

A Disciplined and Virtuous Vampire
by
Holly Brown

Communication Studies Department
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo
June 2010

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Introduction

“Sex sells,” or so we have been told from countless advertisements that market based on the belief that viewers respond to sexual appeal. Sex appears everywhere in the media regardless of its relevancy to the actual topic. Sexual activity is topic-less, requiring no particular set of standards for it be useful or appropriate for an advertisement or any plot line. Sex in the media is beyond common—sex is expected:

Sexual depictions are so common that adolescents encounter in the range of 10,000 to 15,000 sexual references or jokes and instances of nudity in the media each year (Strasburger, 2005). Sex-related scenes appear on television at an average rate of 4.6 per hour and the amount of sexual content on television has increased from 56% in 1998 to approximately 70% in 2005 (Kunkel et al., 2005). Meanwhile, nearly 90% of the television programs containing risky sexual behaviors fail to provide any information concerning risks or responsibilities associated with sex (Cope-Farrar & Kunkel, 2002), and only 4% of programs popular with adolescents mention any risk or responsibility related to sexual behavior. (Pinkleton 5)

Sex is very prevalent in the media. It demands attention and influences the audience to discuss and form opinions about the different practices of sex. Television drama and popular media depict sexual behavior as having little to no negative consequences, and the mention of safe practice is rarely presented.

Sex is predominately portrayed and discussed in one fashion, condoning or fulfilling ones desire, requiring little use of caution and almost no practice of self-control. Consequently, this has developed a norm within society about sex, the place it holds in society, and an “everybody’s doing it” notion (“The average male loses his virginity at age 16.9; females average slightly older, at 17.4” (Coyne). Research has shown that the media maintains a powerful impact upon the beliefs and behavioral choices of its viewers. As Bandura explains in the Social Cognitive Theory, we learn by watching

others act and behave. Furthermore, television often acts as a socializing agent, dictating acceptable and favorable behaviors regarding sex:

Television viewers learn the norms and expectations associated with behaviors as well as what outcomes can potentially result from them. Attitudes consistent with such expectations are likely to be fostered in viewers, and these in turn may shape behaviors. Identifying specific elements within televised portrayals of sex that can lead to such outcomes is crucial. (Eyal 162)

The media have the power to influence and cultivate viewers' thoughts about sex and the appropriate behavior sex ensues, therefore greater understanding can be arrived through identifying these sexual portrayals and what behaviors they may be encouraging. Though a rampant and relaxed portrayal of sex is predominate in the media and American culture, many texts challenge this idea of accepted sexual behavior, and some of those texts are religious based. In response to the issue of sex and accepted sexual practices, religions that fall under the Christian umbrella (Protestants, Catholics, Lutherans, Mormons etc.), advocate the most contrasted view, abstinence, or staying sexually pure before marriage, with that of contemporary media. Studies have shown that most sexual relationships on television take place between unmarried couples (Eyal 163). The media often present sexual activity in a casual manner, with little risk. This typical depiction sets the stage for controversy when a piece of popular media comes out that directly challenges this culturally accepted attitude towards sex and aligns itself with that of a most juxtaposed ideal, abstinence—keeping sex between a married couple. This straying from media's common sexual depiction creates tension in the reader/viewer (an urge to understand or conceive what standard this new behavior is guided by). This alternative approach to sexual behavior also introduces new consequences or perceptions about the acceptable practice of sex and ultimately exposes the reader to a new ideal that may often have

religious links.

Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* breaks away from common media influenced ideals about sex and steers towards a "refrain until marriage" mentality brought on by the religious association (LDS) of its author. The author of *The Twilight gospel: The Spiritual Roots of Stephenie Meyer's vampire saga* writes about *Twilight* saying, "in Stephenie Meyer's world, its everything that leads up to sex...without the sex. It's the romance, stupid." (Roberts 3) Though uncommon for religiously influenced sexual depictions to appear in the media or television drama, these depictions emerge often in literature. Meyers is one of many writers, whose writing is influenced by their religious background, containing religious themes, metaphors, and motifs that align with the doctrine of their faith. C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* is a renowned example of a majestic fictional story that metaphorically represents several themes of Christianity. Authors like Fyodor Dostoyevsky and William Golding created entire characters in their literature that parallel the story of Jesus Christ (Dostoyevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* portrays a Christ-like character in Alyosha, and Golding does the same with his character of Simon in *Lord of the Flies*). Religion influences literature, and through careful analysis one can better understand and acknowledge the intended meanings and origins of specific themes and concepts in a text.

Twilight is the first book in a series of four stories about the passionate love relationship between a human and a vampire, Bella and Edward Cullen. The once book, now movie has acquired national popularity. "The entire series has now sold 8.5 million copies in the U.S., more than 17 million copies worldwide" (Goldstein). Once the story reached theaters it debuted at the #1 spot, grossing "over \$340 million worldwide since

its release on November 21, 2008” (Twilight cover). “The awards for Twilight and Meyer both are the following: TIME’s List of ‘People Who Mattered’ in 2008, USA Today’s ‘Author of the Year’ 2008, MSN’s ‘Most Influential Women’ 2008, New York Times Editor’s Choice, Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year, Amazon.com ‘Best Book of the Decade...So far,’ Teen People ‘Hot List’ pick, American Library Association ‘Top Ten Best Book for Young Adults,’ ‘Top Ten Books for Reluctant Readers,’ *Twilight* has been translated into 20 languages, and is a *New York Times* Best Seller” (Reynolds).

