

PRIDE AND TWILIGHT: UPDATING THE BENNET-DARCY MYTH?

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Abstract

The Bennet-Darcy myth, as representative of romantic love, has been explored in many cultural manifestations since the publication of Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* in 1813. Nonetheless, its contemporary portrayal seems to have missed the foremost original aim of Austen's novel as, even if it belonged to the genre of the sentimental novel, it portrayed women's conditions and subjugation in the English Regency period. As a contemporary exponent of popular culture, Stephenie Meyers' *Twilight* saga has gained an enormous popularity, especially among adolescents. Meyers has often acknowledged Austen's legacy to envision the first novel of her series, *Twilight* (2005). However, despite its influence, *Twilight* updates and transforms the Bennet-Darcy myth presenting a conservative discourse which significantly differs from that of Austen. It is the aim of this article to present a comparative analysis of Austen's and Meyer's respective novels with regard to the Bennet-Darcy myth so as to evaluate the different discourses presented and illustrate the postmodern

Resumen

El mito Bennet-Darcy, como representante del amor romántico, ha sido explorado en numerosas manifestaciones culturales desde la publicación de la novela *Orgullo y Prejuicio* de Jane Austen en 1813. No obstante, su retrato contemporáneo parece haber perdido el propósito primigenio de la novela de Austen que, pese a enclavarse en la tradición sentimental, retrataba la condición y subyugación de las mujeres en el periodo de la Regencia inglesa. Como exponente contemporáneo de la cultura popular, la saga *Crepúsculo* de Stephenie Meyers ha adquirido una gran popularidad, especialmente entre la población adolescente. Meyers a menudo ha admitido el legado de Austen para crear la primera novela de su serie, *Crepúsculo* (2005). Sin embargo, pese a su influencia, *Crepúsculo* actualiza y transforma el mito Bennet-Darcy presentando un discurso conservador que difiere del de Austen de forma significativa. El propósito de este artículo es presentar un análisis comparativo entre las novelas de Austen y Meyers respectivamente, en lo que atañe al mito Bennet-Darcy para evaluar los diferentes discursos que presentan e

aim to regain, recreate, and transform old myths, as well as popular culture's goal of making profit from them.

Keywords: postmodernism; popular culture; myth of romantic love; feminism; sentimental literature; adaptation; vampire fiction; Jane Austen; Stephenie Meyers.

ilustrar el objetivo postmoderno de retomar, recrear y transformar viejos mitos, así como el objetivo de la cultura popular de obtener rentabilidad de ellos.

Palabras clave: postmodernismo; cultura popular; mito del amor romántico; feminismo; literatura sentimental; adaptación; ficción de vampiros; Jane Austen; Stephenie Meyers.

Stephenie Meyer's vampiric tetralogy has surpassed all possible expectations for any contemporary novel writer. Novels such as *Twilight* (2005), *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse* (2007), and *Breaking Dawn* (2008), as well as the cinematic adaptations of the first two novels of the saga, have been especially successful among the adolescent population all over the globe. Meyer's portrayal of physically alluring vampires, who are perpetually in their teens, seems to follow contemporary trends in vampire fiction initiated by Ann Rice's novels, whereby aged and decrepit evil beings of the Victorian period give way to young, tormented, and guilty vampires concerned about existentialism and the meaning of life in the era of postmodernism.

Stephenie Meyer herself has observed that each of the novels in the *Twilight* saga pays homage to other literary classics, and particularly, with regard to *Twilight* (2005), she has admitted that Jane Austen's Regency romance *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) was a key inspiration. With regard to *Twilight*, Meyer has acknowledged the real source of the plot came to her from a dream, but the name of the hero has definitely a literary legacy, as she corroborated:

For my vampire (who I was in love with from day one) I decided to use a name that had once been considered romantic, but had fallen out of popularity for decades. Charlotte Bronte's Mr. Rochester and Jane Austen's Mr. Ferrars were the characters that led me to the name Edward. I tried it on for size, and found that it fit well. (2010:1)

Even if Meyer acknowledges Bronte's legacy in her creation of Edward Cullen –the *Twilight* saga's male hero-and-villain, as he is a vampire– the first novel of her tetralogy, *Twilight*, presents close links in relation to Austen's most well-known novel, *Pride and Prejudice*. Austen's contemporary revivalism is nothing new under the sun, as recreations of the Regency and the

Victorian period proliferate through postmodern attempts to envision, evaluate, and reassess the past. In this sense, with regard to any present-day reappraisal of the past, especially of the Victorian period, Kaplan refers to “the curious appropriation [...] for disparate political and cultural agendas in the present” (2007:5) that adaptations and historical recreations of past periods often imply. Similarly, other scholars point at the postmodern historical and self-reflective constructions of knowledge, and quote back Jameson’s idea that, while the modernists appropriated the past to criticise cultural commodification, postmodernism fashions commodities that make the process of consumption glamorous and pleasurable (Kucich & Sadoff 2000:xiii). In this sense, contemporary recreations of past fictions and former eras involve a subtle idealisation, which entails the reassurance of living in a dreamful space; a cathartic experience, which prompts escapism, precisely one of the sentimental literature’s purported aims, thus turning to “a world unlike our own –a world of glamour, wealth, pageantry, automatic happiness– seeking a distraction from our own ever more depressing world” (Batsleer 1997:220).

All through the eighteenth-century and the Regency period, women were not particularly encouraged to display their artistic talent. Women novelists such as Maria Edgeworth and Fanny Burney brought into English fiction female tenderness through a feminine approach, focusing their attention on women and their problems under the prevailing influence of male novelists such as Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson and Tobias Smollett. These women novelists began to pave the way for domestic life as a new field of exploration from a female perspective, and Jane Austen continued and developed this trend particularly dwelling on middle-class women’s life. According to Ram, in the Regency period, two trends were established with regard to women’s conditions and its literary rendering: one that stressed the womanly qualities of women and their duty towards society, and one that emphasised the full humanity of women and their rights to the free exercise of their faculties (1989:45). The former tendency corresponded with an idealistic and sentimental point of view, whereas the latter showed a more realistic description of women’s socioeconomic needs. In Ram’s mind, the sentimental vein was characteristic of Hannah More’s novels, while the realistic and critical point of view could easily be perceived in Mary Wollstonecraft’s works.

