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MISREPRESENTING THE QUILEUTE NATION:
AN ANTI-IMPERIALIST CRITIQUE OF STEPHENIE MEYER'S *TWILIGHT SAGA*

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ABSTRACT

With the publication of *Twilight* in 2005, author Stephenie Meyer created a global, multimedia empire. The *Twilight* saga has found financial success and become a generational touchstone for its largely preteen audience, thus rendering it a powerful and influential institution. Centered around the supernatural love triangle that arises among human teenager Bella Swan, vampire Edward Cullen, and Quileute Indian-turned-shapeshifter Jacob Black, the *Twilight* saga does not wield its pop cultural power responsibly. Meyer employs a variety of imperialist oriented stereotypes in her portrayal of Jacob Black, all serving to render his character completely inferior to her vampires. To complicate matters further, Meyer's Native American characters are members of the Quileute Nation, a real Native American tribe based in Washington state. The sudden recognition has complicated life for the real Quileute tribe. Many members of the Quileute Nation live in poverty; the tribe does not even profit from sales of *Twilight* merchandise involving their manufactured identity. The success of the *Twilight* saga reveals how easy it is for powerful entities to ignore ethics and the rights of indigenous groups in a quest for profit. This project articulates and challenges these imperialist biases.

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Introduction

In the summer of 2004, author Stephenie Meyer visited Forks, Washington, the setting of her completed but yet to be published novel, *Twilight*, for the very first time. Meyer had discovered Forks through a Google search for a setting for her novel, and she created a fictionalized version of the town to serve as the backdrop for her story about the supernatural love triangle formed by human teenager Bella Swan, vampire Edward Cullen, and Quileute Indian-turned-werewolf shapeshifter, Jacob Black. Meyer's trip to Washington soothed her fears about any discrepancies between her version of Forks and the real thing: "There were a few small differences," she observed, "[but] otherwise it was eerily similar to my imaginings."¹ Enthralled by the beauty of nearby First Beach, Meyer gathered a jar full of the beach's rainbow colored rocks and took them home, placing them on her desk in the hopes that they would fend off writer's block as she worked on *Twilight's* sequels.²

A year later, *Twilight* was published and became a surprise success, spawning three sequels: *New Moon*, *Eclipse*, and *Breaking Dawn*. The *Twilight* saga has since become a veritable cultural phenomenon, a multimedia empire including graphic novels, a novella, five films, and countless commercial products. The saga's mass appeal is evident in its financial success as well. The *Twilight* novels have sold over 80 million copies—at one point in early 2009, *Twilight* novels comprised 15% of the total fiction books sold in the US—and their film adaptations have grossed over 2 billion dollars.³ Meyer was named to *Time Magazine's* "Most Influential People" in 2008 as well as *Forbes Magazine's* "Celebrity 100" list in both 2009 and 2010.⁴ The *Twilight* saga owes its immense success to the devotion of its fan base. Composed largely of adolescent

females, *Twilight* fans have been passionate about the series: they have waited in long lines for the release of the latest novel, attended multiple screenings of each film, and purchased scores of *Twilight*-related items. Some, after reading Meyer's blog post about her trip to Forks, took their own pilgrimages to the town and filled their own jars of colorful pebbles.⁵ Clearly, the widespread appeal of Meyer's words give her real power, but she does not wield this power responsibly.

The Quileute Tribal Council forbids the removal of colored pebbles from First Beach, an ordinance of which Meyer was unaware before violating it, and her great influence on her fans convinced them to do the same.⁶ Similarly, Meyer's ignorance produced a misrepresentation of the Quileute tribe in her work that has the power to influence young fans and cause real life consequences for the Quileute Nation. Meyer's Quileute tribe, and the character of Jacob Black in particular, were created with no input whatsoever from Quileute tribal leaders, and these characters are imperialist oriented amalgams of persistent Native American stereotypes. Meyer has co-opted and completely fictionalized the Quileute tribal identity and the identity of individual Quileute characters for her own financial gain, and other institutions have used this same harmful image to capitalize on the *Twilight* saga as well. This is unethical, especially when considering the economic disparity between Meyer and her *Twilight* empire and the financially struggling Quileute tribe. The success of the *Twilight* saga reveals how easy it is for powerful entities to continue to ignore ethics and the rights of indigenous groups in a quest for profit. This project articulates and challenges these imperialist biases.

Imperialist Ideology

Imperialism, formally defined as the extension of one nation's power into another, is at its core an issue of inequality. Traditionally, the nation exerting the power tends to view the other's indigenous population as alien "others." Stereotypically, the indigenous group is thought to be primitive and ignorant, perhaps even subhuman.⁷ The progression of imperialism begins with the "discovery" of an indigenous group by a Western civilization and the subsequent invasion of the indigenous group's land.⁸ The indigenous group is then dehumanized by its invaders. Early imperialist texts written by colonizers and "discoverers" characterize indigenous people as inferior, in need of the colonizers' assistance to achieve full humanity; as savage, violent, animal-like beings; and as sexually aggressive people unable to control their base instincts. The dehumanizing of people is key to the justification of their decimation, commonly exacted through war and disease, and to their eventual assimilation, which occurs when indigenous people have been sufficiently reformed in the colonizers' eyes and are able to coexist with them. The final stage of imperialism is the indigenous group's "reinvention as a hybrid, ethnic culture," when the characteristics of inferiority, savage violence, and sexual aggression have been "bred out" of indigenous groups through their civilization.⁹ The *Twilight* saga also uses these strategies of dehumanization as it ultimately promotes the final stage of imperialism: that is, Meyer subjugates her Native American characters in order to glorify a Europeanized race of indigenous people in the series' conclusion.

