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## **Third-Wave Feminism in Select Young Adult Literature**

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### Third-Wave Feminism in Select Young Adult Literature

A feminist reading of young adult novels is critical to understand how the romantic relationships between the male and female characters operate. Looking at it through the male character's point of view, as well as the female point of view, provides different perspectives. *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* holds some merit here. But where are all people, regardless of sex, alike? Sex. Degrees vary, but all humans are sexual, especially teenagers. Young adult literature reaches a demographic that identifies so closely with the literary character's "tingling sensations" because they too share the same raging pubescent hormones. In every novel to be discussed, teenage sexuality is the prominent aspect. Each novel centers on love, sex, the need for both, the want for both, and how the characters find or don't find them. I chose books from two different authors, one female and one male, to provide insight into this presentation.

The Twilight saga, as it's referred to, is the all-consuming vampire romance series of the century. It is the brainchild of Stephenie Meyer, an English graduate of BYU. According to her official website, *Twilight* is the result of a dream she had on June 2, 2003. "In my dream, two people were having an intense conversation in a meadow in the woods. One of these people was your average girl. The other person was fantastically beautiful, sparkly, and a vampire. They were discussing the difficulties inherent in the facts that A) they were falling in love with each other while B) the vampire was particularly attracted to the scent of her blood, and was having a

difficult time restraining himself from killing her immediately,” (Meyer). The *Twilight* series is best read as one book, while the Green novels are considered separate entities.

John Green is a very popular young adult novelist in the literary world. His realm revolves around high school boys vying for mysterious high school girl. His biographical information comes from his official website, [www.sparksflyup.com](http://www.sparksflyup.com), where he also posts videos and radio shows that pertain to his books. I’m discussing his three novels that share similar aspects of sexuality and romantic love, all from the male character’s perspective. *Looking for Alaska* won the Michael L. Printz Award for excellence in Young Adult Literature in 2005, and the movie rights have been bought by Josh Schwartz (creator of the teen drama *The O.C.*), and *An Abundance of Katherines* was named a Michael L. Printz Honor Book in 2006. Both novels were finalists for the L.A. Times Book Prize (Green).

The *Twilight* series because it is ripe with examples of sexual dominance and power, but at the same time is conservative and virginal. The author and the main character are both women, but the men play a very important role in the series, if not the most important role. John Green, a male young adult novelist, writes the other set of novels explored here. These novels do not belong to a series like *Twilight*, but they all follow a similar pattern in how the main character, always a male looks and thinks about the woman of his desires. Green’s novels provide idealistic views of love and sexuality, but they still manage to stay grounded in rational thought and experience. Stephenie Meyer’s series gives readers this idealized, fantastical view of love and eternity that is due, in some part, to the fantastical elements of the story, but it can’t be all attributed to vampires and werewolves.

Feminism stands on the tenet that women are equal to men, and serves to expose the dominance that patriarchal societies have long exacted over women. Beginning with Mary

Wollstonecraft's *Vindications of the Rights of Women* and now settling in to its third wave, feminism has come a long way, and still has a long way to go. Feminist criticism is learning "what it means to *read as a woman*," but it goes beyond that (Soter 31). A feminist reading should delve into both sexes, and explore how males and females act and think in the context of their setting and culture. Dale Bauer, professor of English and Women's studies at the University of Kentucky, says it better: "Rather than opposing the public and private voices or opposing masculine and feminine, we need to see how to negotiate that opposition in order to speak a multiplicity of voices into the cultural dialogue," (Kirsch 354). And by reading these texts through a feminist lens, fascinating things about male and female characters in the novels were being discussed. In the *Twilight* series, the male characters are sexually dominant and possessive, but still maintain conservative ideals about marriage and sex. In Green's novels, the male characters are overly enraptured and fascinated by the female characters, which are portrayed as fickle and uninterested in the "right" boy. The "right" boy is the character that believes he is the perfect match to the girl he adores. He believes that he is the only person capable of loving the girl the way she is supposed to be loved, whatever the reasons. Both authors toy with the idea of the "right" boy for their female characters

The history of feminism is a long and storied one. It is separated into waves of movements within the American feminist community. Even though feminist thought and action existed before the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the "first wave" focuses on women's involvement in the anti-slave movement, like Sarah Grimké, "the first American to write a full-length feminist treatise," and the fight for suffrage (MacLean 3). The likes of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton led a decades-long fight for women's suffrage, which culminated in the Nineteenth Amendment, ratified in 1920. The "second wave" focuses on reversing the

sexism that women faced from the government and societal pressures. It is decorated with history forming organizing: the formation of NOW (National Organization for Women) in 1966 and the ERA. NOW, with Betty Friedan at the helm as President, sought to fight the “government’s continued trivialization of gender discrimination,” (LeGates 331). *The Feminine Mystique*, written by Friedan in 1963, introduced “the problem that has no name” to the masses; the idea that women are “yearning for a greater purpose in life than ensuring their own nuclear family’s well-being,” (MacLean 12). Along with *The Feminine Mystique* came the birth control revolution, where women “were freer to enjoy sex and experiment in ways that would have been unthinkable for their grandmothers,” (MacLean13). LeGates notes that the second-wave also introduced a new group of feminists: radical feminists, who “identified patriarchy as the root cause of male dominance and focused on the family and personal relationships,” (LeGates 329). Then the “third wave” feminists came. The defining differences between the second and third wave feminists is age, the latter being “the post-baby boom Generation Xers,” inspired by the Thomas-Hill hearings and President Bill Clinton (Henry 5). It is born from the ‘post-feminist’ period, in which feminism was no longer needed,” (Henry 17). It reflects the age we are in, one of multiple viewpoints that conflict. Henry notes that “third-wave feminist see their sexual freedom as a fundamental right,” and it is their choice to use it, or not, to whatever degree they so choose. (Henry 90).

Feminism, to me, is the freedom of choice a woman should strive for that is not defined by outside influence or thought. I grew up in a very conservative small town that was very harsh towards progressive thought and action. My college years have yielded a surprisingly similar experience for me. I’ve always maintained a pretty liberal mindset throughout my youth, but my feminist views didn’t develop until last year, to be honest. It’s not that I thought feminism was a

dirty word, or I thought it was pointless; I didn't give it the thought to begin with. To be honest, I stumbled across a blog geared towards women that I completely identified with, and after reading it for a few months, I began to identify with the feminist themes that occurred in the articles, like a recent one that discussed a survey, where about 50% of English men and women blame women for being raped (BBC). I have to agree with the quote that Kate Allen, UK director of Amnesty International, gave in response to the findings: "alarming but sadly not surprising." A statistic like that is infuriating, but it's not all that surprising in a culture that awards women with fame and attention for shilling their sex tapes, but then saying that rape victims enticed their attackers with short skirts and cleavage. It's quite infuriating to be a young woman in a society that constantly forces a virgin/slut dichotomy, the notion that a woman should be "a lady in the street but a freak in the bed." Feminism helped me come to terms with my own identity, and that I can be and do whatever I want, as long as I am comfortable and responsible with my actions.

