

CHAPTER 15

THE GREAT AMERICAN LOVE AFFAIR: INDIANS IN THE *TWILIGHT* SAGA

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For most whites throughout the past five centuries, the Indian of imagination and ideology has been as real, perhaps more real, than the Native Americans of actual existence and contact.

—Robert Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*

NOW A POP CULTURE SENSATION, Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga has been praised as an innovative reimagining of the vampire genre, albeit one that panders to teenage girl fantasy. However, Meyer's portrayal of Indians is anything but inventive and relies on tired and well-worn stereotypes created about Native peoples since the landing of Columbus. Although Bella Swan is an atypical heroine, her two love interests—the euro-american vampire Edward Cullen and the Indian/werewolf Jacob Black—are contrasting racial hypermasculine stereotypes. As millions of girls worldwide sigh over the impossibly gorgeous and endlessly sensitive Edward Cullen, Jacob Black presents an alternative to the artfully rich and carefully mannered vampire, embodying the space of the exoticized Other complete with warrior prowess, a bronze hard body, and glistening long black hair. Surrounded by teenage girls in a theater watching the newest movie installment of the *Twilight* series, *New Moon*, I heard both sighs and nervous giggles when Jacob Black (played by Taylor Lautner), in a moment of uncontrollable masculine concern for the wounded and conveniently accident-prone damsel-in-distress, Bella, ripped off his shirt to tend to her bleeding head, leaving his ridiculously chiseled chest bare for full admiration. He and his Indian friends remain that way for much of the movie—chests bared—often dripping with rain, glistening and hot, tall, dark, and handsome temptations.

Gazing on the half-naked body of the exoticized Indian male is nothing new in American film or literature and Stephenie Meyer's novels are not unique in this regard. America has always been in love with the figure of the Indian who is both

noble and savage, sensitive and a warrior, naturally beautiful and close to the earth in a way euro-americans long to be. In this chapter, I examine how Jacob conforms to American stereotypes of Indian men and then show how Meyer's characterization deviates from and embellishes this standard image. Although Meyer's depiction of Jacob may differ slightly from entrenched images of Indians, the new elements she includes serve the dominant ideology working to undermine Native sovereignty and cultural survival and reinforce preexisting stereotypes. Her reiterations irreparably damage the work Native peoples have done for centuries to overturn these harmful images, now entrenched for a whole new generation as "cool" and sexier than ever.

My use of the term "Indian," rather than "Native American" (or a tribal name, which is even more preferable) is purposeful, because although Stephenie Meyer uses an existing tribe in her novels—the Quileutes—her portrayal of them relies heavily on the longstanding American construction of Indianness, which lumps all Indigenous peoples into one category and erases cultural difference between nations.¹ "Indian" refers to the "profoundly contested space" of "the white man's Indian," which for the critical mass is *the* authentic representation" argue Clark and Powell.² Forged through the endless repetition of images and stereotypes, simulated Indianness becomes authentic, "more real than real" as if it "presupposes and precedes the real."³ Packed into a tightly woven knit of interdependent symbols, such as buckskin and war paint, Indianness becomes a product that can be consumed and known, available for cooptation and inhabitation like a costume.

The construction of Indianness began with Columbus, persisted through the Boston Tea Party, and was used to create a distinctly *American* identity separate from Europe: Indians were what made America unique and they symbolized natural freedom and rights. However, after the American Revolution, Indians were used to define American identity through opposition and their image was codified as an uncivilized people whose condition justified conquest, removal, and assimilation policy. Although there are two versions of this stereotype, the Noble Savage and the Indian Princess, Meyer reiterates only the male version. This construction of the Indian is so ubiquitous in American culture that he is easily recognizable: he often rides a horse with a feather bonnet, understands nature, is anachronistic and culturally frozen in time, lives in a tipi and roams the plains looking for buffalo to hunt or white settlers to scalp. The Noble Savage has always contained a contradiction, thanks to the writings of Columbus, who portrayed the Native peoples he met as both kind and generous *and* savage and brutal,⁴ and the figure became a fixture in the American collective imagination, reinforced time and again with each new generation. In the early 1900s, however, the iconographic Indian was renovated as the American public began to feel a little sympathy toward indigenous peoples now settled onto reservations and a new stereotype emerged—the Romantic Savage—that coincided with portrayals of the Noble Savage and persists today.

