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**Sadomasochism and compliance in the Twilight Saga:  
Female submission and the romance of being loved to death**

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## **Introduction**

*The Twilight Saga* is a story about a mentally disturbed, masochistic young girl with father issues and her much older lover. In the world of *Twilight*, sex for anything except the sole purpose of procreation is a twisted, morbid, and even dangerous thing; it is every man's right, no, his obligation, to control and suppress his female companion's sexuality, while she keeps his house. Luckily, for the (un)happy couple of the novels, the Saga reveals in its final chapters that marriage and the starting of a family is the solution to all problems, whether those are related, or not.

While my opening paragraph may seem to be ridiculously exaggerated, this is the actual plotline of the *Twilight Saga*; yet it is unclear whether young women reading the novels notice the values brought to life in the last novel. I am living proof of it, since I, myself, when I was younger read the novels at least three or four times without thinking about the values Meyer was reinforcing in my subconscious. The question then becomes how she was able to so blatantly not only support, but also encourage, such old-fashioned ideas in such a way that even a feminist like myself failed to question it. Perhaps it is the proportions of the issues: uncontrollable toddlers turn into murderous immortals; sexual contacts turn into deadly beatings during the act itself and the choice between childhood and adult life turns, literally, into the choice between happy, sunny days and cold nights without any sunshine. I would argue Meyer is exploiting her reader's coming-of-age-related fears to be able to offer her values as a solution to all problems.

Although Meyer also writes her story in a way that makes the actual problem not only the reason a solution is needed, but a condition of it; without Bella's masochistic character she would never allow herself to act so submissively in a relationship, which would implode the whole nature of Bella's and Edward's partnership and render it impossible. Without Bella's figurative Freudian death wish, how can her literal longing for (un)death be explained? If she were not so dependent on her companion, how could she bow down to his every wish? These two features are exactly what make a marriage between the (un)dead couple an option. The inequality and struggle in the relationship, up until the point of marriage, also emphasizes the value and importance of marriage, and depicts matrimony as a healer of relationships. This type of build-up of the target reader's fears, only to allow Meyer to offer her values as the only valid solution, applies to most aspects of the Saga. When it comes

to maternity, the inequality and female submission in relationships is replaced by the fear revolving around every phase of early motherhood, from the dangerous pregnancy, to the seemingly never-ending hardships of toddlerhood and eventually the rapid rate at which your children grow up.

## **1. Theory**

### **1.1 Psychoanalytic Sadomasochism**

According to Freud, “the sexuality of most male human beings contains an element of aggressiveness – a desire to subjugate . . .”(quoted in Grimwade 157), which results in the need to conquer, exercise control over, as well as power upon, the object of one’s sexual desire. Freud also states that this is the outward manifestation of the death drive (the drive of the living towards destruction and death), termed sadism, whereas masochism would be the corresponding inward manifestation: a pursuit of acknowledgment of the (weak) self by someone strong or powerful enough. One theory on masochism could be that the masochistic nature of women is derived from a need to rationalize and justify the subordination of women in a patriarchal society. However, if one takes into account that both genders may be masochistic, Schopenhauer’s explanation of it is the enjoyment of satisfying the will of another: “the [compassionate] prey’s identification with the powerful will of the predator” (quoted in Grimwade 163). The analogy of the prey and the predator is one often used in the Saga, explaining Bella’s relationships with men, primarily Edward.

### **1.2 Post-feminism**

What I have found upon reading multiple sources is that post-feminism is an ill-defined term used inconsistently.

Consistent in the interpretations I have come upon is the explanation of post-feminism as a “anti-feminist backlash” (Genz 333) against second wave-feminism, which has become redundant as there is equality between the sexes in contemporary society. It has been positioned as a reclaiming of traditional gender roles as well as a celebration of consumer culture. Genz emphasizes the importance of traditional family values (335) and McRobbie mentions embracing consumerism and “an individualism within the family” (qtd. in Genz 347). Post-feminists claim to be liberated, yet they are searching for a man to enable them to enjoy their liberation, and

mention “the fear of [not finding] a father to children as well as a husband” (McRobbie 261). Diane Negra implies the importance of appearance goes further than the celebration of consumerism, luxurious living and the traditional nuclear family and suggests women’s “key to the reclamation of self” is tied to “symbolic forms of time mastery [. . . ] particularly management of the ageing process” (qtd. in Taylor 40).

