tradition by making the vampire more human than ever. Vampires may still require blood to survive, but they can choose to control their urges and live among humans. Edward and Stefan are protectors, the perfect lover in many ways because they live only to protect and care for the women they love, overcoming destructive urges along the way.

Chapter 2: The Vampire Diaries

L.J. Smith's Traditional Vampires

While Chapter One provided a brief outline of the vampire of mythology and its emergence into literature, demonstrating how representations have shifted from a demonic creature to a complex and even sympathetic revenant, Chapter Two focuses on L.J. Smith's contribution to the mythology through her portrayal of the morally upright and romantic vampires who have the ability to give and receive love. L.J. Smith's *The Vampire Diaries* series—*The Awakening* (1991), *The Struggle* (1991), *The Fury* (1991) and *Dark Reunion* (1991)—share the same overarching themes prevalent in *Twilight*, which include self-control and the redemptive power of love. The series is a young adult drama centering on high school student Elena Gilbert and her life in Fell's Church, Virginia. The story may have influenced *Twilight*, which was published more than a decade later, in that our protagonist falls for the handsome and brooding vampire, Stefan Salvatore. Elena also develops a relationship with Stefan's less-than-noble brother, Damon, who represents the darker capabilities of vampire power. *The Vampire Diaries* became a *New York Times* best seller and prompted an equally successful television series of the same name starring Nina Dobrev, Ian Somerhalder, and Paul Wesley. The novel's popularity makes it an ideal case study in evaluating the modern American vampire. It shares a similar pattern with *Twilight*: a young girl falls for a mysterious stranger who reveals he is a vampire, they fall in love and triumph over opposing forces. However, L.J. Smith series, while still entailing a powerful romance is much darker than its counterpart

Twilight. The vampires, including Stefan and his brother Damon, are simply much scarier than the Cullens in that these vampires struggle more with self-control.

Since L.J. Smith's *Vampire Diaries* series provides a more traditional approach to vampire culture, there is a definite element of horror in conjunction with the romantic themes. Stefan Salvatore has more in common with early vampires like Dracula than Edward Cullen, considering he spends a great deal of time in graveyards, has the ability to shape-shift and can influence the minds of others. The vampires of Smith's text share their superhuman senses with Meyer's vampires, which make them highly in tune to their surroundings. Furthermore, both texts signal speed, agility and strength as inherited vampire traits that make them effective hunters. Smith's vampires are immortal; however, they are victims to traditional methods of destruction, such as sunlight, decapitation and a stake through the heart. Smith's are more vulnerable than Meyer's who are seen more like superheroes than creatures of darkness. Smith's vampires are also prisoners of old world superstition, including the inability of the undead to cross running water or enter a household before being invited. Stefan, like Dracula, has the potential to influence others through mind control under the influence of human blood.

Overall, vampirism is not as beautiful and glamorous as it appears in *Twilight*, and Stefan likens it to a curse. However, like Meyer, Smith presents the element of choice; vampires can choose to give in to their dark nature by feeding on humankind, or hold on to their humanity by surviving off the blood of animals—either way, as in *Twilight*, blood is a necessity to survival. In Smith's world, the more you give in to

"the darkness," (*The Awakening* 111) the more powerful yet limited by old world superstition you become. Damon embraces his vampire nature by drinking human blood, and is therefore stronger than Stefan, but ironically ruled by superstition. Stefan, who refuses to consume human blood, is almost more human than Damon because he is a weaker vampire and less confined to the rules. Smith creates a divide between good and evil, but with definite shades of gray. Damon, for instance, is our first antagonist, but he has redeemable qualities having been compelled by his love for Elena and his brother to stagger the moral line. The ultimate evil then becomes vampires and other creatures who have lost all humanity and refuse to change, creatures like Katherine and Klaus who delight in hurting others. Smith may indicate that vampires are beings of darkness, but she doesn't place them beyond salvation, which is what Stefan seeks at the beginning of *The Awakening*.

Dangerous Beauty

Like the Cullens, Stefan conceals his true identity from others, which makes him an outsider and complete mystery to the human world. Elena remarks that Stefan has built a wall around himself to keep others out because he wants to protect them. He shares the same ability to blend in as with Meyer's vampires, only appearing paler and more beautiful than your average human. Interestingly, Stefan's undeniable attractiveness makes hiding difficult. However, there is a coldness that accompanies his beauty. Unlike Edward's angelic description, Stefan possesses an "inhuman," or "alien" beauty, "because no human could project that aura of power, or of distance."

(*The Awakening* 112). Elena, the most popular girl at school, can have anyone she wants, but is attracted to him because he projects both beauty and danger with his leather jacket wearing and fast car driving "bad boy look" (*The Awakening* 16). The theme of dangerous beauty prevails in Smith's text, just as Greek men couldn't withstand the beauty of the *lamia*, neither can Elena help but be drawn to Stefan's charm. A similar theme prevails in *Twilight*, where Bella is irresistibly drawn to Edward, who, like Stefan, must develop self control and discipline so as not to harm his love. However, both Elena and Bella are given the power to make their own choices. They are not seen as victims but empowered women, and both authors choose to make their female protagonist beautiful in their own right. The traditional connection between beauty and power can be viewed in Smith's text, especially through the love triangle between Stefan, Damon and their maker, Katherine, in her ability to seduce both the brothers with her beautiful blue eyes and golden hair. The vampires want their victims to desire them. Smith strategically chooses to name his heroine "Elena," which is another name for Helen of Troy. Elena is warned of the implications of such a name: "beautiful but doomed" (*The Awakening* 89). However, Elena, like Bella, pursues her vampire lover despite the danger because she believes he will not harm her. The boundaries between victim and lover are explored even further when Elena is pursued by Damon against her will, becoming both Damon's victim and Stefan's lover.