Jane Austen’s novels seem to have been originated taking into consideration these two trends of feminine heritage. Thus, even though Austen disliked Wollstonecraft’s extreme feminism, the rigorous examination of women’s economic deprivation and dependence on male assumptions in Austen’s novels seemed not far away from eighteenth-century feminism (Ram

1989:45). This is in fact Austen's "double vision" to which Gilbert and Gubar referred, asserting Austen's heroines survive because of "their contradictory projections" (2000:163), split between their conflicting desire for assertion and their retreat into the security of the home (2000:162). As Ram further admitted, Jane Austen sets her love stories against the background of a materialistic world (1989:27). Austen thus portrays middle-class women realistically, showing no illusions about women and their prospective opportunities in life, but also refuting women's inferiority, emphasising their feminine accomplishments as a display of their strength. According to Ram, Austen's heroines' exhibition of good manners ultimately underlines the cause of women's emancipation (1989:50). All in all, Austen neither favoured the discourse that a woman was supposed to be man's equal nor sided with any contemporary notion which underlined female inferiority. Austen was well-aware of the sphere women of her own class should occupy. Nonetheless, her concern about their economic dependence as well as portraying their own conditions from a female perspective has endured as a sign of Austen's profeminist vein.

If Austen's Regency novels seem to allow both a sentimental portrayal of middle-class women, as well as a more critical depiction of women's conditions, Stephenie Meyer's extremely successful novel, as exponent of contemporary popular culture, mostly underlines a remarkably reactionary discourse. Julia Kristeva claimed all literature is intertextual in as much as a text is the absorption and transformation of another (1986:37), and concerning popular culture, Cawelti also argued that all cultural products consist of a mixture of two kinds of elements, that is, conventions, namely elements which are known to the creator and his audience, and inventions, specifically elements which are uniquely imagined by the creator (1997:71). Bearing this in mind, Hoppenstand acknowledges that Jane Austen "exerted a tremendous influence on the development of domestic melodrama" (1997:128), contributing to shaping the relationship between romantic love and social status, and supplanting the eighteenth-century gothic romance with novels of domestic melodrama. Likewise, along with Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* and especially Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, mostly aided in defining the narrative formula of contemporary popular romance (Hoppenstand 1997:128).

Thus, by means of retaining the conventions of an old past period, the contemporary popular romance story presents a moral discourse, portraying relationships between men and women which have been socially constructed through an inherited successful sentimental formula that still looks particularly lucrative nowadays. This seems to account for the enormous success of the

Twilight tetralogy. Nonetheless, texts such as Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, or Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, through the processes of being repeatedly adapted and transformed, have acquired a status that some critics, like Stoneman, have agreed to define as mythological. Precisely, the cultural significance of the original text as a reflection of its context, along with the process of reiteration it has undergone (Stoneman 1996:4) is what endows Austen's works with a status that Meyer's present day tetralogy lacks, regardless of any division between high and low literature, which has always been, at best, imprecise. The former autonomy of works of art is thus superseded by the interests of the culture industry, which mainly aspires to reproduce a narratological formula to reach the masses and become a bestseller.

Meyer transforms Jane Austen's ironic as well as critical portrayal of Regency England into an idealised, sentimental, and thrilling product of the masses within popular culture especially addressed to teenagers. In this respect, in addition to the faithful and preciousist BBC television adaptations, Jane Austen's novels have recently met a literary and cinematic revival through volumes pertaining to popular culture. Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones' Diary* (1996) seemed to pave the way for subsequent productions which presented a strong resemblance with Jane Austen's plots. A more recent case in point was Karen Joy Fowler's bestseller *The Jane Austen Book Club* (2004), which depicts how six Californian women meet to discuss Austen's novels while their lives begin to resemble 21st century versions of her works. Likewise, the biopic film *Becoming Jane* (2007), based on Jon Spence's book *Becoming Jane Austen*, chronicles the relationship between Jane Austen and Tom LeFroy, based on the letters Jane Austen sent to her sister Cassandra. Even more recently, Seth Grahame-Smith's delirious novel entitled *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009), offers a comic rendering of Jane Austen's novel, recreating it in an alternative universe of Regency England where zombies roam the countryside, Darcy turns into a zombie-hunter, and Elisabeth Bennet matches her witty responses with her martial-arts fighting abilities. Grahame-Smith's recent novel, as well as her popular success, owes a great deal to Meyer's idea to intermingle disparate genres such as the sentimental novel and the horror genre, even though Grahame-Smith's Elisabeth seems more bellicose than Meyer's mesmerised heroine. According to Hoppenstand, "along with horror fiction, science fiction, and crime fiction, the origin of popular romance fiction is found in the eighteenth-century Gothic novel" (1997:128). Thus, Meyer has blended both the sentimental and gothic tradition in her novel, envisioning a best-selling saga and a block-buster series of films that have mesmerised teenagers from all around.

Despite the fact vampires and werewolves populate the town of Forks in *Twilight*, Meyer's saga can hardly be described as horror fiction, as it does not particularly aim at terrifying its readership. *Twilight* is rather a sentimental novel especially addressed to young females, as its success among them corroborates. The choice of a vampire as the hero of the novel should be interpreted as an idealisation which portrays the myth of romantic love, whereby the male hero becomes a man literally endowed with preternatural powers that conceals a tragic and terrible secret the heroine must decipher so as to try to help him. Much concern has been raised about the true nature of romance novels, as some feminist critics believe them to be ways of coping with subordination and even "clues to answer our oppressions" as women (Batsleer 1997:219), while others assert sentimental novels underline a clear ideological purpose "which lulls us into accepting the status quo" (Batsleer 1997:219), thus fulfilling a more conservative aim.

Jane Austen's novels depicted as well as denounced women's precarious situation and perpetual economic dependence in the Regency period, arguing middle-class women were often at the mercy of marrying well so as to survive in the stifling English society of the time. As Brower asserts, through a subtle discourse, Austen's novels "combine the traditions of poetic satire with those of the sentimental novel" (1986:62), thus balancing "a purely ironic vision with a credible presentation of a man and woman undergoing a serious 'change of sentiment'" (1986:75). Austen's ironic twist, especially aimed at denouncing the situation of women at the time, even if inserted in the sentimental discourse, is nonetheless subdued in Meyer's novel. If Austen makes use of irony and sentimentality to portray the Regency period, Meyer nurtures mesmerised sentimentality and doses of horror to revive vampirism in 21st century America. In this respect, despite the significant span of time separating both novels, Meyer's *Twilight*, even if inspired by *Pride and Prejudice*, seems much more conservative than Austen's novel, as far as the relationship between Bella and Edward –which forms the core of its sentimental discourse– is concerned. Elisabeth Bennet's witty remarks significantly differ from Bella Swan's clumsy and erratic moves, even if they aim to fulfil a humorous vein. In this sense, Jane Austen's novels denounced the situation of women by portraying the English conservative middle-class society of the time, while Meyer's novel indulges in an ever-lasting fantasy of eternal love which purports soothing and reassuring effects. Meyer's novel, as a popular culture's interpretation of a historical novel, illustrates the idealising reappropriation of the past, thus updating the Bennet-Darcy myth –ultimately, the myth of romantic love– to address the masses. In this respect, even if using the same plotline, Meyer's novel clearly differs from

the subtle discourse displayed in novels such as *Pride and Prejudice*. As Tuite asserts, “for over two decades now, a predominantly Anglo-American and liberal-feminist critical interest in Austen has remembered gender, and has reinvigorated Austen studies by locating Austen firmly within the revisionary contexts of contemporary feminism” (2002:9). This feminist vein, which feminist critics have identified in the last decades partly due to Austen’s acute irony, is hardly found in Meyer’s novel, which rather relies on sentimentality per se, and indulges in comforting escapism. It is true early criticism dismissed Austen’s novels for the apparent narrowness of its topic –women’s world and circumstances– and yet, feminist revisions and women’s studies eventually highlighted her works as historically relevant and literarily significant.