### **1.3 Abusive relationships**

In relationships where there are disparities in regard to decision-making, Felson and Messner (quoted in Collins and Carmody 383) found that violence is more likely to occur. Adleman and Kil further noted that isolation from other social relationships could lead to controlling behaviours such as objectification of your partner and possessiveness in relationships, (quoted in Collins & Carmody 383). Collins and Carmody then themselves establish three subcategories of controlling behaviour they find applicable when examining the *Twilight* series:

(a) physical control, which included physically detaining, restraining or preventing a character from moving in order to obtain compliance; (b) verbal orders, such as demanding that someone do something; and (c) emotional control, which involved one character controlling the dissemination of information to another character, reacting with anger to threaten another character into compliance, or making threats to harm a loved one or himself if the character did not comply with his wishes. In addition, stalking behaviours, such as following and constantly monitoring a partner’s location... (385)

Other unhealthy relationship behaviours mentioned are talking, self-harm and suicide.

## **2. The Importance of Family and Gender Roles**

One of the bigger themes in the *Twilight Saga* is that of the nuclear family, in line with the neo-conservative family values of the post-feminists, as well as the traditional roles women and men are expected to take within that family. The terms of these roles are made obvious by Bella’s phrasing when Renee goes parachuting: “I felt a little frustrated with Phil, her husband of almost two years, for allowing that” (*Eclipse* 44), as if her mother needed her husband’s permission to do as she pleases.

When these gender roles are taken to the extreme, like in the case of Bella and Edward, the emotional state of the relationship may resemble that of an abusive one.

## **2.1 The Right Kind of Family**

As the first novel begins Bella is separated from her primary caretaker and moves in with her father. Even if Renee offers to give up her newest adventure to continue to raise her daughter, Bella ultimately recognizes “the sacrifice . . . behind the promise” (*Twilight* 4), which is evidence of Renee’s unwillingness to take on the traditional role of motherhood Meyer so highly praises. Bella, on the other hand, immediately accepts the domestic chores at her father’s house, which shows her eagerness to “[step] into the role that her mother rejected” (Silver 124). Furthermore, while Renee is depicted as childlike and erratic, Bella strongly separates her own personality from her mother’s, “I was a very different person from my mother. Someone thoughtful and cautious. The responsible one, the grownup” (*Eclipse* 450). Both this separation of personality and willingness to take on traditional gender-roles, one could argue, is the first indicator of the maturity and strength Meyer will attach to motherhood and the conventional family values glorified by the post-feminists.

Silver claims that “Bella’s desire for eternal life as a vampire with Edward Cullen is closely connected to her longing for a stable family, which she has been denied” (122). The fact that the Cullens currently live as one family when Bella meets them, although they occasionally live as more distant relatives, supports this. Carlisle, a name perhaps symbolically close to that of Bella’s father, Charlie, is not only portrayed as the perfect caring father, but is almost godlike in this role, as he essentially chose and created (sired) his own children. Likewise, Esme is portrayed as the perfect, caring mother and the rest of the family as squabbling siblings. Essentially, Meyer is disregarding of the unnatural aspects of the family and they are portrayed as the ideal traditional nuclear family celebrated by post-feminism, in contrast to Bella’s own broken home. Appropriately, Bella is depicted as, in terms of personality, a more suitable member of the Cullen family than her own: I have already mentioned her difference from her mother; her father is a simple man, interested in football and fishing while the Cullen family, like Bella, is interested in literature, classical music and domesticity.

Bella’s choice to join the Cullen family is further celebrated by the second wave feminism backlash, as it values consumer capitalism, and the luxury consumption the

Cullen family lives by, with their luxurious home and multiple expensive sports cars. The way Bella moves up in class when becoming a part of her new family is valued, as well as the eternal youth she will be able to enjoy. One might even take it so far as to claim that a post-feminist would agree with Meyer's idea that this move would help Bella in finding herself, considering Negra's statement that, "post-feminism suggests that symbolic forms of time mastery (particularly management of the ageing process) will provide the key to the reclamation of self". She continues to say that it is "common in a post-feminist [to] act on a sense of temporal urgency" (quoted in Taylor 40). The phrasing of this immediately draws attention to Bella's urgency to become a vampire as she every day grows older than Edward.