The Romantic Savage is a lost soul, caught between the pressures of civilization and tradition. He is passionate, *always* attractive, elegiac about his doomed people, and yet, still exotic, still at one with nature, and still—if threatened—capable of savage violence. This particular image of the Indian regained unprecedented popularity with late twentieth-century films like Kevin Costner's 1990 *Dances with Wolves* and Michael Mann's 1992 *The Last of the Mohicans*, and is now reinforced by the *Twilight* series.

Academics such as Leslie Fiedler, Roy Harvey Pierce, Fergus M. Bordewich, and Robert Berkhofer wrote the first wave of scholarship arguing that the Romantic Savage was created to serve national interests and persists because he remains a mirror of dominant society's anxieties and desires. Most importantly, this image eclipses the identities of real living Native peoples in the United States today; it is repeated so often that it is taken as the truth, as Robert Berkhofer notes in the epigraph at the beginning of this piece. This is the danger of Meyer's use of Indian characters in her novels: if this version of the Indian is "real," actual Native people become poor imitations and their continual domination justified. Their cultures (as they "once were," because it no longer exist in its "pure" forms) become singular—Indian *culture*—because all Native peoples are believed to be the same, and since they no longer practice their own culture, it is now the property of mainstream society. Indigenous people simply cease to exist, replaced by simulacra. In either case, the endless reiteration of the stereotype makes political exploitation possible and impedes the fight for rights and sovereignty.

Jacob's identity conforms to the stereotype of the Romantic Savage, shaped by the Enlightenment and the American Romance writers of the late eighteenth century. As Enlightenment thinkers chafed under what they considered the tyranny and oppression of baroque civilization, the life of Indian people—in supposed harmony with nature and theorized as living in a "pre-industrial state"—began to look more appealing. The stereotypes of Indians in this era were popularized and embellished in the novels of American writers such as Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and James Fenimore Cooper. In this figuration, the "primary task of the artists" of the era was to "evoke feelings of compassion, sentimentalism and romantic love as well as the lessons of nature, all enhanced through symbolism."⁵ The Romantic Savage became the perfect symbol to evoke these emotions, because he "depended upon passion and impulse alone."⁶ Jacob conforms exactly to this stereotype throughout the *Twilight* series. In *New Moon*, he relentlessly declares his affection for Bella and continues to pursue her well into *Breaking Dawn*, frequently claiming that she loves him, she just does not know it yet. Compared to Edward's inhuman emotional control, Jacob is more than just a hotheaded impulsive teenager, letting his emotions (or hormones) guide him: his passion literally changes him into an *animal*.

Jacob's ability to turn into a wolf contributes to the romantic stereotype in two ways. First, it reinforces the ideology that Indians live in harmony with nature and have a "natural" existence, as Berkhofer argues above. One only has to read the novels of James Fenimore Cooper to understand that Indians can see in the dark, walk through the forest without making a sound or disturbing a leaf (as Jacob frequently does in *New Moon*, *Eclipse*, and *Breaking Dawn*), and have an uncanny ability to understand natural world. In fact, Jacob and his Indian brethren are so close to nature that they can *transform into it*. As (were)wolves, they become part of nature itself, conforming to the laws of wolf behavior and pack mentality. Jacob, in particular, is closer to nature than the rest of his pack, since he leaves them for a while and literally lives in his wolf form, eventually becoming the Alpha male (although he is always the *Beta* in Bella's affections). In *Breaking Dawn*, Jacob acts like a fully feral animal when he hunts deer with Leah and rips the animal apart with his teeth. Meyer's version takes the stereotype of the "nature-loving Indian" to a whole new

level, portraying Jacob as a part of nature itself and controlled by the natural laws of the animal kingdom.