Stefan Salvatore: Romantic Hero

Stefan and Edward continue the new tradition of the aristocratic vampire by being mysterious, alluring, wealthy, but Stefan adheres to the supernatural powers of traditional aristocrat vampires like Dracula. Like Edward, Stefan descends from a rich and powerful family, having been born in fifteenth century Florence as a member of the Italian nobility. He is a student of the Renaissance with an appreciation for literature and art matched only by our other aristocrat, Edward. Stefan shares Edward's sense of chivalry, and saves Elena from danger. Stefan is similarly a gentleman. He is articulate and highly intelligent. As a human, Stefan was driven by his responsibilities to his family and kept to his studies, making him the favored son of his father. Damon's concerns on the other hand centered around pleasure as opposed to duty. Stefan shares Edward's strict moral code which makes him different than other vampires in the text who care only for themselves. He attempts to feed solely off the blood of animals so as not to harm humans, abiding by a vegetarian diet that will be adopted by the Cullens. Like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde he struggles with the duality of good and evil, wondering if he will ever find peace. Stefan's sense of nobility, honor and strict moral code make him an ideal romantic hero, and like Edward, he struggles to make peace with his dark past.

Stefan shares heroic characteristics with Edward such as superhuman speed, strength and agility that he uses to protect others. Like Edward, Stefan defies his vampire nature to be a force of good, which makes him a hero in Elena's eyes. She doesn't fear him because she believes he would never hurt her, and Stefan claims he

would die before causing her pain. However, there is always the danger of losing control, which is why Stefan is careful around humans. The hunger is powerful; it frightens Stefan: "never knowing how strong the hunger would be, or what he might have to do to satisfy it" (*The Awakening* 10). There is a dark side to Stefan that is not so evident in Edward. Stefan has a difficult time maintaining the control that Edward is able to keep, almost killing several characters including Tyler and Caroline in *The Struggle* when he thinks he has lost Elena. He is more dangerous because he doesn't have complete control like Edward does, although he refrains from ever hurting Elena in the duration of the series. Edward and Stefan are heroes because they fight impossible odds and succeed in being a force of good despite the challenges of their condition. Stefan attempts to make amends for his past by becoming a protector of the humanity. He risks his life to save not just Elena but all the dark forces that come to Fell's Church. He even risks exposure to save others.

Stefan's selfless character and ability to protect the woman he loves makes him a romantic hero, which is also seen through Edward in *Twilight*. He has a hopelessly romantic disposition when it comes to love. In *The Awakening*, one learns that he wears the ring of his first love and maker, Katherine, on a chain around his neck at all times. When he first sees Elena, he is drawn to her because she resembles Katherine in appearance: slender, blond hair, blue eyes. Although he struggles at times to be more human, he is ultimately good and possesses heroic, honorable traits. He cares for others unlike his brother Damon and even assimilates into the high school, befriending football star Matt and Elena's friends Meredith and Bonnie. The

tragedy of Stefan's existence is that he lost everything in becoming a vampire, and must face the guilt of Katherine's and Damon's mortal death forever. Immortality in Smith's text means to be young and beautiful forever, but at a tremendous cost. Stefan, like Edward, will always appear as a teenager, which keeps him from ever settling down in one place, lest humans discover his secret; this makes for a lonely existence. The thought of eternity is almost unbearable for Stefan who wallows in guilt and self hatred. Contemporary vampires do not last long as solitary creatures—as one sees in *Interview*, *Lost Boys*, and *Twilight*—and attempt to build relationships with other vampires, sometimes forcibly. Stefan refuses to turn Elena for the selfish reason of having her with him always, and is content to be with her through the duration of her mortal life. Katherine selfishly turns Damon and Stefan so they can be together. He goes to Fell's Church to rejoin the human community, seeking acceptance and redemption. In leaving the "shadow" (*The Awakening* 11) world—a nod to earlier vampires who lived among shadows and stalked human prey—and joins the community of man by attending high school. Stefan's greatest fear is not finding acceptance. He, like Edward, does not wish to be an outsider or monster. However, Stefan has no community and lacks the Edward's supportive family, since his brother Damon does not share his moral code. When Elena first sees the vampire in Stefan, she comments "to be so alone, so alien, and so alone..." (*The Awakening* 211). Both Smith and Meyer make the argument that community is essential to the vampire's triumph over its dark nature.

The importance of social acceptance is already witnessed through Elena's

circle of friends, who time and again prove to be pillars of strength. When Elena's parents are tragically taken from her in car accident, Meredith, Bonnie and Matt give her much needed support. When she is with them, she is strong: "Elena realized that she was going to be all right. She was herself again, not lost, not a stranger " (*The Awakening* 54). Human beings need social connections and Smith proposes so do vampires like Stefan who still have humanity within them. Stefan feels what it means to have social support when he is first invited by Matt to join the football team. He is accepted into Elena's circle of friends, and they fight together to defeat near impossible odds. In *The Fury*, everyone plays a part in defeating the evil Katherine who invented her immortal death only to arrive at Fell's Church to make Damon and Stefan suffer. Bonnie best demonstrates the power of people joining together when her divining produces a circle—a symbol for unity. In *Dark Reunion*, they band together once again to defeat Katherine's maker, Klaus, proving that friendship and love conquers evil. Meyer demonstrates this same communal power through the Cullen family and their ability to protect each other. The modern vampire strongest defining feature lies in his desire for love and community, not lust. Vampires like Edward and Stefan attempt to abstain from seeking humans as a source of food, in order to rejoin the community of humankind and refrain from being monsters.

