Vampires in The Twilight Saga

The Reinvention and Humanization of the Vampire Myth

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Abstract

This paper aims to make a comparison and investigation between three popular vampire fictions, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* and Stephanie Meyer’s *The Twilight Saga* in order to show a development of the vampire. During the investigation it has become clear that the vampire over a decade has become an object that writers continue to reinvent and humanize. Concepts of Self and Other are thus important terms in this paper in the attempt to analyze the reinvention and humanization of the vampire myth. In Stoker’s *Dracula*, the vampire will be discussed from an Eastern and Western perspective where hence the vampire figures as an Oriental demon that in every way is the opposite from the British Empire. Rice’s novel, *Interview of the Vampire* shows a seemingly more humanized vampire that is less Evil, whilst Meyer’s *The Twilight Saga* demonstrates a vampire that is entirely human, however, with “special” abilities.

Keywords: Stephanie Meyer, Anne Rice, Bram Stoker, Popular Vampire Fictions, Vampires, Postcolonialism, Reinvention, Humanization
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Introduction

Edward Cullen is the kind of vampire you'd want your daughter to date, if she had to date a vampire. (Kazez 25)

The majority of our kind who are quite content with our lot - they, too, wonder at how we live. But you see, just because we've been... dealt a certain hand... it doesn't mean that we can't choose to rise above - to conquer the boundaries of destiny that none of us wanted.

To try to retain whatever essential humanity we can. (Meyer, Twilight 268)

*The Twilight Saga* has turned out to be one of the most successful vampire fictions of the 21st century with over 100 million copies sold worldwide (www.publishersweekly.com). Like most vampire fiction, *The Twilight Saga* succeeds in thrilling its readers, because people seem to find stories of evil and horror immensely attractive. The literary scholar, Martin J. Wood argues that there are few monsters that have seemed quite so evil and horrible as vampires, and that their attractiveness distracts us from fairly silly aspects such as the traditional vampire myth (59). He further states that as long as the authors of vampire fiction have succeeded in capturing the allure of vampirism, the mythology seems to be irrelevant (59). Thus, when reading successful vampire fictions such as Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles* or Stephanie Meyer's *The Twilight Saga*, readers become disturbingly aware of the feelings of uneasy sympathy they share with the monsters they have become acquainted with (59). New vampires such as Meyer's Edward and Rice’s Louis are no longer merely an embodiment of evil or damned souls - but have become humanized individuals, similar to us. From the beginning the vampire was an evil monster, named Dracula by Bram Stoker, which was subsequently transformed into a humanized plantation owner, named Louis in *Interview with*
the Vampire, or a school boy named Edward, in *The Twilight Saga*.

The quotes above depict the translation of traditional myth into the human and sympathetic characteristics of Stephanie Meyer’s main character in *The Twilight Saga* - the vampire Edward Cullen. Meyer illustrates Edward not as an immortal monster, but as a human-like and civilized creature that can control his thirst. The reader learns that Edward and his family are not like other vampires, since they have chosen an ethical way of living by feeding on animal blood for sustenance. Still, Edward has the same instincts as a primitive predator, but with deep feelings of agony at his situation and he states that he does not want to behave according to his vampire nature – like a monster.

This paper will attempt to investigate how the author Stephanie Meyer reinvents and humanizes the old vampire myth. With the help of all four books in *The Twilight Saga*; *Twilight, New Moon, Eclipse* and *Breaking Dawn*, a comparison will be made with the works of significant authors in the popular field of vampire fiction - Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire*.

According to McNally and Florescu, the traditional vampire is well described in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* of 1897 (137). Bartlett and Idriceanu argue that Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* is a story grounded on the vampire legends of Europe, which fused in the ultimate creation of Stoker’s Count Dracula (30). Therefore, Bram Stoker’s Dracula might be an important starting point in the investigation to understand how the vampire has changed in literature during recent years. Stoker also made Dracula different from other vampires in gothic novels in the late-Victorian time, by making him a more contemporary vampire who lived and walked the streets of England (McNally & Florescu 145). Even so, Stoker made no intent to explain the vampire; hence Dracula differs much from the humans found in the story. In the novel, Dracula is found in the margin, depicted as the ‘Other’ apart from the human ‘Self’ represented by the Englishmen in the story, where he figures as a rather unexplained monster
in an ideological wasteland.

Anne Rice created the groundbreaking vampires Louis, Lestat and Claudia who are the central characters in *Interview with the Vampire* (1976). It is the first book in *The Vampire Chronicles*. Rice's importance in beginning to break down the boundaries of the vampiric 'Other' and the human 'Self' is believed to have created the guidelines for both the late 20th and 21st century vampire (Högland 309). Before Rice wrote *The Vampire Chronicles*, Bram Stoker dominated the area and the perspective on vampires through his popular novel *Dracula*. According to the scholar, Jennifer Smith, Rice conversely modified the vampire genre by telling the story through the vampire's own words, which was a new and untold perspective (22). Also, this perspective enabled the reader to view the vampire as the 'Self', in the centre of the story, in contrast of being portrayed as the 'Other', in the margin.