A comparative analysis between Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, and Meyer’s *Twilight* would aid in showing how contemporary popular culture exponents recreate and transform former works into successful commodities for the consumption of the masses, thus sacrificing these seminal works’ original aims for the sake of popularity and sales. The relationship established between Darcy and Bennet in Austen’s novel, even if romantic, involves the heroine’s battle against Darcy’s pride and her own prejudices, a process that entails the heroine’s self-knowledge, while subtly denouncing an oppressive social and economic system that subjugates women through marriage. In this sense, as Wiltshire asserts “softened by her thinking about him [Darcy], Elisabeth is able to ‘see’ what she had previously not seen” (2001:124). Elisabeth’s process of self-knowledge as well as her rebellion finds no counterpart in Bella’s mesmerised state of infatuation with regard to Edward Cullen. In this respect, the main difference between both novels seems to echo Butler’s claim as regards the comparison between the eighteenth-century Richardson-Burney tradition and Jane Austen’s novels as follows:

The principal difference between Jane Austen’s version and its prototypes is that instead of the innocent, impulsive, fallible young girl and the model of established propriety whom she worships, the heroine of *Pride and Prejudice* dislikes, teases, and ends by in part debunking the hero. (199)

Conversely, in Meyer’s novel, Bella is devoted to Edward from the beginning even at the risk of considering sacrificing her own life if that involved spending the whole eternity with him. Elisabeth’s rebellion is thus subsumed for the sake of sentimentality. Consequently, it can be argued that Austen’s Bennet-Darcy myth is updated in Meyer’s novel, but readapted so as to meet a specific ideological apparatus in which women no longer denounce their condition, but rather willingly succumb to their fate for the sake of romanticism.

Many analogies can be established between the plots of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and Stephenie Meyer's first novel of her vampiric series, *Twilight*. The arrival of Charles Bingley and his friend Fitzwilliam Darcy causes quite a stir in the village of Longbourn, especially in the Bennets' household, as Mrs Bennet feels a great concern to find the perfect match and marry all five of her daughters. Once both gentlemen attend the first ball in Longbourn, Mr Bingley is soon praised for his good manners and pleasant countenance, whereas Darcy awakens admiration and scorn in equal terms:

The gentlemen pronounced him to be a fine figure of a man, the ladies declared he was much handsomer than Mr Bingley, and he was looked at with great admiration or about half of the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud; to be above his company, and above being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy compared with his friend. (10)

In Meyer's *Twilight*, Dr. Cullen and his wife Esme, together with their foster children, Edward, Emmett, Alice, Rosalie and Jasper, have been living in Forks for two years when Bella Swan arrives in town to live with her father. When she first sets eyes on them at school, Bella immediately notices that, despite their alluring appearance, "they were outsiders, clearly not accepted" (22). Bella soon inquires her newly acquainted friend Jessica about Edward Cullen, the youngest member of the family, which corroborates Bella's prejudices in the following terms: "That's Edward. He's gorgeous, of course, but don't waste your time. He doesn't date. Apparently none of the girls here are good-looking enough for him" (22). Jessica's words seem to echo the generally accepted opinion about Edward's detachment due to his apparent pride and notorious sense of superiority. Edward is the youngest son of the Cullen family, and his status and economic prominence becomes evident when he arrives at high school driving a shiny Volvo, which clearly contrasts with Bella's sturdy truck, her father's present. The Cullens' economic power recalls Mrs Bennet's early allusion to her inattentive husband about Netherfield being taken "by a young man of large fortune" (5), and her resulting plans to marry off her five daughters.

Bella firstly gains insight into Edward's nature as he plainly displays a clear hatred towards her once she sits by him in class: "He was leaning away from me, sitting on the extreme edge of his chair and averting his face like he smelled something bad" (23). Edward's stiffness and obvious disinterest in Bella in their first encounter establishes a likely analogy with Darcy's well-known comment about Elisabeth when Bingley encourages to dance with her at

the Meryton ball: ““She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men”” (11-12). This first encounter proves pivotal in both novels, as it sets the tone for subsequent misunderstandings between Darcy and Elisabeth, as well as Edward and Bella. Both Darcy’s and Edward’s behaviour toward Elisabeth and Bella respectively betrays an acute sense of supremacy that urges the heroines to dismiss them for their irredeemable conceit. As a result, Elisabeth begins to nourish prejudices against Darcy which would ultimately lead her to reject his proposal and his subsequent advances, even though his views on Elisabeth gradually change all through the novel. Unlike Austen’s novel, in which Elisabeth’s feelings are not explicitly described, with regard to Bella, Edward’s overt hatred seems to exert an even more acute effect on her as she unfolds:

I sat frozen in my seat, staring blankly after him. He was so mean. It wasn’t fair. I began gathering up my things slowly, trying to block the anger that filled me, for fear my eyes would tear up. For some reason, my temper was hardwired to my tear ducts. I usually cried when I was angry, a humiliating tendency. (25)