## **2.2 Gender and Gender Roles**

Throughout the first three novels, before Bella becomes a mother, in addition to her own eagerness to enforce typical gender roles by keeping house for her father, she is depicted as weak and dependent on men, both physically and emotionally. The difference in power between men and women is emphasized by all the men in her life being supernatural, incomparably strong, beings: the stone hard vampire and the ultra-strong werewolf. The physical hardness of the males' bodies, Edward being compared to marble and Jacob's jaw breaking Bella's hand as she hits him, could be seen as symbolically representing the mental strength and hardness of males in general. While the female vampires in the novels also possess this hard, physical body Meyer never focuses on this while describing them; furthermore, they are never the ones using physical powers in battles, but fight by either mental abilities, such as Alice's ability to see her opponents moves and simply avoid him, or Victoria's use of manipulation to get others to fight for her.

The dynamic in the relationships Bella have with men is one of "perpetual rescuer and rescued" (Silver 125) and Bella even refers to Edward as her "perpetual saviour" (*Twilight* 79). It could be argued that Edward's ability to read minds presents him as mentally superior as well, though Bella's personal protection from this particular ability of his may be used as a counter argument; this does not, however, hinder him from taking part of her conversations and actions with others through their minds, while his mind is completely shut off from hers. The men of the novels repeatedly enforce traditional gender roles by opening doors, pulling out chairs, lending Bella jackets to ensure her warmth and even carrying her when she is tired. In the ideal

family of the Cullens, the man of the house is the only one with a profession, which further strengthens these ideas. Sometimes Meyer allows for as obvious referrals to the difference between genders as Bella's statement while listening to men talking about mechanics: "Many of the words they used were unfamiliar to me, and I figured I'd have to have a Y chromosome to really understand . . ." (*New Moon* 139 ). While this may seem to be an innocent statement, the values regarding men and women lying underneath are easily detectable if one examines it: we have our place in society based on our biological gender.

Moreover, up until the final novel, the difference between Bella and Edward is not only shown by illustrating their physical differences in regard to power but also grace and beauty. Her clumsiness and his elegance as well as her "obvious ordinariness" (*Twilight* 79) and his beauty are often pointed out, and even compared: "I wasn't interesting. And he was. Interesting... and brilliant... and mysterious... and perfect... and beautiful" (*Twilight* 79). Later on, while Bella examines a picture of her and Edward together she contemplates "The contrast between the two of us was painful . . . I flipped the picture over with a feeling of disgust." (*New Moon* 65). This, one could argue, is to emphasize the inequality not only between the human and the vampire, nullified when she is changed, but also between the woman and the man, nullified in marriage and motherhood. According to Jessica Benjamin "masochism is a search for recognition of the self by an other" (quoted in Taylor 33) and Bella's conviction that she does not deserve Edward in any way grants Edward the power to bestow that recognition.

### **2.3 The Masochist and the Sadist**

The masochistic characteristics of our "heroine" are plentiful in this teenage love-story: Bella's compulsive repetition of how undeserving she is of Edward; the fact that she takes pleasure in his anger, "I felt a thrill of genuine fear" (*Twilight* 23-4); the fact that her narrative, and therefore her self, is non-existent without him and her self-destructive striving towards (un)death, all point to a masochistic personality. Moreover, Bella's coping mechanism after Edward leaves her in *New Moon*, to submit herself into dangerous situations to make herself an object of his (even in mere imagination) wrath, is an example of typical masochistic self-punishment. The self-loathing narrative voice of Bella, recognized in that her earliest description of herself only brings up negative aspects of her looks and her character (*Twilight* 10),

establishes her as weak and her overall clumsiness and physical (as well as mental) awkwardness accentuates a lack of control over the self; a control she seeks in others, mainly Edward and Jacob. As a result of her vulnerability, Bella is, throughout the Saga, dependant on Edward for both physical safety and psychological stability, which helps ensure her subordination to him.