Because this tale has reached and allured a very large audience, it is necessary to investigate ideals and ideologies presented in the story. *Twilight* developed an enormous amount of hype, breeding followers across that world that attest to the story’s attraction despite its shift from the typical sexual-temptation depiction. The underlying Mormon theology throughout the novel imposes a romanticized belief about sexual purity: The battle between the mind and the flesh. Many times in the media and throughout literature we have seen the flesh succeed (satisfying our natural instincts) but Meyer’s *Twilight* presents the alternative, the withholding of one’s instincts or sexual urges for the sake of something greater. The main characters deny their desires through diligent self-control. Sexual purity is a theme throughout many religious texts: juxtaposing with the themes of mass media. Mormon theology weaves its way into the plot line of *Twilight* through the values and practices of sex and the characters pursuit to live morally.

By looking in depth at the behaviors, beliefs, communication, and attitudes of the main characters in *Twilight*, I will examine how Mormon theology weaves its way into this vampire love story. Using Ideological Criticism, I will show how *Twilight* incorporates foundational beliefs outlined in LDS Doctrine. I will continue this rhetorical

critique with a brief description of the author, a summary of the plot, and an explanation of the theoretical importance of using Ideological Criticism. I will highlight specific examples from the artifact to support my thesis statement exemplifying the influence of Mormon Theology in *Twilight*. Focusing on the affects that Mormon theology has upon Meyer's portrayal of sexual purity and the pursuit of a moral life, I will show how Mormon theology constructs the major plot line of *Twilight*. Finally, I will conclude by extending the findings of my analysis to show how *Twilight*'s Mormon theology reaches beyond its audience of devoted fans and into rhetorical theory, more specifically the theory of Ideology.

About the Author

The beliefs and opinions of an author or a rhetor have the tendency to be reflected within their work, forming how and what they discuss. *Twilight* is no exception to this, for the religious views of the author are detectable throughout the writing. Stephanie Meyer is a 35 year-old stay at home mother and a devote Mormon. As Meyer's states "I am also a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and that has a huge influence on who I am and my perspective on the world, and therefore what I write" (Minzesheimer). Meyer's Mormon beliefs underline several of the main themes in *Twilight* and structure the behavior of her characters. In recent interviews Meyer expressed her desire, while writing *Twilight*, to compose a story in which the characters have a moral compass, and steer from the activities that most contemporary media characters deal with. The book mixes fantasy with romance, without sex, drugs or foul language. Meyer's "pet peeve about the (young adult) genre is that there seems to be an empty spot for novels where kids aren't doing drugs and having sex" (Minzesheimer).

Twilight offers this break from most contemporary novels.

The majority of the *Twilight* readers are, in fact, women, rather understandably since the topic of the novel is romance, something that traditionally seems to attract women more often than men. The targeted audience for the novel was for young adults, yet since the premiere date the following of fans has expanded beyond the intended reach. The book was printed in 37 different languages suggesting that the love story does transcend despite language or culture. Yet, an important thing to note about *Twilight*'s audience is that religious affiliation does not seem to be a secluding factor, the theology does not deter readers who do not believe in Mormon theology from enjoying or even loving the series. The lack of religious affiliation required to read *Twilight* allures a diverse audience while her writing may unknowingly present readers with a set of values that are aligned to a specific ideology.

Twilight Plot Line

In the novel, *Twilight*, the main character, Bella, moves to the wet and dark town of Forks, Washington, to live with her Father. As the new girl at school in a small town Bella attracts a fair amount of attention from the students, boys and girls alike. Yet, Bella is fairly shy and unwelcoming of the attention so she distances herself from the other students; she keeps busy playing housekeeper for her Father (preparing meals and cleaning the house). Edward, a 106-year-old vampire, first meets Bella in science class as they are assigned to be lab partners. Upon their first interaction, Edward is overtaken with an intense urge and attraction to her scent and her blood. He scoots his chair far from hers and covers his nose so as to ward off her tantalizing scent. After, Edward misses several days of class leaving Bella upset and wondering how someone could be so repulsed by

her. Their relationship takes a turn when Edward uses his incredible strength to stop a car from crushing Bella in the school parking lot, ultimately saving her life. Bella, in shock about how a human could hold back the weight of a car, begins to question Edward about the incident and about the dark secret of his true identity. The story continues to unfold the tale of these star-crossed lovers who were unlikely to fall for one another; “and so the Lion fell in love with the lamb” (Twilight). Edward fights his overwhelming lust to drink Bella’s irresistible blood, which makes their love relationship all the more complicated. He refrains from touching her and flinches at the slightest graze of her hand on his. Ending Bella’s curiosity, Edward exposes her to his true identity and explains the nature of who he is as a vampire and his family history. Edward is part of the Cullen family, a unique family of vampires that chooses to feast on the blood of animals rather than the blood of humans. The town is particularly awestruck by the Cullen family, often commenting on the eerie yet unexplainable beauty that its members have (later attributed to their powers and presence as vampires). The uniqueness of the Cullen family sets up for a conflict within the story between a tracker vampire, James, who finds the Cullen’s relationship with a human particularly strange—intriguing his desire to hunt for Bella, a fun challenge. Because of Edward’s committed love for Bella he devotes himself to guard and protect her. At the conclusion of the novel, though Bella comes within a hairsbreadth of dying Edward successfully keeps Bella out of harms way, ultimately prevailing as her soul mate and ever-watching guardian.