In Meyer’s novel, a clear emphasis is placed on Bella’s clumsy manners and fragility, which clearly differs from Elisabeth Bennet’s apparent self-confidence and resilience in spite of any humiliation. Meyer’s portrayal of her heroine draws the reader’s sympathy since Bella is the narrator of her own story, whereas Austen’s omniscient narrator impedes a more acute knowledge of Elisabeth’s inner feelings, especially after Darcy’s first dissatisfied comment at the ball. Bella is aware of her physical limitations which sharply contrasts with Edward’s preternatural abilities, and underlines both character’s obvious disparity, which again recalls Darcy’s comfortable situation as heir of Pemberley and Elisabeth’s precarious economic situation as an unmarried woman during the Regency period. In this respect, at the first class of physical education Bella attends, she clearly states “here, P.E. was mandatory all four years. Forks was literally my personal hell on Earth. I watched four volleyball games running simultaneously. Remembering how many injuries I had sustained –and inflicted– playing volleyball. I felt faintly nauseated” (26). Conversely, despite Mrs Bennet’s reluctance, Elisabeth does not hesitate to walk three miles in miserable weather to visit her sister Jane at Netherfield on learning she is ill, confidently asserting that “the distance is nothing when one has a motive; only three miles. I shall be back by dinner” (27). Despite her ludicrous arrival at Netherfield, Elisabeth’s action prompts Darcy’s admiration as he feels “divided between admiration of the brilliancy which exercise had given to her complexion, and doubt as to the occasion’s justifying her coming

so far alone” (28). If Darcy and the Bingleys offer Elisabeth solace and shelter after her three-mile walk to visit her sister Jane, Edward’s preternatural powers also justify his need to watch over Bella closely. Her assumed awkwardness renders her a fragile girl, prone to fall an easy prey of any unexpected incident. Soon after her arrival in Forks, Edward saves Bella from a certain death:

A low oath made me aware that someone was with me, and the voice was impossible not to recognise. Two long, white hands shout out protectively in front of me, and the van shuddered to a stop a foot from my face, the large hands fitting providentially into a deep dent in the side of the van’s body. (56)

After the accident, other incidents occur whereby Edward needs to save Bella as is the case when Bella faints in Mr. Banner’s class at the smell of blood, while carrying out a blood type test. Thus, Edward continually makes reference to Bella’s clumsiness and ineptness, teasing her and repeating ““only you could get into trouble in a town this small. You would have devastated their crime rate statistics for a decade”” (173). Bella’s perpetual need to be saved and Elisabeth’s prejudices against Darcy constantly betray some sort of magnetism on both parts. Bella’s accident aids in getting Edward closer to her, thus showing that his initial hatred towards her was a crafted strategy not to surrender to her charms. Similarly, even if unwillingly, Darcy shows signs of attraction, fearing he will ultimately succumb to his growing attraction to Elisabeth despite the impracticality of marriage to a woman of inferior rank. In this way, after his sarcastic comment at the ball, he becomes aware of Elisabeth’s unquestionable gifts:

No sooner had he made it clear to himself and his friends that she had hardly a good feature in her face, than he began to find it was rendered uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes. To this discovery succeeded some others equally mortifying. Though he had detected with a critical eye more than one failure of perfect symmetry in her form, he was forced to acknowledge her figure to be light and pleasing; and in spite of his asserting that her manners were not those of the fashionable world, he was caught by their easy playfulness. (20)

Elisabeth remains perfectly unaware of Darcy’s true feelings, as “to her he was only the man who made himself agreeable nowhere, and who had not thought her handsome enough to dance with” (20). Moreover, Darcy’s advances to separate Bingley from Jane, believing Elisabeth’s sister does not entertain the same feelings for his close friend, convince Elisabeth that Darcy is not a man to be trusted. In clear contrast, Bella feels increasingly attracted towards Edward, even if his obvious disinclination and continuous absences from school overwhelms her with utter misery. In this sense, Bella admits “I

couldn't believe the rush of emotion pulsing through me –just because he'd happened to look at me for the first time in a half-dozen weeks. I couldn't allow him to have this level of influence over me. It was pathetic. More than pathetic. It was unhealthy" (74). Thus, both heroines' behaviour contrasts sharply as Elisabeth feels an obvious disinclination towards Darcy, while Bella is completely infatuated with Edward Cullen. In this sense, Darcy's attitude towards Elisabeth gradually changes even if she still nourishes latent prejudices against him due to their first encounter. This is especially underlined when Elisabeth politely rejects Darcy's invitation to dance, mostly convinced his proposal merely responded to owing politeness.

Through Elisabeth's vivacious manners, Darcy begins to admit his affection to her despite acknowledged social differences, as it is stated "Darcy had never been so bewitched by any woman as he was by her. He really believed, that were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger" (43). Edward's behaviour also changes in due course, and his early apparent abhorrence towards Bella eventually vanishes. However, he makes it clear it would be better if they were not friends at all. In all cases, both Darcy and Edward seem to be hiding an important secret, which is precisely the reason that accounts for their aloofness, pride, and apparent superiority. Darcy's pride engenders Elisabeth's prejudices, and vice versa, as Elisabeth's prejudices turn to pride when Darcy dares to propose to her, which ultimately leads Darcy to nourish prejudices against Elisabeth for having rejected him. Similarly, Edward's condition permanently puts Bella in danger, and yet her stubbornness is ultimately what threatens her, and vice versa, as her obstinacy puts Edward in danger of breaking his own principles, thus becoming as stubborn as Bella used to be. According to Wiltshire, "this is the psychological state commonly called 'romantic' love. Romantic love is obsessed with the other person and idealised them, but does not perceive them as other to the self. On the contrary it merges self and other" (2001:106). This mutual identification is also perceived in Catherine Earnshaw's exclamation to Nelly in *Wuthering Heights*, when she asserts she is Heathcliff.

As a matter of fact, both Elisabeth and Bella socialise and gain close acquaintances. Bella meets her friend Jessica at high school, while Elisabeth and her intimate friend Charlotte Lucas often exchange their personal and disparate points of view about different issues in life. While Charlotte envisions marriage from a practical perspective, Elisabeth remains sceptical at her friend's clear remarks:

Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. If the dispositions of the parties are ever so well known to each other or ever so similar beforehand, it

does not advance their felicity in the least. They always continue to grow sufficiently unlike afterwards to have their share of vexation; and it is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life. (20)

Charlotte's perspective ultimately leads her to marry Mr. Collins, once Elisabeth has rejected his proposal of marriage. Charlotte and Mr. Collins, as well as their relation with Elisabeth Bennet in Austen's novel, somehow bring to mind Jessica and Mike with regard to Bella in Meyer's book. Jessica is the first who tells Bella about Edward, and Mike is one of the first classmates Bella gets to know in Forks. Mike's politeness and good manners often embarrass Bella to the point he even considers asking her to be her partner in the school prom, a proposal Bella politely declines. Mike's continuous attention and niceties render him not unlike Mr. Collins in Austen's novel. Likewise, this parallelism can be extended to Jessica, Bella's close friend, who eventually feels attracted to Mike when the latter realises Bella is truly in love with Edward. Charlotte and Mr. Collins, as well as Jessica and Mike, play the role of secondary couples that, compared with the central characters in each respective novel, underline the compelling true love between the hero and the heroine in both Austen's and Meyer's novel.