One could without difficulty argue that the image of a vampire is the quintessential sadist, and siring “the ultimate sadomasochistic act” (Taylor 41), supported by Bella’s narration in *Eclipse*, as she describes a willingness to be “polluted” by his venom (324). Even though it is Bella’s choice to be turned, it is narrated as something being *done to her* instead of something she is *choosing to do*.

In regard to Edward, the interpretation of him as a sadistic personality goes further than his symbolical lack of humanity. Freud states that sadism is a result of sexual aggression (quoted in Grimwade 157), and Edward’s physical need to harm, consume and ultimately kill Bella is easily interpreted as sexual. The vampires’ need to feed is often portrayed this way, and in the Saga it is closely tied to Edward’s and Bella’s intimate moments; from the simple act of physical closeness to their inability to perform sexual acts, or even kiss, from fear that his sexual desires might overpower him. Silver also agrees that the drinking of blood is “clearly analogous to sexual desire in [*Twilight*] and other vampire lore” (128).

#### **2.4 The Abusive Relationship**

Edward often disregards Bella’s opinions when making decisions affecting her, even when it comes to things that would not affect him or their relationship in any way. When Edward incapacitates Bella’s car as she decides to visit Jacob, it is even patronizing and insulting, if one considers that when Charlie did the same to her car when she was grounded Edward announced himself disappointed, questioning if that really would be all needed to stop her. When she finally manages to escape and visit her best friend, Edward expresses that she needs his permission before acting and is dismissive about her emotions and wishes altogether: “you can’t expect me to let you . . . this won’t happen again . . . I am not negotiating this, Bella.” and a physical threat even emerges, “His hands were in fists again. I could feel them against my back” (*Eclipse* 143). In this instance Bella actually defies him, where she previously had just “gritted her teeth” to avoid a fight even though she had felt dissatisfaction with his behaviour, referring to “Edward’s shielding arms [becoming] restraints” (*Eclipse* 84),

symbolical of his protectiveness turning into something negative. This only result in him involving Alice in his agenda to control Bella, having her keep watch over Bella and even hold her hostage when he is out of town. By doing so he removes another one of Bella's friends, someone she might have needed to talk to, further isolating her. Edward is effectively removing either the people she trusts, or the trust she feels for them, from her life, which is consistent with an abusive relationship. In accordance with her masochistic, submissive personality, Bella tells him that he can hold her hostage any time he wants, without even expressing the anger she narrates in her head or resolving the issue first (*Eclipse* 189). This sadomasochistic, psychologically abusive, relationship is, as preciously mentioned, transformed into a healthy, loving family in the final chapters of Meyer's story. Interestingly enough, the justification, or even celebration, of abusive relationships is found not only between Bella and her mates, in the big picture, but also in a side-story within the werewolf community.

For example, Sam lost control, transformed into a werewolf and hit Emily -if "hit" is the right verb to use when you turn into a werewolf and mauls someone's face, forever disfiguring him or her. Emily is even fortunate disfigurement was the only consequence of the attack, and not, say, death. Nonetheless, Meyer seems to use Sam and Emily's story to normalize and even romanticize the idea of a relationship between a werewolf (aggressive, powerful man) and a human (weaker female). Theirs is the only relationship in the novels that experiences physical (non-sexual) violence and the excuses are incredibly similar to those made by a woman being abused by a man: it is not his fault as he cannot control his instincts (urges); it is in fact my fault for provoking his transformation (anger) and when he does control himself it is proof of his love. Sam and Emily had actually had problems making their relationship work before the "accident", and afterwards she is the one comforting him, which ultimately leads to them finding harmony (*Eclipse* 124). This could be compared to Bella's and Edward's relationship before and after she is "polluted" by his venom, or frankly, before and after he kills her. Considering this, Meyer does not only treat relationship violence as something excusable, but as something that can be mending. The comparison between the werewolves' instincts and the blood-thirst of the vampire is easily drawn; in which case the provocation simply would be that Bella is alive. She repeatedly apologizes for the fact that she has blood in her, resembling when the woman in an abusive relationship apologizes for the so-called "provocation" she cannot control and a masochist feeling blame when there is none.

