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Heta Pyrhönen

The *Twilight* Saga as an Adaptation of Shakespeare and Austen

In Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* (2005), the protagonist Bella Swan seeks distraction from her obsession with Edward Cullen. She selects the works of Jane Austen, trying to decide which book to read. Her favourites are *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. She begins reading the latter but stops, because "the hero of the story happened to be Edward. Angrily, I turned to *Mansfield Park*, but the hero of the piece was named Edmund, and that was just too close" (*T* 128). Meyer has divulged in interviews that each book in the series was inspired by a literary classic. The plot of *Twilight* is partly fashioned after *Pride and Prejudice*, but *Sense and Sensibility* plays a large role as well. *New Moon* (2006) loosely follows the events of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The book's epigraph comes from the play: "These violent delights have violent ends/ And in their triumph die, like fire and powder, / Which, as they kiss, consume" (Act II, scene VI).

The author's admission of Shakespeare and Austen as intertexts for the saga invites me to examine it as an *adaptation* of these texts. Adaptations are acknowledged transpositions of recognizable other works, but simultaneously they are their authors' interpretive and creative acts of appropriation. Knowledgeable readers experience an adaptation as a

palimpsest through which their memory of these prior works resonates. Thus, reading adaptations builds on comparing texts with another. While Meyer's audience may not have read Austen and Shakespeare, the popular television and cinema adaptations such as the BBC's *Pride and Prejudice* (1995), Joe Wright's *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), and Baz Luhrman's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) are widely known among contemporary readers of all ages. The predecessors' works, however, do not function as a yardstick for what Meyer ought to have done. Instead, the focus lies on what she has picked from these works and what she has done with the chosen materials.

What unites Shakespeare, Austen and Meyer is an interest in the theme of love. Many adaptations pick on themes as the connecting element between the adapted texts and the adaptation. Linda Hutcheon explains the importance of themes for adaptation by remarking that they either strengthen the adapted plotline or introduce wholly new perspectives to it (Hutcheon 11). In grounding her treatment of this theme in the work of her predecessors, Meyer draws on their status as *cultural authorities* on love. Paula Regis characterizes Austen as "the master of the romance novel" and *Pride and Prejudice* as "the best romance novel ever written" (75), and in Harold Bloom's words, *Romeo and Juliet* is "the largest and most pervasive celebration of romantic love in Western literature" (90). Deborah Kennedy has noted that Meyer's adaptive use of intertexts aims

at reinforcing the sanctity of love (141); however, the author's use of Austen and Shakespeare has not been explored. In this essay, I examine how Meyer adapts her literary predecessors' use of the theme of love and to what ends. Lauren Berlant characterizes love as the most *optimistic* of attachments, because it "moves you out of yourself and into the world in order to bring closer the satisfying something that you cannot generate on your own" (1-2). In her *Cruel Optimism*, Berlant argues that a significant channel for sustaining culturally optimistic scripts is genre. Genres perpetuate and sustain cultural fantasies of the good life that involve, for example, ideals of enduring reciprocity in couples. Genres allow readers to experience the narrative unfolding of a key theme such as love (2,6). Achieving lasting love is the most optimistic cultural fantasy of our time, claims the psychoanalyst Paul Verhaeghe (2). Yet, points out Berlant, this fantasy is fraying fast (3) While romance narratives belong to the cultural core of good-life fantasies, Verhaeghe claims that today people "are desperately seeking a new formula that will tell them how to love" (3). Given the emotional frenzy the *Twilight* saga inflamed, examining its portrayal of love against these intertexts throws light on its treatment of the theme of love.

I examine Stephanie Meyer's use of Shakespeare and Austen as literary authorities on love. I look at what Meyer takes from her predecessors and to what use she puts them in her *Twilight* saga. To

structure my discussion, I analyse these texts in the light of the conventions of the romance novel genre, paying special attention to the grounds for the romantic choice of a partner. This is a process involving stable elements of the generic plot structure. Thus, it is possible to track how choice is consolidated through these stages and turned into commitment. This essay compares how Meyer's notion of love interacts with its role in these prior texts. I analyse the use of generic conventions in order to examine the concept of love on which the saga relies and its relation to the ways in which love is understood in Shakespeare's play and Austen's novels. I rely on Pamela Regis' formulation of the plot elements that shape the treatment of relationships in the romance novel. In tracking the changes Meyer introduces to the romance formula, the analysis leans on discursive motifs identified by Lauren Berlant in contemporary aesthetic discourse. By drawing on the sociologist Eva Illouz's analysis of the changing socio-cultural contexts of love, I show that the saga portrays Shakespeare and Austen as authorities on this theme—but only to depart from them. In so doing, Meyer treats Austen and Shakespeare in the sense Joanne Wilkes identifies in her essay—as authors who express supposedly universal aspects of human life. The result is a thoroughly contemporary view of love. This contemporary understanding of love suggests that the saga's notion of love includes a dark underside that no longer can be characterized as optimistic.