Meyer's representation no doubt emerged from her familiarity with imperialist oriented material. Two of the literary inspirations for the *Twilight* series—*Dracula*,

because of its obvious influence on the image of the vampire, and *Jane Eyre*, because of Meyer's personal preference for the novel—emerged from the nineteenth century, a period of high British colonialism.¹⁰ Each of these novels use “foreign” characters with the traits of inferiority, savage violence, and sexual aggression to contrast proper, restrained, and virtuous (and therefore civilized) romantic partners.¹¹ Because Meyer had decided to set her novel in modern Forks, Washington, instead of Victorian England, however, she needed to apply the idea of the unrestrained, unequal rival to Forks. While researching the town, Meyer discovered the Quileute reservation nearby. It was then that she decided to adopt the Quileute tribe into her story.¹² Much like the tactics employed by writers during the height of British imperialism, early Euro-American writers often imbued Native American characters with the dehumanizing characteristics of inferiority, savage violence, and sexual aggression to contrast to other restrained and civilized characters.¹³ These past representations of Native American characters likely encouraged Meyer's use of an American Indian as the unsuitable rival in her love triangle. Furthermore, to suit the supernatural elements of the *Twilight* saga, Meyer combined the ancient Quileute creation story—which says that the original Quileutes were changed from wolves—with the European figure of the werewolf.¹⁴ As Meyer posted on her blog, the “wolf story” seemed to fit with her knowledge of previous stories of vampires and werewolves being “at each other's throats.”¹⁵ Past dehumanizing, imperialist oriented representations are clearly the genesis of Meyer's similar representation.

The characterization of Jacob Black and the Quileute tribe that emerges from these damaging traditions is one of inferiority. Throughout the *Twilight* saga, Jacob

represents an unequal side of the series' core love triangle. The supernatural ability of the Quileute men to transform into werewolves renders them literally part animal, and they are prone to unrestrained violence. He and his tribe are sexualized and sexually aggressive. Following in the tradition of early gothic writers, Meyer uses these traits to elevate the vampire characters, who are portrayed as civilized through their characteristics of reason, restraint, and dignity. Between Jacob, the dangerous, hot-blooded native, and Edward, the upstanding gentleman, the narrative leaves no doubt as to the only suitable romantic option for Bella. Throughout the *Twilight* saga, Meyer continues to emphasize the dehumanization of her Quileute characters in order to promote the harmful imperialist goal of a Europeanized native race.

Literary Analysis

Stephenie Meyer's werewolf mythology, which is intrinsically linked to Quileute heritage, is directly opposed to her vampire mythology. While her vampire characters are, by their very nature, superior to humans, controlled, and restrained, Quileute werewolves, by their very nature, embody the characteristics attributed to uncivilized savages in imperialist texts. They are inferior to humans (and to vampires), they are savagely violent, and they are sexually aggressive. Meyer reveals this dichotomy through the oppositional characteristics of werewolves and vampires. If vampires choose to do so, they can avoid feeding on humans. (This restrained behavior, frequently praised by Bella, is only a viable option because vampires can subsist on a diet of wild animals—including wolves.¹⁶) Vampires are seen as efficient predators because they can remain perfectly still—they do not even need to breathe. The wolves have no such way to control their instincts. They transform from man to wolf at the slightest provocation, and they are rambunctious, running and wrestling to release pent up energy. Vampires have pale skin, are cold to the touch, and their bodies are frozen. The wolves' skin is dark, their body temperatures are extremely high, and their bodies are constantly, often uncontrollably, changing. Vampires are created through the bite of another vampire, but the Quileute shapeshifting abilities are a matter of genetics. Only Quileute people can become werewolves, and therefore the characteristics of these werewolves are innately Quileute.

It should be noted that while the majority of *Twilight's* young readers are likely not experts on Quileute culture, the most problematic aspect of Meyer's work is not the possibility that readers might mistake it for accuracy—that is, that readers might

become convinced that Quileute Indians or other Native American people are really violent, shapeshifting monsters. Meyer has admitted on her personal website, which the *Twilight* saga's fan base is known to view frequently, that she repurposed the Quileute creation legend for her narrative's sake, adding her own references to werewolves and vampires. Rather, Meyer's cavalier alterations of the Quileute Nation's cultural property convey a sense of disrespect and, indeed, represent the unethical appropriation of a whole culture to serve her own self-aggrandizing ends. In the *Twilight* saga, Meyer consistently gives her Quileute characters the three stereotypical and dehumanizing traits found in the writings of early colonizers—inferiority, as established in *Twilight*, savage violence, depicted in *New Moon*, and sexual aggression, depicted in *Eclipse*—that serve the saga's "happy ending" of a Europeanized Quileute race as depicted in *Breaking Dawn*.

Twilight: Inferiority

The sense of superiority over an indigenous group is key to the further dehumanization and forced assimilation of that group by colonizers. Meyer establishes the inferiority of Jacob Black in her first novel, *Twilight*, before giving him other stereotypical characteristics in later novels. Bella's reaction to Jacob, told through Bella's first person narration, reinforces the idea that Jacob is not to be valued as highly as the vampire characters. While Bella finds Jacob a blandly pleasant person upon their initial interaction, her interest piques when she realizes Jacob has information about Edward and his family, and her attitude changes from one of casual friendliness to one of eager interest.¹⁷ Bella's first person narration encourages readers to mimic her

reaction to Jacob, viewing him as a pleasant, inoffensive character who only gains real significance when it is revealed that he will offer more information about Edward.

Meyer's fabricated Quileute legends and Jacob's reactions to them further the depiction of his character and heritage as inferior. Jacob refers to the legends as "scary stories"—which is also the title of the chapter in which the exchange takes place—and he is clearly dismissive of their significance (123). He shrugs to show "little stock he puts in the histories" and worriedly asks Bella if she now considers him to be a "superstitious native" (124, 126). The legend also says that when Quileute tribal leaders encountered the first members of the Cullen family, they were so in awe of their civilized nature that they signed a treaty with them, literally greeting the vampires with the sort of reverence and easy cooperation a colonizer expects from its colonized (125).