As for Bella, she soon begins to indulge in daydreams and fantasies as she falls in love with Edward, and initiates a process of idealisation and deep infatuation which seems to have no turning back. Due to the unbelievable events in which Edward takes part, Bella suspects the experiences she is living through cannot possibly be ordinary, as she contends that "something outside the possibility of rational justification was taking place in front of my incredulous eyes. Whether it be Jacob's cold ones or my own superhero theory. Edward Cullen was not... human. He was something more" (138). Eventually, Bella's apparent delusions with regard to Edward are confirmed when he turns out to be a vampire. Her daydreams and profound attachment to the youngest member of the Cullens are thus surpassed, since Edward is literally not a common boy, but a preternatural creature; a hero literally coming alive from the realm of fiction and myth. In this sense, due to the aura of his evident supernatural qualities and his role as a qualified postmodern young and kind-hearted vampire, Edward Cullen personifies an updated model for the dandy in the fin-de-siècle, the gentleman in Victorian novels, or the romantic hero in sentimental paperbacks. In this sense, Bella carefully observes the amazing details that turn Edward into literally the man of her dreams, or her nightmares, for that matter:

I listed again in my head the things I'd observed myself: the impossible speed and strength, the eye color shifting from black to gold and back again, the inhuman beauty, the pale, frigid skin. And more –small things that registered slowly– how they never seemed to eat, the disturbing grace with which they moved. And the way he sometimes spoke, with unfamiliar cadences and phrases that better fit the style of a turn-the-century novel than that of a twenty-first century classroom. (137-8)

It is significant to notice that Bella is particularly fond of nineteenth-century romantic novels since she mentions that, despite the fact she had already read *Wuthering Heights*, the novel they were currently reading at school, she wants to read it again “for the fun of it” (138). Bella's fondness of romantic novels is evident to the extent that her surrounding reality seems to echo her readings as if she were projecting the story plotlines on her everyday life, thus enacting a mutual exchange between reality and fiction due to her state of romantic infatuation, not entirely unlike *Madame Bovary*. Moreover, Jane Eyre's and Edward Rochester's telepathic meetings closely resemble those of Bella and Edward, and thus, the intimate bond that is established between them also recalls Catherine Earnshaw's deep identification with Heathcliff as depicted in the novel Bella is perusing. In this respect, Bella's explicit acknowledgement of her attraction towards Edward, notwithstanding his initial reluctance for the sake of her safety, clearly contrasts with Elisabeth Bennet's explicit disinclination towards Darcy in their subsequent meetings after his display of sarcasm at the first ball. Significantly, in Meyers' novel, it is precisely at the time her process of falling in love with Edward has begun to take effect that she goes back to her collection of Jane Austen's novels which she brought with her when she moved to live in Forks, establishing an explicit parallelism between Edward Cullen and Jane Austen's litany of Regency heroes in the following terms:

My favorites were *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. I'd read the first most recently, so I started *Sense and Sensibility*, only to remember after I began chapter three that the hero of the story happened to be named Edward. Angrily, I turned to *Mansfield Park*, but the hero of that piece was named Edmund, and that was just too close. Weren't there any other names available in the late eighteenth century? (148)

From Bella's exclamation follows that if Austen's heroes clearly remind her of Edward Cullen, she also feels somehow attached to the heroines of *Sense and Sensibility*, and especially, *Pride and Prejudice*, as this is the last of Jane Austen's novels that Bella has read. Both heroines, Bella and Elisabeth, are depicted as quick and bright, as Bella is fond of books, and Darcy soon notices Elisabeth's wit. Nonetheless, Elisabeth's smartness often opposes her mother's

narrow aims in life, just like Bella's maturity urges her to take care of her own mother, and live a life of her own due to her father's protracted absences. Similarly, most of the time, both Elisabeth and Bella have to make their own choices as their mother proves to be a precarious adviser, and their father often remains too detached from his daughters' daily preoccupations.

Amid the misunderstandings between Darcy and Elisabeth, Mr. Wickham makes his appearance as an alternative pretender, thus hindering any prospective attempt to get closer. Elisabeth and Wickham are soon in good terms as his unexpected scorn for Darcy confirms Elisabeth's prejudices against him. At the Phillip's dinner party, Elisabeth attentively listens to Wickham's story. Presumably, he had planned to enter the ministry, rather than the militia, but was unable to pursue his plans as he was in need for money. According to Wickham, Darcy's father had intended to provide for him, but Darcy made use of a loophole in his father's will to keep the money for himself. Wickham's story clearly predisposes Elisabeth against Darcy, as not only does it confirm her bad estimation of him but it urges her to consider him evil and even inhuman:

I had not thought Mr. Darcy so bad as this –though I have never liked him, I had not thought so very ill of him. – I had supposed him to be despising his fellow-creatures in general, but did not suspect him of descending to such malicious revenge, such injustice, such inhumanity as this. (65)

Wickham's counterpart in Meyers' novel is Jacob Black, who not only arises as a possible pretender but as a true rival to Edward Cullen. Jacob and Bella have known each other since childhood as their respective fathers, Billy Black and Charlie Swan, have remained close friends. When Bella and some of her classmates decide to spend a day on the beach, Jacob mentions the Cullens are not supposed to enter the reservation. It is soon made clear that Jacob is a Native American, and that his ancestors owned part of the land they are all inhabiting. Jacob unveils his great-grandfather was a tribal elder of wolves that turned into men, that is, werewolves. The cold ones, namely vampires, are the worst enemies of the wolves. Nonetheless, during Jacob's great-grandfather's time, he met a group of vampires that did not hunt the way others did, and thus, they were not supposed to be dangerous to the tribe. Jacob's great-grandfather, as a tribal elder, signed a treaty with these civilised vampires according to which they promised not to trespass their land. Ultimately, Jacob reveals this group of vampires were precisely the Cullens.

Jacob's disclosure leads Bella to wonder about Edward's true nature to the extent she has a nightmare the following night after listening attentively to

Jacob's testimony. In her dream, Jacob urges her to run, and Edward begs her to trust him, while a wolf launches himself across the space between Bella and the vampire. Jacob's revelation resembles Wickham's declaration in Austen's novel, and yet both events have differing effects on Elisabeth and Bella, respectively. While Wickham's testimony increases Elisabeth's prejudices against Darcy, Bella interprets Jacob's declaration as an intrusion or disruption, as a menace to Edward rather than their prospective relation. As her dream corroborates, Jacob, as a wolf, is a natural enemy, and therefore, an expected rival to Edward, as a vampire. Nonetheless, Bella is already too devoted to Edward at this stage, and thus Jacob's revelation does not have such a negative effect on the heroine as happens in Austen's novel. Conversely, due to Wickham's revelation, Elisabeth feels somehow attracted to him as he is described noticing "his appearance was greatly in his favour; he had all the best part of beauty, a fine countenance, a good figure, and a very pleasing address" (59). In contrast, Bella's subtle attraction to Jacob is not entirely explored until the second volume of the saga, entitled *New Moon*. All in all, both Wickham's and Jacob's testimonies prove pivotal in order to gain insight into the heroes' real nature, as they arise as their respective adversaries so as to claim the heroines' favour. Actually, Elisabeth's low estimation of Darcy, partly due to Wickham's interference, leads her to reject Darcy's first proposal of marriage. Nonetheless, both Wickham's and Jacob's declarations ultimately prompt the heroes' own revelation of their personal story.