According to Edward Said, a significant scholar in the field of Postcolonialism, the representation of the cultural and historical contexts in European writings plays a crucial role in the creation of the 'Self' and the 'Other'. Edward Said explains the concepts of 'Self' and 'Other' to be terms that reinforce the notion of the superior Western European culture and the attempt to create a dichotomy in order to extend influence. It serves the process of justifying colonial power over other lands and the 'Others' (the non-Europeans) (Ashcroft & Aihluwalia 49). In Colonialism/Postcolonialism, Ania Loomba further argues that European writings (such as for example Bram Stoker's *Dracula*), often describe the East as something strange, uncivilized and barbaric in order to facilitate the perception of Western superiority (53-54).

The thesis of this paper is that the *The Twilight Saga* breaks down the boundaries of the vampiric 'Other' and the human 'Self'. There is a vast number of theories about narration in vampire fictions, but I have chosen to make a comparison between Meyer's *The Twilight Saga* to Stoker's *Dracula* and Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*. In Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the vampire represents an Oriental demon that in every way is the opposite of the British
Imperial subject. Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* introduces a new and self-questioning vampire that is less evil. In *The Twilight Saga*, Meyer continues and develops what Rice started. The vampires in *The Twilight Saga* are hence increasingly humanized and have ultimately merged with the 'Self' that is presented by the human Bella, who is one of the main characters.

1 This definition will be discussed in the following pages 8-14.
Chapter One:

Vampires in Bram Stoker’s Dracula: The Oriental Demon

Bram Stoker’s Dracula tells the story of the Englishman and lawyer Jonathan Harker’s encounter with the Transylvanian Count Dracula. Harker is a solicitor and replacement for Reinfeld, who after negotiations with Count Dracula has become a patient in a mental institution in London. Harker visits Dracula in order to continue the negotiations and arrange the purchase of English property. Along the way, he receives a number of warnings from his environment; amongst them is a crucifix from a woman telling him not to proceed on his journey towards the castle. While at the castle he finds uncountable doors, all locked and not a single mirror. Gradually, he becomes aware that the count is a vampire who lives with a harem of female vampires and that he himself is a prisoner. He also learns that Dracula plans to travel to England with coffins filled with Transylvanian soil and that his ultimate intent is the conquest of England. When Dracula has arrived in England, he finds and attacks Lucy Westenra who is on vacation with Harker’s fiancée, Mina. Dracula gradually drains Lucy of her blood and infuses her with his own blood, which results in Lucy becoming a vampire. The scientist and doctor Abraham Van Helsing tries to save Lucy from vampirism, but fails. Van Helsing convinces Lucy’s fiancé, Arthur Holmwood, to drive a stake through Lucy’s heart in order for her to find eternal peace. Meanwhile, Harker has escaped to London, where Van Helsing persuades him and the other men to find and kill Dracula. Dracula also preys on Mina and makes her drink his blood, much to the male protagonist’s distress. After a fierce search for Dracula, they end up at his castle in Transylvania, where Harker cuts off his head and Quincy Morris drives a stake through his heart.

Dracula is perceived by many critics as an Oriental devil. It seems that the much debated character Dracula has been used as a metaphor for a deeper issue that occurs in
colonial and late-Victorian England, and that it has contributed to his frightening image and otherness.

In the narrative, Dracula is found in the margin, depicted as the ‘Other’ apart from the human ‘Self’. This narrative production contributes to Dracula’s mystique and otherness, as well as reinforcing Western prejudice against Dracula, whose embodiment is a representation of superstition from the East. When reading the novel, it is not difficult to envisage who the villain is. Dracula is an Anti-Christ from the strange East. To emphasize Dracula’s metaphysical status, Stoker, (when having Renfield speak of Dracula), uses capital letters as conventionally “God” is capitalized: “‘So when He Came tonight, I was ready for Him, He raised me up and flung me down’” (Stoker, Dracula 311).

Dracula, the Anti-Christ, is hence depicted as an Oriental demon with satanic powers much repelled by religious symbols. His mere existence threatens the Western civilized world order. It is precisely here that, Dracula’s existence as the evil ‘Other’ is important, for the system of binary opposition between good and evil guarantees the presence of good with which the reader can identify with. The goodness is represented in the novel by the Englishmen: Jonathan Harker, Quincy Morris, Arthur Holmwood and Abraham Van Helsing. Van Helsing describes what he calls his “Army of Light” as “‘ministers of God’s own wish: that the world and men for whom His Son died, will not be given over to monsters, whose very existence would defame him’” (254-55).

