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Anti-Feminism in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* and *New Moon*

by

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Abstract

The novels *Twilight* and *New Moon*, written by Stephenie Meyer, present a barrier in media portrayal of feminist movements. Through the power of media, patriarchal dominated societies continue the reinforcement of maintaining women as figures of ownership. Examining Meyer's characters, writing, and plot devices decode the underlying patriarchal ideals being pressed upon adolescent readers. Media influence upon society is a powerful means to promote the romanticizing of anti-feminist works, such as *Twilight* and *New Moon*. Understanding what comprises these characters as anti-feminist is crucial to understanding their influence upon society, and reveals the unknowing compliance many female adolescents perceive and idolize. Meyer's protagonists demonstrate patriarchal behaviorisms that are to be accepted as normal. Creating a hollow character depicting normalcy is the main tool utilized by Meyer to romanticize the negativity of male domination over female figures. By researching the textual evidence in *Twilight* and *New Moon* through the ideology of feminist theorists, such as Simone de Beauvoir, readers can concur that these novels are promoting patriarchal views.

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Introduction

Existential feminists state that women are born the same as men and are then surrounded by a patriarchal environment that shapes them into what is considered to be ideal by the male population. Simone de Beauvoir reaffirms this notion of patriarchal society: “No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature” (281). This civilization continues to emphasize how a woman should act and defines what creates her as a being. Media plays a large part in creating an environment conducive to producing patriarchal ideals. Michelle Stack writes, “The term *media* is commonly invoked to mean the mediums of communication as well as the products or texts of these mediums (journalistic accounts, television shows, film productions, and websites)” (6). These mediums are influential on society as evidenced by women who still define themselves as womanly because they are wearing the latest makeup, fashion, and following ever-changing trends.

As long as there is pressure on woman to adhere to the ideals of a patriarchal society, she cannot be completely aware of her own self as long as she is considered to be ‘the Other’ according to man. Tania Modleski, a critical theorist of media and its relation to feminism writes, “Film studies has conferred on women studies’ professors the tools with which to demonstrate how women are constructed by various techniques in film and television—those media that most powerfully shape our perceptions of ourselves and others” (21). Modleski uses film studies to tie the relation and impact of media portrayal of women to women themselves and the feminist movement. Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight* and *New Moon* are reflective of these expectations being placed on women and create problems when her ideals are so popular and thriving in every form of media. Her presentation of females as prominent characters creates a

widespread appeal for readers, as is evidenced by the *Twilight* saga's popularity and success in the media. Michelle Stack writes, "The media are central, if not primary, pedagogue. Children and youth spend more time with media than any other institution, including schools" (6). This fact combined with the target audience of Meyer's novels reveals the unhealthy promotion of standards set by a masculine dominated society. Meyer's novels reinforce the idea of a perfect woman according to a patriarchal society, and in her patriarchal religious background in Mormonism. By evaluating instances within the text where these ideals are prominent the reader can become aware of and resist the negative images of women embedded in this popular series.

Chapter 1

Bella Swan: The Anti-Feminist Heroine

As the protagonist of the story, Bella Swan presents herself to the reader as a girl who has various confidence issues. By Bella's own perception of herself, she shows issues concerning her physical appearance, her lack of coordination, and her lack of being able to blend into her school without drawing attention to herself. These traits are common to most adolescents going through puberty. Bella explains her appearance as problematic when she says, "Physically, I'd never fit in anywhere. I *should* be tan, sporty, blond – a volleyball player, or a cheerleader, perhaps – all the things that go with living in the valley of the sun" (*Twilight* 10). Luce Irigaray writes, "Female sexuality has always been conceptualized on the basis of masculine parameters" (23). According to Irigaray's theory, patriarchal society designs the desirability of a woman. Bella has described the stereotypically popular female as defined by patriarchal ideals. By holding herself to this parameter, Bella perceives herself to be undesirable and uninteresting. This is demonstrated by Meyer's portrayal of Bella's idealistic thoughts of how a woman should appear to her audience. Bella then proceeds to alert the reader that she has "always been slender, but soft somehow, obviously not an athlete" (*Twilight* 10). Bella has already exposed her lack of confidence in herself as defined by societal standards. In an article about the connection between body image and women's mental health, Anne Marie Cussins writes:

Advertising's pervasive imagery and objectification of women, when deconstructed, offers a problematic cultural inadequacy of positive, narcissistic elements for the female observer and a situation biased towards identity problems in women from which mental health problems are generated. (105)

By Meyer's wording, Bella is lacking as a person because she is not "media thin" and has some softened tones on her body. Bella's popularity through Meyer's novels, and recreations of these novels as movies, not only reinforces women to want to be like Bella, but to also accept Bella's self-defined short-comings as possible faults of their own as women. Bella is defining herself as abnormal and putting herself in the classification of 'the Other' based on her initial description of her appearance. Judith Fetterly describes a woman as 'the Other' by saying:

Bereft, disinherited, cast out, woman is the Other, the Outsider, a mourner among children; never really child because never allowed to be fully self-indulgent; never really an adult because never permitted to be fully responsible; forever a "young mourner," a "little woman"; superhuman, subhuman but never simply human. (9)

Fetterly's description gives definition to the idea of 'the Other' in relation to Bella and other female characters in Meyer's novels. Bella promotes this idea of being an outsider because she is never able to fit in with anyone from her human surroundings and only finds comfort in that which is considered to be superhuman. As a subhuman, she is not content with herself, but adamantly insists to Edward that she will be happier and belong as a vampire. Edward asks Bella, "Isn't there anything that you'd like for your birthday?" (*New Moon* 24). Bella responds, "You know what I want" (*New Moon* 24). Bella persists with this request to be superhuman through the novels and insists her existence can only be worth something to herself if she is more than a flawed subhuman female character.

Bella also claims there is no excuse for the fact that she does not have blue eyes and tan skin when she says, "Instead, I was ivory-skinned, without even the excuse of blue eyes or red

hair, despite the constant sunshine” (*Twilight* 10). Again, she dismisses her features through negative connotations by the way she describes her appearance and uses the words “instead” and “but” to explain why her appearance does not conform what is considered beautiful. Bella starts her path as a follower of patriarchal rules when she describes herself negatively because she is not what society deigns to be perfect and gorgeous according to its patriarchal standards. If Bella belittles her worth because she does not fit this category of a woman to perfection, she exhibits this stereotype and perpetuates the idea that it is wrong to be different in appearance, which also explains Bella’s lack of feministic ideals.

Bella describes herself as ‘the Other’ as conforming females would see her by reiterating how bland she looks and enlightens readers to what her understanding of beauty is by referring to a pop culture magazine as a basis for representing aesthetic, physical qualities:

The girls were opposites. The tall one was statuesque. She had a beautiful figure, the kind you saw on the cover of the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue, the kind that made every girl around her take a hit on her self-esteem just by being in the same room. (18)

This perspective suggests to readers that the acceptable frame of reference should be the *Sports Illustrated* model, which defines what should be considered the standard for feminine beauty. Even in its most basic approach, this scene encourages girls to estimate their self-worth based on the approval of others. In short, the passage suggests following the patriarchal codes of beauty and leads readers to believe it is right to consider these differences as bad because clearly everyone does. If the readers’ body styles are not glorified by these types of magazines, then they must not be beautiful. Jessica Valenti, author of *Full Frontal Feminism* writes, “Magazines,

TV shows, and movies have been shoving a certain kind of woman down our throats for decades. White, skinny waist, big boobs, long legs, full lips, great hair—a conglomeration of body parts put together to create the ‘perfect’ woman we’re all supposed to be” (44). Meyer emphasizes the idea that self-worth can be based on comparison of appearance to others, not on the worth of one’s self as a being aware of her merit.

Meyer’s overall comparison of Bella to the vampires in the story demonstrates a larger vision of a patriarchal code which women are expected to follow. It becomes apparent through Bella’s descriptions of the Cullens that she idolizes the way these vampires appear. ‘Most beautiful’, ‘perfect blond girl’ and ‘face of an angel’ are descriptions given of the Cullens upon Bella’s first viewing of them. Perhaps Meyer meant to emphasize just how unnaturally beautiful these vampires are; however, their beauty serves to perpetuate Bella’s self-awareness of how plain and worthless she is to herself. This urge to want to be one of these flawless vampires is Bella’s constant desire throughout the novels. She is not satisfied with herself as a woman and wishes to be something more. For example, Meyer writes, “I stammered, blushed, and tripped over my own boots on the way to my seat” (*Twilight* 17). This is one example among many that highlights Bella’s discomfort and awareness of her clumsiness and subhuman imperfection. Another example of highlighting Bella’s imperfection is when Meyer writes, “I didn’t want to spoil the page with my clumsy scrawl” (*Twilight* 46). Bella portrays her discomfort with herself and puts herself down by acknowledging that even her handwriting is clumsy and ill-perceived. She wishes to be less clumsy, more beautiful, and eternal because she has been exposed to the vision of the Cullens. Much like a girl seeking to be as beautiful as the women in the media, Bella demeans herself as a human when making these comparisons to such unattainable, vampiric beauty. Again, Bella’s acknowledgement of aesthetic value is based upon what society

deems to be beautiful in the twenty-first century. Cussins writes, “Media is using a woman’s body to further the economic aims of advertising” (105). Advertising agencies rely on current trends and behaviors to create advertisements that reflect current day expectations and images. These advertisements aid in the definition of patriarchal parameters. By evaluating current day advertisements and media, such as the *Twilight* novels and movies, one can see these aesthetical values and the seemingly positive reinforcement a woman gets from submitting to this role of patriarchal compliance.