In this respect, the day after Elisabeth rejects Darcy's proposal, she takes a walk, and accidentally, runs into Darcy, who gives her a letter. In his epistle, Darcy admits having attempted to break Bingley's romance with Jane, but defends himself claiming Jane's attachment was not strong enough, and adds he advised his friend not to marry into the Bennet family given their social and economic difference. As for Wickham, Darcy's letter reveals that Darcy provided for him after his father's death, and their quarrel lied in Wickham's attempt to elope with Darcy's sister, Georgiana, in order to obtain a large fortune. Owing to Darcy's letter, Elisabeth feels astonished at his revelation, urging her to reappraise Wickham and change her views on her formerly loathed Darcy, to the extent Darcy's confession can be described as a real epiphany for Elisabeth as she ironically comments on her own ignorance as regards her condition:

Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly. Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have

courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment I never knew myself. (162)

Darcy's letter, after Elisabeth rejected his proposal of marriage, sets the balance and somehow avenges Darcy's initial commentary at the ball which deeply hurt Elisabeth. In this respect, as Craik claims, from then onwards, Darcy becomes Elisabeth's equal, and she reforms him in the same process he reforms her, so that both characters develop from complacency to self-knowledge and reformation (1986:66), thus pursuing a path towards personal recognition.

A similar epiphanic scene takes place in Meyer's novel when Bella inquires Edward about Jacob's revelation. Edward confesses his terrible secret –he is a vampire– but also takes care to dismantle some of the myths often related to vampires, claiming he is neither burned in the sun, nor does he sleep in a coffin. As for Jacob's revelation stating that the Cullens are not hunters, Edward feels somehow hurt in his pride in front of Bella, arguing that, despite they are not monsters, this does not mean they are not dangerous. In clear analogy with Louis, the kind-hearted vampire in Ann Rice's novel, *Interview with a Vampire*, Edward and his family kill animals instead of people to survive. Nonetheless, Edward makes it clear to Bella that he is still alarmingly dangerous, and whenever she is with him, she should grasp she is in real danger. Despite Edward's confession, Bella admits that it is too late for her to do anything as she feels she cannot go back on her love. Thus, both Darcy's letter and Edward's confession of his real nature prompt Elisabeth's change of perspective and Bella's confirmation of her love. In clear analogy with Elisabeth Bennet, who changes her mind after reading Darcy's letter, in Meyer's novel, as a result of Edward's intimate conversation with Bella, she feels in the position to assert her love for Edward in the following terms: "About three things I was absolutely positive. First, Edward was a vampire. Second, there was part of him –and I didn't know how potent that part might be– that thirsted for my blood. And third, I was unconditionally and irrevocably in love with him" (195). From these climatic episodes, the heroines' attachment to their respective heroes significantly increases, as both Elisabeth and Bella have learned not to trust first impressions. Nonetheless, Bella's attachment to Edward renders her a victim as, although she is aware of her danger, she willingly decides to run the risk. Owing to her love for Edward, Bella is in danger, while in Austen's novel, it is Darcy who is in danger of losing his fortune and status through marrying an inferior.

Likewise, both Elisabeth and Bella feel overwhelmed by the power of their prospective partners, Darcy's financial buoyancy and Edward's preternatural

power. To Bella's astonishment, Edward displays his inner nature as a vampiric superhero when he invites Bella to literally fly with him:

He streaked through the dark, thick underbrush of the forest like a bullet, like a ghost. There was no sound, no evidence that his feet touched the earth. His breathing never changed, never indicated any effort. But the trees flew by at deadly speeds, always missing us by inches. (280)

Bella's fight with Edward across the forest confirms the hero's supernatural gifts as well as symbolises, even if metaphorically, Bella's infatuation and overtly idealisation of her partner as, once the flight has ended, Bella still feels overwhelmed and certainly mesmerised as she unveils "his beauty stunned my mind –it was too much, an excess I couldn't grow accustomed to" (281). Bella's awe finds its counterpart in Austen's novel, when the Gardiners and Elisabeth visit Pemberley, Darcy's residence, believing its owner to be away. During their brief stay, Elisabeth, having read Darcy's confessional letter, observes each chamber and Darcy's portraits with acute attention, feeling overwhelmed by the majesty and grandeur of Darcy's estate, indulging in daydreams of living there one day, as follows from her alluring description of Pemberley:

It was a large, handsome stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; and in front, a stream for some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal nor falsely adorned. Elisabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. They were all of them warm in their admiration; and at that moment she felt that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something! (187)

If Elisabeth visits Pemberley with the Gardiners, Edward promptly asks Bella to meet his family, the Cullens, and takes her to their mansion beyond the forest. In clear resemblance with Elisabeth with regard to Pemberley, Bella also feels overwhelmed when they both arrive at Edward's ancestors' manor, as she particularly pays attention to the ageless nature of the house, which gives evidence of the Cullens' neo-aristocratic vein and their ancient origins

The house was timeless, graceful, and probably a hundred years old. It was painted a soft, faded white, three stories tall, rectangular and well proportioned. The windows and the doors were either part of the original structure or a perfect restoration. (321)

As she notices, her tattered truck clearly entails a discordant note in the majestic environment where the Cullens' mansion is erected. Edward's