In addition to interpreting the physical aspect of Edward's need to hurt Bella as a symbolism for a man's lack of control over his urges to hurt his partner, it can be argued as Meyer's way of making it acceptable for the reader. By making Edward a man with an essentially kind personality, protective of the women he obviously loves, and making his more unpleasant attributes the result of a physical need, forced upon him by his sire, Meyer turns him into a victim as well. The fact that he considers himself a soulless monster for this only strengthens the reader's view of him as a good man. Not only does Meyer make a man's urges to physically hurt or mentally control his partner something uncontrollable, she manipulates the reader into agreeing by victimizing Edward.

### **3. The Choice Between Childhood and Adulthood**

In the final novel Bella's uncertainty about her place in the world, which she has been pondering for the last 2000 pages, is settled. Though she early on decided to join the Cullen family, she has been unable to fully come to terms with the consequences of her choice. She has found it difficult to make her peace with leaving Renee and Charlie, as well as Jacob. Furthermore, Edward's condition of marriage is not one she accepts lightly, she even calls "matrimony" a "dirty word" (*Eclipse* 440), which emphasizes her submissive nature as she reluctantly goes through with it. Nevertheless, the choice to become a vampire and spend eternity with Edward was never one she questioned, excruciatingly painful death be damned. Silver points out that this decision "stands for any adolescent crisis" and that "Bella's identity crisis is one to which many teenage girls can relate". To Bella, becoming a vampire represents unbecoming a teenager. It is, therefore, "the fulfilment of masochistic desires to be rid of one's ordinary self" (Baumeister quoted in Taylor 39), the impossible act of ending all that is yourself, without actual death.

Jacob, her other option, symbolizes what it would mean not to be with Edward, to not choose adulthood. To select Edward would not only mean marriage and motherhood for Bella, but to be part of the Cullen family, depicted as reserved, elegant and full of knowledge: the ideal of adulthood. Jacob, on the other hand, is unpredictable, fun, carefree, and often compared to the sun. His whole essence brings happy summer days of childhood to mind. Even though he is erratic and somewhat emotional, with his uncontrollable anger and openly shared emotions, he also presents a kind of safety associated with the simplicity of childhood: what you see is what you

get. Edward has more going on under his perfect surface, more than the secret of vampirism. The love Edward and Jacob feel for Bella is never portrayed as unequal, only different. The latter is more blatant, like the love of a child, whereas the first is the more complex love between adults.

To examine the consequences of the choice between the pack and the coven is also interesting. In choosing Jacob, the pack and her old, human family, Bella symbolically chooses childhood in more aspects than Jacob: the whole pack is described as a gang of youthful brothers being taken care of by the elders. The simple fact that Sam, the alpha, is much older than all the other wolves also underscores their youthfulness. Additionally, Bella's mother, as I have already shown, is depicted as childlike, and Charlie simply lacks the sophistication of the Cullen family. To choose the coven would not only be to select said elegance and grace, but put onto Bella a burden of secrecy and responsibility to the degree of seclusion. She would also have to give up her pack, her human family, and her Jacob: everything that ties her to her childhood. In the choice between these two families, by looking from a post-feminist perspective, one also finds the choice between the upper class and the working class, further emphasized by the werewolves' ethnicity and the Cullen's exaggeratedly pale (white) skin.

#### **4. The Fear of Maternity**

In addition to Bella's inability to fully accept her choice to take the path which leads to marriage and motherhood, the Saga is full of symbolic fear of children. This is especially prominent in the two later novels, *Eclipse* with its animalistic newborns, and *Breaking Dawn* with its uncontrollable immortal children. Furthermore, Bella's own little "abomination", species unspecified, growing in her stomach reflects the fear of the unknown a first-time mother may experience. The fear of the uncontrollable toddler phase lasting forever is later morphed into the fear of your children growing up too fast, mirrored in Bella's own halfbreed's accelerated growing rate.

##### **4.1 Newborns**

In the first year of a vampire's life, one is considered to be a newborn; a few of their features are found in common vampire lore, such as the extra strength and thirst. However, in the context of Meyer's dramatic depiction of all new life, the focus is

shifted to their similarity to young children: they are “slaves to their instincts” (*Eclipse* 290); the enhancement of their basic emotions, such as possessiveness and anger, makes them uncontrollable; the need to feed comes first and it takes them a few years to focus on more “human”, or social, needs. Essentially, it takes them a few years to develop a personality and social skills, just like with children. Meyer takes the fundamental needs of a child while changing the circumstances, so that they become dangerous and destructive.

