

disclosure, readers' access to desire and understanding of intimacy must adapt to a new model. In turn, readers, though presumably still engaged with the story, are no longer involved in an intimate relationship with Bella; however, as they have no recourse, they must submit to Bella's decision to change the nature of the narrator-reader relationship. As a result, Meyer's novels offer not only implicit warnings about love and desire but also a model that presents as necessary the relegation of desire and the acquiescence to another's control.

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Chapter 5 Bridges, Nodes, and Bare Life: Race in the "Twilight" Saga

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In the last decade, representation of people of color has significantly increased in literature, film, and popular culture in general. So far much of the work that features people of color steers clear of exploring or questioning how their race informs their experiences as well as how they are perceived by others, and, as a result, many of the portrayals we have today present an impoverished version of what it is to be a person of color. Stephenie Meyer's "Twilight" saga and its film adaptations not only feature people of color but also address race directly. The novels and the films enrich our understanding of race by exploring notions of both metaphorical and literal race. Three metaphorical races—humans, vampires, and werewolves—inhabit the series, and the last two only relate to each other through deep racial prejudice. Meyer uses Bella's and Renesmee's introduction into the world of magic to question and battle vampires' and werewolves' mutual hatred, uncovering the causes of their prejudice and providing ways to combat it. I will argue that through her use of metaphorical races Meyer presents a complex and innovative questioning of racism, even while her treatment of literal race is less successful. Through the Quileutes, Meyer explores literal race by both showcasing their isolation from mainstream society and celebrating their ability to remain aware of the world of magic through their oral culture and strong tribal ties. And yet some readers will perceive her treatment of other people of color such as Latina/os and the members of the Amazon and Egyptian covens as misrepresentation via a series of racial microaggressions, which are unconscious acts of racism that linger in our post civil-rights society today. By addressing these microaggressions, I seek to complicate and enrich the saga's and the films' already multilayered treatment of race.

Metaphorical Races

"Could you ... well, try *not* to be a ... werewolf?" (*Moon* 306, emphasis in original)

Aside from Bella and the Volturi's eager receptionist, people who become vampires do not choose their transformation, and the ability to become a werewolf is an inherited genetic trait. Just as we are born into a certain race in our world, vampires and werewolves cannot choose what they are or will become. While race

for us may at times be hard to ascertain from our physical appearance, humans, vampires, and werewolves are unmistakable to the initiated in Meyer's fictional world through physical traits and smell. Moreover, while our own races may influence our cultural understanding of the world, for the metaphorical races in the "Twilight" saga their understanding of the world is fundamentally shaped by their race.

Each race's cultural understanding comes in part from its separate history. In the case of werewolves this history is passed down orally from generation to generation. For vampires, history also seems to be oral. Although vampires such as Carlisle share historical knowledge with their families, both he and older vampires such as the Volturi and the Romanian coven are also able to keep a record of centuries or even millennia of history through their own life experiences.

Aside from history, however, there are particular traits to each of the races that radically alter the way in which they perceive the world. As Bella discovers after her own transformation, not only can she see, smell, and hear in ways she never could before, but her ability to feel also changes: "These emotions were so much stronger than I was used to that it was hard to stick to one train of thought despite the extra room in my head" (*Dawn* 393). Her mental and physical skills increase but so does her ability to feel, which explains how attached vampires are to their mates. Werewolves have an even stronger, though less voluntary, attachment to their pack, whose thoughts they share as long as they are in wolf form. They also have an obedience system based on bloodline hierarchies, and they are subject to imprinting, which arguably alters their perception of the world above every other aspect of their new existence, including their ability to inhabit a wolf's body. However, all the physical and cultural characteristics of the "Twilight" saga's humans, vampires, and werewolves would not come across as racial markers, were it not that Meyer portrays her characters as perpetuating and overcoming racial prejudice. Because of their popularity and their use of fantasy, the "Twilight" and "Harry Potter" series have frequently been compared. In her article on the latter saga's use of race and fairy tales, Elaine Ostry argues that "[r]ace lies at the root of the two major conflicts in the series" (92). Meyer's story, however, uses race and racism not only as the root of its conflicts but also as its overt driving force and moral lesson.

The Bridge

"I don't care who's a vampire and who's a werewolf. That's irrelevant. You are Jacob, and he is Edward, and I am Bella. And nothing else matters." (*Eclipse* 130)

One of Martin Heidegger's main contributions to Western thought is his attempt to make us realize how insidious it is for us to see things as objects as opposed to humans, whom we see as subjects. According to Heidegger, not only do we share the world with things, we also come to understand the essence of being through our relationship with them. One of Heidegger's examples of the way in

which things enlighten us is a bridge. He tells us that "[t]he bridge lets the stream run its course and at the same time grants mortals their way, so that they may come and go from shore to shore" (354). Much like Heidegger's bridge, Bella acts as a connector between vampires and werewolves. It is through Bella's love for Edward and Jacob, and their love for her, that the two metaphorical races are able to understand each other's humanity. However, again like Heidegger's bridge, both groups come and go, so that for most of the saga they oscillate between friendship and hatred.