Since *Twilight* is written from a first-person point of view, the voice of Bella Swan provides the reader with the source of information about what is visually and mentally important. Meyer presents her as a bland and hollow character. Depressed and obsessed, she thinks continuous and repetitive thoughts about her relationship with Edward Cullen. By creating Bella as a one dimensional individual whose self-worth is based on Edward’s love and approval, various readers including the easily persuaded teenage populations, relate to Bella by projecting themselves into the story. Dawn Currie performed a series of studies to evaluate teenage reactions to teenage magazines, or “teenzines”. Her research yields that some adolescent females are persuaded by ads and columns in teenage magazines produced under the constraints of what is considered to be popular. Currie writes, “Appeal of dominant imagery testifies to the ability of teenzine discourse to construct a universalizing discourse about teenage femininity” (470). Currie also writes, “Texts are able to sustain universalizing means of address because readers from various backgrounds assign stereotypical, dominant definitions of femininity ontological status: That is, the ideological definitions of what it means ‘to be a woman’ are assigned truth status” (471). These passages reinforce the idea that adolescent minds are herded into the mentality that they must conform to what they read and see to be popular. Because

adolescent girls read what it is to be a woman in the patriarchal world, they perceive it to be the truth. The more realistic Bella appears, the more the audience can and will relate to her. Having this formula enables Meyer to project the reader into Bella's shoes and involve themselves with the story by understanding how terrible it is to be considered so un-pretty, plain, and boring, that the meaning of life amounts to stacking up to what is considered to be socially accepted as beautiful and perfect.

Laura Mulvey, author of *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, writes, "The cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking, but it also goes further, developing scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect. The conventions of mainstream film focus attention on the human form" (836). Mulvey writes about audiences wanting to be like the models and actors seen in film. Even though Meyer describes Bella as displeased with her looks, Bella is still portrayed as an attractive female on book covers and within the movie franchise. Female audiences are persuaded to want to be like Bella because she is the heroine of the story and because she is glamorized by visual media. However, while being glamorized by media, Meyer's physical description of Bella makes it easy for a large majority of readers to identify with Bella because her body is considered to be ordinary. By defining Bella's ordinary appearance as what teenager girls would consider to be 'the Other,' readers are positioned to view their own ordinary bodies as less than acceptable because of the negative connotations associated with the mediocrity of Bella's looks. Meyer establishes the ordinary as something to be ashamed of as opposed to being an acceptable concept.

To hide her insecurities from her surrounding environment, Bella internalizes many of her thoughts and opinions. Epitomizing an introvert, Bella obscures her thoughts and opinions from everyone around her. Even Edward cannot read her thoughts, but shows that he

understands her enough to make her decisions for her. Bella is presented as an anguished character not wanting to directly hurt those around her. She goes through efforts to prevent her father, Charlie, from being hurt, but averts his physical pain only to cause him mental anguish. She believes she is attempting to save her mother from being hurt by rogue vampires in the end of *Twilight*. She is presented as caring for her family and is described as having feelings of her own, but eventually these feelings are once again controlled by the male figures surrounding her. Some of the controlling males include Edward Cullen, school friends, and the rival love interest, Jacob Black. The strongest sense of Bella's personality comes from her intense aloofness to the world. Throughout the beginning of the novel, Bella states, "I went through different arguments with her in my head while the teacher droned on" (*Twilight* 15) and "I couldn't remember her name, so I smiled and nodded as she prattled about teachers and classes. I didn't try to keep up" (*Twilight* 17). Bella is not interested in anything around her as she comes into Forks. Passages such as, "I was watching him surreptitiously" (*Twilight* 23), and "I couldn't stop myself from peeking occasionally through the screen of my hair at the strange boy next to me" (*Twilight* 24). Her lack of interest in anything suddenly shifts when she becomes obsessed with the one person in the world who can make her happy: Edward.

The beginning of her obsession is evidenced when Bella says, "Besides, since I'd come to Forks, it really seemed like my life was *about* him" (*Twilight* 251). Bella's personal aspirations and likes are realigned with whatever makes Edward's life easier and happier. At times Edward seems to half-heartedly put up a fight for Bella's interest, but then later dismisses her interests for the chance to have Bella near him constantly. Basic preferences, such as Bella's favorite gem, are changed by a glance into Edward's topaz eyes. Bella says, "Until very recently, my favorite gemstone was garnet. It was impossible, while staring back into his topaz eyes, not to

remember the reason for the switch” (*Twilight* 230). Her own personal taste has suddenly changed even from the aesthetic values she holds. Suddenly pale becomes a positive feature though she spent the first part of *Twilight* explaining how negative her pallid color had become to her own self-image.

A notable difference in her ambitions becomes apparent when Bella explains where she would like to attend college: “I would get through my self-imposed sentence here in purgatory, and then hopefully some school in the Southwest, or possibly Hawaii, would offer me a scholarship”, explains Bella. (*Twilight* 79) Bella also says, “*College, schmollege*, I thought to myself. It wasn’t like I’d saved up enough to go anywhere special—and besides, I had no desire to leave Forks anyway” (*New Moon* 136). Because Bella discards her former desires to move away to a good college, she is extinguishing opportunities to become educated and continues to fit into the traditional position of a woman in the patriarchal world. Michele Doeuff writes, “Woman is extinguished because the traditional position deprives her of an external world to act in and subjects her to the other’s point of view” (42). Doeuff’s theory explains women have to adhere to their roles created by men, or women become classified as ‘the Other’. Bella has desire to go to a sunny area for her college career and daydreams of her experiences there, but these suddenly disappear once she meets Edward. Edward says, “So ready for this to be the end? For this to be the twilight of your life, though your life has barely started. So ready to give up everything” (*Twilight* 497). Bella then replies, “I’d already made this decision, and I was sure” (*Twilight* 498). Ready to give up her previous ambitions for Edward, Bella follows the traditional role of a woman as Doeuff mentions. This submission is relevant to the extinguishing of Bella because she is conforming to the traditional role and she is extinguishing her physical life in the same motion. Bella becomes obsessed with following Edward to the point of nearly

ending her own life a couple times. Examples appear throughout *New Moon* as she is temporarily abandoned by Edward, giving another male interest time to try and move in to control her. When Bella is reunited with Edward in *New Moon*, she becomes more caught up in her idolization of him. Meyer writes, “College was Plan B. I was still hoping for Plan A, but Edward was just so stubborn about leaving me human” (*New Moon* 13). She is willing to forfeit her education altogether for a chance to spend the rest of her life with him. Bella’s forfeiting of education is reflective of conforming to the traditional role of it being acceptable for a woman to be uneducated and dependent upon her spouse.

Feminist Simone de Beauvoir argues that education is a crucial tool to help women find themselves. Beauvoir writes, “The worst handicap they have is the besotting education imposed upon them; the oppressor always strives to dwarf the oppressed; man intentionally deprives women of their opportunities” (252). Knowledge can help women avoid capitulating to societal norms already in place. Education can promote the common cause of enabling women to see the differences between allowing themselves to be called women and being women. Audre Lorde writes on the importance of women becoming educated within their own gender. Lorde writes the following:

As women, we must root out internalized patterns of oppression within ourselves if we are to move beyond the most superficial aspects of social change. Now we must recognize differences among women who are our equals, neither inferior nor superior, and devise ways to use each others' difference to enrich our visions and our joint struggles. (6)

The importance of education is stressed by Beauvoir, Valenti, and Lorde. Various forms of education help women to understand the oppressions put on them by patriarchal society.

Whether it is the education of one woman to another, or education through an institution to give a woman the tools she needs to become successful academically, education is understood to be important and necessary for women to move forward.

Meyer's text diminishes the power of education when she has Bella turn from being interested in school and learning to being completely focused on Edward as a love interest. Bella says, "I looked down at my book as soon as his eyes released me, trying to find my place" (*Twilight* 73), and "I tried very hard not to be aware of him for the rest of the hour, and, since that was impossible, at least not to let him know that I was aware of him" (*Twilight* 74). These are a couple of examples from *Twilight* demonstrating Bella's lack of focus on what is happening in school because she is consumed by thoughts of Edward and what he is doing at all times. In reference to her morning of school, Bella says, "The rest of the morning passed in a blur" (*Twilight* 86). She is completely lost in her dream of Edward to the extent that she is not concerning herself with her education and daydreams through the entirety of the morning. Meyer's portrayal of Bella's obsession leads readers to understand that it is normal and acceptable to forfeit future educational plans and to ignore education as it is happening around her. This lack of interest in education promotes the anti-feminist idea of creating a barrier between woman and knowledge.