Boundaries in terms of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ in Stoker’s Dracula are evident throughout the Transylvanian landscape and in the Count’s castle. This quote illustrates Dracula’s disturbing welcome of guests into his castle: “‘Welcome to my house! Enter freely. Go safely, and leave some of the happiness you bring’” (26). Furthermore, as Harker enters the strange East, he notices warnings and changes in the environment. As he finds himself crossing the Transylvanian border and entering the Count’s castle, his frightening journey into the world
of strangeness and otherness begins. Wayne Bartlett and Flavia Idriceau argue in *Legends of Blood* that Harker’s crossing denotes a frontier with great symbolic value: “The border symbolizes not just a boundary between two countries or civilizations, but an important frontier between the civilized world and the wilderness, between reason and darkness and between reality and imagination,” (73). Thus, Stoker chooses his scene in Transylvania well because it was a faraway never-never land in the view of most Englishmen and Western Europeans, a “land beyond the forest” where anything could happen – which is the perfect home for a vampire (McNally & Florescu 134). Harker notes the strange events when crossing into Transylvania and that it was very unlike Britain. This can be illustrated by the following quote: “There were dark, rolling clouds overhead, and in the air the heavy, oppressive sense of thunder. It seemed as though the mountain range had separated two atmospheres and that now we had to go into the thunderous one” (Stoker 17).

Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* is a representation of an Oriental demon that in every way is the opposite of the British Imperial subject. It is evident that Stoker uses the vampire myth in his book to bear the weight of fears over Britain’s declining status. Harker fears that by helping Dracula to move to London would ultimately cause the doom of the civilized world and the heart of Europe’s greatest empire:

“This was the being that I was helping to transfer to London where perhaps for centuries to come, he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever widening circle of semi-demons to batter on the helpless’. (58)

Stephen Arata discusses in his essay “The Occidental Tourist: Dracula and the Anxiety of the Reverse Colonization” the interesting connection between Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and the cultural context in late-Victorian England. Arata appears to have found a connection between the representations of fear in gothic literature such as Stoker’s *Dracula*, with the cultural
context in late-Victorian England (Arata 625). He claims that Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* was to some extent influenced by the cultural decline in the late-Victorian England, which threatened to erode the Victorian confidence and the glorious self-image of the British Imperial subject. The situation is described in the following way:

The decay of British global influence, the loss of overseas markets for British goods, the economic and political rise of Germany and the United States, the increasing unrest in British colonies and possessions, the growing domestic uneasiness over the morality of imperialism – All combined to erode Victorian confidence in the inevitability of British progress and hegemony. (622)

The cultural and historical context of England during the late-Victorian period altered the perception of its contemporary writers. Arata points out significant changes in late-Victorian popular fiction, where he notes *fears* in the representation of a civilized world that is on the edge of being colonized by “primitive” forces:

[A] terrible reversal has occurred: the colonizer finds himself in a position of the colonized, the exploiter becomes exploited, the victimizer victimized. Such fears are linked to a perceived decline – a racial, moral, spiritual – which makes the nation vulnerable to attack from more vigorous, “primitive” people. (623)

The Englishman, Jonathan Harker experiences this “fear” when he reflects on his current situation of being Dracula’s prisoner as well as on Dracula’s imperialistic intentions towards England: “‘It is the nineteenth century up-to-date with a vengeance. And yet, unless my senses deceive me, the old centuries had, and have, powers of their own which mere “modernity” cannot kill’” (Stoker 56).

At the same time, there is a contradiction in Dracula’s character when considering his Orientalist character. Stoker uses a traditional travel narrative through Harker as the
Westerner visiting the Orient. This narrative enables Harker to have an Orientalist perspective to make sense of what he sees there. Stoker, however, “undermines the conventions” by twisting the traditionally stable ideas that structure the foreknowledge of Eastern and Western races (Arata 637). Stoker undermines stable Orientalist racial structure by representing Dracula as one of the most Western characters in the novel. Dracula seems to be most rational, organized, intelligent and civilized. In Harker’s encounter with Count Dracula, he quickly learns that he is well studied in English language, culture and customs. In a glimpse into his library Harker discovers:

[A] vast number of English books, whole shelves full of them, and bound volumes of magazines and newspapers. (...) The books were of the most varied kind, history, geography, politics, political economy, botany, geology, law all related to England and English life and custom manners. (Stoker 23)

As Harker finds out, this research enables Dracula to successfully hide his demonic self and disguise himself into the role as a Victorian Englishman. Dracula appears to understand the link between knowledge and power and the importance of not being recognized as a stranger in England for it allows him to act unhindered:

‘Well I know that, did I move and speak in your London, none there are who would not know me for a stranger. That is not enough for me. Here I am noble... I am master... But a stranger in a strange land, he is no one. In London, I am content if I am like the rest, so that no man stops me if he sees me, or pause in his speaking if he hear my words, to say 'Ha, ha! a stranger!' I have been so long master that I would be master still - or at least that no one should be master of me’. (34)
Dracula’s imitation of English customs appears to be the essence of his sinister plan which is the invasion of England and the exploitation of bodies. Knowing that Dracula is invisible in mirrors, the lack of a mirror reflection then casts a striking parody on the British Empire’s own imperial practice, which is probably also the most demonic fact about Dracula, that he sometimes mirrors Britain’s own colonial greed.