Drawn Together like Magnets

Regis introduces the eight elements of the romance novel by using Austen's books as an example because they have shaped this genre. Relating them to *Pride and Prejudice*, they are comprised of the following scenes: the initial state of the society (the bleak economic prospects of the Bennet sisters without good marriages), the meeting of hero and heroine (Darcy slights Elizabeth on first encountering her), the attraction between them (Darcy's growing enchantment with Elizabeth), the declaration of love (Darcy proposes to Elizabeth, but she rejects him), the barrier(s) to their union (the Bennets' unrefinement and Lydia's elopement), the point of ritual death when the union seems impossible (Elizabeth's belief that Darcy cannot marry her after Lydia's disgrace), the recognition of the means to overcome the barrier (Elizabeth's unyielding behaviour with Darcy's aunt encourages Darcy), and the betrothal (the second successful proposal). These elements are in place in *Romeo and Juliet* as well. The feud between Montagues and Capulets opens the play. The attraction motif is placed up front: Romeo and Juliet fall in love at first sight. A declaration of love soon follows and the couple weds secretly. Then obstacles begin to mount: after killing Juliet's cousin, Romeo is banished. Juliet's father promises her hand to another

man. The point of ritual death is literal, as Juliet drinks a sleep concoction to feign death. Her plan is to escape from home to be with Romeo. However, this plan misfires, and the lovers die. Their sacrifice reconciles the feuding families. These generic scenes may occur in any order; they may be multiplied, repeated, merged and/or condensed (Regis 30-38).

The *Twilight* saga extends this process of securing the love interest over four volumes. The initial state is unsatisfactory for Bella, who has few prospects for moving up. On first meeting Bella, Edward acts as if she repulsed him, and although soon attraction between the two becomes evident, declarations of love lead only to difficulties, thanks to the fact that the lovers are of different ontological standing—one a human, the other a vampire. The point of ritual death is repeated twice, first when Edward forsakes Bella, and when Bella nearly dies in child birth. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy recognizes how to lift the barrier to his marriage with Elizabeth; similarly, in the saga this realization is Edward's: he dares to transform Bella into a vampire. In both texts, the suitor finds the means of introducing the woman into his family. In the saga however, this moment takes place as late as in the fourth volume. Hence readers are made to wait for an unusually long time for the conventional happy ending.

Edward and Bella are associated with the characters of Romeo and Juliet; this comparison is most explicit in *New Moon*. Edward resembles

Romeo in his melancholia, and quick-temperedness. He is certain he will never love anyone, because he is a vampire. He plays up this obstacle melodramatically, for example, by quoting Romeo: “his voice was like honey and velvet. ‘Death, that hath sucked the honey of thy breath, hath had no power yet upon thy beauty,’” he murmured, and I recognized the line spoken by Romeo in the tomb” (*New Moon*, 45).

Bella’s identifies with Juliet. She muses that,” I thought I knew how Juliet would feel. She wouldn’t go back to her old life, not really. She wouldn’t have moved on, I was sure of that [...] every time she closed her eyes, it would have been Romeo’s face she saw behind her lids.” (*New Moon*, 370). Like Juliet, she is ready to sacrifice everything for love. The prologue of the play characterizes the couple’s fate as that of “the fearful passage of their death-mark’d love.” The expression “death-mark’d” introduces an ambiguity at the outset, because it either means that the lovers are marked out for and by death or that death is their objective (Mahood 17). This double meaning raises the question of whether death chooses the lovers or whether they elect to die. Be that as it may, the realization that their love is forbidden inflames their infatuation. The *Twilight* saga replaces the strife between Montagues and Capulets with enmity between vampires and werewolves. The union between a human and a supernatural being such as a vampire or a werewolf threatens the

tenuous peace between these two warring factions. Hence, the couple's love is fed by its forbidden character.