Parental Encouragement of Anti-Feminist Views

The family presentation of the Swans is less than conducive to supporting any kind of feminist attitude. Bella's mother is in her own controlling relationship with Phil and Bella's

father is stuck in the mindset of letting the woman of the house cook for him even if she is already preoccupied with her own schooling and life. In *Twilight*, Bella describes her mother, Renee, as follows:

I felt a spasm of panic as I stared at her wide, childlike eyes. How could I leave my loving, erratic, harebrained mother to fend for herself? Of course she had Phil now, so the bills would probably get paid, there would be food in the refrigerator, gas in the car, and someone to call when she got lost. (4)

Bella does not respect her mother enough to believe that she can take care of herself without the presence of a man. Calling her mother “harebrained” and suggesting that she is unable to survive on her own shows Bella’s lack of respect: she believes that her own mother, who has clearly survived and raised a child, cannot possibly survive a day without her presence. She reduces her mother to a child-like status, one more helpless than her own. Cecilia Ridgeway writes, “Hegemonic gender beliefs are institutionalized in the norms and structures of public settings and established private institutions” (517). According to Ridgeway, gender roles are established as normal within all aspects of society because they are reinforced by patriarchal ideals. Renee’s dependency on Phil is projecting a patriarchal society as normal because she is playing her female assigned gender role. Clearly, the only way her negatively drawn mother can survive is with the guidance and steady hand of Phil, a dominant male figure. Bella is scolding her mother’s attitude and dependency on Phil, but eventually says it is okay to give into the patriarchally defined gender roles if it is for the sake of love. This makes Bella unreliable in her interpretations because she eventually conforms with Edward to the very actions of dependency her mother displays for Phil. Beauvoir would scoff at the idea of Renee’s dependency on Phil because it is not only bad enough to have a female character embrace her male counterpart as her

only means of survival, but this concept also passes as “knowledge” in the next generation. Bella’s disdain for her mother’s behavior with Phil is apparent, but becomes hypocritical when she herself falls for Edward Cullen and then describes the relationship of dependency as acceptable. The constant acceptance of submission to male counterparts is perpetuated by mother to daughter in *Twilight*. Describing this passage of submission and domination through lineage is apparent when Beauvoir writes the following:

But man does not make his appeal directly to woman herself; it is the men’s group that allows each of its members to find self-fulfillment as husband and father; woman, as a slave or vassal, is integrated within families dominated by fathers and brothers, and she has always been given in marriage by certain males to other males. (448)

Renee is carrying on the patriarchal tradition of becoming the “vassal” for Phil. She accepts this role and moves with him to Florida. Meyer portrays this tradition as a positive and expected way of life for women. Meyer makes it sound as if Renee’s existence is non-existent until she has Phil to help her with basic tasks such as paying bills and feeding herself. Bella’s response is to note how clumsy her mother is, and she voices no disgruntlement with the fact that Phil must obviously be there to help her run her life. This notion is being passed down again from storyteller to reader, whether they are adolescent females or grown women.

Renee eventually makes her move to Florida with Phil because he has been signed a deal with a coaching position. Phil, the new husband, carefully navigates Renee to make decisions on where to move. Renee is represented as a useless pool of empty words that Bella tries to avoid by emailing only when forced to and by speaking to her briefly on the phone. Renee’s emails

consist of empty conversation and questions such as, “Is it raining? I’m almost finished packing for Florida, but I can’t find my pink blouse. Do you know where I put it? Phil says hi” (*Twilight* 33). Within her first email to Bella, Renee is inquiring about clothes she has misplaced, reinforcing Bella’s notion that her mother is scatterbrained and helpless without someone to guide her. She also punctuates the email with Phil sending a hello along. Normally, this could be construed as a normal greeting, but within the context of Renee’s characteristics, it is as if Phil is making sure to input just a bit of dominance in something as small as a letter. It can be read as a final seal on her letter to Bella with the approval of Phil. Bella’s relationship with her mother is less than nurturing and provides little guidance or insight into ideas that could encourage Bella to be an independent being of her own.

Bella’s father, Charlie, is another figure in the story conforming to the ideals of patriarchal society. He does not dictate Bella’s actions as forcefully or as condescendingly as Edward, but he reinforces the acceptance of gender assigned roles typical of a young woman. Many of Bella’s responsibilities relate to the kitchen, a place traditionally associated with women. Repeated parts of *Twilight* and *New Moon* reveal Bella cleaning and cooking in the kitchen. In patriarchal society, the kitchen becomes an emasculated area. Meyer’s portrayal of what happens within the cooking quarters reinforces the very traditional ideas about the kitchen and women’s roles. Soon after Bella arrives at Charlie’s home, she locates the kitchen and prepares food for her father. Meyer writes, “When I got home, I unloaded all the groceries, stuffing them in wherever I could find an open space. I hoped Charlie wouldn’t mind. I wrapped potatoes in foil and stuck them in the oven to bake, covered a steak in marinade and balanced it on top of a carton of eggs in the fridge” (*Twilight* 33). Charlie later walks into the kitchen and asks Bella, “What’s for dinner?” (*Twilight* 35) He does not ask how Bella is doing,

but immediately asks about meal preparations. The kitchen becomes emasculated when Meyer writes, “He seemed to feel awkward standing in the kitchen doing nothing; he lumbered into the living room to watch TV while I worked. We were both more comfortable that way” (*Twilight* 35). Instead of offering to help her, he goes to the TV and leaves her alone in the kitchen. By showing Bella’s discomfort over her father’s presence in the kitchen and his lack of willingness to help, Meyer reflects patriarchal ideals that a woman should feel comfortable in the kitchen on her own and the male figure should be elsewhere.

Bella worries about her father’s eating habits, even though he must have been able to survive somehow on his own for so long. She does not only do this once but multiple times throughout the novels. Though Bella loves her father and is showing concern for him, she is still fulfilling the gender role of being the one to make decent food in the kitchen, even though her father is perfectly capable. Meyer perpetuates conventional behavior and reinforces traditional gender roles by encouraging readers to believe that Charlie is incapable of making food. Bella questions her father on his capability of feeding himself while she is out for the evening to which Charlie responds, “Bells, I fed myself for seventeen years before you got here” (*Twilight* 149). Bella replies, “I don’t know how you survived. I’ll leave some things for cold-cut sandwiches in the fridge, okay? Right on top” (*Twilight* 149). Bella continues to take her role in the kitchen, even as she is assured Charlie can feed himself because it gives her a routine she is familiar with and the kitchen provides a personal space for her in which Charlie will not intrude.

Much like Edward, Charlie puts up a faux argument to alert Bella that she does not have to perform in the kitchen; however, in the end Bella gives in to her patriarchal assigned role without complaint and insists upon it. Charlie is portrayed as having what are considered to be manly attributes like his love for fishing and being a sheriff. He avoids attempting to gain an

understanding of Bella as a woman. Meyer writes, “He seemed to realize that he was out of his depth with the girly stuff” (*Twilight* 149). In reference to Charlie, Meyer also writes, “The thought of sitting in women’s clothing stores for any period of time immediately put him off” (*Twilight* 81). Charlie shows outright disdain for activities usually associated with being feminine. Dress shopping is considered taboo for him because he is given the stereotypical male attitude designated by patriarchal society.

Seeing woman as a mysterious and unsolvable gender based ‘Other’, Charlie refrains from understanding any female relationships he has or has had. When discussing Renee, Charlie only asks if she has been doing well and then moves on quickly to another topic as his own daughter moves back into his home. This reunion leads to Charlie awkwardly driving Bella to their home and showing Bella her room, unchanged from when she was younger. Their awkwardness is present in the passage, “We exchanged a few more comments on the weather, which was wet, and that was pretty much it for conversation. We stared out the windows in silence” (*Twilight* 8). Their conversations are always presented as awkward events coated in uncomfortable silences. Charlie’s inability to understand the opposite gender leaves him in a place of uncertainty and insecurity.

Meyer creates only two backdrops for Bella’s home life. When Bella is at home she is either seen in her bedroom or in the kitchen cooking for her father. Bella makes a comment before beginning the preparation of food for herself and Charlie, adding further evidence to her comfort in patriarchal roles, by saying, “It was nice to be in the supermarket, it felt normal” (*Twilight* 32). This is another reference to traditional gender roles as the norm. Normal is the idea of Bella, a female adult, being comforted by the routine stereotypical idea of the female figure assembling the necessary ingredients to prepare food for the family. While she is not

providing the food, she is procuring it for cooking. This excursion begins her duties in the kitchen. By examining Charlie's anxieties about kitchen work, clothes shopping, and relationships with women in general, readers can see the patriarchal role assigned by Meyer. Meyer is promoting the patriarchal role by expressing Charlie's reluctance in concerning himself with "female" activities, and by Bella's acceptance of his hesitations and disdains.