## The Twilight Saga

The four novel series follows a young girl, Isabella Swan, Bella, and her star-crossed romance with Edward Cullen, the 107-year old vampire posing as a 17-year old high school student. Each book is a continuation of the former, with maybe a few months lapsing in between. The first book, *Twilight*, follows Bella as she moves to the tiny, overcast town of Forks, Washington from Phoenix. Edward, along with his adopted vampire brothers and sisters, are the mysterious family in the town. Bella and Edward fall obsessively in love very quickly, and the sexual tension mounts, as Edward wants to kill and ravage her at the same time. In the next book, *New Moon*, Edward leaves Forks under the pretense that he does not love Bella anymore, but he is actually trying to protect her from his scary and dangerous vampire world. She is depressed, but finds solace in a childhood friend. Jacob Black is a member of the local Native American tribe whose member's change into werewolves in the presence of vampire activity. *Eclipse*, the third book in the series, centers around Jacob and Edward's fight for Bella's love. Bella remains steadfast in her decision to become a vampire, even when Jacob and Edward convince her not to follow through with it. Then *Breaking Dawn* arrives. Bella and Edward marry, are intimate for the first time, and Bella becomes pregnant immediately afterwards. The child is born with some altercations; the main one being that Bella is changed into a vampire in order to survive the pregnancy. Another source I'm going to draw from is *Midnight Sun*, a partial draft that Stephanie Meyer posted on her official website. Essentially, it is part of the first *Twilight* book, written from Edward's point of view. Each book is going to be cited by its title, not by Meyer's name, for clarity.

## Green's Novels

In *Looking For Alaska*, Miles, nicknamed Pudge due to his lack of fat, becomes infatuated with Alaska, the mysterious queen of his Alabama boarding school. Eventually he has a moment with her, but then she leaves in a drunken haze and is killed on the highway. Miles and the other characters spend the rest of the novel making sense of her death. *Paper Towns* tells the story of Quentin and his obsession with Margo, the popular girl next door. One night, Margo gets him to help her in her mission of exacting revenge, and then in the morning she leaves town. Quentin then spends an exorbitant amount of time and money travelling across the country to find her. The third novel, *An Abundance of Katherines*, is the most original, although it still follows the same basic tenants of his other novels. Colin has only dated girls named Katherine, and when the 19<sup>th</sup> Katherine breaks up with him, it takes a road trip and a mathematical theorem designed to predict his Katherine relationships for him to get over her.



## The Boys of *Twilight*

Edward, the chivalrous vampire of *Twilight*, is ripe with sexuality. When he first meets Bella in their biology class, she takes his obvious recoiling as a sign of disgust, when it is in fact the opposite. “Her scent hit me like a wrecking ball, like a battering ram,” he describes (MS 9). He fantasizes about killing her because the smell of her blood sings to him. His only reason to not kill her and all bystanders is the guilt he would feel over disappointing Carlisle, his assumed father/maker/brilliant town doctor/moral compass of the family. There’s a primal urge to his desire, very sensual. He notices every detail about her, the blood pulsing through her veins just beneath her porcelain skin, and how it floods her cheeks when she blushes. He also realizes that she intrigues him on another level. Edward can read minds, but Bella is the first person that he cannot hear. When their hands touch for the first time accidentally, he sends “an electric current” through her fingers,” (T 45). So he leaves Forks to protect her livelihood, but comes back because he is curious about her, as to why he can’t read her mind. He even says, “Would curiosity be enough to keep Bella Swan alive?” (MS 34). That curiosity grows into an obsession, a need to keep her safe from her clumsy self and vans with faulty breaks. And that obsession is reciprocated, thus the romance blossoms. He “dazzles” Bella to the point where he leaves her speechless or breathless or both, just by smiling and asking her questions like, “Do you truly believe that you care more for me than I do for you?” (T 208). But then he plays up his mysterious side by claiming, “It would be better if we weren’t friends... but I’m tired of trying to stay away from you, Bella,” (T 84).

The lion and the lamb theme appears throughout the series, although just not as explicitly stated as the following excerpt from Bella’s point of view:

“ ‘And so the lion fell in love with the lamb...’ he murmured. I looked away, hiding my eyes as I thrilled to the word.

‘What a stupid lion,’ I sighed.

‘What a sick, masochistic lion,’” (T 274).

Edward is a virtually indestructible being with nothing but time and money on his hands. In the Twilight realm, he doesn’t even have to worry about wooden stakes, since it is all just a myth. Bella is his dangerously clumsy lamb, and Edward takes it upon himself to protect her from every possible danger, including himself. He talks about how “fragile” and “breakable” her hands are, that his “breath could snap them,” (MS 98). He compares her to a “soap bubble-fragile and ephemeral,” (MS 251). His psychic sister Alice pleads with him to not “risk her life” and “leave her undefended”: by leaving when other vampires pose a potential threat (MS 86). By vowing to protect her, he refuses to be too intimate with her because he is scared of how he might react physically. Every time they kiss, he pushes Bella away before things can get out of control. The morning after their first intercourse, Edward berates himself because he bruises Bella pretty badly and refuses to have sex with her again, even as Bella tells him that she thoroughly enjoyed it and is not in pain. His drive to protect her perverts itself into an unhealthy need for control. He has to drive her to school everyday, he follows her everywhere, and he watches her while he sleeps. When she visits Jacob on the Indian reservation, an area where the Cullens are banned, Edward waits at the border until she is finished. When he leaves town to hunt animals for animal blood, he makes Bella sleep at his house until he returns. Before they are married and he can watch her every single second of the day, Edward buys Bella a new car, a mythical street-legal tank that is the indestructible car of “Middle East diplomats, arms dealers, and drug lords” everywhere (BD 7).

A large part of the series focuses on Bella's desire to be a vampire, and Edward's refusal. Bella makes up her mind pretty early on that she wants Edward to transform her into a vampire. Edward flat out refuses to do it, at first. He doesn't want to compromise her soul. Eventually, he agrees to do so only if she agrees to marry him. He places all these restrictions and rules and ultimatums around the one thing that can make her fragility disappear. He is obsessed with protecting her out of the name of love, even when she protests.

