

**In the Coffin of Current U.S. Assimilationist Politics: Reading the Homonormative
Politics of Stephanie Meyer's Vampire**

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Abstract

Broadly, this thesis is a project about queerness and its relationship to *Twilight*. This thesis seeks to recuperate the queer in the *Twilight* series. Using discourse analysis, I explore both common and uncommon representations of queerness and the popular and unpopular discourses of *Twilight*. While both *Chapter 1* and *2* offer paranoid readings of the *Twilight* series and its relationship to queerness, *Chapter 3* presents a reparative reading of the text. I argue that Meyer's tame and conservative vampire, conventionally represented as being either sexually ambiguous or outside the norm, is symptomatic of a modern culture that is becoming more accepting of odd, strange, and/or queer individuals. I maintain, however, that the normalization of specific *ways of being* still comes at the expense of the constitutive "other". Furthermore, I understand this process of normalizing a monster to be representative of a seemingly apolitical, yet violent, Faludian *backlash* toward queers.

Keywords: vampires, *Twilight*, queer, homonormative, homonationalism

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my dad,
Kevin McFarland, and my parent, Liz Foley.

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It is to my dad and Liz that I dedicate this work.

Introduction

Return of the Living Undead

“Individual vampires may die; after almost a century, even Dracula may be feeling his mortality; but as a species vampires have been our companions for so long that it is hard to imagine living without them. They promise escape from our dull lives and the pressure of our times, but they matter because when properly understood, they make us see that our lives are implicated in theirs and our times are inescapable.”—Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*

Queer Representation

Two men share an intimate embrace in an airplane hangar as other families reunite in the background¹. A marine wearing a lei and camouflage uniform who has just returned from a tour in Afghanistan has jumped into the longing arms of his waiting partner. Framed almost entirely by the American flag, the same-sex couple kiss passionately. A striking image which incongruously pairs men loving men with nationalism and militarism—both of which evoke a history steeped in competition, brute masculinity, homophobia and, paradoxically, men hating men.

This seemingly discordant image resonates with Alfred Eisenstaedt’s infamous image which captures an impromptu kiss between a returning sailor and an unsuspecting nurse. Known by various titles such as the “Kissing Sailor” and “The Kiss”, Eisenstaedt’s image commemorates the victory over Japan (V-J Day) on August 14, 1945. Although similar in imagery, this recent homecoming kiss chronicled a different, but equally significant celebration and milestone in American military history. Informally referred to as “The Kiss Seen or Heard 'Round the World” (Okita np), the now iconic image of Sergeant Brandon

¹ Retrieved from <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/photo-gay-marine-kissing-boyfriend-receives-flood-support-article-1.1029426> on January 4, 2013.

Morgan leaping into the arms of his boyfriend, Dalan Wells, serves as a landmark piece of documentary photography because it exposes shifting socio-cultural attitudes toward gay couples participating in the military.

The viral image and the reaction it initiated, acutely capture the success of and support for the dismantlement of the military's ban on gays and its "don't ask, don't tell" (DADT) law which was repealed by the Obama administration five months prior to the notorious kiss (Scarborough np). Certainly, this is necessary imagery for queer representation as it is an intentional and public demonstration of a man desiring another man. But what constitutes this imagery as being queer or gay in nature? Is it simply that two men have been captured kissing? And if so, some have dared to ask, what could be queerer or gayer than this representation?

According to the "Still Not as Gay as *Twilight*"² meme which employs the celebrated image of Sergeant Brandon Morgan and Dalan Wells, Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* —the paranormal romance series which chronicles the love story between a clumsy, cis-gendered female adolescent and a chivalrous, cis-gendered male vampire —is gayer than the image of the two lip locked, pelvic grinding men. The meme which is unexceptional in its homophobic sentiment compares the well-known image of the recognizable couple to the *Twilight* series as a whole. According to "Know Your Meme", a website dedicated to the cataloguing of memes and demotivational posters, the "Still Not as Gay as *Twilight*" meme utilizes images which contain imagery traditionally perceived "to be homosexual in nature" ("Still Not as Gay as *Twilight*" np). The images of the meme, all of which do not include women, are comprised of one or more of the following visual themes: explicit displays of male, same-sex sexual activity, homoerotic bonding (especially adolescent), men wearing

² Retrieved from <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/still-not-as-gay-as-twilight> on January 4, 2013.

cosmetics or clothing traditionally perceived to be feminine, men wearing little to no clothing at all and male bodies being presented in close physical proximity to one another. The majority of the images, save the image of Sergeant Brandon Morgan and Dalan Wells which involves same-sex kissing, take up the latter visual themes which do not necessarily or directly indicate sexual orientation or preference. Arguably, even the image of the renowned same-sex homecoming kiss does not even necessarily represent a sexual orientation, but a sex act instead.

Similarly devoid of any explicit or obvious depiction of either male and/or female same-sex attraction is the *Twilight* saga which, arguably, participates in the normalization of heteronormativity and legitimization of its institutions. While queer representation can and often does mean the inclusion of specifically obvious displays of homosexual attraction, desire and sex, evidently, we are meant to understand that the terms “homosexual” and “gay” employed within the “Know your meme” website and “Still Not as Gay as *Twilight*” meme refer less to the sexual orientation or preference of the *male* subject (since women’s bodies are completely absent from this particular meme) and more to the subject’s inability to perform masculinity appropriately.

In consideration of this, “gay” as an identity for non-straight males, must be understood as being comprised of more than just same-sex desire. Like heterosexuality, homosexuality (or, “queerness” which is what I will use to define a broader set of non-heterosexual sex acts, desires, and relations) is, in part, a performance with their own set of behaviours, gestures, attitudes and aesthetics. Thus, if the series lacks explicit demonstrations of gay male sex and Edward and Jacob—the two male protagonists competing for the attention of Bella (the desired female protagonist of interest)—not just appropriately, but hyperbolically perform masculinity, how does the series, consequently, get read as being

“gay” and, more importantly, how is it understood as being “gayer” than the image of the kissing Sergeant Morgan and Dalan Wells?

The “Still Not as Gay as *Twilight* Meme”, correspondingly, ties together several important themes, events and discourses that, I believe, are (at this moment) socially and culturally significant for queer individuals, scholars and representation(s). Among elucidating the recently restored trend of associating, understanding and conflating the vampire with queerness and queer individuals, this particular meme which utilizes the iconic, same-sex couple epitomizes the rather recent and significant shift in the direction(s), goal(s) and objective(s) of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans’ (LGBT) movement in the United States of America. The photograph, as previously noted, indicates some of the positive effects of the initiatives taken by the movement; however, the photograph also captures the movement’s focus on coupledness and military inclusion. But what do the iconic same-sex kiss, queer representation, gay rights and the pursuit of normality have to do with *Twilight*, a series about monsters that lacks explicitly queer characters?

The *Twilight* films like all vampire and monster narratives, in general, draw upon the pedagogical project of creating (sexual, racial, gendered and non-able-bodied) monsters. This project, inevitably interested in displays of the ‘abnormal’ and consequently the ‘normal’—not in the statistical sense, but in common usage—is a political one and therefore has social and ideological implications for a society plagued by its own socially conceived—meaning not actual or intrinsic—monsters (queers, sexual variants, illegal aliens, disfigured bodies and so on). Although these very present ‘monsters’ are glaringly absent from the *Twilight* saga, the mainstream vampire of the *Twilight* franchise embodies or perhaps, more aptly, feeds on these constitutive identities—like so many previous scholars have argued of the progeny of the infamous Dracula (Creed 1993; Auerbach 1995; Halberstam 1995; Dyer

2002)—to establish its monstrosity. So while this project is at once about the *Twilight* series and its representation of the vampire, it is also about vampire and its relation to existing communities such as racial, sexual, and (dis)able-bodied minorities that are literally excluded from diverse, complex representation in the series, but are nonetheless figuratively and symbolically referenced.

Twilight

In the last several years, much ink has been spilled in the creation of whole collections of essays (*Twilight and Philosophy: Vampires, Vegetarians and the Pursuit of Immortality* (Housel 2009); *Bitten by Twilight: Youth Culture, Media and the Vampire Franchise* (Click 2010); *Bringing Light to Twilight* (Anatol 2011); *Seduced By Twilight* (Wilson 2011); *Fanpire: The Twilight Saga and the Women Who Love It* (Erzen 2012); *Genre, Reception and Adaptation in the Twilight Series* (Morey 2012) exploring the social, sexual, political and religious ideological foundations of Stephanie Meyer's four-book saga and Summit Entertainment's five-part screen adaptation of the series known as *Twilight*. Stephanie Meyer's gothic romance series, aimed at teenagers, chronicles the teenage life of the dowdy and awkward Isabella 'Bella' Swan (Kristen Stewart) as she becomes intimately involved with two of the most celebrated monsters in Western literature and film: the icy and demure vampire, Edward Cullen (Robert Pattinson), and the (hot)headed and bold werewolf, Jacob Black (Taylor Lautner).

The first installment of the series, *Twilight* (Catherine Hardwicke 2008), follows Bella as she moves to the small and gloomy town of Forks where she develops a fascination for a particularly strange family of fostered teenagers who attend her school, known as "the Cullens". Captivated and mesmerized by Edward Cullen (the only single and available

Cullen), Bella pursues Edward in spite of his strange and suspicious behaviours and/or *ways of being*. Revealed to be ethical and decent vampires, Edward and the Cullens refer to themselves as “vegetarians” because they refrain from hunting humans, feeding on the blood of animals instead. Besides developing a romantic intimacy between Bella and Edward, the remainder of *Twilight* focuses on the protection of Bella by Edward and his family from a few hostile and ‘othered’ non-vegetarian vampires.

While the first installment largely explores the relationship between Bella and Edward, the second installment within the saga, *New Moon* (Chris Weitz 2009), mainly follows the relationship between the depressed Bella and the adoring Jacob. In an attempt to protect Bella, Edward leaves Bella and Forks and is inadequately replaced by Jacob who, as a werewolf, is soon after revealed to be Edward’s enemy and rival. Meanwhile, Jacob and his Quileute tribe protect Bella from the vengeful Victoria (one of the unsympathetic vampires from *Twilight*). Setting up the conflict for the third film, *New Moon* concludes with a Shakespearean-like misunderstanding in which Edward, stricken with grief over the supposed death of his beloved, attempts to commit suicide. Although Edward’s attempt is interrupted by Bella before it can be successfully executed, the gesture is noticed by a royal and powerful coven of vampires known as the Volturi who—displeased with the Cullens, most notably Edward, for divulging their vampiric nature to Bella, a human—threaten to kill Bella and punish Edward. However, both Bella and Edward return to Forks unharmed and reunited with the understanding that Bella will have to be turned into a vampire to appease the Volturi. Feeling morally conflicted and in doubt about Bella’s future as a vampire, Edward proposes to Bella. The film concludes with Bella accepting Edward’s marriage proposal.

Bella's previously separate relationship with both Edward (largely developed in *Twilight*) and Jacob (explored in *New Moon*) becomes entangled in the third installment, *Eclipse* (David Slade 2010). Recognizing that Edward is his archenemy in both love and war, Jacob vies with Edward for the attention of Bella in spite of her engagement to Edward. Meanwhile Victoria, even more vengeful, begins to create an army of "newborns"—recently turned vampires are, according to Carlisle "never more physically powerful than in [their] first several months of this life" (*Eclipse* 0:56:55). The rivaling men and their respective species temporarily reconcile their differences to protect Bella from Victoria and her created army of "newborns". All the while, Bella struggles with the realities of marrying a vampire.

And finally, the last installment, divided into *Breaking Dawn: Part I* (Bill Condon 2011) and *Breaking Dawn: Part II* (Bill Condon 2012) chronicles the wedding, honeymoon, pregnancy and child rearing of the newlywed couple and the Volturi's response to these events. While the first half of *Breaking Dawn: Part I* focuses largely on the carefree and happy couple as they get married among friends and family in Forks and honeymoon in Brazil, the second half centres on the troubled and unhappy duo as they struggle with: the inability to be sexually intimate, the decision to abort or keep a vampire foetus, the literally monstrous and crippling pregnancy and the decision to turn Bella into a vampire. The decision to keep the monstrous child that is neither entirely human nor vampire, but both effectively suspends the fragile truce, which previously prevented warring, between the vegetarian vampires and Quileute werewolves. As the enemy creatures battle, Bella goes into labor and is literally disembowelled giving birth to a baby that is half vampire and half human to whom Jacob imprints on—referring to the involuntary process in which a werewolf recognizes his (a strictly male endeavour) soul mate. Jacob's convenient and timely imprinting on Renesmee (Mackenzie Foy), the daughter of Edward and Bella, forces the

werewolves to cease their attacks on Bella and the Cullens. In one last attempt to save a dying Bella, Edward stabs Bella's emaciated and pale chest with a needle filled with his transformative venom. *Breaking Dawn: Part I* concludes with the venom taking effect, turning Bella into an impossibly beautiful vampire.

Where *Breaking Dawn: Part I* concludes with the death of Bella as a human, *Breaking Dawn: Part II* opens with the birth of Bella as vampire. As Bella acclimates to her recently attained status as vampire, she learns of the changing dynamics between the vampires, specifically her and the Cullens, and the werewolves. Although the warring between the adversarial monsters ceases, a false allegation about Renesmee instigates an interspecies clash between the Cullens and the Volturi. Falsely accused of turning a child into a vampire (considered a crime among vampires), Bella and Edward are forced to summon witnesses to protect Renesmee from execution. The claims are revealed to be untruthful and Renesmee is proven to be nonthreatening, resolving the conflict. Once home, the film concludes with Edward's foster sister seeing a glimpse of the future: she sees both Bella and Edward and a matured Renesmee and Jacob happily together.

Critical reception of the series, both popular and academic, has been largely negative, much of which has been focused on the abusive dynamics of Bella and Edward's relationship (Beals 2010), feminism—or, the lack thereof—(Happel and Esposito 2010; Dietz 2011; Nicol 2011, Stabile 2011); and, most significantly, the regulation and policing of sexuality—particularly the sexuality of Bella (Ames 2010; McGeough 2010; Platt 2010; Silver 2010; Whitton 2011). Noting the conservative and religious social values that Meyer's deploys within the series, both Tammy Dietz and Carrie Anne Platt argue that “the steadfast denial of multiple pleasures of flesh” (Platt 72) is “unabashadely pro-abstinence” (72). Stressing Edward's instinctual hunger for Bella's blood and Bella's base lust for Edward's body as

integral points within the text, Dietz maintains that a text that focuses on desiring and desirable bodies being violated teaches its audience, largely younger women, that “abstinence is a matter of life and death” (Dietz 101) and “ultimately men are in charge” (Seifert 25).

Accordingly, Sarah Seltzer, Christine Seifert, and Chris Vognar maintain a focus on the female body and sexuality by acknowledging the contradictory nature of *Twilight*'s overly sexualized sexless universe: “Like American culture itself, ‘*Twilight*’ is both lascivious and chaste” (Seltzer np); “It’s abstinence porn: sensual, erotic, and titillating (Seifert 23); and “the *Twilight* world, not coincidentally, knows no sex” (Vognar E4). The sexual, yet chaste universe that Seltzer, Seifert, and Vognar elucidate is comparable to the impossible terrain young women navigate: be innocent yet experienced; chaste yet sexual; infantilized yet mature. Bella, like the hundreds of thousands of young females who consume the contradictory *Twilight* books and movies, occupies the paradoxical psycho-sexual matrix that contemporary female adolescents are socialized to perform.

Represented Queerly

Before the world was fascinated with Bella Swan, it was mesmerized by Bela Lugosi, the infamous actor best known for his characterization of Count Dracula in the production of *Dracula* (Tod Browning 1931). In an age where the focus and intrigue of vampire fiction relies on the prey, victim and beloved and not the predator, perpetrator and lover, the question begs to be asked, what happened to the vampire and our interest in it? Although vampire narratives have often been studied for the social fears and anxieties they represent and their usefulness in analyzing and understanding constructions of gender, sexuality, race, and class (Skal 1993; Auerbach 1995; Halberstam 1995; Creed 1993; Dyer 2002), little

attention has been paid to the recent construction of the vampire figure. While Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles* and Joss Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Whedon 1997-2003) revived an interest, both popular and academic, in the vampire figure in the 1980s and 1990s respectively, interest in the brooding Edward Cullen and his uninterestingly perfect family is more popular and less academic. Much of the scholarship that focuses on Edward can be narrowed down to two areas: the dominating trend of discussing the vampire as a thinly veiled stalker and the less reviewed exploration of Edward and his relationship to queerness (read as both an identity category based on sexuality and as a politically driven positionality).

The characterization of Edward Cullen as an emotional teenage boy with pouty lips, beautifully coiffed hair and, most notably, sparkling skin appeals (perhaps unintentionally?) to Camp's aesthetic and performance. Revealing his bare skin to the sun's magical rays and Bella's gaze, Edward bemoans—in a fashion reminiscent of “coming out” narratives, “This is what I am” (*Twilight* 0:52:12). Bella gasps, “It's like diamonds. You're beautiful.” (*Twilight* 0:52:18)—cue swooning drag queens. The depiction of Edward as a strange (read as odd, different, queer), glittering adolescent—a condition that Pramod Nayar terms “Supernatural masculinity in drag” (Nayar 62)—who is simultaneously repulsed by Bella's abject body, most notably, her scent, and attracted to her appearance reads as Liberace-excess, Rocky-Horror-Picture-Show-Camp, RuPaul-drag—queer at the very least. Steven Marche similarly notes queer incongruities in the seemingly staunch Hetero-romantic tale in his article “What's Really Going on With All These Vampires?": “*Twilight's* fantasy is that the gorgeous gay guy can be your boyfriend” (Marche np). Despite Marche's hasty generalization that “Vampires have overwhelmed pop culture because young straight women want to have sex with gay men” (Marche np.), I believe that the parallel that Marche draws

between the representation of Edward Cullen and queerness is fitting and a subject worthy of greater attention.

Similarly, Kathryn Kane poignantly addresses the Cullens', specifically Edward's, relationship to queerness or, perhaps, lack thereof. Referring to Meyer's vampires as "distinctly unqueer" (Kane 117), Kane ponders the implications of championing a normal monster that was previously associated with transgression. In line with Kane's investigation, I wish to elucidate both the type of normativity that is embodied by Edward and how that type of normativity reflects dominant narratives and rhetoric that have been associated with queer identities.

According to Nina Auerbach, "every generation creates and embraces its own" (Auerbach vii) vampire. As her pivotal book *Our Vampires, Ourselves* illustrates, vampires evolve, mutate and transform throughout the ages to cater to the specific politics of each unique cohort. Focusing on the centrality of a variety of vampires from several generations, Auerbach argues that the history of Anglo-American politics and culture can effectively be traced and documented. With the vampire's ability to adapt to the demands of past generations while remaining transgressive, one would expect that the vampire's evolution into the twenty-first century would supersede its revolutionary ancestor's progressive trajectory; however, the contemporary and popular vampire has, instead, done quite the opposite and regressed. My intervention elucidates the (oxymoronic) nature of the 'normal monster' while exploring how its depiction parallels contemporary Anglo-American politics and culture. While Kane briefly explores how the *Twilight* series restrains the radical possibilities of Queer, I wish to fully expand this analysis to include how this text as a cultural artefact is in the business of producing meaning about normative queers; and how this text, in spite of its normalizing tendency, is still very queer.

