

*Writing and Reading the **Twilight** Series: Discovering Some Implicit Worlds*

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the internal and external processes and processes of writing and reading through the unearthing of internal and external structures imposed on writers, readers, and texts. Specifically, it looks into various interlocking coordinates present in the relationships between writer/reader, context, text, and the socio-psycho dynamics involved in such relationships. This is done through an examination of the processes of writing and reading of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series. By looking into various realities connected with the writing and reading of Meyer's fiction, this essay offers some insights into the nature of writing and reading itself, as well as into the character of the author and readers. By delving into such writing-reading elements, the expressive, affective and objective aspects of literary works are also given more flesh.

KEYWORDS

Creativity, criticism, resistance, writing as death, writing-reading interplay

INTRODUCTION

The *Twilight* series is based on Stephenie Meyer's dream – a dream (*dream*¹) which she, the author, experienced in sleep, recounted in writing, and enlarged in the four-installment series (*Twilight*, *New Moon*, *Eclipse*, and *Breaking Dawn*). In another sense, it is also a story based on the author's dream (*dream*²), that is a longing, a hankering, or thirsting for what is lacking – expressed through the narrative and embodied in its extraordinary vampire-characters who reside in a specially-chosen setting favorable to their survival. In these two senses, the *Twilight* series originated from the author's depths – being triggered by *dream*¹ which, in turn, is deeply grounded in *dream*². The expressive character of literary works is thus illustrated through *Twilight*'s textual representation of the author's dreams.

This article will expound on these two-level dream-sources of *Twilight*, revealing both the biographical footing of *dream*¹ and, with the help of Freud's

analysis, the social connections of *dream*². This whole process is hoped to bring to light important authorial backgrounds and narrative elements that underscore the author's dreams and reveal what to her are foundations and armor of love and life.

In other words, this essay will unveil and identify fundamental moral assumptions which the author of *Twilight* has embedded in the whole narrative. This will be done in the following discussion: 1) a reconstruction of the factors that led the author to compose *Twilight* to introduce the topic via bits of biographical and social information; 2) an unveiling of the moral qualities/force embodied by the main protagonists to show the author's emphasis on virtue as a foundation and armor of love and life; 3) a look at the life-setting and material background of the author to further reinforce the context-appropriateness and context-dependence of choice virtues; and 4) *Twilight's* moral influence over its readers to discuss how the narrative could have a moral influence on readers. This last point touches on the affective character of literary works.

With the task of connecting the author and readers to implicit contexts, it is necessary to expand our view beyond the author's and readers' disclosures. As these behind-the-back contexts are made more explicit, literature's rootedness and dependence on implicit worlds are better clarified – which could explain further the expressive, affective, and objective character of literary pieces. Even Stephenie Meyer, the author, does not possess the definitive view on the significance of her composition. Her sources are bigger than herself and they remain mostly behind her plans; mainly implicit and – thus not immediately open to herself and to the ordinary reader.

Some things that Meyer does not care to uncover and some things that most of us are not interested in discovering are also important for a greater appreciation of the experience of writing and reading, as well as for a greater understanding of our world and ourselves.

STEPHENIE MEYER AND THE *TWILIGHT* SERIES

Stephenie Meyer, when interviewed about her books, has disclosed portions of herself. Through her testimonies, we are provided with background materials that, to some extent, have shown us a better picture of the author. Readers have also contributed their share of insights. Forums and blogs supply data that help in assessing *Twilight's* impact on readers. These have provided clues, not only about the books' appeal to readers, but also about what's behind that appeal.

Ms. Meyer, a mother of three young boys and a (used-to-be) full-time housewife, was born in 1973. Her family lives in Phoenix, Arizona – a place which Meyer characterizes as “hot, hot, hot.” She graduated at Brigham Young University with a bachelor's degree in English. She has been married for ten and half years. When her sons were born, she became busy with “babysitting” and “spouse-caring” until she had an unusual and alluring dream that led her to write the first of the romance-adventure series, *Twilight*.