For being able to observe the world for more than one hundred years, Edward is old fashioned for his like. Usually, sex and violence go hand in hand with vampires, with lore of succubi and incubi seducing and killing innocent humans. When he realizes he wants to be close to Bella, he tells her in his smoldering voice, "It would be more... *prudent* for you not to be my friend. But I'm tired of trying to stay away from you, Bella," (T 84). He starts the relationship when he is ready for it, not her. The physical relationship comes long after they say "I love you" for the first time, due to Edward's wavering willpower to keep her safe and not suck her blood. When she leans in towards his "angelic face" to just get closer, he has to run away to compose himself (T 262). When Bella looks at him, his eyes are "hungry. Not in a way to make me fear, but rather to tighten my muscles in the pit of my stomach and send my pulse hammering through my veins again," (T 277). Bella obviously feels sexual urges, but she doesn't do anything physical with Edward, unless he initiates it. Bella is taken aback by their first kiss: "What neither of us was prepared for was my response. Blood boiled under my skin, burned in my lips. My breath came in a wild gasp. My fingers knotted in his hair, clutching him to me. My lips parted as I breathed in his heady scent," (T 282). This happens every single time they kiss. He even points out that she's "intoxicated by [his] very presence," (T 284). He exerts this sexual power over her, watching her while she sleeps every single night in her bed, but he wishes to

remain abstinent until they are married. And she loves him so much, she agrees with his wills. He tells Bella that he is her prisoner, but she notices “his long hands formed manacles around *my* wrists,” (T 302). Meyer wanted that image to be one of love, passion, and devotion, but it comes off as controlling and possessive. There’s a scene where Jacob and Edward are fighting over Bella, and Edward takes it to the next level by saying, “She *is* mine,” (E 341). There is a blog article that applies Edward and Bella’s relationship to the 15 signs of an abusive relationship, according to the National Domestic Violence hotline. The author provides rational examples to every single question asked (McMillan). Edward is the man, the lion, so it’s automatically his job to protect Bella and control her actions at all costs. Meyer tries to make these qualities positive, but they are really telling of the gender roles that pervade the series.

In *Midnight Sun*, when Edward considers leaving Forks to keep Bella safe, he imagines her life without him, and her walking down the isle to another man. Edward says, “It was odd, the pain that image caused me. I couldn’t understand it,” (MS 54). He hasn’t quite realized his love for her at this point, but he already knows he wants to marry her? That he would be hurt if she married another? Later on, he imagines the same scenario. Mike, a friend of Bella’s, asks her to a dance, and when Bella doesn’t immediately say no, Edward is taken back to his earlier vision. This time, it makes him maniacal. “The pain was more than anything I’d felt before. A human would have to be on the point of death to feel this pain—a human would not live through it. And not just pain, but outright *rage*,” (MS 96). This is not a sign of a healthy relationship, and they aren’t even in a relationship at this point. Edward doesn’t want Bella to have the free will to consider going to an innocuous dance with a friend, because he loves her.

Edward has waited a hundred some odd years to find the love of his life. When he finds that person, he makes her agree to marriage before they can have sex or become a vampire, both

of which Bella explicitly desires. Marriage is a man-made concept of finality, which seems like the exact opposite of what a vampire would cherish. Their love, which defies time and human existence and all reasoning, has to be defined by a ceremony and a piece of paper. It is confined within a human notion, when everything about their relationship is not human. It would be easy to blame this on Meyer's Christianity and assumed conservative views, but the religious right can't be the only force at work. There is a surge of young people settling down in their late teens and early twenties. The idea that women should find a man and have children is still prevalent in young generations.

Then, there's the honeymoon. The act itself is not described, but the outcome is. Edward leaves an aftermath of broken bed frames and headboards in his sexual wake. He laments over bruising Bella, even though she isn't in pain. She says, "I tried to remember this-to remember pain-but I couldn't. I couldn't recall a moment when his hold had been too tight, his hand too hard against me. I only remembered wanting him to hold me tighter, and being pleased when he did..." (BD 89). He then flat out says, "I will not make love with you until you've been changed," (BD 98). He denies his wife sex, which she had to wait for marriage to have, on the basis that she bruised some. It doesn't matter that she isn't in pain or happened to enjoy the sex, he is in control of what happens. This cycle continues for a few weeks before they realize Bella is pregnant. Meyer presents through a fantastical realm the idea that women, to some extent, are expected to marry and bear children in all circumstances, even in fantasy worlds. In their defense, no one expected Edward to impregnate her, but it happens.

Meyer's writing style helps contribute to the series' overwhelming popularity. Most 13-20 year old girls would love to be the recipient of Edward's affections. His language is so ornate and final and immediate, that it could win plenty of girls over. He tells her that she is "the

opposite of ordinary,” and that she is “the most important thing to [him] ever,” (210,273). When she tells him that she loves him, he simply answers, “You are my life now,” (T 314). He recites Romeo’s lines to her, as if she is Juliet. He spouts out these long proclamations of his love to her: “Before you, Bella, my life was like a moonless night. Very dark, but there were stars-points of light and reason.... And then you shot across my sky like a meteor. Suddenly everything was on fire; there was brilliancy, there was beauty,” (NM 514). Meyer plays up the notion that true love will conquer all, and that all women should find their soul mate as soon as possible.

Jacob serves as the main foil to Edward. He is essentially everything that Edward can’t be to Bella. Jacob is a werewolf, the only known enemy of the vampire. He is aggressive and physical. Jacob’s main role in the books comes in the second one, where he basically nurses Bella back to physical and emotional health when Edward leaves her. They hang out in his garage while he fixes up motorcycles.

Meyer plays with Jacob’s physicality throughout the entire series. Even at fourteen years old, he is taller than most high schoolers. And by the time he reaches sixteen, he has the abs that would shame a Harlequin romance novel cover. His physical mature makes up for his young age. So much detail is put into Jacob and Bella being able to touch freely. Edward’s skin is ice cold and rock hard, but Jacob’s body temperature runs over 100 degrees after his wolf transformation. His body is soft, warm, and inviting. There’s one scene in *Eclipse* where every one, wolves and vampires, are hiding out during a blizzard to surprise attack another vampire. Jacob sleeps next to Bella to keep her warm, all while Edward watches from the far corner of the tent. In other scenes, he grabs her face and kisses her, he holds her hand, he puts his arm around her. He is always touching her in some way. When he professes his love for her, he is very

honest: “ ‘I’m in love with you, Bella,’ Jacob said in a strong, sure voice. ‘Bella, I love you. And I want you to pick me instead of him. I know you don’t feel that way, but I need the truth out there so that you know your options. I wouldn’t want a miscommunication to stand in our way,” (E 327). But then when he kisses her, he doesn’t take her feelings into account; he just does it. “His lips crushed mine, stopping my protest. He kissed me angrily, roughly, his other hand gripping tight around the back of my neck, making escape impossible. I shoved against his chest with all my strength, but he didn’t even seem to notice....His lips forced mine open, and I could feel his hot breath in my mouth,” (E 300). She punches him, but she ends up breaking her hand in the process, so she calls Edward to take care of it. And when Jacob tells Bella’s dad what happened, he responds by saying, “Good for you, kid,” (E 336). Apparently no one is too concerned over the fact that Bella didn’t ask for it to happen, and she didn’t want it to happen. Jacob shows a blatant disregard for her opinions or feelings when it comes to anything physical. Meyer makes his physicality such an important aspect of the books, but uses it negatively when he overpowers Bella and forces himself upon her. Since Bella is small and weak, she can’t push him away and defend herself.