As characters Bella and Edward are intertextually constructed. The *Twilight* saga also draws on *Pride and Prejudice* in fashioning the protagonists. Their first meeting, adapts the scene at the Meryton ball: the relationship begins with Edward acting proudly, and Bella taking offence (*Twilight*, ch.1). In fusing tragic figures with comic ones, Meyer concentrates on shared traits such as steadfastness in love and belief in one's choice. This strategy does not reproduce faithfully the adapted characters but latches on to their iconic nature. As Janine Barchas and Kristine Straub observe, Austen and Shakespeare together with their best-known characters are examples of the cult of celebrity. Adapters draw on this cult in order to ensure that their adaptations target figures familiar to the public. Moreover, the experiences of Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*, and Fanny Price, Maria Bertram and Edmund Bertram in *Mansfield Park* emerge as further points of comparison. All these Austen characters fall passionately in love, knowing that their choice throws them into an ethical quandary. Their love is risky because it is socially unacceptable – either the couple lacks the means to marry yet continues to court, their differing stations forestall the match, or their worldviews are too wide apart. In each case, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, the risk enhances

the attraction. Edmund Bertram, for example, is appalled by Mary Crawford's blasphemous opinions, but they add to her appeal.

As in Shakespeare and Austen, three of Regis's elements, the initial state of society, the meeting and the attraction, introduce the theme of love in *Twilight*. At the start, both the community and characters desire change. Bella's lacks emotional support from her parents, while Edward's vampire nature makes him believe that he is outside love's reach. Also, there is tension in the community, because the ancient violent conflict between vampires and the local Quileute tribe who metamorphose into werewolves threatens to break out again. In this context, the meeting between Bella and Edward is an intense experience:

[Edward's] fingers were ice-cold ... When he touched me, it stung my hand as if an electric current had passed through us. (*T* 38)

I was consumed by the mystery Edward presented. And more than a little obsessed by Edward himself. (*T* 57)

There is attraction between Bella and Edward, which resonates with the infatuation of Romeo and Juliet. As Romeo describes it, "Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight, For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night" (I:4). Juliet reciprocates Romeo's reaction. In Austen's novels, a

similar moment of enchantment takes place when Marianne first meets Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility*. Edward and Bella find the other everything they have dreamed of. The experience is rounded and total, for it evokes all the senses. Inger Brody analyses the love relationship in Shakespeare and Austen in terms of charm and enchantment. These terms capture the fickle nature of emotions in the works she analyses. By enhancing charm, the authors evoke a sense of comedy. Meyer, however, portrays the experience of falling in love in the more ominous terms of fascination. Fascination paints the love object as special, gifted with supernatural, superhuman, or at least exceptional qualities (Baumbach 58). The experience of admiring a charismatic person, such as Edward, changes the admirer, who “feels magically transformed and elevated, [her] imagination aroused” (Baumbach 58). What sets Meyer’s adaptation apart from her predecessors is that these qualities on which fascination depends are *literal*. Bella’s infatuation with Edward arouses her imagination, opening up a supernatural world. Bella’s belief in the superiority of vampirism over humanity suggests that fascination in the saga takes place in context of what Berlant calls the *situation* (5). A situation is a context in which one is aware that cultural practices and relations are changing, but genres do not yet have conventions for presenting and characterizing this change. In Meyer’s saga, the situation

implies that a love story with an ordinary human partner cannot provide an experience of everlasting love.

Anxiety colours this situation and the emotions it evokes, for fascination is a borderline experience that combines the opposing forces of deep attraction and intense repulsion. Baumbach remarks that the repulsive side of fascination flows from its hidden, subversive and devious nature (Baumbach, 3-4). In Bella's case, the repulsive underside of fascination stems from Edward's proximity to death: in becoming a vampire he has crossed the threshold from human to superhuman being. The real possibility of being killed by Edward draws her to him. During the course of events Bella comes close to death, but her infatuation with Edward remains unshaken. Her fascination with the forbidden, parallels Juliet's infatuation with Romeo. Juliet knows from the beginning that she risks her life in loving the enemy's son. It is this element of danger that accounts for the intensive emotional engagement of both heroines. It freezes the senses and suspends rational decision-making. Because fascination promises experiences that are larger than life, the risks appear worth taking.

Enchanted Love

How do the Shakespearean and Austenian intertexts affect the concept of love in the *Twilight* saga? For Bella, love does not involve choice:

“Love didn’t work that way, I decided. Once you cared about a person, it was impossible to be logical about them anymore” (NM 304). At another point, she muses that “love is irrational ... The more you loved someone, the less sense anything made” (NM 340). She holds that her faith in love justifies the necessity of being transformed into a vampire: “if he’d asked whether I would risk my soul for Edward, her reply would be obvious” (Ne M, 379). Portraying falling in love as overwhelming and irrational fascination subscribes to an age-old model of so-called *enchanted love*, that, according to Illouz, consists of the following features: enchanted love is experienced as a unique event, which erupts unexpectedly in one’s life; it is inexplicable and irrational; and it operates as a deep commotion of the soul. This type of love is felt to be fateful in the sense that you cannot choose it: it chooses you even against your will (159-60; 195).

