Contemporary *Bildungsromans* and the Prosumer Girl

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J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* franchise set a powerful new distribution model for cross-marketing cultural content spanning a variety of age, race, and gender demographics. Hot across Potter’s jugular, the coming of age novel series *Twilight* continues to drive the young adult market, selling a combined total of just under 26.5 million copies in 2009. The first book alone has sold 25 million copies worldwide and been translated into 37 languages. The *Twilight Saga*, a series of film adaptations of the novels, earns loyal fans and revenue returns totaling $389 million so far for just the first three films. While the sales and earnings do not come close to the Potter empire, they are remarkable insofar as girls drive the Twilight phenomenon, a demographic once ignored as mere sidekick to the primacy of the men-in-training youth market. The consumption of *Twilight* on such a huge scale and the zeitgeist of girl desire articulated through hundreds of pages catapult it to the top of the contemporary bildungsroman for girls, offering plot cues and character sub-references that permeate girl culture and popular culture at large. While *Twilight* is notable for making novel reading trendy among girl nonreaders and readers alike, its most significant effect lies in the proliferation of fan texts, taking reader response to a whole new level of “self-actualization.” Girl producers/consumers, or prosumers, deploy technological savvy and critical aesthetic acumen to generate a host of responses to *Twilight*, which they then “publish” on the internet. The key difference for the Twilight phenomenon is that the bildungsroman as enculturation narrative now requires the production of new texts, texts based upon the original but which operate outside the purview of previous reader/text response. The prosumption of *Twilight* illustrates one of a number of vectors through which girls “enculture” and produce each other, actualizing one or any number of selves online.
The Twilight Saga can be categorized as a bildungsroman proper because the story arc encompasses an individual’s arduous and conflicted growth through and into a social order, initiated by loss and extra familiar bonding. Bella, the protagonist, faces not only the typical struggles of a girl grappling with the constraints and pleasures of her inevitable “womanhood,” including the passion and heartbreak of heterosexual love relations, she also takes on the seemingly impenetrable domain of the vampire, having to assimilate conventional gendered societal mores while negotiating the rules of the undead world. The self-enculturation of the protagonist is achieved over the span of four books, and culminates in her physical and spiritual transmogrification: the traditional markers for female maturity are met as Bella becomes wife and mother, and she is fully accepted into a vampire society by becoming one and fighting amongst them against a common enemy.

The popularity of the Potter franchise and the Twilight Series signals a return of the traditional bildungsroman genre to the fore. The saturation of the Twilight novels among girl readers is due in no small part to the categorical specificities and resonances of the female bildungsroman for the twenty-first century girl. Feminist myth critics of the 1970s and 1980s such as Annis Pratt noted the disparities between hero and heroine action in “novels of development,” configuring female narrative archetypes and articulating the ways in which the bildungsroman plots are “shaped by the dominant social norms for womanhood,” such as learning to be submissive, accepting pain as a female condition, equating sexuality with danger, marrying after the inevitable failure of a rebellious autonomy, regressing from full societal participation in order to “actualize” the inconsequential status of the female self. “In most of the novels of development it seems clear that the authors conceive of growing up female as a choice between auxiliary or secondary personhood, sacrificial victimization, madness, and death.” Twilight hits all of these markers. While there are some feminist exceptions, girls still turn to the “traditional” novel of development as assimilatory roadmap, a Walmartian greeter of womanhood in book form who
shows them what is available on every aisle. The eviscerations of feminism as a habitable category since the 1980s, or one of several backlashes make even the whiff of feminist narrative undesirable to many girls. Twenty-first century girls may even seek some “old-fashioned” content via a form they perceive to be antiquated, or at least old. In any case, novels of development prove to be inoculants against the impending doom of womanhood, and offer the comfort of the familiar against the fear of the future.

Whether the popular turn to the female bildungsroman provides satisfying glimpses of imagined futures or jaunts through authenticated girl-centric terrain, the immense popularity of Twilight goes beyond the resurgence of its form, film adaptations, and generation of fans. The Twilight Series as the traditional bildungsroman evidences crossover appeal in its consumption by women of all ages, boys, and young men. The purchasing and celebrating of these girl-centered texts by other demographics is an indicator of just how mainstream girl-as-protagonist has become, her desires, concerns, actions, aesthetic and communicatory realms authenticated as valuable and “normal.” Despite the passing nod to more boy-centric narratives such as warring vampires and loner lycanthropes, the hopes and dreams of a girl drive the plot. Twilight’s protagonist Bella, an all too human girl who falls in love with the perfect unattainable love-object vampire, must negotiate mythological creatures and archetypes of gender against raging hormones in order to become a woman. While the book series prescribes a hetero-normative, just-say-no way through girlness for the ordinary middle class white girl, some girls who embrace the series deconstruct it with productions of their own, ranging from the proliferation of fan fiction sites to YouTube homages and correctives. Twenty-first century networked girls actively produce their own bildungsromans every day, through social networking sites such as Facebook. The bildungsroman as process rather than product becomes the key distinction between the traditional object and its Web 2.0 counterpart.

This article troubles the traditional textual bildungsroman as trace or exemplar of self-enculturation by perforating the bounds of the genre with contemporary
prosumer life practices, especially as they transform the bildungsroman from product to practice. I focus particularly on the prosumer girl fan; drawing on examples of *Twilight* remixes, including interrogations of narrative, culture, and gender in YouTube films made by girls. The term “prosumer” is proliferating and evolving beyond its jargoned origins. According to that bastion of popular knowledge *Wikipedia*:

**Prosumer** is a portmanteau formed by contracting either the word *professional* or *producer* with the word *consumer*. The term has taken on multiple conflicting meanings: the business sector sees the prosumer (professional–consumer) as a market segment, whereas economists see the prosumer (producer–consumer) as having greater independence from the mainstream economy. It can also be thought of as converse to the consumer with a passive role, denoting an active role as the individual gets more involved in the process. More recently, in the mental health field, the word "prosumer" has come to mean "consumer/provider," also known as a "peer provider," such as a peer support specialist or other mental health consumer who also provides peer support mental health services.

The prosumer as a market segment is someone who produces “professional” content often via non-commercial means. For example, grades of a product such as a camcorder are branded for target markets: consumer, a camera adequate to produce home movies, prosumer, a camera adequate for the production of professional quality movies on a home budget, and professional, top of the line advanced equipment. Prosumption may constitute an invisible but measurable uncompensated economic force, such as peer-to-peer mp3 sharing or home health care for family members. Prosumers may staff rape hotlines as survivors trained to provide personalized counseling. Henry Jenkins describes the fan prosumer as one who is neither “totally autonomous from (n)or totally vulnerable to the culture industries,” an “interactive audience ... more than a marketing concept and less than ‘semiotic democracy’” (John Fiske’s term for the process of consumer resisting and recoding hegemonic “meanings” of cultural
commodities). Lev Manovich critiques academic “celebrating (of) ‘user-generated content,’” and the implicit equating “of ‘user-generated’ with ‘alternative’ and ‘progressive.’” The Twilight prosumer, like Jenkins’s participatory fan, operates somewhere between the self-made and the industry-initiated, the user-generated mash-up engineered with consumer electronics within the constraints of social media. Is the Twilight prosumer driven by the desire to bend the fantasy narrative to her will, to ride or rail against a trend, to launch feminist interventions into conventional narrative schemas, to participate actively in digital girl culture, to intimately occupy the space of the protagonist and/or her suitors by generating one or more Twilight avatars, to collectively glory in the freshness of amour? The girl prosumer under investigation here helms one of many selves or aggregates made and unmade through the participatory group cultures of Web 2.0. She is not new, but her marked appearance in the male-dominated realms of computer-based technology and organized fandom indicate shifts not only in the gendered demographics of narrative “subjects” but also in the notion of subjectivity itself, as the production of something or someone discrete becomes an infinite distribution of surface.