However, it is not only the characteristics of a newborn that should be considered when examining them, as the context in which the reader first comes into contact with them, as well as their history, emphasizes their symbolism. While one newborn is quite enough to express the fear of children, the army of them raging through Seattle, killing and feeding without any control, accentuates their danger. Furthermore, as this army is created for the sole purpose of destroying Bella and her family their danger becomes directly connected to her, stressing her issues with motherhood. Although the context of the newborn vampires being used as weapons in wars in the South does not translate particularly to children or maternity, this side of the story does nonetheless accentuate the negative notions concerning them. The fact that when Jasper minimizes their reliance on pure instinct, controls their need to feed, they become manageable shows that it is this part, the one connected to the instincts of an infant, that makes them, and therefore infants, unmanageable. Furthermore, until Jasper gives his description of the newborns and their history to Bella, and still to some extent afterwards, they are objects of a “fear of the unknown” connected to children throughout the novels.

#### **4.2 Immortal Children**

As any human turned into a vampire is “frozen” in time, not only physically, but emotionally, it is no surprise this also applies to the mental maturity of infants and toddlers, forever incapable of learning, abstract thought and emotional maturing. There are few changes a vampire can go through, for example when Edward fell in love with Bella, and his entire being is described as “being shifted”, though these events are rare and permanent. It is apparent that the immortal children, both the infants and toddlers, personify that motherhood never ends, which may scare some parents to-be. Moreover, the atmosphere of “lets not tell Bella anything” is overhanging and these children are also a part of the “dangerous unknown”. Even if

the story of the children is eventually told, Bella never encounters one herself. This could be claimed to be one of Meyer's ways of building up the fear, in this instance of motherhood, which later on proves to be completely pointless.

Since the immortal children are frozen at the age at which they were turned, they may embody several stages of a child's development, making the connection to human children and motherhood much more candid and less symbolic than with newborns. The youngest immortal children are forever fixed at the screaming stage of the infant, mirroring a new mother's fear of that seemingly never-ending period of a child's life. The immortality of the child combined with the fact that it will never mature, or even develop its own personality with which one may form a bond, accentuates the hardship of this period, and lack of escape from it some mothers may feel. If a toddler is made into a vampire, the same rules apply. One might find it much easier to relate to a toddler in the process of developing a personality, however, these are the more dangerous of the immortal children: they cannot behave themselves, or control their emotions, and one of their tantrums could "destroy half a village" (*Breaking Dawn* 34). An immortal toddler is so dangerous, that Meyer make them illegal in her would-be world. Once again, a parent's worries of that particular stage in a child's development is exaggerated and morphed into a life and death situation.

### **4.3 The Dangers of Pregnancy**

The first weeks after Bella becomes pregnant are interesting and revealing in more ways than the anti-abortion propaganda I will discuss later. Firstly, there is no knowledge about what is growing inside her womb: there is no historical evidence of such a creation before, and the membrane is too thick for any ultrasound to work. The journey into the unknown any mother-to-be experiences is multiplied thousands of times. Secondly, the matter of complications throughout pregnancy and childbirth are accentuated by Meyer's depiction of the foetus as something that is causing physical pain as well as actually killing Bella. Here, the notion of children being dangerous carried out with newborns and immortal children are, yet again, being enhanced. Thirdly, Bella's reversed feelings for "her baby", one could argue, is used to lessen the shift from fear of maternity to the ultimate deduction that there is nothing to fear and everything will eventually work out. This might, also, be claimed to represent the concept that these qualms will disappear once one is pregnant: there is nothing to dread. It may also give the impression that a mother is supposed to know the love for

her child right from the beginning, which is discussed in the anti-abortion part of this essay.

When it comes to Bella's pregnancy, all the conventional fears are inflated to ridiculous proportions by Meyers, perhaps to allow the other side of the road to be that much more gratifying as the same time as showing the fears of childbirth and maternity are perceived much bigger than the actual problems are.