Bella's father, Charlie, seems to be in part responsible for Bella's tolerance of the Other. Although in the *Twilight* film Charlie has a white friend who falls victim to Victoria, James, and Laurent, in the novels Charlie's only friends are Billy and Harry Clearwater. "The Blacks are practically family, Bella," he tells his daughter (*Eclipse* 13), and for this socially awkward man whose life has revolved around work, longing for his ex-wife, and his daughter's summer visits, his relationship with the Quileutes is second only to his love for Bella. Charlie is also surprisingly tolerant of the metaphorical races once he learns about them. As Jacob tells Bella after revealing his wolf-self to Charlie, "He's brave. Brave as you are. Didn't pass out or throw up or anything. I gotta say, I was impressed" (*Dawn* 495). By the end of the series, Charlie has no meaningful relationship with anyone of his own race, since his daughter and in-laws are vampires, his granddaughter is a half-vampire, and his partner is a Native American woman whose children are werewolves.

There is more to Bella's tolerance than her upbringing, however. As Heidegger tries to convince his audience of the ability of things to help us understand our own essence, he argues that "[t]o be sure, people think of the bridge as primarily and properly *merely* a bridge; after that, and occasionally, it might possibly express much else besides" (355, emphasis in original). To Heidegger, there is always a lot more to the bridge, which can help us uncover the essence of being. Much like the bridge, Bella's outwardly frail humanity conceals a different nature that is only unleashed with her transformation into a vampire.

Upon learning that Jacob is a werewolf, Bella laments the fact that "Jacob, the only human being I'd ever been able to relate to," in fact, "wasn't even human" (*Moon* 294). It seems to confirm her suspicion that there is something wrong with her since she can only feel close to those who are not of her metaphorical race. The problem is not that they are different, but that their world is dangerous for her. Yet, as the saga unfolds, we realize that Edward's misgivings about turning Bella into a vampire are misguided, since she can only reach her potential after her transformation. Her whole being is so eager for her to reach her true form that she bypasses the newborn stage entirely and learns to control her mighty gift in weeks. As she explains, "I was amazing now—to them and to myself. It was like I had been born to be a vampire. . . . I had found my true place in the world, the place I fit, the place I shined" (*Dawn* 524). It isn't only Bella's upbringing but also her very nature that allows her to be the bridge that brings metaphorical races together.

Bella's ability to foster friendship between vampires and werewolves, however, is limited by her being an outsider to both worlds (until her transformation), so that

the alliance she fosters is tenuous at best. It is Renesmee who manages to solidify the bonds, as I will argue in the next section, but she couldn't have managed the feat without her mother's work in paving the way. As Heidegger explains, "The bridge swings over the stream 'with ease and power.' It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge expressly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off against the other by the bridge" (354). Even though vampires and werewolves come together through Bella, it is because of Bella that the new breed of werewolves emerges in the first place. Before Bella arrives, the Cullens are in Forks but the werewolf gene has not been triggered, probably because the Cullens are not really a threat to the tribe. It is after James and Victoria begin terrorizing Bella that the werewolves emerge. Thus, like Heidegger's bridge, it is Bella who, by her presence, has brought the two banks into opposition. It is also Bella who, while bringing them closer, simultaneously keeps them apart, since Edward and Jacob's rivalry over her creates much of the friction between the two metaphorical races, the most dangerous being the potential breach of the treaty over her transformation.

In spite of Edward and Jacob's love for her, Bella's welcome into their worlds is intermittent throughout the series. Edward's fear for her safety makes him leave her in *New Moon*, and while Bella is pregnant he even asks Jacob to father her children in the future so she'll let them remove Renesmee, who is jeopardizing her life. Moreover, although the Quileutes see her so much as one of their own that they invite her to the elder council, Jacob bans her from the reservation for weeks after his transformation, and Sam is willing to kill her in order to save the tribe from her potentially dangerous child. Although at that point Jacob thinks, "*She's human, too! Doesn't our protection apply to her?*" (*Dawn* 202), he contemplates killing the Cullens, and Bella by extension, only hours before, when he thinks she has already become a vampire. He justifies killing her by arguing that "[s]he's not Bella anymore" (*Dawn* 160). Bella's role as a bridge, then, is a precarious one. As long as she remains human, she can be excluded from the worlds of the men she loves. However, if she becomes a vampire, she loses access to the werewolves. If she joins the werewolf world by marrying Jacob, she loses access to the vampires. Even though Bella is able to see the humanity in both metaphorical races, the wolves and the vampires are blind to it. Both groups, with the exception of Carlisle, Esme, and Billy, use racial epithets such as bloodsucker, leech, dog, and mongrel to refer to and address each other. They also insult each other on the basis of their smell, one common aspect of human racism. The bad smell, as we learn from Jacob's narration and later Bella's, is real, but it is also something that they can get used to.

The novels also explore racism through Alice's failure to see the wolves and Renesmee's future. As Alice explains in frustration, "You would be mortified, too, if you realized that you were handcuffed by your own nature. I see vampires best, because I am one; I see humans okay, because I was one. But I can't see these odd half-breeds at all because they're nothing I've ever experienced" (*Dawn* 382). Racism is made possible by our inability to empathize with the Other and see the

world from their perspective, but it goes even deeper than that. As Ralph Ellison argues in *Invisible Man*, racism makes the Other vanish for us. We simply don't see them, and by not seeing them, we are able to ignore their suffering and their very humanity. Alice's inability to see the werewolves may be necessary for the plot, but it is also a way to emphasize Meyer's notions about how otherwise good people can commit terrible crimes against one another.