Because Jacob often “phases” (like the moon, yet another nature metaphor to describe his behavior and a convenient reference to the titles of the novels), he is frequently half-naked throughout the series, again reinforcing the romantic stereotype while simultaneously updating it to conform more closely with the twentieth-century popular romance genre, which continues to endlessly fetishize Indian men on book covers and in Harlequin Romances.⁷ Meyer, in *Eclipse* and *Breaking Dawn*, is careful to note that Jacob and his pack-mates often tie their shorts to their legs when changing forms so that they won’t be incessantly naked, conforming their behavior to the strict religious sexual morality which dominates the series. At the same time, she also notes in *Breaking Dawn* that before Leah Clearwater joined the pack, the boys were frequently nude together, giving her teenage girl readers permission to imagine this very scenario. The films add to Meyer’s fetishization of Indian men with visual reinforcement that equates Indians with nudity and prelapsarian fantasy. This is especially egregious in *New Moon*, where the male Native actors are seldom seen wearing anything other than tight shorts riding low on their hips. All of them are equally gorgeous, and all of them have perfectly sculpted forms, usually shot so that the viewer can see their bare chests and the very top of their jean shorts. None of them, however, are heartthrob candidates for the young viewers since none of them are fully realized characters. Taylor Lautner (Jacob Black) is portrayed similarly, but the camera pays special attention to his body and thus so do viewers, signaling that he is one of the two main love interests in the series. Jacob, too, is almost always half-naked, and usually dripping wet with rain, heightening his steamy portrayal.

In Peter van Lent’s article on how popular culture romance novels portray Indian men, he writes:

Most Native male characters are placed in a traditional setting, often close to nature. Nearly all of them are decent, good men. They are all shown as gentle and loving in one way or another, but they are all warriors at heart. To some degree each one of them is vulnerable . . . and finally, let us not forget the physical . . . the most immediately appealing quality that all these young men have is that they are very, very handsome.⁸

Jacob conforms to each portion of this stereotype. He is morally good, always taking Bella into consideration first, and then his fellow pack members, before himself. He is endlessly vulnerable because he loves too much, which forces him to return to Bella time and again even though she continually turns him away and thus makes him the object of desire—as well as pity—for viewers and readers. Despite his sensitive side, Jacob remains a virile fighter, taking center stage in the battle with Victoria and the “newborn” vampires at the end of *Eclipse* and becoming the ultimate Indian warrior of his tribe as he takes the position of Alpha wolf in *Breaking Dawn*. Finally, like all Indian warriors, he is not afraid to fight savagely and to the death to protect his love. All of this makes him endlessly romantic, but his heartthrob status is secured by Taylor Lautner’s physical appearance, shot so that he appears much larger and more “masculine” than the Native actors in the film. There was a great deal of gossip about Taylor Lautner’s new body prior to the film, since he was almost dropped from the cast of

New Moon for being too “slight” and had to “bulk up” into his current sculpted form in order to fit the image Meyer relies on of the virile Indian warrior and that readers, in turn, expect of a masculine hero.⁹ Lautner’s impressive physique is on continual display in the film and changed so drastically between the first and second installments that the characters are forced to remark upon the difference or it would seem absurd. When Bella sees Jacob for the first time in the beginning of *New Moon* she exclaims, “Hello biceps. You know, anabolic steroids are really bad for you.”¹⁰ Later, when Jacob lifts the motorcycle out of the back of her truck on his own, Bella again calls attention to Lautner’s body with a statement of the obvious: “Jake, you’re, like, buff!”¹¹

Further, Jacob/Taylor Lautner has all the recognizable signifiers that mark him as the distinctly *Indian* warrior/hero seen both in Western films and in popular romance novels. Peter van Lent writes, “Native heroes all have glistening, coppery skin and long, raven-black hair . . . and they usually wear little more than a breechclout.”¹² To give Meyer *some* credit, in both the film and in the book, Jacob wears more than a breech-cloth: he wears sweatpants and cut-off jeans, and his “tribal” tattoo (i.e., war paint). Yet Meyer never seems to miss an opportunity to remark on Jacob’s handsome, distinctly Indian qualities, usually in the form of commentary from Bella, who continuously notices Jacob’s skin color and hair in *New Moon*, describing him as “russet-colored,” having “red-brown skin” and long black hair like “satin curtains.”¹³ Bella thinks, “His skin was such a pretty color, it made me jealous,” and remarks aloud, “Did you know, you’re sort of beautiful?”¹⁴ Repeatedly remarking on a person’s skin color and how it marks them as “different” (even if that difference equates to attractiveness) is usually considered racist, not exotic and sexy, and certainly not acceptable. Even as a *wolf* Jacob is “reddish brown.”¹⁵ Readers might excuse this behavior because, after all, Bella *is* a teenager and the predominant narrator of the books; but continually finding synonyms for “red” does not make mentioning his skin color any less racist than calling Jacob a “redskin,” and it is important that the intended audience of the novels is the same demographic as the narrator. These teenage readers will not see the subtlety of their narrator’s racism and instead identify with her.