Love Conquers All

Elena and Stefan both share profound sadness which forms the basis for their relationship. The death of Elena's parents leave her feeling "alone" and "lost" (*The*

Awakening 4). She loses sight of herself as the beautiful golden girl but continues with the facade by forcing herself to act normal at school. And although Stefan seems "calm" and "controlled," Elena believes "underneath he was as confused and unhappy as she was" (*The Awakening* 85). Elena yearns to feel safe again, to find somewhere to belong. She is driven by the loss of family and community, just as Bella is emotionally compromised by her broken family dynamics. As Smith writes about Elena, "It was as if she were always reaching for... something" (*The Awakening* 21). Elena finds the answer in Stefan, explaining that she had finally "come home" (*The Awakening* 125) and knows what it's like to "be completely happy" (*The Awakening* 169), and Stefan finds peace through Elena. Smith emphasizes the same value of love over lust as Meyer does through Edward and Bella. Katherine and Stefan's relationship was built solely on lust, but Elena and Stefan's is built on trust and love. Their love is initially an obsession, also seen with Edward and Bella, but Smith comments it was "not merely passion, but a bruising tenderness and a love so strong it made [Elena] shake inside" (*The Awakening* 124). Their first kiss is quite revealing of the depth of their relationship:

It was almost as if she could hear his thoughts, could feel his feelings.

Pleasure and desire raced between them, connecting them drawing them closer. And Elena sensed, too, a wellspring of deeper emotions within him. He wanted to hold her forever, to protect her from all harm. He wanted to defend her from any evil that threatened her. He wanted to join his life with hers (*The Awakening* 125)

The love story between Stefan and Elena is written to be just as powerful as Edward

and Bella's, if not more so when one considers how they triumph over death in *Dark Reunion* (2007). Smith would like us to believe this is an ideal, true love, and evidence certainly exists as to its selflessness. Similar to Meyer, the ability to love defines the vampires of Smith's series.

Smith's portrayal of a vampire and mortal love affair is as dangerous as it is strong. They are both seen as unattainable, something that they cannot easily have and it could kill them both because Stefan hungers for her blood and Elena could expose him as a vampire, but they are deemed worthy by triumphing over the many obstacles that come their way. Elena is not frightened and willingly puts herself in his world: "while she was with him, she could not be afraid of anything" (*The Awakening* 125). Smith's fictional world is described as a dangerous place in itself, much like Meyer's *Twilight*, a fact that Matt comments on in *Dark Reunion* when he questions whether there is a point to anything when there is so much evil in the world. And therein lies the quandary, to give up or to continue fighting. The modern vampire shines as a hero who refuses to stop fighting despite the difficulties.

Love and Redemption

The text is abundant with spiritual undertones that suggest the vampire is capable of being a romantic hero because the fate of his soul is in his hands. Like Edward, Stefan is more like a self-sacrificing Christ figure than the vampires of old because he is selfless in his pursuits and exhibits a great amount of self control. Smith promotes the existence of the human soul in her text. Elena and Stefan both are

attributed souls even after they become vampires. Stefan comments that his kind are supposedly soulless and should not have a reflection Smith, like Meyer writes that the eyes are in fact the "window to the soul" (*The Struggle* 328), and when Elena sees his image in the mirror, his eyes appear "dark" "sad" and "hopeless" (*The Awakening* 210). However, later, Elena would witness "his soul shining through those eyes" (234) when their love becomes the strongest force in the novel in *The Fury* and she sacrifices herself for everyone. Stefan even jokes that Elena "is the mirror" and has "stolen his soul" because he loves her so much (*The Struggle* 348). The act of drawing blood is sometimes seen as an act of love. Smith uses blood to draw Elena and Stefan together on a significant and spiritual level, but she describes blood sharing and not taking. Elena herself is not a helpless victim but leads her own life; she explains "I've made my decision Stefan... I want to" (*The Awakening* 235). It is Elena's desire to share blood in order to bring them closer together, and not Stefan's. Stefan warns Elena that the "passion is stronger than you can image" (236), but in that moment he proves he is able to maintain self-control by stopping himself from draining her entirely. The sharing of each other's blood emphasizes the strength of their love and a mutual trust. Elena trusts Stefan completely, explaining "you will never hurt me" (*The Awakening* 238). And as Elena takes out the knife to draw blood from Stefan, Stefan acknowledges his trust of her through his vulnerability. The experience is described by Smith as a deeply intimate and spiritual act: "the pain faded almost instantly. it was replaced by a feeling of pleasure that made her tremble. A great rushing sweetness filled her, flowing through her to Stefan" (*The Awakening*

238). Blood sharing is seen as a sharing of souls, a kind of peace reminiscent of heaven. Smith writes, "Stefan's love bathed [Elena], shone through her, lighting every dark place in her soul like the sun" (*The Awakening* 125). Meyer also uses the drawing of blood as an act of love. Edward draws Bella's blood in order to save her from vampire venom; his ability to stop, emphasizes Edward's perfect self-control and love's power over desire.