Chapter 2

Patriarchy as Introduced by Edward Cullen

Bella's attributes and the evolution of her desires and ambitions demonstrate her participation in patriarchal views and behavior. Edward Cullen also contributes to Bella's embrace of patriarchy because he perpetuates male dominance through behavior and language. Edward is portrayed as an unattainable object of desire and perfection. As Edward and Bella make their way into their first class together, a gust of wind blows the smell of her essence towards Edward causing him to freeze up and appear to be disgusted. Meyer writes, "Just as I passed, he suddenly went rigid in his seat. He stared at me again, meeting my eyes with the strangest expression on his face—it was hostile, furious" (*Twilight* 23). Later the readers learn that he is a vampire and the scent of her blood is almost too much for him to resist. He describes her blood as "a very floral smell, like lavender, or freesia. It's mouthwatering" (*Twilight* 306). Edward momentarily loses himself in Bella's scent and has to apologize for almost giving into his bloodlust by saying, "I am so very sorry. Would you understand what I meant if I said I was only human?" (*Twilight* 263) He also admits, "In that close, warm little room, the scent was maddening. I so very nearly took you then" (*Twilight* 270). Edward cures this blood-lust by hunting for animals. He feeds in places uninhabited by humans so that he will not slip and harm a human being.

Edward continuously becomes spontaneously moody and aggressive towards Bella leading the reader to suspect it is because he is experiencing his vampiric blood-lust again. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Edward frequently changes his behavior towards Bella in the middle of perfectly calm conversations without provocation just to control Bella's behavior at his

whim. Edward's behavior is exemplified when, "Anger flashed in his tawny eyes" (*Twilight* 82). He is involved in a normal conversation with Bella when he suddenly appears angry, or snaps at her quickly. In response to Edward's unpredictable conversation, Bella even notices his unstableness by asking, "Do you have a multiple personality disorder" (*Twilight* 82). Edward's display of dominance to control his female counterpart through aggression is typical of patriarchal behavior.

Although Edward appears to love Bella, he is constantly demonstrating his masculine dominance over her by arguing with her and yelling at her, sometimes for no apparent reason. Edward's controlling nature over Bella corresponds with the patriarchal idea that Bella must be submissive to Edward in order for society to function naturally. A differentiation between male and female must be understood between the two and the rules must be adhered to according to Gerda Lerner. Lerner, author of *The Creation of Patriarchy*, writes, "As long as both men and women regard the subordination of half the human race to the other as 'natural,' it is impossible to envision a society in which differences do not connote either dominance or subordination" (229). Edward snaps and is allowed to demonstrate his masculinity through cutting verbalization and degradation. This leads Bella into submitting to his arguments, suddenly seeing logic in his controlling decisions and commentaries. Because of his verbal treatment towards Bella, Edward could be considered verbally abusive in the sense that he demeans her and turns on her angrily in conversation on a whim. Tracy Herbert, a researcher of domestic abuse, writes, "There are four factors representing verbal and/or emotional abuse (i.e., being 'yelled at,' being 'embarrassed in public,' being 'ridiculed,' experiencing incidents of 'verbal/emotional abuse')" (316). A brief example occurs when Bella and Edward exchange comments about him appearing out of nowhere because of his supernatural vampire speed. Bella's agitation is greeted with Edward

saying, “Bella, it’s not my fault if you are exceptionally unobservant” (*Twilight* 81). Not afraid to continuously throw Bella’s confidence into jeopardy, Edward makes snide comments about her shortcomings. Bella responds mentally, “I scowled at his perfect face. His eyes were light again today, a deep, golden honey color. Then I had to look down, to reassemble my now-tangled thoughts” (*Twilight* 81). Bella proceeds to accept various underhanded jabs at her lack of abilities and is repeatedly ridiculed. Going along with the idea that opposing genders must be identified as submissive and dominant, Bella accepts the terms of her patriarchal relationship. She conforms to Edward’s idea of what a woman should be and submits to his influence. This relationship suggests to the audience that it is acceptable for a young woman to submit to verbal and emotional abuse from an attractive male.

Edward is constantly talking to Bella condescendingly and controlling her by exploiting her personal insecurities. This mental abuse continues because Bella never regards Edward as anything less than perfect, always hanging onto every word and every image of him. When Edward asks Bella if she has figured out his background yet, she responds with, “I’m more afraid you’ll be angry with me” (*Twilight* 182). Edward continues to ask if his being angry is a bad thing and Bella agrees that she does think something bad about his background. She demonstrates constant fear of pushing Edward away from her by constantly second guessing herself, wondering who she is, and questioning if she is worthy of his love. Bella directly says, “How well I knew that I wasn’t good enough for him” (*Twilight* 70). Though Edward continuously and underhandedly insults her, yells at her, and controls her, Bella unwaveringly follows his commands because her identity is defined by who he is and what he says. Bella asks Edward, “So, as long as I’m being...not smart, we’ll try to be friends?” (*Twilight* 89). Edward replies, “That sounds about right” (*Twilight* 89). Meyer makes Edward’s insult against Bella’s

intelligence into playful banter. This projection of playful banter indicates Meyer's acceptance of Edward's behavior. This does not represent independent feminist qualities. Meyer's text sets women further back because of examples present in the dependent behavior of a protagonist in an extremely popular series. The repetitiveness of these actions and their depiction as the desired lifestyle for adolescent girls is damaging to the female mind. The popularity of the series sets back the feminist movement as it creates desire among females to seek male dominance.

Edward Cullen's behavior and mentality exemplify choreography between patriarchy and its continuous oppression of women. Edward is a 104 year old vampire, familiar with the changing times and the evolution of social manners. Like patriarchy itself, his history demonstrates the continual effects of patriarchal rules on women today. Coming from an era when males dominated society almost entirely, Edward continues to behave in a way that promotes these patriarchal ideals. Bella notices key differences in Edward's behavior and mannerisms that set him apart from boys who are her contemporaries and does understand that he was born in 1904. She knows he may still be retaining some of these former memories and habits. Edward does not seem to need to show an understanding of females as equals in society.

Edward himself is dominated by the idea of having to protect the helpless maiden. He tells Bella what to do and dictates how she should live her life. Once in a restaurant, Edward controls Bella through small orders for because he believes she needs to be told how to survive, or live. "‘Drink’, he ordered. I sipped at my soda obediently" (*Twilight* 169). Patriarchal rules shape Edward's attitude and habits to the extent that he believes it is necessary for him to exist so that Bella might exist. Barbara Risman confirms this by saying, "Social structures not only act on people; people act on social structures. Indeed, social structures are created not by mysterious forces but by human action" (432). Edward's dominance over Bella is instilled in him because

of the social structure surrounding them. Bella's reaction of submission to him reinforces the social structure set up by patriarchal figures. His upbringing in an already patriarchal world encourages him to perpetuate the patriarchal attitudes he exhibits towards Bella. Edward blatantly disregards Bella's freedom in multiple instances. In *Twilight*, when Bella yells at Edward to let her go after he overreacts to her getting sick in class, she says, "He ignored me. I staggered along sideways across the wet sidewalk until we reached the Volvo. Then he finally freed me" (*Twilight* 104). Bella directly tells Edward to let her go, but he insists on manhandling her till he deems it an appropriate time to let her go. Even using the words "he finally freed me" is suggestive of Edward's control of Bella as her mental and physical captor.

Edward dictates Bella's actions throughout their relationship. He sets rules about eating and places she can go visit. Bella tells Edward she is not hungry, but Edward responds that she does indeed need to eat something. Meyer writes, "Edward's voice was low, but full of authority" (*Twilight* 166). Bella expresses her honest preference not to eat, leaving Edward to respond condescendingly by telling her to humor him. Bella narrates, "Obviously there would be no further discussion" (*Twilight* 166). Bella is once again stripped of the ability to take care of herself and is also stripped of her freedom to choose as she pleases.

Bella idolizes the man who tells her what to do, how to do it, and condescends to her as she is doing what she is told. While Bella holds a perfect image of Edward in her mind, he continuously treats her as lower class. Bella says, "His smile was condescending now" (*Twilight* 224). Edward is constantly making backhanded insults to Bella, all of which feed into her belief that she is incapable of living without him around. Edward's condescending nature is demonstrated when Bella observes, "Adrenaline pulsed through my veins as the realization of danger slowly sank in. He could smell that from where he sat. His smile turned mocking"

(*Twilight* 263). Edward is clearly amused by the power he holds over Bella and enjoys it when she acknowledges her weaknesses. Edward's smug nature is part of his character. He is content with making Bella aware of her flaws and insecurities. Meyer also plays with the cliché of a man needing to be dangerous to attract a girl. Edward reiterates to Bella how dangerous he is and emphasizes that if he slips she would be dead. He uses this fact to keep Bella in her place. His dangerousness encourages her to do exactly as she is told so he is not 'forced' to hurt her. Bella is submissive to Edward's patriarchal behavior and veiled threats of physical abuse as a consequence to disobedience.

Edward temporarily leaves Bella in *New Moon* to protect her, once again, from unfathomable dangers. He believes Bella cannot survive unless he is the one implementing her means of survival. This belief is reinforced by his conviction that she is inadequate and fragile. Sheltering Bella becomes Edward's obsessive trait. He cannot leave her alone for a moment, unless he believes he is protecting her. He watches her when she sleeps and appears in her dreams, violating any time Bella may have for subconscious realization of independence. Edward invades every aspect of her privacy without remorse. After Bella discovers Edward trespasses into her house on a routine basis, she asks, "You spied on me?" (*Twilight* 292). Following this question, Bella thinks, "But somehow I couldn't infuse my voice with the proper outrage. I was flattered" (*Twilight* 292). Edward's stalker-like tendencies are romanticized by Meyer.