## **5. Motherhood and Marriage**

The fact that Bella gets married, becomes a mother, and joins the vampire after-life in all its glory over the course of a few weeks is very interesting. This awkward girl, up until now depicted as painfully ordinary and undeserving of her man, always in need of protection and comfort, finally becomes equal to her mate. The fact that she has not had any kind of personal development throughout the Saga, it all happening at once as she is transformed from a teenage girl to a married mother, emphasizes that this is the root of her transformation. Suddenly, she is not only able to care for herself but also defend others, with her new-found strength and protective mental shield, now stretchable outside of her own mind and around others. The "purely defensive" (Eclipse 596) nature of her ability becomes symbolic of the nurturing and protective mother. Bella is finally able to take the role of the unselfish, to the point of sacrificial, mother she was deprived. Self-sacrifice used to prove one's love is a recurring theme throughout the novels (the most obvious example being Edward's repression of his natural instincts to drink Bella's blood).

As a mother and wife Bella can finally find equality with Edward, indicated by her at last becoming as strong, graceful and beautiful as he is, as well as now also having her own mental power. Meyer also suggests women cannot fulfil their own fate without starting a family with Bella's statement that she "had found [her] true place in the world, *the place [she] fit* (emphasis mine), the place [she] shined" (*Breaking Dawn* 524). Even if Bella first and foremost is contemplating her transformation into a vampire, it is just as much a reflection on her role in her new family, as these transformations are so directly linked that they become indistinguishable from one another. Furthermore, Bella's actual physical death is symbolic of the ending of her own individual existence, as she must literally conform to Edward's way of life: she is now unable to move about or eat as she used to, in regard to sunlight and a diet of blood. Her adolescent identity crisis is over. She has also fulfilled her Freudian

struggle towards death, without actually having to stop living, and so her masochistic struggle, which derived from her death drive, is over, evident in the transformation in her and Edward's relationship.

## **6. Female Sexuality**

Bella's near obsession with not only physical intimacy but also sex opens up several lines of investigation. First of all, taking everything surrounding her sexual desires into consideration, such as physical damage, Bella's sexuality is depicted as dangerous. Her own urges are uncontrollable and can only have negative outcomes. Edward being a vampire, and therefore (un)dead, portrays sex as something sick and perverted, which helps amplify the negative aspect of Bella's sexuality. One might even argue that the "negative physical ramifications of sex" could be translated as STDs. These dangers she is exposed to, with regard to her sexuality, forces a need for protection upon her, making male dominance over female sexuality not only acceptable but a necessity. Edward's refusal to satisfy her sexual needs emphasizes the control he maintains over her in other aspects of their relationship. His act of saving Bella by removing, and ultimately consuming, James' venom from her symbolizes his control over her sexuality one step further, in regard to hindering her "[being polluted] by another man/vampire" (Taylor 38): he does not only maintain control over their sex life but symbolically over her whole sexuality. This kind of control minimizes Bella's own ability to manage her sexuality, which Meyer also belittles when Jacob tries to kiss her.

Charlie's response to Jacob essentially sexually assaulting his daughter, where her discomfort with the event is being made quite clear by her broken hand, diminishes her position as a victim.

"Why did she hit you?"

"Because I kissed her," Jacob said, unashamed.

"Good for you, kid," Charlie congratulated him. (*Eclipse* 336)

Meyer makes it a point to express Jacob's lack of shame for the unwanted sexual advances, to which Bella was too weak to stop: "I grabbed at his face, trying to push it away, failing again. He seemed to notice this time, though, and it aggravated him. His lips forced mine open . . ." (*Eclipse* 330). After kissing her multiple times, Bella eventually giving up and shutting down, to just stand there like "a statue", he expressed nothing but positive feelings in regard to his actions, laughs, and calls her

“touchy” and “overly defensive” (*Eclipse* 334). Following the action of the kiss Bella is treated as an object, the males speaking over her head, disregarding the fact she was forcibly kissed as well as her emotions concerning it.

Regarding the inequality and perversion in the sexual part of Bella’s and Edward’s relationship, even though they do wait to the consummation of their marriage to have sex, it is still only once and reproductive. It’s not until after Bella becomes a mother Meyer allows for recreational sex.