extended vampiric family significantly differs from Bella's family unit. Edward lives with his father, Dr. Cullen, his mother, Esme, and his brothers and sisters, namely Jasper, Alice, Rosalie and Emmett. The Cullens personify a perfect and welcoming American upper-class family of ancient origins, according to Edward's narration of his family's origins, which clearly differ from her own. Bella used to live in Phoenix with his mother, but she moved to Forks to live with her father, Charlie, when they separated, while Renée started a new life with another partner. Carlisle, Edward's father, was truly a pursuer of vampires until he was attacked by one of them. From then onwards, he devoted his life to study, and travelled around the globe until he reached the New World. Carlisle worked as a doctor during the influenza epidemic and it was there he felt the need for a companion. Having helped a couple who died of the fever, Carlisle decided to try with their only young son, and turned Edward into his companion. Carlisle's kindness as well as that of the rest soon leads Bella to feel part of the Cullens' family. Nonetheless, Bella also notices some of Edward's relatives, like Rosalie and Emmett, seem more reluctant to let her feel part of their kin. Edward confesses Emmett considers him a lunatic for pursuing a mortal, and as for Rosalie, Edwards concedes she "struggles the most with... with what we are. It's hard for her to have someone on the outside know the truth. And she's a little jealous" (327). In this respect, Rosalie's disinclination with regard to Bella, particularly because she is definitely different from them, bears a close resemblance with Lady Catherine de Bourgh's intentions to disallow any prospective marriage between her nephew, Darcy, and Elisabeth, as she unfolds a tacit engagement has been established between Darcy and her own daughter. Likewise, Rosalie's pseudo-aristocratic condition and absence when Bella visits the Cullens are closely linked to those of Lady Catherine when she intently calls on Elisabeth to warn her not to marry Darcy, as the description of her manners asserts: "she entered the room with an air more than usually ungracious, made no other reply to Elizabeth's salutation than a slight inclination of the head, and sat down without saying a word" (270). Thus, in both Austen's and Meyer's novel, the heroines must face disrupting elements that menace their final union to their prospective partners.

After Carlisle unfolds the origins of the Cullens, Edward takes Bella to his room whose size and magnificence once more have a dazzling effect on her. Carlisle's profound wisdom and devotion to his family, as well as his mansions' grandeur, contrast with Bella's humble house in Forks, where she lives with her father Charlie, a police officer. The disparity between both families again recalls Darcy's concern about the Bennets' economic deficiency as he states when he first proposed to Elisabeth and in his letter, thus justifying his need to

separate Bingley and Jane until he was certain about his friend's feelings towards Elisabeth's sister. Bella's mother, Renée, is often portrayed as helpless and obsessive to the extent her own daughter Bella seems more mature than her. In this respect, Bella's mother is also somehow reminiscent of Elisabeth's mother since, as soon as Bella arrives in Forks, she needs to remind her mother her blouse is at the dry cleaners, and that she was supposed to pick it up. Similarly, due to Renée's long list of emails to check on her daughter, Bella feels compelled to write "I miss you, too. I'll write again soon, but I'm not going to check my e-mail every five minutes. Relax, breathe" (34). Renée's obsessive manners and overprotection is counteracted by Bella's father's undisturbed and stoic behaviour. As a police officer, he is frequently away, and Bella often arrives home to find it empty. Charlie's subtle lack of involvement significantly recalls Mr Bennet's detached attitude. Withdrawn from his wife's hysteria and family matters, Mr Bennet's indulgence of Lydia's immature behaviour, as well as his approval of her going to Meryton, result in general disgrace when she elopes with Wickham. Moreover, he also proves ineffective when the Gardiners, and especially Darcy, have to take the responsibility of discovering the couple's dwellings so as to rectify the situation and save the Bennets' family name.

In Austen's novel, it is Jane who sends a brief note to Elisabeth informing her about Lydia's elopement with Wickham. Elisabeth's altered state promptly meets Darcy's response, as he offers to help her in her distress. Elisabeth is well aware that her young sister's disgrace would ultimately involve all the family's shame, and would certainly imperil her own expectations with regard to Darcy, as well as Jane's assumed prospects to marry Bingley. Darcy's endeavours ultimately end up in Lydia's and Wickham's marriage, which silences Elisabeth's and her family's anticipated disgrace. Through Mrs. Gardiner's letter, Elisabeth learns Darcy played an active part in urging the marriage between Lydia and Wickham to take place, and as a result of his accomplishment, Elisabeth's altered perception of Darcy truly takes effect:

For herself she was humbled; but she was proud of him. Proud that in a cause of compassion and honour he had been able to get the better of himself. She read over her aunt's commendation of him again and again. It was hardly enough but it pleased her. She was even sensible to some pleasure, though mixed with regret, on finding how steadfastly both she and her uncle had been persuaded that affection and confidence subsisted between Mr Darcy and herself. (251)

If Lydia's elopement and projected disgrace serves the purpose of Darcy's enacting his charming powers, thus enlightening Elisabeth on her actual affection, a similar occurrence takes place in Meyer's novel concerning Bella

and Edward. After going to Port Angeles with her classmates Jessica and Angela to try on outfits for the school dance, Bella decides to take a walk to the nearest bookstore and, as she is walking along the streets, Bella realises:

A group of four men turned around the corner I was heading for, dressed too casually to be heading home from the office, but they were too grimy to be tourists. As they approached me, I realized they weren't too many years older than I was. They were joking loudly among themselves, laughing raucously and punching each other's arms. I scooted as far to the inside of the sidewalk as I could to give them room, walking swiftly, looking past them to the corner. (157)

Bella's sense of danger is alarming since she is aware that any possibility of fighting back is out of the question, as she feels utterly incapable of defeating four men on her own. The assaulters' manners as well as their comments imply their intentions are not only criminal but go beyond that, thus threatening Bella to fall into disgrace. Nonetheless, as they are about to get hold of Bella, Edward appears out of the blue to rescue her from shame in his car. Bella's former sense of imminent disgrace is thus soothed through Edward's precise intervention to the extent Bella becomes aware she made the right choice when she decided to trust him. Edward's action clearly resembles Darcy's endeavours to intervene in Lydia's elopement with Wickham so as to save her from disgrace. As a result, Bella's sense of safety and relief is evident when she reflects about what would have happened had Edward not come to her rescue.

I felt utterly safe and, for the moment, totally unconcerned about where we were going. I stared at his face in profound relief, relief that went beyond my sudden deliverance. I studied his flawless features in the limited light, waiting for my breath to return to normal, until it occurred to me that his expression was murderously angry. (162)

As opposed to Darcy, who acts methodically and discreetly, Edward, as one creature of the night, is passionate and terribly jealous. In this sense, his covetousness is highlighted in the novel as evidence of his love for Bella. Edward plainly admits to her that sometimes he has problems with his temper, and confesses how jealous he felt when he realised Mike, one of their classmates, showed signs of interest in Bella. After Bella's incident, they both stop at a café, and Edward discloses he was able to read the four assaulters' minds and their thoughts concerning Bella owing to his telepathic gift, thus admitting he had to fight back his anger and was in trouble to subdue his wish to kill them due to his anger and jealousy. Nonetheless, Edward's passionate and wild nature, as well as his continuous insistence to Bella that he poses a danger to her, do not decrease her love for him but rather increase and unleash

her passion. Moreover, as soon as Bella realises the waitress feels attracted towards Edward, she cannot help getting terribly jealous as a response.

