

The motif of the hybrid child in Malorie Blackman's *Noughts and Crosses* and Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series

This paper investigates the motif of the 'hybrid' child in two highly successful young adult series, Malorie Blackman's *Noughts and Crosses* books (2001-2008) and Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* tetralogy (2005-2008).

The series share many similarities in their treatment of relationships, featuring an irresistible love story between two members of different classes, races, or species, whose liaison is hindered by socio-political and/or physical imbalance in power. Both couples accidentally conceive a child via one first sexual encounter. The 'hybrid' offspring (a girl, in both cases) is then willingly brought to term, the young mother's staunch refusal of abortion bringing about the death of the father in *Noughts and Crosses*, and the symbolic death of the mother's human body and life in *Twilight*. The narrative then focuses greatly on the hybrid, exploring her efforts and ability to modify the polarised configuration of the world she was born in.

I will use postcolonial criticism, in the form of Homi Bhabha's definition of hybridity in *The Location of Culture* (1994), to evaluate whether the hybrid in both series inhabits an identitary 'third space' with a potential for socio-political and ideological counter-power. In Bhabha's analysis, hybridity is an agent of disruption, inhabiting a fluid, subversive third space. I will argue that Blackman and Meyer differ in their treatment of this third space. Although both hybrids, symbolically, make a strong ideological statement in favour of political or religious change, differences in the ways in which they are characterised reveal the impossibility for *Twilight* to present a truly subversive portrayal of hybridity.

Thus Callie, the hybrid child in *Noughts and Crosses*, in all her flaws and uncertainties, offers subtle ways of exploring conflicting views on power. Conversely, Renesmee, her equivalent in *Twilight*, reinforces the power structures in place from the beginning of the series, glorifying a puritanical approach to relationships.

This divergence has consequences on the reception of the books. The hybrid is, in both cases, not only a narrative but an ideological tool, enticing the emergent adult reader to localise herself within either a contestatory or a conservatory set of values and power relationships.