The traditional paper novel and the internet bildungsroman-as-process coexist quite nicely and can be juxtaposed against earlier categorical distinctions such as art vs. craft, autobiography vs. diary, hero/villain vs. protagonist/antagonist. Does the shift in the bildungsroman from object to practice necessitate an expansion of the genre parameters, or does it require completely new terms of engagement? How might the move from the page to the pixel suggest a paradigm shift not only in the kinds of narrative specific technologies engender, but also the self or selves produced through them?

Bella, Coming of Age; This Bites

Twilight recounts in much inner monologue detail (cue chick flick folk song) the adventures of (Isa)Bella Swan, a seventeen-year old girl of divorced parents who spends the senior year of high school with her sheriff father in the dreary town of Forks, Washington. Despite Bella’s musings on her foibles, that she is spazzy,
fashion-challenged, and “ordinary,” she makes friends, has her pick of boys, and seems to everyone but herself to be inexplicably exotic. The most beautiful, perfect, wealthy, and wise of all the senior boys falls in love with her, protects her from her own clumsiness, objects to her friendships with other boys, and watches over her in her sleep with the flattering convention of a stalker romance. He is the divine Edward Cullen, cold and hot all at the same time, unobtainable object extraordinaire -- vampire. The two quickly become an unconventional pair steeped in Mormon social convention. In the confines of this narrative, humans and vampires rarely bond because the power relations are too disparate, as one is usually prey and the other predator. However, Meyer invents a “family” of “vegetarian” vampires who feed on livestock and wild animals. They use superhuman will to deny and reroute their drives in order to live among and honor humans. As Edward can only control his bloodthirst for Bella by keeping his desire in check, he maintains the boundaries of their physical relationship by offering pecks on the forehead and the occasional deep kiss. Bella’s desire produces the delirium of risk in the unknown, a common thrill between bodies, except that desire here extends to an afterlife in which she too would become perfect, beautiful, strong, and live forever at the chronological age of 18, shedding the turmoil of adolescence for all the benefits of maturity sans the debilitating effects of aging.

Bella’s journey toward self-discovery is driven by her obsession with Edward, the perfect unrealizable love object. To that end, she is willing to renounce her flawed human state in order to become worthy of Edward’s love. As intimated above, Bella deplores the prospect of aging past the chronological age of her vamp-beau. Chapter one of the second book New Moon opens on the morning of her eighteenth birthday with a nightmare:

Gran hadn’t changed much; her face looked just the same as I remembered it ... Like a dried apricot, but with a puff of thick white hair standing out in a cloud around it ... With a dizzying jolt, my dream abruptly became a nightmare. There was no Gran. That was me ... Me – ancient, creased, and withered. Edward stood beside me ... excruciatingly lovely and forever
seventeen. He pressed his icy, perfect lips against my wasted cheek. ‘Happy birthday,’ he whispered.

(Meyer 2006, 3-6)

Her wish to become immortal has more to do with the preservation of the freshness and desirability of youth than with a fear of death. Perhaps it is a coincidence that Bella finds the infirmities of aging as repugnant as her youth-obsessed culture. Beyond the symptomatic gesture of aging as failure, Bella and her girl counterparts also wish to stave off womanhood. The move from girl to woman is viewed as a limitation of possibility, a clipping of one’s wings. Despite this fear, more profound than losing one’s “humanness,” the bildungsroman takes up the thematic in very conventional ways.

The books use recognizable feminine markers of maturity to move the narrative to its most traditional conclusion: love, marriage, sex, and motherhood. There is very little mention of the biological symptoms of maturation (menses, erogenous zone pleasures, fluid exchanges) despite obvious obsessions with the spilling and sucking of blood, and blood as the contaminating force toward death and/or the venomous gift of eternal life. Bella begins as “the locus of exaggerated stereotypical feminine capacities and self-loathing,” and despite her success in school, her only areas of skill seem to be “cooking and doing laundry, which she does without complaint for her father.”

Twilight as a novel of growth does not reach its apex until the final installation. In Breaking Dawn, Bella gets married, has body-bruising but nondescript intercourse, and is impregnated with a half-vampire fetus whose growth threatens her life and whose birth explodes her womb. She finally becomes both woman and mother at the same time: the baby jettisons its mother by exploding out of her, rending her body into shards and stopping her heart. Bella is “saved” by her husband’s venomous elixir, and suffers through the burn of transmogrification to live as vampire. This plot detail allows Edward to remain a heroic savior instead of a selfish murderer. Bella, like a volcano engorged and spewing bloody chunks, “births” and “dies” at the same time, taking on the “powers of horror” dutifully ascribed to the woman subject while transcending the boundaries of time and space through the vector of
eternity. Leaving girlness behind, she embraces her superhuman capacities as mother/warrior and after protecting her loved ones in a vampire show-down, settles down to the quiet conventions of bourgeois family life.

_Googling Bildungsromans, or The Novel is Dead, Long Live the Novel_ The bildungsroman as picture or novel of formation, learning, maturation, and enlightenment arises from the tradition of _bildung_, a theological and philosophical education/cultivation of citizenship. _Bildung_ dates back to 16th century Pietistic theologies about modeling oneself in the image of God, as well as “natural” philosophies about the development of potentialities in organisms. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s _Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship_ (1795-96) defines the genre through its rebellious archetypical hero who rejects his bourgeois origins for more aesthetic aspirations (morphing in later incarnations to the ubiquitous “life of the mind”), only to be subsumed again through recognition by his “masters” and the love of a good woman. The course of the bildungsroman ebbs and flows, from its early nineteenth-century German emergence and the “rapid expansion of literary production,” to its relative disappearance in the late nineteenth century with the exceptions of middle-class self-enlightenment guides that I would argue include the mannerly quests of Henry James. The “bildungsroman re-emerges in the modernist neo-Romantic revival” as the more heroic twentieth-century interiorization projects of Thomas Mann and D.H. Lawrence et al.

The subject of 19th century bildungsroman, the production of a kind of Kantian autonomous self, mirrors the reader’s contemporaneous struggle to act as if he were a unified separate entity free of worldly constraints despite being constructed through and functioning within societal and cultural conditions. Thus, the bildungsroman as a genre is founded upon the production of Subjects, self by self by self. In _The Way of the World: the Bildungsroman in European Culture_, Franco Moretti suggests that it is the absence of cultural prescriptives that “confronts the individual with the truly modern problem of choosing,” wherein “(e)very behaviour becomes subjective, transitory, questionable: there
arises the problem of how to assess it … “ (209)xxiii. The assertion of free will crafts the modern Subject, both fictional and somatic. This historical phenomenon shores up its genre.

As the modernist pinnacle of the heroic quest for self-actualizationxxiv, or being a Subject, gives way to the postmodern experiments and parodies of “fractured selves” or becomings of a subject crafted by Toni Morrison, Don Delillo, Kathy Acker, etc, so do contemporary literary critics dismantle or expand the genre to move beyond its archetype to encompass the postmodern plethora of identity practices and politicsxxv. The bildungsroman now reflects the diversity of authorial experience, including the lives and cultures of “others” such as women, the disabled, gays and lesbians, immigrants, the diasporic, and the girl.xxvi Davin Heckman even argues for a posthumanxxvii bildungsroman in which:

(T)he individual is present not as the expression of a coherent self, but as the central problem of the story. Rather than triumph over external obstacles through force of will, the will itself is formed through the effects of outside forces. The story remains a tale of growth and education, but the end of this process is an attempt to stabilize the subject and construct a coherent representation of the self that is consistent with the expectations of its cultural milieu (or, perhaps, the genre) ... For posthuman subjects, these are stories about learning what it means to be human.