And yet, Edward feels more than mere jealousy when another faction of vampires intrudes into their secluded province. On the day Bella meets the Cullens at their manor, they all decide to go to the forest and play baseball to take advantage of the fine weather. In the midst of the game, three vampires – Laurent, Victoria, and James– make their appearance, undoubtedly attracted by Bella’s curious smell. Of all of them, James seems particularly dangerous as he immediately feels attached to Bella as he identifies her human nature. Edward and the Cullens realise Bella is in terrible danger, as James will not stop until he manages to kill Bella and drink her blood. This unexpected encounter with a faction of hunting vampires urges the Cullens to move Bella and conceal her far away from Forks to preserve both her safety and that of her father Charlie, whom Bella convinces she is leaving home. Nonetheless, James’ mischievous machinations persuade Bella to believe her mother is also in danger, thus bargaining her own life for that of her mother. Once Bella manages to escape from the Cullens’ protective shelter, she meets James face to face, and gets ready to die. Nonetheless, once again, when Bella has already lost consciousness, she overhears the voice of her saviour: “And then I knew I was dead. Because, through the heavy water, I heard the sound of an angel calling my name, calling me to the only heaven I wanted” (452). If Edward had previously saved Bella from disgrace, he saves her again from falling from the light and become a vampire. His enduring protection, as well as Bella’s own description of Edward as her angel, gives evidence of her desperate need for him to remain alive. As Darcy had saved Lydia from Wickham’s evil intentions as well as the Bennets’ family from disgrace, Edward twice saves Bella from shame and preserves her human condition until the end.

As Mary Waldron asserts, the closure of *Pride and Prejudice*, even if apparently conventional in the marriage of Elisabeth and Darcy, is not entirely sentimental, as “Austen never quite allows us to forget the multiple problems which the alliances bring” (1999:61). Conversely, in Meyer’s novel, Bella is seriously considering giving up her life to sanction an eternal union with Edward, and her idealisation is evident when, in the last chapter of the novel, after all she has been suffering, she confesses to Edward, “mostly I dream about being with you forever” (498), while he ironically asserts, ““Is that what you dream about? Being a monster?”” (498). In contrast, the last chapter in Austen’s novel underlines Elisabeth’s influence over Darcy’s sister, Georgiana, thus describing that “by Elisabeth’s instructions she began to comprehend that a woman may take liberties with her husband, which a brother will not always

allow in a sister more than ten years younger than himself" (299). Despite obvious and commented parallelisms, this differing closure underlines the disparate discourse unfolded all through both novels, Bella's devotion despite becoming a victim, and Elisabeth's triumph and subtle empowerment.

Any comparative analysis between Bella and Elizabeth seems particularly unfair to the former. Jane Austen's heroines possess single-mindedness; consciously virtuous, they acquire self-confidence and faith, and are not easily disheartened. As a matter of fact, Austen's heroines are usually fond of fruitful conversation and even bodily exercise, to the extent both Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility* and Elisabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* indulge in taking long walks even if in stormy weather. Bella cannot equal Elizabeth's fondness of exercise and walking, since Bella describes herself as clumsy and dependent, unable to overcome any situation demanding physical strength. Furthermore, fond of the art of conversation, Elizabeth is often ironic and proffers witty remarks which turn out to be critical and even poignant at turns. Despite her playfulness, she is also thoughtful and careful about serious matters, and her gravity coupled with her endurance endows her, as happens with many of Austen's heroines, with enough confidence in her own judgments and observations. In contrast, Bella hardly ever feels self-confident but eagerly subservient to Edward's will to the extent she would not hesitate to sacrifice her life provided she could still remain attached to Edward.

According to Ram, most Austen's novels can be interpreted as a narrative of the heroines' release from the worthlessness of the wrong man (1989:40) as a result of the heroine's ultimate discovery of the hero's dubious past. Indeed, Elisabeth Bennet gains insight into Wickham's reprobate nature which results in her rejecting the young lieutenant and accepting Darcy accordingly. In sharp contrast, it is precisely when Bella gets to know Edward's dark nature as a vampire that she feels irretrievably in love with him, thus incorporating the dangerous implications that romantic love ultimately seems to bring about in many popular romance novels, that is, women's glad subjection and self-sacrifice for the sake of true love.

Despite the fact a comparative analysis can also be established between *Twilight* and Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, Bella and Edward do not seem to match Catherine and Heathcliff as closely as they resemble Elizabeth and Darcy. Bella does not share Catherine's dilemma between being true to herself and her social aspirations, and Edward, despite being a vampire, hardly matches Heathcliff's passionate attraction towards Cathy, as it is precisely Edward who tries to convince Bella not to get too close to him. Edward's vampiric nature

entangles him in an ancient and wealthy dynasty which appears in sharp contrast with Heathcliff's humble origins as an orphan. Actually, in Meyer's novel, Jacob seems to be the male character that presents a more acute resemblance with Heathcliff. Jacob has been Bella's closest friend since childhood, and it is obvious he feels attracted to her. As opposed to Edward's pale and pseudo-Caucasian complexion, which bears more resemblance with Edgar in Bronte's novel, Jacob's Native-American features are also somehow evocative of Heathcliff's gypsy origins. Nonetheless, Jacob is not given enough prominence in Meyer's first novel of her tetralogy, and thus the love triangle established among Edward, Bella and Jacob –Edgar, Catherine, and Heathcliff, for that matter– is not significantly explored up until the third novel in Meyer's Twilight series, *Eclipse*, through which Meyer provides many explicit references and quotes from Emily Bronte's novel.

Taking into consideration the analogies established with regard to their plot as well as the dissimilarities in relation to their discourse, I would like to conclude the analysis of both novels by perusing Simon Joyce's image of the rear-view mirror, whereby he claims that, when we try to recreate the past, we never really encounter it, but we rather gain a mediated image like the one we get when we glance into our rear-view mirrors. In this respect, Joyce's metaphor involves the paradoxical sense of looking forward to see what is behind us, thus claiming the inevitable distortion any mirror image may have, as the objects in the mirror are usually closer than they appear (2002:3). Thus, recreations of past works often blur the primeval image, implying a projected picture, an idealised visualisation which is counterfeited and unfaithful to the original so as to fulfil one's current purposes. By revising and updating old myths we recreate them but often subdue their original purpose. In this way, we may argue whether updating the Bennet-Darcy myth does not necessarily entail a contemporary reappropriation, and thus, transformation to suit one's purpose. All in all, the Bennet-Darcy myth has been extendedly explored through cultural manifestations, but if deprived of its sociocultural context, it ends up presenting an anachronistic updating of the myth of romantic love, especially addressed at female adolescents, which may bring about some serious consequences, such as the idealisation of impossible relations, the innate suffering nature of love, as well as the sacrifice of personal pursuits for the sake of romanticism.

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