Elena and Stefan's love redeems them both. Elena wants "to be worthy of Stefan" and no longer the selfish, narcissistic creature who used others for her own gain. The formally selfish Elena sacrifices herself to save her friends, the man she loves and the town from evil. She returns as an angel surrounded by white light and in so bears the connotation of innocence, purity and spiritual beauty. Elena becomes a symbol of light to the whole town. Elena, who feared she would live forever as a vampire, is redeemed through her love for Stefan and its power to make her a better person. Elena's love beats the darkness inside Stefan. He is able to let go his guilt when he learns the truth about Katherine and attempts to reconcile with his brother, Damon with Elena's help. Elena makes him feel like he is not a monster but simply a man in love with a girl. She made him "feel human again" (*The Awakening* 376). Stefan who was named after St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, finally lives up to his name, which means "salvation" (*The Awakening* 229). Elena herself is changed for the better once she regains the sense of love and community she lost with her parents. Elena even represents the ultimate self-sacrifice as she gives up her life to save her loved ones from Katherine, much like Bella gives up her family and friends

in order to protect them after becoming a vampire. Even Damon is moved by Elena's sacrifice and regains the relationship with his brother that was destroyed by Katherine's wickedness. As Smith writes, "in the end she did the most unselfish thing anybody could do" (*The Fury* 245). Elena's love for Stefan tears through the walls to "expose[] his soul" (*The Fury* 351). She tells Stefan his soul was never missing, but was tied to his humanity which was strengthened by their love, "heal[ing] him" (*The Fury* 352). Both Smith's and Meyer's heroines end up practicing the same self-control and sacrifice of their vampire lovers, which makes them strong, heroic characters (and not the previously swoonful female victims of the past) who not only assist in the salvation of their vampire lover but are transformed themselves for the better—a key theme developed even further by Meyer in her characterization of Bella.

The Aristocratic Vampire as a Moral, Compassionate Hero

L.J. Smith's *The Vampire Diaries* series pay tribute to traditional vampire mythology by using common superstitions attributed to the old world vampire that give her vampires more of an edge than Meyer's. Stefan is an evolved aristocrat because although he possesses their allure, wealth and supernatural abilities, Smith focuses on the heroic aspects of his character so he may be a force of good in the community. Stefan is a gentleman like Edward who will do anything for the woman he loves. The love story between Stefan and Elena is described as transcendental, spiritual, giving the two characters the redemption each seeks. Like Meyer, Smith uses high school as the basis of her tale because the average teenager does feel like an

outsider or different in some way from everyone else, and it makes sense (s)he would gravitate towards a creature who personifies alienation and seeks acceptance. Karen Backstein suggests, the novel's popularity rests in the fact "they are female-centered narratives that strive for audience identification with the heroine—with her strength, her extraordinary capabilities, her status as an object of desire, or a combination of all these traits" ((Un)safe Sex: Romancing the Vampire). Additionally, what is particularly innovative is the self-sacrifice inherent in both texts. Both Bella and Elena due to inner strength and the love shared with their vampire lovers, are propelled out the realm of victim and choose to become heroines who protect their communities by using the same self control and self-sacrifice practiced by their vampire lovers.

Chapter 3: Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight*: From Damned to Adored

Angst Sells: Rewriting the Vampire Myth

While Chapter Two discussed L.J. Smith's interpretation of the vampire myth with her morally complex vampires that have the ability to choose humanity over vampirism, Chapter Three discusses Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series which presents a new kind of aristocratic vampire who obeys a strict moral code and has the ability to love deeply. In this chapter, I will identify how Stephanie Meyer challenges the literary tradition by introducing a vampire who represents modern sensibilities by being deeply moral. Meyer's *Twilight series*, *Twilight* (2005), *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse* (2007) and *Breaking Dawn* (2008), centers around high-school student Isabella "Bella" Swan and her transition from sunny Phoenix, Arizona to bleak and rainy Forks, Washington where she falls in love with the beautiful but mysterious Edward Cullen who happens to be a one hundred and seven year old vampire. The series achieved best-seller status which prompted Summit Entertainment to create motion picture successes starring Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson. What is the secret to Meyer's success? *Publisher's Weekly's* articulated it best in their starred review: "The main draw here is Bella's infatuation with outsider Edward, the sense of danger inherent in their love, and Edward's inner struggle—a perfect metaphor for the sexual tension that accompanies adolescence. These will be familiar to nearly every teen, and will keep readers madly flipping the pages of Meyer's tantalizing debut." *Twilight* primarily appeals to young adult readers through its ability to portray a realistic and relevant tale, but what's of particular interest is her ability to rewrite the

vampire myth into something more accessible and human. The vampires of Meyer's tale are subject to the same dilemmas facing humankind—whether it be love, the nature of good and evil, and God—and like humankind, they may choose to be lead morally-driven existences or cling to selfish and wicked endeavors by giving into the hunger within them. Meyer uses the imagery of the apple and Genesis 2:17 to symbolize the themes of temptation and choice which prevail in her series. The Cullen family chooses to align themselves with humanity by being "vegetarian" vampires who honor Christian virtues. These vampires bear little resemblance to the flesh-eating demons or blood-drinking revenants of traditional mythology because they are more human than ever in her ability to control the hunger within and look to others with compassion and love.