“Unraveling Identity, Watching the Posthuman Bildungsroman,”

CTheory (May 2008),

http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=594#_edn50

The relatively recent undoing of the genre may seem to eviscerate its categorical standing, but the intra-categorical minutiae have little bearing on the stakes of the girl or female bildungsroman in question. The significance for the postmodern novel here lies in its capacity to generate, absorb, and redound different kinds of subjects, and the affirmation of said infinite number of subjects in the face of what was formerly unrecognizable and unknowable, i.e. that which could not be subjected.
As referenced earlier, the traditional bildungsroman begins with a child coming-of-age, a rising action event distancing that individual from predetermined assumptions and mores, and the long and arduous process of self-discovery toward a maturity that includes the assimilation of contemporary cultural values and the participation and recognition of that individual by society. Though the process of “reading” over the last century generated or reinscribed different kinds of subjects, particularly across the move from modernism to postmodernism as the Subject becomes a multiplicity, subjectivity remains as an “enlightened” by-product of late capitalism. The most explicit transition of the twentieth-century novel from pedagogically inscriptive narrative to formation as perpetual process is Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). In *Subjects of Desire, Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), Judith Butler frames Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* as a bildungsroman, “an optimistic narrative of adventure and edification, a pilgrimage of the spirit” in which “the sentences enact the meanings that they convey” (17-18). Life becomes literature as the reader’s attempts to identify with the protagonist are subverted in much the same way as the suturing of subjectivity is thwarted via the very operations that are supposed to define and defend it. Though Hegel’s “subject cannot be located in existence” (23), and neither can the reader, the force of desire for something unified and recognizable continues to propel the perpetual search.

The Hegelian subject’s continued pursuit for unity takes an ironic turn; the twenty-first century digital reader breaks the paradigm of linear progression toward knowledge that is the encounter with the novel through the daily interaction with hypertext and internet search engines as she authors a daily self-narrative online\textsuperscript{xxxiii}. The “time to learning” shifts dramatically as the amount of information available is freed from covers and shelves. However much we pleasure in reading a novel --caressing it, judging its cover, writing marginalia-- the novel as a paper object is dying\textsuperscript{xxix}. I am not suggesting here that the veracity of narrative readily available at our keyboards is superior to that of the novel, but
along with the decline of book purchases and demise of small booksellers and presses in this continuing recession, it is the emergence of competing media that indicates an irrevocable break between the way knowledge was formerly produced and consumed and its current invocations. One could argue that the 21st-century hypertexting bildungsroman merely expands the disaggregation of a postmodern self. Perhaps its genealogical referent already contains ever-ready seeds ripe for the germination of related paperless forms. I argue that the speed of “bindungsromaning” produces an intensification of Hegelian self-development of spirit, but the gesture remains the same: one loses oneself in order to find oneself again and again and again. The contemporary bildungsroman as accretive process for subject formation may provide a swerve around the narrative confines of normative self-discovery (postmodern or not), but does it really produce something other than a recognizable doer behind the hypertextual deeds?

The bildungsroman as literary genre still exists as a traditionally consumed category. Bildungsroman as a twenty-first century practice is emerging, transmuting the subject formation of the genre into the actual formation of subjects in the world. The electronic bildungsroman authors a distributive process, hailing a reader who is also a writer and for whom the goal is the educational process itself more than resolutions or maturation. These “open-source” buildable narratives gesture toward Hegel’s meta-bildungsroman where the “human spirit,” not merely the human, journeys. By linking one event to any number of others, the satisfying narrative closure is thwarted, highlighting the quest as its own reward with the hero(ine) locating herself in multiple spheres. I argue that this enactment fundamentally changes the function of the bildungsroman, if not always its form. This bildungsroman 2.0 produces a collective subject in addition to or in place of the multiple subject of postmodernity. The new reader/writer of the internet bildungsroman, the prosumer, spins a Jamesonian pastiche of narrative --images, sound, film, statistics, advertisements, text grafts and self-authored prose— functionally obliterating the boundaries of the self/text, “written” open-sourced and published on the web. Bildungsroman now describes the formation of subjects and it forms
subjects all at the same time, noun to verb. For example, the bildungsromaning girl who manages several avatars, status updates, locations, “likes,” a YouTube channel, and a Twitter feed produces herself as a multiplicity across the surface of the web. While this vector of identity construction is consistent with the production of the postmodern subject, it also produces something new, the digital collective subject, who arises from the simultaneity of “pack” production, i.e. the Facebook user, the Second Life participant, etc. “The Facebook user” both describes and enacts a subject.

**Evolution of the Prosumer**

“Prosumer” was first popularized with futurist Alvin Toffler's widely read *The Third Wave* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1980). In *TTW*, Toffler identifies three successive waves of capitalist participation: 1) the first wave – primarily agrarian societies in which ‘prosumer’ individuals consumed what they themselves had made (283); the second wave – industrial societies that produced commodities for sale and exchange (ibid.); and the third wave – a move back toward ‘prosumer’ culture provoked by, among other things, the explosion of new production technologies available to mass users from the 1980s onward (292). Prosumers begin to do more for themselves in the realm of the everyday, with everything from at-home pregnancy tests to inspired bathroom tile installation courtesy of The Home and Garden Network. Cultural production also becomes a bit democratized with capacities to create “professional” and countercultural aesthetic works in existing mediums. Self-published ‘zines and Adobe Pagemaker-templated gun show newsletters coexist and thrive as they mark their respective communities.

Today’s technologically savvy prosumer deploys Web 2.0 media to customize everything from blog pages to M&Ms. According to homepage of The Prosumer Studies Working Group, started by George Ritzer in 2009 at the University of Maryland, the prosumption trend covers everything from: consuming and producing online knowledge at Wikipedia and Google’s Knol; status updating, character and community building, interpersonal and collective communication
experiences on Facebook, MySpace, Chatroulette, the blogosphere, Friendfeed, Twitter, Buzz, and SecondLife; the buying and selling of goods on Ebay and Craigslist, and I would add, the arts and crafts community shops of Etsy; media sharing on YouTube, and Flickr; city guides and reviews on Yelp!, and FourSquare; the ‘folksonomies’ of lists at Digg and Del.icio.us; music remixing at ccMixter.org; mobile phone geotagging sites; and self-publication and production sites like lulu and cafepress.

The inclusive user site platforms and forums cited by The Prosumer Studies Working Group as prosuming territories should not imply that all consumers of Web 2.0 media are producers. According to 2007 statistics offered by Lev Manovich in his exploration of cultural production and open source participation, “only between 0.5 percent and 1.5 percent of users of the most popular social media sites (Flickr, YouTube, Wikipedia) contributed their own content.” Despite this miniscule percentage, the sheer number of prosumer participants proves staggering. For example, out of more than 400 million active Facebook users, 70% of whom locate themselves outside the U.S., there are 60 million updates per day. YouTube’s website states the upload rate for new videos to be in the hundreds of thousands daily, with 24 hours of video uploaded every minute.

