

ETHIC OF ROMANCE IN THE *TWILIGHT* SERIES Dream-Fulfilled in the Honourable Male Vampire

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1. Introduction

A good number of readers branded the *Twilight* series as amateurish, emotionally empty, inane nonsense, naïve, conservative, monotonous, contradictory, or trivial.¹ These are *Twilight* haters who mostly populate the internet; but no matter how much they dislike the work, they could not deny its enormous popularity. Such popularity has been acknowledged by literary critics who have fairly recognized the importance of analysing *Twilight*.² However, most of their critical studies did not pay attention to the fact that this popular appeal is an indication of the readers' response to an element in

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¹See Chloe Buckley, "Natalie Wilson, Seduced by Twilight and Gizelle Liza Anatol, ed., *Bringing Light to Twilight*," <http://www.gothic.stir.ac.uk/uncategorized/natalie-wilson-seduced-by-twilight-and-gizelle-liza-anatol-ed-bringing-light-to-twilight/> accessed 28 March 2013; Tracey Baptiste, *Who Wrote That?: Stephenie Meyer*, New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010.

²Rebecca Housel and J. Jeremy Wisnewski, eds., *Twilight and Philosophy: Vampires, Vegetarians, and the Pursuit of Immortality*, Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009 studies the series from various philosophical perspectives; Nancy Reagin, *Twilight and History*, Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2010 provides young adult readers with historical contexts for various characters in the series; Kurt and Olivia Bruner, *The Twilight Phenomenon: Forbidden Fruit or Thirst-Quenching Fantasy?* Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2009, and Beth Felker Jones, *Touched by a Vampire: Discovering the Hidden Messages in the Twilight Saga*, Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2009, approach the novels from a religious standpoint; Melissa Click, Jennifer Stevens Aubrey, and Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz, eds., *Bitten by Twilight: Youth Culture, Media, and the Vampire Franchise*, New York: Peter Lang, 2010 focuses on the cultural, social, and economic aspects of the series; Gizelle Liza Anatol, ed., *Bringing Light to Twilight: Perspectives on a Pop Culture Phenomenon*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011, enter into scholarly conversation with the texts, and Natalie Wilson, *Seduced by Twilight: The Allure and Contradictory Messages of the Popular Saga*, Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Co., 2011, offers a comprehensive analysis of the text from cultural studies perspective.

the novels which relates to their own longings, needs, or desires. Indeed, *Twilight* has struck a chord in the heart of its readers. The “powerful element” in *Twilight* that produced the kind of impact on readers is, however, neither evident nor openly announced by the author. Analysis could, however, identify it and bring it into the open. Moreover, a fair amount of thoughtful study may be required to clarify what that ‘chord in the heart of its readers’ would refer to.

When readers number up to more than 300 million, this would reflect not just the ability of Stephenie Meyer, the author of the *Twilight* series, to strike a chord in the heart of her readers but also that ‘chord’ is so common, prevalent, and shared globally (to date, the work has been translated into 40 languages). It is because of that chord’s prevalence that one may wonder what constitutes it and how come it resides in so many hearts? The question of prevalence may direct us to the longings of the hearts of readers when they embrace Edward Cullen as the vampire that they need for this age. Meyer may have something to say about that longing too, especially when her novels did start as a dream; and especially when she crafted Edward, the main vampire character, as the locus of struggle to realize her ideal of ethical responsibility in the context of romantic encounters.

This paper will mainly comment on the following inter-related topics: 1) Meyer’s dream and longings as the source of the novels’ drive; 2) the novels’ ethical approach to girl-boy romance as constituting the narrative’s appeal and 3) the thirst for the old-fashioned moral values as the “chord in every reader’s heart.” I will argue that *Twilight* is a timely offer to young adult readers who consume it with enthusiasm because of their search and mood for what is right in romantic contexts. With these goals in mind, I will develop how Meyer has transformed *her dream* (dream^a) and *longings* (dream^b) into a creative and ethical act through literary composition. I will also argue for the convergence of the readers’ response to *Twilight* as a dovetailing between the authorial ethical position and the readers’ longing (dream^c) for what is ethical.