Ideological Criticism

I have selected ideological criticism for the critique of this artifact because it best examines where the moral undertones of the novel derive from. This allows for greater

interpretation of the meaning behind the text and further analysis of how the author indirectly unfolds her religious beliefs into a fictional love story. An ideology is a “body of beliefs or principles belonging to an individual or group.” Ideological criticism focuses on the dominant ideology within an artifact. Using Ideological Criticism one can expose and examine those reoccurring ideologies within a text to better understand context and the author’s intent. As renowned ideological critic Teun Van Dijk writes, “ideologies, thus defined, have many cognitive and social functions... they organize and ground the social representations shared by the members of (ideological) groups” (Dijk 117). Ideologies shape and represent the beliefs and behaviors of their followers, thus studying ideologies that appear in an artifact can help one reach more informed conclusions about the meaning within that artifact.

Ideological criticism assumes that ideologies do exist within different cultures and societies and that those ideologies can be manifested rhetorically through books, movies, speeches, etc. As Anne Makus, in “Stuart’s Hall’s Theory of Ideology: A Frame for Rhetorical Criticism,” writes, “ideology is not like a building which one can exit; we are necessarily in the building, and all we can do is choose how to decorate or remodel it. The issue is how consciousness is produced and reproduced, not whether we can or should escape ideological formulation. It is a matter of which ideological formulations are engaged, not whether we should have them” (Makus 500). All written or spoken work encompasses some ideologies, as Makus explains, it is the manner in which those ideologies are presented and which ideologies are selected that is worth discovering/exploring. By examining the behaviors of the characters, the settings, and the attitudes/choices of the characters one can uncover certain ideologies employed by the

rhetor; Analyzing the lens the rhetor sees the world through, can help to explain or further describe elements and concepts within the artifact. Expressing the importance of using ideological criticism when looking into pop culture artifacts critic Conrad Oswald writes,

Ideological criticism tends to understand religion in relation to that which is not ordinarily considered religious: the social structure; gender relationships; race and class distinctions. Thus, with ideological criticism, one sees how religious concepts and categories are translated into everyday power struggles and societal relationships. Ideological critics interpret religion in its historical and social context and explore the relationship between society's values and the religious force such values might have in a particular culture. (Oswald 12)

Oswald explains how religious concepts are interlaced in character's behaviors and relational-depictions, thus understanding and examining these values and where they originate helps to color and illuminate the true meaning behind an artifact. Finally, evaluating how the rhetor articulates or illustrates the themes or values of an ideology is important in interpreting the meaning of the text. Specifically in the case of Stephanie Meyers' *Twilight*, one can uncover teachings of the Mormon faith through the analysis of ideologies within the text.

For the purpose of this rhetorical critique I will explore how Stephanie Meyers' religious beliefs (LDS) shape the values and behaviors of the characters within *Twilight*. By analyzing several re-occurring themes throughout *Twilight* I will show how the actions and beliefs of the characters in *Twilight* mirror several foundational ideologies of the Mormon Church. Ideological criticism helps "to see and learn how these values and religious ideas interact in culture" (Oswald 23). To make this case I will first identify aspects from the text that point to a particular ideology, accepted and preached within the Mormon Church, about sexual purity. I will show how Meyer's text re-enforces this ideal and romanticizes it through an extended metaphor. The accumulation of evidence from the

text will help to further layout the ideologies within *Twilight*. By looking at events, membership of characters, activities, goals, and core beliefs of the characters I will then make an assessment of the artifact in pointing out how these events combine to formulate specific ideologies. I will analyze whether the ideologies are passed on to the reader and if the ideologies change or alter social norms. To analyze how themes of the Mormon religion are constructed throughout the text without directly preaching or imposing the Mormon doctrine on the reader; my focus will be on how Meyers alludes to the importance of sexual purity and the pursuit of a moral life.

Sex in Society

Sex is an integral part of humanity and the discussion of the appropriate practice of sex is dominant in many cultures and religions. Furthermore, many ideologies incorporate opinions about sex; some theologies are based solely around the issue (who can have sex, when sex is appropriate, why sex was designed). The process of deeming what is considered acceptable sexual behavior has divided communities. Beliefs about sex are often dictated by the ideologies individuals choose to follow. For instance, the Church of Latter Day Saints holds specific views about sexual behavior, which transfer certain values and practices upon its followers.

The merge of sex and religion is a rather interesting subject to indulge upon. As seen through the sexual behaviors of the characters in *Twilight*, sex within religion is very different and accepts vastly different sexual practices than the majority of society. Why is it that sexual practices are so different among religious individuals? Do these teachings have an origin? Mythologist, Joseph Campbell, writes about many religious teachings and explores their potential origins. When discussing sexual restrictions in the church he

discusses the issue of rituals and how they guide people to “do things with intention, and not just in the animal way, ravenously, without knowing what you're doing” (*Mythic*). He adds, “people who just engage in sex as a fun game, as something exciting like that, don't realize what they're doing; you don't have the sacramentalization, and the whole reason marriage is a sacrament is that it lets you know what the hell is correct and what isn't. A male and female coming together with the possibility of another life coming out of it - that's a big act” (*Mythic*). Campbell notes how rituals frame our behaviors away from animalistic tendencies; they seek to establish greater discipline in individuals.