The novels and films reinforce this racism by allowing Jacob’s *red* skin and half-naked body to be fully objectified and bear the burden of the desirous gaze, a long tradition in American culture that began with Columbus’s study of the bodies of the half-clothed Indians on Hispaniola.¹⁶ Even more appalling, with the release of the new Jacob Black Ken Doll from Mattel,[®] complete with sculpted “six-pack” abs, “tribal” tattoo, and cutoff jean shorts, the naked male Indian body is not just meant for consumption by teenage girls and adult women but now is consumed by little girls as well, indoctrinating them into this racist ideology while young (see Figure 15.1).

Jacob’s skin color is important not only because it marks him as the exotic sexual Other, but also because it stands in contradistinction to *whiteness*, which is really what these books endorse. In *New Moon*, Bella has a vision where Jacob turns into Edward, which allows Meyer to pointedly compare their races: “The russet color of his skin leached away, leaving his face pale white like bone.”¹⁷ It is no mistake that Bella repeatedly chooses Edward, or *consuming* whiteness, since it is accompanied by palatial estates and luxury cars that distinguish the buying power of only the wealthiest white elite. Further, the films enact the ideology about race and skin color that



Figure 15.1 Jacob Black Barbie Doll. Copyright 2009 Mattel.

Meyer's books espouse by casting Taylor Lautner to play Jacob Black, the only Indian character not played by a Native actor. Chaske Spencer (Sam) is of mixed descent with Sioux, Nez Perce, Creek, and Cherokee heritage. Kiowa Gordon (Embry) is Hualapai; Tyson Houseman (Quil), and Bronson Pelletier (Jared) are Cree; Alex Meraz (Paul) is Purepecha. The Indian adults in the film are also Native, the most famous of whom is Graham Greene, who plays Billy Clearwater and who is Oneida. Lautner has claimed in interviews that he does have some Native American blood in

his ancestry, remarking, “actually, I am part Native American . . . on my mother’s side, she has some Potawatomi and Ottawa Indian in her.”¹⁸ Having Native blood in one’s ancestry and being culturally Native American are not synonymous, and claiming ancestry is a learned, distinctly *American* response that displaces white guilt for domination and genocide and works to reshape our historical narrative.¹⁹ Taylor Lautner may not have known it, but in accepting the role of Jacob Black he joined a long line of those who have “played Indian” for commercial success.²⁰ Rayna Green argues in “A Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe” that “the living performance of ‘playing Indian’ by non-Indian peoples depends upon the physical and psychological removal, even death, of real Indians,” which allows Americans, throughout history, to play with Indian identities.²¹ The casting of Lautner may have been dictated by other factors, but it is remarkable that the movie production team was unable to find a Native actor to play the main love interest, particularly since they *did* manage to find quite a few handsome Native actors.

Peter van Lent’s article helps explain this apparent discrepancy, noting that in popular romance novels, the Indian hero is described as both visibly Native in terms of skin color and hair, but also has Caucasian facial features, which maintain his candidacy as a heartthrob by preventing him from being “too alien” while simultaneously avoiding “squeamishness about miscegenation.”²² Indeed, miscegenation is a possibility these novels repeatedly reject through the Edward–Bella–Jacob love triangle but also with the pairings of the Quileute tribe members who always fall in love or “imprint” with other Indian characters. This remains true throughout the series until *Breaking Dawn*, when Jacob “imprints” with Renesmee, who is herself a product of vampire and human mixing and thus a fitting companion.

Although the stereotypes Meyer relies on are at heart romantic, it is important to understand that the preexisting stereotype—that of the Savage, though Noble, Indian—never fully dissipates and is the foundation for the more “admirable” version, the Romantic Indian. The reason that the Indian of American imagination can be portrayed as romantic at all is due to what Renato Rosaldo calls “imperialist nostalgia”—once Native peoples are no longer a threat, as a nation we look upon them fondly and with nostalgia for the loss of a more innocent time and people. However, before that—before indigenous people were slaughtered and the survivors marched across the country, subdued, and trapped on reservations—they were *always* savage, always a threat. Jacob and the other Indian characters in the *Twilight* series, as romantic and handsome as they may be, are also capable of tremendous violence as wolves and warriors of their tribe. Although Stephenie Meyer does not actually show the reader how the wolves/Indians rip apart vampire bodies using their teeth, she does imply it and leave it to the imagination, in the same way she suggests their collective nudity.