2. Meyer’s Dream (dream^a) and the *Twilight* Series

Stephenie Meyer, when interviewed about her books, has disclosed portions of herself. Through her testimonies,³ we are provided with

³Stephenie Meyer’s personal testimony is found in her official website where she yields some valuable information which could either confirm or refute every attempt to understand her and her *Twilight* series. www.stepheniemeyer.com.

background materials that, to some extent, have shown us a better picture of the author. Readers have also contributed their share of insights. Forums and blogs supply data which help in assessing the impact of the *Twilight* series on readers. These have provided clues, not only about the books’ appeal to readers, but also about what’s behind that appeal.

Ms Meyer, a mother of three young boys and a (used-to-be) full-time housewife, was born in 1973. Her family lives in Phoenix, Arizona – a place which Meyer characterizes as “hot, hot, hot.” She graduated at Brigham Young University with a bachelor’s degree in English. She has been married for ten and half years. When her sons were born, she became busy with ‘babysitting’ and ‘spousecaring’ until she had an unusual and alluring dream (dream^a) that led her to write the first of the romance-adventure series, *Twilight*.⁴

It was on June 2, 2003 when Meyer woke up from a dream featuring a girl and her lover vampire. The two characters were together in a scenic forest where they exchanged thoughts about their unconventional relationship and their peculiar predicament. Meyer reproduced this dream in chapter 13 of *Twilight*.⁵ Her words about her dream:

Though I had a million things to do, I stayed in bed, thinking about the dream. Unwillingly, I eventually got up and did the immediate necessities, and then put everything that I possibly could on the back burner and sat down at the computer to write – something I hadn’t done in so long that I wondered why I was bothering.⁶

Eventually, the dream led Meyer to go on into a writing marathon. She did not stop putting on paper what her dream imprinted in her memory. Later she expanded the original dream. Even when already in bed (upstairs), Meyer would rise up and go (downstairs) to her computer to encode what kept running in her head. She would later have a pen and paper next to her. It became too tiring to get up from bed every time she had a material rising up her mind. Nobody seemed to know about this by-the-side activity. It was only later, when a book was already getting into form, that Meyer told her sister about her preoccupation. With encouragement from her sister, Meyer decided to get *Twilight* published. It took her three months to complete the story of Bella and Edward in the first book *Twilight*; actually, two years to produce the definitive version. It was a long and tedious process but with the help of a literary agent the work was finally sent to

⁴Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight*, New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005.

⁵Meyer, *Twilight*, 260.

⁶<http://www.thetwilightsaga.com/page/stephenie-1/> accessed 28 February 2013.

seven publishers; six of whom rejected it. Lucky for Little, Brown and Company who made Meyer sign for a three volume work for young adults. She was so excited and elated to produce what is now called the *Twilight* series; not three but four-volume work which includes *New Moon*,⁷ *Eclipse*,⁸ and *Breaking Dawn*.⁹

The first book, *Twilight*, starts with the departure of Isabella “Bella” Swan from sunny Phoenix, Arizona to rainy Forks, Washington to live with her father, Charlie. This allows her mother, Renée, to travel with her new husband, a minor-league baseball player. As a newcomer in a very small town, Bella attracts much attention at her new school. Several boys compete for her attention, no matter how clumsy she appears. Edward Cullen, a ‘vegetarian’ vampire (one who only drinks animal blood), who also drives a Volvo, is Bella’s classmate. On her first day of school, Edward seems to resist her presence. Bella, who was puzzled by Edward’s behaviour, could not, however, get over her attraction for him.

Bella, with the help of Jacob who is a family friend’s son, soon discovers Edward and his family are vampires. Despite this, Edward and Bella fall in love. Edward, however, has to constantly struggle with the fact that Bella’s scent is so irresistible. In his words,

The fragrance coming off your skin ... I thought it would make me deranged that first day. In that one hour, I thought of a hundred different ways to lure you from the room with me, to get you alone. And I fought them each back, thinking of my family, what I could do to them. I had to run out, to get away before I could speak the words that would make you follow...¹⁰

Each time they meet, Edward had to control his desire to kill her. His words to Bella:

Isabella ... Bella, I couldn’t live with myself if I ever hurt you. You don’t know how it’s tortured me...The thought of you, still, white, cold ... to never see you blush scarlet again, to never see that flash of

⁷Stephenie Meyer, *New Moon*, New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2006.

⁸Stephenie Meyer, *Eclipse*, New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2007.

⁹Stephenie Meyer, *Breaking Dawn*, New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2008.