For centuries religious groups, like the Mormon Church, have outlined appropriate and acceptable sexual behavior for one to engage in. Most religions have decided differently what they deem proper or sexually moral; little agreement has been reached, yet all groups discuss the issue of sexuality. Though this topic is vast and would require an extensive study of its own, I will take note the unique relationship between sex and religion as it directly corresponds with the text of *Twilight*, a religiously influenced work that portrays sexual activity in a specific manner as dictated by the Mormon Church. Alan Watts, a spiritualist and expert in comparative religion, discusses the link between sex and most religions, making postulations about their connection. Regarding sex and religion he states, “read any kind of spiritual literature if you want to: Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Daoism, all of them seem to emphasis the importance of detachment from the body from the physical world, so that you will not be engulfed in the stream of impermanence. To the degree that you identify yourself with the body, and with the pleasures of the body, to that degree you are simply going to be something that is sucked away in the course of transency, so therefore hold yourself aloof” (Watts). Watts

concludes that most religions aim at the goal of detachment from one's body, rejecting dependence on the physical world; this idea leads many religions to express caution about the practice of sex and a need for discipline in the activity. Watts continues in his explanation to say that, "all the beauties of this world fall apart. And therefore if you are wise you do not set your heart on mortal beauty, but you set your heart on spiritual values that are imperishable" (Watt). The origin of this common theme of restricted sexual behavior in religion could be attributed to the seeking of detachment, the pursuit of a greater good above that of the physical world.

Restricting Human Nature

Religious teachings form and construct behavior, yet there are other influencing factors that shape and guide the sexual practices of society. Psychologists have often discussed the relationship between human instincts or desires and systems/norms within society (Campbell 150). These norms or systems of sentiments sway individuals to act in a certain fashion (what is socially acceptable becomes a regulating factor in behavior). One comes to know the norms of society through individual observation and interaction.

"We never merely invent the norms of truth and morality. They are already in place, they are already 'culturally real' in the plain sense that within the life of any viable society, its members already provisionally subscribe to the operative norms that define their interests. The course of history—the salience of new technologies, new events, new conceptual possibilities—drives every society to assess anew the norms it finds entrenched in its own practices." (Mead 243)

Society assesses norms and theorizes about the practice of morality in order to gain greater understanding of how to act and/or behave. Through personal experience individuals understand the norms of society and are often influenced to behave in accordance with them. Human nature also guides behavior. Yet, just because natural instincts can guide behavior, does not mean they always move individuals to action,

“although in many instances the sign stimuli that release animal responses are immutable and correspond to the inner readiness of the creature as precisely as key to lock, there also are systems of response that are established by individual experience” (Campbell, *Primitive* 35). Humans restrict their natural instincts based on individual experiences within society. Individual discipline is necessary for a functional society. Renowned literary critic and theologian, C.S. Lewis, compares sexual desires to our appetite for food when explaining the need for restricting or limiting desires of human nature.

Now if we eat whenever we feel inclined and just as much as we want, it is quite true most of us will eat too much: but not terrifically too much. One man may eat enough for two, but he does not eat enough for ten. The appetite goes a little beyond its biological purpose, but not enormously. But if a healthy young man indulged his sexual appetite whenever he felt inclined, and if each act produced a baby, then in ten years he might easily populate a small village. This appetite is in ludicrous and preposterous excess of its function. (Lewis 96)

Though human nature may seem natural and therefore permissible, according to C.S. Lewis, there are necessary limitations when abiding to one’s instincts; society expects the restraint of some desires and instincts in order for it to function. Reasons for restriction can vary; sometimes based upon social norms, personal experience, or religion, but self-discipline exists in society within and outside of religion.

Sex and the Mormon Faith

The restricting of natural instincts or human nature is evident in teachings of the Mormon faith, particularly in the teaching of sexually purity. In the Mormon religion sexual purity is of great importance. Appearing in books of the Bible and in The Book of

Mormon, Sexual purity is linked with obedience to God's commandments. Mormons refer to sexual purity as chastity; to be chaste means to be pure of sexual immorality. To keep within the Law of Chastity one must refrain from any and all sexual behavior before marriage and once in a marriage they must keep sex between a husband and a wife.

According to the Bible, sex is a gift and was designed for a husband and a wife to enjoy after the sharing of marriage vows. Sex before marriage is against LDS teachings. In the Bible God calls for ultimate purity; "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity...because these are improper for God's holy people" (*Bible: Ephesians 5:3*). Holy people should refrain from immoral acts, therefore based on the Mormon Doctrine; Mormons should strive to attain sexual purity. God takes pleasure in those that obey the Law of Chastity, "For I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me; thus saith the Lord of Hosts" (*Book of Mormon: Jacob 2:28*). Sexual purity is a way for Mormons to follow God's commandments by denying their sinful temptations. The Book of Mormon includes that Chastity is something to be highly valued, the "most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity" (*Book of Mormon: Moro. 9:9*). If one does not obey the Law of Chastity it is comparable to murder and highly frowned upon with the Church. "Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost?" (*Book of Mormon: Alma 39:5*). Sexual immorality is second only to murder. Mormon followers advise the greatest precaution when it comes to sexual immorality, for as the Prophet of the Mormon Church writes "there is no true Latter-day Saint who would not rather bury a son or daughter than to have him or her loose his or

her chastity--realizing that chastity is of more value than anything else in all the world” (LDS). Not only is Chastity gravely important, Chastity cannot be replaced; once it has been taken it is forever lost (a belief specific to the Mormon religion). "Also far-reaching is the effect of loss of chastity. Once given or taken or stolen it can never be regained,” says President Kimball of the Mormon Church (LDS). The practices and beliefs about sexual purity are very distinct and notable; breaking away from common practices and values toward sex. Unlike the sexual depictions seen in the media, the consequences of engaging in sexual behavior are grave and irreversible, not something to be desired or encouraged within the Mormon faith.