The Good Vampire

Meyer challenges vampire mythology by glorifying the vampire and aligning them with Christ rather than prolonging The Middle Ages preoccupation with the devil. By referencing the *stregoni benefici*, an Italian vampire who is considered "good" and an enemy of all "evil" vampires (*Twilight* 135), Meyer distinguishes the Cullens from more traditional vampires like the Volturi with their red eyes and savage hunger. The Cullens are so beautiful they even sparkle in sunlight, which is a long way from turning into dust like Rice's vampires. Their home is an extension of their personalities: beautiful, "timeless" and "graceful" (*Twilight* 321). The simple fact their dwelling is a home lends to the idea of a family. Bella does not expect to

find a place of such quality, as Edward jokes, "no coffins, no piled skulls in the corners; I don't even think we have cobwebs... what a disappointed this must be for you" (*Twilight* 329). The Cullens represent human potential, unlimited time to be spent on worthy endeavors. Edward and his family prize a good education. The fact Edward and his adopted siblings—Jasper, Alice, Emmett and Rosalie—attend school goes beyond a keeping of appearances. Carlisle himself, the adopted father, earned a medical degree so that he may be of service to humankind. Bella explains how the house "held more books than I'd ever seen outside a library" (*Twilight* 334). Christian icons once used in defense of vampires, such as crucifixes, do not harm the Cullens, who have a cross hanging in their home. The Cullens are deeply religious, Carlisle himself being a pastor's son. Meyer poses that her vampires are not inherently evil and can even be devout Christians by leading a morally driven life built on the foundation of family and education. They refuse to be monsters; as Edward says Carlisle realized he could "exist without being a demon" (*Twilight* 337) by living everyday in service to humankind. Their birth as vampires can be seen more like a cross to bear from a religious standpoint, a test of one's faith. Carlisle adamantly believes in a just God, explaining "...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 the other. Not even the reflection in the mirror" (*New Moon* 36). By associating the vampire with images of beauty, faith and family, the vampire presented through the Cullens is no longer a creatures of darkness; Meyer makes this notion even more clear with her theory of the origin of vampires: "if you don't believe

that all this world could have just happened on its own, which is hard for me to accept myself, is it so hard to believe that the same force that created the delicate angelfish with the shark, the baby seal and the killer whale, could create both our kinds together?" (*Twilight* 308). Meyer's vampires are God's creatures, but more than that; contemporary vampires like Edward are more like Christ figures because they are willing to sacrifice themselves for their love for humans.

The Human Community

In Meyer's work, the vampire has departed from tradition through its ability to be a member of the human community—to love and be loved, a factor contributing most to its status as a romantic hero. Meyer's vampires appear human for the most part, they're simply colder and more beautiful; therefore, they have little difficulty passing as human. A common theme in the vampire genre, including Anne Rice's novels, is the fear of isolation, which often results in the siring of new vampires for companionship. The Cullen family is the result of one vampire, Carlisle, saving others from mortal death or adopting wayward vampires in order to create a family. They are able to suppress their vampire nature and coexist with humans because they have each other's support. At the head of the household is Carlisle, whose compassion for humanity was only amplified after becoming a vampire, since he dedicates his life to helping humans in the highly respectable profession of doctor. He refrains from taking human life and survives off the blood of animals. Esme, Edward's "mother," is described by Bella as possessing strong "motherly instincts" (*Twilight* 268). Carlisle

and Esme impart their moral teachings to the family they've created. It was Carlisle who taught Edward that he could control his hunger, and Jasper's reform into a "vegetarian" is owing entirely to the loving support of his family. Carlisle is philosophically a good father because he imparts the tenets of self-control and discipline, which Meyer promotes throughout the text in complete opposition to previous vampire tales where vampires glutted themselves on human blood and suffering. Earlier vampires, especially those prior to the twentieth-century like Ruthven and Carmilla, lived solitary lives in opposition to the community of humankind. Vampires like Dracula go so far as to pervert the family unit by creating submissive and deranged creatures like the "weird sisters." As a family, the Cullens are strong. They share an unbreakable bond that gets them through even the most dire of situations, including the threat of the Volturi. If Edward was not part of this family, it is highly unlikely he would succeed as the romantic hero readers have come to adore.

Edward Cullen: Romantic Hero, Gentleman, and Superhero

Stephanie Meyer's vampires have taken the idea of the tragic hero of the twentieth century one step further in becoming romantic heroes. Leading vampire, Edward Cullen, is a beautiful yet conflicted character who becomes completely absorbed by his desire to create a life with Bella Swan, backed by the moral teachings and support of a strong family community. Although part of a modern text, Meyer clearly identifies Edward with classic romantic heroes who were similarly complex,

even dark, figures such as Mr. Rochester—who shares the same first name—Heathcliff, and Mr. Darcy. Edward outshines previous romantic heroes by being "inhumanely beautiful," with a face one would "expect to see on the airbrushed pages of a magazine" (*Twilight* 19). Bella describes his facial features in terms commonly attributed to ideal beauty in men: high cheekbones, strong jawline, a straight nose, and full lips. He is compared to the Greek god Adonis with his pale, marble-like skin, which also suggests a certain degree of coldness or impenetrability. Edward's beauty bears the deadly significance of the Greek vampires who seduced men with their wiles; however, Edward refuses to prey upon the women he attracts. Meyer gives Edward the beautiful camouflage of a monster like the *lamia*, but Edward's characterization reveals his beauty matches his inner nature which encompasses compassionate and surprising depth. Bella goes so far as to call him an "angel" (*Twilight* 452). While Edward attracts considerable attention based on his good looks, Edward and his family act like outsiders. They refrain from drawing too much attention because although they live within human society, they are not human. Edward, like other vampires, is immortal and will forever appear seventeen; he could never live without scrutiny in society for too long. To Bella's frustration, Edward imparts no knowledge of his character or family for quite some time, concerned Bella would associate him with the monstrous vampire society has come to fear. Edward's beauty, compassion, and the sheer mystery surrounding his existence makes him an incredibly appealing protagonist. He becomes even more of a romantic hero once one learns about his aristocrat heritage and hopelessly romantic tendencies.