Twilight has been translated into 40 languages and has sold millions of copies. The Harry Potter seven volume series still tops as it has sold more than 450 million copies and translated into 67 languages. Meyer’s *Breaking Dawn* sold about 1.2 million in one day; Rowling’s seventh and last instalment, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, sold 8 million copies in 24 hours.

¹⁰Meyer, *Twilight*, 270.

intuition in your eyes when you see through my pretenses ... it would be unendurable... You are the most important thing to me now. The most important thing to me ever.¹¹

However, their relationship is disturbed when James, a tracker vampire, hunts Bella for sport. The Cullen family has to hide her and devises a plan to confuse the tracker but Bella is tricked to give herself up to James as she thinks he holds her mother as hostage. Edward and the rest of the Cullen family rescue Bella before James could kill her. They have subdued James but only after he had bitten Bella’s hand. Edward sucks the venom out of Bella’s system before it can spread and transform her into a vampire. Bella had been saved and they return to Forks. Bella expresses her desire to become a vampire but Edward refuses and even made himself invisible in Forks.

The sequels (*New Moon*, *Eclipse*, and *Breaking Dawn*) have developed the whole romance-drama-adventure around Bella and Edward, and the werewolf Jacob and his friends and their families providing some twists. The culmination was the immortalization of Bella into a vampire and the surmounting of major obstacles, including the ‘complicating’ romance with Jacob and the fight with the powerful Volturi coven of human-blood-sucking vampires. *Breaking Dawn* has concluded the series by putting the exclamation point to a fantasy that starts with Meyer’s dream^a.

3. Meyer’s Longings (Dream^b) in the Narrative

Meyer says she is a simple *Hausfrau*, a status which has become connected with routine; it calls to mind a woman’s domestic share in society’s division of labour. When she began working on *Twilight*, Meyer had to insert writing into her daily life. This gave her a great amount of excitement; and difference to predictability. The writing process itself had thrown her into an extraordinary plane. It had made her pierce through the ordinary *Hausfrau* definitions; she was then steadily moving beyond the matrix of the household, extricating herself away from the world of commoners. She was enjoying the writing, as she revealed in her website: “I was just writing down a story for my personal enjoyment, letting it grow as it would and lead where it would. No pressure, just fun.”

Writing her dream may have been just for fun, but nothing could stop Meyer from projecting her longings (dream^b) in her novels. Through the *Twilight* series, such longings are to be realized in Bella, in Forks (the novel’s setting), and in Edward.

¹¹Meyer, *Twilight*, 273.

Meyer's hope for a baby girl has been frustrated in real life, but this did not prevent her from birthing her in *Twilight*. Bella is her baby, as well as herself. Taking care of her baby and herself in the *Twilight* series tells us how writing is itself a process of giving birth to dreams. In caring for Bella, Meyer gifted her baby no less than the experience of true love (being able to give it and being able to receive it from a traditional Edward, 100-year old, but frozen in his 17-year old gorgeous frame). The form of this true love will be framed and enhanced by the amazing characters like Jacob (who is also ready to sacrifice himself for Bella), the werewolf friends of Jacob, the vampire family of Edward, and the simple and traditional setting of Forks, Olympia, Washington, all giving a world of support to a truly 'Gothic romance.'

The writer's social world (Phoenix) was far removed from Forks where her baby Bella had to move and discover a most exciting life. Although Forks was damp and soggy enough to look dreary, it also provided a sanctuary for vampires. Its neighbourly environment stands in stark contrast to the urban anonymity and harshness of Phoenix everyday life. For Meyer, we could surmise: true love must start and get fulfilled in a setting that provided the favourable conditions – broader friendships, family and extended family togetherness, unsullied mystical wilderness, and simplicity in almost everything. It is also amidst all of this provincial ecology that the intensity of deep teleological passions is felt more strongly because they could be clearly heard thriving far from the distractions of urban jungles. Nothing less than the promise and possibility of true love's realization could be devised by Meyer for Bella; providing herself something different from her prosaic *Hausfrau* existence. Here, a situational correction of reality is introduced and communicated through fiction.

We do not know how much of Meyer's personality is written in Bella's character, but we are sure to find the common clumsiness and uninteresting-ness being ignored by Edward for the more important Bella who loves him and who, because unfathomable, becomes very interesting. Bella's impenetrable brain makes her special to Edward who has the ability to enter into people's minds. This made Bella's blood 100 times more appetizing than ordinary mortals' blood. But even when tempted, Edward's resolve not to kill Bella became more firm. He wanted to preserve her humanity because Bella's love, her loved ones, and his own family are far more noble reasons than the gratification of a fleeting desire.