The “imprinting” storyline that runs throughout the last two books is troubling. The act of imprinting is when a werewolf falls immediately in love with another person. Jacob says, “Sometimes...we don’t know exactly know why...we find our mates that way.... I mean our...soul mates.” When Bella jokes that it’s just love at first sight, he replies, “It’s a little bit more powerful than that. More absolute,” (E 122-123). It’s explained as all the strings in the universe snap except for the one connecting the two people. The other person, usually the girl, since most of the werewolves are boys, technically has a choice in whether to be in the relationship, but that person is supposed to be “designed for her alone,” (E 176). Jacob spends

all his time trying to imprint on Bella, so that nothing can stand in his way, but he instead imprints on Renesmee, Bella and Edward's daughter, right after she was born. This is the description Meyers gives of the act:

“Everything inside me came undone as I stared at the tiny porcelain face of the half-vampire, half-human baby. All the lines that held me to my life were sliced apart in swift cuts, like clipping the strings to a bunch of balloons. Everything that made me who I was-my love for the dead girl upstairs, my love for my father, my loyalty to my new pack, the love for my other brothers, the hatred for my enemies, my home, my name, my *self*-disconnected from me in that second-*snip, snip, snip*-and floated up into space.

I was not left drifting. A new string held me where I was.

Not one string, but a million. Not strings, but steel cables. A million steel cables all tying me to one thing-to the very center of the universe.

I could see now-how the universe swirled around this one point. I'd never seen the symmetry of the universe before, but now it was plain.

It was the baby girl in the blond vampire's arms that held me here now.

Renesmee,” (BD 360).

Meyer skirts this issue by portraying the imprinting on young girls in a positive light. Jacob observes one of his pack interact with the 2-year-old girl he imprinted on. He's very protective, in the father-figure sense. “I've seen what it's like, through his eyes. There's nothing *romantic* about it at all, not for Quil, not now.... It's so hard to describe. It's not like love at first sight, really. It's more like...gravity moves. When you see *her*, suddenly it's not the earth holding you here anymore. She does. And nothing matters more than her. And you would do anything for her, be anything for her....You become whatever she needs you to be, whether



that's a protector, or a lover, or a friend, or a brother," (E 176). It's explained that when the girl becomes of age, then it will turn into a romantic relationship. Since werewolves don't age, they will eventually be the same age, thereby rationalizing the relationship. There's also the issue that the imprinting process is a very rare thing. Jacob complains, "Wasn't it bad enough that yet another member of the pack had imprinted-because, really, that made four of ten now! When would it stop? Stupid myth was supposed to be *rare*, for crying out loud! All this mandatory love-at-first-sight was completely sickening!" (BD 147). It's supposed to be a rare act, but it happens to 50% of the werewolf pack. Meyer does not approach the subject of Leah, the one female in the pack, imprinting on a male.

The imprinting reflects unrealistic ideas of love that the *Twilight* series present. Meyer portrays falling in love to be so simple and final, even though she says she "deeply believe[s] in the complexity, variety, and downright insanity of love," (Meyer 3). She believes in love that doesn't give the participants a choice, and she finds this idea romantic enough to weave in to her story.

## Bella

Bella is the virginal female character. She is independent to begin with, making dinner for her father and working to save money for college. But the moment she meets Edward, her independence flies out the window. She claims to be in love with him just after a few conversations and one date. She is also very naïve when it comes to her sexuality. For example, this piece of a conversation between her and Edward:

“I know love and lust don’t always keep the same company.” (Edward)

“They do for me. Now, anyway, that they exist for me at all,” (T 311).

She claims to have never been in love before, and she claims to have never lusted after another person before, but she somehow possesses the capability to separate them in her mind and not confuse them. This dialogue also points out that having lustful thoughts is frowned upon. Sexual attraction outside of a “true love” relationship is, for whatever reason, not approved of. This is an unfair judgment of human nature. Not to mention, Bella can’t have a sexual desire that doesn’t involve being madly in love. This echoes the entirely false thought that women either don’t have sexual desires or shouldn’t express them. Bella does have desires, even though they are conservative. She asks Edward if there will ever be a day “That my heart might someday stop trying to jump out of my chest whenever you touch me?” (NM 16).

Bella is the typical teenaged girl, hopeless romantic that fantasizes about being thrust in to an Austen novel or into Juliet’s shoes. But after a while, the reader does get to see her sexual side. While thinking about becoming a vampire, she asks herself, “Was there a human experience that I was *not* willing to give up?” (E 345). The word “sex” is rarely used in the series, but it’s obvious to understand what she is referring to. She begs with Edward that having sex while she is still a human is “all [she] wants,” (E 448). So when he kisses her, she

“tremble[s], but it was not from the chill,” (E 449). The reader finally sees a manifestation of her sexual desire, but it is short lived. Edward then pulls away from their intimate moment and makes her agree to marry him first, in order to protect her “virtue” (E 453). Meyer glosses over a really important moment in their relationship. She doesn’t need to be explicit, but teenagers are going to identify with those same trembles and chills that Bella experiences. But then they are told that those feelings have to wait until marriage, which is not always the most reasonable request.

Edward controls their relationship. She faints when he kisses her for the second time (T 319). And he is always the one kissing her, not the other way around. He initiates all physical contact and ends all physical contact, since he has to be in control of his emotions at all times. She thinks of herself to be completely average, but she compares Edward to “a marble tribute to some forgotten pagan god of beauty,” almost every time she sees him (NM 7). When Edward leaves, this is how she describes it: “It *was* like some had died-like *I* had died. Because it had been more than just losing the truest of true loves, as if that were not enough to kill anyone. It was also losing a whole future, a whole family-the whole life that I’d chosen....” (NM 398). She doesn’t act when Edward is involved; she only reacts to whatever he does. Bella is very dramatic when it involves Edward. Everything is immediate and final. Bella can’t be relaxed and calm in her relationship with Edward. She says: “The word *boyfriend* had me chewing on the inside of my cheek with a familiar tension while I stirred. It wasn’t the right word, not at all. I needed something more expressive of eternal commitment.... But words like *destiny* and *fate* sounded hokey when you used them in casual conversation,” (E 6). Bella realizes that there’s something off with proclaiming her eternal love for Edward, but it’s the word choice that bothers her more than anything else.