One of Bella's defining characteristics is her ability to empathize with the racial Other. This sets her apart from Harry Potter, who cannot see the evils of elf enslavement. As Ostry explains, "Only Hermione cares about the house-elves, and the other children—including Harry—mock her efforts to help the elves and raise social awareness all around" (96). Bella, in her compassion for the suffering of those who are different from her, is more like Hermione than Harry. Unlike Hermione, however, Bella is the protagonist, more strongly emphasizing her perspective and her antiracist message.

For Meyer, awareness of the Other is not enough, since one can still misunderstand them. When Edward tries to explain why he will not allow Bella to see Jacob, he tells her, "I know [werewolves] better than you think, Bella. I was here the last time" (*Eclipse* 30). And yet, in spite of his longer acquaintance, he is completely ignorant about them. Later, after Jacob has proven his goodness, Edward is able to see his old prejudice in action when his fellow vampires taunt the werewolves as immature warriors. A wiser Edward tells Jacob, "They'll be shocked when the *infants* save their superior lives, won't they?" (*Dawn* 661, emphasis in original). Jacob's own ignorance about vampires is even deeper than Edward's. So certain is he that Bella will not be the same after her transformation that he tells her, "You'd be better off dead. I'd rather you were" (*Eclipse* 183). Like Edward, Jacob has his own journey to make. We see the results when he tells Sam that "*they aren't our enemies. They never have been. Until I really thought about destroying them, thought it through, I didn't see that*" (*Dawn* 209). Jacob is right, since as far as vegetarian vampires are concerned, there is no reason, aside from racial prejudice and ignorance, for the two groups to be enemies when they want the same things: to live peacefully and protect their immediate territory from nonvegetarian vampires. And yet, even after that realization, Jacob is still willing to murder his vampire friends and Renesmee herself the day she's born, but he is stopped by Renesmee, who is not a bridge but something much more effective in the fight against racism.

The Node

"Renesmee is as much a part of our family as she is yours. Jacob cannot abandon her, and we cannot abandon him." (*Dawn* 559)

In his article "Materials for an Exploratory Theory of the Network Society," Manuel Castells explains that "[a] network is a set of interconnected nodes. A node is the point where the curve intersects itself" (15). Unlike a bridge, which can be crossed to go from one place to the other, a node is where two things intersect. A node

joins things by merging them into one at the point where they connect. Renesmee is a node between humans, vampires, and werewolves, solidifying her mother's antiracist work for the rest of their lives. Vampires and humans, as represented by Charlie, are tied to her by blood, and the wolves are tied to her through Jacob's imprinting. As Bella explains, "[T]he most absolute of all the pack's laws was that no wolf ever kill the object of another wolf's imprinting" (*Dawn* 456). Renesmee provides the wolves and the vampires with an unbreakable link of love, even if that love isn't voluntary on all parts. Ostry argues that "if Rowling means to point out Harry [Potter] as ... biracial, then she fails somewhat," since despite his Muggle-born mother, he is described as "not from a Muggle family" (93, emphasis Rowling's). Even though Bella is not biracial herself, she does give birth to a biracial child, whose own hybrid nature is used to counteract racism between the saga's main characters.

Some of my fellow fans seem to be disturbed by Jacob and Renesmee's romance. For one thing, she's a baby and he a teenager. For another, it seems like a facile and too convenient way to get out of the love triangle. But I suggest that Meyer makes the relationship work by having Renesmee be the personification of the love Bella feels for Jacob. Finally realizing how much she loves Jacob but knowing that she will still marry Edward, Bella tells us, "If only I could be struck by lightning and be split in two. Preferably painfully. For the first time, giving up being human felt like a true sacrifice. Like it might be too much to lose" (*Eclipse* 589). Giving birth to a daughter is as close as a woman can get to splitting in two. Through Renesmee, Bella gets her wish.

After her fight with Jacob at her wedding, Bella tells us that "[w]hen Edward claimed me again, I found that the Jacob-drawer was shut nice and tight" (*Dawn* 70). However, as we know from their previous arguments, her love for Jacob never vanishes, no matter how much they hurt each other. That love, which becomes Renesmee, only grows throughout the pregnancy, to everyone's confusion. When confronted by her eagerness to see him, Bella explains that "[i]t feels ... complete when you're here, Jacob. Like all my family is together" (*Dawn* 298, ellipsis and emphasis in original). After the birth, when she's outraged by the imprinting, Jacob uses her need for his company during the pregnancy as proof that Renesmee was created to be with him, "From the very beginning. We had to be together even then" (*Dawn* 451). Bella, and more reluctantly Edward, eventually come to terms with their daughter's love for Jacob. As Bella observes, "Seven months ago, our triangular relationship seemed impossible, three different kinds of heartbreak that could not be avoided. Now everything was in perfect balance" (*Dawn* 674). The balance is a balance of love. The four of them, the vampires, the vampire-human girl, and the werewolf, love each other profoundly and are able to function as a family in spite of their complicated past.

Renesmee's origins in love, both the love of Bella and Edward and the love of Bella and Jacob, are vital to the story because she is the saga's ultimate multicultural character. Not only a hybrid herself, she is a hybrid who loves another hybrid and will likely give birth to mixes of the three metaphorical races that run through her

and her prospective husband. There are only two versions offered as the cause for imprinting. Sam thinks that it is "to make a bunch of new little werewolves. Survival of the species, genetic override. You're drawn to the person who gives you the best chance to pass on the wolf gene" (*Dawn* 318). Billy believes that "you're imprinting to make stronger wolves" (*Dawn* 318, emphasis in original). Jacob's love for Renesmee makes the latter seem more likely, opening the door for even more powerful and flexible creatures that may result from the mixing of the races. After all, Renesmee and Jacob are much better suited for life in our society than vampires, being able to blend in physically and subsist on human food, even if the latter is distasteful to Renesmee. In Meyer's world, it is the hybrids, the mixed, multicultural beings, who in the end have the easiest time adapting.