In addition, in *New Moon*, Jacob’s ability to transform contains the threat of potential violence, since anger can cause him to “phase” at any moment, putting those around him in physical danger. This means Bella lives under the constant threat of domestic violence throughout the series from both love interests who can lose control at any moment and “accidentally” kill her. Like abused women everywhere, Bella is continually warned to mind her behavior and not to provoke either boy, or he might “lose his temper.” Emily, Sam’s fiancée in *New Moon*, is physical proof of

this possibility: a long scar runs down one side of her face and body, leaving her permanently disfigured because she was once too close to Sam when he “lost” his temper. “Hanging out with werewolves” (read: Indians) “truly did have its risks,” Bella thinks to herself upon meeting Emily.²³ Yet, in all cases—Emily with Sam or Bella with either Jacob or Edward—this threat of domestic violence is excused because of “true love.”²⁴ Meyer’s elision of the reality of Emily’s daily life as a battered woman is justified by “true love” because of the inevitability of “imprinting.” Quickly excusing the abuse that both Bella and Emily experience eclipses the real tragedy of Native women who experience violence and physical assault at rates higher than any other ethnic group in the world.²⁵ Although Edward *might* lose control at any moment, he never does, and so it is even more poignant that Jacob *does* lose control several times, once even starting a fight and hurting one of his own pack-mates, Paul. This anger is a *genetic* trait, Meyer’s books assert, evolutionarily bred into Indian men who have a natural inherent savagery, and Emily is literally scarred by being an Indian woman who chooses to remain a part of her own culture.

These stereotypical depictions of Indian people are emphasized by Meyer’s portrayal of reservation life as prosaic and banal. She ignores the poverty and health problems that plague Native people across the United States at alarmingly higher rates than the rest of the population. In *New Moon*, Bella spends a remarkable amount of time at La Push—truly one of the more beautiful reservations in the United States and now the victim of endless tourism because of the novels, yet no less immune to the health and economic problems suffered by Native peoples across this country.²⁶ Although Bella remarks several times that the Black house is small and Jacob’s room is tiny, there is never any acknowledgment of the political realities of *why* this might be. In fact, although Indians in this novel are useful as romantic love interests, Meyer is completely dismissive of the lived realities of Native peoples, perhaps because “admitting genocide would not be good box office.”²⁷ Ignoring poverty and domestic violence is a purposeful omission, particularly when compared to the lavish existence of the Cullens.

In addition, Meyer’s language when discussing legitimate Native beliefs about history, origins, and storytelling is offensive. In the beginning of *Twilight*, Jacob tells Bella the story about the “cold ones” and continues throughout *New Moon* and *Eclipse* to call his Indian own stories “superstitions” about the belief in “magic”: “just like they had their legends of the great flood and wolf-men ancestors. Just stories, folklore . . .”²⁸ While it is true that Meyer invents these stories, one of the problems with her writing style is that she varies her language very little, and in this case her repeated use of the terms “superstitious” and “magic” is insulting because the stories are “real” in the context of the novels. Regulating these tribal beliefs to “superstition” and “folklore” implies that all Native oral histories are invented fictional stories for amusement, like the fairytales of the Brothers Grimm. Meyer also equates Native religious ideology in these instances with the belief in “magic,” inexplicable bits of trickery or sleights-of-hand that only children believe are real. The term “magic” is damaging as well because much of Native American art is mislabeled “magical realism,” a term that arrogantly dismisses any way of knowing or understanding the world outside of western scientific philosophical thought.