Bella refuses to believe she is good enough for Edward. She cannot believe that someone like this perfect man should have any interest in a plain, ordinary girl. Being shown the slightest affection leads Bella to justify the controlling and invasive behaviors of Edward. Bella says, "I sighed in relief. The anger was what I wanted to hear—false, fabricated evidence that he cared, a

dubious gift from my subconscious” (*New Moon* 113). Bella is relieved when she hears Edward angrily tell her what to do, even though he is not physically there with her. She has convinced herself that it is a good thing to be dominated and desires it.

Bella is subservient and dependent upon someone she believes to be too good for herself. Bella tells Edward, “Well, look at me. I’m absolutely ordinary—well, except for bad things like all the near-death experiences and being so clumsy that I’m almost disabled. And look at you.’ I waved my hand toward him and all his bewildering perfection” (*Twilight* 210). This dependence is presented as something to be desired by other females. Bella says, “I wanted nothing more than to be alone with my perpetual savior” (*Twilight* 166). She acknowledges Edward as a figure to depend on because she has already accepted him as someone who will always save her. She also advertises to readers how desirable her relationship with Edward is when she says comments such as, “You’re the very best part of my life!” (*New Moon* 69). Meyer presents this dependence as something to be desired by other females. As Meyer may be allowing her upbringing as a Mormon to seep into her writing, she promotes the ideas of a relationship with a man as the epitome of Bella’s happiness.

Establishment of Authority

While Edward controls Bella, he also does this with the females living in the same household with him. The audience understands that all vampire figures in the novels have amazing abilities and are beautiful to the point of perfection. Meyer shows no signs of promoting any type of equality for females, even the supernatural vampiric ones. Alice, another vampire living as a Cullen resident, becomes Bella’s closest friend because of her compassionate nature. She is always pleased to see Bella and holds her in high regard, especially since she

makes Edward happy. Edward tells Bella, “She wanted to say goodbye, but I convinced her that a clean break would be better for you” (*New Moon* 72). Edward denies Alice the choice to say goodbye to her best friend and decides for Bella that she never needed to see Alice again. He does not give Bella the chance to decide if she is strong enough to stay in contact with Alice. Edward’s absence leaves the audience to once again read Bella as incapable of surviving when every trace of Edward is gone from her life. As he leaves her, Edward directly tells Bella, “I won’t put you through anything like this again. You can go on with your life without any more interference from me. It will be as if I’d never existed” (*New Moon* 71). Bella then says, “If I stopped looking for him, it was over. Love, life, meaning...over” (*New Moon* 73). Edward takes control of Bella’s life to the point of regulating who she spends time with and dictates how her life will be better because he has taken it upon himself to make the decisions for her. Bella is convinced she cannot be happy without Edward and that life holds no purpose for her if she cannot be with him. Again, the idea of Bella’s happiness revolving around her relationship with Edward seems indicative of the patriarchally created Mormon structure of the importance of a dependent relationship. This behavior continues as Edward also controls the social aspects of Bella’s life when she is among her schoolmates.

Bella’s friends, including vampire ones, have no choice about wanting to spend time with her. Edward takes Bella away from her human friends while she is with them in Port Angeles. Her schoolmates, Jessica and Angela, agree to leave her with Edward because he has deemed it better for him to take Bella home. Edward’s handsome appeal charms the female cast again as they agree to let Bella go. Meyer writes, “As they got in, Jess turned and waved, her face eager with curiosity” (*Twilight* 166). They do not protest, but stare after the two with curiosity as they

pull away. They accept Edward's decision to take Bella away and demonstrate submissive behavior by allowing him to do so, and in thinking Bella will be okay with him.

New Moon reveals Bella's dependence on Edward. She experiences great mental anguish when he has left. With Edward gone, Bella says, "I always had nightmares now, every night. Not nightmares really, not in the plural because it was always the *same* nightmare" (*New Moon* 122). Her nightmare is always ended by waking herself up by her own screaming. It is right for her to have become so enamored with a man that she cannot function without him. It becomes her portrayal of normality as she writes for her audiences to take in and understand Bella's situation. Targeting a young female audience, Meyer promotes patriarchal models of society through her work. Stephanie Meyer's novels reveals the unhealthy promotion of standards set by a masculine dominated society.

Meyer writes an intense scene in *Twilight* in which Bella is cornered and herded into an isolated area with four rough looking men. They harass her and say, "Don't be like that, sugar" (*Twilight* 161). This segment suggests that Bella is in a dangerous situation and facing a possible gang rape. Predictably, Edward drives in with the preemptive knowledge that Bella is in danger and needs his protection again. As they drive off, Edward disregards any feelings Bella may be experiencing in favor of his own. Simply ordering her to "Distract me, please" (*Twilight* 163), Edward focuses only on his needs and what Bella can do to calm him down. Edward then says, "Just prattle about something unimportant until I calm down" (*Twilight* 163). He appears to have complete disregard for the fact that Bella just experienced a traumatic situation by not commenting about it from her perspective. He only focuses on his needs to calm his temper. Bella is just there to do as he says and calm him down.

Considering Bella has narrowly escaped an ordeal as intense as a threat of gang rape, Edward shows little concern for her. Instead, he focuses on his own fears of losing control of himself. The violent thoughts and actions are always left to Edward because he always removes or attempts to remove Bella from any dangerous situation. The violent and aggressive scenes of the novels leave Bella on the sidelines, either because she has been injured, or because she could not handle the situation on her own. In *Twilight* and *New Moon*, Meyer depicts Bella as insufficient and incapable without Edward. As the main protagonist of the story, Bella's domination by men becomes an example of female societal compliance. Meyer's text positions readers to identify with Bella, to admire and emulate her vulnerability and submissiveness to both Edward and Jacob.

Chapter 3

Environmental Encouragement of Patriarchy

The few supporting characters reinforce the idea that women exist only for the attention of boys. These characters adhere to conventional gender categories and behaviors. Bella befriends a couple of girls in her school in Forks and agrees to go out with them occasionally. Jessica is presented as a boy-obsessed girl who spends most of her time being jealous of Bella because Bella has the attention of her crush interest, Mike. Lauren Mallory acts as a friend figure for Bella in her high school, but continuously exhibits animosity toward Bella because of her popularity in the school. Both Jessica and Lauren appear to use Bella's friendship as a means to promote their own popularity within the school. Jessica benefits from introducing Bella to the other students. Bella notices this as she says, "They seemed impressed by her bravery in speaking to me" (Twilight 17). This desire for popularity stems from the urge to please those around them, but mostly to draw the attention of boys to become the objects of their desires. Mulvey writes the following:

The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. Women displayed as sexual objects is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to strip-tease, she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire. (837)

The mentality that a woman must be thought of as desirable by a man is common within adolescent girls and stems from the cultural imperatives to become appealing to the opposite sex. The social structure of Bella's school reinforces the necessity for girls to gain popularity and desirability through status and appearance. This does not help to promote any feminist views

and counters feminism by promoting popularity and desirability to the opposite sex at the expense of others as the accepted norm.

Most of Bella's encounters with her female friends involve them discussing which boy is going to ask them to prom and which dress they should buy when they go shopping in Port Angeles: "The dance was billed as semiformal, and we weren't exactly sure what that meant. Both Jessica and Angela seemed surprised and almost disbelieving when I told them I'd never been to a dance in Phoenix" (*Twilight* 153). It is beyond the comprehension of Bella's female companions that she has not spent more time focusing on being social and going to dances with boys. They border on condescension when probing her for details on the matter and then resume shopping for dresses. Jessica asks, "Didn't you ever go with a boyfriend or something?" (*Twilight* 153). After Bella tells her she has not, Jessica's reaction is skeptical: "People ask you out here and you tell them no" (*Twilight* 153). Meyer reiterates the normalcy of girls going out to shop and reinforces the idea that it is common for girls to think about boys the entire time they are awake. Bella appears to distance herself from these girls and is disinterested in the dress shopping, but in doing this she appears to be abnormal.

At times Meyer wants Bella to be presented as different because it distinguishes her from the other characters in the story. She incorporates being different as a negative. She is lacking basic abilities for survival and functionality, but eventually reverts back to being just like the rest of the herd of girls by saying, "While they tried things on I merely watched and critiqued, not in the mood to shop for myself, though I did need new shoes" (*Twilight* 154). She acts disinterested, but makes a mental note to shop for her shoes and accessories. Portrayed as the negative because she is different, Bella still follows the cultural conventions of purchasing items for dances and becoming aesthetically pleasing to male driven desires.

During the epilogue of *Twilight*, Bella ends up at the prom with the rest of her friends who beam at her from where they are dancing with their dates. Bella constantly voices her opinion that she does not want to attend the dance because dances make her uncomfortable. Despite her attempts to avoid it, Edward manages to once again change her mind and convinces her to attend. Edward makes an interesting comment while he speaks to her at the dance saying, “I brought you to the prom because I don’t want you to miss anything. I don’t want my presence to take anything away from you, if I can help it. I want you to be human” (*Twilight* 495). Bella’s replies, “In what strange parallel dimension would I ever have gone to prom of my own free will? If you weren’t a thousand times stronger than me, I would never have let you get away with this” (*Twilight* 495). Bella directly tells the audience she would never have wanted to go to prom on her own and leads readers to understand that Edward made her attend. She neglects to respond to his comment of wanting her to be as human as she can be which entails her living a mortal life.