Meyer's dream^a triggered an alternative motion and the formation of dreams-fulfilment through writing; a different act that seeks and finds for itself

another world. This creative act is making a breach, an extra-ordinary form of scribbling, in her memory slate. But a happy scribbling for her since it supplements or alternatively soothes some memories imposed by everyday existence, of a drudgery that saps her energy on a daily basis. Writing after the dream^a has provided a different kind of force and an exciting path different from the everyday life that modern Phoenix has imposed on her. Thus, writing *Twilight* does find another world and its spirit, a different world; one just inverse of Phoenix. This alternative world is made concrete through writing *Twilight*, which is itself a transgressive act to fulfil longings (dream^b).

Twilight series as a product of longings is a writing by an individual triggered by various experiences in the world. The writing on her memory slate by the pressures and dents of quotidian routine and pragmatic life had incited her psychic apparatus to wish for something and which the archived traditional world could actually offer – this is, at least, suggested by the *Twilight* heroes and their settings. Writing about this made that world more visible, something to share, something to be already enjoyed by searching readers, also yearning for the immortal (readers’ longings, dream^c).

The abovementioned characters and setting are Meyers longings (dream^b) displaced and realized in the novels. It is, however, through a particular ethical stance, involving self-denial, sacrifice, and struggle that Meyer’s longings are to be crowned and fulfilled. This ethical stance, featuring the character of Edward, will be played up in the context of romance. Such is the ethical turn of the *Twilight* novels.

4. An Ethics of Romance: Dreams Fulfilled

The *Twilight* novels belong to the ‘coming of age’ (*Bildungsroman*¹²) cum romantic genre in literature. This may explain the overwhelming reception of the series by girls – first, in how they are able to relate with Bella’s romantic adventure and transformation and second, in how they are able to negotiate their lives around the struggles and exemplary behaviour of Edward. Yet, this does not categorically identify the novels’ more *specific* source of

¹²“*Bildungsroman* (Coming-of-Age, Apprenticeship, Formation) novels recount the development (psychological and sometimes spiritual) of an individual, to the point at which the protagonist recognizes his place and role in the world. The main character undergoes adventures and/or inner turmoil in his growth and development as a human being. Some characters come to grips with the reality of cruelty in the world – with war, violence, death, racism, and hatred – while others deal with family, friends, or community issues.” <http://www.myteacherpages.com/webpages/emconnell/files/Literary%20Genre%20Descriptions%20%20Semmler.pdf> accessed 12 March 2013.

appeal. Bealer's observation may give us some lead: "The phenomenal response from women and girls to Edward as a romantic hero creates a space and a market for twenty-first-century vampires who do not drain their female victims of blood, but rather their own vampiric bodies of the will to dominate."¹³ Bealer here suggests that it is not Bella's character that pushes up *Twilight's* appeal, but Edward's uncharacteristic behaviour as he denies himself the normative role of a bloodsucking vampire. This is not to belittle Bella's place in the narrative, but rather to give more weight to the centrality of Meyer's dream-fulfilment in Edward. In this regard, Meyer's longings being displaced and condensed in Edward takes a more ethical turn.

A vampire who restrains himself from sucking the blood of his beloved is central to the allure of Meyer's novels. Yet, this self-restraint that is offered as the right behaviour is also wedded to the image of Edward groomed as beautiful. This crafting of Edward the beautiful and good vampire, may link Meyer's literature with the classical narratives that portray a hero as possessing *kalokagathia*.¹⁴ Nevertheless, Edward is not immediately granted by Meyer this blending of the good and beautiful qualities. Like the heroes of the Greek classics, Edward must be able to pass through struggles and combats that will eventually reward him the possession of *kalokagathia* – qualities that ethical characters embody.

Edward's struggle is always triggered and compounded by Bella's presence. Her provocations (and the ensuing troubles brought by non-vegetarian vampires) may have made life for Edward more difficult. This, however, may have given more tools for Meyer to highlight, on the one hand, the virtues of Edward and the other members of his vampire family and, on the other, the humanity of Bella who represents and dramatizes the active longing of many individuals for incorruptibility. This binary contrast between humanity and the virtue-bearer vampires creates a fundamental tension between human longings for salvation and the immortal's preservation of character and virtue that assures the enthronement of what is beautiful and good.