Edward shares his aristocratic heritage with the literary vampires of the nineteenth century, since he was born to wealthy parents in the early twentieth century; however, Meyer challenges the tradition of blood-sucking aristocrats by contrasting saintly Edward against vampires like Ruthven and Carmilla who selfishly feed off humankind. Edward chooses to lead a moral lifestyle by feeding strictly off the blood of animals. As far as the aristocrat art of seduction goes, he may sneak into Bella's bedroom, but he refuses to steal her life or soul; his intentions are only to protect her. He is not associated with the nightmare, as Carmilla is—influenced by the succubi of the ancient world—and even creates a peaceful setting for Bella to fall asleep; Bella explains how she feels "safe" with Edward (*Twilight* 162). Edward is intelligent and cultured like the vampire aristocrats, but it is never used towards a wicked end. Being romantically inclined, he plays classical piano and quotes Shakespeare to an adoring Bella. On top of being handsome, rich and mysterious, Edward is also a true gentleman—that is, once Bella gets to know him. He has retained some of the more gallant characteristics of his early twentieth-century life, evident in his mannerisms and speech. Edward asks Bella's father permission to court and marry his daughter. He honors a code of chivalry by protecting Bella from various harm, whether it be from other vampires, humans or werewolves, with complete disregard for his own safety. His selflessness and desire to protect those he loves despite his vampire condition makes him an admirable, romantic hero. He is not defined by the traditional aristocrat vampire profile that make for an obvious

monster—mind control, shape-shifting, red eyes, protruding fangs, or coffins. In fact, one can hardly call Edward a villain or monster given his constant drive to do good.

Meyer adopts characteristics from vampire mythology that make Edward more like a superhero than traditional vampire. Edward's version of the aristocrat—infused with all its romantic tendencies—combines elements commonly found in superhero tales such as superhuman strength, speed and endurance. He also has the ability to read minds (with the exception of Bella's). Following the superhero and vampire tradition, Edward was at one time human, before the tragedy of losing his parents to the Spanish influenza. Edward's story is a tale of heroism because he chooses to "rise above—to conquer the boundaries of a destiny that none of us wanted" (*Twilight* 307). Edward shares his strict moral code with figures such as Superman and Spiderman, who are twentieth-century creations. He uses his abilities to protect those he loves, often disregarding his own well-being. Our first indication of Edward's selflessness comes when he jumps in front of a moving car to protect Bella, knowing this action may expose his secret—which brings up another tenet of superheroism used by Meyer: the need for a secret identity. Edward is immortal, making him impervious to bullets and other threats, but he does have the early vampire's vulnerability when it comes to dismemberment and fire.

Unlike earlier aristocratic vampires, who possessed some degree of mind control, Edward's power of mind reading isn't evasive or threatening, but used for protection. For instance, he saves Bella from a group of inebriated men after reading their violent thoughts in *Twilight*. Edward spends a great deal of time saving Bella, to

the point where she theorizes he is a superhero; however, Edward suggests the opposite, implicating he is "the bad guy" (*Twilight* 92). Edward may feel like he is a villain, but his actions indicate he is a hero. Bella describes him as "the vampire who wanted to be good—who ran around saving people's lives so he wouldn't be a monster" (*Twilight* 204). Edward's self-loathing is defeated only when Bella and Edward's love is actualized, which lends to the overarching romantic theme. Unlike earlier vampires—including *Interview's* Louis and his failed attempts to be more human—Edward succeeds at living a happy and morally sound life through his love for Bella. Meyer has successfully created a new kind of romantic superhero in the form of a vampire who uses his abilities to do good and protect those he loves.

The Importance of Self-Control and Discipline

Meyer emphasizes the importance of self-control in Edward's ability to be a romantic hero. Edward's inner struggle to be more human makes him comparable to Rice's sympathetic vampire, Louis. However, Meyer differs from Rice in the achievement of this goal. One finds that Edward and Louis share a wayward past of preying on humans. Edward tells Bella he left the Cullen family and their vegetarian code to feed on murderers. However, Edward found that the taking of any human life is immoral and has been haunted by his decision ever since. Louis is told to feed on evildoers as well in an effort by his maker, Lestat, to ease him into the vampire lifestyle, but even Louis with his strong hold on humanity ends up embracing his vampire nature by falling victim to bloodlust. As Edward explains, animal blood is

never truly satisfying, but he abstains from preying on humans nevertheless. Louis and Edward are both consumed with the concept of damnation, as Edward initially wonders if there is peace for him at all.

Meyer interestingly emphasizes Edward's struggle through his eyes in *Twilight*, which emphasize great emotional depth; at times he has "careful" (43), "earnest" or "sincere" (462) eyes. Bella explains that "his eyes went black again" (476), "burned" (269) or contained a "haunted look" (472). Edward, like his family, has amber eyes as opposed to the red of the Volturi. Edward also has purple bruises under his eyes, implicating exhaustion. Meyers assigns a spiritual connection to the eyes where they indicate the inner emotion and character of the individual—their soul. By his eyes, Edward is originally seen as a brooding character who believes he is a monster. It is his love for Bella that enables him to gain absolute control over his vampire nature. Rice uses this same redemptive quality of love in *Interview with the Vampire* when Louis finds happiness with Claudia but becomes a lost soul as soon as she is gone. Edward is given the opportunity to have a happy ending with the woman he loves, an unheard of conclusion in previous vampire novels like *Interview with the Vampire*, because he is able to practice Carlisle's teachings of self control and discipline.