At the end of the novel, Dracula is chased by the Englishmen who are equipped with the cunning of the modern Western world and the Christian symbols. This cunning appears to put them at an advantage over Dracula, and together with the doctor and the expert on vampirism, Van Helsing, they form a team. They can travel in sunlight and have access to the scientific use of Christian symbols which seems to repel Dracula. In turn, Dracula is very powerful and displays inhuman physical strength as well as supernatural abilities of transforming into mist, a beast or communicating with and gaining help from animals. However, these abilities are not enough to win the battle against the Englishmen, and as a result, they win the struggle over Dracula and the evil that threatens to erode the civilized world. Hence the “little band of men’s” triumph over Count Dracula symbolizes the triumph of scientific teamwork over Eastern attempts to impersonate Western colonial practises, the rational over the irrational, and the light of modern Western European civilization over Eastern medieval darkness.

In late-Victorian England, Dracula’s otherness signifies great sexual threat with his sexual prowess. Margret L. Carter argues in her essay “The Vampire as Alien in Contemporary Fiction” that Dracula performs exogamy (28). He is unable to suck blood from his own kind, which is the vampiric version of intercourse, and must then seduce as-yet untransformed women such as Lucy and Mina. Dracula hence causes an “interracial sexual competition” where the Englishmen in the story find Dracula dangerous because he corrupts and steals “their” women (28). Carter further implies that Stoker externalizes forbidden desires in his vampires: Dracula and his harem of three female vampires figure as a binary
opposition to the conservative values of the society in Victorian England. By having Dracula defeated and penetrated by stakes in the end of the novel, the prohibited sexual desires of exogamy are put an end to. In other words, Stoker symbolically frames Dracula as fully ‘Other’ in the end of the novel in order to maintain the orderliness in Victorian-England.

The novel ends several years later in Harker’s “Note”, where he announces the birth of his first born son, Quincy Harker, after Quincy Morris who died during his effort in the battle against Dracula. On the anniversary of both of Dracula’s and Morris’s death, Harker’s “note” contemplates the terrible memories from the action that had taken place a year ago. According to Harker, Morris’s brave spirit has passed on to his son. What is interesting is, however, that through little Quincy Harker lives not only the spirit of Morris from that horrible day, but also the blood of Dracula which Mina in their previous encounter had drunk (Arata 643). The mixture of blood from both Morris and Dracula suggests that the Oriental danger that once defined Dracula has now been neutralized. England had with the spirit and blood from both the “little band of men” and Dracula, prevailed over the East and neutralized the threat of England’s cultural decline. The Eastern and Western influences in little Quincy Harker suggests an invigoration and England’s victory over the mystic and strange Transylvanian encounter represented by Dracula.

The human “Self” in Stoker’s storytelling remains to the advantage of the Englishmen’s perspective. The vampiric ‘Other’ remains in an eternal otherness from the British Empire.
Chapter Two:

Vampires in Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire*:

The Birth of a “New” Vampire

Anne Rice’s novel *Interview with the Vampire* is the story of a 200-year old vampire, Louis, telling his life story to a journalist. In 1791, Louis was a young plantation owner living in a sumptuous mansion in the American South. Louis describes his suicidal behaviour after the death of his brother, and that it lead to his encounter with the vampire Lestat. Lestat searches for a companion and therefore sees and grants Louis’s deathly wish with the rebirth into the world of immortality. Louis almost immediately regrets his choice to become a vampire and becomes a tortured visionary brother, in contrast to Lestat who is an egotistical and uncompassionate villain. Subsequently, they are brought together by the bond of immortality and form a quite controversial family. The six-year-old girl Claudia joins the family years later on an occasion where Louis was not able to restrain his thirst: “I was burning with physical need to drink,” (Rice, *Interview with the Vampire* 74). Louis stops short of killing her and leaves her to die. However, Lestat finds and turns her into a vampire and hence insisting Louis to stay in the relationship and care for their “child”.

The concept of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ is applicable to the story and in the setting where the story begins. Bram Stoker’s choice of Dracula’s setting in the strange East, seems to have inspired Rice who has borrowed this notion into the landscape of her novel. Louis’s setting at his mansion in the American South proves to be a strange and exotic place for a vampire since it is a space of dark magic and frightening practices, set on a plantation where the slaves use voodoo and black magic (Bartlett & Idriceanu 74-75). Furthermore, Louis is from the beginning a human and white upper-class-man that become the ‘Other’ by becoming a
vampire. Because the vampires are creatures that perform terrible acts on humans, they conform to the notion of the ‘Other’. Louis becomes the ‘Other’, yet in contrast to other vampires in the story, such as Lestat and Claudia, he also becomes increasingly humanized and he experiences feelings of extreme guilt and difficulties in letting go of his human ‘Self’. Hereby, I argue the birth of a “new” vampire that refuses to “go native” by entirely becoming the ‘Other’.