After Bella is changed into a vampire, Edward no longer has to worry about hurting her during intercourse. Bella says that, “He was all new, a different person as our bodies tangled gracefully into one on the sand-pale floor. No caution, no restraint. No fear-especially not that. We could love *together*-both active participants now. Finally equals,” (BD 482). Meyer explicitly states that Bella was unequal to Edward before her vampiric conversion. Bella has to change her life to match his life before she is considered his equal. In their early relationship, Edward made all the decisions about their physical and emotional relationship. He set the conditions of their marriage, and she agreed to it all because she loved him. But now that she is a vampire, she can finally have a say in their relationship. The issue isn’t the fact that she became a vampire; it was her choice from the beginning. Meyer presents her as being mentally, physically, and emotionally inferior to Edward for the bulk of the series, but she’s only an equal for 200 pages.

The popularity of the books and the movie series has polarized fans into two camps, Team Edward and Team Jacob. Both camps believe that their figurehead character is the “right” boy for Bella. From a logical standpoint, Bella should want to date Jacob. He can protect her, and he can be physical with her and not want to kill her. She wouldn’t have to change into a different life form, and he can give her as many biological children as she desires. But, she decides to stay with Edward. Her decision to stay with Edward is inherently feministic, since she decides on her own will, but that will is not entirely free. Meyer discusses on her website the fact that she has received backlash about Bella being an anti-feminist character, since she marries young and keeps her baby. To sum it up, she emphasizes that Bella is a fictional character, and that none of it is real. She does, however, delve into her feminist perspective: “But do her choices make her a negative example of empowerment? For myself personally, I don't think so.

In my own *opinion* (key word), the foundation of feminism is this: being able to choose. The core of anti-feminism is, conversely, telling a woman she can't do something solely because she's a woman—taking any choice away from her specifically because of her gender. One of the weird things about modern feminism is that some feminists seem to be putting their own limits on women's choices. That feels backward to me. It's as if you can't choose a family on your own terms and still be considered a strong woman. How is that empowering? Are there rules about if, when, and how we love or marry and if, when, and how we have kids? Are there jobs we can and can't have in order to be a 'real' feminist? To me, those limitations seem anti-feminist in basic principle,” (Meyer). Her basic principle is valid, but centering one's entire life and future on a lover would take the free will required to make those choices away. A woman should be able to want a husband and children, but when it becomes all she wants, then there's a problem. Everything Bella does, every choice she makes, has to do with Edward. She doesn't have any choices when it comes to Edward, which invalidates Meyer's argument. Bella loves Edward to the point where she agrees to anything he asks or demands. The conflict of the series focuses on Bella's inequalities with Edward, not her equality. Carmen Siering, assistant professor of English and women's studies at Ball State University, wrote an article for Ms. Magazine saying, “Even as Edward declares his love to her, Bella deems herself 'unworthy' of it, being simply human while he's a vampire and all,” (Siering). Edward qualifies Bella's self worth because she doesn't have the choice to qualify herself.

## *Looking for Alaska*

*Looking For Alaska*'s Miles, aka Pudge, is a different breed of boy from the Twilighters. All of Green's books focus on the present, the immediate action, not something that is 10,000 miles away or five years into the future. With that immediacy, the characters have to be much more in touch with the present. Miles is very observant of his surroundings, especially when it comes to the objects of his affections. The day he meets Alaska, he is so enraptured by her looks. Her eyes are "fierce emeralds," and her lines make him realize the "*importance of curves*" on a woman (19). When they are searching for four-leaf clovers, he notices her crossed legs and the "pale skin of her sizable cleavage" that makes it impossible for him to focus on clover picking (40). He leans in to kiss her "on the dusty orange couch with its cigarette burns and its decades of collected dust... and I would have felt the shock of her so-soft lips. I would have," (54), but she ignores his advances. Miles is obsessed with that moment of expressing his feelings to her. He's obsessed with the idea of kissing her more than the act. He watches Alaska passionately kiss her boyfriend and details her head movements her very slight movements. She lays her head down on his lap and he can only think about the layers between her cheek and his penis. The layers game comes out throughout the story, whenever Alaska is close to him.

There's a scene where Miles and Alaska are alone during Thanksgiving break and they get tipsy off of Strawberry Boone's Farm and lie next to each other under the stars. He gets sexually aroused and then tries to tell her that he loves her because "what else matters but that", but she interrupts him with some nonsensical musing (82). Green places the sexual feeling before the declaration of love, but both are present. This isn't a "chicken or the egg" issue. Lust and love are found together, and it can be hard to distinguish one from the other. Green does an excellent job of intertwining the heart flutters and the physical excitement to show Miles'

emotions. The reader can sense that lust is the main emotion on display, but unlike Bella, Miles doesn't claim to be able to distinguish the two.

At one point, Alaska and Miles stumble upon a porn video. As he's taking mental notes, she is coaching him on the dos and don'ts of lovemaking. Then, after all of the sexual talk, he wants to sleep next to her on the couch "in the most innocent sense of the phrase. Not fuck... not even have sex," (88). Miles understands the sensuality and sexualness of simply sleeping next to a person. But is Miles an unreliable narrator? It's hard to believe that he would only want to sleep next to her, when he is so physically attracted to her. Miles acts so virginal, even when he clearly wants more sexually. Green is maybe trying to dispel the stereotype of the overly sexual teenaged boy that is rampant in American society.

Green uses sex to further show Miles' affections towards Alaska. After a failed attempt at a blowjob with his girlfriend Lara, they ask Alaska how it's really done. The blowjob scene is written so matter-of-fact, just describing the action, no emotions. "Lara and I went back to her room, where she did exactly what Alaska told her to do, and I did exactly what Alaska said I would do... It was my first orgasm with a girl, and afterward, I was embarrassed and nervous," (128). Miles says it felt like "a hundred little ecstatic deaths," but that's all he reveals about it. Very basic. It's interesting that during the act, Miles focuses more on Alaska's presence than his girlfriend's. But when he finally gets his moment with Alaska, everything changes. Miles describes their "tongues dancing back and forth in each other's mouth until there was no her mouth and my mouth but only our mouths intertwined," (130). He describes her taste as a combination of "cigarettes and Mountain Dew and wine and Chap Stick." He feels her "arching her back fluidly beneath me," and he traces the outline of her breasts (131). And when she stops, his "mouth strain[s] to stay near hers." Green writes Miles' mindset so differently from when he

was with Lara. It's beautiful, fluid, and desireful. Even though a blowjob is arguably much more sexual fulfilling than kissing, Green cements Miles' desire and love for Alaska without having anyone take their clothes off.

Green doesn't shy away from the idea that Miles only loves the idea of Alaska, not Alaska. Alaska tells him, "Don't you know who you love, Pudge? You love the girl who makes you laugh and shows you porn and drinks wine with you. You don't love the crazy, sullen bitch." Miles thinks, "And there was something to that, truth be told," (96).