Meyer's choice to make multiculturalism the result of bonds of love makes sense in her feminist world, where emotional bonds are the most vital aspects of people's lives. As Castells explains, "Some nodes are more important than others, but they all need each other as long as they are within the network" (15). Renesmee, as the node who brings together all three metaphorical races, represents the apex of emotional bonds, but Meyer also features emotional bonds in her envisioning of war.

One of the fantasy genre's paradoxes is that, while some of its pivotal series such as *Harry Potter*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Chronicles of Narnia* have fundamentally pacifist messages, they also glorify war in battles that become breathtaking events once transferred to the screen. We must have peace, but in order to do so, we're going to fight some really "cool" battles. *Twilight* and *Eclipse* are no different. *Breaking Dawn*, however, eludes the paradox by having the Cullens and their allies prevent the final battle through diplomacy. It is true that in fiction, and especially on the screen, a group of people talking may not be as exciting to some as explosions and throats being ripped by giant wolves, as we see in *Eclipse*. However, Meyer manages to add enough tension to the negotiations between the Cullens and their allies and the Volturi to make a strong argument for diplomatic battles being as exciting as physical battles. She thus provides an alternative to falling into fantasy's pacifist/war-affirming paradox, and she supports her point through the emotional bonds across metaphorical and literal races. Her use of the union of different races in her championing of diplomacy is significant because it provides a counterpoint to the literature and film trope in which people of different races destroy each other in war.

Chelsea, one of the Volturi's main weapons, works with emotional bonds in a way that also speaks to questions of race. As Eleazar explains, "She could make someone feel bonded to the Volturi, to want to belong, to want to please them" (*Dawn* 602, emphasis in original). While members of the Cullen family are together because they love each other, Chelsea, who works as a malicious node in opposition to Renesmee's role as a good node, makes members of the Volturi guard stay through an artificial bond. Their emotional willpower has been stolen from them. Chelsea's gift becomes more perfidious when it's used to break the bonds between the covens they attack. Eleazar explains that "anything weaker than the

bond between partners is in danger. In a normal coven, at least. Those are weaker bonds than those in our family, though. Abstaining from human blood makes us more civilized—lets us form true bonds of love" (*Dawn* 603). Beyond partners, love can only grow between those who are able to see the Other—humans—with compassion and respect. Those who view the human metaphorical race as mere nourishment cannot achieve love, which is the most important value in Meyer's world.

Because they feed on humans the Volturi fail to experience love outside of their relationships with their partners, although they know how powerful it can be if used to their advantage, as they try to do by exploiting the vegetarian vampires' bonds during their confrontation. As Bella tells us, "I understood that Caius had never underestimated the ties of a true family. *This* was the ploy. He had not wanted Irina's complaint; he had wanted her defiance. His excuse to destroy her, to ignite the violence that filled the air like a thick, combustible mist" (*Dawn* 708, emphasis in original). The Volturi kill Irina to cause her bereaved relatives to start a battle, breaking one set of bonds so that more will be destroyed, but Caius underestimates how much their love for each other makes them abstain so they can live and be together. The Volturi's sacrifice of Irina, one of their kind, gives us a glimpse at arguably the darkest aspect of Meyer's work.

Bare Life

"Even if others could be convinced that the Volturi are exploiting their power, how would it make any difference? No one can stand against them." (*Dawn* 605)

In his book *Homo Sacer*, Giorgio Agamben examines the difference between *zoe*, which the Greeks defined as bare life, "the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods), and *bios*, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or group" (1). While bare life can be taken away from us at any point, *bios* provides us with the rights shared by the members of a particular governmental entity. However, as Agamben notes, who is granted *bios* isn't always decided fairly. In what he calls the state of exception, Agamben writes that "the sovereign, having the legal power to suspend the validity of the law, legally places himself outside the law. This means that the paradox can be formulated this way: 'the law is outside itself'" (15). If sovereigns decide which laws we will have and how they will be executed, how can we prosecute them when they break the law themselves? The Volturi exemplify Agamben's worst fears of how a sovereign can abuse the state of exception. Not only do they ruthlessly make use of their power, but, as Edward tells Bella, "The Volturi aren't supposed to be the villains, the way they seem to you. They are the foundation of our peace and civilization" (*Dawn* 580). It's only at the end of the saga that their true behavior is finally uncovered to a portion of the vampire community, and Meyer uses race as her vehicle to expose the Volturi's malevolence.

We catch a glimpse of the Volturi's abuse of the state of exception when Jane refuses to leave Bree alive, claiming that "we don't give second chances. It's bad for our reputation" (*Eclipse* 578). Even though it may seem necessary to sacrifice some vampires if the Volturi are going to keep their kind from exposing themselves, we later learn that gifted vampires are routinely given second chances and invited to join the guard. In this way, Meyer supports Agamben's claim that currently "the exception everywhere becomes the rule, the realm of bare life—which is originally situated at the margins of the political order—gradually begins to coincide with the political realm" (9). In other words, in today's world our *bios* is always in jeopardy and we may at any moment become bare life. Meyer brings Agamben's theories to life when we realize that the Volturi's attack on the Cullens in *Breaking Dawn* is their attempt to secure Alice as a member of the guard. They are willing to treat dozens of their own kind as bare life by slaughtering them without cause in order to procure the services of one vampire. Having Alice, moreover, would make them powerful enough to indefinitely retain their ability to abuse the state of exception.