Judging by these features, enchanted love seems to be grounded in fascination. Although fascination and enchanted love are not synonymous, they share the intense emotional experience engulfing the subject. Both fascination and enchanted love stress the uniqueness of the love object. The ravishing quality of the emotions this object provokes explains the readiness to sacrifice oneself for the loved one. Yet while in enchanted love dangers may be only hypothetical or imaginary, in fascination they are always real.

Romeo and Juliet intertwines fascination with enchanted love by emphasizing sacrifice. For example, Juliet's use of the image of stars—"and when I shall die, take him and cut him out in little stars" (R&J, 70). as symbols of the eternal quality of love refers to a concealed awareness of the impending tragic fate (Gibbons 59). In Austen's novels, fascination and enchantment threaten especially women with the loss of reputation and, consequently, of being banished from their social circles. Lydia's example in *Pride and Prejudice* and the story of the two Elizas who followed their passion in *Sense and Sensibility* serve as warnings of acting on one's passion –it places these women outside their social station. The *Twilight* saga, however, departs from its intertexts in that the deadly menace of fascination contains the possibility of entering into a new ontological realm and remaining "alive" as a vampire. Whereas in Shakespeare and Austen the danger of fascination involves only loss, in the *Twilight* saga it promises a new beginning. Thus, its character is different: while the perils of fascination are real, its consequences are painted as beneficial—for the heroine.

In the romance genre, fascination leads to another one of Regis's typical elements of romance: the declaration of love (34). Given that *Romeo and Juliet* and the *Twilight* saga rely on "the love at first sight" model, the declaration takes place early on, while Austen tends to place it closer to the end, which reflects the fact that it takes longer for her

heroines to assess their suitors. No matter where it is placed, the love declaration, involves choice. Illouz explains that romantic choice is shaped by cultural practices and constraints. These conscious and unconscious parameters steer a subject's evaluation of the love object. They organize the ways in which these subjects consult their emotions, knowledge and reasoning to reach a decision. These practices and constraints are thus grounded in the socio-cultural environment that systematizes even the most intimate choices subjects make. In this view, while making romantic choices, subjects are largely guided by their contexts (Illouz 20-21).

Although the *Twilight* saga employs the work of Shakespeare and Austen to underline the fixity of romantic love, the contexts of romantic choice have changed significantly from the predecessors' days. This change emerges clearly when we consider the socio-cultural environment that steers a subject to make choices in a certain direction. In entering a clandestine marriage with Romeo, Juliet breaks against her society's parameters of choice. Capulet as Juliet's father enjoys the right to choose on her behalf, for marriage was the means of consolidating and perpetuating wealth and status. These constraints become evident when Capulet is ready to denounce Juliet for her unwillingness to accept Paris, who is the father's choice for her. In Austen too, social status and economic standing regulate the subject's range of choice. The Bennet's

reduced means and lack of finesse threaten Elizabeth's chances with Darcy. Similarly, Marianne and Willoughby are infatuated with one another, but lack of money on both sides means inability to sustain their social standing. Economic realities speak against their union, not to mention Willoughby's weak character. In both intertexts, the characters' possibilities for choosing their spouse on the basis of their emotions are much more restricted than what they are today. In Austen's novels, the heroines' choices conform to pre-existing moral codes and social rules as well as to their awareness of commitment to others (Illouz 26, 29).

As today socio-economic factors no longer play a dominant role, the *Twilight* saga focuses on the significance of choice as an expression of the heroine's *distinctive individuality*. Today, the personal, physical, emotional, and sexual attributes of subjects are held to define their uniqueness. Further, they are thought to be able to choose their mates in an unconstrained way. Therefore, choice for Bella signifies the exercise of freedom, rationality, and autonomy to a far greater degree than it did for her predecessors: it is both an intrinsic right and a form of competence, an expression of her individuality and taste (Illouz 51-53). Consequently, although the *Twilight* saga appears to be grounded in the same combination of fascination and enchanted love as its predecessors, it portrays their combination in a wholly different way.