Meyer’s choice to connect these stories to a real, existing tribe instead of an invented one implies that they are culturally “authentic” indigenous tales; she thus

doubly profits from stereotypes about mystical Indian healing and spiritual beliefs, along with other famous and equally exploitative writers like Lynn Andrews and Carlos Casteneda. Like invoking the Romantic Savage or playing Indian, the cooptation of Native spiritual beliefs for commercial success is a custom of longstanding tradition in mainstream American culture and is ultimately damaging to Native peoples as they struggle to keep their religious practices alive and protected from misuse. Laurie Anne Whitt argues, “When the spiritual knowledge, rituals, and objects of historically subordinated cultures are transformed into commodities, economic and political power merge to produce cultural imperialism.”²⁹ Often stolen under the guise of “religious freedom” or First Amendment rights of free speech, or simply invented as Meyer does in the *Twilight* series, these imagined beliefs contribute to the overall stereotype of Indians as close to nature and the progenitors of some kind of ancient mystical knowledge, and in turn prevent Native peoples from educating American society on their real religious values without fear of misrepresentation and commercial exploitation. The reconfiguration of Native American religious beliefs has disastrous consequences, both for white Americans who buy into this New Age spirituality in the hope of finding healing,³⁰ and even more so for Indigenous peoples who are fighting to maintain cultural practices and undo the damage of the boarding school era when they were made to feel ashamed for their beliefs.

Thus far I have discussed the ways in which Meyer’s Indians conform to the traditional stereotypes in the dominant American cultural imagination, but she also manipulates the images by projecting Mormon religious beliefs onto her Quileute characters. This may seem incongruous: why, if Meyer relies so heavily on repeated iterations of Indian people that portray them as savage and uncivilized would she also attribute Mormon religious values to these figures? Precisely because this portrayal mirrors the historical relationships and views that Mormons have held of Native peoples, and, in turn, reinforces the Savage Indian stereotype she draws upon for her warrior wolves; it also allows her to simultaneously distance herself from the fundamentalist Mormon values that she disavows.

In *The Book of Mormon*, a Hebrew man named Lehi journeys to the so-called New World in a boat, bringing his followers with him. Lehi had two sons: Nephi, whom he favored and who inherited the leadership of the tribe upon his death, and Laman, whose jealousy caused a split in the tribe between the righteous and those who believed in “unbelief and idolatry.”³¹ The Lamanites were so degenerate that God cursed them with dark skin, a visible signal of their immorality. Tensions rose, and the Lamanites slaughtered their fair-skinned Nephite relatives to become, according to *The Book of Mormon*, the ancestors of the modern Native Americans. This explains “why Columbus encountered no Caucasians when he landed in the New World in 1492” and also the condition of Indians as he described them—as savage peoples reduced to a vagabond existence, mired in superstitious pagan worship.³²

While this account conforms to Meyer’s Mormon faith, she also projects practices onto her Indian characters that contribute to their exotic racialization, such as the practice of polygamy through the story of the “third wife” in *New Moon*. For many contemporary Americans, Mormonism is synonymous with polygamy, but this is a

simplistic reduction of the religion. In reality, this principle caused the faith to split into sects: those who believe in polygamy are called Fundamentalist Latter-Day Saints and the modern Mormon Church has continually distanced itself from these believers in order to protect the reputation of their faith. It is not a coincidence that Meyer attributes this belief to the Quileute wolves, the allegedly degenerated descendants of the Lamanites, because it reinforces the stereotype of the Noble Savage by comparing Native peoples to the historical representation of polygamist Mormons in American history. The practice was said to “distinguish them [Mormons] at a glance”³³ and uprisings against polygamist Mormons were incited with the same phrases used to provoke violence against Native peoples, including the phrase “nits make lice,” used before the Haun’s Hill Massacre on October 30, 1838, where eighteen Mormons were killed; it was also used against the Cheyenne before the Sand Creek Massacre on November 29, 1864. Although this seems to suggest some sympathy on Meyer’s part with her Indian characters—a solidarity between what Native peoples went through and what Mormons have historically faced in this nation—by attributing polygamy to her Indian characters, Meyer actually *distances* herself as a modern Mormon from this ideology, which now belongs to a raced savage people who believe in superstitious folklore and magic.

Incredibly, the most damaging element of Meyer’s portrayal of Indianness in her novel is not that she reentrenches old racist stereotypes, fetishizes the exotic male, or even that she dismisses Native American religious values while supplanting them with Mormon ideology. The most dangerous element of her depiction is that she renders Native peoples mythical. By imagining her cosmic epic battle between good and evil, between vampires and werewolves/Indians, she creates a binary that implies that Native peoples are as equally fantastic, as equally fictional, as vampires. This is particularly true in *Breaking Dawn*, by far her most fantasy-driven novel in terms of genre. As the vampire friends who surround the Cullens exhibit an impressive array of superpowers rivaled only by the X-Men, the werewolves/Indians are relegated even further into the background of the series. Any visible mark of Indianness disappears, and the werewolves/Indians spend most of the book as glorified, albeit annoying, house pets and rather oversized guard dogs.