New Moon: Savage Violence

Meyer introduces more Quileute characters in *New Moon*, but she imbues them with a sense of danger in the form of uncontrollable, savage violence. In writing her characters as violent savages, Meyer renders them more animal than human—especially so in the case of the Quileute werewolves, who are literally part animal. Reminiscent of early colonizers' view of Native Americans, Meyer sees her Quileute characters as problems to be solved, animals to be tamed, and beings to be civilized. Jacob's violent nature, a part of his cultural heritage, provides another impediment to his validity as a romantic partner for Bella.

Meyer and her narrator Bella view the violent nature of the Quileute wolves, seen in the wolves' uncontrollably violent transformations, as "bad" and the behavior of Edward and the vampires as comparatively "good." Bella is afraid of the "La Push

gang,” the Quileute werewolf pack whose intimidating nature is attributed to their native heritage: “They’re all about *our land*, and *tribe pride*...”¹⁸ Bella eventually realizes that the gang is actually a pack of werewolves—their hostile, intimidating nature is now explicitly linked to their ethnicity, as each man has inherited the Quileute werewolf gene. However, the knowledge of these supernatural circumstances does not diminish the danger and violent behavior associated with the gang. In fact, immediately after Bella learns of the werewolves’ existence, she believes Jacob and his friends to be responsible for a rash of unexplained murders in Forks (296). She condemns their lack of restraint and compares them to the Cullens’ noble efforts to abstain from human blood and “be good” (298). Even though the wolf pack is cleared of the murders, the contrast between the “good” vampires and the “not good” werewolves stands.

Nowhere is this dangerous and unpredictable violence characteristic of werewolves more apparent than in the relationship between Quileute werewolf Sam Uley and his fiancée Emily Young. A minor domestic dispute resulted in Sam becoming so angry, he could not prevent himself from morphing into wolf form. The transformation process, described as “violent,” “explosive,” and “like bursting out of one’s skin,” was so violent in this case that Sam inadvertently mauled Emily’s face. Emily now has permanent facial scarring that is described in grotesque detail: “Her face was scarred from hairline to chin by three thick, red lines...one line pulled down the corner of her dark, almond-shaped right eye, another twisted the right side of her mouth into a permanent grimace” (331). As Jacob comments, “The hardest part is feeling...out of control. Feeling like I can’t be sure of myself...like I’m a monster who might hurt somebody” (345). Even though Edward has voiced similar concerns, narrator Bella’s

complete trust in him inspires the same trust in the reader—there is no act of violence associated with Edward or the Cullens that is as visible or as disturbing as Emily’s facial injuries.

Although the wolves are capable of harm, their uncontrollable violence poses no real threat to the restrained vampires. Jacob reminds Edward that if he bites Bella to change her into a vampire, as she has requested, he will be violating the long-ago treaty forbidding such action and will thus be putting the Cullens at risk of a werewolf attack (558). Bella does not put much stock in this threat—she still wants to become a vampire, musing that if she did, “the Quileute werewolves would try to [kill me] themselves—along with trying to kill my future family. I didn’t think they had any chance really, but would [Jacob] get himself killed in the attempt?” (562).

Bella’s statement is historically harsh, and in fact, inaccurate. In reality, most treaties between Native Americans and Euro-Americans were rarely beneficial to Native American tribes: often, the United States government drafted treaties with tribes to avoid the costs of a war that the Native Americans would likely lose anyway.¹⁹ Bella seems to view the Quileute-Cullen treaty with a similar imperialist eye. It is a formality, rather than an equal compromise, as though it was simply more convenient and good natured for the Cullens to agree to the treaty than to exercise their obvious ability to wipe out the Quileute reservation. Bella does not even entertain the notion that the vampires would lose in a fight, a sentiment that reflects her clear preference for Edward over Jacob. The Cullens’ sophistication is destined to triumph over the uncontrollable violence of the Quileute werewolves.

Eclipse: Sexual Aggression

Meyer opens *Eclipse* by reminding readers of the danger Quileute wolves present—Bella remembers the frightening experience of a wolf “baring his dagger-like teeth” and envisions Emily’s scars, “her mouth warped forever into a lopsided scowl”—but Meyer then translates this danger and the theme of uncontrollable rival Jacob versus virtuous preferred partner Edward to *Eclipse*’s main concern, sexuality.²⁰ Meyer sexualizes the Quileute characters and gives them sexually aggressive demeanors. This is another way of rendering these characters animalistic—their sexual aggression indicates that they cannot control their basic urges like a civilized person should—and introduces the idea of the native body as a sexual object, a thing that can be used for pleasure but is not to be valued as highly as a potential romantic partner.

Edward demonstrates a “civilized” attitude toward sexuality that contrasts Jacob’s sexual aggression. Edward reveals that his elevated self-control extends not only to resisting Bella’s blood but also to resisting her sexual advances. While Bella frequently pushes Edward to advance their relationship physically, he resists in an effort to keep Bella safe and to preserve her virtue (44). The werewolf’s violent transformation also plays a role in Jacob’s sexualized nature. As first mentioned in *New Moon*, any clothes worn by a werewolf are shredded and destroyed during phasing; hence, the wolves wear as little clothing as possible in human form. Jacob is usually “bare-chested, wearing nothing but a pair of old cut-off jeans” (215). When Jacob suggestively asks if his “being half-naked” makes Bella uncomfortable, she says no and blushes, remarking to herself that his abs are indeed impressive (215-216). Even though Bella has made her preference for Edward clear, she still looks at Jacob and blushes—Jacob’s body is

on display, worthy of Bella's enjoyment while Jacob himself is not worthy of romantic reciprocation. This is a reflection of bell hooks' concept of "eating the other"—Jacob's constantly on-display body and sexuality enables Bella and readers to indulge fantasies about the primitive "Other" while still remaining safely in the accepted culture of white supremacy.²¹

Jacob's sexual aggression emerges when he kisses Bella. Jacob grabs Bella's face and forcefully kisses her; while Edward's kisses are gentle and restrained, Bella describes Jacob's kiss as angry and rough (330). Jacob holds Bella's face so hard it hurts and "forces" her lips open, and he later insists that Bella enjoyed the kiss and will be thinking about it later that night (331-333). This behavior is clearly disturbing to both Bella and readers. When Bella confirms her preference for Edward's self-control and traditional virtue by agreeing to marry him, Jacob reacts to the engagement with the typical Quileute wolf reaction: he transforms into a wolf and runs away into the wilderness (629).