This idealized love becomes more pronounced after Alaska's death. Her death is such an integral part of the novel that Green divides the novel into two sections, "before" Alaska's death and "after." The days are listed as "one hundred twenty-eight days before" and so on. After trying to figure out her reasons for the actions that killed her, The Colonel, Miles' best friend and roommate, calls Miles out for his fantasy love:

"You don't even care about her!" he shouted. "All that matters is you and your precious fucking fantasy that you and Alaska had this goddamned secret love affair and she was going to leave Jake for you and you'd live happily ever after. But she kissed a lot of guys, Pudge. And if she were here, we both know that she would still be Jake's girlfriend and that there'd be nothing but drama between the two of you- not love, not sex, just you pining after her and her like, 'You're cute, Pudge, but I love Jake.' If she loved you so much, why did she leave you that night? And if you loved her so much, why'd you help her go? I was drunk. What's your excuse?" (171)

After The Colonel's blowup, Miles realizes that it was all a fantasy to him:

"I screamed because The Colonel... was right, for I did want to believe that I had a secret love affair with Alaska. Did she love me? Would she have left Jake for me? Or was it just



another impulsive Alaska moment? It was not enough to be the last guy she kissed. I wanted to be the last one she loved. And I knew I wasn't. I knew it, and I hated her for it. I hated her for not caring about me. I hated her for leaving that night, and I hated myself, too, not only because I let her go but because if I had been enough for her, she wouldn't have even wanted to leave." (171). Miles realizes the love isn't just that one feeling or that one kiss. It's complex, hard, and unforgiving at times. Green doesn't present teenaged love to be flowery and simple.

Alaska, much like Greene's other leading ladies, is a mystery to the boy. She isn't really mysterious to the reader, but Miles' fantasy of her places her on an indescribable level to him, just because he likes her. When Miles asks her why she smokes so much, her face lights up "with all the delight of a kid on Christmas morning" and she replies, "Y'all smoke to enjoy it. I smoke to die," (44). He tells her that he doesn't get her and she tells him, "You never get me. That's the whole point," (54).

Alaska is not the only victim in the novel. She subtly manipulates Miles into bending to her requests, because she is obviously aware of the affect she has on him. She asks him to spend Thanksgiving with her at their school, because she doesn't want to be alone, and she knows he will. When she goes to lie on his lap to sleep, she prefaces it with, "I'm not flirting. I'm just tired," (76). She denies it, but then immediately places her head on his crotch. Then, she goes on to preach about patriarchy and feminism. The prank she devised was referred to as "Subverting the Patriarchal Paradigm," (199). When her and Miles watch porn together, the first thing she comments on is how "the girl is just an object," (87). Alaska is presented as being two-faced: she wants the attention of guys, but will then claim that attention to be sexist. Green will allow for his males characters to discover the complexity of love, but his females characters must either be one-dimensional or hypocrites.

If choice is a tenant of third-wave feminism, then Alaska could be considered a follower. She is comfortable with the choices she makes, even if they aren't exactly fair to the other characters. While Green creates a complex identity for Miles and his other male characters, he doesn't give Alaska the same complexity. Green pushes Miles as being the "right" boy for Alaska, even though he clearly is not. Miles is the right boy only because he loves the idea of Alaska loving him. When she doesn't eventually fall in love and become fully committed to him, Miles regards her as being a lesser being, the heartbreaker. Green seems to lump Alaska into a stereotype that he tries to escape. Green attempts to break his male characters out of typical teenaged male stereotypes, but he doesn't attempt to do the same with his female characters.

### *An Abundance of Katherines*

*An Abundance of Katherines* is the most girl-centered book of Green's bunch, but it still echoes the same sentiments as the other two. Colin, a teenaged child prodigy, takes a road trip in hopes that it will cure his heartbreak over Katherine, the nineteenth Katherine he has dated. He and his Sunni Muslim friend end up in a tiny Tennessee town, where Colin develops The Theorem of Underlying Katherine Predictability. It's an equation meant to graphically convey the relationship of every Katherine he has dated. He does it as a means to show Katherine XIX that he is a real genius, not just a child prodigy, so she will get back together with him. In the process of his growing relationship with Lindsey, a girl from the boonies, he realizes that the future is unpredictable and his theorem is right but he has no more use for it, since he is now in an unpredictable relationship.

This novel has the same basic characters as the others: a skinny boy (Colin) with an unrequited love for a girl (Katherine), and a sidekick (Hassan), who usually makes jokes about his massive penis (Thunderstick). After Katherine the nineteenth breaks up with him, he goes into a deep depression not even the promise of summer school classes can fix. This catalyzes thoughts of never being more than a really smart kid, since she's no longer around. Colin says, "I'm just-I'm just a failure. What if this is it? What if ten years from now I'm sitting in a fugging cubicle crunching numbers and memorizing baseball statistics so I can kick ass in my fantasy league and I don't have her and I never do anything significant and I'm just a complete waste?" (9). His fear of losing her forever directly correlates with his fear of losing his gift forever. From the ninth page, the reader can sense that he might not love her as much as he loves proving his genius, which is his love, to her.

Colin's lack of relationship know-how is that he doesn't consider outside variables. He's so smart, and he thinks his issue is like his vision, myopic. He can't see the future before him, "inevitable but invisible," (35). So he tries to invent a way of seeing the future, in order to prove his intelligence to himself and Katherine. He thinks the world consists of "Dumpers and Dumpees," Katherines being Dumpers and Dumpees being him (8). And so he gets stuck in the mindset that he is supposed to love the Katherines and the Katherines are supposed to break his heart. Every time. By writing his theorem, he thinks he can predict at what point in the relationship a Dumper will dump a Dumpee. And if he can make it apply to any two people in the world, he will win the girl back. But he doesn't consider things like age, relative attractiveness, etc., even when they are right in front of him. Hassan, his overweight Muslim friend, starts to date Katrina, the "incredibly hot-in that popular-girl-with-bleached-teeth-and-anorexia kind of way, which was Colin's least favorite way of being hot," girl in town (53). It perplexes Colin that Katrina actually likes Hassan, even though he looks like nothing she's ever dated before. She's not Katherine, and he can't understand attraction beyond Katherine.

Colin's idea of love is very childlike, like the other characters in Green's novels. Love to him is being loved. He says to Katherine XIX, "I love you so much and I just want you to love me like I love you," (40). And being in love means smiles that "end wars and cure cancer," (32). And thinking of her name not as her name, "but a word that described only her, a word that smelled like lilacs, that captured the blue of her eyes and the length of her eyelashes," (16). But he has dated nineteen Katherines, so that word can't only apply to one. He tries to make this Katherine the one Katherine, the ultimate Katherine, but according to his theorem, she is just another Dumper with the same name as everyone else he has dated.