¹³Tracy L. Bealer, "Of Monsters and Men: Toxic Masculinity and the Twenty-First Century Vampire in the Twilight Saga," in Gizelle Liza Anatol, ed., *Bringing Light to Twilight: Perspectives on a Pop Culture Phenomenon*, 150.

¹⁴A phrase used in the Greek classics to describe an ideal of personal conduct, especially in a military context. The word is adjectival, composed of two adjectives, *καλός* ("beautiful") and *αγαθός* ("good" or "virtuous"); see Werner Jaeger, Gilbert Highet, trans., *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1945, 11ff.

Edward must struggle between his selfish appetite for the blood (life) of Bella and his commitment to refrain from killing humans for food. He has to go against his naturally powerful emotion so that his most beloved human being may continue to live and flourish. It will be through the virtues of self-control, postponement of gratification, masculine tenderness and care that he will be able to preserve Bella’s humanity and lead her to her equally overpowering pursuit of immortality. This seems to be the event, the exemplary experience of inner struggle to transcend (or oppose) the confusing human drive (including Bella’s drive) of unthinking intimacy, naïve desire for incorruptibility and immortality, that provoked in readers a responsiveness that could lead to an awakening of an ethical imagination. Or at least this experience could trigger in them the refinement of moral sensibilities which could translate personal longings into hope and hope into practice.

Nevertheless, Edward’s encounters with Bella and the ensuing struggles do not immediately bring him rewards; these will actually bring him face-to-face with his own limitations and weaknesses. He complains about his cold and stony state and even hates himself. This self-loathing surfaces in a line addressed to Bella: “You don’t care if I’m a monster? If I’m not *human!*”¹⁵ If indeed Edward is here identified as a monster, readers would be amazed and felt attracted to him as a “monster” who could eventually redeem himself through his struggle with his natural vampiric instincts via self-denial. Meyer’s creation of a potential venomous bloodsucker into an honourable vampire in every romantic minute of the story has gripped girl-readers who see in Edward their right and ideal romantic partner. This also shows that the road towards transformation, which is the attainment of capacity for ethical responsibility for the self and for others, is a road tormented by constant tugs-of-war. This, however, is the only road towards transformation. Meyer is realistic enough to represent an ethical struggle as a combat; that when Edward wins this combat, a transformed capacity will be there at his behest. But first, he must face himself through his struggles.

Edward’s struggle with himself may be likened to the classical tension between conscience and concupiscence especially raised by Thomas Aquinas and other Christian writers in spirituality.¹⁶ Edward

¹⁵Meyer, *Twilight*, 102.

¹⁶See *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, Pt. 1, Q. 60, Art. 3 trans. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Paris: Christian Classics, 1981, 299.

recognizes his ‘monstrosity’ which he sees condensed in his powerful and pleasurable concupiscent desires. If this predatory quality dominates his personality it would mean both to validate that monster and to destroy Bella. If he follows the inclination of this monster, it would mean succumbing to immoderate and harmful self-indulgence, thereby reducing Bella as an object to be consumed and enjoyed.¹⁷

Edward’s predicament may be further clarified by Plato, through Socrates, who presents the soul as a chariot, driven by a charioteer and pulled by a team of two winged horses, one compliant and well-behaved, the other stubborn and unruly.¹⁸ Meyer’s picture of Edward as one caught in between two powerful contradictory forces highlights the inner battle already familiar to people who struggle for sanctity or wisdom. In Meyer’s literature, it is a struggle towards near immortality. Meyer, in revisiting the classic portrayals of struggle towards transformation, has packed in Edward something ‘old’ but refreshing to modern-day girl readers.

In *Twilight*, the ethical way is to follow what is right as dictated not by concupiscence but by conscience. In making Edward avoid what to him is a monster-like behaviour, Meyer not only endorsed *kalokagathia*, but also enthroned a form of human flourishing that Bella must follow. It is, first of all, in the avoidance of consuming your beloved that humans realize their intrinsic worth. It is, eventually, in a relationship full of mutual care, between Edward and Bella, that a right kind of romance will perfect this recognition of human worth.