Breaking Dawn: A Hybrid Race

After Meyer has effectively dehumanized Jacob by depicting him as inferior, violent, and sexually aggressive, her final *Twilight* novel, *Breaking Dawn*, moves on to the final stages of imperialism. Meyer assimilates Jacob within the vampire coven and causes him to sever ties with the rest of his tribe. Meyer also creates the beginnings of a literal new race of Europeanized Quileute wolves.

In order to accomplish this assimilation and subsequent racial "improvement," Meyer has Jacob succumb to one final uncontrollable instinct. Jacob "imprints" on Bella and Edward's half-human, half-vampire child in *Breaking Dawn*, and his imprinting

fundamentally changes his violent, sexually aggressive nature. When a Quileute wolf “imprints” with someone else, he is instantly smitten and completely devoted to them, a mystical version of love at first sight—the imprinter “really has no choice” in the matter.²² While no concrete reason is given as to why this phenomenon occurs, the most likely explanation is that shapeshifters imprint with people who are best suited to pass along the werewolf gene to their offspring.²³ The wolf pack initially decides to attack and kill the Cullens, Bella, and her unborn child, ironically because they believe that the behavior of a half-vampire infant will be too unpredictable and dangerous to allow it to live.²⁴ In the face of such violence, Jacob splits off from the pack and decides to “choose vampires” over the pack by warning the Cullens (212). The harshness of the wolf pack’s decision and the series long depiction of vampires as superior make Jacob’s decision seem appealing and appropriate to readers.

Jacob’s assimilation into the vampire coven is finalized when he imprints on Bella and Edward’s intelligent and self-controlled daughter, Renesmee (360). Everything Jacob Black was or did throughout the *Twilight* saga was leading him to the moment his life would be made complete through Renesmee and the assimilation that she represents. The imprinting effectively rewrites his character: All previous affection between Jacob and Bella is completely dismissed as Jacob’s understandable attraction to someone so physically and genetically like his future soulmate. In addition to the ridiculous, unsettling image of a teenage boy who is completely devoted to a baby (he will initially act as Renesmee’s caretaker, and his aging process will halt until she catches up), the imprinting completely eliminates the negative aspects of Jacob’s character. Out of concern for Renesmee’s safety, Jacob refuses to morph into wolf form

near her, even when he is aggressively threatened (452). Only a close connection with a vampire could give him such commendable self-control. The reformation extends to the other Quileute wolves to a degree: because one of the highest laws of werewolves states that a wolf may not harm another wolf's imprintee, Jacob and Renesmee's bond prevents the violent attack on the vampires that the wolves planned earlier (470). If the notion that imprinting occurs with those who are best suited to continue the werewolf lineage is factored into Jacob and Renesmee's bond, the narrative also suggests that the Quileutes' own genes realize that vampire DNA will improve their race.

The ultimate goal of imperialism has at last been achieved within the *Twilight* saga: Jacob has rejected the uncivilized behavior of the Quileute tribe and embraced the dignified, powerful Cullen family. Edward's restraint has been rewarded and Jacob's savage behavior, tied to his Quileute heritage, is reformed by his complete assimilation. The series clearly suggests that Jacob and Renesmee's union will result in future generations of improved, Europeanized Quileute people.

Film Adaptations

Stephenie Meyer's image of the sexualized, savage American Indian is one of many stereotypes that have come to prominence through motion pictures. Visual representations of "murderous savages with painted faces" have been present in a vast number of American films.²⁵ The American western genre, comprised of films that tell stories about the settling of western America by Euro-Americans, relies heavily on this image—these films typically use the depiction of Native Americans as uncontrollably savage to justify their inhumane treatment by the film's cowboy protagonists, not at all unlike Meyer's use of that depiction to justify Bella's choice of Edward over Jacob.²⁶ Just as Jacob observes, the violent anger of the Quileute shape-shifters is reminiscent of characters in a bad Western.²⁷ The film adaptations of the *Twilight* novels, then, are the epitome of Jacquelyn Kilpatrick's definition of filmic representation: film "is not a reflection or a refraction of the "real"; instead, it is like a photograph of the mirrored reflection of a painted image."²⁸ The vigorous adaptation process needed to turn Meyer's novels, averaging around 500 pages each, into two hour films as well as the highly visual nature of film itself have resulted in a heightened contrast between the vampires and werewolves; the *Twilight* films communicate the Quileute characters' central traits of inferiority, savage violence, and sexual aggression.

Set Design: Inferiority

The environments of the Cullens and the Quileute tribe, though only separated by a few miles in the *Twilight* saga's story, are presented as entirely different worlds on film. The sets of the Cullen house and the Quileute reservation are designed to reflect the inequality between the two and to glamorize the intellectual, civilized vampires.

Edward lives in a spacious three story house with enormous glass windows. The most prominent decoration in the home is a mosaic of graduation caps framed on the wall. Each cap was earned by a member of the Cullen family. They have devoted their immortal lives to education, attending high school and college multiple times each in a literally endless quest for knowledge. Jacob's house is small—his bed barely fits in his bedroom—and a tarp hangs over the roof. Jacob spends most of his time in his tool littered garage, where he does mechanical work. This obvious economic disparity reflects the poverty that afflicts many Native American reservations, but the films do not make an effective or compelling point in this regard. Rather, Jacob's basic housing and physical labor are merely more characteristics that are meant to pale in comparison to the Cullen's glorified mansion, the subject of multiple lingering shots, and the family's ceaseless academic pursuits.