The theorem works like it's supposed to, after he accounts for other variables, but he's never satisfied with it. He projects his lack of satisfaction with his own relationships onto his work. He doesn't understand that he has never been satisfied because he only dates Katherines for the idea of love, not because of the actual person. When he kisses the first Katherine (who also happens to be the last one), he thinks that "the kiss didn't feel nearly as good as the sound of her asking if she could be his girlfriend," (47). Before their first kiss, Colin says that "because as good as kissing feels, nothing feels as good as the anticipation of it," (79). After she hangs up on him: "*You can love someone so much*, he thought. *But you can never love people as much as you can miss them*," (105). When K1 grows into K19, she says to him, "You don't need a girlfriend, Colin. You need a robot who says nothing but 'I love you,'" (40). When he wants to kiss K19 for the first time, he boils it all down to a Rejection Minimization Theorem, which basically says that whoever is the least likeliest to be rejection should initiate physical contact. The basis of it being "boys, basically, want to kiss girls. Guys want to make out. Always... Whereas girls are very fickle about the business of kissing. Sometimes they want to make out, sometimes they don't," (76). He doesn't think that girls have the same drive and want for intimacy as guys do, which is wrong. He thinks that since the girls he dates have some restraint in their lives, they don't harbor the same desires.

In the epilogue, Colin makes all the realizations about his life and the world and his future. He plugs Lindsey into his theorem, and it states that she will break up with him in four days, but she doesn't. And so he tries to fix it, but by doing so, he makes the discovery that "the future is unpredictable," (213). And that being a genius doesn't really matter because "the infinite future makes that kind of mattering impossible," because "the future" is in fact, "forever." But, since the future is unpredictable, he can be whatever he wants, "a genius, even,"

(214). He loses the idea that all there is in the world is a girl named Katherine who will dump him, even though he loved her, and that proving his intelligence to her won't do anything. It takes Colin the course of the novel to realize that he can date and dump and be dumped by whoever he chooses, which is very simple and obvious, but it changes his outlook on everything.

Green sets up a dichotomy between Katherine, girls of the past, and Lindsey, girl(s) of the future, to echo Colin's growth. There's not really that much of a difference between the two girls, but it's seemingly enough to catalyze his change.

Katherine 19 is the atypical girlfriend; the right mix of mysterious and normal to send Colin into a frenzy. From meeting at a very young age, Katherine was always highly interested in Colin's gifts for languages and anagramming. Even when they fight, she asks him to anagram the things around them. We don't see that much of her, only that she signs yearbooks "And here's me, whispering again and again and again and again iloveyou. yrs forever, K-a-t-h-e-r-i-n-e," and she likes *The Royal Tenenbaums* (6). The reasoning that we get for the breakup is that she grew tired of Colin's obsession in being nothing more than a child prodigy. She's predictable to the point that Colin thinks he can predict relationships, using theirs as the model.

Lindsey, on the other hand, is meant to be new and exciting. She likes to shoot hogs and is fascinated by Colin's mental ability and the theorem. She does private things, like chew on her thumb in front of Colin, which he takes to mean she is comfortable with him, thus is attracted to him. She tells him how she can't be herself in front of anyone, so when she does something like biting her thumb, it just cements the idea further in his mind. They share a common fear of not mattering to people, hence her not being able to be her normal self around people. But she's just as smart as Katherine, just as pretty, and just as intrigued with Colin's thought processes. She's the redneck Tennessee version of Katherine, but Colin sees her as this

entirely different person, which is what he thought of Katherine, before she dumped him. Also, the fact that he can't use his intelligence to predict her makes her that much more desirable to him. She disregards the theorem when they start dating, which makes Colin able to fall in love with her after four days. After he realizes he can't predict their relationship, he embraces the idea that he can't predict anything in the future, which is the opposite of Katherine and the theorem.

Green continues to subjugate his female characters into a trope that he appears to have his male characters bypass. Katherine is the hypocritical girl who claims to be interested in Colin's talent, but still breaks his heart, and Lindsey is the one-dimensional companion Colin seeks. Green doesn't take the time to explore his female characters' motivations for anything. It seems like Katherine and Lindsey can only hover between two states: loving Colin and not loving Colin. *An Abundance of Katherines*, more so than the other Green novels, focuses on the male character's break from the stereotypes that Green attempts to disprove, but the same attention is not given to the female characters.

### *Paper Towns*

Quentin, the protagonist of *Paper Towns*, follows a more stereotypical situation, at least in the beginning. He lives right next door the school's resident girl next door, Margo Roth Spiegelman. He calls it his "miracle" (1). The novel begins with Q recounting the mystery of the man that Margo and him found dead in the park when they were nine years old. That's when Q realizes that he "could never stop thinking that maybe she loved mysteries so much that she became one," (8). Because after that day, she never says a word to him until their senior year of high school, nine years later. After that, she would lead him on a wild goose chase around central Florida and across the country because of her mysterious facade.

Most of the blatant sexual references come from Q's friends, not himself. Ben tells Q "he should just hit that. God, that is one candy-coated honeybunny," "that" being Margo (14). Q wants to take her picture and add it to his "photographic series entitled *Perfection Stands Still While Mortals Walk Past*. He even thinks Ben's obsession with the word "honeybunny" is "more sexist and lame than retro-cool," (16). Q refers to his state as being "incontestable in love with her," (31). He calls her beauty "a kind of sealed vessel of perfection- uncracked and uncrackable," (50). Q thinks that his two best friends, Ben and Radar, only want the physical aspect of a relationship because that's all they joke about. He doesn't understand that others can feel that same incontestable love he can.

Q is a self-centered main character. When Radar talks about his girlfriend and their love, Q doesn't care. "He [Radar] talked a little about Angela and how much he liked her and how weird it was to fall in love just a few months before they would leave for different colleges, but I found it hard to listen very well," he admits (219). He forces his friends to absorb themselves in this quest to discover her, and he can't stand to listen to their issues.



Like all of Green's main characters, he only wants to be in love. Q has a dream about Margo, where they are just sleeping together. "God help me. The only teenaged guy in America who dreams of sleeping with girls, and *just* sleeping with them," he says (176). Very familiar, almost exactly what Green has Miles say about Alaska. Q mentions his desire of sleeping next to her much earlier in the novel as well. "Not doing anything-just lying there together beneath the sky... And maybe I could feel her breathe against my neck..." (78). Again, love is equated to a simple act of sleeping next to a person. It's idealized as being simple when it is anything but.