As the numbers of participants in subcultures in the 1980s and 1990s became ever niche-ier in the 2000s, corporations duplicated, branded, rebranded, and sold back cultural products and services to an ever-splintering market. Prosumers now had powerful sets of development and distribution tools, as well as venues primed for participation with ready-made audiences. Companies also developed tactics for prosumer participation that included solicitations for amateur product reviews and invitations to develop and distribute “authorized” application additions. Current lines between the web prosumer, the corporate-sponsored prosumer poseur, and the professional cultural producer blur. The critical academic arm of the prosumer is similarly affected. The Prosumer Revisited 2009 conference held in Frankfurt Germany featuring a cast of
international interdisciplinary ‘prosumer’ scholars was in fact sponsored in part by Ebay.

How does one separate out the provinces and practices of the contemporary consumer from that of the prosumer? I argue that the contemporary prosumer is an evolution of the Baudrillardian consumer. In The System of Objects [J. Benedict (Trans). Verso Books. London and New York, 1996 (1968)], Jean Baudrillard details the separation of significatory codes from their respective objects, with consumer “purchases” as proliferation of totalizing referentless code: “our individual flights do not negate the fact that each day we participate in its collective elaboration.”(22) The move from use-value to sign-value detailed by Baudrillard produces a consumer who inscribes her own “totalized” alienation, ironically within a collective, via either her attempts to make meaning out of codes alone and/or thwarted attempts to locate the “real.” The prosumer takes this one step further. Never having had access to the “real” (of course no one has in the Saussurian sense), the prosumer experiences no disconnect between use-value and sign-value; sign-value is use-value. Where the consumer’s identity is accretive, trafficking in signs as a means to reify one or several identities, the prosumer ingests signs and also emits them as a single gesture. The “identity” of the prosumer is a sign engine, continually replenished and dispersed, locatable only through significatory patterns found on the web and elsewhere.

The prosumer as concept is useful both as descriptor of our current incarnation of subject formation and as diagnostic of contemporary modes of open textuality. Tracing the synergistic relations between the prosumer as corporate target of yet another market segment slice, the prosumer as Do-It-Yourself culture producer, and the prosumer as academic object of study creates a multifaceted outline requiring a delicate disarticulation. The tendril I’d like to tease out here is the DIY brand of prosumer who emerges from knitting circle zines and Scarleteen to unleash her own narrative aggregation. The girl enters a male-dominated programmers land via a confluence of the everyday familiarity of Facebooking
and the desire driven by the most successful youth market book for girls since the baby boomers were young.

In *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri chronicle the current shift in the capitalist model: “The great industrial and financial powers thus produce not only commodities but also subjectivities ... agentic subjectivities within the biopolitical context: they produce needs, social relations, bodies, and minds – which is to say, they produce producers.”(32) The prosumer is the logical outcome of this model, one who produces subjectivities she cannot own. While the primary focus of this essay is girl prosumption as bildungsroman for an online life, I want to be careful again to reiterate my awareness of this phenomenon as one practiced by girls who have access to actual digital technologies as well as technologies of the self. Sign-value as use-value is not a universal condition. Prosumptive practices, while fulfilling to some degree Marx’s call to take the means of production into one’s own hands, are not without some cost. Social theory and culture blogger Nathan Jurgensen suggests that:

(P)rosumption generally, and especially on Web 2.0, is the mechanism by which we become unpaid workers (“crowd sourcing”), producing valuable information for the benefit of businesses. This is the almost endlessly efficient business model of Web 2.0 capitalism ... Perhaps many do not mind giving away their labor because they enjoy the services provided, such as the richly social Facebook platform. However, we should also ask why the personal data of ourselves, that we are producing, does not belong to us?


On the business end, girl prosumption of the *Twilight* franchise functions as free viral advertising, and is permitted to exist without prosecution for copyright violation, as it is synergistically beneficial. But what is in it for the girls? Does the
prosumption of the novel alter not only its form, but its function? The Twilight girl prosumer epitomizes this new model of capital: she consumes texts, produces commodities, subjectivities, and communities in response, which in turn generates more Twilight prosumption.

*The Bildungsroman and The Girl*

Though the traditional novel market continues to shrink, a small sector of hardcovers and paperback progeny revel in a new joie d’vivre. Whether it is the vast number of teens that comprise Generation Y, coming in at numbers slightly under the boomers, or the afterglow of tween Harry Potter readers hungry for chunky seriality, the young adult book market is undergoing a renaissance. The YA market is the only sector of novels experiencing growth, up 4.5% in value terms for the UK last year. The girl as sought-after consumer demographic, an off-shoot of the 1950s “teen” run through and past the 1970s Women’s Movement, emerges from the 1990s post-punk “grrl power” period hijacked, commodified, and repackaged as purchasable “girl power” products typified by the Spice Girls. Today’s girls cut their teeth on this market, and have come to the fore as the drivers of several niches that go way past a couple of pink department store aisles. They function as core targets for the crossover corporate multi-armed bandits of film and television, music, fashion, magazines and books, even décor. There is now in fact more concern about boys being left behind programming and content development vectors for media outlets, as the gap in “reading” and its attendant literacies continues to widen between boys and girls.

The prosumer girl constructs her own bildungsroman through both public and private web interactions. Google tracings provide a map of the everyday girl, i.e. girl in process, her interests, concerns, habits, desires, and curiosities. A New York Times article proclaiming “digitally effusive teenage girls” as “the cybepioneers of the moment,” marks the gender shift in web prosumption among the 12-17 demographic. Significantly more teen girl web users than boy users blog, make their own webpages, work on other’s websites, and produce
social networking profiles. The only website activity boys engage in far more than girls is video posting or vlogging, by a two to one margin. So if the prosumer girl blogs, the more traditional bildungsroman becomes her self-published offering as testament to and provocation for negotiations of the feminine or growing up girl. MySpace and Facebook log her connections to friends and family, support her geographical tweets and status updates, and most clearly present her as self-crafted avatar. These girl web bildungsromans are more ethereal and fluid than traditional novels. They produce a different kind of reader, one who has to solder disparate and perhaps unintended pieces together to create a narrative cohesive enough for the bildungsroman proper, or respond to these novels in a completely different way by allowing the distributed process of writing to remain unstable. Bildungsromaning or individual web browsing does not change a reader-subject who prefigures the “texts” but directly forms subjectivities via its practices.

The distributed girl bildungsroman seems to suggest something more like Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s antidote to the confines of the Oedipal self – the desiring-machine – than anything cohesive enough to be called a desiring subject. Michael Hardt articulates the Deleuze and Guattari desiring-machine as an assemblage that “cannot be conceived as a desire to do or have an object or even achieve a state. (Hence "the object of desire" really doesn't make sense here.) Desiring-machines have no object, or goal, or telos, but rather are completely invested in the process, the production. Desiring-machines can thus never be "satisfied" or come to a completion." The girl likewise prosumes toward no particular end. Despite her position as highly desirable demographic, girl is not officially rights-bearing, and the subjectivities she produces online may remain unrecognized in “real life.” Girl as digital desiring-machine is just like everybody else, rights-bearing or no. Her bildungsroman asserts the nonlinear, the break from chronological time experienced in particles and particulars as web surfing practice. Prosumer girl is recognizable as desiring-machine through her “novels of learning.” It is in “reading” her bildungsroman that one can find someone(s) discreet, in the guise of a subject. She authors strings of texts: tweets,
videos, lists, reviews, and updates, traces that wrestle with the mantle of the feminine.