Dialogue and Scene Construction: Savage Violence

The scenes of violence in the *Twilight* films are condensed, even more powerful indictments of the Quileute characters than the novels from which they originated. The wolves' first transformation scene, from *The Twilight Saga: New Moon*, is a perfect example. Bella visits the reservation and is confronted by the Quileute wolf pack in human form. They stand in front of her, blocking her path. When Bella, at this point unaware of the existence of werewolves, asks what the men have done with Jacob, they become hostile and move menacingly toward her. One of them taunts, "Watch it, little girl." Bella slaps one of the men, Paul, and he becomes so angry he cannot control his instinct to transform. Paul's face contorts, his breathing becomes labored, and his chest heaves violently before he bursts into wolf form, his claws nearly missing Bella's

face. Jacob emerges from his house and Bella screams, terrified, and warns him to run away. Jacob transforms into a wolf as well, and Jacob and Paul begin to fight as wolves, growling and viciously attacking each other. This scene gives viewers a visceral image of the very real danger the werewolves' presence causes Bella. The use of special effects gives viewers an even clearer picture of the Quileute wolves' violent nature while Bella's screams encourage viewers that they should be feeling the same terror.

Actors and Costuming: Sexual Aggression

The sexual objectification of the Quileute shape-shifters also intensifies when presented onscreen. Physical attractiveness is clearly important to the character of Jacob, as evidenced by rumors that circulated prior to the start of filming on *The Twilight Saga: New Moon*. Some speculated that boyish actor Taylor Lautner, who originated the role of Jacob in *Twilight*, would be recast in *New Moon* because he lacked the sculpted physique required to appear in the extensive shirtless scenes the script called for. Stephenie Meyer finally quelled the rumor on her website, stating that Lautner would indeed reprise the role upon "proving to [director Chris Weitz], [film producer] Summit Entertainment, and [Meyer herself] that he was the best possible Jacob."²⁹ Lautner's so-called proof was ostensibly his ability to gain over twenty pounds of muscle.³⁰ The characterization of Jacob as a body to ogle rather than a suitable romantic partner is encouraged by the extensive use of Jacob's gratuitous shirtless scenes in the *Twilight Saga* films *New Moon*, *Eclipse*, and *Breaking Dawn - Part One* as well as in their promotional material.³¹

Trish Monaghan, costume director for *The Twilight Saga: New Moon*, explicitly describes the blatant sexualization of the Quileute characters in comparison to the

vampires.³² Monaghan describes Edward's primary costume, a "two piece suit with a dark linen shirt" which was designed to make him look "interesting" and more sophisticated than a contemporary teenager. When it came to designing costumes for the werewolf characters, however, Monaghan states that the main goal was to make them look "sexy."³³ As a result, all the Quileute men appear in denim cutoff shorts without shirts for the vast majority of each film. When shirts were worn, they were altered for maximum tightness, especially in Lautner's case; his shirts were shortened and taken in to "reflect his new, great biceps."³⁴ Director Weitz jokes about Lautner's perpetual shirtlessness and its relation to Jacob's native heritage: "I wonder if I might have gone one shirtless scene too many...of course, once they turn to wolves, any clothes they're wearing split apart. It's an economic incentive for the disadvantaged Quileutes that they not have to keep going to Target to buy new T-shirts."³⁵

These filmic images reinforce the imperialist stereotypes of inferiority, savage violence, and sexual aggression that Meyer used in her novels. The *Twilight* films have also made it easier for Meyer's misrepresentation to be used for profit.³⁶ The visual image of a shirtless Taylor Lautner or a vicious wolf, images that exist because the *Twilight* films exist, have been featured on merchandise and used to promote the series. The existence of these concrete images have been instrumental in the targeting of young fans and the quest for profit that has harmed the Quileute tribe.

Problems of Targeting a Preteen Audience

The *Twilight* saga has achieved great financial success due to its mass appeal to a preteen audience. Preteen audiences have long been considered lucrative due to their large appetite for media and tie-in merchandise. After *Twilight*, the novel, found a devoted, diehard fan base consisting largely of enthusiastic preteen girls, the subsequent novels and films were marketed specifically to this fan base, in no small part because of the preteen audience's large appetite for media and tie-in merchandise.³⁷ As Diane Carver Sekeres elucidates in her theory of the "market child and branded fiction," many successful products in recent years, including *Hannah Montana* and *American Girl*, are multimedia brands consisting of books, movies, and other merchandise that are marketed primarily for girls in the preteen age range.³⁸ The *Twilight* series, which has expanded from just four books to include an eventual five total movie adaptations, graphic novels, t-shirts, and action figures, to name a few, certainly aims to be such a multimedia brand. Unfortunately, efforts to profit from the *Twilight* saga by marketing to such an audience have also been detrimental to the Quileute tribe.

While the depiction of a Native American tribe as savage and sexual is offensive and inaccurate in its own right, there are specific problems associated with the blatant marketing of such an image to a young female audience. As many preteens are likely unfamiliar with the Quileute tribe and Native American culture in general, this stereotypical image is especially damaging. Jacob's portrayal as a secondary, inferior character could potentially influence the overall perception of Native Americans by the *Twilight* saga's fan base. Cornel Pewewardy explains that many young white children's

knowledge of American Indians is limited to their exposure to characters in books and movies, which are often, as in the *Twilight* series' case, inaccurate. "The Indian portrait of the moment may be bellicose or ludicrous or romantic, but almost never is the portrait that of real persons," he writes, and Jacob Black, certainly the Indian portrait of this moment, is quite likely the most prominent Native American figure in the lives of many young Americans.³⁹

The *Twilight* saga also has the power to influence preteen behavior in the sexual arena through the depiction of its central love triangle. Preteens with developing identities are often informed with ideas about sexuality and viable romantic relationships through the media; they often use the stories they read or see as a "sexual script," following protocols introduced by these forms of media in their real life situations.⁴⁰ Essentially, movies can teach their young audiences to follow the example of their characters, a phenomenon only heightened by Stephenie Meyer's blank slate treatment of protagonist Bella. Although she is ostensibly the main character of the series, Bella's only real defining characteristics are her love for Edward and lesser affection for Jacob. Bella's lack of a dynamic personality enables preteen fans to easily project themselves onto her character and as a result, identify with her choices. When these choices so strongly favor a pale, academic, Shakespeare-quoting gentleman like Edward over an easily angered, car mechanic like Jacob, the *Twilight* saga presents fans not only with a stereotypical image of Native Americans, but also a subconscious warning to avoid them as potential romantic partners in the future.