Obstacles in Love's Way

Because fascination is an experience of being in-between categories, it presents a challenge to the act of choosing. This has significance for the romance novel, as it forms part of the generic element of the barrier. The *Twilight* saga grounds this difficulty in the ontological difference between the lovers. This difference requires that Bella and Edward negotiate between such categories as mortal/ immortal, and salvation/ damnation. Fascination involves dangers: Bella's blood sings to Edward, beckoning him to bite her. Also, he holds that vampirism means the loss of one's soul. For these reasons Edward forsakes Bella in *New Moon*. Obviously, terminating the relationship presents an insurmountable barrier, one that leads to the element of ritual death. Regis characterizes the latter as the moment when it seems that there is no way to lift the obstacles and, hence, the union of the couple appears impossible (35). In constructing these two elements, the *Twilight* saga leans on its intertexts, but handles them differently. It is at such "points of infidelity" that an adapter's creative acts take place (Sanders 20). These points are also places where differences between the texts emerge. I already mentioned that in dealing with the tenuous peace between the warring factions of vampires and werewolves, Meyer relies on the plot motif of the situation. Looking at her use of motif of the barrier, we notice that she exaggerates it to the point that it turns into what Berlant calls the motif of the *impasse*. An

impasse is a situation of intimacy that holds the promise of real reciprocity, yet does not provide a script of how actually to achieve it (4.193) Indeed, there is no script for uniting a human with a vampire.

Sense and Sensibility puts up a similar barrier as the *Twilight* saga, when Willoughby declares his intention of marrying Miss Grey. Marianne sinks into deep depression. Marianne's grief (*S&S* 129) is transposed into Bella's exhaustion after Edward leaves her. Bella slides into a catatonic state, as is evidenced by the four "chapters" running from October to January with no text whatsoever.¹ As for Juliet, after having drunk a concoction of drugs, her lifeless state resembles death even more closely than Bella's and Marianne's. Its purpose, however, is to lift the barrier, and enable her reunion with Romeo. Of the three heroines, only Juliet can view the barrier as a temporary obstacle and place her trust in Romeo's love in spite of the circumstances.

These difficulties are revealing of the socio-cultural room for manoeuvre of choice. They become visible whenever the heroine has more than one suitor to select from. Indeed, a staple of the romance genre are foils of hero and heroine, who act as an additional barrier to the romantic union. The heroine of a romance novel struggles to distinguish the "right" one among her suitors. Whenever her emotional response is

¹ This section is located between the pages 84 and 93. It neither has page numbers nor is mentioned in the Contents of *New Moon*. It only records the names of the months. This section emphasizes Bella's "ritual death" as a psychic obliteration that is similar to Marianne's suffering.

based on fascination, choice becomes complicated, for fascination's element of danger suggests that the heroine may be fatally mistaken about the character of the love object. The texts under scrutiny raise this question as part of the barrier element, but each treats it differently. Austen's novels invariably involve this stage, as, for example, Elizabeth has to distinguish the worth of Mr Darcy and Mr Wickham and Marianne must consider the merits of Brandon and Willoughby. So, it is in the *Twilight* saga, too, for besides the vampire Edward also the werewolf Jacob woos Bella. While the earlier heroines pay attention to the suitor's character, social and financial status in making choices, Bella's dilemma concerns ontological status and its potential dangers.

In drawing on Shakespeare's play, Meyer uses it to combine the barrier and ritual death elements together. In fact, this combination lies behind her turning of the motif of the barrier into one of impasse. After Edward abandons her, decisive in Bella's revival is the werewolf Jacob whom Bella associates with Paris. Unlike Edward, Jacob is of sunny disposition, and easy-going. Jacob kindles Bella's feelings, making her ponder whether he actually is the right choice:

[Paris] was just a stick figure—a placeholder, a threat, a deadline to force [Juliet's] hand...What if Paris had been Juliet's friend? ... What if he really loved her, and wanted her to be happy?

And ... what if she loved Paris? (NM 370-71)

In expanding the figure of Paris as Jacob, Meyer seizes on what narrative theory calls the *disnarrated*, that is, elements in a narrative that refer to what does not take place, but could have (Prince 118); here the disnarrated points to unexploited lines of plot development, thanks to tragedy's generic and thematic restraints. It is typical of adaptations to expand the adapted text by focusing on the disnarrated. In this instance, the heroine's ritual death adds to the barrier, for Jacob makes Bella hesitate about her choice of mate. Character foils of romance do not always provide genuine triangular relationships, because the rival is often a weaker alternative (Radway 122-23). The Paris figure in the *Twilight* saga is a real option, as the division of its audience into "Team Edward" and "Team Jacob" as the "right" decision for Bella illustrates. Bella learns to love Jacob, and in *Eclipse* she begs him to kiss her even after she has committed herself to Edward (*E* 525). Moreover, Jacob also evokes fascination, for in his werewolf form, he is gorgeous, but impulsive.