One problem for the prosumer girl is that she receives no remuneration for prosuming her life save recognition by peers, trend trackers, and data mines. Some exceptional girl prosumers may eventually garner something wage-paying for their services, though it seems not to be the primary goal for the practice. I am not sure that Web 2.0 participation has a goal per se, but it does operate as a vehicle for and as the materials of cultural participation. Bildungsroman prosumption is also not a synecdoche for living; it has become for these privileged girls a vital function, a way to recognize and manage a sea of one’s own selves. Another problem for the girl who comes-of-age online is that her own narrative developments may be processed through categories that both determine and limit her stories. For example, the heavily perused Facebook “Relationship Status” as identity category forces girls to conceptualize themselves as a relational unit, a gesture maligned by second wave feminists such as Luce Irigaray who advocate for a sexual completeness and separateness of self. Life narratives, like fictional ones, range from the triumphant to the annihilating, but this is not a cumulative effect of bildungsromaning as a practice. Girl life narratives can be mapped to glean and situate the current status of the girl, which may or may not adhere to accepted conventions of the feminine. Her stories may provoke revulsion, inspire action, or produce mere indifference in readers her follow her.

While many girls construct their daily digital bildungsromans as automatically as putting on clothes or eating breakfast, these and other girls also engage coming-of-age narratives in traditional novel form. Girls garner the majority share of the young adult book market and are clearly buying novels. Evidence for the recent girl take-over of the Young Adult book market as cited earlier is the wildly successful Twilight series, which has sold over 25 million books and has been translated in 37 languages since its first publication. According to the Nielsen report citing the top ten YA books for 2009, Stephanie Meyer’s fantasy/romance
saga occupied spots one through four: *Twilight* at 544 pages (2005), *New Moon* at 563 pages (2006), *Eclipse* at 629 pages (2007), and *Breaking Dawn* at 756 pages (2008). Boys read a number of these girl-protagonist books as well, but the drive behind the series success is definitely feminine. On the heels of the Harry Potter bildungsroman empire, the success of the *Twilight* bildungsroman series skyrocketed girl to the top of the demographic heap and the genre in serial form to the most marketable of novels. Substantial dissonance between the prosumed and the papered bildungsroman seems not to exist; girls freely blog about the novels they read. The juxtaposition between daily open-sourced noveling, an embodied yet productless process, and the process of endless reading, engaging the physicality of heft in tome, turns the book into a fetish object. The novel becomes desirable again for its construction and weighty presence, its structured beginnings and endings, its old-fashioned analog “real” time (but not real life) existence.

*Spirited Away: The Prosumer Fan Goes Pink and Sometimes Lemony*

The visibility and accessibility of web fan communities has exponentially expanded from the 1980s/90s days of zines and annual regional conventions. Henry Jenkins and Constance Penley both trumpeted Michel de Certeau’s assertion that “consumption is production” in order to rescue the fan from his status as agency-free capitalist cog, to revalue fandom as cultural work, and to give explanatory force to their theories of Star Trek and slash fandom respectively. More recently, Jenkins takes up the work of Pierre Levy on collective intelligence to address the paradigm shift to digital fan communities and the production/consumption circuit.

Online fan communities might well be some of the most fully realized versions of Levy’s cosmopedia, expansive self-organizing groups focused around the collective production, debate, and circulation of meanings, interpretations, and fantasies in response to various artifacts of contemporary popular culture (137) ... The emergent knowledge cultures never fully escape the influence of the commodity culture, any more than commodity culture can totally function outside the constraints of
territoriality. But knowledge cultures will, he predicts, gradually alter the ways that commodity culture operates. Nowhere is that transition clearer than within the culture industries, where commodities that circulate become resources for the production of meaning ... (144)

So according to Jenkins, there is a ‘collective intelligence’ produced by digital fan culture as it explores, dissects, and creates “meaning” around revered cultural objects, institutions, and events. Digital fan culture is in alliance with “knowledge culture” or the production of sanctioned texts, and can affect these texts in a feedback loop circuit. Jenkins’ recent configurations of fan culture move past the “value” fandom accrues as self-determined mirror, reflecting “the real” while reshaping the image of the original, toward a kind of “meaning” mobility in the participatory cloud, where the negotiation of textual determinacy (re)produces a number of virtual texts and textual communities.

If cultural commodities are to garner a sizable share of the contemporary consumer marketplace, they must court the virality of the prosumer or at the very least not appear hostile to the prosumption of their products. To be fair to Jenkins, he seems to find digital fandom relevant beyond the cases in which the knowledge produced on the fan end is then reincorporated on the production end, knowledge to commodity. Digital fandom is also valuable to him through the multitude of prosumer “meaning-making” practices in and of themselves, whether they affect commodity production or not, despite the cathection onto the very commodities they disaggregate via their practices. Jenkins seems to get stuck here on the valuation of meaning as a categorical imperative, collapsing fandom into a diagnostic enterprise. The so-called value of prosumer fandom lies more in the production of infinite subjectivities than in the production of infinite meaning. Taking into account the analysis Jenkins himself provides about the feedback loop between knowledge culture and commodity culture, the symbiotic relationships between these cultural categories remains predicated upon the permeable boundaries of each as distinct but not entirely separate operations.
Instead of maintaining the knowledge/commodity production divide, Lev Manovich interrogates the evolution of 21st century prosumption in terms of the culture industry:

Given that a significant percentage of user-generated content either follows the templates and conventions set up by the professional entertainment industry or directly reuses professionally produced content, does this mean that people’s identities and imaginations are now even more firmly colonized by commercial media than they were in the twentieth century? ... (Is this) a progressive development? or does it constitute a further stage in the development of the culture industry as analyzed by Adorno and Horkheimer in *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception* (144)? (2009, 312)

Manovich’s foreboding prompts rely upon a possible outside to the production of culture, one that is potentially more “naturally” derived than typical prosumptive fare. Is the charge of the prosumer, in her post-postmodern incarnation, “to make it new” when there is “nothing new under the sun”? Or is prosumption merely an evolution of Jamesonian pastiche, dooming the doers to swallow their interchangeable, customized tails over and over again? The “collective intelligence” of prosumer girl fans is subject to colonization by the culture industry. Whether or not one can build a Manovichian case for the recapitulation of culture to its products, these products germinate the material for the production of contemporary subjectivities. Though prosumer girl fans don’t get to choose the stakes of their “value,” their prosumption of culture is endemic to a an open-sourced living which moves the determinate toward the distributed, moth to flame. The girl fan as a particularly overcoded modality reflects the most dire of concerns for both Jenkins and Manovich: the girl is a pack, a horde who snacks up and spits out a cotton candy of cultural detritus, scrambling the categories of knowledge and commodity as she produces herself/selves. The girl remains a phantasmatic projection of anointed denizen and victim. As such, prosumer girl fan communities have no problem engaging the interface between knowledge and commodity cultures, and find the audience for their activities receptive to mash-
ups of all kinds. A sure sign of the girlification of prosumer fan culture is that the term “fangirls” has been appropriated to refer to the fans of a fan who has achieved some celebrity status among community members (Big Name Fan or BNF). According to Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse in Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet, “(f)angirl has also become a verb, as when one fangirls another writer or an actor, perhaps by squeeing (a squeal of uncontained appreciation or excitement).”

Even within her own prosumer fan community, the term girl still retains the kind of pejorative exuberant Beatlemania fluffiness that her participatory presence continues to contradict.