The Quest for Profit and Anti-Imperialist Solutions

The inferiority of the Quileute tribe as represented in the *Twilight* saga and an urge to capitalize on the *Twilight* saga's revenue potential have resulted in further instances of cultural theft with regard to the Quileute Nation. Meyer has profited immensely from the unflattering image of her Quileute characters, created from her cavalier alterations to Quileute history, and other institutions have since sought to use her image of the tribe to attract her lucrative fan base and earn profit for themselves. This is especially insensitive when considering the Quileute Nation's financial straits—many people on the reservation are impoverished, and the tribe has recently devoted much of its financial earnings to a legal battle to win back higher ground from the government so that the reservation's school could be relocated from a tsunami-prone location.⁴¹ The dehumanizing nature of Meyer's portrayal, however, makes it possible for these institutions to ignore the humanity and the human struggles of those they are exploiting and continue to thoughtlessly perpetuate a manufactured image in their quest for profit. Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes this as a modern iteration of colonialism, stating, "The current fashion of patenting anything likely to be desired by others in order to both control and profit from it is placing great pressure on indigenous communities to protect themselves."⁴²

Many companies and institutions developed products and services that have placed such pressure on the Quileute Nation. Some involve the physical invasion characteristic of the first stage of imperialism: Unauthorized tour buses full of eager fans frequently drive through the reservation.⁴³ To celebrate the Forks-invented holiday Stephenie Meyer Day, news website MSN.com filmed video footage of notable Forks

locations in 2009—this included footage of cemeteries and graves of esteemed tribal leaders on the Quileute reservation, all set to macabre music.⁴⁴ According to Quileute tribal spokesperson Jackie Jacobs, the situation caused “an enormous amount of pain and suffering to the Quileute Nation as a whole, but especially to the descendants of the Quileute chief” whose grave was filmed.⁴⁵ MSN.com had acquired permission to film points of interest from the Chamber of Commerce in Forks but did not realize that the Quileute Nation was its own sovereign entity, reducing it to a subset of the town of Forks.⁴⁶ MSN.com and various tour bus companies have followed Meyer’s example; they failed to consult any Quileute tribal leaders before manipulating the tribe’s image into something they themselves could profit from. Similarly, several companies, including upscale department store chain Nordstrom, Inc., developed their own Quileute wolf-themed products, such as jewelry and clothing, again without consulting the Quileute Nation in any way.⁴⁷ As Smith suggests, these companies are controlling the public’s perception of the Quileute Nation for monetary gain.

While it would seem that the Quileute tribe could protect its image and cultural property through the law, cultural property laws have traditionally been biased against indigenous groups and supportive of imperialist tendencies. The Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 requires that any item claiming to have a tribal origin be actually produced by that tribe—however, even this does not protect the Quileute Nation from exploitation because the *Twilight* series products, using Meyer’s manufactured image, technically do not claim to be authentic Quileute items.⁴⁸ The law makes it more convenient to profit from a fabricated version of the Quileute reality than to navigate the legal avenues involved in obtaining the tribe’s cooperation. As Angela Riley argues, the cultural

property laws that should ostensibly prevent this type of cultural identity theft are predisposed to benefit those institutions with power while working against groups like Native American tribes which are viewed as less powerful.⁴⁹ While trademark and copyright laws protect the representation of the Quileute tribe created by Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight* film producer Summit Entertainment, and various merchandisers, indigenous groups are often denied cultural property rights.⁵⁰

However, members of the Quileute tribe are fighting this inaccurate representation by representing themselves, a tactic Smith names as an “indigenous project” with an end goal of decolonization.⁵¹ While the wide reach of the *Twilight* saga has propagated an inaccurate portrayal of Quileute people and encouraged their mistreatment, it at least brings the Quileute Nation a larger platform from which to reassert their identity. Smith refers to “representation” as a product of indigenous writers, artists, poets, and others who are “countering the dominant society’s image of indigenous peoples...and proposing solutions to the real-life dilemmas that indigenous communities confront.”⁵² The Quileute Nation is directly responding to the dominant society’s perception of their nation, enforced through the *Twilight* saga, and to the problem of the persistent cultural theft exacted by those institutions seeking to profit from *Twilight*.

In the years since the *Twilight* series rose to prominence, the Quileute Nation has created several educational museum exhibits, launched a website dedicated to selling merchandise, and renovated their official tribal website. The museum exhibits are intended to educate *Twilight* fans about Quileute heritage and authentic Quileute legends and tradition. In addition to other tribal goods, the merchandise website also

caters to *Twilight* fans by selling wolf-related items, providing the Quileute Nation an opportunity to earn its own profit from the *Twilight* image. The renovations to the existing tribal website list the Quileute Nation's ordinances and encourage visitors to respect them.

"Behind the Scenes: The Real Story of the Quileute Wolves," an exhibit that opened in the Seattle Museum of Art in late 2010, directly engages the *Twilight* phenomenon while dispelling its stereotypes in favor of an authentic representation. Featuring historic Quileute cultural materials, the exhibit was designed with the intention of providing an authentic depiction of Quileute heritage: As Quileute Ann-Penn Charles elaborated, tribal leaders found the *Twilight* portrayal "disrespectful" and encouraged tribe members to "represent us the way we Quileute were meant to be."⁵³ The exhibit features a few accurate props from the *Twilight* films, including a deer-hide drum the film crew borrowed from a Quileute girl for filming, and educates fans about the tribe's real legends regarding wolves with performances of ancient Quileute wolf dances.⁵⁴ Recently, the Quileute tribe has collaborated with the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, affiliated with the University of Washington, to create a similar exhibit entitled "Truth vs. Twilight," complete with a comprehensive website.⁵⁵ These exhibits are effective ways of attracting *Twilight* fans, teaching them about the inaccuracies in the *Twilight* saga, and countering the way Meyer portrayed the Quileute Nation with the way the Quileute view themselves.