Sex in Twilight

Meyer's *Twilight* incorporates elements of Mormon theology through Edward and Bella's sexually pure relationship. They do not, despite their deep attraction for one another, partake in any sexual behavior. Furthermore, Edward's thirst for Bella's blood can be interpreted as a metaphor for the fight against temptation of forbidden fruit (another theme within Mormon theology): The love relationship between Bella and Edward depicts the overwhelmingly intense battle of remaining sexually pure despite one's natural instincts. First, Edward and Bella's relationship is sexually pure, not comprised of any sexually immoral behavior (as deemed by the Mormon faith). They keep physical contact to a minimum, only kissing briefly (*Twilight* 282). Contrasted to the typical pop culture depiction of sex, Edward and Bella's refrain from sexual intimacy points to LDS values. Mormon teachings are also evident metaphorically through Edwards's resistance to drink Bella's blood. His dismissal of his natural instincts and

urges aligns with the struggle that many Mormons face when with staining from sex before marriage, or other sexually immoral behavior.

From the moment that Edward meets Bella he is overcome with a strong urge/thirst for her blood. He notes barely being able to restrain himself when her scent lingers around his nose. Edward states, "I did my very best to stay as far from you as possible. And every day the perfume of your skin, your breath, your hair...it hit me as hard as the very first day" (Twilight 273). For Edward, Bella is the ultimate temptation, something he desires so deeply that even the scent of her sends him into a frenzy. Much like sexual temptation can be a strong and powerful emotion, Edwards thirst for Bella is incredibly strong. Edwards thirst is so strong in fact that he almost succumb to his temptation when they first met. He states; "To me, it was like you were some kind of demon, summoned straight from my own personal hell to ruin me. The fragrance coming off your skin...I thought it would make me deranged that first day. In that one hour I thought of a hundred different ways to lure you from the room, to get you alone. And I fought them each back, thinking of my family" (Twilight 269). Edward is overcome with desire for Bella, he sees her as the ultimate test of his self-control.

Part of Edwards reasoning behind refraining from his temptation is his family: "And I fought them each back, thinking of my family" (Twilight 270). Edward took into account his virtue and that of his families, knowing that they have taken a vow not to feed on human blood (Mormon take a vow of Chastity) (Twilight 187). Not only was it a value of his own, but also it is one that affects his family. Similar to this, the Church of LDS places a strong importance on family and the influence family opinions/values have on ones sex behavior. As noted before, some fathers would rather see their child dead

than sexually impure, when Edward considers his family in his fight against temptation it mirrors the moral obligation many Mormons feel.

It takes the utmost self-control for Edward to deny his natural instincts what they crave. Much like the Mormon doctrine that advises one to control and not fall to sexual temptations of the flesh, Edward must fight his hunger for Bella. In the novel, Edward must build his strength before the pair can even attempt to kiss. This depiction of caution and self-control mirrors the approach to sexuality purity discussed in the Church. Often Edward will distance himself abruptly from Bella if his instincts start to lure him, “I smelled his cool breath in my face. Sweet, delicious, the scent made my mouth water. It was unlike anything else. Instinctively, unthinkingly, I leaned close, inhaling. And he was gone, his hand ripped from mine. In the time it took my eyes to focus, he was twenty feet away, standing at the edge of the small meadow, in the deep shade of a huge fir tree. He stared at me, his eyes dark in shadows, his expression unreadable. “Give me a moment,” he called.” (Twilight 263) Edward feels so strongly for Bella that he must be in full control when he is around her. Edwards building of strength is mirrored by religious beliefs that instruct men to be cautious of their own strength, knowing how to avoid sexual temptation in times of weakness. Often church leaders will advise men to keep the door open, do not lay down together, have other people around, so as not to fall into sexual temptation. Edward, acknowledging his weakness and struggle keeps Bella at a distance and asks her to refrain from touching him or it might lead to something else. “It’s not only your company I crave! Never forget that” (Twilight 266). Edwards ultimate goal is to protect Bella, so he warns her of his temptations and asks her to aid deterring

his thirst. Though it is a struggle Edward learns to control his desires and distance himself from her when needed.

The *Bible* commands believers to deny the sinful desires of their flesh, “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming” (Bible: Col 3:5-6). Edwards pursuit to deny his cravings mirrors the pursuit of believers within the Church of LDS to strive to live a pure life without sexual impurities. Even though Edward is thirsty for her blood he must deny his desires. He comments on just how much he thirsts for Bella by comparing her to his own personal brand of heroin, one that he is particularly hungry for (Twilight 268). But just like Mormons are asked to refrain from sexual immorality by denying themselves (“Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Bible: Luke 9:23), Edward must deny his cravings and dismiss the temptations. Mythologist, Joseph Campbell notes this religious struggle stating, “loosing yourself, giving yourself to some higher end, or to another—you realize that this itself is the ultimate trial. When we quit thinking about ourselves and our own self-preservation, we undergo a truly heroic transformation of consciousness. And what all the myths have to deal with is transformations of consciousness of one kind or another. You have been thinking one way, you now have to think a different way” (Campbell 154). Edward, by nature lusts for Bella and, like those of the Mormon faith, he must transform his thoughts and think in a new way. This transformation of thought also exists and possibly originated from mythogoloy. Campbell describes these trials and transformations that all of society face, not exclusively those of religious affiliation, “trials and revelations are

what it's all about (in the transformation of ones consciousness)," (Campbell 155). Truth in society comes from this acknowledgement of a collective good or "some higher end" that moves individuals to de-center and think about others before themselves.