In keeping with Auerbach's project while updating it, I deconstruct and provide an analysis of the recently resurfaced, domesticated and morally righteous sympathetic vampire while exploring the social and sexual politics of early twenty-first century America. If we accept Auerbach's argument that every vampire is unique, specific and reflective of its generation and can point to the progress or decline of movements like feminism, then what does the conservative Edward Cullen of Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series reveal about the current generation and its social movements? My objective is to explore the change in depiction of the heteronormative yet homoerotic, traditionally queer yet recently de-queered, and abnormal yet strikingly normal sympathetic vampire known as Edward Cullen. The impetus then to understand and theorize around the modern vampire is ultimately political. Much writing on the cultural representation of seemingly unified and homogenous groups of people such as racial minorities, women and LGBT individuals has striven to reveal that there is a lack of complex representation and that those very limited representations restrict the very material lives of the individuals they seek to re-present. While the largely identifiable group of pale, fanged predators known as vampires can afford the risk of being inaccurately or inauthentically portrayed, the thinly veiled (gendered, sexual, racial, classed, and non-able-bodied) 'other' that vampires so often symbolize cannot.

Social Constructionist Theory and Queer Theory

Since much of my analysis of the *Twilight* series hinges on an understanding of a culture of non-heterosexuality and/or queerness, Social Constructionist theory proves pivotal to my discussion. Taking up Queer theory's main impetus that gender and sexuality—far from being inherent or natural—are normal, I rely on the philosophies of social constructionism, specifically Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*. Reacting to the

intellectual climate of the 1950s, Foucault's contributions to Social Constructionism were motivated by a response to "Marxism, phenomenology, and structuralism" (Lock 245). Dissatisfied with these fields' interest in discerning essential and absolute knowledge(s) and/or truths, Foucault sought to problematize, contextualize and historicize particular "truths". In his *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault most markedly contextualizes sexuality. In this work Foucault argues that sexuality, recognized as an object of knowledge, is neither fixed nor natural, but a constructed identity produced by social, political and cultural structures. Consequently, Foucault suggests that sex is a shaped social construction rather than a given binary classification. This understanding of sex as being fundamentally social means that "modern categories of sex, most importantly, heterosexuality and homosexuality, but also the whole regime of modern sexual types, classifications, and norms are understood as social and historical creations" (Seidman 89). Recognizing that sexual taxonomies are created, artificial, non-natural and, importantly, constructed, is integral to my discussion of sexual identity in its relation to queer "ways of being". Ultimately, it is this contribution from Foucault that I rely on when I turn to Social Constructionism as a structuring theory. This work, in part, takes up Foucault's impetus to denaturalize and historicize sexuality as it is rooted in specific societies.

Although Foucault is often considered to be one of the most prominent advocates for theorizing sexuality within both Western feminism and queer theory, Judith Butler's theories on the performative nature of gender and sexuality (more meaningfully) constitute the theoretical underpinnings of this project. In analyzing and queering the *Twilight* series, I am interested in taking up the poststructuralist and postmodern concern in destabilizing essentialist notions of race, sex, gender, and sexual identity and replacing them with multiple and shifting identities. Judith Butler and her theorization of gender performativity have and

continue to be instrumental in the formulation of Queer literature and theory. Butler's concept of performativity, heavily influenced by Lacanian psychoanalysis, Foucauldian theory, structural anthropologists (Claude Levi-Strauss), phenomenologist and speech-act theorists, places an emphasis on the ways in which identity, specifically gender and sexual identity, is conceived of through discourse. In her understanding of performativity, these theorists and structures of thought shaped Butler's conceptualization of how gender—far from being a given social reality—is an illusion informed by and “through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social sign” (Butler 270). Butler describes gender performativity as the repetition of a set of norms by which “discourse produces the effect that it names” (Butler 187). Key to her understanding of gender performativity is repetition, regarding gender as a set of collectively accepted actions and behaviours which must be rehearsed like a script, a cultural script, which we, as actors, perform and inevitably naturalize and normalize by continuously performing the actions (187). Correspondingly, the performance of gender involves ‘doing’, or not ‘doing’ as in the case of gender-benders, drag queens and, arguably, feminists, what is supposedly “‘natural’—the imaginable domain of gender” (Butler 186). Put simply, gender performativity is the accumulation of a set of acts, words, gestures, and behaviours that articulate and/or enact the cultural or societal in the accepted belief that these acts signify the natural or “an organizing gender core” (186). Consequently, individuals “only become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognizable standards of intelligibility” (186). Thus, Butler understands gender and sexuality as something that one does rather than something that one is.

Butler rearticulates her theories of performativity in *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* to address that gender, although performed, is, nonetheless a material reality enacted within our bodies. Elaborating on her theory of gender from *Gender*

Trouble, Butler offers clarification of the notion of “performativity” to discuss the potential of heterosexual hegemony to shape the “matter” of bodies and subjectivities. Explicating that performativity is not a singular act, but a reiteration of sets of cultural, historical and social norms, Butler relies on the work of Derrida’s theory of iterability to discuss the importance of repetition:

Performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed *by* a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that 'performance' is not a singular 'act' or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance. (Butler 95)

Derrida’s conceptualization of reiteration proves useful for Butler’s clarification of performativity because it at once suggests how reiteration both produces the biological sexes and confirms their constructedness.

Because Butler’s conclusions were meant to both reveal the oxymoronic logic of essentialist eco-feminism that reinforced rather than challenged the strict gender binary and challenge the inflexibility of the social constructionists, Butler’s deconstruction of gender performativity essentially aims to anachronistically ‘queer’ (Butler’s *Gender Trouble* unconsciously became the foundational text to the development of Queer theory as a school of thought) or make strange the complicated and seemingly invisible process of ‘acting’ or ‘doing’ identity, especially gender and sexual identity. For this very reason, I am interested in couching my work in Butler’s conceptualization of gender and sexual performativity because it provides the theoretical tools and framework to analyze and queer the cultural text, *Twilight*, and its protagonist, Edward Cullen.

Butler's theorization of gender and sexual performativity will be of particular importance and use in my understanding of the vampire as symbolizing queer attitudes, lifestyles, behaviours and *ways of being* because it illuminates the 'constructedness' of identity, particularly sexual identity. While I will be comparing the characterization of the queer body with the vampiric body, I do not want to mislead or confuse my readership in thinking that I understand there to be a 'true' or 'authentic' manner or performance of being queer. Rather, by employing the concepts of Butler, my intention is to suggest that the characterization of the vampire, specifically the sympathetic vampire, resembles the current constructed, rather than biological, nature of the queer which is maintained, normalized and naturalized through discourse.

Thus, I want to make clear that the 'queer attitudes, lifestyles and behaviours' that I speak of, in relation to the vampire, are not inherent or biologically specific to the queer individual, but socially, historically and culturally attributed. In other words, notions of male and female, man and woman, straight and non-straight, and white and non-white conveyed in the *Twilight* films, do not exist because of essential or biological differences that cause men and women or straight and non-straight or white and non-white individuals to behave in different ways. Rather, visible differences are the result of structural categories of gender, sexuality and race which produce the scripts of femininity and masculinity, straightness and non-straightness, and whiteness and non-whiteness which individuals continually re-enact (185). Thus, understanding established binaries such as straight and non-straight identity as 'performative' instead of 'natural' is integral to my project because ultimately I am suggesting that the sympathetic Edward Cullen is 'doing queerness/non-heterosexuality'. Thus, understanding sexuality as something that is highly policed, regulated and constructed

rather than as something that is essential, biological and innate establishes the ideological underpinnings of my approach and project as a Queer scholar.

Suspicious of a Boy who Sparkles: Paranoid Methodologies

Borrowing from both Foucauldian and feminist media studies methodologies, I employ a discursive analysis of the contemporary vampire figure. Focusing largely on Meyer's construction of the vampire figure, I provide a textual analysis—a close, interpretative reading—of the film adaptations of Stephanie Meyer's gothic-romance series *Twilight*. A discursive analysis of the five installments—*Twilight*, *New Moon*, *Eclipse*, *Breaking Dawn: Part I* and *Breaking Dawn: Part II*—grants me the opportunity to explore and reveal how images, in part, construct and order specific views of the social world. Regarding discourse as being a matter of social practice and ideology (Scollon 254), my analysis of the *Twilight* series is ultimately concerned with power and representation.

Discourse, Foucault says, disciplines our sense of self, relations and places. Not simply repressive, but—indeed—productive, discourse disciplines subjects into specific ways of thinking and acting. The depiction of the vampire, for instance, is productive: it produces some bodies as belonging to normalcy while excluding others. As a film arguably dealing with bodily difference, *Twilight*, in varied ways, is informed of and informing our ways of being and knowing including our sexual mores and taboos. Indeed, the films—like all other visual media—are simultaneously the message and the messenger and are therefore effective and persuasive teachers. As a result, I analyze both literal and figurative representations of difference and obvious and obscure political allegories about monstrosity within the films.

Following the traditions of feminist and Queer scholars who discursively engage with paranoid readings, my project on queerness and the *Twilight* series similarly deploys a methodology of paranoia. Drawing on Eve Sedgwick's *Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You*, Ummni Khan aptly characterizes the large body of feminist writing on the *Twilight* series as being paranoid (Khan 2013). In keeping with this tradition, my project offers a paranoid reading of the *Twilight* series. Paranoid practices, Eve Sedgwick maintains, "represent a way, among other ways, of seeing, finding, and organizing knowledge" (Sedgwick 130). Suspicious of the construction of Meyer's vampire, my paranoid reading seeks to unmask, expose and reveal insidious and violently exclusive constructions of the queer.

While a reading of this sort is useful to realize oppressive structures and constructions often invisibilized and naturalized, it offers no "value for making oppositional strategy" (142). Accordingly, Sedgwick puts forth a practice, referred to as "reparative", that garners pleasure where it can be found within a text. An undertaking of this manner, referred to as "reparative", extracts "sustenance from the objects of a culture—even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them" (150-1). Correspondingly, I offer an alternative, more hopeful reading of *Twilight* that seeks to unearth and uncover queer potential as well. In addition to my paranoid reading, I seek to 'repair' the text by suggesting that *Twilight* is equally a site of queerness as evidenced by the proliferation of slash fan fiction that resists Meyer's hetero-patriarchy. Deploying both strategies to analyze the *Twilight* series, I seek to recognize the structures and constructions in *Twilight* which are both oppressive and queer.

While a textual analysis of the *Twilight* series and its cultural embeddedness is important and even necessary work, it is highly inductive and speculative in nature. My

analysis of the series is inevitably limited because my preferred methodologies are not free from subjective inquiry, intellectual biases or enculturated knowledges—arguably no methodology ever is. Although textual readings are personal and interpretive and therefore questionable and contestable, they encourage readers to engage in similar, yet dissenting, interpretive readings which foster a robust intellectual community interested in the circulation of ideas. And a person passionate about ideas, bell hooks says, is “a dangerous person to be in this society” (hooks 44). Thus, my hope is that my work will create an interest, analysis and dialogue with other activists and scholars invested in the dissemination of ideas.

Chapter Outlines

Broadly, this is a project about queerness and its relationship to *Twilight*. In this project, I engage with both common and uncommon representations of queerness and the popular and unpopular discourses of *Twilight*. While both *Chapter 1* and *2* offer paranoid readings of the *Twilight* series and its relationship to queerness, *Chapter 3* presents a reparative reading of the text. In *Chapter 1*, I argue that Stephanie Meyer’s vampire, a figure that has often been rendered quite normal is, indeed, quite queer. Aligning vampirism with queerness, I trace the often homosocial and homoerotic histories of the vampire figure. Claiming that Meyer’s heteronormative vampire largely deviates from the tradition of associating the vampire with the queer, I demonstrate how the construction of Edward Cullen still feeds on the popularly imagined construction of queerness.

Refusing to abandon the tradition of understanding the vampire as a metaphor for queer individuals and lifestyles, I employ this metaphor in *Chapter 2* to argue that the trope is far from being undead. I argue that the trope, alive and well, has simply been altered to

accommodate the shift in attitudes toward queer individuals. Unlike his shadowy and threatening predecessors, the recent vampire has been reformed, domesticated and normalized. I argue that Meyer's tame and conservative vampire, conventionally represented as being either sexually ambiguous or outside the norm and therefore commonly embraced and championed by gay culture, is symptomatic of a modern culture that is becoming more accepting of odd, strange, and/or queer individuals. I maintain, however, that the normalization of specific relationships, bodies and *ways of being* still comes at the expense of the constitutive "other". Furthermore, I understand this process of normalizing a monster to be representative of a seemingly apolitical, yet violent, Faludian *backlash* toward queers. This backlash against queers as represented by the vampire figure is no longer interested in violently eradicating or pathologizing the deviant subject—as was the case for both fictional vampires (Benshoff 1997; 2006; Menell 2012) and gay folks (Russo 1987; Aaron 2004; Benshoff 2006; Griffiths 2006) prior to the 1970s; it is instead, I argue, invested in the highly exclusive process of assimilating the *abnormal* monster into *normal* society.

In *Chapter 3*, I seek to "repair" the text that I previously accuse of being very limited, restrictive and oppressive. In spite of readings in Chapter 1 and 2, I acknowledge *Twilight's* potential to be queer. Recognizing that *both* fans and "haters" alike, straight and non-straight, participate in queer readings of the *Twilight* text, I examine the proliferation of *Twilight* slash fiction including video montages, memes, storytelling, and fan art. Considering these fictions to be astute queer readings, ultimately, I argue that the creators of these queer fictions read queer possibility into the *Twilight* text because the *Twilight* narrative, whether intentionally or unintentionally, partakes in aesthetics, traditions, and figures traditionally perceived to be associated with queer culture and *ways of being*. I consider how Meyer's text both flirts with Camp aesthetics and gay sensibility and employs the homoerotic graphic schema of the love

triangle which, I argue, makes possible queer readings of the series. Given the popularity of the “Still Not as Gay as *Twilight*” meme, I return to the queer potential of homophobic *Twilight* themed memes, concluding the chapter by considering the productive potential of the meme to disrupt, unsettle, and challenge heteronormativity and the possible social implications of this message among a largely male, adolescent population.

Finally, I conclude the thesis by providing an overview of the chapters. Returning to Auerbach’s objective, I consider what Meyer’s queerly normal creature reveals about the generation that has so voraciously consumed it.

Conclusion

This thesis takes up notions of queerness (in all its various forms) and its relationship to the modern vampire and the *Twilight* series, specifically. By narrowing my analysis of modern vampires on, perhaps, the most famous vampire of the early twenty-first century, I aim to explore why we as a society crave and hunger for an Edward Cullen? What does it mean that a traditionally transgressive figure has been emptied of all its previous subversive and queer potential? Or if we are to see Edward as a subversive revolutionary, which systems and institutions does he challenge and what attitudes does he defy?

With box office numbers ranging in the billions, the *Twilight* saga has undeniably sunk its teeth into a cultural vein and has seduced large audiences into craving more. While the *Twilight* Saga clearly does not represent reality, it likely upholds common or dominant embedded ideologies about family, sex and desire that are at once both influenced by and influencing the popular imagination. Correspondingly, as Auerbach demonstrates, “Vampires go where power is” (Auerbach 6) and the American film market—especially Hollywood cinema—certainly exudes power and has had a profound effect on American and non-

American culture. For this reason, investigating the success of the sympathetic vampire known as Edward Cullen and the dominant narratives that he more often bolsters than undermines is an important feminist and queer endeavour.

Chapter 1

Locating the Queer in *Twilight*

“...the vampire is a queer figure because it is disruptive; the vampire breaks down categories, transgresses boundaries, and upsets the very premises upon which systems of normality are structured. At least this is true of most vampires. In 2005, Stephanie Meyer introduced the *Twilight* series, which valorized a family of vampires who clearly and firmly refuse the queerness typically associated with the figure.”—Kathryn Kane, *Bitten By Twilight*

Introduction

Monsters offer some of the most egregious representations of race, gender, class, (dis)ability and sexuality. Far from being apolitical creatures that simply fascinate and frighten, monsters embody constitutive difference or ‘otherness’. Put simply, representations of monsters matter. Judith Halberstam notes as much in *Skin Shows* when she argues that representations of the modern monster and the horrific body bolster and sustain social and sexual hierarchies (Halberstam). For example, Charles Ramirez Berg argues that depictions of the cryptic and peculiar alien in American science fiction films symbolize the threat of real Latin American immigration (Berg 67). Similarly, while depictions of the zombie (known for its gait and its incomprehensible speech) often indulge fears of disability, depictions of the alien (known for its peculiar appearance, strange behaviours, smelly foods and cryptic language) indulge fears of racism and xenophobia. And while representations of the werewolf (known for its rapid transformation which often involves intense changes in temperament and growth of body hair—reminiscent of puberty) indulge fears of gendered difference and the uncontrollability of the body, depictions of the mummy (known for its deteriorating body) indulge fears of abjection and ageing. Depictions of vampires, on the

other hand, are largely seductive and sexualized and often indulge fears of forbidden or tabooed sexuality (Skal 1993; Creed 1995; Benshoff 1997; Dyer 2002; Benshoff 2006).

The destructively predatory and hypnotically charming vampire, more so than any of its supernatural contemporaries, is associated with sexuality. This has not so much been posited by a few as it has been established as a canon when both analyzing and understanding the vampire figure in both literature and film. A scholarly tradition of conflating the vampire with sexuality, especially deviant sexuality, suggests as much (Skal 1993; Weiss 1993; Creed 1995; Benshoff 1997; Dyer 2002; Williamson 2005; Benshoff 2006). With a predisposition to seducing, nibbling, biting, penetrating and sucking, the vampire “is perhaps the highest symbolic representation of eroticism” (Jackson 120). While Jackson’s contention is typical of a generation of scholarship that conflates vampires with eroticism broadly, a more recent trend has materialized which focuses on the association between vampirism and homosexuality (Creed 1993; Auerbach 1995; 1997; Benshoff 1997; Dyer 2002; Williamson 2005; Benshoff 2006). These scholars, drawing parallels between the lifestyle of the homosexual and the vampire, largely argue that what makes the vampire attractive, yet frightening to the general public is its embodiment of sexual transgression and difference—queerness at large. More recently, however, both cultural critics and scholars alike have been noting an even more queer (?) and frightening (?) tendency toward the normalization of blood(suckers) within vampire fiction. Referring to the vampire figure in modern vampire fictions like *True Blood* (2008-), *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-) and the *Twilight* Saga (2007-2012), Stephen Marche notes as much when he claims that “our vampires are normal. They’re not Goth, they’re not scary, they’re not even that weird” (March np). Recalling familiar Antebellum chivalry and virtue, modern vampires—gentlemanly, handsome and young—are, indeed, quite normative.

Stephanie Meyer's chaste and conservative *Twilight* saga, especially, demonstrates this tendency toward the normalization of the vampire figure. The *Twilight* books and films which center on a morally righteous family of vampires referred to as "the Cullens", construct an image of vampirism that is white (alabaster-white), moneyed, educated, patriarchal, monogamously coupled, appropriately reproductive, domestic and, as Kathryn Kane poignantly notes, "distinctly unqueer" (Kane 117). A (straight)forward embodiment of the American (neoliberal) dream, Meyer's conservative conceptualization of the vampire as a normal and compliant subject, Kane and I argue, strays from the canon's radical representation of the vampire as a strange and disruptive troublemaker.