Evidence for categorical infections prosumed by girl fans of Twilight highlights new web pathways, domains, interactions, and “products” through a co-mingling of participatory fan culture and girl culture. Prosumer girl enters the male-dominated domain of digital fandom to forge, in Jenkins parlance, her own ‘collective intelligence’ through engagement in multiple sites and activities. However, her participation does not effect a “re-valuing” of fandom, the culture industry, or the girl; she simply epitomizes the subject who prosumes herself. The girl uses the Twilight bildungsroman as canonical link to and referent of girl culture, creating her own feedback loop. She showcases both media and cultural literacies as textual rewrites, spinoffs, utopic grandstands, and biting assemblages. One notable synergistic example occurred on Ms.Kathy’s blog, a kind of clearinghouse for “Twihards.” Fans generated over $85,000 for Haiti relief organizations after the 2010 earthquake by donating at least $5 each for a pdf compilation of Twilight-centered fan fiction for contributors and fans alike. The monumental success of Twilight occurs in no small part because of its prosumption, and because of Stephanie Meyer, Little, Brown, and Company, and Summit Entertainment (the film company producing the series adaptations) support or tolerance of the texts’ prosumption.

Over the past five years, Twilight fan prosumers have posted thousands of stories and hundreds of videos on the web. These narrative slices provide additions and revisions to the now canonical girl bildungsroman. Web sites such as
FanFiction.Net, LiveJournal, Twilighted, Twilight Archives, and Twilight Fan Center host fan fiction, and sometimes fan art and video (or what constitutes the “fanon”) all inspired by the novels. The Twilight prosumer girl offers “episode fixes” for gender stereotypes while reveling in contradictions of the feminine. One of the most fascinating plot points she asserts throughout is the runaway train of girl desire, found in the original text and taken to new heights. This desire is one not just of objects, but the connective force of a desiring-machine. When it does take the form of very specific objects, be they het (heterosexual), femmeslash or saffic (girl/girl), or other alternate pairings, girl prosumers may turn up the narrative heat. Pushing beyond the confines of the good girl or Mary Sue, they sometimes take the undercurrents of limeyness (sexual themes) in Twilight and make sexually explicit or lemony stories that push past the boundaries set up by the original text. When girls want Bella to have growlingly satisfying sex with Jacob the wolfboy instead of the vapid pining for unattainable Edward, they write and publish it themselves.

*Prosuming Twilight on YouTube*

Girl as driver of book sales, top of the most coveted market, turns the timelessness of the bildungsroman into something new through prosumption. But what is the coming-of-age turf girls claim for themselves in their appropriations of Twilight? If Twilight constitutes a canonical referent for girl culture, what are the stakes of its narrative? While there is exponentially more fanfic available than other prosumed objects (making Twilight fanfic a fascinating object of study on its own), YouTube videos engaging the Twilight saga portend the entrance of the girl fan into a male-dominated domain, and offer a unique window into the prosumption of girl culture. YouTube as a site of the girl’s bildungsroman prosumption is significant for at least three reasons. The traditional paper bildungsroman authors an interiorization product in which the narrative stakes tie directly to a subject for the benefit of the subject. YouTube bildungsroman practices involve the exteriorization of knowledge production as part of a collective subjectivity machine. The scale of audience dramatically shifts from chatting with your friends to millions of random and rabid consumers.
Paper bildungsroman writers court engagement with their texts, prosumption being one of a number of available responses. A key difference between books and YouTube video media lies in the “openness” to interaction. Videos posted to YouTube are subject to the speed and virality of consumption that books by virtue of their status as “real life” objects are not. The presence of the girl as author in either case is notable as she is underrepresented in both media.

Girls take on the bildungsroman in a number of categories, ranging from book and movie reviews, including high school book reports, testimonials and rants, trailer and film clip mashups, to spoofs, parodies and homages. The doubling of the *Twilight* bildungsroman, both as prosumer process and pop culture object, expands 21st century renderings of girls coming-of-age. Instead of posing a question about the value of prosumer girl fandom or her precise contributions to the culture industry, an interrogation of this form elucidates the engagement with canonical femininities at work and play. Girls do not appropriate the mantle of femininity wholesale, choosing instead to exhibit life “learning” narratives as one among many scripts. The following six examples take on prosumer *Twilight* fan girl uploads including permutations on the book/film review, the rant, and the parody. These prosumed narratives function as signposts or short stories about girl and the role she plays in the contemporary culture industry, the narratives available to her about gender and becoming a woman, and how she produces a span of subjectivities in response. Though I offer each narrative as a frame for encountering a particular girl identity in process, I do not intend for examples to represent girl archetypes. These are six of any number of *Twilight Saga* subjectivities prosumed over the span of five years. *Twilight* is a particularly available bildungsroman to prosume because of its ubiquitous presence in girl’s pop culture canon. More importantly, its primary narrative borrows from childhood fairy tales in which there is a princess who is isolated because she is different/weird/special/unrecognized who is rescued by the perfect prince. Girls find the prosumption of *Twilight* particularly rewarding as it gives them the opportunity to interrogate and rewrite this interpellating narrative for themselves.
Sensate

The first girl “identity” I will explore is “sensate,” or emotion. Cultural theorist Brian Massumi describes emotion as “a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal … qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual, point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning.”(28) This girl crafts a narrative of intense feeling via Twilight fan prosumption. She evidences the phenomenon of unchecked girly hysteria both celebrated and maligned in fan and popular cultures. Though her experience is personal, she possesses, creates, and participates through the force of a fan pack.

NuttyMadam is one of the loudest Twilight girlfan voices on YouTube. She lists the UK as her home and her real name as Emma. She has uploaded video since 2007, and received over four million hits to date. Her videos are simple close-cropped headshots of Emma, a white, roundish girl with flat brown hair and a space between her teeth, monologuing comfortably to the camera. They also feature a low-tech camera-to-computer buzz that comprises a background sound, and single take shots without any editing. In them, an array of emotion spews across the surface, between snarl and smile and the waving of hands. Her Twilight videos range from reactions to texts and trailers, replete with squealing and gasping, to defensive responses and shout-downs addressing Twilight haters’ comments and posts. NuttyMadam is a representative use of YouTube as a social networking site. People post responses to her, and she in turn addresses their comments. She offers her take on the saga, acknowledging the problems others articulate while staunchly defending the series. One explosive example that received 561,175 hits called “im getting really sick of the breaking dawn haters!!” admonishes detractors as spoiled for not getting what they wanted in the final book of the series. "Why are you so down on people when they’re happy?” she quips about the happily-ever after ending. She also champions Reneesmee’, Bella’s half vampire child: “Reneesmee rocks. She’s the coolest little girl ever. I want one. Not a real one. A vampire one. Real ones poop and wee on you and
need food all hours of the day ... Reneesmee gives you visions, and when you
don’t have any alcohol you can tune into her when she is dreaming and it’s like a
contact high.” Some of NuttyMadam’s Twilight posts are tagged as “most
disliked” by viewers, and they inspire their own series of spoofs. Through the
open-sourced exteriorization of NuttyMadam’s videos, we see not only the
sensate story of one girl and her textual obsessions but also the dispersal and
aggregation of the bildungsroman, narratives of the girl horde.