It is not surprising that the Volturi can see their own kind as bare life when they see other metaphorical races that way. Humans are their food source, and werewolves are to be killed on sight as potential enemies. Strikingly, however, even some of the Cullens are somewhat cavalier about humans, jokingly making bets on how many people Bella will kill as a newborn. Edward himself has fed on humans, and the kind-hearted vampires who come to protect the Cullens, such as the Irish and the Amazon covens, have no qualms about killing humans. Bella explains that "[t]he compromise made me very uncomfortable, though I tried to tell myself that they'd all be hunting somewhere else in the world" (*Dawn* 607). By becoming a vampire, Bella has entered a metaphorical race in which good people feed on the metaphorical race she belonged to originally, the metaphorical race of her parents and classmates. Much as she may disagree with nonvegetarian vampires, she finds herself emotionally bound to people who see humans as bare life.

Things are worse for Jacob since "werewolves existed to prevent the loss of human life, and here was rampant murder being condoned barely outside the park's borders. But under these circumstances, with Renesmee in acute danger, he kept his mouth shut" (*Dawn* 607–8). While his racism against vegetarian vampires is unfounded, his dislike of nonvegetarian vampires makes perfect sense, and yet because of Renesmee, the node, he is now bound to them not just in battle but also in gratitude, since they survive the Volturi thanks to the gathering of multicultural vampires who come to their rescue. As Bella tells us, "Aside from the Volturi, it was probably the largest friendly gathering of mature vampires in immortal history" (*Dawn* 628). However, there is a big difference between the Cullens' friends and the Volturi: race—this time of a literal rather than a metaphorical kind.

While the Volturi are European in origin, the group that the Cullens gather comes from all over the world. The films wisely decided to cast Laurent as a black man, but it isn't until the second half of the series of novels that we meet

any vampires of color, and in spite of a number of problematic representations I will discuss below, they save the day. As Edward explains when the Volturi fail to attack, "They're worried about the faces they don't recognize—Zafrina and Senna in particular—and the wolves, naturally" (*Dawn* 685). The all-white Volturi have no idea of what is happening in the Amazon, where Carlisle befriended the Amazon coven, and they have never seen any reason to bother with the Quileutes, who were just humans—food—to them. By respecting and befriending groups from different metaphorical and real races, the Cullens find a way to stop the all-white sovereign, at least until they face each other again. Siobhan predicts, "Alice will warn us when they intend to strike. . . . And we'll gather again. Perhaps the time will come when our world is ready to be free of the Volturi altogether," to which Carlisle responds, "If it does, we'll stand together" (*Dawn* 743). Out of friendship and a need to survive, the group of multicultural vampires and werewolves is now bonded for eternity.

Yet in spite of Meyer's championing of multiculturalism as the way to stand up to the sovereign's abuse of the state of exception, her treatment of vampires of color is problematic. Bella describes the Egyptian coven as "an unlikely grouping—though the Egyptians all looked so alike, with their midnight hair and olive-toned pallor, that they easily could have passed for a biological family" (*Dawn* 609). The proverbial "they all look the same to me" expressed here makes it hard to single out individuals, and without individuals, a particular race becomes an abstract Other. Of course, this is Bella, not Meyer, making the comment, but since Bella is our bridge to multiculturalism, it is shocking for her to describe the Egyptian coven that way.

Even more worrisome is Bella's description of the Amazon coven, "It wasn't just their eccentric clothes that made them seem wild, but everything about them, from their restless crimson eyes to their sudden, darting movements. I'd never met any vampires less civilized" (*Dawn* 612–13). She goes on to say that "though I liked Zafrina very much and I knew she wouldn't really hurt me, the wild woman scared me to death" (*Dawn* 617). For someone who is unfazed by Edward stopping an out-of-control car with his hand and who chooses to sacrifice herself to James in order to save her mother, it makes little sense to be frightened of a pleasant woman who will gladly risk her life to protect her. What does Bella mean by "vampires less civilized" anyway? Hasn't she spent the whole saga trying to show that other civilizations, such as the Quileutes, are as wise as the Western juggernaut, if not wiser? Meyer is not alone in presenting readers with these paradoxes. Ostry argues that in the "Harry Potter" series Rowling portrays racial markers, people of color (including giants and elves), and the idea of darkness in general as negative in contrast to the goodness of white characters (94–5). What makes these authors portray people of color this way when they are both clearly trying to critique racism? While Ostry argues that such portrayals are inherent in the fairy tales from which Rowling's fantasy descends, I believe an answer to this question can be found in what Derald Wing Sue, Christina M. Capodilupo, Gina C. Torino, Jennifer M. Bucceri, Aisha M. B. Holder, Kevin L. Nadal, and Marta Esquilin call racial microaggressions.