It was on June 2, 2003 when Meyer woke up from a dream featuring a girl and her lover vampire. The two characters were together in a scenic forest where they exchanged thoughts about their unconventional relationship and their peculiar predicament. Meyer reproduced this dream in chapter 13 of *Twilight*. Her words about her dream:

Though I had a million things to do, I stayed in bed, thinking about the dream. Unwillingly, I eventually got up and did the immediate necessities, and then put everything that I possibly could on the back burner and sat down at the computer to write – something I hadn’t done in so long that I wondered why I was bothering.

Eventually, the dream has sent Meyer into writing trips. She could not stop putting on paper what her dream imprinted in her memory. When she found time to write she would sit down and expand the original dream-thought; the dream-process thus found a space and medium as Meyer’s memories were extended and recorded on paper.

Even when already in bed (upstairs), Meyer would rise up and go (downstairs) to her computer to encode what kept running in her head. She would later have a pen and paper next to her. It became too tiring to get up from bed every time she had a material rising up her mind. Nobody seemed to know about this by-the-side activity. It was only later, when a book was already getting into form, that Meyer told her sister about her preoccupation. It took her three months to complete the story of Bella and Edward in the first book *Twilight*; actually, two years to produce the definitive version.

With encouragement from her sister, Meyer decided to get *Twilight* published. It was a long and tedious process but with the help of a literary agent the work was finally sent to seven publishers; six of whom rejected it. Lucky for Little, Brown and Company who made Meyer sign for a 3-volume work for young adults. She was so excited and elated to produce what is now called the *Twilight* series; not three but four-volume work which includes *New Moon*, *Eclipse*, and *Breaking Dawn*. Another work *Midnight Sun* which features Edward’s point of view of *Twilight* could be published in the future (this was apparently shelved by Meyer because of the leaked copies of her first draft).

Twilight is a simple story that has captivated young-adult readers, especially girls (women), all over the world. It has been translated into 40 languages and has sold millions of copies. The Harry Potter 7-volume series tops as it has sold more than 100 million copies. Meyer’s *Breaking Dawn* sold about 1.2 million in one day; Rowling’s seventh and last installment, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, sold 8 million copies in 24 hours.

The first book, *Twilight*, starts with the departure of Isabella “Bella” Swan from sunny Phoenix, Arizona to rainy Forks, Washington to live with her father, Charlie. This allows her mother, Renée, to travel with her new husband, a minor-league baseball player. As a newcomer in a very small town, Bella attracts much attention at her new school. Several boys compete for her

attention, no matter how clumsy she appears. Edward Cullen, a “vegetarian” vampire (one who only drinks animal blood), who also drives a Volvo, is Bella’s classmate. On her first day of school, Edward seems to resist her presence. Bella, who was puzzled by Edward’s behavior, could not, however, get over her attraction for him.

Bella, with the help of Jacob who is a family friend’s son, soon discovered that Edward and his family are vampires. Despite this, Edward and Bella fall in love. Edward, however, has to constantly struggle with the fact that Bella’s scent is so irresistible.

Edward would later explain about their first encounter:

The fragrance coming off your skin... I thought it would make me deranged that first day. In that one hour, I thought of a hundred different ways to lure you from the room with me, to get you alone. And I fought them each back, thinking of my family, what I could do to them. I had to run out, to get away before I could speak the words that would make you follow...

Each time they meet, Edward had to control his desire to kill her. His words to Bella:

Isabella... Bella, I couldn’t live with myself if I ever hurt you. You don’t know how it’s tortured me... The thought of you, still, white, cold... to never see you blush scarlet again, to never see that flash of intuition in your eyes when you see through my pretenses... it would be unendurable... You are the most important thing to me now. The most important thing to me ever.