It is evident that throughout *Interview with the vampire*, Louis cannot fully accept the ‘Other’ he has been transformed into and has, thus problems letting go of his old human ‘Self’ in order to fully embrace his vampiric (un)life and the feeding on blood for sustenance. Louis is horrified by the murderous assaults that vampirism makes on other human beings and therefore chooses to feed on animal blood. The death caused by him, tortures him and is a constant reminder of the death of his brother. When Louis vampirizes his victims, he also symbolically experiences his own death.

‘Killing is no ordinary act (...) One does not simply glut oneself on blood (...) It is the experience of another’s life for certain, and often the experience of the loss of that life through the blood, slowly. It is again and again the experience of that loss of my own life, which I experienced when I sucked the blood from Lestat’s wrist and felt his heart pound with my heart. It is again and again a celebration of that experience; because for vampires that is the ultimate experience’. (29)

Thus, to the astonishment of his vampire-maker Lestat, Louis is not capable of letting go of the loss of his human life. Instead, he continually tortures himself and hence cannot affirm the kill, which affirms his complete identification as a vampire. In the eyes of the reader, Louis becomes a “good” vampire, a self-doubting murderer and a reluctant killer. This transformation of the vampire signifies the birth of a new humanized vampire that is less of a
demonic 'Other'.

According to Ken Gelder, the narrative in *Interview with the Vampire* offers the reader a chance of hearing the "Other" speaking at first hand in order to reveal the feelings and the true story about vampires (109-110). This can be illustrated with the beginning of the novel, where Louis starts with these words: "I would like to tell you the story of my life," (Rice 3). As the reader discovers, Louis speaks in his own voice when telling his life story, which indicates that the narrative perspective has changed in Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* compared to the human narratives in Stoker's *Dracula*. This new narrative perspective offers the reader a discovery where, in a sense, the vampire comes out of the closet and makes a confession. The new perspective forces the reader to view the vampire more as the human "Self" than as the Oriental demon and monstrous 'Other' that is depicted in Stoker's *Dracula*.

The concepts of centre and margin are also central in the story where the vampire appear to be outcasts of society and damned to eternal darkness and living an (un)life in the margin of human existence. Rice's vampires wander restlessly, thirsty and in search for answers, regarding their true nature and origins. During daytime they sleep in coffins to protect themselves from the sun that threatens their immortality, and are hence creatures living on the margin of human life; the centre.

Rice's vampires appear to be pagan, in contrast to the vampires in Stoker's *Dracula*. Dracula and his harem of female vampires seem to be repelled by religious symbols that stand for what is sacred in Christianity, which suggests that Stoker’s vampires are more like Anti-Christ. In Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire*, religious symbols relating to Christianity are not relevant and are thus brushed off by the vampires. When the journalist asks Louis about crosses, he explains it to be nonsense: "'That is, how would you say today... Bullshit?"' (Rice 23) It seems as though traditional anti-vampire devices such as crucifixes are products of superstitious beliefs in Rice’s novel. The vampires, like their human prey, give the impression
of having advanced to a pagan world-view (Gordon & Hollinger 33)

Louis discusses his existential feelings of guilt with the ancient vampire leader Armand in their headquarters in a theatrical building in France called Théâtre des Vampires: “I’m evil, evil as any vampire who ever lived! I’ve killed over and over and will do it again.’ Armand responds: ‘Why does that make you as evil as any vampire? Aren’t there gradations of evil?’” (Rice 235). Throughout Louis’s discussion with Armand, Louis finds that there is no simple answer to his existential question; why he is unable to accept his vampire existence.

Aspects of how Rice’s vampires derive pleasure show them to be more similar to humans. In contradiction to the vampiric sexuality expressed in Stoker’s Dracula, Louis in Interview with the Vampire derives pleasure purely through the imagination (Rickels 316). Throughout the story, the vampire’s sexuality includes theatricality, seduction and a great deal of conversation. Lestat and Claudia, however, find great sexual pleasure in drinking from humans. Notably, in the vampire family it is only Louis who is tormented by melancholy. Claudia is not affected by it and neither is Lestat who is more prone to the vampiric pleasures in his (un)life. Louis, however, finds great pleasure in his platonic conversations with the vampire leader Armand. Armand becomes Louis’s mentor and through their deep conversations come to experience feelings of love and desire for each other. This new feature of how the vampires Louis and Armand are able to derive pleasure through platonic conversations with others of their kind altogether makes them more human and less monstrous and ‘Other’.

Claudia senses Louis’s love for Armand and fears the worst scenario of abandonment. She demands that Louis turn Madeleine, a mourning mother who lost her child, into a vampire who can care for her when Louis has left. Claudia states that she is “fighting for her life” while Louis is terrified by the request that would force him to kill. As Claudia predicted, he turns Madeleine to free himself from Claudia. Louis is much depressed after his kill and states
to Armand that whatever is left of his passion and humanity is lost. Armand assures him that his humanity is not lost: "But that thing is no longer dead, that passion, that humanity, whatever you wish to name it. If it were not alive there would not be tears in your eyes now. There wouldn't be rage in your voice" (Rice 288). Louis, however, is tortured by his kill. He is a vampire that believes that their existence denotes the highest form of consciousness and power and that what constitutes real evil is the taking of a human life (237).