Through an in-depth thematic analysis of the five filmic re-imaginings (*Twilight*, *New Moon*, *Eclipse*, *Breaking Dawn: Part 1*, *Breaking Dawn: Part 2*) of Meyer's four-book *Twilight* saga, this chapter explores, develops and challenges Kane's contention that the modern vampire as characterized by Meyer's Edward Cullen is distinctly un-queer. While for the most part I agree with Kane's assertion that Stephanie Meyer's vampire, a figure that has often been championed as being both transgressive and sexually "deviant", is emptied of *some* queerness, I depart with Kane's argument when her definition of "queer" stops at transgression. Following an elucidation of the various conceptualizations of the term 'queer' to make clear how the term will be deployed throughout my project, I trace a history of queerness within the vampire genre to locate Meyer's conceptualization of the vampire within this practice. Claiming that Meyer's representation of the vampire largely breaks with its traditionally queer ancestors, I demonstrate how Edward Cullen, frighteningly less monstrous and more normal than his predecessors, is not wholly capable of parting from a well-established tradition of understanding the vampire as being queer.

Conceptualizing Queerness

Traditionally, vampires have often been thought of as being very queer creatures. *Troubling* (queering; verb) because they challenge and defy the rules and institutions of hetero-patriarchy, *strange* (queer; adjective) because their habits, appetites and appearances are divergent and *homosexual* (queer; noun) because they are often imagined engaging in same-sex relations, vampires are simply ‘queer’. As illustrated, the use of the term ‘queer’, here, does not refer to a particular conceptualization, but to a multitude of meanings. The word ‘queer’, initially utilized to describe something of a strange or unusual nature has undergone significant transformations in both activism and scholarship. For example, while the 1980s’ human rights activists’ reclamation of the pejorative ‘queer’ indicated an identity for non-straight individuals and communities, the use of ‘queer’ in contemporary academia frequently refers not so much to an identity, but to a politic associated with anti-identity attitudes. Thus, “queer” is both a ‘catch-all’ term for the panoply of non-straight identities (a sexual orientation) and an attitude (a positionality) that challenges hegemonic systems and institutions predicated on heteronormativity and the supposed stability of gender and sexuality. Although not the only ways to recognize the vampire as being queer, queer as an organizing identity for both alternative sexuality and oppositional positionality make up the bulk of how the vampire has traditionally been understood to be “queer”.

Most often, these two divergent discourses arise in scholarship regarding the vampire figure in one of three ways. First, the vampire is associated with queerness because the vampire itself is depicted as explicitly engaging in non-straight sexual activity and is therefore assumed to be a gay, lesbian, or bisexual identified character—this association is arguably most commonly discussed (Weiss 1993; Creed 1993, Aurebach 1997; Dyer 2002; Williamson 2005). Although not limited to women, the vampire as an explicitly queer

identified character is most often represented as a lesbian or a bisexual woman (Creed 2002). While few films revel in explicit same-sex male vampirism (*Gayracula* (Roger Earl 1983) being one of the few exceptions), the 1970s and 1980s most remarkably abounded in fetishistic images of lesbian vampirism. Commonly referred to as ‘dykesploitation’ films, films exploiting images of lesbian desire like *The Vampire Lovers* (Roy Ward Baker 1970), *Lust for a Vampire* (Jimmy Sangster 1971), *Daughters of Darkness* (Harry Kümel 1971), *Vampire Orgy*—originally titled “*Vampyres*” (José Ramón Larraz 1975) and *The Hunger* (Tony Scott 1983)—to name only a few—deal exclusively with representations of the vampire as a lesbian or bisexual. Many, most notably Bonnie Zimmerman, Andrea Weiss and Barbara Creed, have noted the metaphorical possibilities between vampirism and lesbianism. This union between predatory vampirism and licentious lesbianism, Creed notes, is a happy one because both lesbians and vampires have been popularly imagined as seducing properly disciplined and gendered subjects away from patriarchal order (Creed 59).

Second, the vampire is associated with a queer identity without explicitly engaging in same-sex behaviour. Put differently, the lifestyle, behaviour, performance, and gestures of the vampire are implicitly compared to those of a non-straight individual. Richard Dyer, particularly, notes the similarities between vampires and lesbian and gay identified individuals in his article “It’s in His Kiss!: Vampirism as Homosexuality, Homosexuality as Vampirism”. Dyer confirms as much when he claims, “what has been imagined through the vampire image is of a piece with how people have thought and felt about homosexual women and men—how others have thought and felt about us, and how we have thought and felt about ourselves” (Dyer 73). Here, Dyer is, of course, alluding to the long history of the West perceiving LGBT identified individuals as sexual and physical predators capable of mass infection (Benshoff 1997; 2006). Amenable to queer readings, vampires, Dyer argues, are

similar to the socially constructed 'homosexual' because they are both steeped in histories marked by secrecy and mystery, isolated from normative society, and sexually voracious among other similarities. There is, of course, nothing inherently 'gay' or 'lesbian' about being private, alienated, or sexual; however, this is how the West has frequently constructed and thus understood LGBT identified individuals. This essentialist notion that queerness has certain innate sensibilities and behaviours makes possible the conflation of the vampire with the 'queer'.

This leads me to the third, and perhaps most significant, conceptualization of 'queer' in scholarship focusing on the vampire figure and its fictions. While the first two applications of 'queer' focus on the longstanding trend of exploring both the explicit and implicit connections between the vampire figure and gays and lesbians, the third application centers on the more recent, yet equally important trend of equating the vampire with an attitude or ethos that refuses to comply with the rules of hegemonic systems (and throughout my work, the capitalization of 'Queer' will refer to this understanding). Accordingly, 'Queer', in this sense, refers less to the supposedly innate and stable identity often coupled with non-straight individuals, and more to the actions taken that are motivated by the intent to challenge, transgress, disrupt and destabilize naturalized systems of oppression such as compulsory heterosexuality, monogamy, temporary able-bodiedness, white supremacy and patriarchy, among others. Put differently, the first two applications rely on the usage of 'queer' as a noun to categorize a set of people with supposedly identifiable differences while the third depends on 'Queer' as a verb to indicate a state or action. Aligned with a positionality, 'Queer' is, therefore, not necessarily contingent on one's sexual identity, but on one's lack of compliance with or mistrust in normalized systems of ordering.

As a positionality that is aligned with disruption (Muñoz 1999), loss (Love 2007), and failure (Halberstam 2011), 'Queer' has understandably been perceived by activists and scholars alike as a politic or ideology of gay culture. However, as mentioned previously 'Queer' is less of an identity-organizing construct and more of a critique of identity (Jagose 1996). Assuming that a sexual orientation, then, like 'gay' even has a culture that possesses unique, fixed behaviours, gestures and attitudes is antithetical to 'Queer' sensibilities. However, this is not to say that queerness, like heterosexuality is not, in part, a performance (Butler 1990). Refusing categorization and definition, Queer sensibilities reject essentialized notions of sexuality which rely on an acceptance of the supposed fixedness and stability of socially constructed binaries like homosexuality and heterosexuality. It is this disruptive potential of Queer, Kathryn Kane maintains, that aligns with the vampire (Kane 107). Regarding the vampire as a "boundary threat", Kane argues that the vampire, like the Queer, has conventionally disrupted ordered ways of knowing, being and relating: "it undoes that which is taken to be fixed" (106). Kane is critical of Meyer's depiction of the "defanged" (107) vampire which, she claims, is "a radical revision" (107). Arguing that Meyer's conservative and sympathetic vampire represents the pinnacle of heteronormative success and order, Kane contends that Meyer's conceptualization of the vampire is decidedly "unqueer" (117).

Correspondingly, Meyer's conservative representation of the vampire is, indeed, quite queer (strange) in its un-Queer (un-troubling) tendencies. Although I agree with Kane's contention that Meyer's vampire has been emptied of much of its potential to trouble, challenge, disrupt, transgress and, hence, queer systems and institutions of power, I disagree with her argument when she severs herself from a tradition of aligning the vampire with gay and lesbian (queer) identity. While Kane briefly acknowledges a scholarly tradition of

conflating the vampire with LGBT identity, her line of argumentation is overwhelmingly and distinctly grounded “in the way the vampire aligns with [Q]ueerness, not gay and lesbian identity” (Kane 105). Even as she suggests, without elaboration, that many compelling connections exist between Meyer’s vampire and homosexuality, Kane divests Edward Cullen of his queerness and homoeroticism. I, on the other hand, discern a queer individual in Meyer’s protagonist vampire, Edward Cullen. While there is nothing particularly revolutionary about the Cullens and none of them are imagined as being explicitly gay identified characters, I return to the metaphor to explore the vampire’s relationship to queerness. Taking direction from Richard Dyer’s conflation of the performances of both vampirism and queerness, I locate Meyer’s conceptualization of the vampire within this tradition.

I have elucidated multiple conceptualizations of the term ‘queer’ to illustrate shifting notions of queerness while creating the parameters of how I will engage with “queer”. While I occasionally refer to the vampire’s Queer potential throughout my work, my use of the term ‘queer’ in this chapter, particularly, refers to the limited and limiting categorical “non-heterosexuality”. Put simply, I employ ‘queer’ to name a group of people and lifestyle that do not comply with dominant, heterosexist ways of being and relating. I turn, now, to a history of queer vampires.

Edward’s Great Queer Ancestors: (Blood)suckers and Man Haters

The vampire is popularly imagined as a caped, white-fanged aristocrat. He is of your Halloween variety—foreign, male, effete, unsympathetic, ghostly, lonely, old, white (very white) and most likely saying “I want to suck your blood”. He is Dracula. Although the image of Dracula informs our popular understanding of the vampire, the vampire is a

versatile monster that has been (vamp)ed and re(vamp)ed throughout the years. As Nina Auerbach begins in her influential text *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, "...there are many Draculas—and still more vampires who refuse to be Dracula or to play him" (Auerbach 1). In all its diversity, the vampire has been represented as being: sympathetic (*Interview With the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles* (Neil Jordan 1994) and *True Blood* (Alan Ball 2008-)); young (*Let the Right One In* (Tomas Alfredson 2008)), female (*Vamp* (Richard Wenk 1986), *The Addiction* (Abel Ferrara 1995) and *Innocent Blood* (John Landis 1992)); lesbian (*Dracula's Daughter* (Lambert Hillyer 1936) and *Lust for a Vampire* (Jimmy Sangster 1971) and *The Vampire Lovers* (Roy Ward Baker 1970)); bisexual (*The Hunger* (Tony Scott 1983)); White (*White Skin "La peau blanche"* (Daniel Roby 2004)); Black (*Blade* (Stephen Norrington 1993) and *Blacula I* (William Crane 1972) and *Scream Blacula Scream* (Bob Kelljan 1973)); Asian (*Thirst "Bakjwi"* (Chan-wook Park 2009)); evil (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Joss Whedon 1997-2003)), good (*Twilight* (Harwicke 2008)); homosocial (*The Lost Boys* (Joel Schumacher 1987)); and a psychosis (*Martin* (George A. Romero 1976)).

These vampires, in all their various forms, have functioned throughout the decades as salient metaphors for a myriad of social and political epidemics afflicting the United States. Vampires have been useful stand-ins for everything from slavery (Lee 2002; Cain 2009), consumption (Marx and Engels 1967; Latham 2002), modernity (Abbot 2006; 2007) and immigration (Newland 2009) to polymorphous sexuality (Auerbach 1997; Zanger 1997), lawyers (Sutherland 2006), menstruation (Creed 1993), sexual disease (Skal 1993) and surveillance (Grandena 2013). Although the vampire figure has symbolized all such meanings among others, the vampire figure has most commonly haunted the popular cultural landscape during moments of sexual panic and crisis to symbolize voracious sexual desire (Marche np). Correspondingly, we see a rise in vampire fiction being produced at the turn of

the century when women were becoming more independent and vampire films were being produced in the United States in both the 1960s during the sexual revolution and in the 1980s during the AIDS epidemic. Although vampire films are, of course, not restricted to these eras, the rise can, perhaps, be best explained by grasping the vampire's fundamental relationship to sexuality.

The vampire's characteristic bite or "kiss", as it is often referred to—yet another indication of the vampire's association with sexuality, situates both predator and prey in an intimate embrace that is at once both satisfying and painful. Although you do not have to read the vampire's transformational bite as being sexual, Richard Dyer (among a number of other writers) says, "an awful lot suggests you should" (Dyer 75). The vampire's erotic bite, consequently, appropriates the place of sex—penetrative sexuality specifically.

Archetypically, this erotic displacement commonly occurs between a predatory male vampire and an unsuspecting female victim; however, both male and female vampires are also regularly imagined freely preying on men, women and children. The vampire's connection to deviant sexuality, then, or queerness—more appropriately—is but a single step in the logic when a vampire bites someone of the same sex. Consequently, the vampire as a character has been integral to the production of gay and lesbian fiction as its participation in same-sex relations has often been overlooked (Dyer 73). The vampire allows authors to explore sexual themes and imagery that may otherwise not be available to them. To illustrate a tradition of queerness, I turn to several of Edward Cullen's queer predecessors who, more frequently than not, revel in same-sex biting—a preference that is markedly homoerotic (or (hemo)erotic), if not homosexual.

Often thought to be the inventor of the vampire, Bram Stoker—the creator of the notorious Count Dracula—is frequently credited, mistakenly, as being the first to imagine the

vampire. Although Stoker's Gothic novel *Dracula* (1897) largely defined our modern understandings of the vampire, Count Dracula is not the first vampire in Western literature. In fact, prior to the conception of the unpleasant Dracula who single-mindedly pursues young women, vampires were considerably more homosocial, more homoerotic—more queer. Nina Auerbach notes as much when she argues that the infamous Dracula “is less the culmination of a tradition than the destroyer of one” (Auerbach 64). Referring to a tradition in which vampires were considerably more friendly and intimate, Auerbach argues that the nineteenth century, pre-*Dracula* vampire “offered an intimacy, a homoerotic sharing, that threatened the hierarchal distance of sanctioned relationships” (60). For example, Samuel Coleridge's unfinished and ambiguous poem “Christabel” (1797), written a century before *Dracula*, tells the story of a young, but dead woman named Lady Geraldine who has inexplicably returned to charm and captivate the young maiden Christabel. Successfully captivated by Lady Geraldine's enchantment, Christabel is transfixed by the sight of a naked Lady Geraldine, her breast specifically. The erotic overtones of the prose are markedly Sapphic, for example:

So half-way from the bed she rose,
 And on her elbow did she recline
 To look at the lady Geraldine,
 Beneath the lamp the lady bowed,
 And slowly rolled her eyes around;
 Then drawing in her breathe aloud,
 Like one that shuddered, she unbound
 The cincture from beneath her breast:
 Her silken robe, and inner vest,
 Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
 Behold! Her bosom and half her side
 A sight to dream, not to tell?
 O shield her! shield sweet Christabel
 (Urisini 32)

This imagery in which Lady Geraldine, partially naked, holds the attentive gaze of Christabel takes advantage of the naked female figure and lesbian desire. Employing her seductive wiles, Lady Geraldine's power, as Auerbach and others have noted, lies in Geraldine's focal breast (Auerbach 26). Correspondingly, Barbara Creed and others (Weiss 1993; Williamson 2005) have argued that "the female vampire's seduction exploits images of lesbian desire" (Creed 59). The imagery of predatory and voracious female intimacy and sexuality is undeniably homoerotic in its vivid illustration of same-sex attraction between Lady Geraldine and Christabel.

Sheridan Le Fanu's supernatural novella *Carmilla* (1871), similarly, focuses on a young girl named Laura who is haunted by dreams of a beautiful and mysterious woman named Carmilla and, later, Millarca—both anagrams of "Mircalla". Both Carmilla and Millarca are eventually revealed in the narrative to be the same person, Countess "Mircalla" Karnstein, a female vampire who expresses a predilection for vampirizing young women—a preference that produces palpable homoerotic underpinnings. Following a suspicious carriage accident, Carmilla is unexpectedly placed under the supervision of Laura's father where she officially meets Laura. They quickly become close friends in spite of Carmilla's abrupt and disruptive mood swings which fluctuate between perplexing rage and unsettling "passionate declarations of her liking for [Laura]" (Le Fanu 82). Distressed by "a cruel love—strange love that would have taken [her] life" (82), Laura expresses confusion: "I experienced a strange tumultuous excitement that was pleasurable, ever and anon, mingled with a vague sense of fear and disgust. I had no distinct thoughts about her while such scenes lasted, but I was conscious of a love growing into adoration, and also of abhorrence. This I know is paradox, but I can make no other attempt to explain the feeling" (87).

Correspondingly, Laura's contradictory feelings of both disgust and adoration resonant with popularly imagined representations of how gay and lesbian identified individuals have thought and felt about themselves as they experience dissenting attraction and desire. Also implied in her statement is the notion that Laura is attracted to and affected by Carmilla in spite of her best efforts to remain unyielding. Similarly, the effect of being bitten by a vampire is one of a biological connection that binds the victim to the prey in spite of reason. Thus, the narrative which ambiguously explores Carmilla's lust and/or hunger for Laura in many ways establishes a tradition of conflating vampirism with homosexuality. One possible implication of such imagery is that women who desire other women are predatory and, more worryingly for a heterosexist, patriarchal culture, capable of ensnaring heterosexual women, transforming them into deviants, sexual or otherwise. Although Christabel toys with lesbian desire, Carmilla effectively establishes the trope of the lesbian vampire as it is this fiction which gets re-appropriated time and again in twentieth century horror films.

After the creation of *Carmilla*, the lesbian vampire as a trope does not significantly return as a common depiction until the 1970s. No longer a thinly disguised metaphor for queer desire, the films of the 1970s represent many of their female vampires as explicitly lesbian and bisexual identified individuals. The Hammer productions, especially, boast lesbian vampires whose "lust knows no boundaries"—a tagline from the so-called Karnstein Trilogy's *Lust for a Vampire* (Sangster 1971). While the instances of lesbianism or queerness discussed in both Christabel and Carmilla are more incidental, the instances in the dykesploitation films of the 1970s—loosely adapted from Le Fanu's "Carmilla"—are purposeful. The female vampires find identity politics and are clearly lesbian (Auerbach 56). Correspondingly, these films exploit imagery of soft core lesbianism that is at once both

threatening and non-threatening. These films offer audiences—overwhelmingly heterosexual and male—the brief opportunity to revel in images of pornographic depictions of lesbianism before the narrative re-establishes order or “proper” ways of relating within the heterosexist matrix. Even as these films narrowly present lesbian desire, they demonstrate a shift in patriarchal and heterosexist structures. These films arguably crop up during a time of burgeoning feminism and a greater awareness of lesbian relations. For Auerbach, films such as these can indeed celebrate alternative expressions of female desire as a result of the shifting attitudes of the 1970s (Auerbach 165). Where lesbian desire was suggested in the nineteenth-century female vampire, lesbianism is specifically addressed in the vampire films of the 1970s.

Although “Carmilla” and “Christabel”—fictions which solely focus on intimacy between women—largely establish the explicit queerness of the vampire figure, a comparable pattern of same-sex intimacy and attraction between men can similarly be traced throughout vampire fiction. Referring to Lord Byron’s “Fragment of a Tale” (1816) and John Polidori’s “The Vampyre” (1819), Nina Auerbach makes clear a connection between the male vampire figure and homosexual writing. Elaborating on this correlation, Richard Dyer’s “It’s in His kiss: Vampirism as Homosexuality, Homosexuality as Vampirism” provides a rich variety of examples to argue that the vampire figure and vampire fiction in general is a cultural phenomena that has been both produced by and about men in the category “queer”: “From *Manor and Har* to Anne Rice’s *Louis, Armond and Lestat*, or from *Vathek* to *Gaywick*, there is a line of vampire Gothic writing that is predominantly queer/gay produced, or which at any rate forms part of a queer/gay male reading tradition” (Dyer 71). Vampire fiction like Gothic fiction, Dyer argues, is often in contention and divergence with hegemonic male culture and narratives (72). Apart from elucidating a tradition of queer

produced vampire fiction, Dyer's most important intervention in the scholarship relies on the metaphorical connections between the construction of the vampire and the queer.