While he is in her life, Bella has every desire to live with Edward as a submissive human. It is not until Bella thinks about the fact that she will get older and die as he stays young and beautiful that she begins to beg Edward to turn her into a vampire, eternally perpetuating her need to be with him and rely on him. With this request, which is made repeatedly in *New Moon*, Bella indicates her willingness to forfeit her own desire to live in order to spend the rest of her existence with Edward. Bella is willing to exchange her mortality for the chance to stay young with Edward forever.

Edward is absent for most of *New Moon*. Because Bella is so defined by her male counterparts, another character moves into place to dominate Bella in Edward’s absence: the aggressive male figure, Jacob Black. Jacob Black makes his appearance in *Twilight*, but does not

play a substantial role until *New Moon*. By elaborating on the background of Jacob and the Native American tribe he hails from, Meyer constructs another dominating male character.

“Both Jacob and Mike had claimed the armrests on either side of me. Both of their hands rested lightly, palms up, in an unnatural looking position. Like steel bear traps, open and ready” (*New Moon* 210). Jacob is trying to assert his dominance by challenging Mike’s attempt to claim Bella and later tries to reinforce to Bella that she must care for him more than any other male figure in her life: “You like me, right? Better than that joker puking his guts out in there? Better than any of the other guys you know?” (*New Moon* 212). As Bella becomes familiar with Jacob after Edward has left in order to protect her, she falls into a mix of unhealthy relationships because she is depending on Jacob. Not only is she with Jacob through the book, she puts up with mood swings and mental anguish similar to those she experienced with Edward and is again unable to resist.

Bella invites disaster when she rides her motorcycle for the first time. Meyer writes the voice of Edward asking Bella, “Do you want to kill yourself, then?” (*New Moon* 186). Bella smiles at the question and proceeds to wreck her bike when she loses control. She exhibits happiness as she tries to later throw herself off of a cliff. “I leaned forward, crouching to get more spring...And I flung myself off the cliff. I screamed as I dropped through the open air like a meteor, but it was a scream of exhilaration and not fear” (*New Moon* 359). The memory of Edward creates a nearly suicidal Bella who wants to face extreme dangers just for a chance to hear the possible murmurings of Edward’s warnings playing through her head.

In *New Moon* references the gang rape scene from *Twilight* when Bella sees a group of rough looking individuals across the street near a bar. This event signifies the start of her self-destructive tendencies after suffering the loss of Edward. Bella says, “What was I doing? I

should be running from this memory as fast as I could, blocking the image of the four lounging men from my mind, protecting myself with the numbness I couldn't function without. Why was I stepping, dazed, into the street?" (*New Moon* 109). Desperate to hear any fragment of Edward's voice, Bella throws herself into these situations of danger and nearly kills herself in more than one instance. She demonstrates this behavior as she jumps off the cliff and takes up motorcycling.

Young girls read this trendy novel which celebrates Edward's devotion to Bella, and they are positioned to desire a similar relationship. Janice Radway, author of *Reading the Romance*, writes the following:

Reading is not a self-conscious, productive process in which they collaborate with the author, but an act of discovery during which they glean from her information about people, places, and events not themselves in the book. The women assume that the information about these events was placed in the book by the author when she selected certain words in favor of others. Because they believe words are themselves already meaningful before they read, Dot and her friends accept without question the accuracy of all statements about a character's personality or the implications of an event. (189)

Adolescent girls are prone to accepting the glamour of Bella's relationship with Edward because they read Meyer's words as truth without question. Meyer promotes the idea that this kind of love is the epitome of happiness and the source of life's meaning. To not have such a man is to have no existence at all, no identity, and no self worth. This thinking is not healthy or realistic

for adolescent females. The saga then serves to reiterate and reinforce the patriarchal ideals of which have been passed on through generations.

Chapter 4

Jacob Black: Substituted Dominance

Edward remains absent from the *New Moon* novel except for his mental warnings to Bella and when he makes his way to Italy to commit suicide at the end of the novel. While Edward is removed physically from the plot, Jacob Black fills the role of the patriarchal figure dominating Bella's life. With Jacob, Bella discusses her interest in cliff diving, riding motorcycles, and participating in other hobbies Jacob finds to be recreational. Jacob continues Edward's patrol of Bella's safety and also disappears as he faces his own problems dealing with his lycanthropy. As Bella begins to rely on Jacob, he briefly disappears from her life as he undergoes the process of becoming a werewolf. Bella's safety is the reason Jacob leaves and only returns when he has more control of himself. As Jacob experiences his transformation, he becomes more misogynistic and condescending towards Bella. "'You could have just called,' he said harshly" (*New Moon* 305). Jacob also says, "We can take care of ourselves" (*New Moon* 305). These abrasive responses made by Jacob demonstrate how he speaks to Bella regularly. Like Edward, Jacob is condescending and abrasive when it suits him. Jacob echoes Edward's dominance and governs Bella's actions and thoughts through tone and behavior.

Bella begins her motorcycling expeditions after meeting with Jacob and discovering he has the ability not only to ride bikes, but also to rebuild them. Bella becomes interested in motorcycles when she realizes Jacob's interest in them. Meyer places Jacob in the traditional patriarchal roles of being good at mechanics, being unafraid of danger, and being willing to engage in violence. Beauvoir writes, "To force an arm to yield and bend, is to assert one's sovereignty over the world in general. Such masterful behavior is not for girls, especially when

it involves violence” (347). Beauvoir suggests that in a patriarchal society not only is a female unable to participate in activities involving violence, but she is also unable to master what are considered to be masculine traits and hobbies. Jacob represents these situations of violence and mechanical mastery. Though Bella shows her interest in the mechanical aspect of rebuilding motorcycles, she spends the novel watching Jacob build and then failing to ride the motorcycle successfully when it is completed. With these near disasters, she fails at another attempt to fit into ‘the Other’s role’ and must again wait for male rescue as Jacob tends to her wounds after her motorcycle accident. Beauvoir points out that a woman can try to defy these norms of society, but by breaking the rules, she segregates herself. By patriarchal standards, Bella has failed in a male oriented role. This causes her to fall into her female gender role because she cannot successfully perform a male designed sport.

Fulfilling the traditional male role of mechanical aptitude, Jacob is then placed on a pedestal by Bella. Bella’s narration comments on Jacob’s aptitudes and willingness to cooperate with her plans: “Only a teenage boy would agree to this: deceiving both our parents while repairing dangerous vehicles using money meant for my college education. He didn’t see anything wrong with that picture. Jacob was a gift from the gods” (*New Moon* 136). Bella acknowledges that Jacob understands that the money comes from her college fund and goes along with this course of action. Bella admires Jacob because she believes he is doing something she cannot do herself. She cannot express her independence as Jacob does and must play the part of the submissive female. Bella not only accepts the notion that she cannot perform as Jacob can, but praises him just as she has done with Edward in *Twilight*. Meyer, whether aware of it or not, has placed more positive emphasis on courses of actions and reactions based on expectations of a male governed society.

Jacob goes on to meet up with his pack who are also either lycanthropic at the current time or are going to be in the future. As Bella hears them discuss bikes, she says to herself and the readers, “I figured I’d have to have a Y chromosome to really understand the excitement” (*New Moon* 139). Bella explicitly segregates herself from the group because they are boys and she is a girl. What girl would want to be caught knowing how to be familiar with something as masculine as motorcycles? Meyer highlights Bella’s helplessness due to gender roles by having her lack knowledge of or interest in the subjects usually dominated by males. Her initial reaction to Jacob’s friends leads Jacob to think that she must be bored. Bella responds to Jacob’s realization by saying, “I just have to go cook dinner for Charlie” (*New Moon* 140). Meyer attempts to make Bella look edgy, but puts her right back into her expected maternal roles as concocted by the rules of patriarchal society. She is once again placed in the emasculated area of the kitchen and is accepting her duty to prepare food for her father.

Jacob presents another example of territorial behavior, especially when involving Bella. As his friends tease him for having Bella around, Jacob responds, “If either of you set so much as one toe on my land tomorrow” (*New Moon* 141). Jacob is a descendent of a Native American tribe known as the Quileute. Several conversations evolve around the fact that the Quileute have their established territory and if any vampire crosses into it, they have the right to kill the trespassers. Building upon the idea of the male need to dominate land and groups of people, Jacob carries with him the same principles of ownership and need to conquer. Lightly jesting with his friends begins his ownership of his land, but this evolves further into the need to dominate Bella. Jacob’s demeanor changes whenever Bella mentions Edward and he suddenly becomes sulky or more aggressive. He shows apparent signs of wanting to win her away from Edward and even presents her with an ultimatum at the end of *New Moon*.