Louis reflects upon what a vampire is to him. After decades of suffering and searching for answers, Louis has come to terms with what his vampire existence denotes and chooses a journalist to create his memoirs in order to share his wisdom with the world. According to Louis, vampires are necessary 'Others'. He argues that vampires in our ordinary world are necessary reminders of the concepts of good and evil. The binary opposition of 'Self' and 'Other' is hence clearly applied through Louis’s view of the world. He argues that nowadays there is a thin line between these concepts in the minds of humans. Therefore, the human 'Self' needs to be reminded by the vampiric 'Other' of what constitutes real evil and that it could occur at anytime.

'People who cease to believe in God or goodness altogether still believe in the devil. I don’t know why. No, I do indeed know why. Evil is always possible. And goodness is eternally difficult. (...) You don’t have to see Satan when he is exorcised. But to stand in the presence of a saint... To believe that the saint has seen a vision. No it’s egotism, our refusal to believe it could occur in our midst'.

(13)

Hence, according to Louis, vampires need to exist in the margin of human society as necessary evils.

To vampires, human beings only serve as victims and are marginalized to the extent that
they wish to be a part of the "Other" world. At the end of the novel and to Louis’s despair, the journalist begs to be made a vampire:

‘Don’t you see how you made it sound? It was an adventure like I’ll never know in my whole life! You talk about passion, you talk about longing!

You talk about things that millions of us won’t ever taste or come to understand’

(343)

As the readers find, vampires in Interview with the Vampire have not yet merged with the human self in that is presented by the journalist in the story. Rice’s vampires remain in the margin of human existence as ‘Others’. However, in contrast to Stoker’s Dracula, Rice has given her vampire Louis his own voice, which I argue forces the reader to view the vampire more as the human ‘Self’ than fully as the monstrous ‘Other’. Also, because of Louis’s difficulties in letting go of his human ‘Self’ and accepting the otherness he has been transformed into, he becomes a tortured and reluctant killer, which makes him an increasingly humanized vampire.
Chapter Three:

Vampires in Stephanie Meyer’s *The Twilight Saga*:

The Reinvention and Humanization of the Vampire Myth

The premise of this third analysis is the transformation of the traditional vampire figure from an Anti-Christ, a metaphysical ‘Other’, towards a new humanized vampire that is socially competent. Jules Zanger accentuates the emergence of “new” vampires as popular mass culture figures in “Metaphor into Metonymy: The Vampire Next Door”, where she argues that vampires in the last two decades have been designed to appeal to the audience of readers and viewers. She argues that vampires have become commercial products in media such as popular novels and films, and as a result, moved into the direction of the domain that we call “human”, also leading to a greater contiguity with us as readers (17). In line with this, the vampire figures found in *The Twilight Saga* display a contemporary existence for vampires, where they have merged with the “Self” that is represented by the human Bella. In *The Twilight Saga*, the vampires are able to blend into the ordinary world undetected. The uneasy feelings the reader receives when becoming acquainted with *The Twilight*-vampires is the notion that this creature might as well be our neighbour. At the same time, these vampires are on an ethical diet called vegetarianism for vampires and show the reader strong ethical and altruistic values.

Stephanie Meyer’s *The Twilight Saga* is a series consisting of four books which deal with the love story between a vampire boy, Edward, and a human girl, Bella. As the reader learns, Edward is a vampire who desires to make his humanity come through even more and is prepared to fight against predestination. To Bella, Edward declares that he does not want to
be a monster, and that being on a human-free diet is the right thing to do. Even so, he admits
that he had, and sometimes still has, difficulties in controlling himself in Bella’s presence.

‘[I]’d compare it to living on tofu and soy milk; we call ourselves vegetarians,
our little inside joke. It doesn’t completely satiate the hunger – or rather thirst.
But it keeps us strong enough to resist. Most of the time. (...) Sometimes it’s
more difficult than others’ (Meyer, Twilight 164)

Thus, the reader learns to sympathize with Edward and his family that are “good” vampires
who have learnt how to restrain their thirst. This notion of goodness also helps to reduce the
moral dimensions of the narrative that makes them less of a demonic ‘Other’. The vampires in
the Cullen family are throughout the story stressed as vegetarian killers, who instead of
feeding on human blood, feed on animal blood.

Margaret Carter implies that all the new vampires in contemporary fiction each deal in
different ways with the human majority with whom they must live. However, they all seem to
share the pattern of fascination towards humans which seems to make them merge towards
each other (34-40). Louis is an example of a vampire that has the characteristic of self-
disclosure, who feels the urge to justify himself towards a human journalist. Edward and his
family, however, need no justification from humans since they are strong enough to control
themselves and are able live amongst humans disguised as school pupils or in a profession
such as a doctor. The Cullen family wish their existence to be secret. In order to keep their
existence secret, Meyer’s “new” generation of vampires are able to mimic human
relationships as well as illustrate a greater degree of social complexity, for instance, love
affairs, betrayals, rivalries and elective affinities – which are all human characteristics.