Ultimately arguing that the vampire's metaphorical possibilities account for its traditional and historical relationship to queerness, Dyer explicates how the construction of the vampire is dependent on modern discourses used to articulate the social construction of queerness. Dyer argues that there is a fit between vampire imagery and gay and lesbian identities. Referencing both explicitly queer and heterosexual vampire fictions to illustrate how the visual production of vampirism is homologous with the construction of queerness, Dyer underscores several features that the two identities share: privacy/secretcy, uncontrollable desires and discourses of self-loathing. Although there is nothing inherently private, uncontrollable or self-loathing about the popularly imagined queer, these features, Dyer argues, are integral to modern notions of hegemonic queerness.

I have focused on traditions of both visual and metaphoric queerness represented throughout Western, vampire fiction. A history of textual and visual homoerotic vampires, both male and female, and a metaphoric compatibility begin to explicate my, among other scholar's, reasons for extending the metaphor to contemporary vampire fictions such as *True Blood* (Brace and Arp 2010; Culver 2010; Curtis 2010) and, most importantly, the *Twilight* Saga. Turning now to a more direct analysis of the *Twilight* saga, I will illustrate and reiterate Dyer's claim that "much of the form of the vampirism/sexuality is homologous with the social construction of queerness" (Dyer 77). Although the Cullen family and, more importantly, Edward, in many ways, represents a major revision in the construction of the vampire as monster (Kane 117), Dyer's metaphoric understanding of the vampire largely remains the same. I return to Kane's claim that Edward and the Cullen family are decidedly "distinctly unqueer" (Kane 117) to, instead, argue that Meyer's representation of vampirism

continues to articulate and conflate popular discourses of the “queer”—inflected by gender, race, class and ability (*Chapter 2*)—with the vampire figure.

The Undead Metaphor

Turning to a more direct analysis of Stephanie’s Meyer’s adaptive film series, I will demonstrate how Meyer’s vampire, regarded as being atypical and revisionary (Kane), represents an extension of the very tradition it is believed to disavow. Locating the self-hating, outsider known as Edward Cullen within a tradition of equating the experience of the vampire with the experience of the non-heterosexual, I will illustrate how Meyer’s film series reanimates this undead trend.

As a social construction, homosexuality or, more appropriately, queerness is often perceived to be a fixed and stable category that is thought to have inherent and identifiable characteristics and *ways of being*. While privacy has been integral to the definition of the ideal, sexual citizen (Rubin 1984; Warner 1999; Dyer 2002), which according to the construction does not include queers (Rubin 1984; Warner 1999; Puar 2007), privacy has also been integral to the construction and perception of the queer for other reasons. Popular culture often imagines queer individuals to be private individuals either out of necessity to avoid perceived—yet very real—physical and psychic violence (*Boys Don’t Cry* (Kimberly Peirce 1999); *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee 2005) and/or because the queer individual is ashamed of his/her same-sex attractions (*M. Butterfly* (David Cronenberg 1993); *J. Edgar* (Clint Eastwood 2011)). Correspondingly, it is under the conditions of a heterosexist matrix and often flagrantly homophobic culture that queer individuals are encouraged or, more appropriately, forced—both intuitively and physically—into lives of secrecy. Although there

is nothing inherently private about queer folks, the idea of privacy is frequently perceived to be very important to the queer 'lifestyle'.

Similarly, secrecy and privacy are integral themes within traditional vampire fiction. Noting the similarities between the lifestyles of the queer and vampire, Dyer discusses the importance of the secret, double life in which both vampire and queer must hide their *true* identities. Like the perceived-to-be or self-identified queer, the vampire must conceal its *strange* desires and acts to ensure its survival in a society that ruthlessly maintains normalcy because, as Dyer notes, there is a “sense that being a queer is something one must keep to oneself [which] certainly accords with an idea of the authenticity of private sexuality, but it also is something that one better keep private if one is not to lose a job, family, friends and so on” (Dyer 78). As a result, the vampire’s existence relies on its ability to be consistently regarded as belonging to a group that is not its own—essentially, the vampire is able to “pass” as being human. The sociological phenomena known as “passing”—which not only includes sexual passing, but racial, gender and class passing—is reliant on successful misrepresentation. The concept of passing requires a critical nod of acknowledgment to the constructedness or performance of identities—racial, gender, sexual, class, bodiedness, or otherwise. In the same ways that queer individuals have been understood as possessing an identifiable ethos, *ways of being* and cultural practice (Dyer 1988; Halperin 2012) or, as Dyer aptly observes, “a widespread discourse that there are tell-tale signs that someone ‘is’” (Dyer 78), vampires, similarly, have *ways of being* which, if revealed, threatens their existence. Although Dyer made this comparison twenty odd years ago, this theme of, what is essentially, “passing” which fittingly resonates with the lives and stories of many LGBT identified individuals still rings true for the vampire figure in Meyer’s *Twilight* Saga.

Indeed, Meyer's "beautiful" vampire breed renders statements like Dyer's, "the classic metaphoric statement of the idea of the gay male image of the gay man as a sparkling, agreeable surface masking a hidden depravity, brilliant charm concealing a corrupt and sordid sexuality" (Dyer 80) quite fitting. My attention here is, of course, focused on Dyer's description of the vampire's body as being *sparkling* and *agreeable* because Meyer's vampires—in a break with traditional vampire convention—indeed, sparkle. Among being exceedingly beautiful, Meyer's vampires sparkle when their skin is exposed to the sun. The ironic scene in *Twilight* in which Edward not only reveals himself to be a vampire to Bella, but also exposes his peculiar ability to sparkle has been only one of many sites of incredible amusement and disparagement for viewers of the *Twilight* series. This scene of discovery and Edward's fabulous 'coming out' is instigated by Bella cagily saying, "I know what you are" (*Twilight* 0:50:36). In spite of this 'othering' language which is strikingly similar to Dyer's "tell-tale signs that someone 'is'" (78), Bella does, in fact, have grounds to suggest that Edward is different. After all, the first half of *Twilight* goes to great lengths to demonstrate how Edward's *ways of being* are different, strange, peculiar—queer even. As Bella notes, Edward is "impossibly fast and strong. [His] skin is pale white and ice cold. [His] eyes change colour and sometimes [he] speak[s] like [he is] from a different time. [He] never eat[s] or drink[s] anything. [He doesn't] go out into the sunlight." (*Twilight* 0:49:43). Not only does Edward have "give away aspects" (79) which align him with vampirism, which reinforces Dyer's comparison and argument that both the queer and vampire have "tell-tell signs" (71), Edward has queer "give away aspects" which more closely align him with queerness.

While Dyer argued that vampirism in all its expressions was easy to read as an image of queerness, I argue that Edward Cullen with his revisionary signs more readily associate

him with queerness. Besides possessing the “othering”, yet typical traits of conventional vampirism, Edward sparkles when *out* in sunlight, appears to be repulsed by the sight and smell of Bella and, perhaps most importantly, will not and/or cannot bite or have sex with Bella—surely, the type of concealed “sordid sexuality” (80) Dyer was referring to previously. These particular additions to the vampire mythos are unquestionably queer behaviour for a vampire (Sommers 155). But, more importantly, are these additions not queer behaviour for an adolescent male too? If only stereotypically indicative of the *ways of being* “gay”, these features align Edward more readily with queerness. Stephen Marche suggests as much when he claims that Edward resembles the gay, bestfriend construction:

Edward... is a sweet, screwed-up high school kid, and at the beginning of his relationship with Bella, she is attracted to him because he is strange, beautiful, and seemingly repulsed by her. This exact scenario happened several times in my high school between straight girls and gay guys who either hadn't figured out they were gay or were still in the closet. (March np)

Although Marche's hasty claim is quite reductive and essentializing, it reinforces Dyer's comparison between the rhetoric and discourse of queer and vampire spotting and, more importantly, it locates queerness within the hetero and abstinent *Twilight* saga.

Conventionally, monsters emerge to disrupt and challenge hegemonic ideas of the normal. Consequently, monsters, including vampires, evade rules, mores and order. Renowned for especially evading *sexual* rules, decorum and order, the vampire's appetite, in spite of its sexual orientation, “always exceeds and defies cultural mores” (Weinstock 2012). At the whim of its appetite, the vampire has traditionally been depicted as indiscriminately feeding on both men and women. Consequently, the vampire, unable to control its hunger, has often been depicted in same-sex biting, penetrating and sucking. This imagery which imagines two men or two women invading the body of another of the same sex has been one

of limited visual representations of homoeroticism in popular culture. Thus, the vampire's voracious and irrepressible appetite has afforded it with the opportunity to engage, even if only platonically or temporarily, in same-sex relations.

Recently, however, vampires have been depriving themselves of this natural, yet evil instinct in an attempt to be civil and moral—HBO's *True Blood* and Meyer's *Twilight* series being the most blatant expressions of this trend. Although not the first to depict the vampire as attempting to control its appetite, Stephanie Meyer is the first to depict her vampire as being successful and content while doing so. Where Anne Rice's self-loathing and sympathetic Louis is ultimately unable to manage his natural inclination toward drinking human blood, Stephanie Meyer's resolute and controlled Edward ultimately perfects repressing his bodily appetites. Although drinking the blood of humans is perhaps the most distinguishable and significant feature of the vampire as well as its greatest pleasure, Meyer's vampire, in a mark of disinterest with this convention, abstains from feeding on humans. Referred to as "vegetarian" vampires, Edward Cullen explains, "my family and I, we are different from the others of our kind. We only hunt animals. We learned how to control our thirst" (*Twilight* 0:54:20). In interest of leading a moral life, Meyer's vampire rejects and denounces an inherent part of its self-identity because vampirism and morality are thought to be incompatible.

Correspondingly, if we are to understand the vampire's innate and pleasurable act of sucking the blood of humans as a thoroughly Victorian displacement of the traditional sex act, recognizing its refusal to feed on humans as an attempt to abstain from sexual intercourse, then—same-sex or otherwise—is, but a step in the logic. Put simply and directly, Meyer's Byronic Edward not only controls the biological impulse to bite and suck human blood, but, more significantly, controls his voracious impulse to penetrate and suck the

bodily fluids of his victims. Interestingly, Edward is only ever visually imagined as haunting, biting, penetrating and sucking male bodies (save that of Bella's which is always out of necessity to save her life).

In a flashback which reveals a pre-vegetarian Edward, Edward describes himself as a monster. While the choice of language is interesting because it resonates with how LGBT identified individuals have often been represented and, thus, thought of (Benshoff 1997; Dyer 2002; Benshoff 2006), the language also reveals a judgement. This fictional condemnation and repression of a (super)natural instinct eerily resembles an existent discourse which condemns natural feelings of same-sex attraction and desire. This existent discourse, informally referred to as "Pray the Gay Away", endeavours to reconcile homosexuality with religious beliefs, Christianity specifically. The fundamentalist practice of attempting to convert folks identified as "homosexuals" into "heterosexuals" resembles the Cullen family's practice of converting vampires into vegetarian vampires. In the same ways that the Cullen family believe that the desire to and act of suck(ing) the blood of humans is incompatible with a moral life, many extremist Christians believe that same-sex desire is incompatible with a moral life. Given Meyer's religious standing and the text's overriding didactic messages of piety and restraint, the association between Meyer's fictional family who abstain from the perverse bodily desire to consume blood and individuals like Alan Chambers—the longstanding president of Exodus International, the organization which has single-handedly become synonymous with the phrase "Pray the gay away"—who "though he still has same-sex attractions, he has never been tempted to stray" (Crow np). Both bodily desires, thirst for blood and attraction to same-sex, are similarly constructed as being purely biological and instinctual and both pious groups, the Cullen family and organizations like

Exodus International, champion similar ideologies that maintain that those very instincts can be overcome with *just* a little effort and determination.

Gripping Edward's hand, Carlisle (Peter Facinelli) leans into Edward's dying and bed-bound body and tenderly whispers words, unbeknownst to the viewer, into Edward's ear. Following this, Carlisle thrusts his bite into Edward's exposed neck, holding Edward's face still as his body writhes in agony. In the violent moment Edward is pictured screaming, gasping for air as his eyes open wide in pain. A victim of circumstance, Carlisle is depicted as experiencing feelings of regret and possibly even abhorrence as he removes himself from Edward's penetrated and infected body. Carlisle is demonstrated as possessing immense focus and restraint: "not many of us have the restraint to do that" (*Twilight*). Carlisle's decision to 'turn' a dying Edward is one based in compassion and reason instead of impulse and instinct which distinguishes Meyer's brand of vampirism from her predecessors. Even as Carlisle is seen as producing a monster, Carlisle is sympathetically rendered as the morally righteous patriarch who is capable of controlling his desires.

Another feature of the vampire narrative that Dyer claims can be easily read metaphorically as an image of queer sexuality and experience is the discourse of self-loathing that surrounds the vampire. Discourses of self-loathing are essential to the construction of the sympathetic vampire, in particular (Williamson 63). As many have noted, the sympathetic vampire is a vampire who loathes its condition or identity but is essential and ultimately constrained by it (Williamson 2005; Dyer 2002). Unlike the unsympathetic vampire, the sympathetic vampire despises and feels contempt for its perceived and/or self-identified culture and personal identity. Unlike the traditional vampire, imagined as a predator and perpetrator, the sympathetic vampire is regarded as being a victim of circumstance (Williamson 63). Again, Dyer relates this imagery to the queer identity and

experience. Dyer posits that queer readers of vampire fiction may very well identify with the ‘curse’ of vampirism because the framing language used to understand and empathize with the melancholic vampire reflects modern, bio-medical discourses about the “curse” of “homosexuality”. With the medicalization and essentializing of “homosexuality”, individuals identified as queer were more frequently pitied than abhorred. Indeed, the twentieth century “argument that ‘we/they can’t help it’” (Dyer 81) which has often taken the form of “a mix of distaste for homosexuality with a recognition that it cannot be resisted” (81) is similarly employed within the vampire narrative. Respectively, the sympathetic vampire innately “can’t help it” and its awareness of its biological disposition is often met with feelings of regret, disgust and disappointment. This identity crisis which bears a striking resemblance to the consequences of internalized homophobia, as Dyer contends, rings true for forlorn queer folks across North America.

Throughout the series, Edward experiences several identity crises in which he struggles to accept his seemingly inherent queerness as a vampire. As a creature that has instinctively perverse desires—a voracious thirst for human blood, Edward is, perhaps, fittingly imagined as experiencing crises which are almost always surrounded by language of self-loathing: “All the men I killed were monsters. And so was I” (*Breaking Dawn: Part I* 0:05:40). This language, as Dyer notes, has been informed by the modern queer. In *Breaking Dawn: Part I*, Edward recalls a time when he enjoyed killing humans. Edward is demonstrated biting the neck of a man and when he explains this to Bella, he emphasizes that he only *penetrated* (my language) men. This scene is informed by language of regret and disgust—“I was a monster” (*Breaking Dawn: Part I* 0:5:56). Although Edward is meant to be read as regretting his decision to *kill* men, I argue that this scene can be alternatively read as an instance of Edward's homo-erotic panic especially because this 'coming out' scene is in

response to Bella jeeringly saying “What, you're not a virgin?” (0:05:12). The language of the forbidden—the impermissible, combined with Bella's enquiry about Edward's previous sexual exploits contributes to the reading of Edward as an ashamed queer. In addition, these scenes in which Edward struggles with his identity often occur when Edward warns Bella of the dangers of his 'condition' to discourage her from its *destruction*—“I'm the world's most dangerous predator” (*Twilight* 0:53:20). Thus, Edward's continuous and purposeful distancing from his “condition” render his actions and attitudes self-loathing.

While Edward attempts to purge himself of any vampireness by refusing to live like a vampire as demonstrated by his choice to maintain a 'vegetarian diet', the villainous vampires—perhaps only villainous because they embrace their nature which stands in direct opposition to the nature of humans, epitomize the self-identified, out and proud queer because they embrace and revel in their desires (*Chapter 2*). Whereas Edward denies himself the pleasures, desires and experiences of the vampire, James, the most celebratory of his differences, embraces his supposed genetic nature and all that it entails. Thus, I draw a parallel between the frequently self-hating Edward and the construction of the ‘closeted’ homosexual, both of which are popularly imagined as being incapable of embracing their ‘true’ or ‘authentic’ self. The coded language of the 'closeted' homosexual which is equated with the vampiric condition of Edward is just, yet, another example of how Edward Cullen can be understood as participating in the constructed *ways of being* queer.

Conclusion

Returning to Kane's assertion that the Cullens “are vampires that are distinctly unqueer” (Kane 117), I want to make clear that while, I understand Meyer's representation of

vampirism as participating in a tradition of conflating queer and vampire identities, I do not claim that the Cullens are Queer creatures. As many have noted (Creed 1993; Auerbach, Boyer 2011), vampires have traditionally represented “those of us who defy definition or exist within multiple categories, such as those who identify as mixed race or bisexual” (Boyer 25) and have, therefore, been considered Queer. The Cullens, as Kane contends, *are* decidedly ‘unqueer’; however, as previously mentioned queer and Queer are not synonymous with one another. In recognizing that Meyer’s representation of the vampire is not wholly free from traditional associations with queer identity, I seek to explore what a creature of normative behaviour and queer impulses represents in early twenty-first century North America where social attitudes toward gay and lesbian identified individuals are shifting. Refusing to discard the metaphoric possibilities of associating vampirism with queer identities, I will consider what these normative queers embody in *Chapter 2*.

Chapter 2

The Backlash(ing) of Queers: Domesticating the Vampire

“The reasons for Obama's about-face [regarding his support for gay marriage], as he explained them, seemed perfectly normal. His thoughts, he said, had gone to his own staffers ‘who are in incredibly committed, monogamous relationships, same-sex relationships, who are raising kids together.’ He'd thought about the troops, fighting on his behalf, yet still facing the constraint of not being ‘able to commit themselves in a marriage.’”—Molly Ball, a staff writer, quoting President Barack Obama, *The Atlantic*

“In Auerbach’s politically tinged perspective, the conservative backlash of the 1980s gives us vampires who are ‘constricted in their potential, their aspirations, and their effect on mortals’ (Auerbach 165)”. —Louis H. Palmer, *Vampires in the New World*

Backlashes

Toward the end of the twentieth century, Susan Faludi identified a paradox that was (and, arguably, still is) plaguing the lives of American women: gender equality had supposedly been achieved, yet women were experiencing inequality. Responding to publications and magazines, Faludi noticed that women had much to celebrate as they were experiencing unprecedented gains in the domestic and public spheres due to feminism’s progressive strides, yet were miserable and confused for exactly this reason. Blaming feminism and the women’s liberation movement, both popular and academic literature, Faludi argues, “held the campaign for women’s equality responsible for nearly every woe besetting women, from mental depression to meager savings accounts, from teenage suicides to eating disorders to bad complexions” (Faludi xi). In opposition to dominant attacks against feminism, Faludi suggests that women’s unhappiness can be better attributed to the overwhelmingly disproportionate inequalities experienced by women in the education system, work force, government, home and bedroom: “But what has made women unhappy in the last decade is not their ‘equality’—which they don’t yet have—but the rising pressure

to halt, and even reverse, women's quest for that equality" (xviii). Ultimately arguing that women of the 1980s were experiencing "a backlash, an attempt to retract the handful of small and hard-won victories that the feminist movement did manage to win for women" (xvii), Faludi suggests that backlashes against women were intended to convince the public that women's emancipation was the actual enemy of American women and America at large.