Wing Sue and his collaborators define racial microaggressions as "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group" (273). Microaggressions are not something people commit consciously. When confronted about them, most are horrified to be considered racist and have rational excuses for their actions and words (275). However, microaggressions, especially when experienced repeatedly, result in "self-doubt, frustration, and isolation on the part of the victims" (279). Microaggressions are hard to target since there is no malicious intent behind them, no sense that the Other is bare life, as the Volturi feel about humans and even their own kind. Microaggressions are for the most part inadvertently inherited from the culture, and, when not confronted, they propagate unnoticed. I would argue that Bella's fear of Zafrina constitutes a microaggression; since Meyer is clearly aware of more conscious forms of racism and battles them in her novels, potentially hurtful moments such as Bella's response to Zafrina and her description of the Egyptian coven may well have slipped through unbeknownst to the author.

Meyer shows that she ultimately sees Zafrina as a trustworthy and powerful character by having Bella choose her as her protector when she tells Edward, "You *have* to get to Demetri. Zafrina will keep them away from me" (*Dawn* 729, emphasis in original). It is also Zafrina who provides us with the final, romantic moment in which Edward can finally hear Bella's thoughts, "Zafrina's idea. We practiced it a few times" (*Dawn* 752). Meyer's microaggressions, however, become less ambiguous as she discusses the covens from "the South." When recounting his past in "the South," Jasper says that "the North is, by comparison, very civilized. Mostly we are nomads here who enjoy the day as well as the night, who allow humans to interact with us unsuspectingly—anonymity is important to us all" (*Eclipse* 289). Once again, the notion of a civilization being superior to another arises.

This time it is not South Americans who fail to live up to the saga's unstated sense of what a civilization is, but, as far as we can tell, Mexicans. Meyer doesn't define the area for us, though she mentions Mexico City and Monterrey, which are in Mexico. It is common enough for some Americans to think of the whole of Central and even South America as variations on Mexican culture, but we expect better from Meyer, who tries so hard to assert the values of alternate cultures in her books. Again, Meyer is not alone. Ostry criticizes Rowling for "not specifying exact cultural groups" either (94); nevertheless, Meyer's being more precise about what geographical area the "uncivilized" South covers would help lessen the blow to Latina/os by showing an understanding of our national cultural differences. Not much, however, could be done to smooth over Jasper's statement: "It was enough that the fever for conquest did not spread from the South. The rest of the world stayed sane" (*Eclipse* 291). This sense that the chaos raging in the undefined "south of the border" may spread to the "civilized" United States is a trenchant weapon used by leaders in the anti-immigration movement. Unlike Bella, who may overcome her initial prejudice against Zafrina, Jasper is never seen to move away from his perception of the South as "uncivilized."

Latina/os' origins continue to be nebulous in the saga through the portrayal of the two positive Spanish-speaking characters we encounter, Carmen and Eleazar. We are never told where they're from. While members of the other covens are defined by their country of origin (Ireland, Egypt, Romania, etc.), the Spanish speakers' nationalities are left frustratingly vague. There is great difference between an Argentinean and a Cuban, for example, and it's troublesome to group the Spanish-speaking world into a nameless mass. Even so, at least Spanish-speakers are represented in the books, unlike African Americans, who somehow fail to appear at all in Meyer's world. The films try to remedy that oversight with Laurent and by casting Bella's classmate Tyler as an African American, but the latter's role is so insignificant that he isn't in *New Moon* or *Eclipse* and his absence is never addressed. Meyer's treatment of literal race is most successful in her representation of Native Americans through the Quileutes, whose transformation into werewolves fits neatly into Agamben's thinking.

Homo Sacer

"We take what we do seriously, Bella. Nothing's been forgotten. Everything they need to know has been passed down from father to son for generations."
(*Moon* 354)

Agamben titled his book *Homo Sacer* after the Roman sacred men, a name that, contrary to what it may suggest today, describes people who, due to crimes committed, were banished from their civilization. No one would be punished for killing them, since they had no *bios* and were only bare life, but they couldn't be sacrificed to the gods. There have been many versions of *homines sacri* throughout history, including wolf-men; Agamben notes, "Germanic and Anglo-Saxon sources underline the bandit's liminal status by defining him as a wolf-man" (105). Being forced to live in the wild after being banned from their society, these *homines sacri* were considered part human, part wild animal. Agamben explains that "the life of the bandit is the life of the *loup garou*, the werewolf, who is precisely neither man nor beast, and who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither" (105). That wolf-men were banned from the land they called their own and forced to make their life somewhere else was possible because their humanity was taken away from them. Like Native Americans during the period of westward expansion, wolf-men were seen as bare life so that killing them would not constitute homicide. Many Native Americans, Meyer's Quileutes included, still live in reservations, divided from mainstream American society, and the "Twilight" saga's emphasis on the connection between the Native and the werewolf evokes this brutal history of banishment and genocide.

In "Alter/native Heroes: Native Americans, Comic Books and the Struggle for Self-Definition," Richard King states:

Historically, savagery delimited the horizons of indigeneity, conjured in both its ignoble and noble variations; more recently, in the wake of the civil rights and red power movements, publishers have distanced themselves from explicitly

negative or demeaning images, which is not to say their positive visions do not in fact dismiss or belittle, for in fact, they frequently do. Although often members of real tribes, such invocation [sic] appear more about endowing characters with a particular mystique for the predominantly White audience and less about elaborating the humanity of the hero. (217)

There is no question that Jacob's humanity is deeply explored by Meyer, and the Quileutes are a real tribe who live predominantly in La Push and whose lore credits them with descent from wolves. However, it is hard to argue that there is no mystique around the "Twilight" saga's Quileutes. There is plenty of mystique around the vampires, too, but, for all their magical ties, the Cullens are very well adjusted to human society. They attend Ivy League schools, collect real estate, and have "enough cash stashed all over the house to keep a small country afloat for a decade" (*Dawn* 647). Much like Charlie and Bella's teachers, Carlisle is defined by his profession as a doctor. The Quileutes, in contrast, are the only adults in the Forks universe who have no known profession. Their only mentioned source of income is the souvenir shop where Embry's mother works.