If Edward were to succumb to his temptation and bite Bella he would kill her. For her life he must practice self-control. Edward takes many precautions to keep Bella safe for he loves her and values her life, "Bella, I couldn't live with myself if I ever hurt you" (Twilight 273). He knows he always be in control or his temptations or there will be grave consequences. A man in the Church of LDS must also control his sexual temptations or there will be consequences. In the Mormon religion if a man were to have immoral sexual relations with a woman he would take something from her that she could never get back. Many Mormons consider the breaking of Chastity comparable to death, the killing of ones innocence, destroying their purity. As quoted earlier by the Prophet of the Mormon Church, "There is no true Latter-day Saint who would not rather bury a son or daughter than to have him or her lose his or her chastity--realizing that chastity is of more value than anything else in all the world" (LDS). (Chastity is something so valued that death is preferable before the loss of one's chastity. Edward's delicate and cautious nature when dealing with his thirst for Bella mirrors that of a LDS member who takes precaution with sexual immorality. Just as Edward could kill Bella, a man would rob a woman of her purity if he engaged in sexual behaviors with her.

Alluding to Forbidden Fruit: Cover

Not only do themes within the book point toward sexual purity as laid out in the accepted belief of the Rhetor, but the image on the book's cover hints and sexual purity as well. The cover of the book alludes to the theme of sexual purity or with staining from

temptation. The book cover is an image of hands holding an apple. The hands are marble white and resemble the cold pale skin of Edward and the Cullens. The apple is vibrant red and is photographed in an alluring way; held out as if to tempt the reader. This representation aligns with the Bible concept of forbidden fruit and the story of Adam And Eve. In scripture forbidden fruit represents own sinful desires, a desire that cannot be obtain or received, forbidden. The reference of forbidden fruit comes from the book of Genesis in the Bible where God advises Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of life (depicted in contemporary literature as an apple tree). Eve dismisses God's command and eats from the tree; her disobedience is referenced in Christian literature as the fall of man. The apple in the story has metaphorical meaning, often connected to immoral acts, particularly sexual immorality (Bible). The metaphor or immorality or forbidden fruit is a very fitting cover for *Twilight* as it alludes to the temptation that Bella is for Edward, mirroring the battle of maintaining sexual purity.

Edward's Moral Pursuit

“Please forgive me,” he said formally. “I can control myself. You caught me off guard. But I'm on my best behavior now.” He waited, but I still couldn't speak. “I'm not thirsty today, honestly.” He winked. At that I had to laugh, though the sound was shaky and breathless” (*Twilight* 265). Though it may seem impossible for many to with stain or deny their sexual desires, Edward is an example for the Mormon community that even the most seductive of temptations can be overcome through the process of “loosing yourself..giving yourself to a higher—end” (Campbell 155).

Like the representation of a sexually pure relationship that alludes to the author's ideological beliefs, the Cullen family's pursuit to live morally exemplifies the Mormon's

calling to live righteously and Holy. Similarly to the Law of Chastity, Mormon's feel a higher calling and a greater sense of obligation or duty to serve their God through living righteously, often surrounding the denial of their fleshly desires. This higher calling and existence of a moral compass is embodied in the behavior and life-style choices of the Cullen family as compared to those of other vampires.

Vampires, as they were imagined and are depicted in traditional fiction-stories, drink human blood; they survive and are nourished through the consumption of human blood, often rendering vampires to be the antagonists or villains of a storyline. In the plot line of *Twilight* the Cullen family chooses to drink only of animal blood, with staining from their thirsts for human blood. As Edward explains, "my family, we're different from others of our kind. We only drink animal blood," (*Twilight*) The Cullen family gives several explanations for their choice to with stain from drinking human blood and the importance they place on this moral decision. Edward talks with remorse and disgust about his desires for human blood, he sees the evil and wrongdoing of his ways and desires to rise above the thirst of his nature. Though he does deny his monster-like tendencies, he struggles with the reality of his existence. "I'm the world's most dangerous predator. Everything about me invites you in. My voice, my face, even my smell. As if I would need any of that. As if you could outrun me. As if you could fight me off. I'm designed to kill" (*Twilight*) He sees himself as a villain, the worst kind of predator, a creature designed to kill, and thus it requires the utmost of self-discipline to deny his cravings and follow his moral compass. C.S. Lewis calls upon a similar struggle when discussing the reality of his human nature, he writes:

The sins of the flesh are bad, but they are the least bad of all sins. All the worst pleasures are purely spiritual: the pleasure of putting other people in the wrong, of

bossing and patronizing and spoiling sport, and back-biting, the pleasures of power, of hatred. For there are two things inside me competing with the human self which I must try to become. They are the Animal self, and the Diabolical self. (Lewis 103)

As Edward fights against his urge to drink blood, so those of the Christian faith fight against desires of the flesh, their “animal self.” Lewis describes this battle to be human or act humanly as a continual process of restricting pleasures of the animal self (like Edward fights his thirst) and those of the Diabolical self (how Edward resents his predator-like nature).