Bealer points to the transformation of a vampire from a ‘monster’ into one more humane and who is able to show restraint and honour:

Though “conflict rag[es] in his eyes,” Edward allows himself to touch Bella tenderly, “swiftly brush[ing] the length of [her] cheekbone with his fingers,” and realizes that he is capable of mediating his strength and interrupting his thirst in order to enjoy a sensory experience that is mutually enjoyable and gratifying. Whereas feeding is the vampiric equivalent of phallic domination, with the pleasure and desire located only on the penetrative partner, Edward and Bella’s careful touching is a model of intersubjectivity in which both participants give and receive pleasure. When Bella touches Edward, he allows that even his cold,

¹⁷George A. Dunn, “You Look Good Enough to Eat: Love, Madness, and the Food Analogy,” Rebecca Housel and J. Jeremy Wisnewski, eds., *Twilight and Philosophy: Vampires, Vegetarians, and the Pursuit of Immortality*, Hoboken: New Jersey: 2009, 12.

¹⁸See Plato, *Phaedrus*, sections 246a - 254e.

hard skin responds to the affectionate touching he has denied himself since his transformation, sighing, “You can’t imagine how that feels.” Edward’s decision to be emotionally and physically intimate with Bella reveals that the one way to harness his bloodlust is to, surprisingly, indulge in a very different kind of lust. In interesting ways, the novels seem to conflate what Edward calls his “human instincts...buried deep, but they’re there” with a conception of heterosexual desire that is not predatory and dominative but empathetic.¹⁹

This is the culmination, the goal, the reward of a self-denial that discovers the capacity for caring – not consuming – sexual gestures. Edward’s restrained acts of romance embody Meyer’s declaration of what is ethical in every sexual encounter. Girl readers of *Twilight* delight and feel satisfied in this extraordinary attractiveness of beauty and goodness (*kalokagathia*). On their part, men, in the light of Bella’s risky offering of herself to a struggling male, must learn from Edward who is able to reevaluate his monstrous desire for bloodsucking. It is through their lack of conscience (for what is right) that they become dishonourable. When they feast on women as consumable sexual partners and without the amount of self-restraint, they fail to take the lead of Edward the honourable vampire.

5. Reader’s Place in Meyer’s Dreams

Meyer, through Edward’s transformation and possession of *kalokagathia*, has offered an ethical re-visioning of the male role in romance. She has put the ethical burden on males who, like Edward, must be able to challenge gender roles. Girl readers have appreciated this and found it congenial to their longings for an ideal mate. When Meyer translates her dream^b in Edward as the ideal mate for Bella, it is a reward for readers whose own dreams also took hold of what is good and beautiful – something which they could identify as alternative to toxic males who abundantly populate their world.²⁰ As Edward struggled to restrain his desire to ‘eat’ Bella, to control his instincts for self-gratification, and to behave with extraordinary display of tenderness and care, readers idealized him not for his physical and material endowments but for his ethical qualities that nullify every natural vampiric tendency to hurt other people.

¹⁹Bealer, “Of Monsters and Men,” 144.

²⁰Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992; Cas Wouters, *Sex and Manners: Female Emancipation in the West, 1890-2000*, London: Sage Publications, 2004.

Twilight may have become instrumental in remembering its young adult readers – giving them a place in literature when other texts fail to address their longings. It was quite a similar situation with the *Harry Potter* series which *remembered* the younger generation-readers who, in turn, responded with characteristic enthusiasm by plunging themselves into the most exciting places and events where they could join Harry, with his fragility, innocence, humility, and sensitivity, in discovering his own gift of power to annihilate the widely feared dark character, Voldemort. Readers of *Twilight*, too, would respond with their own brand of plunge into Forks with Edward and Bella, and delight in their experience of the uncharacteristic power of self-control, tenderness, and care – conquering the enemies that lurk inside every male-vampire’s instinct. This reader-experience could be delightful for those being remembered and given a place in a hoped-for scenarios amidst the toxins of patriarchal dominance and male concupiscence. Young-adult women readers may have actually chosen *Twilight* as their banner narrative in announcing to “males” what to them are the more important values and ideally right behaviour in sexual encounter.

If readers have truly found an alternative world of alternative characters, then *Twilight* has powerfully stoked sensitivities a fair amount of questioning: that readers not only pine for something non-existent but that the real world they live in ought to change. *Twilight’s* alternative (no matter how conservative, inane, or anthropomorphic) is still an alternative which young-adult readers could not realistically expect from their real surroundings. This is the ethical experience opened up by *Twilight*: an imagination worked up by a literature that evokes ‘traditional’ virtues. Without much effort, readers are powerfully charged with emotions and desires for what *Twilight* has imaginatively offered. This is possible since a prior sense of social flourishing may have already bloomed in their own dreams, similar to Meyer’s dreams that eventually produced *Twilight*.