These backlashes, she suggests, which were hardly coincidental and, instead, triggered by illusory advancements in women's rights, pre-emptively limited women before any large-scale progress could occur. Although Faludi focalizes on media at large as the backlash's main executor, she also identifies Hollywood and the film industry as secondary contributors to the backlash against women: arguing that, as a compelling and powerfully persuasive tool, popular culture "was in a position to drive these lessons home more forcefully than the media" (113). Consequently, the blockbusters of the 1980s, steeped in the anti-feminist discourse sparked by the media, depicted single and independent career women as being depressed, neurotic, hysterical, and even homicidal because they were too free, too liberated. Faludi notes that the 1980s were inundated with images of women as being either subservient and pleasant or aggressive and independent. Women on screen were either being snapped back into good wives and mothers (*Terms of Endearment* (James Brooks 1983); *The River* (Mark Rydell 1984); *Moonstruck* (Norman Jewison 1987)) or were being violently and graphically punished for their gender transgressions as adulteresses and businesswomen (*Fatal Attraction* (Adrian Lyne 1987); *Overboard* (Garry Marshall 1987); *The Good Mother* (Leonard Nimoy 1988)). Lest women get the wrong impression that liberation was good, let alone pleasing, cautionary tales of self-sufficient women being 'put in their place' were celebrated on the big screen. This is, in part, according to Faludi, how America attempted to thwart the small victories of women's progress.

Similarly, I argue that North America is currently experiencing another backlash; however, this backlash is not specific to women. The first decade of twenty-first century America, interestingly, has witnessed unparalleled, ‘inch-by-inch’ gains for the constitutive ‘other’. Traditionally understood in relation to the white, middle-to-upper-class, able-bodied, heterosexual, male subject, the ‘other’ has often represented everyone from *thieving* immigrants to *shadowy* terrorists, from *predatory* homosexuals to *sneaky* trans folks, from the *abject* poor to the *useless* disabled to *unpredictable* women. Twenty-first century America *has* witnessed measured progress for many underprivileged and prejudiced groups. The presidential Democratic primaries of 2008, for instance, promised America either its first female (Hilary Rodham Clinton) or African-American (President Barack Obama) presidential candidate which was marked by many as a substantial stride forward for women and non-white folks.

Gay rights, particularly, have experienced the largest expansion in American history in the last decade. While the first half of the decade occupied itself with fighting for legal equality in marriage and the military, the second half began to benefit from these efforts. Greater support for same-sex couples provoked the revocation of several discriminatory policies like “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” as well as influenced the creeping possibility of gays and lesbians achieving legal equality. More recently, the election of 2012 resulted in Tammy Baldwin—“the nation’s first openly gay senator”—being elected as Wisconsin’s representative and same-sex marriage equality was, for the first time, granted by Maine, Maryland and Washington (Cox np). These relatively small, yet significant wins for the lesbian and gay movement register as progress for many.

The movement’s recent work can be recognized and celebrated for achieving the second largest gains in legal and social equality since the stirrings of the Gay Liberation

movement. The movements' focus on marriage equality, adoption and military inclusion has, for many, been the first logical step in attaining equality for gay identified individuals: "The extension of equal benefits for all legally married spouses, regardless of sexual orientation, is a huge step forward for our families who for far too long have been excluded and cut off from support" (Eckert np). The statement, typical of pro-marriage rhetoric, captures the desperate and reasonable need for institutional and national recognition. Marriage as a privileging institution bestows upon its members many legal, social and economic benefits (Moats 2004; Corvino 2012; Sterngass 2012). Consequently, the fight for marriage equality and military inclusion makes sense.

Although many have championed the gay and lesbian movement for the social work it has accomplished, many have expressed fear and distrust with the movement. The movement's rather recent focus on marriage equality and military inclusion has been considered a misguided endeavour among many queer scholars and activists (Warner 1999; Willse and Spade 2005; Polikoff 2008; Sycamore 2008; Conrad and Nair 2010; Spade 2011). At the turn of the century, many theorists and activists took note of the shift and began to express a wariness with and mistrust of the United States' LG (I exclude the 'B' and 'T', here, because I contest the meaningfulness of the movement's intended inclusiveness) movement. The misguided focus on marriage equality and military inclusion, they argue, fail to meaningfully address the interlocking systems of oppression that restrict and endanger the lives of people of color, people with disabilities, immigrants, genderqueer and trans individuals. Additionally, the movement's normalization of specific relationships and bodies, Michael Warner and others (Rubin 1984; Puar 2007) contend, always and inevitably comes at the expense of constitutive "others". In favor of a campaign that more broadly acknowledges the complexities and pluralities of sex and desire, Warner argues that the

needs and wishes of LGBT individuals would be better met by, instead, discarding the pursuit of normality and its heteronormative trappings.

Recalling Faludi, backlashes are incited when increased possibility for equality (for a privileged few) becomes available and small advancements (incapable of dismantling or even acknowledging interlocking systems of oppression) are garnered. In consideration of Faludi's argument about the nature of "backlashes", I investigate the relationship between the recent victories of the gay and lesbian movement with the fairly recent depiction of the normative queer—popularized by twenty-first century television shows like *Will and Grace* (David Kohan 1998-2005), *Modern Family* (Christopher Lloyd 2009-), and *The New Normal* (Ryan Murphy 2012-). Specifically, I explore the representation and politics of the vampire figure—acknowledging the considerable and extensive history of associating the vampire with gay individuals and gay identity (*Chapter 1*)—within the film adaptations of Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* saga. Drawing a parallel to Faludi's argument that the film industry in the 1980s participated in a backlash toward women precisely when gender equality was becoming a greater possibility, I argue that Meyer's *Twilight*, similarly, participates in a backlash toward queers (represented by the vampire figure) at a time when gender-normative, non-heterosexual individuals are achieving greater legal equality—not to be confused with social equality.

This backlash against queers as represented by the normative queer vampire, is no longer interested in violently eradicating or pathologizing the deviant subject—as was the case for both fictional vampires and gay folks prior to the 1970s (Benshoff 1997; 2006; Griffiths 2006). The backlash, is, instead, I argue, invested in the assimilation of the *abnormal* monster into *normal* society. Ultimately, I argue that Meyer's tame and conservative vampire, conventionally represented as being either sexually ambiguous or

outside the norm and therefore commonly embraced and championed by gay culture, is symptomatic of a modern culture that is becoming more accepting of odd, strange, and/or queer individuals (read as individuals that evade normative sexuality); however, this greater acceptance comes with the invisibilized understanding that individuals marked by difference will be afforded both social and legal privilege and rights by moving closer to the dominant, the normal, the *right*. In the same ways that the backlash against women in mainstream film, outlined by Faludi, seemed apolitical and unorganized, I argue that the seemingly trifling and irrelevant domestication and normalization of the vampire in Meyer's series is representative of a backlash against queer folks.

Politics of Sexuality

In the relatively recent fight for gay rights, there have been many political approaches to securing equality among heterosexuals and the myriad of sexual identities. Since the political agitations of the 1960s (Stonewall), gay assimilation (also referred to as gay liberation) and queer radicalism have been considered the dominant camps of opposing activism and advocacy for gay rights (Warner 1999; Moats 2004; Sycamore 2008; Corvino 2012; Sterngass 2012). Although these ideological camps of activism fail to properly contain the complexities of the individual advocate, they serve to categorize two radically disparate viewpoints. While gay assimilationist have largely been concerned with the inclusion and tolerance of *gay* and *lesbian* identified individuals, queer radicals have largely been focused on the exclusion of oppressed individuals at large—including, but not limited to persons identified as bisexual, trans, genderqueer, of color, poor and/or disabled. Interested in the mainstreaming of gay folks, the assimilationist agenda seeks inclusion in established systems, while the queer radical agenda endeavors to critique and reject these very systems.

Many Queer scholars have voiced concern for/with the longstanding myopic focus of the LGBT agenda in North America. Repudiating the movement's central focus on gays in the military and, most significantly, same-sex marriage equity, Michael Warner, particularly, discusses the agenda's attempt to normalize and desexualize gays as being misguided and in the interest of select identities. Rather than either devising a radical reimagining of sexuality, family and relationality and/or challenging institutions and structures which disproportionately privilege, the movement promotes the reappropriation of traditional and restrictive values and institutions.

This type of agenda, assimilationist in function, has been referred to as "homonormative". Homonormativity, as defined by Lisa Duggan in her article "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism", "is a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumerism" (Duggan 23). Working to downplay homosexuality as a form of significant otherness, homonormative conventions mark individuals within lesbian and gay communities as indistinguishable from heterosexuals (Duggan). In line with the gay assimilationist viewpoint(s), homonormative politics are quite different from radical Queer politics which not only strive to deemphasize the importance of sexual identity politics, but address LGBT issues as they intersect with gender, race, class, ability and capitalism. Conversely, homonormative politics prioritize issues that involve the mainstreaming and thus normalization of gay identities. Focus on the legislation of same-sex marriage, adoption and military service as the primary concern of most lesbian and gay activist groups exemplifies homonormative rhetoric and discourses. Thus, rather than

questioning or challenging heteronormative structures and institutions like marriage and child rearing, homonormativity simply asks for inclusion in the existing structures.

The quotation at the beginning of this chapter correspondingly illustrates homonormative rhetoric and discourses. Barack Obama's statement in support of same-sex marriage, to reiterate Duggan's claim, "does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions" (23), but, indeed, "upholds and sustains" (23) the importance of "committed, monogamous relationships", "raising kids together" and "marriage" (Atlantic np). In fact, these heteronormative institutions are provided as justification for the legislation of same-sex marriage. The implicit logic of the statement is that homosexuals are, in fact, 'just like' heterosexuals because they participate in the same institutions heterosexuals do. Obama's logic reflects homonormative discourse which situates queer folks as being no different than the heterosexuals in which they want to emulate.

This assimilationist ideology that strives to have queer individuals be recognized as being similar, if not normal, resonates with the discourses employed in Meyer's text. Although the *Twilight* series is not explicitly a text about queer sexuality, it is a text about queer creatures. A text about vampires, monsters and individuals not like us, the *Twilight* saga implicitly explores themes of normality and abnormality. Consequently, the text carries several persistent and enduring, yet embedded and invisible notions about normality. These notions are so pervasive and established in Western culture that they rarely get questioned or challenged. I argue that the *Twilight* series, in its production of normality and abnormality, is reproducing problematic discourses that reappropriate homonormative rhetoric. Much of the rhetoric and many of the discourses that surround the assimilationist approach in the struggle for gay rights, I contend, is reappropriated by *Twilight's* Cullen family and Edward, in particular. Like homonormative queers, vampires who endeavour to squelch their abnormal

desires and who, instead, channel their energies into fostering incredibly committed, monogamous relationships and raising children are sympathetically rendered as valuable individuals.

Homonormative politics, as highlighted in Obama's statement, problematically recuperate sexual hierarchies which, of course, intersect with hierarchies of gender, race, class and ability. In 1984, Gayle Rubin outlined a politics of sexuality in her infamous article "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality". According to Rubin, subjects "never encounter the body unmediated by the meanings that cultures give to it" (Rubin 7) and Modern Western society, Rubin contends, "appraise sex acts according to a hierarchal system of value" (9). With reproductive heterosexuals as the privileged category, Rubin maintains, that unmarried, yet coupled monogamous heterosexuals and "stable, long-term lesbian and gay male couples verging on respectability" follow in the sexual system of value. These groups are bestowed with certain social rewards and privileges like "respectability, legality, social and physical mobility, institutional support and material benefits" (9). Below these groups "dykes and promiscuous gay men" (9) hover just above the lowliest group which, according to Rubin's hierarchy, includes trans identities, sex workers and pedophiles (9). As the unprivileged groups, these sexual identities and behaviours are "subjected to a presumption of mental illness, disreputability, criminality, restricted social and physical mobility, loss of institutional support, and economic sanctions" (9). Thus, a politics of sexuality that seeks to reveal how "normal" and/or "healthy" a sexual relationship is based on its position to the privileged category is not a radical politic.

I argue that this type of un-radical politic, the assimilation of heteronormative ideals and constructs into queer culture and identity, is deployed in the *Twilight* saga whether consciously or unconsciously to mark "normal" and "healthy" queers from "abnormal" and

“unhealthy” queers. This is best exemplified by the Cullen family, Edward specifically, and their reappropriation of traditional American values, such as virtue, loyalty and sacrifice, and institutions, such as marriage and family building. In fact, Meyer’s films glorify heteronormative structures and institutions by upholding the importance of compulsory, heteronormative coupling, monogamy, the practice of abstinence before marriage, matrimony, the nuclear family and organic child rearing which the film, *Breaking Dawn: Part I*, provides for Bella and Edward in spite of all supposed folkloric and supernatural odds. Although a queer character, if at the very least because he represents something not normal, Edward not only takes part in these institutions and structures, but cherishes and upholds them as markers of the good and healthy, normal life. Although Edward will never be able to fully attain a normal life because we are told that vampires are—like queers are imagined to be—intrinsically abnormal folk, Edward can acquire most of the socio-sexual markers of Rubin’s valuable, sexual citizen. Put more forwardly, Edward cannot change his biological and disreputable impulses, but he can conduct himself in a manner deemed appropriate enough to afford him with the opportunity to border respectability and, thus, receive the social privileges and rewards listed above.

Correspondingly, the Cullens and Edward, in a rejection of their “natures”, align themselves with normality by upholding and participating in both social and sexual (heteronormative) value systems and institutions assumed to be natural to humans. Accordingly, the Cullens are valued as respectable figures—in spite of their literal and figurative queerness—because their sexuality is “heterosexual, marital, monogamous, reproductive, and non-commercial” and “coupled, relational, within the same generation and occur[ing] at home” (10). According to Rubin’s hierarchy of sexuality, their sexuality and

ways of relating does not violate distinctions of “normal” and “healthy” sexuality, but bolsters it by blindly accepting the supposed “normalness” of it.

This message is nowhere more blatantly stated in the text than when Bella implores Edward to have sex with her. We are told that Edward refuses to have sexual intercourse with Bella because “Edward is old school” (*Eclipse* 1:12:36) and, more importantly, her human scent is most potent and, thus, attractive to Edward’s vampiric senses when she is sexual aroused. But in desiring to have sex with Edward as a human being before being turned into a vampire, Bella pleads “You said you wanted me to have every human experience” (*Eclipse* 1:15:10). Although sex is, but one of the “human experiences” Edward hopes for Bella, this statement and scene alludes to the stakes in sexual conduct. A desire for human experience is relegated to a select few, yet privileged experiences which are considered human and, thus, good. Edward *does* want Bella to have every human experience and he *does* want to have sexual relations with Bella, but for Edward the human experience is conflated with “normal” sexuality: “Believe me I want to. I just want to be married to you first” (*Eclipse* 1:17:10). More concerned for her “virtue” (*Eclipse* 1:17:29) than the threat of vampirization, Edward conflates not desire, perverse or otherwise, with normality and/or “human experiences”, but proper socio-sexual conduct—a feature that aligns him not only with religious morality, but with homonormative rhetoric and discourses.

Among the moral didacticism, the film’s fascination with marriage among sexual politics serves to normalize the vampires. Meyer’s text, I argue, draws from gay liberationist strategies that have situated the gay individual as being no different than its straight counterpart. Drawing a parallel to the rhetoric and discourses of the North American gay and lesbian movement, I argue that the *Twilight* series employs homonormative propaganda and strategies to articulate the normalness of the vampire. In an attempt to normalize the

vampire, the series embraces an invisibilized politics of normal which requires the vampires to repudiate their perverse desire—a similar tactic that the North American gay movement took in the 1990s.

According to Michael Warner, the North American lesbian and gay movement experienced a drastic, political shift in the early 1990s. Warner contends that a large faction of the gay movement stopped embracing a politics of sexual pride and, instead, embraced a politics of shame (Warner 42). Recognizing that “power lies almost exclusively on the normal side” (44), the gay movement, he argues, underwent a desexualisation in hopes of garnering more support (legal and social) from the heterosexual majority. As a result, the movement’s embrace of “normal” began with “divorcing homosexuality from sex and then from politics” (60). Similarly, the *Twilight* text, I argue, divorces desire from sex and politics. The Cullens are virtually ‘just like’ their human counterparts, save that for their strange desires and impulses. We are told that the only thing that distinguishes the vampires from humans is their desire and lust for blood; however, according to Meyer’s text, if that desire is controlled and restrained, then, vampires—positioned as fundamentally different—can be ‘just like’ us. By controlling their desires and embracing institutions and values considered ‘normal’, the Cullen family moves from creatures of disgust to creatures of respectability. Accordingly, just as “marriage, in short, would make for good gays—the kind who would not challenge the norms of straight culture, who would not flaunt sexuality, and who would not insist on living differently from ordinary folk” (Warner 113), marriage would, similarly, make for good vampires.

I have provided a concise description of the goals and principles of the two dominant, yet largely opposing viewpoints involved in the struggle for both legal and social equality for queer individuals. I have elucidated the histories and rhetoric of both the gay assimilationists

and radicals' approach to draw a parallel between the normalization of queers and vampires. Meyer reveals that vampirism can be good—normal, even. If the *unnatural* desires of the vampire and queer *cannot be* squelched, the *Twilight* series reveals that the lifestyles that are assumed to belong to those desires *can be*. As a result, the queer lifestyle of Edward ultimately becomes indistinguishable from a normative human life. Duggan's homonormative politics provide a useful platform for addressing and discussing Edward's normalizing tendencies and his desire to be seen as the same. I use homonormativity to explain Edward's desire to be perceived as normal because Meyer deploys normalizing discourses of gender, sexuality, race, class and consumerism to validate Edward as a low-risk, dependable protagonist within the *Twilight* saga.

I argue that the *Twilight* series nourishes homonormative propaganda that positions queers as being 'just like' heterosexuals. A politics—like homonormativity—that distances queer individuals who *do not* want to invest their time, energy and resources into monogamy, let alone the institution of marriage (not to suggest that they are synonymous) and/or militarism from queer individuals who *do* want to invest their time, energy and resources into those very institutions is not a radical politic. This type of politic recuperates a sexual hierarchy which positions a particular “type” of homosexual as being 'just like' heterosexuals. This structure only encourages and reifies discriminatory, sexual and gender “othering” while sustaining heteronormative institutions.

Good Queers vs. Bad Queers

My attention to sexuality does not negate the importance of dealing with how multiple and cross-cutting systems of inequality, namely gender, race, class and ability, intersect in the *Twilight* saga. Although Duggan's homonormative politics provide a useful

formulation for addressing the heterosexist politics of the *Twilight* saga, her definition fails to meaningfully address race, ability and class. If, as I have argued, vampirism represents gay identity and specific *ways of being* (*Chapter 1*) and the Cullens and Edward, in particular, represent a particular ‘type’ of gay politic, what do the other vampires and threatening figures represent? The characters who pose a threat to Bella and Edward and the normality they covet are different. Queer, in the traditional usage, the monsters in the *Twilight* series are imbued with racial and bodily distinctions. Their difference not only lies in their refusal to control their thirst or their natures, but in the racial, sexual and bodily coding of difference. Referring to Jasbir Puar and her discussion of national queerness, I will illustrate how the text discursively privileges *select* queer bodies (the Cullens) by distancing itself from others (the werewolves and bad vampires) which are, perhaps, purposely marked by difference.