In addition to Edward’s personal convictions that do align with those of his families, his father notes the importance of living in harmony with humans as a rationale for why their family does not drink human blood. They wish to be people or creatures of peace, even to the point that Mr. Cullen works as a doctor, helping to save the lives of humans. Though the Cullen’s are in bodies that desire to commit “evil” acts, they choose to ignore those desires and follow their convictions.

This struggle the Cullen family faces and the unique convictions they feel can be interpreted as a metaphor for the calling and convictions those of the Mormon faith feel. Because the author, Stephenie Meyer, has devoted her life to the teachings of LDS church, she accepts the idea of dying to one’s self, or denying ones earthly desires, it is no surprise that she would construct characters that feel a similar calling. Her characters do not conform to the world, or their vampire world, but rather set standards for their behavior and live according to those. In the book of Mormon this idea of submitting to a higher calling or moral standard and denying one’s natural man is taught; specifically in the book of Mosiah it is written,

For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticing of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. (Mosiah 3:19)

Mormon's believe that one must yield to their natural desires and obey those of the Lord or the Holy Spirit. Much like Mormons obey and follow a certain moral code, the Cullen family does not yield to their enticing flesh but rather they live in discipline according to their convictions.

Conclusion

After reading this analysis, the themes of Mormon religion interwoven throughout *Twilight* may be more easily detected, yet the question of author's intent still remains. Did Stephenie Meyer intend for her novel to convert readers? Did she purposefully incorporate her faith and does she acknowledge its existence in her writings? I am certainly not the first to detect the connection between the Mormon faith and *Twilight*. Dave Roberts wrote, *The Twilight Gospel*, with the intent to answer and respond to *Twilight* from a Christian perspective. He notes this same tension of forbidden fruit, commenting that the entire *Twilight* series, "gravitates around the tension between free will and predestination, (Roberts 143)" here Roberts describes the struggle *Twilight's* characters face when deciding to act in their free will or act in accordance with their destiny or higher calling. Robert continues in his analysis of the text saying, "Meyer has made it clear in interviews that she believes part of the function of the story is to explore ideas about free will" (Roberts 143). In *Time* magazine, as Robert notes to, Meyers is interviewed regarding her series and makes the comment that, "We have free will, which is a huge gift from God...I really think that's the underlying metaphor of my vampires. It

doesn't matter where you're stuck in life or what you think you have to do; you can always choose something else. There's always a different path" (Roberts 144). As the Mormon faith encourages and the *Twilight* characters embody, circumstances do not excuse one from submitting to their fleshly desires, despite the incredible difficulty it may cause you to choose what is right, you must. Stephenie Meyer acknowledges this theme of obedience, submitting one's desires for that of the right choice or the morally sound decision, possibly even the greater good, within her plot line. To many, this principle may be interpreted with a simple application such as, do not let your circumstances or difficulties fog your perception or lead you to make unmindful, ill-gauged, and unreflective choices. Though Meyer's may not have deliberately embedded Mormon teachings into her writing, she certainly acknowledges those specific teachings that permeate through the text.

Twilight has achieved both reach and impact. Crossing languages and attracting millions of followers despite its sex-less and deeply religious-influenced plot line. Through my analysis one can see how the values and beliefs of the Rhetor are visible throughout the novel and do impact the way Meyer's characters think and behave. Stephanie Meyers uses Edwards resistance to drinking Bella's blood to metaphorical depict the task of obeying the Laws of Chastity within the Mormon Religion as well as there obedience in remaining sexually pure. As Roberts describes them, "Redemptive analogies" he expands by saying "these parables, pictures or metaphors within a storyline are seized upon as parallels to Christian truth and doorways to insight" (Roberts 9). Meyer's story raises the question of obedience and conviction, drawing a connection to the Mormon teaching of denying one's self, the natural man. By using

ideological criticism one is able to look at the context of *Twilight* more closely, providing deeper insight and revealing the themes of sexual purity and moral obedience as outlined in the Mormon Doctrine. Many viewers may not have been able to articulate what was so different and alluring about *Twilight* and its stray from typical sex depictions in the media; But through the examination of *Twilight* with ideological criticism one can better understand where these behaviors and values derive from; explaining the importance of using Ideological Criticism on literature. As noted on the back cover *Twilight* is, “deeply seductive and extraordinarily suspenseful. *Twilight* is a love story with a bite” (*Twilight*). *Twilight* talks about sex but it a way that aligns with Mormon theology, constructing it in a more conservative light yet still enabling it to have the same appeal. Whether the followers of *Twilight* choose to emulate the same values is difficult to say, but *Twilight* does offer the audience a different way to view the practice of sex and the morality of yielding to fleshly desires. *Twilight* proves that a love story can be deeply seductive and powerfully captivating without explicit sex scenes.