In the romance novel, the obliteration of the barrier is coupled with the generic element of recognition of new information that makes the desired union possible. This can range from changed external circumstances to personal growth and maturation (Regis 36). The difference between the *Twilight* saga and Austen's novels is the most noticeable: in Austen love

based on fascination is rejected. In *Sense and Sensibility* emotions based on fascination are shown to have no constancy, and preference is given to feelings steered by reason and discernment. The dangerous side of Willoughby dominates his character, making him an unsuitable husband. Thus, Marianne never reaches the recognition stage with him, but must look elsewhere for love.² Austen stresses that love is also a matter of rationality, which Marianne finds in Colonel Brandon, whom she first perceived as the “wrong” suitor. Austen’s marriages rely on the cultural expectation that spouses feel and display the emotions attendant to their roles (Illouz 38). Her heroines conform to this expectation.

Meyer’s insistence on fascination as the necessary basis of love becomes apparent in the weighty role *Romeo and Juliet* plays in staging the recognition in the saga. The adaptation tactic again seizes on the disnarrated when Meyer transposes Juliet’s fake death, Romeo’s despair and suicide, and Juliet’s ensuing suicide to address Bella and Edward. In *New Moon* the forsaken Bella hears Edward’s voice whenever she is in danger. In order to make him speak to her, she jumps off a cliff, only to be saved by Jacob. Finding out about Bella’s suicidal jump, Edward goes to the Volturi, a group presiding over vampires, to beg them to kill him. Bella, however, manages to save Edward’s life. The generic context of

² The recognition element between Marianne and Willoughby is present only in a modified form. When Marianne is seriously ill, Willoughby visits Elinor, confessing to her his deceitful conduct. Willoughby confirms that he loved Marianne dearly. Hence, he confirms Marianne’s conviction of shared love, but it does not lead to the union she desires.

the romance novel enables Meyer to turn a tragic arc of events into a benevolent one. This brush with death leads to the recognition element that Bella defines as “an epiphany” (526):

Edward loved me.. The bond forged between us was not one that could be broken by absence, distance, or time. ...

“You love me,” I marvelled. The sense of conviction and rightness washed through me again. (*NM* 527)

Bella’s epiphany lifts the internal obstacles, flowing from her sense of inferiority. Fascination and enchanted love is greater than an individual, enabling her to rise above her supposed personal shortcomings. In the *Twilight* saga, the goal of love is elevation and transcendence. Yet in spite of this newfound conviction, the impasse between the couple is not cleared. If anything, it has gained momentum, for they face dangers from other vampires and the werewolves. Like Juliet’s father, Bella’s father opposes their union. Most significantly, the impasse persists, thanks to the couple’s bickering and quarrels. These remaining barrier elements anchor the saga in contemporary contexts of romantic choice, a factor that separates it from its predecessors’ understanding of love. This difference emerges more clearly when we look at the way the romantic couple is finally brought together.

Negotiating Love and Making Compromises

Betrothal, the last scene Regis identifies, does not guarantee the obliteration of obstacles—nor does marriage. The clandestine marriage in *Romeo and Juliet* creates further difficulties. Juliet cannot marry Paris, as she already is married. If her status became known, her father would denounce and banish her. The lovers' plan to navigate the difficulties ultimately leads to their deaths. Similarly, in Austen's novels private engagements create turmoil, leading, for example, to disinheritance as in *Sense and Sensibility* when Edward's liaison with Lucy becomes known. Bella's epiphany about mutual commitment takes place early in the saga, in its second volume, but she marries Edward as late as in the fourth one. The relationship continues to be plagued by discord and insecurity. These disagreements suggest that things have not reached a generically satisfactory point, as readers criticize books that report too closely problems familiar from daily life (Radway 162). Radway reports that readers strongly dislike romances that dwell too much on the "myriad of difficulties that must be overcome" (163). The following example provides a typical illustration of these moments of disharmony between Edward and Bella:

"Bella," [Edward] whispered. "Do you have *any* idea how close I came to crossing the line today

He ground his teeth together. His hands were balled up in fists at his sides. He was still standing against the wall, and I hated the space between us. (E 140-41)

The couple's quarrels address the vampires' strife with the werewolves, the presence of Jacob in Bella's life, and the ontological difference between them. These incidents address the challenge of reconciling two independent emotional selves who must recreate the emotional conditions and reasons for coming together in the first place (Illouz 39). Bella needs continual reassurance that a dazzling person such as Edward wants to be with her; similarly, Edward craves to hear that Bella thinks him good in spite of his vampire nature. Their arguments also concern the reciprocity and symmetry of the relationship, not only because there is considerable difference between the couple in economic and social status but also in ontological status. Bella believes that only her transformation ensures equality and emotional equity. Until then Edward has the upper hand. The negotiations, and compromises turn love into an object of endless investigation and self-scrutiny. Such self-reflection leads to on-going discussions concerning desires, needs and goals. Meyer's adaptation introduces yet again a new motif to the arsenal of set motifs of the romance genre: Bella's and Edward's ongoing

bickering falls under Berlant's motif of the *conversation*. This motif handles moments during which characters desperately search for means of adjustment and scramble for modes of living on (57). This motif provides them with the means of working through the impasse.