Meyer has been repeatedly criticized for her lack of artistic skills, linguistic repetition, and reliance on traditional genre formulations. While I agree with this assessment, I also think it is dangerous to dismiss these novels simply because they are poorly written. Indeed, there are remarkable moments in each novel that shine with creative ingenuity. Meyer has clearly tapped into a cultural vein that betrays a collective desire for fantastic romance. Because of their immense popularity, these books/films have the potential to irreparably damage the feminist movement and harm teenage boys everywhere who will never be able to live up to the impossible standard set by Edward Cullen. Most importantly, they harm Native peoples struggling for livelihood and recognition, and undermine their very *existence* by supplanting them with stereotypes and mythic status. Because of this alone, they need to be taken seriously. Each time another teenage girl loses herself in this narrative, she is inculcated into a dangerous ideology that, while creating a fantasy world and make-believe races of vampires and werewolves, elides actual Native peoples and repeats the violence of genocide and colonial domination.

NOTES

1. A visual example of this occurs in the film *New Moon* when Jacob gives Bella a dream catcher, a traditional Ojibwe object. It is a common American impulse to lump all Native peoples into one generic figure although there is enormous variety in the indigenous world, which in the United States alone consists of 562 federally recognized tribes that speak over 200 distinct languages. (This does not include those fighting for recognition as I write.)
2. Anthony Tyemee D. Clark and Malea Powell, "Resisting Exile in the 'Land of the Free,'" *American Indian Quarterly* 32, no 1 (Winter 2008): 15.
3. *Ibid.*, 14.
4. In the digest written by Bartolomé de Las Casas from Columbus' log book on his first voyage, Columbus noted that the Native peoples were "marvelously friendly to us. . . . In fact, they very willingly traded everything they had" (55). Later, however, after Columbus and his soldiers took many of the indigenous peoples home as slaves and they began to understand that the "occupation and conquest of the country" (as Columbus asserts in his journal) was the purpose of the visit, relations between the two groups naturally soured. Columbus left men behind on his first voyage who began to rape and pillage Native villages and were subsequently wiped out by the indigenous population. Columbus's descriptions of them changed after this, and in his second voyage he wrote: ". . . as for the men they [the Caribs] are able to capture, they bring those who are alive home to be slaughtered and eat those who are dead on the spot. They say that human flesh is so good that there is nothing like it in the world. . . . They castrate the boys that they capture and use them as servants until they are men. Then, when they want to make a feast, they kill and eat them, for they say the flesh of boys and women is not good to eat" (136). Within the diaries of Columbus, the Noble Savage was created and has persisted through the centuries. J. M. Cohen, ed, *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (New York: Penguin Books, 1969).
5. Robert Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 79.
6. *Ibid.*
7. These titles are easy to find by visiting any bookstore and wandering through the Romance section, but to view some of the more egregious examples, see any of Karen Kay's books online.
8. Peter van Lent, "'Her Beautiful Savage': The Current Sexual Image of the Native American Male," in *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture*, edited by S. Elizabeth Bird (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 214.
9. Samantha Chang, "Taylor Lautner: I Worked Out Nonstop for *New Moon*," *Examiner*, July 16, 2009. <http://www.examiner.com/examiner/x-14380-NY-Celebrity-Fitness-and-Health-Examiner-y2009m7d16-Taylor-Lautner-I-worked-out-nonstop-for-New-Moon>
10. *New Moon*, directed by Chris Weitz (Imprint Entertainment, 2009, DVD).
11. *Ibid.*
12. Peter van Lent, "Her Beautiful Savage," 214.
13. Stephanie Meyer, *New Moon* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2006), 131.
14. *Ibid.*, 131. This line is also repeated word-for-word in the film version.
15. *Ibid.*, 244.
16. Again on the first voyage, Columbus noted, "They were very well built with fine bodies and handsome faces. Their hair is coarse, almost like that of a horse's tail and short; they wear it down over their eyebrows. . . . They are the color of Canary Islanders

(neither black nor white)” (55). Like many explorers who follow him, Columbus meticulously described Indigenous bodies repeatedly, betraying both European desire and disgust of the Other. J. M. Cohen, ed., *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (New York: Penguin Books, 1969.)