Meyer's theme of self-control and discipline is especially important when considering the precarious romance between Edward the vampire and Bella the human. Edward is the symbolic lion of the romance, while fragile Bella is the lamb. It is necessary for Edward to control his urge for blood in order to protect Bella who

recognizes the danger in the relationship but trusts Edward completely (as Elena trust Stefan). Meyer utilizes the common romantic trope of love at first sight in a slightly comical way considering Edward is a vampire who hungers for Bella's blood. Bella explains how she felt genuine fear at first meeting Edward, where her instincts scream be afraid (*Twilight* 27), but she was compelled to pursue him—another oddity considering in past vampire tales, the vampire pursued their obsession. Meyer has reversed the predator and prey dynamic to emphasize the selflessness of her vampire and the strength of her heroine. Bella, who could date any of the boys at school, notices Edward and only Edward. The attraction seems to be based on the idea of togetherness in suffering; Edward believes he is a monster and Bella is lonely, sad and somewhat broken. Their love begins as an obsession where all they can think about is each other, with an "electric spark" or "restless craving" (*Twilight* 230) stirring in each, but it shows more depth in its progression. As the love progresses, so does the danger. Aside from the fact some part of Edward hungers for her blood, by inviting Bella into his world, he puts her in danger with other vampires, werewolves and the Volturi. However, danger was already present in Bella's life. Bella almost needs the protection Edward offers because she is a magnet for trouble. Meyer appears to be reverting to a pre-feminist conception of womanhood where Bella, although she attempts to be strong, is at times a damsel in distress. Meyer suggests the world is scary enough without the existence of vampires, as seen with the Seattle incident in *Twilight* where Bella is attacked. However, Meyer suggests one does not perceive Bella as a victim, because she was given the choice and accepted the apple

of temptation so to speak (i.e. to know Edward is a vampire and willingly set out in his world). She accepts Edward for who he is and the implications that come with their relationship, unlike others in previous novels who had no choice when it came to their fate. Bella also becomes a stronger character after surviving all of the danger, as she suggests quite poetically, "I like the night. Without the dark, we'd never see the stars" (*Twilight* 233), implying that without the trials Edward and Bella went through they wouldn't appreciate the strength of their love. Meyer's romance is appealing because Edward and Bella's love reads like an optimistic Romeo and Juliet where two opposing worlds meet and continue on into a happy (un)ending.

Meyers builds upon the idea of fated soul mates touched upon in Coppola's "Dracula" through the timeless love-story of Mina and Dracula. Edward and Bella were not complete until they found each other. As Bella herself explains, "the bond forged between us was not one that could be broken by absence, distance, or time... As I would always belong to him, so would he always be mine" (*New Moon* 527). Edward explains, "for almost ninety years I've walked among my kind, and yours... all the time thinking I was complete in myself, not realizing what I was seeking. and not finding anything, because you weren't alive yet" (*Twilight* 304). As their love matures, Edward gives Bella the "feeling of security" (*Twilight* 162). They feel the security of knowing they can be themselves with one another is expressed by Edward who claims, "it's too easy to be myself with you" (*Twilight* 262). The bonds of love are so strong that they outshine the human relationships found in the novel. Carlisle and Esme, Jasper and Alice, and Emmett and Rosalie have been together for a long

time, yet Bella's parents are divorced. Her mother is described as slightly irresponsible and immature, which meant Bella had to fend for herself and grow up too fast; as she explains, "someone has to be the adult" (*Twilight* 106). The result of this failed relationship is a self-conscious and emotionally closed-off Bella (until she meets Edward). Meyer implies that because everything is amplified through vampirism, love among vampires is as powerful and eternal as the vampires themselves; Edward loves Bella with this intensity. Bella, a human who hasn't known what it means to be a part of a happy family, is accepted into the Cullen family with open arms because Edward loves her. If one looks at the other vampire relationships one can assume Edward and Bella's love will be just as eternal. The same appears true for werewolves in the novel when one considers imprinting, which coincidentally points to the notion of fate and soul mates as well. Meyer writes that true love is possible.

Edward and Bella's love is not grounded on the lust attributed to vampires prior to the twentieth-century, but continues in the tradition of Smith's depiction of a deep spiritual connection. Edward abstains from premarital union and in doing so is being true to Christian principles unlike earlier vampires such as Dracula and Carmilla who advocate a legacy of indulgence. Edward tells Bella that although it is difficult for him, they must wait until marriage, explaining "my virtue is all I have left" and that he wants to leave "one rule unbroken" (*Eclipse* 454). Bella laughs at Edward for being "so old-fashioned" (*Eclipse* 453). Karen Backstein suggests "at the same time, however, the narrative is packed with sexual substitutes, so the vampire

retains his potency even if he pulls back. It is always clear that when the time comes (and it does, in later novels) that sex is permissible, he will be the perfect lover" ((Un)safe Sex: Romancing the Vampire). Edward loves Bella selflessly. He puts himself in uncomfortable, even painful situations to be with her. While the text is laden with references to tragic romances—*Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Wuthering Heights*—their love does not destroy them because it is not based on lust. If we go by his actions, Edward is the ideal romantic hero because he sacrifices everything for the woman he loves, including his instincts for blood and isolation.

Love and Redemption

It is the love between Edward and Bella that transforms Edward from a self-loathing figure to a romantic hero. As Karen Backstein writes, "the vampire's effect on his victim has always been one of transformation, but a negative one: the draining of blood, the draining of energy, the draining of life. *Twilight*, unlike its predecessors, tells a story of transformation in a more positive sense" ((Un)safe Sex: Romancing the Vampire). Bella believes in Edward when he doubts himself. She stands beside him unafraid even after he reveals his secret. It is her insistence that he is special, "something more" than human (*Twilight* 138) that makes him believe he is no monster. Bella is the ultimate test of his moral character because she is so tempting to him as his "brand of heroin" (*Twilight* 267). When Edward is forced to taste her blood in order to save her life, he practices extreme self control in the near impossible task of stopping because he loves her so much, which implies their love is greater than the

hunger for blood. Bella is a kind of saving grace. She reminds Edward of what it is like to be human, awakening emotions he hadn't felt in a long time. Bella's love "resurrect[s] the human in [him]" (*Twilight* 304). Bella is able to love Edward in his entirety. Her love gives him strength. Edward and Bella's relationship succeeds because it is not based on lust but a strong spiritual connection which Meyer implies is ordained by fate.