However, their relationship is disturbed when James, a tracker vampire, hunts Bella for sport. The Cullen family has to hide her and devise a plan to confuse the tracker but Bella was tricked to give herself up to James as she had thought he holds her mother as hostage. Edward and the rest of the Cullen family rescue Bella before James could kill her. They have subdued James but only after he had bitten Bella’s hand. Edward sucks the venom out of Bella’s system before it can spread and transform her into a vampire. Bella had been saved and they return to Forks. Bella expresses her desire to become a vampire but Edward refuses and even makes himself invisible in Forks.

The sequels (*New Moon*, *Eclipse*, and *Breaking Dawn*) have developed the whole romance-drama-adventure around Bella and Edward, and the werewolf Jacob and his friends and their families providing some twists. The culmination was the immortalization of Bella into a vampire and the surmounting of major obstacles, including the “complicating” romance with Jacob and the fight with the powerful Volturi coven of human-blood-sucking vampires.

Breaking Dawn has concluded the series by putting the exclamation point to a fantasy that starts with Meyer's dream. Millions of readers have been drawn towards her fairy-tale-like composition.

WRITING ON MEYER'S SLATE: HER LIFE AND HER WORK

A close reading of Meyer's work would yield more understanding about who Meyer is in real life; in turn, a closer look into Meyer's life gives us more materials for the understanding of her work – thus, further aiding in the foregrounding of the moral values/virtues/themes developed by the narrative.

Meyer says she is a simple *hausfrau*, a status which has become connected with routine; it calls to mind a woman's domestic share in society's division of labor. Following the wife-mother roles, domestic housekeeping does not afford much excitement and fun to many stay-at-home mothers, even if this is oftentimes euphemized by the term homemaking.

When she began working on *Twilight*, Meyer had to insert writing into her daily life. This gave her a great amount of excitement; and difference to predictability. The writing process itself had thrown her into an extraordinary plane. It had made her pierce through the ordinary *hausfrau* definitions; she was then steadily moving beyond the matrix of the household, extricating herself away from the world of commoners. She was enjoying the writing, to say the least. She revealed this in her website: "I was just writing down a story for my personal enjoyment, letting it grow as it would and lead where it would. No pressure, just fun." Elsewhere, she said, "It's hard to explain how joyous the writing process was for me when I was creating *Twilight*. It was something I did for fun and excitement, with no concern for what anyone else might think, because no one else was ever going to read it. With *New Moon*, I knew people were going to read it. This made it very hard to put the words down, and I had a horrible feeling much like stage fright the whole time I was writing." In fact, Meyer claimed she got carried away almost every time she sat in front of her computer. But this passion for writing intensified and Meyer produced six or seven books in a span of five years.

In *New Moon*, Meyer had to pass through a tough test in extricating Bella from her almost tragic experience of loss of a true love in the person of Edward – a marvelously faithful traditional vampire who had to leave her to avoid the almost irresistible temptation to suck her blood. Though the writing experience in *New Moon* was less fun, it was full of more grating emotions. In her website, Meyer wrote:

It was hard to write her [Bella's] pain, because I had to live it to write it, and I was often writing through my tears. At the same time, it was always interesting. Bella surprised me with her grit and dogged determination. She pushed through the agony, living for others – Charlie in this case – as has always been her style.

Meyer's hope for a baby girl has been frustrated in real life, but this did not prevent her from birthing her in *Twilight*. Bella is her baby, as well as herself. Taking care of her baby and herself in that baby Bella in the *Twilight* series tells us how writing is itself a process of giving birth to dreams. In caring for Bella, Meyer gifted her baby no less than the experience of true love (being able to give it and being able to receive it from a traditional Edward, 100-year-old, but frozen in his 17-year-old gorgeous frame). The form of this true love will be framed and enhanced by the amazing characters like Jacob (who is also ready to sacrifice himself for Bella), the werewolf friends of Jacob, the vampire family of Edward, and the simple and traditional setting of Forks, Olympia, Washington, all giving a world of support to a truly "Gothic romance."