Meyer's Quileutes are impoverished. Jacob tells a nonchalant Bella that fixing the bikes might cost "more than a hundred dollars" (*Eclipse* 144), as if he were referring to thousands. When Jacob phases without removing his shoes, Jared picks up the remains, saying, "Billy said this was the last pair he could afford—guess Jacob's going barefoot now" (*Moon* 327). There is, of course, nothing wrong with being poor, though one could argue that it's problematic to have the white Cullens be so wealthy and the Quileutes so poor. The real problem is that the Quileutes don't seem to work. They are poor, and they seem to do nothing to solve the problem. Jacob, whose considerable gifts as a mechanic cause Bella to call him "absolutely, without a doubt, the most talented person I know" (*Moon* 168), has the only potentially lucrative skill in the whole reservation.

The Quileutes seem to be stuck in a world of magic, even if the werewolf gene had not been active for generations. Magic is, at least, a positive thing in Meyer's world, where magical beings are physically and mentally superior to humans. As Edward tells Bella, "The Quileutes have a long memory" (*Twilight* 187), and his point holds not only for the Quileutes but for Kaure's Brazilian tribe as well. In the "Twilight" saga, oral history has been much more successful at keeping track of the truth than written culture. The Quileutes value the voice in ways that our written culture seems unable to. It is perhaps for this reason that Meyer chooses to give Jacob an actual voice in the novels.

Ostry critiques Rowling for mentioning minorities in the "Harry Potter" series but keeping them on the sidelines of the story (93). Meyer improves upon this situation by having Bella predominantly narrate the saga, but also having Jacob narrate the epilogue of *Eclipse* and Book Two of *Breaking Dawn*. Seeing the world through Jacob's eyes would by default strengthen our bond with him, but Meyer also takes advantage of the opportunity by making his voice so energetic and quirky that it's arguably her best writing. Jacob replaces Bella's cryptic one-word chapter titles with sprawling sentences such as "Why Didn't I Just Walk

Away? Oh Right, Because I'm an Idiot" (*Dawn* 185) and "You Know Things Are Bad When You Feel Guilty for Being Rude to Vampires" (*Dawn* 268). Everyone, himself included, falls victim to his wit. About Bella he tells us, "The girl was a classic martyr. She'd totally been born in the wrong century. She should have lived back when she could have gotten herself fed to some lions for a good cause" (*Dawn* 187). In his eloquent, irreverent fashion Jacob sums up one of Bella's most complex characteristics—to some readers her most endearing quality, to others her worst flaw. Through Jacob's humor and incisive understanding of others, we get the chance to see Bella through outside eyes and grow to love her more in spite of and because of the flaws Jacob lovingly points out.

Jacob also gives us our first look at the world of magic from within. After Bella's transformation we get to experience the expanded physical and mental powers of vampires with her. We also feel her learn to control her shield. However, the more fascinating Cullen gifts of mindreading, foreseeing the future, and controlling the emotions of others remain beyond her, and by extension our, reach. With Jacob, though, we see what reading others' thoughts and having ours read feels like. The mental conversations Jacob has with the wolves are lively and exciting. We also get to experience the inability to shut others out, especially through Leah, who tortures him but also helps him overcome his broken heart over Bella: "She thought about the things that were worse, the black pictures in my head, while I tried to tune her out without much success. She was able to look at them with some distance, some perspective, and I had to admit that this was helpful" (*Dawn* 316). Unlike Edward, who can only listen to others, the wolves can communicate mentally and the management of their communal thoughts is one of the richest aspects of the saga, which we get to experience through Jacob.

The first *Breaking Dawn* adaptation contains Book Two of the novel, the section narrated by Jacob. Jacob's epilogue was left out of *Eclipse*, perhaps so the filmmakers could end the film with Bella and Edward alone, as in the previous two films. Without Jacob's epilogue, there is no doubt in the first three films that Bella is the person we are meant to follow. In *Twilight*, Bella narrates for us throughout, and *New Moon* deviates from the book by adding Bella's bouncing emails to Alice's closed account as Bella's way to share her pain over Edward's absence. The adaptation of *Eclipse* moves further away from Bella's point of view than do its two predecessors, as Katie Kapurch notes in Chapter 11 in this volume, but Bella still guides us into the film by reciting the Robert Frost poem that opens the novel, just as *Breaking Dawn Part I* begins with a voiceover in which Bella muses on childhood's relationship to death. First person in film, however, goes beyond narration. It is also a careful balance between seeing the world through a character's eyes and seeing that character, since we attach ourselves to the faces on the screen. *Breaking Dawn Part I* allows us to hear the wolves' mental interaction, but it cannot provide Jacob's perspective to the extent that Book Two of the novel does. Even so, the films as a group have already strengthened Jacob's role in unforeseen ways.