Like Rice’s pagan vampires, the social setting of Meyer’s vampires appear to have
shifted from a monotheistic, moralistic structure to a pagan hegemony. They all seem to share
the pagan views of the contemporary human beings. Thus, Bella, along with almost all of the Twilight-characters, appears to be religion-free. Bella claims:

Religion was the last thing I expected, all things considered. My life was fairly devoid of belief. Charlie considered himself a Lutheran, because that’s what his parents had been, but Sundays he worshipped by the river with a fishing pole in hand. Renée tried out a church now and then, but, much like her brief affairs with tennis, pottery, yoga, and French classes, she moved on by the time I was aware of her newest fad. (Meyer, *New Moon*, 23)

Similarly, Edward’s family owns a crucifix that they have for purely sentimental reasons, since Carlisle’s father was a medieval priest. Edward, however, looks at it with humoristic irony and seems not to be affected by it at all. Furthermore, Edward himself explains traditional vampire characteristics mostly to be myth (Meyer, *Twilight*, 162). Twilight vampires neither sleep in coffins or are repelled by the sun, nor shun Christian symbols. In contrast to Dracula and Louis, Meyer’s vampires need no sleep at all, ultimately making them more atemporal beings than other vampires in traditional myth (Housel & Wisnewski 223).

Meyer’s new vampires, however, seems to have one new and rare feature which limits their life, which is their sparkling skin in direct sunlight. However, in the town of Forks, Washington, the vampires can rest, assured of the rainy, foggy and cloudy climate that allows them to live amongst humans without fear of exposure to the sun.

All of the vampires in the Cullen family look like models that are breathtakingly and inhumanly beautiful. Meyer’s new vampires have become more similar to superior human beings and supermodels than to the inhuman beasts in Stoker’s *Dracula*. Bella describes her first encounter with the Cullen family:

I stared because their faces, so different, so similar, were all devastatingly, inhumanly beautiful. They were faces you never expected to see except perhaps
on the airbrushed pages of a fashion magazine. Or painted by an old master as the face of an angel. (Meyer, Twilight, 17)

Frequently, Bella calls Edward an angel and admires his sparkling skin in the sunlight. The flawless appearance of Meyer’s vampires seems to be part of their arsenal in enticing their prey (231). Each vampire also has one special power where for example Edward is able to read minds and his vampire sister Alice, is able to see the future. Thus, the vampires in The Twilight Saga differ much from the vampires in Stoker’s Dracula or Rice’s Interview with the Vampire in ways that make them more human, but also superior to humans.

The vampire sexuality in the world of Meyer’s vampires ostensibly stresses the combination of wanting to eat the beloved subject and at the same time to be sexually intimate. George Dunn argues in his paper “You Look Good Enough to Eat; Love Madness and the Food Analogy” that the combination of sexual desire and hunger Edward feels for Bella is a human trait and not entirely strange to us because erotic and romantic longings seem to have something in common with physical hunger (9). Hence, new humanized vampires such as Edward are able to engage in relationships as well as have intercourse with humans. At the same time, Edward struggles to control his (sexual) vampire lust in order to maintain the stable surface of his human side (Höglund 329). The sexual liberation that once belonged to vampires in fiction such as Dracula or Interview with the Vampire is, in The Twilight Saga, transformed into a traditional, monogamous and passionately romantic ideal that believes in the one true love. Edward has become, after a century of solitude and turning down invitations from various vampire women, irrevocably attracted to the human girl, which contributes to the distress of his family that wishes their vampire-existence to be secret.

Socially, Meyer’s vampires appear to be more communal, rather than solitary as in Stoker’s Dracula. In comparison with Dracula, the Twilight vampires are secularized and integrated in society’s institutions. Also like Rice’s vampires, they are familial - living with
and relating to other vampires. Carlisle, the father and vampire leader in the Cullen family, works as a doctor and is described as the most compassionate and humane member of the family (Meyer, *Twilight*, 252). The vampires turn to Carlisle in times of peril and he functions as a role model who introduced them to his vegetarian and altruistic lifestyle. Edward was turned by him in 1901 when he was dying from the Spanish influenza, and he was the first to become a member in the family. Edward conveys a deep respect towards Carlisle, and says that vampires of the vegetarian persuasion would never kill a human being unless they had no another choice.

In *The Twilight Saga*, the reader finds that there are two types of vampires. There is one kind that has chosen to be “good” and the other kind that has chosen to be evil. Vampires such as James and Victoria, who occur in *The Twilight Saga*, figure as a negative pole and frightening reminder of the vampire’s monstrous nature. The vampire visitor Armand comes to warn the Cullens about their evil personalities as well as their bad intentions towards Bella. Evil acts of vampires are hence viewed as expressions of individual personality and the human condition rather than as the conflict between God and Satan.