According to Puar, the confluence of sexuality and American politics has recently afforded ‘the queer’ national inclusion; however, this particular form of “sexual exceptionalism” which she terms “homonationalism” is dependent on the “segregation and disqualification of racial and sexual others from the national imaginary” (Puar 2). Traditional heteronormative ideologies, she argues, are becoming interchangeable with homonormative ideologies (2). By replicating the same hierarchical ideals concerning the maintenance of dominance in terms related to race, class, gender, and nation-state, “this brand of homosexuality operates as a regulatory script not only of nonnormative gayness, queerness, or homosexuality, but also of the racial and national norms that reinforce these sexual subjects” (2). As a result, the effects of homonationalism, Puar explicates, are to discursively distance white, liberated, patriotic and Western gays from non-white, repressed, terroristic and foreign queers.

To connect these ideas to my earlier discussion, I return to Gayle Rubin and her hierarchy of sexuality. As previously stated, Rubin asserts that a non-heterosexual, gay and/or queer individual may be granted social respectability and national inclusion if his/her sexuality was coupled, monogamous, private and so on. In line with this thinking, Puar, recognizing that “homosexuality is no longer a priori excluded from nationalist formations” (2), essentially amends Rubin’s definition of the valuable, sexual citizen to include “a commitment to the global dominant ascendancy of whiteness” (2). Put simply, homonationalism affords only certain queer bodies national recognition and inclusion.

Consequently, if vampirism, as I and others have argued, represents gay identities or *ways of being* and the Cullens’ brand of vampirism is particularly assimilationist in that they want to blend and live in peace with humans, how are we to understand the other vampires and monsters? Meyer’s supernatural creatures, both vampire and werewolf, both good and bad, are victims of their ‘condition’ and are, therefore, worthy of sympathy. Vampirism, then, does not necessarily constitute the depravity and wickedness of the ‘bad’ vampires and monsters. Instead, the ‘bad’ vampires and monsters’ wickedness, I argue, can be attributed to the racial and bodily difference they physically embody. Returning to Puar’s homonationalist subject, I argue that the Cullens’ propensity for the good and normative, with its invisibilized notions of white superiority and ableism, distinguishes them from the others. I argue that the “split between, proper (national) homosexuality (...queerness?) and improper (colored) nonnational queerness” (Puar 78) can be demonstrated in Meyer’s films through the juxtaposition of the Cullens/Edward/Bella—good, white homonormative subjects—and the Quileute tribe/Jacob/Laurent—bad, non-white queer subjects. Turning to the main ‘othered’ characters, I will illustrate how the *Twilight* series which champions the Cullens—queer, yet good monsters—embody homonationalist discourse.

While I have made the argument that the construction of vampirism fittingly resonates with the construction of the queer identity, the werewolves may also be seen as being particularly queer creatures. Queer because they represent an abnormal condition, the werewolves symbolize an “improper (colored) nonnational queerness” (78). Although their ways of being associate them less with the popularly imagined gay identity, their inherent strangeness casts queerness upon them. Often employed as a threat to the heterosexual union of Bella and Edward and the normative Cullens—who, I have previously argued, represent “good” queers who merely seek to blend—the werewolves are distinctly Aboriginal. Unlike the Cullens who are depicted as being white, civilized, wealthy, able-bodied and egalitarian, the Quileute werewolves are depicted as being non-white, savage, poor, disabled and repressive. While the Cullens are capable of control (to abstain from sexual intercourse and drinking human blood), the Quileute werewolves are unmistakably incapable of control (of their rage and physiological desires). This is first alluded to explicitly when Jacob warns Bella of the danger he poses to her as a werewolf. Using Emily, the severely scarred girlfriend of the Quileute tribe’s and/or werewolf pack’s leader, as evidence of the uncontrollable violence that Jacob and his werewolf tribe members are capable of, Jacob warns Bella, “You saw what happened to Emily. Sam got angry. Lost it for a split second. Em was standing too close. He’ll never be able to take that back. What if I got mad at you?” (*New Moon* 1:24:19). The uncontrollable temper is particular to the werewolves and the werewolf monstrosity is particular to Quileute persons.

Uncontrollable rage is not the only thing that is particular to the werewolves and, consequently, Quileute people. Jacob explains that werewolves experience a particular form of uncontrollable desire—“more than some crush” (*Eclipse* 0:22:29)—that binds them to their somewhat destined beloved. This werewolf phenomena, referred to as ‘imprinting’, is,

as Jacob describes, “like when you see her, everything changes. All of a sudden, it’s not gravity holding you to the planet. It’s her. Nothing else matters. You would do anything, be anything for her.” (*Eclipse* 0:22:49). Jacob’s heterosexist description, which does not acknowledge the possibility of same-sex imprinting, avoids explication of the phenomena’s potential effect to cross generation boundaries. Unable to couple with Bella because she has decidedly chosen Edward, Jacob involuntarily imprints on Bella’s newborn daughter,

Renesmee:

Jacob: “Look, it’s a wolf thing.”

Bella: “What’s a wolf thing?”

Jacob: “Um... You know we have no control over it. We can’t choose who it happens with. And it doesn’t mean what you think, Bella, I promise.”

...

Bella: “You imprinted on my daughter?”

Jacob: “It’s not my choice.”

Bella: “She’s a baby!”

(*Breaking Dawn: Part II* 0:11:19)

While the Cullens repress and redirect their intrinsic, yet perverse desires, Jacob is demonstrated as being incapable of controlling this involuntary impulse known as ‘imprinting’. And although the *Twilight* series is a tale of fiction and supernatural desires, the desire for a child is, unfortunately, not a supernatural desire. Recalling Rubin’s pyramid of sexuality, the bottom is occupied by “the lowliest of all, those whose eroticism transgresses generational boundaries” (Rubin 9). The werewolves’ and Jacob’s monstrosity lies in their inability to control their anger and desire—a trait that is specific to werewolf monstrosity and, consequently, the peoples who become werewolves, the Quileute peoples.

Similarly racialized and othered, are the vampires who revel in their perverse, unnatural lusts and desires. James, Laurent and Victoria are vampires that embrace their supposed intrinsically strange natures. Able to control their desires, they simply choose not

to. The first three films (*Twilight*, *New Moon* and *Eclipse*), position the salacious trio of bloodsuckers as Bella and Edward's immortal enemies. Among their rejection to abstain from killing, the trio embodies bodily difference. Laurent, referred to as "that leech with the dreads" (*New Moon* 1:15:24), is visibly a non-white and French character. Prior to the last film, *Breaking Dawn: Part II*, Laurent is the only black character in the narrative. As the only significant black character within the films, it is perhaps not coincidental that Laurent happens to be positioned as one of the largest opposing forces to *good*.

Among James and Victoria, Laurent is depicted as a terrorist because he kills humans with pleasure. Unlike Edward or the Cullens who are depicted as engaging or wanting to engage in all the normalizing activities such as eating animals, getting married and having children *as all good national subjects do*, Laurent, in particular, is depicted as a radical in his rejection of the normal. Convinced of his innocence, Irina—a distant cousin of the Cullens' and Laurent's romantic partner of sorts—recuperates homonormative rhetoric to persuade the listening group of Laurent's supposed respectability: "I don't believe that [he tried to kill Bella]. He wanted to be like us. To live in peace with humans." (*Breaking Dawn: Part I* 0:18:02). However, to be 'like us' is not to simply "live in peace with humans". The "like us"—good vampires/queers—is constituted by invisibilized and unmarked axes of power and privilege. Consequently, the normative and, thus, valuable citizen is not only, as stated previously, "heterosexual, marital, monogamous, reproductive, and non-commercial" (Rubin 9), but white, moneyed and able-bodied.

Although Edward and Laurent are employed in the text as being both queer creatures, if at the very least because they represent something not normal, they represent two dissimilar constructions of queerness: one which is acceptable and tolerable because it seeks to blend, to present no visible difference and to avoid any conflict, and one which is

unacceptable and intolerable because it seeks to disrupt, to make visible the material differences that are presented as *truths* and to address privileges that are invisibilized and legitimized. Thus, while Edward is depicted as the good, white (unmarked, invisible) queer because he maintains, what I argue to be, homonormative and homonationalist politics, Laurent is depicted as the bad, black queer because he revels in his vampirism/queerness, but more importantly because the *Twilight* franchise is trading on preconceived notions that black masculinity is already a site and signifier of fear and anxiety.

A text about monsters, the *Twilight* text recuperates racial, sexual and bodily codifiers of difference. Although situated in fantasy, the markers of difference that the text relies on have consequences for how people of constructed difference are perceived. I argue that the representation of the Cullens as good, white, socio-sexual subjects who not only represent homonormative politics, but homonationalist politics, is a frightening depiction for queer representation and queer individuals. The series seems to be acknowledging that actual members of stigmatized and prejudiced groups, like gays, *can* be good and valuable citizens in spite of their difference; however, in creating ‘good’ and ‘right’, ‘bad’ and ‘wrong’ monsters along sexual and racial lines to illustrate this message, Meyer reifies harmful sexual and racial hierarchies. Consequently, a reading such as this renders statements like Jacob’s, “It’s not a lifestyle choice, Bella. I was born this way. I can’t help it. You’re such a hypocrite. What, I’m not the right kind of monster for you? (*New Moon* 1:14:36)” very apt. The *Twilight* series reveals that there *is* a right kind of monster and it is one that is white, appropriately (hetero)sexual, monogamous, wealthy and able-bodied.

Conclusion

Popular culture is permeated with ideas of normality. As gay and lesbian individuals acquire more social and legal equality in North America and social attitudes toward non-normative sexualities evolve, representations of queer individuals change as well. Situating the vampire—a figure that has been championed by queer folks for being queer (*Chapter 1*)-- as a character that desires to embrace normality as opposed to rejecting it, is in many ways a backlash. I argued that the *Twilight* series nourishes homonormative propaganda that positions queers as being ‘just like’ heterosexuals. The normalization of the vampire—conventionally an embodiment of strangeness, difference and transgression—has troubling consequences for the material bodies of otherness that it purposefully distances itself from. There are implications to how monsters, the vampire, in particular, are represented in the *Twilight* films. In many of the same ways that the attempt to normalize queers through the promotion of homonormative and homonationalist propaganda has had troubling consequences (Warner 1997; Willse and Spade 2005; Paur 2007; Polikoff 2008; Sycamore 2008; Conrad and Nair 2010; Spade 2011), I argue that Meyer’s normalizing tendencies also have troubling effects for the *other* bodies, attitudes and *ways of being* they violently demonize and exclude.

Chapter 3

Vampires that Sparkle: “That’s So Gay”

“This place was created to allow fans of both characters (and maybe even those that known what really happened in the tent that night in the woods) to gather and discuss the pairing.”³

“It’s unintentionally ridiculous and takes itself way too seriously, as if it doesn’t realize that it’s actually a film about glitter” –Kellen Rice, “A *Twilight* Review from an Anti-*Twilight*”

Gay Discourses

In my *Introduction*, I presented an image of Sergeant Brandon Morgan and, his partner, Dalan Wells kissing. As previously mentioned, the image’s content is important because it captures a time when it is legally—not, necessarily, socially—safe and tolerable to serve in the military as an openly gay individual. The image, taken only months after the repeal of the DADT policy which barred openly lesbian and gay persons from serving in the U.S. military, represents (for many) a dramatic shift in attitudes toward non-normative sexualities. Although I introduced the image to highlight several of the key themes my work would take up, I would like to return to this image to explore the popular discourse of associating Meyer’s rather hetero narrative with queerness. As previously discussed in *Chapter 1*, this significant image was re-appropriated for the “Still Not as Gay as *Twilight*” meme which employed imagery considered ‘gay’ in content. I want to consider why *Twilight* gets interpreted as being ‘gay’.

While “gay” has often been deployed as an organizing identity construct for individuals, specifically men, who experience same-sex desires, attractions, and sex—as in my previous use of it—use of the word “gay” in the “Still Not as Gay as *Twilight*” meme is

³ Retrieved from <http://jakeward.livejournal.com/> on 20, February, 2013.

more likely participating in the relatively recent incidence of the word connoting “disappointing” and/or “unfashionable”. Contemporary (homophobic) use of the word “gay”, as in “that’s so gay”, conveys that there is something fundamentally wrong and/or bad with being gay. This language which contributes to maintaining a homophobic social climate normalizes negative feelings and/or attitudes toward individuals identified or perceived to be LGBT. As the “Still Not as Gay as *Twilight*” meme illustrates, there is a popularized understanding of the *Twilight* text as being “gay”—meaning “uncool” and, more importantly, “terrible” and “inadequate”. This type of response is typical of a patriarchal culture that undermines, devalues and trivializes feminine activities, pursuits, values and genres like Meyer’s romantic *Twilight*. Consequently, the symptomatic “Still Not as Gay as *Twilight*” meme—likely an expression of a largely male, adolescent population attempting to distance themselves from a text principally associated with femininity—has less to do with the text consisting of same-sex sex acts and more to do with a socialized contempt for all things feminine in nature. Put differently, the meme’s probable message does not necessarily imply that *Twilight* consists of queer and/or gay messages, themes, and/or characters, as previously considered, but that *Twilight* is sentimental, romantic, and girly (hence, gay) and therefore unworthy of our attention.

However, what if the meme did, indeed, intend for its audience to think of *Twilight* as consisting of queer and/or gay messages, themes, and characters? The “Still Not as Gay as *Twilight*” meme, arguably, *can* be understood as participating in a queering of the *Twilight* series. Certainly, other web users have imagined the *Twilight* series as containing queer possibilities. For instance, the “Screw Bella”⁴ meme which, perhaps, sweetly depicts Edward and Jacob leaning in for a kiss illustrates an imagined attraction between two characters who

⁴ Retrieved from http://www.iswimforoceans.com/2011_02_01_archive.html on 3 March, 2012

we are to assume, for all intents and purpose, are attracted to Bella and *only* Bella. In another meme which reeks of homophobic sentiment which admittedly may very well be intended to be playful, humorous and even endearing (yet not likely), a predatory yet frightened-looking Robert Pattison (who plays Edward Cullen in the *Twilight* films) skulks in a tree next to a caption which reads: “Edward Cullen is pale because there’s no light in the closet”⁵.

Proffering the suggestion that Edward Cullen is, indeed, a non-straight individual who has yet to disclose his “actual” or “real” sexuality, the metaphoric “closet” or “closeted” lifestyle referenced in the meme functions to associate Edward with queerness and/or a queer lifestyle, at the very least. And finally, in yet another meme which disrupts the hetero-romantic arc of Bella and Edward, an image of a grinning Fred Gwynne as Herman Munster from the American sitcom *The Munsters* is employed with a caption below reading: “*Twilight?* Back in my day vampires sucked blood, not dick”⁶. Again, the implication being that Edward the vampire is a decidedly less heterosexual individual. The highlighted cases as well as the previously mentioned “Still Not as Gay as *Twilight*” meme, although likely oblique and unintentionally queer, reject Bella as a referent for Edward’s desire and (hetero?) sexuality and instead cast Edward as a sexually ambiguous character which disrupts and in effect resists Meyer’s hetero-metanarrative.

Correspondingly, I argue that *both* fans and “haters” alike, straight and non-straight, participate in queer readings of the *Twilight* text. In this chapter, I shall examine the proliferation of *Twilight* slash fiction including video montages, memes, storytelling and fan art created by both (homophilic) admirers and (homophobic) critics. This is not to say, of course, that critics of *Twilight* are exclusively homophobic and admirers are completely

⁵ Retrieved from <http://cheezburger.com/template/768049/page/3> on 3 March, 2012.

⁶ Retrieved from <http://www.addfunny.com/pictures/funny/108334.html> on 20 February, 2013.

homophilic; nor is to say that all admirers are “Twi-hards”—a term used to describe passionate fans of *Twilight*—and all critics are “Twi-haters”—referring to a fraction of the population who detest the series yet may receive immense pleasure from consuming and criticizing the books and films (Gilbert 170). Accordingly, some “Twi-hards” may very well admire the series and write queer fan fiction. Some “Twi-haters” may consider the content, language and writing terrible yet admire the text for its Camp, ironic and/or queer possibilities (to name only a few) and create homoerotic video montages or parodies. While still some “Twi-hards” and “Twi-haters” may acknowledge a potent and compelling same-sex bond in the series and create a meme that endearingly, playfully and/or maliciously considers the homoeroticism evident in the series. Consequently, it is irrelevant whether the producers of the queer, *Twilight* fandom likes or dislikes the series. Considering these fictions to be astute queer readings, ultimately, I will argue that the creators of these queer fictions can read queer possibility into the *Twilight* text because the *Twilight* narrative, whether intentionally or unintentionally, partakes in aesthetics, traditions, and figures traditionally perceived to be associated with queer and/or gay culture. The chapter begins by contextualizing queering(s) of or queries with the *Twilight* series. This section delineates the intentions of a queer reading(s) while highlighting its key characteristics for the purpose of illustrating how visual and textual fictions created by fans demonstrate a queering of *Twilight*. It then considers how Meyer’s text both flirts with Camp aesthetics and gay sensibility and employs the homoerotic graphic schema of the love triangle which, I argue, makes possible queer readings of the series.

Queering Cyberspace: Slash Fiction and Memes and Fansites, Oh My!

Although a definition of “queer” and “queer reading” may, in fact, be counterproductive to the intentions and goals of the Queer project given that defining requires fixing, limiting, and stabilizing while queering, alternatively, requires unfixing, delimiting, and destabilizing, definitions that recognize that their borders are always shifting and in flux may, nevertheless, be useful for advancing my argument. Given that “queer”, according to David Halperin, is “by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant” (Halperin 62), a “typical” queer reading refuses to accept established meanings, identities and norms. As a result, queer readings are often called resistant readings because characters, themes, and plots largely perceived to be gender-normative and heteronormative like those of *Twilight* may be considered ‘queer’ even in the absence of any explicit representation of homosexuality. Unwilling to accept hegemonic values and beliefs, whether they be about race, gender, sexuality, class and/or ability, “resistant readings” move beyond the preferred and/or dominant meanings and, instead, offer an alternative reading. Thus, many marginalized communities, specifically those of a queer nature, find themselves in the awkward position of offering stubborn, unconforming and *perverse* understandings of otherwise fairly benign language, styles, aesthetics, and moments.