The writer's world (Phoenix) was far removed from Forks where her "baby" Bella had to move and discover a most exciting life. Although Forks (where almost every day was rain) was damp and soggy enough to look dreary, it also provided a sanctuary for vampires. Its neighborly environment stands in stark contrast to the urban anonymity and harshness of Phoenix everyday life. For Meyer, we could surmise: true love must start and get fulfilled in a setting that provides the favorable conditions – broader friendships, family and extended family togetherness, unsullied mystical wilderness, and simplicity in almost – everything. It is also amidst all this provincial ecology that the intensity of deep teleological passions is felt more strongly because they could be clearly heard thriving far from the distractions of urban jungles. Nothing less than the promise and possibility of true love's realization could be devised by Meyer for her whiny and plain baby Bella; providing herself something different from her prosaic *hausfrau* existence. Here, a situational correction of reality is introduced and communicated through fiction.

Edward, the personal too, had to be the perfect partner for Bella. We do not know how much of Meyer's personality is written in Bella's character, but we are sure to find the common clumsiness and uninteresting-ness being ignored by Edward for the more important Bella who loves him and who, because unfathomable, becomes very interesting. Bella's impenetrable brain makes her special to Edward who has the ability to enter into people's minds. This made Bella's blood 100x more appetizing than ordinary mortals' blood. But even when tempted, Edward's resolve not to kill Bella became more firm. He wants to preserve her humanity because Bella's love, her loved ones, and his own family are far more noble reasons than the gratification of a fleeting desire.

Discipline, self-restraint, other-oriented sacrifice, respect, gentleness, sentimental tenderness, etc. are human qualities that make this vampire more interesting and noble – the immortal and perfect for Meyer's Bella.

Meyer's story, thus, evokes hope, fulfillment, or greater thirst for the "classical" virtues of sacrifice and self-control – rare or lacking in urban centers' quotidian affairs which emphasize more on efficiency (cf. exploitative manufacturing) and self-centered instant gratifications. It also refreshes the hopes of readers whose ideals are stoked by the traditional behavior of so-called vegetarian, and so admirable, vampires.

Meyer has created the 100-year-old immortal as the bearer of those qualities worthy of Bella's pursuit. *Twilight* tricks our experience of time by passing through the "immortal" constructs. This could express a longing for the return of a world and an age long repressed, colonized, and subordinated by rational pursuits of utilitarian and pragmatic values. Bella's death-defying and death-inviting behavior towards Edward could also be a sign of a heart's reckless but unstoppable longing for something eternal and ultimately for the only thing worth dying for or living for. Don't we feel one with Meyer in this longing? Readers would, in fact, extremely enjoy what Meyer has allowed them to imagine and possess at least in print. Meyer's self-expression through writing has dovetailed with the readers' affective appropriation in reading.

FROM THE WRITING IN DREAM-THOUGHT TO WRITING OF DREAM-CONTENT

Meyer's dream-thought has been extended, translated, and displaced into a dream-content through writing – one that is not only emotionally expressive but *creative, therapeutic, and critical* as well. This is a realization that we could gather from Meyer's *Twilight* series. Through her novel, Meyer has given the public some things that went beyond emotional writing or pleasurable reading. She has, in fact, succeeded, albeit more unintentionally than intentionally, in communicating what is lacking in the ways we mortals are conducting ourselves in today's world – *Twilight* convinces that humans could become immortal if all of us exercise the ageless virtues of self-control, patience, and self-sacrifice.

Let us try to track the career of her dreams with the help of a device used by Freud in his own dream-analysis. We are here trying to discover the psycho-social platforms that may bring to light the moral forces which Meyer had attributed to her vampire characters.

To describe the imprinting of thoughts on the psyche, Freud in "A note upon the 'mystic writing-pad'" used as an analogy of the psychic apparatus the writing device called, in his time, the Mystic Pad, something similar to the "magic writing pad" of today. It consists of a waxed paper for surface scribbling and underneath it a rubberized slate from which the cover waxed paper borrows image when pressure is put on it by writing. To remove the surface images, the waxed paper is pulled and lifted up. Fresh writing could be repeated each time the surface material is freed from removable images.