Much like Miles, Q also admits that he can't understand both sides to Margo. At the end of a few chapters, Q makes certain remarks about how mysterious Margo is. The prologue ends with, "And in everything that came afterward, I could never stop thinking that maybe she loved mysteries so much that she became one," (8). Chapter 8, part 1: "She either trusted me or wanted me to fall," (79). There's another remark at the end of chapter 8, part 2 that says, "I don't know who she is anymore, or who she was, but I need to find her," (141). The final one, the one that culminates these musings: "The fundamental mistake I had always made-and that she had, in fairness, always led me to make-was this: Margo was not a miracle. She was not an adventure. She was not a fine and precious thing. She was a girl," (199). He realizes that he can't understand her if he only thinks of her as this elusive enigma, this otherworldly deity. He has to look at her as if she was just a lost girl who couldn't handle it anymore. Someone that makes mistakes and runs from them, like everyone else. When he realizes this, he can see her. The last page of the novel:

"I feel her hand on my back. And it is dark as I kiss her, but I have my eyes open and so does Margo. She is close enough to me that I can see her, because even now there is the outward sign of the invisible light, even at night in this parking lot on the outskirts of Agloe. After we

kiss, our foreheads touch as we stare at each other. Yes, I can see her almost perfectly in this cracked darkness,” (305). He understands the complexity of their relationship and his feelings for her, which in turns makes things clearer for him.

Before the cracking, there has to be the blowup. The epiphany. When Q finds Margo, she acts completely different than he expected her to act. She gets angry because she says she didn’t want to be found, so he gets angry. “I’m so pissed at her. For... for, I don’t know. Not being the Margo I had expected her to be. Not being the Margo I thought I had finally imagines correctly,” (284). And then the climax:

“She screams at me now, pulling herself up by my shirt so she can get in my face. ‘Oh bullshit. You didn’t come here to make sure I was okay. You came here because you wanted to save poor little Margo from her troubled little self, so that I would be oh-so-thankful to my knight in shining armor that I would strip my clothes off and beg you to ravage my body.’

“ ‘Bullshit!’ I shout, which it mostly is. ‘You were just playing with us, weren’t you? You just wanted to make sure that after you left to go have your fun, you were still the axis we spun around.

“She’s screaming back, louder than I thought possible. ‘You’re not even pissed at me, Q! You’re pissed at this idea of me you keep inside your brain from when we were little!’” (284-285).

As like Miles, Q realizes that his love ends with his dream of sleeping next to her. Green makes his male characters put the female characters up on unrealistic pedestals, and then when the girls don’t meet those standards the boys are shocked and disappointed. The reader is supposed to sympathize with the boys when this happens, because the girl is apparently wronged the male character. The reader never sees the complex side of the female characters, so their

actions have to be taken at face value. Green writes Margo to be the root of all of Q's problems, and so when the situation doesn't resolve itself perfectly, it's because of Margo. She is judged as being the mean character because she doesn't realize that Q is the "right" boy for her, which is an unfair judgment.

Green doesn't give Margo the complex sexuality of the other two female characters. Margo's problems are more emotional and internal; she projects them onto Q, who takes them to be sexual advances.

When Q and Margo find the man who shot himself to death in the park, Margo comments on the fact that she thinks all the strings in him broke, and that's what caused him to kill himself. When she enlists Q to help her with her mission, she comments that all of her strings broke. So when she disappears, Q believes that she left clues to her body, that she killed himself just like the man in the park.

Her strings break because her boyfriend is sleeping with her friend and her friends don't tell her, and she skips town. She has before, for her parents' attention. She wants Q to follow her, because she knows what he thinks about her. She also idealizes Q in her diary to be this "superhot, superloyal defender of justice," from when they found the dead man (299). After she and Q have their night of debauchery together, she realizes he was exactly like she imagined him to be, and she couldn't handle it, but she can't let him go. She leaves him these disconnected clues to find her, but then claims she "sure as shit did not" want anyone to find her (285). Like Alaska, she is written as being a hypocrite when it comes to romantic relationships.

It's important to note that none of the novels end with the male character ending up with the female character. Q kisses Margo at the end of the novel, but then he leaves. Colin does end

up dating Lindsey, but she is not who he originally set out to date. There are two layers to this, the first being that the male characters love the idea of love more than the act itself. The second is the fact that the female characters are seen as manipulators, since their action and motivations are not explored. All three girls (Katherine, Margo, Alaska) are somewhat villanized for ruining the guys' expectations of love. They appear to victimize the male characters, which are presented as being sweet, nice, lovable, and at worst, susceptible, just because they don't end up dating them. If Green devoted the time and effort to giving his female characters the same complexity and emotion that is given to the male characters, then his novels would be that much more realistic.

Green's novels portray high school relationships somewhat more accurately. Even though the guys say they are in love with the girls, they usually never end up with that girl. Sometimes they find love, but most of the time they don't. Teenagers are stereotyped as being materialistic and immature, but Green strives to make his male characters complex. His male characters are concerned with their metaphysics and the world at large. But, Green does seem to play with the stereotypes he tries so hard to avoid. Green makes his male characters' profile a trope in itself. All of his main characters are skinny, smart, lanky, awkwardly cute boys surrounded and preyed upon by the muscular football players. They all want the girl that they can't have: the pretty, unique, mysterious popular girl. All it takes is a crazy adventure or a new environment, with a crazy best bro riding in the sidecar, and he'll have all the confidence in the world to date any girl he wants. They think they are the best matches for the girls they adore, even when the girls turn out differently from what they expected. Then, when the aforementioned girls break their hearts, the reader feels sorry for them, since all they wanted in life was to be loved in return. The girls are heartless for dumping the sweet, innocent boys.

Meyer, for being a female author, doesn't seem to be too concerned with the ways her main female character is portrayed. Bella spends a large part of the series feeling inadequate and unequal to her lover, but acquiesces to his requests every single time. Meyer has the perfect opportunity to present Bella as being a strong, vocal, female character that has the will to choose her own path, but Bella comes off as being weak and needy. At the point where Bella becomes equal to Edward, the reader barely gets to see her emotions. Bella chooses to stay with Edward, even when her life is at stake, and even when a much healthier option for lover is fighting for her attention. But for whatever reason, Meyer chooses to ignore Bella's will for the rest of the series. Meyer does a disservice to her legions of loyal female readers that could have benefitted from reading a stronger Bella. This strength has nothing to do with Bella's sexuality or lack of; it comes from her ability to love another person, yet still remain her own being. Her relationship with Edward is too one-sided for her to be her own person.

Young adult literature gives insight into the lives of the genre's demographics, and reading with a feminist lens can give even greater insights. Third-wave feminism cites choice and freedom of sexuality as its main tenants. The male characters in these novels express more feministic characteristics than the female characters. While the males are portrayed as exploring their sexuality, the female characters are one-dimensional. They are not allowed that same freedom of choice, for whatever reason. This isn't deliberate, but it is a byproduct of not giving equal emphasis to the female characters as the male characters receive, even when a female is the main character.

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