Jouissance
One particular emotion often associated with the girl collective is jouissance, a
Kristevan iteration of jouissance, “total joy or ecstasy” “that is sexual, spiritual,
physical, conceptual at one and the same time.”(16) This girl identity deploys
highly intensified affect at and through Twilight, co-mingling with the euphoria
of first love and the new world of narratives it generates. Girl joys in Twilight,
and also in other girls’ joying. One girl prosumes a collective moment of
jouissance through an embodied response, a dance. “Crazy Twilight Girl Fan
Dances,” receiving a modest 1300 hits, is a video channeling the “feeling” many
girl fans have in their experience of Twilight. Its maker, Kati (ieou1234),
describes herself as “just your average girl” who wants “to show the world how I
feel about the Twilight saga. As you will see, I am equipped in my new Twilight
shirt from Hot Topic! OW OW!!” This exuberant music video uses the soundtrack
“Dancing Queen” by Abba to inspire Kati as she dances around her bedroom. She
intercuts medium shot clips of her freestyle dancing and jumping around with
paint blob effects and colorful washes to create a kind of ‘80s vibe. This video is a
notable exception to much uploaded girl fan work because instead of using
images from the film or lines from the book or music from the CD Kati prosumes
her trademarked t-shirt with a party girl anthem from another era. “Dancing
Queen” encapsulates the joy of being a girl, and the attractive force one exudes
while moving in joy. “Crazy Twilight Girl Fan Dances” is a music video that
captures the girly jouissance of the collective fan through the frenetic incarnation
of the one.
Brand

As the prosumption of Twilight produces a number of girl identities, so do some girls harness these identities in order to construct/package themselves. Most vectors of avatar construction are commercial, with girls borrowing corporate logos and constructing lists of items, sites, and practices they “like” in order to signify who they are in a field where signs are more determinate or self-referential, such as social networking sites. The following girl identity not only uses Twilight as a way to lure fans onto her page, she brands herself with it as she critiques it, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of the way identity is constructed, maintained, and proliferated by deploying it as a branding strategy and critiquing through the content and vehicle of her Twilight prosumption.

“LisaNova does Twilight” is one of a number of video parodies uploaded by Lisa Nova, a girl who describes herself as “videomaker.” She includes her website URL http://www.lisanovalive.com/ on her YouTube channel. At over a million hits this parody has Edward, played by an attractive androgynous girl, as a vegan instead of a vampire, who attempts to control his desire for Bella and her cheese pizza. The spoof highlights the appeal of Edward as a pretty man whose feminine qualities hold sway over teen minions, and pokes fun at social subgroups who position themselves as morally and politically superior, such as the “vegetarian” vampire. It recreates famous scenes from the film, such as Edward and Bella lying on the ground next to each other, up in a tree before they “fly,” and in the forest where Bella says “I know what you are ... vegan” with the same fear-tinged indifference that Kristen Stuart says “vampire.” The most notable aspect of LisaNova however is its brand (present in most of her uploaded video titles), and the way she uses Twilight to signify herself as owner of and participant in girl culture. One click to her featured website reveals her three-pronged prosumptive arena, respectively called “YouTube, Watch Me,” “Twitter, Follow Me,” “Facebook, Friend Me.” Nova rewrites the texts of others in order to write herself. She offers critiques, whims, “likes,” advice, and membership to her forums. She is her own publishing house and constructs her bildungsroman as public offering that is, as of now, not sponsored by any advertisers.
Friend

One girl identity presumed through the Twilight community is friend. Friend operates as support structure and confidant who nevertheless offers concerned admonitions and critical interventions when she feels they are warranted. Friend is part of the Twilight collective, an under-thematized subject whose TV sitcom referent continues to dominate as one who is group-identified, funny, very attractive, coffee-drinking, and under-employed. The Twilight friend comes with the addition of lexicon sharing and assembling over the network. According to their YouTube channel, FiveAwesomeGirls consists of a group of five girl friends (Kristina, Lauren, Kayley, Hayley, and Liane), living in different areas of the US, who each vlog one work day a week per girl. Their channel has over 30,000 subscribers and has received almost a million and a half hits. Most of the videos contain talking head shots with the occasional insert edit or medium shot to demonstrate or highlight an aspect of their monologues. They started vlogging as Harry Potter and Twilight fans, but when some of the girls offered critiques of Twilight characters, style, and plot elements, they predictably received negative responses from Twihards. In “Kristina has issues with Edward,” Kristina states that she has fallen out of love with Edward because she reread some of the series out of order, outside the lens of Bella’s lovelust, and found him limp and lifeless. It was “kind of like seeing an ex-boyfriend and wondering what you ever saw in him in the first place.” She declares herself a member of “Team Jacob,” coming out as a fan of the imperfect werewolf.

Another “awesome girl,” Liane, goes so far as to write and sing a song about Jacob called “Lupine Lover.” She says that Bella can have iced cold Edward, and intimates the pleasures to be found between real warm bodies. In “Haley pulls her face out for Twilight,” she admits that she loves Twilight because it is sexy and shares some of the morals she has, but that she also hates it because it is poorly written. She finds the comparison between Twilight and Harry Potter to be insulting, as the Potter franchise is more like literature and less like pulp. While FiveAwesomeGirls offers critiques and satires of the novels, they
acknowledge the allegiance that their own fans have to them, their responsibilities as prosumer site hosts to those fans, as well as the importance of the novels as *fanonical narrative* within girl culture. The large scale of viewership for their video diary entries changes not only the parameters of prosumption, but directly affects the content/knowledge produced. They continue to produce each other as “real life” singular friend and YouTube distributed friend.

**Stereotype**

While the prosumption of *Twilight* generates a celebration of the coming of age girl, it also reinforces gendered and racial stereotypes and the limited identities that adhere to the bildungsroman proper. Not all *Twilight* prosumed interrogations are shining examples of “empowered” girl mashups. Stereotype as identity is prosumed in “Twilight Parody, Black Girl,”\(^{xi}\) revealing a confused rearticulation of the narrative as racial critique. Bella, now an overweight working-class white girl, confronts Edward, a girl whose monstrosity is not undead blood sucking but being black. Like many YouTube Twilight parodies, ‘Black Girl” recreates scenes shot per shot with pointed alterations, and uses dialogue as tweaked referent to the original for maximum impact. “You have huge lips, incredibly dark skin ... you wreak of fried chicken, and you talk like you’ve only known Ebonics.” Edward asks Bella if she is afraid, to which she replies “No.” Black girl Edward decries, “As if you could out rap me... as if you could dance me off. I was designed to be a slave.” Bella replies “I’m here.”

The *Twilight* franchise is overwhelmingly white and middle-class. I am sure OhhLivia33’s parody takes issue with the original narrative demographics. The status of societal pariah foisted on single black mothers and the abominable stereotype of black girls as sexually available and insatiable makes this narrative swap out particularly poignant. However, the reiteration of black social stereotype in order to critique it falls flat and is even offensive. The girls are simply not in control of their medium, and the signs they mock do not deflect the power of their use. At the very least, this example is proof of girls’ struggle to
make narratives through mindfields of racist and sexist social systems. Stereotype highlights the limitations of cultural narratives to adequately articulate difference, the possibility for critique that prosumption entails.

**Polyglot**

Polyglot girl prosumes multiple languages: the corporate, the aesthetic, the user, the advertiser. In addition, the polyglot YouTube girl cross-pollinates film genres such as the fantasy film, romance, and action adventure. In this final example, polyglot girl mashes up Western film genres with an Eastern film enterprise. It is a *Twilight* spoof, not only of the film and its fanonical moments but also of the genre itself produced by YouTube now celebs The Hillywood Show, two sisters with a background in dance who took up acting and directing to produce the most professional *Twilight* videos on YouTube.\(^\text{b:\text{xiv}}\) Their channel has over 48,000 subscribers, and videos have received over 8 million hits. Hilly and Hannah Hindi reinvent the original *Twilight* film as a Bollywood music video, including highly wrought sets, costumes, action sequences and full cast dance numbers.\(^\text{k:\text{iii}}\) Their parody is perhaps the most watched at about 4.3 million hits. Adapting this popular bildungsroman by running it through one of India’s popular culture mediums cleverly highlights the dissonance between forms and jams the uptake of girl through its cultural mashup. The interaction afforded to the Hindi sisters by the open-sourced YouTube platform in combination with high-end aesthetic prosumption helped launch them into Internet stardom. Hillywood produces itself as polyglot: director, actor, writer, critic, reader, and girl, coming-of-age.