Should Bella want to see Edward again, Jacob threatens to withdraw his presence and friendship from her. He plays on her emotions to try to make her come to the decision that he is right and that she belongs with him. Jacob demonstrates misogyny stemming from his failure to dominate Bella in Edward's place. Jack Holland writes, "Misogyny springs up as the ideology that denigrates women in order to justify their lowly status" (274). Jacob's self-perceived lack of power is apparent when he yells at Bella for liking Edward or thinking about him. Feeling humiliation from lack of success in establishing domination over Bella, Jacob fluctuates between being rational around her, and yelling at her.

Meyer incorporates wolf-like attributes into Jacob's character by having him run in a pack with the other boys and live under the discipline of the elder or leader of the pack. Playing the part of the leader is Sam Uley, an individual who is determined to have the respect he believes he deserves as the pack leader: "Every one of them was turned for Sam's reaction. Sam nodded once, his face unperturbed. He turned and walked into Jacob's house. The others, Paul, Jared, and Embry, I assumed followed him in" (*New Moon* 264). Meyer's portrayal of Jacob's territorial behavior shows that he is fueled by his aggression to control Bella and to win her over from Edward. Meyer is presenting misogyny under the guise of pack mentality. Jacob adheres to the pack and its leader, but ultimately it is still misogyny in another less discreet form. It becomes Jacob's obsession to dominate her, and Bella lets him to a degree, even when Edward returns. Meyer depicts Bella as a woman who is being fought over as a prized possession and object to be had. The positive light cast on Bella's desirability is one that might influence young readers. She creates a false positive image based on Bella being helpless and mentally dependent on male figures to win her over and claim her.

Chapter 5

Male Leadership within the Clans

Sam Uley, the pack leader of the werewolves through *Twilight* and *New Moon*, has a stereotypical demeanor and attitude. He acts as an aggressive figure, determined to keep his lot in line and in compliance with his law. He also claims his fiancé, Emily Young, and maintains a very territorial position toward her. Sam is protective of Emily because she is his woman and because he has a tragic past of hurting her. Sam degrades women when he breaks all promises to his girlfriend Leah and decides to lay claim to Emily instead. Leah is second cousin to Emily, and after Sam's rejection of her, she develops a bitter disposition towards people and life. Meyer validates Sam's actions because he mentions feeling guilty for having been responsible for her sour outlook, but continues to justify his choice of hurting her because he "imprints upon" Emily and it is fate that they be together. The system of imprinting is itself disturbing, and is extremely misogynistic and is reminiscent of part of the Mormon tradition to take on a wife, despite the age of the female. Imprinting takes away the choice a woman has to pick her spouse and is a direct action of male domination over female. Children are imprinted by werewolves and must accept that their destiny is to be loved and love no one else but their imprinted spouse.

Sam's justification for imprinting works against the ideas of feminism from multiple viewpoints. He demonstrates only a twinge of guilt for assuming he emotionally disrupts Leah. His guilt over Leah's bitterness exemplifies his arrogance and ego, since he is sure he has ruined her outlook on life and that he is the only one that could have contributed to her views. Lying and leaving Leah for another woman are other misogynist actions that are justified because he abides by patriarchal standards and simply cannot help himself.

Sam's continual displays of aggressive behavior are meant to show off his masculine traits: "Sam ran after them, kicking off his shoes on the way. As he darted into the trees, he was quivering from head to toe. The growling and snapping was fading into the distance" (*New Moon* 326). Meyer presents these traits as dangerous, but justifies them because of Sam's constraints to his lycanthropic pack. The testosterone driven Sam cannot be held accountable for his violent nature because he is a werewolf and driven by the rules of the pack. Again, the pack seems to be a convenient way for Meyer to pass of patriarchal Mormon ideas in her writing. Meyer writes, "Sam lost control of his temper for just one second...and she was standing too close" (*New Moon* 345). Even as he is guilty of scarring Emily's face in an accidental loss of control, Emily demonstrates forgiveness and loves him endlessly. Meyer excuses the abusive actions by saying Sam cannot be held liable for his actions because of his masculine, werewolf nature and because Sam must really love Emily. Partial blame for the accident is put on Emily for standing too close. An abusive relationship is upheld and celebrated as something every young girl should get used to if she is to be considered dedicated to her male interest. The aggressive outbursts are depicted as normal and acceptable as long as he seems apologetic in the end.

Emily is presented as the merry homemaker who is content to cook in the kitchen because the males of the Quileute demand their food: "A young woman with satiny copper skin and long, straight, crow-black hair was standing at the counter by the sink, popping big muffins out of a tin and placing them on a proper plate" (*New Moon* 331). Smiling happily as she meets Bella, she is cooking massive quantities of food for the boys and is emotionally involved with Sam. Though he has mangled her face, Emily is completely in love with Sam. Bella is warned ahead of time not to make mention of or stare at Emily's face because she is self conscious about

it. Meyer has enlightened the readers that Emily is embarrassed by her appearance and is not okay with having people notice her scarring. Meyer tries to pass off Emily's discomfort as acceptable because she is still loved by the man who scarred her. By doing this Meyer has created another situation where a woman must feel she is physically acceptable based on the definitions of beauty in patriarchal society. Emily is not all right with her wounds, but Meyer suggests that she is able to overlook her unhappiness in the situation because Sam was sorry about it. Meyer reinforces the idea that masculine driven behaviors and irrational physical and mental outbursts are acceptable for a woman to experience if the guilty male has apologized and declared love for her. This is not a healthy standpoint for readers to absorb, especially young ones still formulating what a healthy relationship should be.

The vampires, like the werewolves, have their own male leader dictating their actions and behaviors. Not surprisingly, Meyer has assigned the role of vampire leader to another male character, Carlisle Cullen. Carlisle embodies the definition of patriarchy as he is not only the leader of the vampire clan, but also the paternal figure for the Cullen 'children'. Mary Clawson defines patriarchy among households:

Patriarchalism found its definition in the relationship between the father/head of household and the children, servants, and apprentices who were both his dependents and his workers. The proper relationship between master and servants was believed to be that of a father and children. Servants owed their master respect and filial obedience as well as labor, while he in return owed them religious education, moral governance, and education as trade, as well as their keep. (371)

Telling humans that he is the adopted father to Edward, Rosalie, Jasper, and Emmett, he also assumes the role of husband to Esme. Carlisle's is a father-like character to Edward and teaches Edward to be like him in the sense that he helps to raise him and he instructs him on how to be a human-life sparing vampire. While Carlisle does not come across as violent or dominating character, he still provides the stem of patriarchy for his "children" by giving them instruction on how to blend in and be peaceful with humans. Already described as beautiful and perfect, he is the creator among his clan. He is put on a god-like level, and as a male leader, he has the attention and respect of his children and his spouse, Esme. Much like Emily, Esme is in love with Carlisle to the point he can do no wrong, even if he has taken away her humanity. She accepts and holds him in reverent love like the rest of the Cullens. Though Carlisle chose his victims to save them, he is accepted as a character of good and the act of stripping their last humanity is overlooked.

Edward's language regarding Carlisle is reverential. Edward says, "'No, that's just Carlisle. He would never do that to someone who had another choice.' The respect in his voice was profound whenever he spoke of his father figure" (*Twilight* 288). Edward's explanation for the creation of their family shows Carlisle's expectations of a family structure. Edward cures Carlisle's loneliness, but Carlisle then brings Rosalie into the family. Edward says, "I didn't realize till much later that he was hoping she would be to me what Esme was to him" (*Twilight* 289). Carlisle specifically chooses certain individuals to be introduced to the family as a means to pair off his 'children' together. Rosalie is meant to be Edward's spouse, Esme is made for Carlisle himself, and Jasper is meant to pair off with Alice. Though he tries to enforce his ideal family upon his creations, Rosalie becomes more like a sister to Edward, allowing her to pair with Emmett. Carlisle dictates the relationships as he sees fit. Since Rosalie is not taken with

Edward, she is paired off with Emmett at his consent. Despite them being supernatural beings, there is no room for non-heterosexual pairings that could be considered different than those that follow the patriarchal trend. This breaks away from the trend of having any homosexual relationships within vampire novels. This is usually written into vampire novels because it epitomizes the primal urges and lust associated with these sensual beings. Boys are with girls and that is the way it must be in Meyer's series. This notion reinforces Meyer's Mormon background and her portrayal of this patriarchally dictated religious background.

A rival group of vampires spawns towards the end of *Twilight*, providing antagonists to the story. The male leader of this coven is James who is accompanied by Victoria, his mate, and Laurent, his fellow coven member. James is portrayed as a bloodthirsty killer, obsessed with the hunt of his prey. He tracks Bella once he encounters her smell. James' death leaves Victoria as a spiteful and vengeful mate who seeks Bella through *New Moon*. Victoria obsesses over Bella because of her attachment to James. James gives purpose to Victoria and when he is gone, she seeks revenge against Bella, who killed him and whom James had sought. Once James is dead, Laurent comes out of the shadows to go after Bella because he too wants to claim her as his own prize. Both males of this coven attempt to dominate and take Bella for themselves; however, Jacob manages to ward Laurent off and kill him. This group of antagonists provides more evidence that the female characters in *Twilight* and *New Moon* are objects to be possessed and dominated.