Meyer’s dream^a exemplified her longing of an appropriate world and characters, leading towards a craft that unified both author and readers and their common worlds that subordinate traditional virtues. *Twilight*, with its representations of ethical values, does provoke remembrance of virtues marginalized and subordinated by market society. The author-reader unification is referred back to a common social base whose members share the society’s life’s patterns, demands, requirements, contradictions and problems. The author and readers of *Twilight* are grounded in a reality and immersed in a common situation that generated not only progress (economic) but also a moral crisis.

In modernity's workplaces and consumers' venues, people are required or pressured to become more rational, autonomous, efficient, aggressive, and competitive. It is in those venues where the modern individuals gain their dispositions and identities, especially male individuals who may also have found their niche in today's capitalist markets.

Moderns are expected to become more 'manly' in the pursuit of goals offered by a market environment defined by males whose presence at home are normally abbreviated. In modern settings, people are generally expected to act like the qualified men who must struggle toward success which in turn is understood in terms of usefulness and productivity. An unintended consequence, however, results: their rational pursuits and struggles may afford them some material dividends but these could neither satisfy their deeper need for affection nor compensate for the absence or lack of nurture afforded by the warmth of care from mothers, homes, and other intimacy-producing social bonds or solidarities. Because people are largely unconscious of this need-satisfaction imperative being anchored in affection and care, they continuously compound their problems by thinking that their pursuits and successes are their real sources of happiness, including their sexual pursuits.²¹

It is thus not surprising that the so-called sexual revolutions²² that rocked Europe and North America were triggered by the modern work-related pursuits and contexts: 1) migrations of males and females towards the factories and away from the supervisions of traditional institutions, characterized by the move towards regularly waged labor and towards greater individual freedom during the Industrial Revolution, 2) the mixing of males and females in the rise of the schools and universities that produced educated and more liberal employees for offices, industries, and commerce, 3) the prevalent use of contraceptives among women who either limit reproduction in order to rationalize their family resources or for the sake of their jobs/careers or to preserve their gains for autonomy

²¹See, Herb Goldberg, *The Hazards of Being Male*, New York: Signet, 1976; Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992, 149-152; Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill, London/NY: Continuum, 2004, 51-61.

²²See Ferdinand D. Dagmang, *The Predicaments of Intimacy and Solidarity: Capitalism and Impingements*, Quezon City: Central Books, 2010, 168ff.; Paula Kamen, *Her Way: Young Women Remake the Sexual Revolution*, New York and London: New York University Press, 2000.

and leisure, and 4) the women's experience of taking charge of their lives boosted by their own income and a greater sense of women entitlement and rights. In such contexts, every sexual encounter is not necessarily for procreation or for the prospect of marriage, but primarily an expression of choice and a decision taken for the sexual excitement and pleasure that it offers. Nevertheless, when the two sexes meet we also observe the story of the dominant male's initiatory sexual tension and aggressiveness which could define the problematic character of sexual encounters.²³

In other words, modernity has produced one of the moral crises especially felt by women as a burden of absence or lack of tender and caring male partners, who, instead of behaving like Edward, are seeking themselves through sexual encounters, the contact that they pursue but could not articulate as a much deeper expression of longing for nurture.²⁴ Instead of giving tenderness, à la Edward's expression of care, males pursue and consume pleasure in sex. Sexual gratification, in such cases, may become like a consumed good or service whose ability to gratify diminishes every time one pursues the same good or service.²⁵ In the consumption of material things, people must continually experience newness or novelty in order to be constantly fired up in their consumption habits. When sexual encounters pass through this consumption format, the pursuit of sexual gratification may also demand frequent change of techniques or partners. The woman's more defined capacity to show care may thus be abused by the more relentless, compulsive, and self-centred males in their quest for sex and power. It is thus no longer a surprise that female readers of *Twilight* dream for the Edward of their lives.

What Meyer and her readers share as a common experience of breakdown or loss of traditions also produces a *conscience collective*;²⁶

²³This is not to downplay the role of social, economic, political and cultural power of males in every sexual encounter. See Bell Hooks, *Where We Stand: Class Matters*, New York: Routledge, 2000.