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EXTRA

CHECK: JOSEPH campbell* Episode 2: The Message of the Myth (first broadcast 6/22/1988 on PBS)

Creation myths, transcending duality, pairs of opposites, God vs. Nature, sin, morality, participation in sorrow, the Gospel of Thomas, Old Time Religion, computers, religion as “software,” the story of Indra: “What a great boy am I!,” participation in society

Many religious groups, like the Mormon Church, have outlined appropriate and acceptable sexual behavior for one to engage in. Most religions have decided differently what they deem proper or sexually moral; little agreement has been reached yet all discuss the issue of sexuality. Though this topic is vast and would require an extensive study of it's own, I will take note this unique relationship between sex and religion as it directly corresponds with the text of *Twilight*, a religiously influenced work that portrays sexual activity in a specific manner as dictated moral by the Mormon Church. Alan

Watts, a British philosopher and author of 25 books about philosophy and religion, discusses the link between sex and most religions and postulates about their connection. Regarding sex and religion he states, “read any kind of spiritual literature if you want to: Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Daoism, all of them seem to emphasize the importance of detachment from the body from the physical world, so that you won't be engulfed in the stream of impermanence. To the degree that you identify yourself with the body, and with the pleasures of the body, to that degree you are simply going to be something that is sucked away in the course of transience, so therefore hold yourself aloof” (Watts). Watts concludes that most religions aim at a goal of detachment from the body, rejecting dependence on the physical world; this idea leads many religions to express caution about the practice of sex and a need for discipline in the activity. Watts continues in his explanation to say that, “all the beauties of this world fall apart. And therefore if you are wise you do not set your heart on mortal beauty, but you set your heart on spiritual values that are imperishable” (Watt). The origin of this common theme of restricted sexual behavior in religion could be attributed to the seeking of detachment, the pursuit of a greater good above that of the physical world.

Alan Watts

“The point at which we can become most attached” the other reason why it is most problematic is that “sexuality is something you cannot get rid of.” “I don't think religion is repressed sexuality.”

“The whole attitude of anti-sexuality in the Christian tradition is not as anti as it looks, it is simply a method of making sex prurient and exciting in a kind of dirty way” (Watts 2/6)

-Asks the question of why sexuality is given up... even in Asian religions giving up some of your physical world is important.

-All the beauties of this world fall apart. And therefore if you are wise you don't set your heart on mortal beauty, but you set your heart on spiritual values that are imperishable...the worldly hope that men sets their

“Read any kind of spiritual literature if you want to: Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Daoism, all of them seem to emphasize the importance of detachment from the body from the physical world, so that you won't be engulfed in the stream of impermanence. The idea being that to the degree that you identify yourself with the body, and with the pleasures of the body, to that degree you are simply going to be something that is sucked away in the course of transience, so therefore hold yourself aloof” (Watts)

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GO LOOK UP:

Mosiah 3:19

Alma

1. Teun A. van Dijk, “Ideology and discourse analysis” *Journal of Political Ideologies*, June 2006

“Ideologies, thus defined, have many cognitive and social functions. First of all, as explained above, they organize and ground the social representations shared by the members of (ideological) groups” (117) .

“Ideologies have been defined as foundational beliefs that underlie the shared social representations of specific kinds of social groups. These representations are in turn

2. Anne Makus, “Stuart Hall’s Theory of Ideology: A Frame for Rhetorical Criticism,” *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 54)

“Therefore, ideology is not like a building which one can exit; we are necessarily in the building, and all we can do is choose how

to decorate or remodel it. The issue is how consciousness is produced and reproduced, not whether we can or should escape ideological formulation. It is a matter of which ideological formulations are engaged, not whether we should have them. (500)”

“Consequently, although rhetors may choose what they will say, ideology theory maintains that these choices are determined within the common sense of the culture.” (500)

“Hall's critical theory of ideology provides a systematic and comprehensive method for the analysis of discourse in interaction with social practices and structures” (496).

3. Makus, pg. 503

4. Jancie Hocker Rushing and Thomas S. Frenzt, “Integrating Ideology and Archetype in Rhetorical Criticism,” Quarterly Journal of Speech

PG. 221

QUOTES

“Sadly, courtship, to a very large extent, has gone out the window. Except in the world of Bella the human and Edward the vampire as chronicled in the books Twilight, New Moon, Eclipse, and Breaking Dawn. There it is, the gentle touch, the longing look, the warm embrace, the hand-in-hand walks in the fog-shrouded night in the town of forks.

Oh, and yes, the kiss. Make no mistake, there is the tension and that warm fuzzy feeling when you know it's first love and it's real. Don't remember those emotions? Talk to your parents. They can clue you in. In Stephenie Meyer's world, it's everything that leads up to sex...without the sex. It's the romance, stupid." (3) – Stephenie Meyer: The Unauthorized Biography of the Creator of the Twilight Saga by Marc Shapiro

“She was raised Mormon; in and of itself not a defining factor in her approach to creating imaginary canvases. But her religion, coupled with a loving, conservative sense of self that is her template, is very much the fuel that has fired her work. Being a good girl with good values..” (3) - Stephenie Meyer: The Unauthorized Biography of the Creator of the Twilight Saga by Marc Shapiro

“Redemptive analogies..These parables, pictures or metaphors within a storyline are seized upon as parallels to Christian truth and doorways to insight” (9) – Roberts

Gender Roles

“there's a dichotomy that the church has, it means that the women and what they are doing in the church is always subordinate to men. I see that as damaging to women because they are put in the role of being under the power of the man. It is not an equal partnership.”

Marriage Construction

“Through and in and by and with the family that Mormons are saved. And it's how they think primarily of their relationship both to the afterlife and to the church as a whole.” – Sarah Barringer Gordon (Historian)

“The marriage that takes place in the temple when a man and a woman are joined together or as we term it sealed together not just for time or until death does us part but for time and all of eternity.

- Marlin K. Jensen (LDS Church Historian)

“We look at the family as an eternal unit, you are making eternal commitments.”

- Kimber Tillemann- Dick (Business Consultant)

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