To be sure, also Shakespeare's and Austen's characters engage in conversations and repartees in order to determine the suitor's character and to demonstrate one's own, yet these exchanges do not provide the basis on which the love relationship is built. Bella interprets Edward's refusal to transform her as his unwillingness to commit fully to the relationship. In order to make him change his mind, she draws him into endless conversations. The *Twilight* saga emphasizes the motif of the conversation as the key determining factor: fitting of the desires and goals of two separate individuals takes place through conversation. Conversations provide the means for achieving reciprocity and symmetry, and engaging in self-reflection. Conversation supplies the venue for negotiating how to meet each subject's need and to establish equality. The negotiations and compromises exhibit the expectation that intimacy includes verbal disclosures of emotions and sharing these emotions with a partner. Such disclosures lay bare the lovers' emotional selves so that they get support and recognition, while they retain their individuality and freedom (Illouz 38).

Given that the trajectory of the romance novel centres on the difficulties of choice, deciding whom to love puts a character's assets to the test. Even Juliet, responsible for exalted declarations of romantic love, wavers when she hears of Romeo's killing of Tybalt, but then rallies. In adapting her predecessors, Meyer introduces a wholly new binary of human: inhuman as the means of supporting the habitual optimism of the romance formula.

Enchanted Love without Fascination

The newly-wed Bella is impregnated with a half-human, half-vampire child. Paradoxically, this proof of her commitment supplies a new impasse. Edward wants her to abort the foetus, because it threatens her life. Bella is ready to die for the child and to be metamorphosed in spite of the risks. When Bella's heart stops beating, Edward bites her all over her body:

But I could hear the lush tearing of her skin as his teeth bit through, again and again, forcing venom into her system at as many points as possible. I saw his pale tongue sweep along the bleeding gashes. (*BD* 326)

Edward fully commits himself to Bella by metamorphosing her when she is no more than a mangled corpse. Although such gruesomeness seems unusual in a romance novel, the scene is not that far removed from the vault scene in *Romeo and Juliet*, which contains two suicides and the bloody corpses of Mercutio, Tybald and Paris. The difference between the adapted texts and the saga lies in the function they assign to fascination as it relates to enchanted love. Again, comparison reveals telling differences among the texts.

The odds are too great against Romeo and Juliet for their love to triumph. Everything conspires against them: their families, the state, and cruel time (Bloom 102). Consequently, death remains the only venue to pursue the exceptionality of their love. Their tragic love-death conveys the danger and mystery of their experience (Gibbons 66). Their love retains the two-way pull of fascination, its mixture of allure and dread, until the end. Fascination actually finds its fulfilment in the moment of death. The experience of fascination is lodged in their bodies, uniting sexual passion with the pain of the dying body. Romeo and Juliet undergo a metamorphosis “out of Nature, into the artifice of eternity” (Gibbons 74). The commemorative statues the reconciled families erect reflect the transformation of fascination into an image of love and beauty. Such conversions provide readers with the shelter of safe spectatorship, enabling them to immerse themselves in the allure of fascination and to

stay insulated from its dangers (Baumbach 61). Whenever we contemplate these lovers, we acknowledge the fascination subtending enchanted love that gave them the courage to meet their fate.

To be sure, fascination plays a minor role in Austen. Even so, there is a connection between fascination, enchanted love, and death that reverberates at the close of especially *Sense and Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park*. Although Marianne recovers from Willoughby's desertion, she never again gains similar love. Likewise, for Edmund Bertram the spell cast by Mary Crawford is never repeated. When Marianne marries Brandon and Edmund takes Fanny as wife, they achieve contented love. These marriages are morally commendable and socially acceptable, and the spouses take up their married roles with ease. As such they stand in stark contrast to the taboo, carnal relationship of the *Twilight* lovers. They conform to the expectation that "a good marriage consists[s] in the capacity to play one's role successfully, namely to feel and display the emotions attendant to the role" (Illouz 38). Yet the conclusions include an awareness of a missed opportunity, of awakened passions and expressions of deepest feelings forever lost.

When Bella wakes up a vampire after the painful transformation process, she is completely new:

After eighteen years of mediocrity, I was pretty used to being average.

... I was amazing now ...It was like I had been born to be a vampire.

... I had found my true place in the world, the place I fit, the place I shined. (*BD* 484-5).