The Quileute Nation has also countered the institutions profiting from the sale of *Twilight*- and Quileute-related items by launching the *Twilight at Quileute* website.⁵⁶ The website sells items like clothing and woven baskets, handcrafted by tribal artisans, and

the store features the tagline, “Be authentic.”⁵⁷ The store, explains tribal Chair Anna Rose Counsell-Geyer, is a way to promote “culturally appropriate, authentic Quileute items online.”⁵⁸ The emphasis placed on the authenticity of the online store allows the Quileute Nation to correct the manufactured image used in other merchandise and use the *Twilight*-inspired interest in all things Quileute to both earn profit and promote tribal art and legend.

To prevent intrusions like MSN.com’s filming of tribal leaders’ grave sites and Meyer’s removal of pebbles from First Beach, the Quileute Nation renovated its website to educate visitors about how to plan respectful visits to the reservation. A section entitled “Indian Country Etiquette” instructs those who visit La Push to not remove objects from beaches and to keep out of burial grounds and other areas not traditionally shared with the visiting public.⁵⁹ The website also contains an in-depth “Photography-Video-Sketching Policy” which states that all commercial filming, photography, and audio recording on the Quileute reservation are forbidden without permission from the Tribal Council, and those creating these commercial recordings must be accompanied by a tribal member or employee.⁶⁰ In addition to protecting their privacy and enforcing their ordinances, the Quileute Nation is taking steps to prevent further appropriations of their tribal image.

As these Quileute reactions reveal and as Smith suggests, authentic representations of indigenous groups—humanizing representations that inhibit imperialist attitudes and pursue social justice—are almost exclusively produced by members of indigenous groups. Stephenie Meyer, it seems, did not intend to create a damaging representation of the Quileute tribe that would harm the real life inspirations

for her characters. Rather, Meyer appears to have been influenced by centuries of prevailing imperialist representations and to have fallen victim to her own ignorance. Meyer appreciated Quileute legends and Quileute people enough to write them into her novels, and she admired the rocks on First Beach enough to take them home with her. Unfortunately, she did not contact Quileute leaders to ensure that her representation would be accurate just as she did not know enough about Quileute ordinances to know that the removal of the rocks was forbidden. Ignorance breeds ignorance, and in the *Twilight* saga, Meyer has created an inauthentic representation of an indigenous group that could inspire other authors to create similar portrayals.

Smith claims that there are ways in which non-indigenous researchers can be more culturally sensitive to their indigenous research subjects, and the same methods apply to non-indigenous authors or other image-makers who seek to represent indigenous people in their work. Smith suggests that non-indigenous researchers should work closely with indigenous groups, allowing their research to be shaped by tribal leaders, sustain a life-long relationship with their studied group in which they become familiar with the group's traditions, and respect the boundaries set in place by the indigenous group.⁶¹ If a non-indigenous person wishes to feature native characters or stories in their work, it is essential that he or she consults with the tribal leaders of the intended represented group and that the representation not be published or released until it is approved by these same leaders. Meyer, at the very least, should issue a formal apology to the Quileute Nation for failing to follow these guidelines.

The problems wrought by Meyer's *Twilight* saga, however, do not seem likely to threaten the Quileute Nation's celebration of survival. Another of Smith's indigenous

projects, the celebration of survival “accentuates...the degree to which indigenous peoples and communities have successfully retained cultural and spiritual values and authenticity.”⁶² "The Quileute have traced their ancestry to the Ice Age," explains tribal spokesperson Jacobs. “One day, *Twilight* will go away and they will continue being the hospitable, welcoming people they've always been, practicing the culture they have been practicing for tens of thousands of years.”⁶³ The Quileute Nation continues to claim its own authenticity in *Twilight*'s wake, suggesting that the most appropriate use of the *Twilight* saga is to serve as an example for image-makers and capitalist institutions. Imperialist ideals should be abandoned in favor of an ethical approach to representation.

¹ Stephenie Meyer, "Twilight - Forks," *The Official Website of Stephenie Meyer*, accessed January 30, 2012, http://stepheniemeyer.com/twilight_forks.html.

² Meyer, "Twilight - Forks."

³ Lev Grossman, "It's Twilight In America: The Vampire Saga," *Time Magazine*, November 23, 2009.

⁴ Orson Scott Card, "Artists and Entertainers: Stephenie Meyer," *Time Magazine*, April 30, 2009.

⁵ Kristen A. Carpenter, Sonia K. Katyal, and Angela R. Riley. "Clarifying Cultural Property," *International Journal of Cultural Property* 17 (2010): 581.

⁶ "Indian Country Etiquette," *Quileute Nation*, accessed January 30, 2012 <http://www.quileutenation.org/indian-country-etiquette>

⁷ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 20-23.

⁸ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 88.

⁹ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 88. Smith also notes that "indigenous perspectives" on the progression of imperialism are "more likely to be articulated as: (1) contact and invasion, (2) genocide and destruction, (3) resistance and survival, (4) recovery as indigenous peoples."

¹⁰ Meyer has stated that childhood favorite *Jane Eyre* played a role in her development of *Twilight*. In fact, Edward Cullen's first name was inspired in part by *Jane Eyre*'s Edward Rochester. Stephenie Meyer, "Twilight - The Story Behind *Twilight*," *The Official Website of Stephenie Meyer*, accessed January 30, 2012, <http://stepheniemeyer.com/twilight.html>.

¹¹ *Dracula*'s most common interpretations view Dracula's consuming the blood of his victims as an aggressive act with highly sexual undertones, and a sort of triangle arises among Dracula, his female victim, and his victim's upstanding male partner. Similarly, *Jane Eyre*'s central love triangle consists of Victorian gentleman Edward Rochester; heroine Jane Eyre; and Mr. Rochester's mad wife, Bertha Mason. Bertha, a Jamaican Creole formed by an act of imperialism (specifically Britain's colonization of Jamaica), is an exaggeratedly unfit match for Rochester and is continually portrayed as violent, aggressive, and inferior to moral Jane.

Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (New York: Macmillan, 1992 reissue).

Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Clayton: Prestwick House, Inc., 2006 reissue).

¹² Meyer, "Twilight - The Story Behind *Twilight*."

¹³ This tactic has also been extensively in American films, primarily those of the Western genre. Andrew Macdonald, Gina Macdonald, and MaryAnn Sheridan, *Shape-Shifting: Images of Native Americans in Recent Popular Fiction* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000), 216.

¹⁴ "History," *Quileute Nation*, accessed January 30, 2012, <http://quileutenation.org/culture/history>

¹⁵ Stephenie Meyer, "New Moon - The Story Behind the Writing of *New Moon*," *The Official Website of Stephenie Meyer*, accessed February 5, 2012 http://stepheniemeyer.com/nm_thestory.html.

¹⁶ This is implied throughout the first two novels, but only stated explicitly in *Eclipse* (New York: Little, Brown, 2007).

¹⁷ Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight* (New York: Little, Brown, 2005), 122. All further references will be cited with parenthetical in-text citations.

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- ¹⁸ Stephenie Meyer, *New Moon* (New York: Little, Brown, 2006), 173. All further references will be cited with parenthetical in-text citations.
- ¹⁹ Vine Deloria and Clifford M. Lytle, *American Indians, American Justice* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1983), 5.
- ²⁰ Stephenie Meyer, *Eclipse* (New York: Little, Brown, 2007). All further references will be cited with parenthetical in text citations.
- ²¹ bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance." In *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*, ed. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas Kellner (John Wiley & Sons, 2006) 366.
- ²² Meyer, *Eclipse*, 418.
- ²³ Stephenie Meyer, *Breaking Dawn* (New York: Little, Brown, 2008), 318.
- ²⁴ Meyer, *Breaking Dawn*. All further references will be cited with parenthetical in-text citations.
- ²⁵ Lucy A. Ganje, "Native American Stereotypes." In *Images That Injure: Pictorial Stereotypes in the Media*, ed. Paul Martin Lester and Susan Dente Ross (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003) 114.
- ²⁶ Ganje, "Native American Stereotypes," 114.
- ²⁷ Meyer, *New Moon*, 170.
- ²⁸ Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians* (University of Nebraska Press, 1999) xv.
- ²⁹ Stephenie Meyer, "January 7, 2009" post. Accessed at http://www.stepheniemeyer.com/newmoon_movie.html.
- ³⁰ Mike Fleeman, "Taylor Lautner Gaining Weight to Save *Twilight* Job," *People Magazine*, December 18, 2008.
- ³¹ Merchandise manufacturers did not miss the chance to profit from Lautner's physique either: a shirtless Jacob action figure was sold by toy company NECA, and another shirtless likeness of Jacob was produced by Barbie manufacturer Mattel, sold alongside a fully clothed Edward doll.
- ³² "The Subtle Details." As featured on *The Twilight Saga: New Moon 2 Disc Special Edition*, Summit Entertainment.
- ³³ "The Subtle Details."
- ³⁴ "The Subtle Details."
- ³⁵ Grossman, "It's Twilight in America: The Vampire Saga."
- ³⁶ *Twilight* film producer Summit Entertainment seems especially interested in profiting from the series as much as possible. The film adaptation of *Breaking Dawn* has been split into two separate films, *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn - Part One* and the forthcoming *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn - Part Two*. This appears to have been done less for artistic reasons than for profit-oriented reasons.
- ³⁷ Rebecca Winters Keegan, "*Twilight*: The Fangirls Cometh, With Cash," *Time Magazine*, Nov. 19, 2008.
- ³⁸ Diane Carver Sekeres, "The Market Child and Branded Fiction: A Synergism of Children's Literature, Consumer Culture, and New Literacies" (*Reading Research Quarterly*, October/November/December 2009), 399.

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- ³⁹ Cornel Pewewardy, "The Pocahontas Paradox" (*Journal of Navajo Education*, 1996), 20.
- ⁴⁰ Jane Delano Brown, Jeanne R. Steele, Kim Walsh-Childers, *Sexual Teens, Sexual Media: Investigating Media's Influence on Adolescent Sexuality* (Routledge Press, 2002), 74.
- ⁴¹ The legislation approving this request for more land was signed only recently by President Barack Obama on February 25, 2012.
Emily Foster, "President Obama Signed Quileute Tsunami and Flood Protection Bill," *Bayak, The Talking Raven: A Quileute Newsletter*, March 2012.
- ⁴² Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 101.
- ⁴³ Angela R. Riley, "Sucking the Quileute Dry," *The New York Times*, February 7, 2010.
- ⁴⁴ Riley.
- ⁴⁵ Paige Dickerson, "Quileute to Receive Apology for MSN.com's 'Twilight' Video." Peninsula Daily News, accessed February 20, <http://www.peninsuladailynews.com/article/20100111/news/301119997>.
- ⁴⁶ Riley.
- ⁴⁷ Riley.
- ⁴⁸ Riley.
- ⁴⁹ Carpenter, Katal, and Riley, 589.
- ⁵⁰ Carpenter, Katal, and Riley, 590.
- ⁵¹ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 142.
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- ⁵³ Kara Briggs, "Quileute Separate Fact from Fiction for 'Twilight' Fans." *American Indian News Service*, October 21, 2010.
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- ⁶⁰ Quileute Nation, "Photography-Video-Sketching Policy." Accessed March 30, 2012 http://quileutenation.org/qtc/media_policy_2010.pdf.
- ⁶¹ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 177-178.
- ⁶² Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 145.
- ⁶³ Su-Jin Yim, "Vampire Vacation: Twilight Fans turn a Quiet Indian Reservation Into an Unwitting Tourist Mecca," *The New York Post*, July 5, 2009.

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