²⁴“We may therefore maintain, with Freud, that the germ of sexual pleasure in the adult resides in the infantile sources of pleasure. I should note that we could just as readily derive everything from the nurturing instinct rather than from sexuality.” Sabina Spielrein, “Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being,” *Journal of Analytic Psychology* 39 (1994), 159 (155-186); see also Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy*, 3ff.

²⁵Mirroring the economic theory of marginal utility, the continuing reduction of utility of a good or service because of the increase of consumption of that good or service.

²⁶“The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society forms a determinate system with a life of its own. It can be termed the

Twilight is thus an ‘event’ that retrieves and evokes the cognitive-moral states common to both the author and the readers who live in an advance-modern world that is missing or losing (but hoping for) the values of self-control, postponement of gratification, masculine tenderness and care.

Meyer has appropriated traditional values which she feels must constitute a world for a plain girl and a gorgeous vampire who did represent that chivalry in a world suffering from the absence or lack of stability, commitment, tenderness, and disciplined and dedicated passion.

What we see in print brings to life a non-existent; makes visible the invisible. That is why readers are hooked on the text when what they see could compensate for what is absent in sound or hearing within their lifeworlds. Or when their lifeworld saturates them with too much ordinariness and the textual allows them to see and feel rare and exciting moral worlds. This is not a mere act of ‘waiting passively’ for Edward. The appropriation of the more traditional values may actually lead women readers to voice out their ethical preferences in the face of aggressive males – something that feminists could downplay or ignore.

Thus, the whole narrative itself carries the ethical impetus of Meyer’s characterization of what really matters in this world where the anxiety-loaded young people are forced to spend their productive lives away from immortalizing qualities. This is the ethical turn of the narrative, even as it is not openly announced by Meyer: acquiring the vampire-like *kalokagathia* is the road to human flourishing. It is through Edward and his vampire family that readers may find opportunity for sensitizing themselves towards a more ethical response. A single-minded pursuit à la Bella could provoke in people that desire for a world of desirable characters.

Readers have become part of that unifying story – by the fact that they have entered the world of the narrative, they will be inexorably bound to the enveloping membranes of those values, which behave like concentrated substances that permeate the boundaries of the selves who, in turn, would have achieved some kind of balance.

collective or common consciousness.” Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, trans. W.D. Halls, London: The McMillan Press Ltd., 1984, 38-39.

In French, the word *conscience* refers to ‘conscience’ and ‘consciousness.’ It thus covers both the moral beliefs/sentiments and cognitive beliefs/sentiments shared by individuals in a society. See Karen E. Fields, “Translator’s Introduction,” in Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, New York: The Free Press, 1995, xlvii ff.

6. Conclusion

Readers of the *Twilight* series are asked to plunge themselves into a world that brings alive (again and again) the heroic and marvellous – they plunge into this experience of a world which represents moral values that have become ‘old-fashioned’ or subordinated. In this sense, *Twilight*, is also a form of critique on the present-day lived-world which no longer effectively represent immortal values of self-control, disciplined romance, and sacrifice.

Meyer made this critique possible by giving the immortal to Isabella Swan and thus ride on what would transport readers into uncharacteristic experiences. The attribution of clumsiness, whininess, and plainness to Bella has become the magic wand’s trick that made readers to withdraw from their own forms of drudgery and move towards Forks and participate in Bella’s extraordinary experiences; in her predicament, unusual discoveries and transformations have happened – things that amaze and remind readers about moral values that immortalize love and life.

In *Twilight*, tension is played up in the character of Edward who, through ethical negotiations, conquers self and wins his object of affection, Bella, through his appeal to conscience rather than concupiscence. In this ‘coming-of-age’ narrative, Meyer has mustered creative and ethical energies to produce a revision of characters from venomous masculine bloodsuckers to life-giving honourable vampires. Moreover, the whole *Twilight* series that witness to the creative and ethical move of Meyer earned a corresponding response of readers who could identify themselves with Bella and the object of longings in the vampire character Edward, the most sought-after romantic partner who is able to assess correctly his destructive capacity if he indulges in a socially-defined male-centred penetrative intercourse. By denying himself the most gratifying act of “eating” Bella, Edward has affirmed what many girls would actually prefer in a boy-girl encounter: *romance rather than intercourse*. As such, the novels testify to the possibility of a right approach, an ethical stance, to sexual relationships during teen and young-adult years.