**Animating Forces In Conclusion**

The contemporary paper bildungsroman engenders a life, a subject, and while they explicitly function as cultural textbooks with hearty Hegelian feedback loops (I lose myself to find myself), they remain territorialized around the production of meaning. Novels articulate the interior into discrete consumable objects. Open-sourced bildungsromans are by contrast exteriorization projects that exist only through the collaborations of a collective. Bildungsromaning produces subjectivities rather than subjects. The girl straddles both paper and practice with
ease. She not only drives the single current growth market for novels in the industry, the prosumer girl fan authors her own bildungsroman on the web, traces of girl learning, as she constructs and responds to the *Twilight* coming-of-age saga. Girl shows us the current status of textuality as open, something that goes beyond the multi-authored, texts as actual filaments and conductors of identity. Internet girl as desiring-machine takes form through prosumption, consuming/producing “knowledge” highly valued within the burgeon of a socially networked girl culture, and artifacts that are used to sell commodities via the commercial sponsorship of websites like YouTube. Girl identities such as sensate, jouissance, brand, friend, stereotype, and polyglot are a few representatives of the prosumed girl horde. Whether or not the culture industry values her contribution as anything more than candy, her prosumption, both distributive and collective, is girls gone viral. Since girlfans have infected internet venues with the critical exuberance of the feminine in flux, the girlification of prosumption has come to mirror the real life of girls.

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ii Diane Roback, “The Reign Continues,” *Publisher’s Weekly,*

iii Kenneth Turan, “You wanna neck?” *Los Angeles Times,*


The marketing of products to girls has shifted over the past fifteen years. On the 1990s toy front, Megan Rosenfeld reports in “The story on toys for girls? They’re mostly about boys,” that “(i)n a toy world dominated by males, both parents and manufacturers are interested in boosting female-oriented toys. One study found that 11 of the 15 most advertised toys in 1993 were aimed at boys, another that seven aisles of a Toys R Us were crammed with things for boys while five aisles of mostly dolls were for girls,” Washington Post via Los Angeles Times, http://articles.latimes.com/1996-01-04/news/ls-20680_1_toy-story (January 4, 1996). Whereas the girl market was accessible in large part through advertising directed at boys, they now shape much of the advertising directed at teens. The effect of the Twilight phenomenon on the girl consumer market is much in evidence, for example, at HarperTeen. Their repackaged classics series, with editions of “Wuthering Heights,” “Pride & Prejudice,” and “Romeo & Juliet,” (my italics) borrows Twilight’s book cover design to reference, hail, and entice that coveted girl market. They also deploy familiar girl magazine tropes. “For ‘Pride & Prejudice,’ a back-of-the-book quiz asks ‘Which Pride & Prejudice Girl Are You?’” WSJ Staff, “Jane Austen and Shakespeare go for the ‘Twilight’ audience” The Wall Street Journal, http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2009/12/29/jane-austen-and-shakespeare-go-for-the-twilight-audience/ (December 29, 2009).
The bildungsroman as expansive European genre is defined in Marianne Hirsch’s oft-cited essay "From Great Expectations to Lost Illusions: The Novel of Formation as Genre," *Genre*, XII, 3 (1979), 293-311.


The female bildungsroman is not to be confused with the feminist bildungsroman. For a most nuanced rendering of the categorical contours, see Rita Felski’s “The novel of self-discovery: integration and quest,” *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics, Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) 122-153. *Twilight* is safely categorized as *female* because the narrative follows the traditional bildungsroman trajectory, culminating in marriage, motherhood, and happily-ever-after, without creating a “journey into society … (that) constitutes the precondition for oppositional activity and engagement”(137), providing a “basis for future negotiation between the subject and society … (wherein) the question of the ultimate social consequences of individual transformation is left open.”(133)


I speculate that *Twilight* author and Mormon Stephanie Meyer’s beliefs against pre-marital sex influenced her narrative as much if not more than any desire to break into the teen book market and the constraints that might be in place for the handling of sexual content. According to an interview conducted by Tony-Allen Mills, Meyer is also a straitlaced Mormon who doesn’t drink alcohol or smoke and, before she started writing, had never read a vampire book or seen an R-rated film. “News Review Interview:
Stephanie Meyer,” *The Sunday Times Online,*
http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/books/article4492238.eca (August 10, 2008).

xiv The afterlife as configured here has more than a hint of Mormon plenitude, a kind of eternal lightness in normative familial bonds. Meyer gestures toward the perfection of youth more than once, and marks that age as the pinnacle of physical beauty and strength. The ideal age for a “Generation Y” girl, target audience for her text, *could not* be much more than 18 (since according to my undergraduate students, becoming a woman is something to be avoided well into your thirties). An article in *Allure* magazine about the “perfect age” analyzed a number of polls to find that most women after the age of 25 feel younger than their chronological age, one’s personal perfect age increases as one ages to something in the more recent past, and that the ideal age for most women is somewhere between 31 and 37 (Rebecca Mead, “The Perfect Age”, *Allure,* (April 2010,) 112-124. The notion of a sliding “ideal age” was most recently exhibited for me at my 94 year-old grandmother’s funeral, in which a 70-something Catholic priest asserted in a serious but odd fashion that after her death my grandmother had been regressed to her ideal age, 30, where she once again romped and played with my dead grandfather, also regressed to the ideal thirty. On this model, I had to wonder if her babies who died in infancy would be aged to their ideal “thirty,” and if all souls in Catholic heaven operated at exactly the same earth-bond chronological age.


While the interstices of genre criticism are beyond the scope and concern of this article, Tobias Boes provides an excellent elucidation of the complicated tendrils of the genre in his article “Modernist Studies and the Bildungsroman: a historical survey of critical trends,” Literature Compass 3.2 (January 2006): 230-243.

Georg Lukacs outlines the presence of a “historical consciousness” not only in novels of history but as something intrinsic to the form itself, and highlights class struggle as an important factor in the development of its protagonists (The Historical Novel, University of Nebraska Press, 1937).


See Linda Hutcheon’s The Poetics of Postmodernism (1988) and Brian McHale’s Postmodernist Fiction (1987) for explicit analyses of the postmodern novel.

For great analyses of female and ethnic bildungsroman, see Ellen McWilliams, Margaret Atwood and the Female Bildungsroman (Great Britain: Ashgate, 2009), and Martin Japtok, Growing Up Ethnic: Nationalism and the Bildungsroman in African American and Jewish American Fiction (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2005).
I include this as a categorical exemplar because of the astute analysis of our current condition, despite my sense that the term “posthuman” has seen better days.

I use the term novel here interchangeably with bildungsroman as the characteristics of the later have come to signify the former in much vernacular usage.

Obsessions with death exquisitely rendered in Don Delillo’s novel White Noise (1985) portend this kind of mass fear of loss.


Recent articles detailing the gap reversal in culture productions for boys include Ada Calhoun’s “Is tween TV skewed toward girls?” The LA Times,


xli See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s iteration of assemblage machines and desiring machines in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972).


xlvii See Henry Jenkins, "Star Trek Rerun, Reread, Rewritten: Fan Writing as Textual Poaching," in eds. Constance Penley, Elisabeth Lyon, Lynn Spigel and Janet Bergstrom,


lvii FiveAwesomeGirls’ YouTube Channel,


lxii The Hillywood Show YouTube Channel,

lxiii “Twilight Parody by the Hillywood Show,