Chapter 6

Satirical Truth in *Twilight* and *New Moon*

By examining the individuals and groups that comprise *Twilight* and *New Moon*, it becomes evident to the reader that they contain anti-feminist ideals. Another means of understanding the anti-feminist positions in *Twilight* is through satirical versions of it. *Nightlight*, by *The Harvard Lampoon*, is a parody of *Twilight*. Through satirical examples the anti-feminism of Meyer's saga becomes more apparent. Satire can be useful in highlighting absurdities and socially structured situations in a light-hearted, but more apparent manner.

Nightlight begins with Belle leaving her mother to visit her father in Switchblade, Oregon. From the beginning of this book, Bella's poor measure of self-worth and confidence issues are highlighted: "It's not *important* enough for *mapmakers* to care about. And don't even think about looking me up on that map—apparently, I'm not important enough either" (*Harvard Lampoon* 4). Belle takes stabs at her own femininity by saying how feminine she would be if she were to become a vampire, implying that she is not already. Belle moves on to describe how helpless her mother is by talking to her as if she were a baby and relying on Bill, the new stepdad, to take care of her. "Belle is only going to be gone for the rest of high school, okay? You're going to have a lot of fun with Bill, right Bill?" (*Harvard Lampoon* 4). The emphasis on Belle's mother's helplessness demonstrates how Bella's mother comes across in *Twilight* when she makes all of her decisions based on what Phil wants.

Belle's entrance into her new high school allows her to meet Edward Mullen, the mysterious figure who immediately captures her attention and heart. Bella's dependency on Edward is exaggerated as Belle ceaselessly talks about her undying devotion to Edward "I

picked up the pencil on Edward's desk and pressed it against the soft, supple flesh of my face. They were the projectile kind. Satisfaction attained" (*Harvard Lampoon* 16). This exaggeration of emotion and need is reiterated throughout the rest of the satire and brings out Bella's obsession over Edward. Bella's definition of love is also exaggerated as Belle says, "Was this how it felt to be in love, I wondered, for robots? Caught in his ionized hypnosis, the old adage came to mind: *Beautiful enough to kill, gut, stuff, and frame above your fireplace*" (*Harvard Lampoon* 18). Hypnosis is an appropriate word to describe the interactions between Bella and Edward because it is a form of mental control. Edward cannot directly delve into Bella's mind to control her, but he does emotionally manipulate her when he is not physically handling her.

Bella's compulsion to cook for Charlie is mentioned in *Nightlight* as a way to show just how involved Bella has become in her role as a fitted homemaker. "'You don't like it, Dad?' I asked concernedly, worried that I hadn't cut the meat into small enough pieces or fun enough shapes" (*Harvard Lampoon* 27). A comparison is made mentally in remembering the events that occurred in *Twilight*. As it happens throughout the entire parody, the reader can deduce that the jokes stem from parts of *Twilight* that appear to be absurd.

Nightlight makes a direct reference to the massive number of Meyer's fans and their impressionability: "I can't shop for more clothes, guys. I'm a role model to 1.3 million girls—I have to prove to them that there's more to life than clothes. There are novels out there. Romance novels, for every type of monster fetish" (*Harvard Lampoon* 59). This description of Belle shows how Bella falls further into the anti-feminist role because of the role she plays in selling Meyer's "monster fetish" romances. Meyer's vampire, romance novels perpetuates fetishes for the patriarchally conforming female. The satire then draws attention to the consistencies of patriarchal standards in Meyer's texts.

When catering to Edward's needs, Bella does anything she can to make him happy, even if she is not happy with what is happening to her. Above all else, she submits to making him happy and promoting his well being over her own life. *Nightlight* mocks this aspect of her submissive behavior by making her look ridiculous: "I laughed with him, then stopped when I saw he looked better than me, then laughed once more because all I wanted was for him to be happy" (*Harvard Lampoon* 78). *Nightlight* brings out the irony of what Meyer defines as a healthy relationship by taking her words and saying them more blatantly and without the extra paternal reasoning. Edward's sporadic angry outbursts towards Bella are justified by Meyer because he is protecting and loving her. *Nightlight* summarizes Bella's acquiescence to his surly behavior by commenting that, "When guys gnash their teeth and knit their brows in a broody, furious expression, it means they have found their soul mate" (80). The language used and the jokes demonstrate the extreme behaviors and traits of Meyer's characters. This satire shamelessly mocks Meyer's patriarchal model of society. She projects her vision of patriarchy into her works which are consumed by a mass audience of naïve adolescent girls.

Truth in Comparison to *Dead Until Dark*

Charlaine Harris, author of *Dead Until Dark*, has created a similar genre of monster fetish novels based on romance and vampires. Harris shows the possibility of writing about the same topics and genre features without incorporating the patriarchal ideology Meyer uses in her works. Even in a work on vampires, often thought of as male because of their phallic fangs, Harris provides examples of feminist behaviors and thoughts. The protagonist of *Dead Until Dark* is a young female who is independent and demonstrates her ability to take care of herself without the need of a male figure in her life. Sookie Stackhouse, the protagonist of the story, notices trouble brewing for a vampire and decides to ask her brother for a chain from his truck. He asks, "You

going to fight, Sookie? Hey, you need my help?” (Harris 7). She responds with a simple, “No, thanks” (Harris 7). Sookie makes choices of her own: she is full of self-confidence and does not base her choices on males’ whims and needs. Harris writes, “He was bleeding, squeezing to encourage the flow of blood from his wrist into my mouth. I gagged. But I wanted to live. I forced myself to swallow” (Harris 31). Sookie does not drink because Bill orders her to, but because she chooses to survive. Sookie encounters dangers through the novel because she is surrounded by unstable, supernatural creatures, but she manages to succeed by using her own instincts and desire for personal survival.

While Bella maintains she is perpetually clumsy and unattractive because of her society dictated ideas, Sookie defines herself as pretty because she feels she is good enough despite what society has enforced. “You can tell I don’t get out much. And it’s not because I’m not pretty. I am” (Harris 1). The only disability Sookie admits to having is the supernatural ability to read minds. Bella describes her own thoughts and movements as disabilities when in truth, nothing is wrong with her. Describing herself as disabled hardly represents a stable or healthy self-concept. Bella’s is described as weak and feeble when dealing with any survival situation. Harris manages to create a female character, not superhuman, that can endure physical injury and manages to fight back out of the need for self-preservation. No male character motivates Sookie to live. Instead, she deems her own life to be worth saving.

In her fight for survival, Sookie is approached by a male vampire, Bill, seeking to aid her. Bill says, “You will die unless you do as I say” (Harris 31). Though Harris gives Bill the initial sound of dominance, Sookie still responds, “Sorry, don’t want to be a vampire” (Harris 31). At this moment, Sookie chooses to die instead of listening to what Bill commands because he claims it will save her life. She demonstrates her ability to choose her fate, whereas Bella does

what Edward says at all times because he has commanded it. When Sookie does choose to drink from Bill to save her own life, it is important to note that her survival could be found in any vampiric being, female or male. Through her descriptions of decisions like this, Harris promotes a sense of feminist ideals. Meyer's characters depict romanticized patriarchal ideals, even though writers such as Harris prove that it is possible to write about characters in a similar fashion while promoting female equality.

Conclusion

The novels created by Stephenie Meyer undoubtedly portray a world governed by patriarchal ideals. These texts encourage adolescent girls to believe that the romance portrayed in *Twilight* and *New Moon* is acceptable and normal. Meyer creates the image of the patriarchally designed 'Other' through Bella, but fails to encourage ideas of independence and equality. Bella is described as average and hollow, allowing readers to step into her world and fantasize themselves in her position. Living vicariously through this controlled female character, the reader experiences the romanticization of patriarchal ideals. It is evident that Meyer does not understand she is promoting anti-feminism when she is directly asked in an interview whether she believes Bella is an anti-feminist heroine or not. She responds, "the foundation of feminism is this: being able to choose. The core of anti-feminism is, conversely, telling a woman she can't do something solely because she's a woman—taking any choice away from her specifically because of her gender" (Meyer 1). Meyer has created in Bella the image of a female character reliant on male decision and superiority. Conforming to patriarchal ideas through the novels, Bella shows no sign of exhibiting the need for equality with Edward as she submissively complies with his desires and needs.

When defending herself against charges of anti-feminism, Meyer relies on the fact that her series is a fantasy: "This is not even realistic fiction, it's a fantasy with vampires and werewolves, so no one *could* ever make her exact choices" (Meyer 1). Granted, the novels are fantasy, but adolescents also imagine what life would be like as this heroine. Margaret Whitford writes, "The imaginary vehicles our most powerful passions and emotions; to leave it with no images in which these emotions could be embodied, or with images of women-for-men, leaves intact the power of the dominant system of representation" (98). Just because it is a fantasy does

not mean Meyer is not contributing to the patriarchal values of society. Because she projects the image of women existing for men, she perpetuates the idea of a patriarchal society. She creates a female protagonist incapable of making her own choices, even if her choices are pertaining to fictional vampires. If the aspect of vampirism were left out of the story, there would still be romance promoting choices being made based on the directives of a male figure. It is evident that Stephenie Meyer's novels, *Twilight* and *New Moon* reinforce the norms of a patriarchal society by incorporating both fantasy and romance traditions into their plots. When adolescents consume these texts, they are positioned to become acculturated to the same values the texts promote.

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