In the books Bella keeps forgetting to breathe in Edward's presence, unable to "believe that someone so beautiful could be real" (*Twilight* 87). Jacob, in contrast,

is simply good-looking, something that takes Bella two books to discover: "I just hadn't realized before. Did you know, you're sort of beautiful?" (*Moon* 192). At a midnight screening, I watched Kristen Stewart utter that line after a hundred or so women and girls yelled with enthusiasm as Taylor Lautner removed his shirt, displaying his formidable torso. While readers may choose to imagine Edward as supernaturally beautiful and Jacob as averagely handsome, Catherine Hardwicke and her team wisely chose to cast two very good-looking actors for the parts. As *Entertainment Weekly* reported, "The one *Twilight* star Hollywood is already betting big on [is] Taylor Lautner, the 18-year-old boy with the abs of steel who has sold every studio in town on his charm and good looks" (Sperling 15). Currently asking a fee of \$7.5 million per film, Lautner has become a media phenomenon, and the adaptations' Jacob is a stronger force in the films as a result. By giving a greater influence to Jacob, the loyal, witty, and kindhearted Native American werewolf destined to marry the human-vampire hybrid, the films reinforce Meyer's antiracist message.

A Celebration

"I want you to know something—when it comes to all this *enemies* nonsense, I'm out. I am a neutral country. I am Switzerland. I refuse to be affected by territorial disputes between mythical creatures." (*Eclipse* 143, emphasis in original)

Ostry points out that one of the paradoxes of fairy tales, and of much children's literature more generally, is that "[t]he fairy tale may contain radical elements, but it is also firmly conservative. Its values have been as much for social stability as for social advance" (98). She believes that the "Harry Potter" series' treatment of race tries to call for change but ultimately ends up arguing for keeping the status quo. While *Breaking Dawn* ends with the Volturi still in power, suggesting that little has changed in actual political arrangements, the main characters do undergo radical changes in their understanding of race.

The success of the "Twilight" saga's books and film adaptations in part results from Meyer's willingness to deal with race's ambiguities and complications in her story. Meyer uses Bella, Renesmee, and Jacob to guide us through the saga's racial minefield, arguing that racism can be best combated by personally getting to know the Other and developing romantic and blood bonds with people of other metaphorical and literal races. Even though Meyer's treatment of metaphorical races is strong and daring, literal races are a weaker link in her work. While her treatment of the Quileutes and, especially, Jacob show a conscious effort on her part to counter our misunderstanding and mistreatment of literal races, her portrayal of the Egyptian and Amazon covens and of Latina/os is filled with microaggressions. Some may dismiss her efforts based on these problematic instances, but I would argue that we will be better off celebrating what she has done well and pointing out where she has inadvertently misrepresented the Other. Race is a slippery and

uncomfortable subject to address (I have, no doubt, upset some of my readers), which is perhaps why, even though we have so many new representations of people of color, those characters' struggles with race are rarely addressed. In spite of committing her share of microaggressions, Meyer has crafted a work in which people of literal and metaphorical color have to face and overcome their own and others' racism. This is a welcome development that will hopefully inspire many to follow suit.

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Chapter 6 Girl Culture and the "Twilight" Franchise

Catherine Driscoll

"Twilight" is girl culture: popular culture *for* girls, *about* girls, and circulated *by* girls.¹ "Girl culture" in this sense clearly takes many forms and is shaped by many cultural contexts, but it appears wherever the modern ideas of gender and adolescence intersect with mass-produced popular culture that enables girls' sharing of ideas about girlhood. In this sense girl culture emerges in the nineteenth century in multiple locations and has continued to both appear in new places and spread across distances and borders, developing some impermanent but particular generic allegiances and conventions along the way. It is as girl culture that "Twilight" seems to me particularly significant. "Twilight"—the object I take up here is not confined to the published books by Stephenie Meyer or even to these plus their film adaptations—is certainly historically and culturally specific. It is a twenty-first-century *mélange* of media culture that is some ways intensely North American. But "Twilight" is also more broadly relevant to girls of this period as a component of and commentary on girl culture.

This essay considers what girlhood and girl culture mean to "Twilight," focusing on the meaning of Bella Swan's girlhood in the novels, Bella's relation to the girl culture around her, and the adaptation of this relation across the first three films. It is also concerned, however, with the way girl culture shares knowledge about the experience of becoming a subject, and the claims about what kind of subject girls should become posed within and around "Twilight." While girlhood and girl culture are gendered categories, they are just as defined by the cultural trajectory we call "adolescence," and the "Twilight" books and films manipulate the meaning and significance of adolescence in a range of often contradictory ways. I want to suggest here that while girlhood in the books is dramatically different from girlhood in the films, the gothic romance of "Twilight" revolves especially around dramas of development. This is crucial, I think, to understanding "Twilight"'s appeal to (some) girls and rejection by (other, or later) girls. That is, the "Twilight" franchise appeals to girls simultaneously as an embrace and as a rejection of contemporary girl culture.

¹ Thanks to Anne Morey, and to my niece, Miranda Stokes, for inspiring me to read the "Twilight" novels and lending me her books. This essay also draws on my book *Teen Film: A Critical Introduction* (Berg 2011).

By the "Twilight" franchise I refer to the series of novels by Meyer and their film adaptations. Much of my discussion here is also relevant to the merchandise surrounding them and to associated "Twilight" fan cultures, although these are not my central object.