Edward is ruled by a selfless and pure desire for Bella. Bella herself is set free by their love because it means she can be happy and no longer worry about taking care of others; as Bella replies to Edward's qualms about leaving her family behind, "hurting them more by staying human" considering all the danger (*New Moon* 536). Meyer uses Smith's model of self-sacrifice to define Bella and Edward's relationship. Bella follows Edward's model of self-sacrifice in giving up everything to protect those she loves. For Bella, to be with Edward means to give up her friends, family and a normal human life, but she believes her decision will make her happy. As Bella explains, she has always felt out of place as a human. Alice even has visions of Bella becoming a vampire from the beginning, which implies it is meant to be. Meyer describes Bella as beautiful and pure; although her last name "swan" denotes the grace she lacks as a human. As a vampire, Bella is portrayed at her full potential: a thing of beauty, grace and strength. Bella doesn't need Edward to constantly save her because they are equals. Edward and Bella also bring a child into the world, and Bella selflessly risks her own life to carry the child to birth. Being a vampire to Bella, means having love, freedom and a family. Although as a reader one may question

Meyer's decision to turn Bella into a vampire, the glorification of vampires like the Cullens and Bella's relationship with Edward makes the ending an ideal happy ending from the romantic standpoint, since our lovers will be together, forever. Meyer dismisses the tradition of vampires as creatures of darkness condemned by God, so there is no question of moral injustice in turning Bella.

The Modern Vampire: A Knight in Glittering Armor

With motifs of abstinence, self-sacrifice and unconditional love in Edward and Bella's relationship, Meyer creates a more romanticized version of vampirism. She suggests that vampires are no longer the damned figures of the nineteenth century, but embody goodness through a divine love that surpasses all others. Edward's love for Bella enables him to control his animalistic nature and be more characteristically human. However, the element of danger is always present for Bella as long as she is human. As a human, Bella faces the dangers of both worlds, whether it be human men accosting her on the street, or the vampires James, Victoria and the Volturi. Edward protects her in her fragile human form, and later changes her into a vampire, so she can protect herself. The act of transformation is originally seen as a great evil in Edward's mind, but is resolved into an act of love.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

The Twenty-First Century Vampire: Acceptance, Love and Self-Control

Chapter Two and Three focus on two incredibly popular young adult series—Meyer's *Twilight* and Smith's *The Vampire Diaries*—that have shaped the current tradition greatly by making the vampire a romantic hero. The vampire is no static figure, but evolves to suit the characteristics of the corresponding culture. In ancient cultures, where humankind lived at the mercy of vengeful gods, vampires were often she-demons blamed for the untimely deaths of young men and children. As literary figures, vampires went from being damned in the eighteenth century to being adored in the twenty-first century as romantic heroes. The leading vampire men of *Twilight* (2005) and *Vampire Diaries* (1991) are more human than ever in their valuing of life, to the point where there is little resemblance to the bloodthirsty and demonic counterparts of early folklore. It is the twenty-first century vampire's ability to give and receive love that distinguishes him from his predecessors, transforming him from a ruthless aristocrat into the ultimate lover.

Vampires like Edward and Stefan are virtuous, selfless and practice extreme self-control in their relationships, which makes them heroic, if not Christ-like. The audience not only sympathizes with their struggle to be human and not, as Edward puts it, monsters, but finds their romance a redeemable force in the novel lead to happy endings for our characters. Both texts shy away from the drive of hunger established in the earlier centuries--a lust for control and power. Modern vampires simply desire acceptance and love. And although these relationships between humans

and vampires are dangerous, their love overcomes all obstacles because it is a match of soul mates who are meant to be together and earn their happy endings. As Frank Langella once suggested, "vampires are sexy to a woman perhaps because the fantasy is similar to that of the man on the white horse sweeping her off to paradise" (*Playboy Magazine*, August 1979). Edward and Stefan's behavior suggest that the ideal romantic hero is first and foremost a protector with the self-control to protect those he loves in a dangerous world. What is even more surprising is the way the objects of love become agents of power in their own right, unlike the swooning victims of the past. Love redeems both the vampire and their lover and inspires them to be as selfless and self-sacrificing in order to protect their communities. The film version of *Twilight* (2008) and the television series *Vampire Diaries* (2009) has made the romantic vampire even more accessible to audiences, which has helped renew interest in vampires and reshaped our conceptions on the subject.

Researchers have explored the popularity of the modern vampire but often fail to make important distinctions regarding its challenge to the traditional myth, primarily the power of love in humanizing and redeeming the vampire. A further avenue for research includes the media's representation of the modern vampires, not just *Twilight* and *The Vampire Diaries*, but shows like *True Blood* or *The Gates*. There are a plethora of other works of literature centering on the vampire, including Richelle Mead's *Vampire Academy* series (2007-2010), P.C. Cast's and Kristin Cast's *House of Night* series (2007-2011), and Claudia Gray's *Evernight* series (2008-2011). Since my study was primarily concerned with representations in young adult

literature, it would be interesting to see what other reader-bases are reading. This thesis was primarily concerned with representations in young adult literature, and so centered on the two most popular series, so it would be interesting to see what a wider scale of case studies would reveal about the twenty-first century vampire.

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