Bella's talk about "shining" refers to her acquisition of a personality, looks, and sexiness with which to impress others. She understands her place differently from her Shakespearean and Austenian predecessors. These heroines comprehend that they want to fill their place as the wives of suitable spouses. In contrast, Bella's place is dependent on who she is as an *individual*. She revels in her new gorgeous body that is made for evoking desire as well as giving and receiving pleasure. Significantly, once the lovers are ontologically same, all tensions vanish in the saga, they need neither to negotiate anything nor make compromises. Instead, from the moment of Bella's metamorphosis, the couple is united into one. With the shared ontological status of the lovers, the enticing danger of fascination vanishes, and is replaced by soft-pornographic allusions to continual great sex. Consequently, *the end vaporizes fascination*. The *Twilight* saga unties the knot between danger and death; it thus empties out its emotional force.

In focusing on fascination and enchanted love in adapting Shakespeare and Austen, Meyer pays homage to revered works that deal memorably with love. Such a strategy provides a means of benefiting from the

predecessor's cultural cachet. It speaks of the adapter's desire to gain respectability and be upwardly mobile (Hutcheon 91). Yet Meyer's appropriations of the romance formula as conceived on the basis of updating Shakespeare and Austen, marks a departure from this formula's notion of love. Shakespeare and Austen place the romantic couples in the communal context. The parents of the dead lovers vow to mend their ways, whereas Austen always places the happy couple in context of other couples. In *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, the union of Elizabeth and Darcy is contrasted with the unhappy marriages of Charlotte Lucas and Mr. Lucas, as well as Elizabeth's parents. Meyer, however, marries Bella off to a superhuman being. Her new family cannot take a role in the human community. The saga rejects the human dimension of intimate relationships: only a vampire male and his vampire clan can offer Bella the secure love she craves for.

Meyer's adaptation rejects the human dimension; simultaneously it, turns the barrier motif of conventional romance into a series of impasses requiring complex negotiations. The conventional happy ending is reached through torturous discussions. Therefore, one may question the saga's power to provide readers with what Berlant calls "a cluster of promises" that sustains hope in enduring intimate relationships.

As my examination shows, there are more differences than similarities in Meyer's treatment of shared themes. By adapting Shakespeare and

Austen as authorities on love, the saga expresses a longing for love and sexuality that does not produce anxiety, negotiation, and uncertainty. It promotes the notion that readers should tenaciously believe in love in order to achieve it in their lives. In so doing, it insists that love still is a worthy cause.

In its reliance on fascination and enchanted love, the *Twilight* saga employs a *double emotional structure*. On the one hand, fascination allows characters and readers to express longing for enchanted love that is based on self-sacrifice, fusion and affirmation of absolutes. Enchanted love is appealing, because it promises transcendence of the mundane human condition. Its appeal is tinged with nostalgia, for, as Illouz remarks, we no longer can sustain belief in this type of love; neither can we feel the emotions appropriate to it. Instead, a deep-seated disappointment in love has gained ground. Yet we still yearn for the capacity to believe, because disenchantment has meant that the mystery of love has become disparaged and meaningless (158). As we have seen, fascination based on the dangers of dating a vampire unleashes just those anxieties that are familiar from contemporary life. Today, the criteria for mate selection are diverse and they have become integrated into the private dynamics of individual taste. Like us, Bella can only rely on herself in choosing a partner, and this choice results from a complex process of emotional and cognitive evaluation (Illouz 50, 54).

Consequently, adaptation plays a key role in the *Twilight* saga so that readers experience contradictory emotional valences: longing for and belief in an out-dated mode of love together with contemporary insecurities and anxieties about the challenges of romantic choice. Therefore, the saga's adaptation of Shakespeare and Austen may be said to place readers in a relation of *cruel optimism* – a situation in which the ideal no longer works and actually turns into an insurmountable obstacle (see Berlant 5-6).

The *Twilight* saga's treatment of its Shakespearean and Austenian intertexts confirms Sanders's observation that the cultural value of canonical authors lies in their availability. Moreover, updating these two authors within the same fictional work has an amalgamating effect whereby their literary contexts and histories are obliterated. When I relate my analysis to Inger Brody's discussion in this volume, a key difference becomes apparent. She shows that both Shakespeare and Austen couch their portrayals of love in a self-reflexive meditation on literature's role in shaping our understanding of the theme of love. Hence, readers are made aware of the means with which literature may charm us. This self-reflexive characteristic is absent from the *Twilight* saga. Consequently, in Meyer's hands, Shakespeare and Austen appear to belong to a vast reservoir of literary motifs, themes and plotlines from which any writer

may pick and choose. Thus, Shakespeare and Austen live strongly on in popular culture, their status reinforced by multiple adaptations.

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