As a result of the reinvention and humanization of the vampire myth, the traditional roles of human beings as victims, have in *The Twilight Saga* become increasingly trivialized and marginalized (Gordon & Hollinger 21). When Bella’s human world collides with Edward’s vampire world, it is not without difficulties. After they have decided to pursue a relationship, problems result for them both. The incompatibility of the mixture of their worlds appears in various ways. Bella is described as unathletic and clumsy, while Edward and his family are depicted as athletic and graceful. As a human, Bella experiences stigmatization in comparison to Edward and his family. Bella is aware of this disparity when she is with Edward and wants to become a vampire in order to be a part of the secret and magical world that constitutes their existence, but most importantly; she wants to be equal with her beloved.
'A man and a woman have to be somewhat equal (...) as in, one of them can't always be swooping in and saving the other one. They have to save each other equally... I can't always be Lois Lane (...) I want to be Superman too'. (Meyer, *Twilight*, 473-74)

In the major plot point in *Breaking Dawn*, the confluence of the human and vampire world take a decisive turn. Bella’s pregnancy causes her direct physical damage. If Bella has the child, she will die, which appears to make the convergence between vampirism and humanity in *The Twilight Saga* by nature incompatible – at first. It turns out that Bella’s world loses the death struggle with vampirism and Edward is forced to turn her after the delivery so that she will survive. Ultimately the narrative perspective has been shifted to the vampire world which has thus entirely merged with the human ‘Self’ that was represented by the once-human Bella.

To sum up, it is clear that the vampires in *The Twilight Saga* have merged with the centre and taken the position of the human ‘Self’ that is represented by Bella in the story. They prove to have human characteristics to the extent that I no longer find them as monstrous ‘Others’, but merely as the human ‘Self’.
Conclusion

During the period that I have worked with these vampire fictions, I have drawn the conclusion that they all seem to deal with the general concepts of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’. First of all, in my observations, the vampires occurring in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) have been illustrated as the ‘Other’ in comparison to the human ‘Self’ represented by the Englishmen in the story. I have also found that these concepts seem to have changed through the vampires occurring in Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), and in Stephanie Meyer’s *The Twilight Saga* (2005-2008). These reinvented vampires, such as Rice’s Louis and Meyer’s Edward, appear to have blurred the boundaries between the concepts ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ and gradually made them merge towards the human ‘Self’ – ultimately resulting in a humanization of the vampires.

In other words, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* is a vampire that is perceived as an Oriental demon which in almost every way is the opposite of the British Imperial subject. Dracula symbolizes a great monstrous threat towards the British Empire because of his frightening ability to mimic Western colonial practices, thus threatening the British Empire from within. This apparent otherness that Dracula represents feeds off and strengthens the Western prejudice towards the East.

In Anne Rice’s novel *Interview with the Vampire*, I have found that the vampire Louis, when compared to Dracula, has become increasingly humanized, due to his inability to affirm his (un)life. However, Louis is a vampire that has not entirely merged to the human ‘Self’ that is presented by the journalist in the story. The concepts of centre and margin are therefore also applicable in the story where Rice’s vampires remain in the margin of human existence as ‘Others’. Yet, in contrast to Stoker’s *Dracula*, Rice has given her vampire Louis his own voice, which forces the reader to view the vampire more as the human ‘Self’ than entirely as
the monstrous ‘Other’ and Anti-Christ.

In *The Twilight Saga*, Edward and his vampire family the Cullens have ultimately merged with the centre and human self that is presented by Bella. The Cullens have managed to integrate into human society unnoticed and hence blend in despite their “special” abilities. Meyer’s vampires can exist in daylight in contrast to the mythology endorsed in Rice’s and Stoker’s novels. This ultimately enables them to be envisaged as humanized creatures since they appear to have merged towards the centre of human existence and to that of the human ‘Self’.

The thesis of this paper is hence that *The Twilight Saga* breaks down the boundaries of the vampiric ‘Other’ and the human ‘Self’, which results in a humanization and reinvention of the vampire myth. Whereas in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, the vampire is a demonic being that is the ‘Other’ and Dracula has an evil imperialistic intention towards England. On the contrary, the Twilight-vampires (at least the Cullens) do everything in their power to adjust to their contemporary society, which ultimately enables the reader to view Dracula and the Twilight-vampires as each other’s opposites.

Through Meyer’s vampires, the reader comes to understand that matters such as good and evil are not easily determined through black and white rhetoric, as in Stoker’s *Dracula*. Nowadays readers understand that good can become evil, and evil can become good. I believe that this might be the new code that Meyer tries to convey through her *Twilight Saga*, and this may explain why the vampire myth is being reinvented and humanized, why concepts of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’, vampires and humans are being blurred. Maybe Meyer desires to convey the notion that we have a free will, that humans can be both monstrous vampires and angels. Perhaps the perfect example of this notion of the ambiguity of dichotomies such as good and evil, human and vampire, ‘Self’ and ‘Other’, is the word *Twilight* itself, since it refers to a place that is neither fully light nor fully dark (Housel & Wisnewski 64).
Works Cited

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