Although queer readings traditionally scrutinized the semiotics of cultural artefacts and/or texts to uncover hidden, almost latent, meanings, recent queer readings recognize that the subtextual codes no longer have to be intentional. Although it is irrelevant to a contemporary queer reading if the queerness is intentionally hidden in a text, there exists many reasons why many may insist on a reading that supposes that symbols, language and style were intentionally incorporated and hidden. Accordingly, Barbara Menkel and others (Russo 1987) maintain that a queer aesthetic was created in post-World War II Hollywood

films as a consequence of the 1934 censorship code, also known as the Hays Code, which prohibited major studios from depicting “unacceptable” content—displays or suggestions of homosexuality being among the list of banned content:

“Based on the prohibition to utter the words ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’ on the mainstream screen, Hollywood films created narratives that circled around the impossibility to portray homosexuality explicitly...this interdiction of homosexuality in the Hollywood studio system produced queer aesthetic practices that included subversive strategies, such as camp and veiled subtexts...” (Mennel 26)

However, as those aesthetics created an identifiable genre associated with individuals identified or perceived to be gay and lesbian, queer readings increasingly moved away from readings that understood the subtext to be intentional as this proved to too prescriptive and, ultimately, counterintuitive to the queer project. As a result, contemporary queering(s), according to Maria Wiedlack, focus less on uncovering hidden or latent signs, symbols and meanings and more on acknowledging “the very aspects of texts that irritate the binary gender system and challenge the assumptions of heterosexuality and heteronormativity” (Wiedlack 317). Consequently, the “aspects of texts that irritate”, understood as deviations, inconsistencies, and tensions with/in the heteronormative matrix, expose alternative realities, meanings and narratives that may be in contention with the author’s and/or characters’ preferred or intended meanings and/or desires. Thus, queer readings, fundamentally, reveal that cultural signs, symbols, and actions have multiple and shifting entry points.

Correspondingly, fan fictions which often re-imagine the narratives and characters of popular novels, films and television series ought to be thought of as participating in resistant or queer readings as their producers recognize and offer alternative understandings of popular cultural texts such as *Twilight*. Also known as “fanfic”, fan fiction broadly defines a plethora of fan created stories and, I include, visuals which intend to extend the narratives of

well-known texts—*Star Trek* (Gene Roddenberry 1966-69), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Whedon 1997-2003) and *Harry Potter* (David Yates 2001) being three notable examples. Although fan fiction must be understood in relation to the original text, fan fiction differs from the proposed narrative in two main ways: fan fiction can either alter the text by re-presenting characters, settings and relations in divergent ways (e.g. although Bella is depicted as pursuing Edward in Meyer’s *Twilight*, Bella might be imagined as pursuing a romantic relationship with Jacob the werewolf, instead) or, it can uphold the text by bolstering characters, settings and relations through elaboration (e.g. Bella and Edward are imagined playing with their daughter Renesmee at a park which is a non-existent scene in Meyer’s *Twilight*, but functions to perpetuate the intended narrative without deviating from Meyer’s metanarrative). It is the former that proves to be a site of queer potential as the (hetero-) sexuality and/or desire of characters—only one of the many variables that can be adjusted within fan fiction—can be altered and re-presented as being less (straight)forward and more complex, ambiguous and fluid. Thus, in spite of strong parallels between the forbidden love of Meyer’s Edward and Bella and Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet, a significant fraction of fan fiction creators recognize Jacob and Edward to be the star-crossed lovers, their love thwarted by the hindering Bella and their supposed innate incompatibility.

Known as slash fan fiction, “slash”—referring to the punctuation symbol which divides the named pair (e.g. Edward/Jacob)—invents or imagines an intimate relationship between two male characters which fundamentally challenges and queers the hetero-romantic trajectory of the text. In other words, many online communities devoted to the creation and consumption of slash fan fiction challenge and disrupt the intended hetero-metanarrative by stubbornly refusing to accept established ways of being and relating: “Slash fandom thumbs its nose at the insidious heterosexism underpinning most forms of literary

expression and seeks to subvert its dominance by introducing and celebrating sexualities that fly in the face of traditional heterosexist discourses” (Hayes and Ball 223). Accordingly, Sharon Hayes and Matthew Ball argue that slash fan fiction communities can buttress typical social discourses surrounding gender and sexuality (such as discourses on gender that construct the naturalness of male and female and/or discourses on sexuality that construct the legitimacy of heterosexuality and homosexuality). Like that of fan fiction in general, slash fan fiction communities can also offer spaces where new ways of relating are produced and explored by its participants (Hayes and Ball). Certainly, the slash fandom of *Twilight*, distinct from “femmeslash” which imagines pairings between two females (e.g. Bella/Alice) which also interrupts the heteroromantic flow of Meyer’s text, is no exception to Hayes and Ball’s argument.

The internet abounds in queer *Twilight* fandom, including everything from fan art images that depict a digitally manipulated Kristen Stewart kissing Ashley Greene⁷ (the actresses who play the unimpressive Bella Swan and vivacious Alice Cullen); to You Tube videos like the “Brokeback *Twilight* Trailer”⁸ which re-presents and re-purposes scenes and dialogue between Edward and Jacob from the *Twilight* films; to “smut” writing which envisions *Twilight* characters engaging in same-sex relationships as well as poly relationships including an incestuous threesome that occurs when “Bella stumbles into Edward during a girls’ night out with Rosalie [Edward’s surrogate sister of sorts]”⁹. Fan fiction sites such as *Twilighted.net* and *Livejournal.com* build on the pre-existing homosocial intimacy of Jacob and Edward among other pairings. Rather than accepting *Twilight* as a “disturbingly rosy account of teen marriage and pregnancy” (North np), these audiences

⁷ Retrieved from <http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/alice%20and%20bella> on 17 February, 2013.

⁸ Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kC2nJiKvJE6> on 10 February, 2013.

⁹ Retrieved from <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/5527003/1/Three-Hopeful-Thoughts> on 19, 2013.

reform it as a narrative exploding with queer potential, capable of containing same-sex relationships (gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.), unconventional relationships (threesomes, polyamory, group sex, etc.) and erotic subcultures (BDSM, fetishes, etc.).

Addressing audiences such as these, both John Fiske and Henry Jenkins propose that many underrepresented communities not only resist the textual intentions of the producers, but reinterpret the text and in doing so become producers themselves. The producers of these texts detect and perceive textual conations that are incongruous and inconsistent with the seemingly heterosexual arc of the narrative. As a result, a scene in which Bella is assumed to be fought over by an envious Jacob and a defensive Edward gets re-presented in a way that demonstrates Bella as being secondary and, indeed, an obstacle to an angst ridden and conflicted homoerotic relationship between Jacob and Edward (“She has a right to know that we’re gay...”¹⁰); or, a scene in which Jacob and Edward are momentarily depicted working in unison for the protection of Bella get re-purposed and re-thought to similarly explore homoerotic desire and longing between Jacob and Edward with Bella being immaterial to the plot. Although these resistant audiences and producers of fan fiction can and do imagine the characters in their textual and visual narratives as assuming an identity or identifier such as “gay” or “bisexual”—always understood in direct relation to the norm, many narratives more often than not, interestingly, imagine characters impetuously acting on desires and longings. These desires and longings which frequently culminate in lengthy and explicit descriptions of same-sex sex acts between at least two characters do not define the identity or personality of the characters; nor do they cause the characters to experience some supposedly revelatory and liberating “truth” or “nature” about themselves. These texts, in addition to presenting

¹⁰ Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5tB-USJdGA> on 10 February, 2013.

alternative sexualities, sex acts, and sexual politics, largely abandon the defining and limiting constructs of contemporary, modern sexuality and instead offer unlimited possibilities.

Producers of slash fiction, memes and videos devoted to the *Twilight* series, I argue, present compelling and astute queer readings. As a result, these texts, both intentionally and unintentionally (likely the case for the “Still Not as Gay as *Twilight*” meme), disrupt and unsettle the heterosexual couple as referent; challenge the normalization and legitimization of heteronormativity which makes possible hegemonic heterosexuality; and, finally, problematizes privatized sexual culture and its privileged institutions which in the *Twilight* series are presented as offering the good life. Resisting the unabashedly (hetero)normative tale, fan fictions offer queer readings of the *Twilight* series.

***Twilight* and Camp: “It’s good because it’s awful”**

Stephanie Meyer’s recalibration and, according to many, degeneration of the vampire figure in the *Twilight* series has spurred considerable discussion, rage and excitement among fans, critics and scholars. Meyer’s vampire, emptied of all previous danger and threat, is basically a self-loathing creature who painstakingly deprives itself of its most basic instinct: preying and feeding on human blood. Among abstaining from bodily pleasures, desires and instincts broadly, Meyer’s vampire is: inhumanely beautiful, liberated from being confined or defined in relation to its coffin, unaffected by religious symbols and iconography, unable to transform into a cat, bat and/or any other animal, and, perhaps most importantly, a largely good and moral character. While Meyer’s vampire evidently evades common understandings of the conventional vampire figure, one of its most perplexing and notorious deviations from the traditions of the vampire and genre is not just its ability to withstand exposure to sun, but its ability to do so dazzlingly. Accordingly, instead of being extinguished by the sun’s

powerful rays as so many of its predecessors were, Meyer's vampires, indeed, sparkle in the sun. In this style for style's sake moment, Meyer's content is dismissed, rendered silly at the very least, and theatricality and artifice are accentuated.

The ironic scene in *Twilight* in which Edward not only reveals himself to be a vampire to Bella, but also exposes his peculiar ability to sparkle has been only one of many sites of incredible amusement and disparagement for viewers of the *Twilight* series. The scene, instigated by Bella cagily saying, "I know what you are" (*Twilight* 0:50:00) to Edward, incongruously juxtaposes a sense of approaching peril and danger marked by ominous non-diegetic music, increased movements, and dizzied camera perspective with Edward's innocuous and unthreatening sparkling chest. As Bella stares at the sheepish predator in awe remarking on how his skin resembles diamonds, an ashamed and glittering Edward warns, "This is the skin of a killer, Bella. I'm a killer" (*Twilight* 0:52:35). After the disclosure of his secret, Edward's persistent comments intended to intimidate and scare Bella, instead, read as deflated and harmless threats. As if he is appealing to, even pleading with, an unconvinced Bella, Edward implores "I'm the world's most dangerous predator. I'm designed to kill. I've killed before" (*Twilight* 0:52:57). Edward as a serious and legitimate threat or predator to Bella is undermined by the harmlessness of a shimmering body, rendering his threats invalid and meaningless. The result of this declaration in addition to the juxtaposition between danger and decidedly undanger is Beckettian humour and absurdity.

Twilight fails to be taken seriously. *Twilight*'s unintentionally comical scenes facilitate amusement because they are just that, unintentional. Humorous because it is intended to be serious—as the quotation at the beginning of the chapter elucidates, *Twilight* exhibits elements of Camp aesthetic and sensibility including failed seriousness, theatricality, irony, hyperbole and extravagance—demonstrated by Edward's beautiful, bare chest which

is described as sparkling “like diamonds” (*Twilight* 0:52:18). Like “queer”, Camp is difficult to define and “universal definitions are rarely useful” (Ross 63). Certainly an aesthetic or sensibility associated with homosexuality and queerness, Camp and Camping is fundamentally about revealing the constructedness of the world, exposing the seams and sutures of gender and sexuality. Hegemonic constructions of masculinity, for example, become apparent when Meyer’s readership is asked to recognize Edward as a referent for heterosexual, masculine identification in spite of being a creature that sparkles. In this social climate, glitter and masculinity are irreconcilable because like romance, objects or, in this case, people that sparkle are associated with femininity and are therefore considered to be trivial and irrelevant. Since modern conceptualization(s) of sexuality are so often understood as being contingent on appropriately performing gender, Edward’s masculinity and, consequently, his (hetero)sexuality are performative.

Correspondingly, signifying “performance rather than existence” (Babuscio122), Camp privileges artifice, theatricality and exaggeration. In the influential “Notes on Camp”, Susan Sontag argues that Camp is a sensibility that champions frivolity and excess, particularly excess that is deliberately sincere, serious, and naive: “...pure examples of Camp are unintentional; they are dead serious. The Art Nouveau craftsman who makes a lamp with a snake coiled around it is not kidding, nor is he trying to be charming. He is saying, in all earnestness: Voila! The Orient!” (Sontag 258). Similarly, Stephanie Meyer, in all earnestness doggedly offers a paranormal, teen romance between a “vegetarian” vampire (the Cullens refrain from sucking human blood) and a simple human girl. Unintentionally facetious, Meyer’s vampire—unable to incite fear in either Bella or the audience—in addition to a fantastical narrative that fails to be serious smack of Camp sensibility.

Unintentionally Camp, *Twilight*'s fanciful stylization and deprived visual effects recall the aesthetics of earlier films often thought of as Camp. Directed by Catherine Hardwicke, the director of the first film and the only female director in the series, *Twilight* is specifically and especially Campy in comparison to the other films in the series. Known for creating compelling and artistic critically-acclaimed films about adolescence on particularly low-budgets (*Thirteen* 2003; *Lords of Dogtown* 2005), Hardwicke was selected to direct *Twilight* on a modest budget of thirty-seven million within less than fifty days (Cunningham 201). Although Hardwicke achieved commercial success with the release of *Twilight*, Hardwicke received harsh criticism for her steadfast loyalty to her youthcentric audience in addition to her derisory cinematography. Among corny and far-fetched exchanges between the two young lovers, major points of criticism were Hardwicke's outlandish and poorly executed special effects which resonate with the Campy aesthetics of made-for-television programming and/or B films. For instance, referring to the Cullens as "a family of Edward Scissorhandses", Michael O'Sullivan speaks disparagingly of not only the shoddy make-up of the Cullens' which he says "looks less like natural—even, er, unnatural—pallor than like face paint" (O'Sullivan np), but of the inadequate technical wire work and CGI action:

I never quite bought Edward's extraordinary running, jumping and tree-climbing ability, either. Hardwick relies too much on motion blur, a cheat that looks oddly dated...And the scene in which Edward reveals what his skin looks like—like diamonds, according to Meyer—is frustratingly vague. "This is what I *really* look like," he says, stepping out of the constant fog into a rare shaft of sunlight. What? Out of focus? (O'Sullivan np)

This response to the film—unexceptional in its dissatisfaction with the technical features employed within *Twilight*—highlights both the viewer's inability to believe or "buy" the action and Meyer's failure to represent the supernatural convincingly. The disappointing and rather hokey features reveal the handiwork of its producers; effectively shattering the illusion

and removing the viewer from the action and danger of the plot, the film is rendered “outright goofy” (Dargis np). It is in instances such as these, where “a disparity between intention and result” (Sontag) are obvious, that *Twilight* can be understood as inadvertently participating in Camp.

In her book *Fanpire: The Twilight Saga and the Women Who Love It*, Tanya Erzen echoes this sentiment; referring to *Twilight* as “Moodily atmospheric and also unintentionally campy” (Erzen xix), Erzen makes clear that Hardwicke’s production value was less sophisticated than that of the following films in the saga:

Catherine Harwicke, known for edgier fare like *Thirteen*, brought a tone that was more whimsical and silly than that of later films. But after each subsequent film broke records for highest-opening weekends, Summit Entertainment realized it had an unstoppable franchise on its hands and brought in big-name male directors to helm slicker productions of each subsequent movie adaptation of the books. (Erzen xix)

Correspondingly, fans, reviewers and scholars perceive a Camp element to the series because Hardwicke’s sincerity (which certainly influenced the aesthetic of the films to follow its production) is misguided and, thus, ridiculous, far-fetched and over the top. Accordingly, this is precisely what makes *Twilight* so amusing and, arguably, enraging to its audience.

Summed up by Sontag in her infamous phrase and explored by Anne Gilbert in her essay “Between Twi-Hards and Twi-Haters: The Complicated Terrain of Online “*Twilight*” Audience Communities”, that which is Camp is “good because it’s bad” and *Twilight*, according to the “anti-Twilighers” that Gilbert traces in her work, is decidedly bad. The films, Gilbert maintains, “missed the boat on making a genuine product” (Gilbert 171); however, audiences who revel in its shortcomings draw “pleasure from interpreting the text in a way that rejects its original intent” (171). Consequently, unable to locate the romance between Edward and Bella, audiences consume the ironic and Camp aspects of the text.

Triangulated Desire

Although the *Twilight* films revel in monogamy, the supercouple, soul(less) mates, marriage and coupledness (the Cullens, most notably, inhabit a single house and are paired up perfectly with their respective mates—perhaps the most supernatural part of the text), the overall plot of the *Twilight* saga largely relies on the European tradition of triangulated love. The “love triangle”, most often represented in romantic literature and film, is often characterized by themes of jealousy, unrequited love, and instability because frequently the love of the beloved is not distributed equally among the two rivaling lovers. Theorized by both René Girard and Eve Sedgwick, the rivalrous triangle—most often, but not always—involves bonds of rivalry between two men over a woman. While the “Bella, Edward, and Jacob triangle” is the most dominant expression of this graphic schema in the films and the focus of this chapter, *Twilight* abounds in other triangle imagery, threesomes, and hindering third wheel(s) including the triangulated relationships of: Jacob, Mike, and Bella; Leah, Sam, and Emily; Sam, Jacob, and Bella; and Bella and Edward (as a unit), Jacob, and Renesmee. Focusing on love triangles involving two men and a woman, specifically the Bella, Edward, and Jacob relationship, I argue that theoretically queer relationships and sexual continuums which disrupt conventional, binary understandings of sexuality and gender are present, making *Twilight* slash fiction not just possible, but plausible. In queering what is often considered and accepted to be a traditional heterosexual text, I deploy the foundational works of René Girard and Eve Sedgwick to explore resistant readings of the *Twilight* films.

René Girard's book, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, which relies heavily on triangle imagery, traced a formulation of power that was structured by the relation of rivalry between the two active members, often if not always male, of an erotic triangle. Ultimately suggesting

that the bonds of love and rivalry are equally powerful if not equivalent, Girard maintains that “in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved” (Girard 39). This erotic triangle vested with intense libidinal energy, which results from the competitive imitation of another person, is often referred to as mimetic desire. “Mimetic” since we borrow our desire from another’s pre-existing desire. Girard employs mimetic desire to explain the triangular formulation, suggesting that our desire for a certain object, far from being unique, is motivated by the desire of another person (model) for the same object. Consequently, the relationship between subject and object is not direct, but triangular because it involves subject, object and, most importantly, model. Thus, in desiring the object, the subject is inevitably drawn to the model who poses as an obstacle to the acquisition of the object and, as a result, the subject seeks the model.

Correspondingly, evidence of mimetic desire can be traced within the infamous triangular relations of *Twilight*’s Bella, Edward and Jacob. As the object of desire of both competing monsters, Bella occupies the apex of the triangle. Edward and Jacob, consequently, constitute the two points at the base of the triangle, but which competing rival assumes the role of mediator and which assumes the subject? Even though Jacob is largely absent from the *Twilight* film, Bella and the audience are introduced first to Jacob Black within the first establishing scenes of the film. During their opening interactions, Jacob reminds Bella that they have had previous friendly dealings: “Hi, I’m Jacob. We uh...we used to make mud pies when we were little” (*Twilight* 0:04:39). Thus, are we to believe that Edward’s desire for the object, Bella, (which much of the film’s narrative explores) is motivated by Jacob, who initially, although rather nervously, models his desire for Bella? Although always imitated, Girard insists, desire cannot be neatly divided into original

(Model) and duplicate (Subject). Indeed, simplifying the order and dynamics of the desire of both Edward and Jacob is too reductive and, more importantly, irrelevant to exploring the libidinally electric and stimulating relationship between the two.