## **7. Pro-creation and Anti-abortion**

I get the impression that even though Meyer had Bella and Edward wait until after marriage to actually have sex, sex purely for pleasure and not at all for the purpose of reproduction did not wholly agree with her Mormon beliefs. The first clue of this is the fact that the place where the newlywed Mr. and Mrs. Cullen is supposed to spend their honeymoon and, inevitably, consummate their marriage, Isle Esme, belongs to and is named after the strongest, most nurturing, mother in the entire Saga. Additionally, this is the person that becomes Bella’s female role model throughout the novels, after she moves away from her mother, even though she does not explicitly take the role of Bella’s mother. She is, however, Edward’s mother and Bella’s mother-in-law. This instantly links the sexual act to procreation.

Directly after Bella becomes pregnant, a forceful and obvious anti-abortion propaganda begins. Even though Edward’s first reaction is to “remove” the abomination, Bella reacts just as a pro-life, expecting mother is supposed to, and refuses abortion: “I wanted [my baby] like I wanted air to breath. Not a choice – a necessity” (*Breaking Dawn* 132). Silver points out that this is the most blatantly political statement in the entire Saga, one that could “come directly from an anti-abortion bumper sticker” (130). The two sides of the abortion-issue are personalized in Rosalie (pro-life) and Jacob (pro-choice). Rosalie is absolutely unconcerned about Bella, the mother, and only cares about the child and its survival. This is in agreement with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’, which most of the Mormons of the United States belong to, view of abortion. This is what their official website has to say on the issue:

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints must not submit to, perform, encourage, pay for, or arrange for an abortion . . . some exceptional circumstances may

justify an abortion, such as when pregnancy is the result of incest or rape, when the life or health of the mother is judged by competent medical authority to be in serious jeopardy, or when the foetus is known by competent medical authority to have severe defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth. But even these circumstances do not automatically justify an abortion.

Jacob, on the other hand, immediately and unquestionably wants Bella to end the life of “whatever was inside her” (*Breaking Dawn* 174). The reason Meyer chose Jacob to be the voice of abortion may be because he is, arguably, the most unreliable voice in this matter. He has his own personal love for Bella and inherent loathing of vampires:

I didn't want to see this, didn't want to think about this. I didn't want to imagine him inside her. I didn't want to know that something I hated so much had taken root in the body I loved. My stomach heaved, and I had to swallow back vomit.

(*Breaking Dawn* 174)

The fact that this is the first instance where his narrative becomes emotional and personal instead of “cool” and adaptive of the prestige of his pack (Arvidsson, 10) emphasizes the affect the foetus has on him.

When Edward starts to hear the foetus's thoughts, Meyer tips the scale in favour of pro-life: she “fictionalizes the key anti-abortion argument that personhood occurs before birth” (Silver 132). By giving Rosalie the incredibly harsh “pro-life at all costs”-opinion and letting Edward be protective of Bella's life until it is supernaturally proven that the foetus actually is a conscious being, showing that Bella was correct when refusing abortion and referring to it as “my baby” the whole time, Meyer compassionates the pro-life side and makes it more agreeable.

### **Future research**

Further research in the psychosexual nature of Bella and Edward's relationship, as well as in regard to family, would concern itself with Edward's potential role as a replacement for Bella's father. Multiple times he belittles her, calls her “an insignificant little girl”, and commits the same actions towards her as her father does. The symbolical significance of him siring her, as the day she is turned is considered

her birthday, as well as the Cullen children's sire being considered their father, makes this an interesting aspect of the novels.

### **Conclusion**

A type of build up/reassurance is used in every aspect of the Saga, from the fear of adulthood, to matrimony and maternity. Throughout the novels, Meyer exploits the negative aspects/fears of commitment, motherhood and the coming of age, to in the end invalidate them. She portrays a "pre-Bella", before matrimony and maternity, filled with anguish, fears, uncertainty and even physical weakness. After her marriage and pregnancy, all this is erased, and we are left with a confident, strong, protective woman, in a relationship with no sign of sadomasochism anymore. Ultimately, Meyer constructs a scenario where her values are the only "rescue" available.

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