17. *Ibid.*, 276.
18. Larry Carrol, “‘Twilight’ Actor Taylor Lautner Is Eager To Deliver ‘Naked’ Line, Master Driving Teen star also discusses his research on the Quileute tribe to play Native American character Jacob Black,” *MTV*, May 20, 2008. <http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1587744/20080520/story.jhtml>
19. For more on this concept, see Vine Delora Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins*.
20. There is a long history of coopting, stealing, and inhabiting Native American identity for profit in this country—what critic Philip Deloria calls “Playing Indian”—and the farce can be incredibly lucrative, as it currently is for Taylor Lautner. One of the most famous perpetrators of this was Forest Carter (a.k.a. Asa Carter), the author of *The Education of Little Tree* and famous white supremacist who wrote speeches for George Wallace in the 1960s. There have been many others: writers, “spiritual leaders,” actors, and politicians. Most recently, another writer, Nasdijj (Timothy Barrus), award-winning writer of several “memoirs” about his life as an Indian on the reservation—*The Blood Runs Like a River Through My Dreams*, *The Boy and the Dog Are Sleeping*, and *Geronimo’s Bones: A Memoir of My Brother and Me*—was revealed as a fake by investigative reporting. In Hollywood, playing Indian for profit has a long history, particularly since Native actors were not hired to play leading roles in cinematic productions, a tradition the *Twilight* films continue. While this might seem insignificant—these are *actors*, after all, filling a *role*—the tradition of inhabiting Indian identities reinforces the national narrative that this country was “inherited” from Native people via Manifest Destiny and divine right, which in turn justifies removal and genocide, or ignores it all together. After removal and into the modern age, drawing on the imperialist nostalgia I discuss earlier in this chapter, Americans now claim ancestral descent from Native peoples, easing guilt for colonization and denying Indigenous peoples rights, since they are just “one of us” now.
21. Rayna Green, “A Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe,” *Folklore* 99, no 1 (1988): 31.
22. Peter van Lent, “Her Beautiful Savage,” 217.
23. Stephanie Meyer, *New Moon*, 333.
24. *Ibid.*
25. The National Violence Against Women Survey conducted in 2006 found that Native women experienced rape at rates 34.1 percent higher than any other ethnic group, stalking at rates 17 percent higher and assault at rates 61.4 percent higher. Meyer’s books attribute this violence and the threat of domestic assault to her Indian male characters, but a study released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, *American Indians and Crime*, shows that “9 out of 10 American Indian victims of rape or sexual assault were estimated to have had assailants” of a different race and that most crimes perpetrated against Native people are not committed by other Native Americans. Lawrence A. Greenfield and Steven K. Smith, “Bureau of Justice Statistics: American Indians and Crime,” *U.S. Department of Justice*, February 1999. <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=387> Patricia Tjaden and Nancy Thoennes, “Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings From the National Violence Against Women Survey,” *National Institute of Justice*, November 1998. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/172837.htm>

26. Angela R. Riley, "Sucking the Quileute Dry," *New York Times*, February 8, 2010. Riley writes, "a tour company hauls busloads of fans onto the Quileute reservation daily. Yet the tribe has received no payment for this commercial activity. Meanwhile, half of the Quileute families still live in poverty." A21.
27. Mary Alice Money, "Broken Arrows: Images of Native Americans in the Popular Western," *American Indian Studies: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Contemporary Issues*, edited by Dane Morrison (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 371.
28. Stephanie Meyer, *New Moon*, 81.
29. Laurie Anne Whitt, "Cultural Imperialism and the Marketing of Native America," *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing About American Indians*, edited by Devon Mihesuah (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 171.
30. Two people died and many were injured in a sweatlodge run by an illegitimate practitioner in an upscale New Age resort in Sedona, Arizona, one of many resorts and faux-healing establishments currently profiting from peddling false Native American religion. For more information, see the Associated Press articles by Felicia Fonesca: "Authorities seek cause of Ariz. sweat lodge deaths" (October 10, 2009) and "2 die, 19 overcome at Arizona retreat sweat lodge" (October 9, 2009).
31. Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 67.
32. Ibid.
33. Dr. Barthow quoted in Jon Krakauer, 205.