While Edward and Jacob are neither wholly Model nor Subject, both—perhaps more accurately and usefully—can be understood as occupying the role of Model and Subject separately, but at irregular and asymmetrical instances within the text. Thus, there are moments within the text when Jacob is presented as the Model and Edward the Subject and vice versa. This is perhaps a more plausible formulation for understanding the triangular dynamics of desire because often the competing rivals' actions, behaviours, and gestures are noticeably dependent on the actions, behaviours, and gestures of whomever, whether it was Edward or Jacob, modeled them first. Girard associates this type of interaction with “internal mediation”, one of two mediations proposed by Girard, which is possible when a mediator becomes aware of the tangible presence of a rival and the immediate threat he/she poses: “desire always increases in intensity as the mediator approaches the desiring subject” (Girard 83). Internal mediation, Girard argues, is often riddled with conflict and subsequent violence which is not just substantial in the *Twilight* series, but amplified because of the pre-existing rivalry and opposition between the interspecies duelling of the vampire and werewolf. Recognizing that neither has substantial claim to the object of desire (especially because both rivals cannot read Bella's mind—an idiosyncratic lapse for Edward who can read the minds of all humans, save that of Bella's), conflict between the duelling suitors is inevitable.

Unable to destroy each other because of an established truce between the werewolves and the Cullens and because, perhaps more importantly, both Edward and Jacob recognize that killing off the competition, so to speak, would likely reduce, if not eliminate, their opportunity to be wholly loved by Bella, the rivaling Edward and Jacob resort to titillating

displays of ‘one-upmanship’. Characterized by outdoing the competitor, acts of ‘one-upmanship’ allow both rivals to be individually Model and Subject throughout the series. Although there are several instances of this behaviour within the *Twilight* series, I highlight two notable instances of ‘one-upmanship’ that demonstrate Girard’s claim that the bond that connects Edward and Jacob to one another is as potent—and, I argue, exciting—as the bond that connects either of the rivals to Bella, the beloved. First, the act of gifting, an ancient tradition tied to courtship rituals, is explored within the series, as an invidious site of mediation. In *New Moon*, a dreamcatcher, for instance, is gifted to Bella on her eighteenth birthday from Jacob which proves to be a particularly convenient and significant gift to Bella who later in the film experiences violent nightmares brought on by Edward’s purposeful absence. Symbolic of Jacob’s protection of Bella especially from Edward, the dreamcatcher is met with passive-aggressive attention from Edward: “So how come Jacob Black gets to give you a gift and I don’t?” (*New Moon* 0:07:30). Interestingly, no such scene exists in the film where Bella supposedly tells Edward not to give her a gift. Nonetheless, Edward demonstrates a corresponding and analogous display of desire, offering Bella the greatest gift of all—the assurance that her existence is the most precious and important thing to Edward: “Bella, you give me everything just by breathing” (*New Moon* 0:07:39). The soppy sentiment, typically yearned for by a self-obsessed, adolescent female, is triggered by Jacob’s display of affectionate gifting and, thus, his desire. Thus, more of a reactionary twitch to Jacob and his actions, Edward is illustrated as demonstrating his desire for Bella by imitating Jacob who, in this case, first models his affection for Bella.

Additionally, a greater, more obvious example of tit-for-tat, competitive gifting occurs in *Eclipse*. After forcing an unwanted kiss on Bella as a declaration of his desire for the beloved—which is met with anger, repulsion and scorn by Bella—Jacob attends a

graduation party hosted by the Cullens for Bella's graduating cohort. In an act of forgiveness and affection, Jacob gives Bella a bracelet which dons a hand-carved wolf fashioned by Jacob himself. Aware of the foreign object on his beloved, Edward inspects Bella's wrist. Edward looks questioningly at Bella who offers in response, "It's a graduation present" (*Eclipse* 0:55:51). The bracelet given by Jacob represents a physical and symbolical marking of Bella; A territorializing of her body and her personal space, Bella is riddled with objects that symbolize another's desire for her. Paralleling or, perhaps more appropriately, mimicking Jacob, Edward subsequently gives Bella a charm to add to the bracelet that was given to her by Jacob: "it seems only fair that I be represented as well" (*Eclipse* 1:13:34). The imitative or "mimetic" nature of human—or, perhaps, more appropriately, monstrous—desire creates a bond between the duelling rivals. Exemplary of mimetic rivalry, the gesture of giving Bella a token of his affection has less to do with Bella and more to do with the rivaling Jacob. Accordingly, the original cause of both monsters' desire is forgotten. Displaced to the background, Bella's relationship to either Jacob or Edward becomes secondary to the rivals' relationship. Marked by obsession, fascination, and hatred for one another, Jacob and Edward are bounded together in a morbid relationship, but a relationship nonetheless. Thus, both instances of gifting described here not only reveal that desire is produced through mimesis and not need, but that in desiring Bella a unique relation is produced between Jacob and Edward.

Second, another way in which mimetic desire is enacted by the antipathetic, yet jointed duo is through physical contact with Bella which includes—but, is not limited to—hugging, kissing, cuddling and comforting. Again, these actions point less to a unique and autonomous need or care for Bella, per se, and more to a mimicked and reflexive response to another's interest in Bella. Each suitor respectively performs his desire for Bella knowing

that he is actively being watched by the other suitor. Eve Sedgwick, correspondingly, discusses the erotic triangle in relation to homosocial male desire which she explores in her text, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. Recuperating desire within the “homosocial” and disavowing binary dialectics, Sedgwick imagines a continuum between the homosexual and homosocial (Sedgwick 1). Sedgwick suggests that within the triangular relation, men have intense libidinal relations but, nonetheless, nonsexual relations with other men and women serve as the channels through which that libidinal energy is explored (Sedgwick 14). Although libido often denotes sex drive, I employ it here to illustrate the emotional and psychic excitement and titillation it generates between the rivals: “not for a particular affective state or emotion, but for the affective or social force, the glue, even when its manifestation is hostility or hatred or something less emotively charged, that shapes an important relationship” (Sedgwick 2). Accordingly, vested with libidinal energies, competitive moments between Edward and Jacob which are seemingly driven by a desire to affect Bella, reveal a desire to, in fact, affect the other male suitor. Put crudely, it is less about getting Bella off in these moments and more about getting the other suitor (ticked) off.

Although Bella’s objectified presence in the kiss, embrace, or touch is necessary as she acts as conduit for relations to be explored between Jacob and Edward, Bella as a desiring subject might as well be absent during instances of mimetic rivalry between the two men. Homosexuality and sexism collude in this social formulation to ensure that men are able to engage in intense, libidinal bonds with individuals of the same sex while maintaining their heterosexual privilege. For instance, an exaggerated display of desire between Edward and Bella is exhibited before the shirtless Jacob who awaits Bella for their arranged departure to La Push, an Aboriginal reserve in the text. Disembodied and performative, the seemingly intimate moment between Edward and Bella is emptied of libido and is, instead,

relocated between the invidious voyeur and the provocative exhibitionist. This interaction between Bella and Edward executed for the envious gaze of Jacob is followed by a similarly performative and mimicked expression involving Bella and Jacob. With arms wide open, Jacob invites Bella into his intimate and shirtless embrace. The exchange, loaded with smugness and self-righteousness, is both dependent on and a demonstration for Edward's gaze. Here, we are encouraged to assume that Jacob locates greater pleasure in Edward's dissatisfaction than in Bella's satisfaction. Excessive displays of physical closeness between Bella and either suitor are thus deprived of hetero-libido and, instead, are swelling with homoerotic undertones.

Developing Girard's claim that triangular relations may initially appear to be pure rivalry, but, in fact, actually emphasize an attraction between men, Sedgwick's analysis of the love triangle in which two men appear to be competing for a woman's love offers an understanding of power and meaning that makes clear how individuals, specifically men, must negotiate and reorganize their relations (sexual and non-sexual). Sedgwick suggests that "the goal of triangulation is not for two men to desire the same woman, but rather to cement the problematic relations between men" (17). For Sedgwick, there is nothing coincidental about two men desiring the same woman: desiring the same woman allows the two men the rare opportunity and space within an anxious, homophobic culture to safely explore a relationship, platonic or otherwise, with one another. This formulation offers a spectrum fertile with possible relations between men. Neither entirely homo(sexual) nor homo(social), triangular love in *Twilight* provides instances where audiences can abandon binary conceptions of sexuality to explore its complexities.

As a result, the love triangle proves to be a quite useful graphic schema for a largely homophobic and masculinist culture because it "avoids the homoerotic threat and it keeps

male domination in place by treating the female love object as object" (18). This is best illustrated in the infamous tent scene in *Eclipse* that so much of the slash fiction of the *Twilight* series develops upon. In an attempt to protect Bella from Victoria—a female vampire who is determined to avenge the murder of her vampire lover James who was killed by Edward to protect Bella—Edward and the Cullens with the help of the werewolves hide Bella up high in the mountains of Forks, Bella and Edward’s city of residence.

Shivering and unable to get warm, Bella’s chattering teeth draw Jacob to the intimate tight space of the tent that Bella and Edward occupy. Recognizing that as a dead, cold creature he is useless to a freezing Bella and more importantly that Jacob as a living, warm being can protect Bella from hypothermia, Edward temporarily puts aside his resentment for Jacob in Bella’s best interest. The tightly shot scene in which Jacob makes Bella hot, depicts Edward carefully watching the prostrate, clinging bodies of heavily clothed Bella and almost naked Jacob. Pregnant with double interpretation, the scene flirts with the duplicitous meaning of getting someone warm or hot—Jacob is capable of both warming Bella’s temperature and arousing her sexually: “You’re freezing Bella. Relax. You’ll warm up soon. Faster if you took your clothes off” (*Eclipse* 1:26:44). This instruction to Bella which is depicted as clearly being less about Bella and more about antagonizing an inadequate Edward—if at the very least because Jacob haughtily glares up at an angered Edward—begins to illustrate both Bella’s objectification and its simultaneous significance and insignificance to the proceedings between the men. Meaning that Bella’s presence which becomes further absent as she eventually drifts off to sleep rendering her body unconscious is necessary to the scene which depicts the two men becoming increasingly more intimate with one another because her stand-in, objectified female body signifies the heterosexual privilege of both Edward and Jacob even as it is undermined. Thus, her female body which

reinforces the heterosexual desire of both men is required to alleviate any homosexual tension the audience may recognize in the rather homoerotic exchanges between Jacob and Edward in the intimate confinement of the tent.

According to Sedgwick's theory, Bella—the woman, the object, the stand-in for heterosexual privilege, the sign of exchange—would be considered the mediator of homosocial desire between the two rivaling, yet admiring men. Treated as object in the scene, Bella's unconscious body provides the opportunity for both men to explore their feelings for one another while simultaneously dispelling any real threat of homoeroticism. If we indulge Sedgwick's theory and suspend our heteronormative understanding(s) of the text, an additional reading of the tent scene reveals to be quite homosocial, if not homoerotic:

Edward: "This might sound odd, but I'm glad you're here."

Jacob: "Meaning, as much as I'd like to kill you, I'm glad she's warm."

Edward: "If we weren't natural enemies and you weren't trying to steal my reason for existing, I might actually like you."

Jacob "Well, if you weren't planning on sucking the life out of the girl I love, I might...no not even then."

Pointed by moments of coy smiles, heavy sighs and lip biting which is often symptomatic of bashfulness, embarrassment and even sexual reservation, the intimate scene with its gestures full of duplicity is susceptible to double interpretation. Suspending the overall heteronormative arc of the text, libidinal moments such as these facilitated by the triangular schema offer the audience opportunities to comprehend relations between Edward and Jacob to be more diverse and plural than those of strict binary heterosexuality and homosexuality.

To conclude, I uphold that triangular love renders statements like Bella's "Edward hated the idea, but it [the relationship between Edward and Jacob] wasn't about rivalry anymore. It was about my safety and Charlie's" (*Eclipse* 0:28:34) very queerly accurate.

Their relationship *is not* about a rivalry any longer, nor is about the safety of Bella and Charlie. It *is*, I argue, about a love or a feeling (at the very least) that dare not speak its name because it does not fit neatly into one of the existing rigid, conceptual categories of male intimacy.

Conclusion

Lacking any explicitly queer identified characters, the *Twilight* series is perhaps most accurately described as being a tale of hetero-romance. Still, we must not assume that viewers of *Twilight* comply with and/or glean pleasure from the hetero-romantic arc of the text. The “Still Not as Gay as *Twilight*” meme with the re-appropriated image of Sergeant Brandon Morgan and Dalan Wells which incongruously pairs men loving men with nationalism and militarism suggests as much. Although the meme is likely participating in homophobic discourses surrounding the *Twilight* series, I have argued that *Twilight* themed memes and fan fictions of this sort participate in a queering of the *Twilight* series. Disrupting and resisting Meyer’s hetero-metanarrative, the “Still Not as Gay as *Twilight*” meme among others troubles the notion of Edward and Bella as the heterosexual referent. Gleaning queerness or aspects of the text which trouble the heteronormative matrix, these fictions expose alternative realities, meanings and narratives.

While it is quite unlikely that Meyer intended for her two male protagonists to be understood as being involved in an intimate relationship, sexual or otherwise, audiences can potentially read queer potential into their exchanges. The campy feel of the text and the rare and unique ways of relating that the triangular schema offers to men in a largely competitive and homophobic society not only make queer readings possible, but easy. As a result, the Camp aesthetic employed and the triangular relations of Bella, Edward and Jacob involving angry, voyeuristic gazing, pouting, and showing off facilitate understandings of the text

which are less (straight)forward and clear and more homoerotic and queer. Thus, Girard's triangular formulation and Sedgwick's theorization of homosociality not only offer a useful lens for exploring a queer reading of the libidinally charged relationship between Edward and Jacob, but they also provide an understanding of why the consumers of *Twilight*, homophobic or otherwise, comprehend the series to be "gay". Both homophilic and homophobic written and visual fictions that imagine a more intimate bond, whether that be romantic or sexual, between Jacob and Edward are facilitated, in part, by the complicated and muddled dynamics of triangulated love.

Conclusion

“every generation creates and embraces its own [vampire]”—Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*

In 1995, Nina Auerbach argued that vampires, far from being simply fantastical monsters, were creatures that embodied the age in which they were created in. What vampires are, she maintains, “in any given generation is a part of what [she] is and what [her] times have become” (Auerbach 1). Referring to the years in between 1989 and 1992 (the years of George Bush’s presidency), Auerbach draws compelling parallels and makes convincing comparisons between the representations of vampires and the moral panics and social fears of the period. Correspondingly, my intervention in vampire studies has explored the rather recent depiction of the ‘normal monster’ while discerning how its depiction, similarly, parallels contemporary Anglo-American politics and culture.

This scholarly work took shape during 2011 and 2013 when debates about sexuality took front stage in U.S. politics. It was during these years that Rick Santorum, one of the Republican primaries, was glittered bombed by protesters for his hateful and homophobic denouncements of same-sex marriage. It was during these years that president Obama was re-inaugurated, defeating Mitt Romney. It was during these years that Obama announced his support for same-sex marriage and the Obama administration urged the Supreme Court to rule in favor of same-sex couples. It was during these years that landmark victories for gay rights were achieved, including the legal recognition of same-sex couples from the federal government in states where same-sex marriage is legal. It was also during these years, that the final *Twilight* film, *Breaking Dawn: Part II* (Condon 2012) which grants the undead, no

longer unwed couple, Edward and Bella a happy-ever-after ending in spite of their supposed difference.

This work has largely been a Queer endeavour. Engaging with an uncommon representation of queerness, I have argued that Meyer's hetero-romantic *Twilight* series can be regarded as participating in the century-old tradition of associating the vampire figure with queer identities and *ways of being*. Beginning by exploring the homosocial and homoerotic histories and themes of past vampire fictions, *Chapter 1* addressed the startling normality of Meyer's Cullen family. Although vampires have been traditionally employed as figures of transgression, difference and strangeness, Meyer's vampire embraces a politics of normal that is quite uncommon. Her unconventional depiction of vampirism as controlled, peaceful and good deviates from the vampire's traditional uncontrollability, destructiveness and wickedness. In spite of these revisions to the vampire's disposition, I demonstrated how the construction of Edward Cullen still feeds on the popularly imagined construction of queerness.

Relying on the metaphoric compatibility of vampirism and queerness, *Chapter 2* proffered suggestions for the trope's continued, yet altered existence within the *Twilight* series. The normal vampire, I argued, is symptomatic of a modern culture that is becoming more accepting of odd, strange, and/or queer individuals. Altered to reflect current perceptions of non-normative sexual identities, the construction of the vampire as an individual desperate to be recognized as being 'normal' is a subtle and seemingly apolitical form of violence toward queer identities and bodies. The highly exclusive process of assimilating the *abnormal* monster into *normal* society, I argued, is a discriminatory project that reifies racial and sexual hierarchies used to discursively distance normality from abnormality.

Addressing the popular phenomena of referring to the *Twilight* series as being ‘gay’, *Chapter 3* examined the proliferation of *Twilight* slash fiction produced by both fans and ‘haters’. Considering these fictions to be astute queer readings, ultimately, I argued that the creators of these queer fictions read queer possibility into the *Twilight* text because the *Twilight* narrative, whether intentionally or unintentionally, partakes in aesthetics, traditions, and figures traditionally perceived to be associated with queer culture and *ways of being*. The text employs both Camp aesthetics and the graphic schema of the love triangle, both of which have been considered the domain of queer culture. Meyer’s, (likely) unintentional, use of Camp aesthetics and the (homo)eroticized love triangle, I argued, renders queer readings of Meyer’s text queerly convincing.

Extending Auerbach’s project to twenty-first century America, I have explored the politicized nature of sexuality in the last decade to illustrate the socio-sexual climate of the period when the series was being created and produced. Granted, Meyer’s narratives were created several years before these events; however, debates over gay rights were as present in the media, then, in the early millennium, when Meyer would have been creating the texts, as they are now. Stephanie Meyer was writing during a time when attitudes toward gay individuals were beginning to shift dramatically. Both the book (2005-2008) and the film series (2008-2012) were created during an explosion of shows centered on the lives of gay individuals like the prime time television show *Will and Grace* (David Kohan 1998-2006) and popular *Queer as Folk* (Daniel Lipman 2000-2005) and trendy *The L Word* (Michelle Abbott 2004-2009).

These are queer times we live in. Queer (stange), indeed, when our vampires look and act like what we imagine ‘normal’ people to look and act like; however, this is not surprising that creatures that have traditionally embodied difference look and act like (some of) ‘us’

now. Returning to Auerbach's objective, vampires, far from being unimportant and nonsensical creatures, "matter because when properly understood, they make us see that our lives are implicated in theirs and our times are inescapable" (9). Consequently, as North America witnesses a shift in attitudes toward (white, wealthy, able-bodied, male) gays, so, too, does it experience a change in attitudes toward the gays' commonly imagined counterpart, the vampire.

In this work, I have sought to recuperate the queer in the *Twilight* series in the glaring absence of one. A narrative about a supposedly odd and out-of-place girl meeting and falling in love with a vampire (or, more appropriately, a rich, white (super)man living with vampirism), the *Twilight* series is not a text about the abnormal, but one, instead, about the normal. Normality is not something that has come easy to queer folks (I do not mean to confuse my readership, here, into thinking that I believe that there is anything inherently or biological abnormal, unhealthy or bad about queer folks) and, thus, drawing a parallel between Meyer's normal vampire and the queer identity, commonly understood in opposition to the 'normal', 'healthy' and 'good', has not been a common strategy among scholars theorizing around the *Twilight* series. I, however, maintain that the normalcy of Meyer's normative Edward Cullen can be attributed to recent changes in American attitudes toward and representations of queer individuals. In a society where people once considered different and strange are more frequently understood as being 'normal', it only makes sense that the figures they influenced, embraced and celebrated also evolve to accommodate the period's new attitudes and perceptions.

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