The detachable paper represents the surface of the human memory slate, responsible for the reception of conscious and unconscious perceptions. The rubber material represents the memory slate's inner pad which serves as storage for memorable data or force. Every image that appears on the writing surface of the waxed paper may disappear by just lifting it away from the underlying pad. Every pressure acts to imprint memorable stimuli if these are important or forceful enough as to create a breach in both the outer surface and inner memory slate. Such memorable stimuli would later on add to the content of the unconscious, itself a product of powerful stimuli that leave traces, as well

as stored aggregates of repetitive pounding on the surface to eventually register permanent dents or traces on the deeper memory layers. What we know is that the deeper portion of the psyche's topography is not a place from where we could consciously retrieve materials or into which we could consciously encode data. The retrieval or encoding always happens unconsciously even if the individual consciously perceives data from the outside or retrieves data from the inside.

Meyer's dream-work happened at a time when she has no awareness. The dream-thoughts have just presented to her and these are what she remembers.

The dream-work of Meyer brings us not only into the psyche's process of reorganization but also into a scene of writing – a writing on Meyer's memory slate. Where these dream-thoughts come from we do not exactly know; we just say these are from her depths.

We know about her situation, the context of her dream: Meyer's status, hopes, and latent longings (*hausfrau*, true love, a baby girl, and redemption through immortality). We must remind ourselves that everyday pressures are also scribbled into her memory slate; constantly leaving traces, even if briefly, of her *hausfrau* patterns of existence; all of which provided materials and energy for a memory apparatus to be intensely and actively preoccupied with a profound scribbling of the dream-work starring Bella and Edward. The latter provided welcome thoughts that will be willingly translated and transformed by Meyer's writing – a process and a product now detached from her psyche and extended as writing.

We have a very important lesson here. Everyday-life traces are not that interesting or enjoyable that is why we have no special regard for the common, bland, trite, and inconsequential. These, however, would be scribbled together with the spirit of the time; our soul would be bearing the character, that is the soul, of our world – its culture and patterns of order. There is no need for Meyer to write about this long and sustained period of scribbling into her memory the shared standards and pathways of everyday existence. It is not that exciting; in the first place, it is not memorable. (It finds place in her novel as mere backdrop of memorable scenes.) Nevertheless, the fact is that because of this day-to-day writing into our memory we have acquired a character which we also call our own. Character formation, indeed, passes through this constant rubbing of our surface by quotidian pressures, leaving the traces which we inevitably recognize as self. We feel that with the imposed scribbling, we identify what we consider as our self; that is why some of us do not even go beyond points of imposition because we do not consider these as violation of the self. What we usually know is that the self does not normally deserve a special attention worthy of a memorable entity. The self has taken the character of everyday life. Some moments, however, spell some difference to the self; dreams could provide it that difference.

In every period of an individual's existence, one is imprinted with the character of one's time; this, however, may also be called the burial of the

individual by the soil and mounds of our culture or spirit of our age. Gaining the spirit of a time may be seen thus as both an erasure and growth of a self. Potentialities will be halted through a railroading of individual motion which is itself loaded with potentialities. This is a human predicament of which individuals must struggle for expansion and development.

Meyer's dream provided an alternative motion for herself. But then we have to recognize this as a different scribbling on her memory slate. But a happy scribbling for her since it supplements or alternatively soothes some memories of drudgery that sap her energy on a daily basis. This dream has provided a different kind of energy and an exciting path different from the everyday life that modern Phoenix has imposed on her. It does, however, follow a similar pattern of imposition of a world and its spirit – a world just inverse of Phoenix.

Creative

The product of thought which is writing is a tool of creative deliberation and imagination. Note here that the product is not just the text but the act of writing itself.

Writing as an after-dream-thought is a step towards the extension of every original dream-work process which continuously instigates the psyche. The mind may be brewing every minute, but is also in need of a space and material for expression. This need could be satisfied by the very act and product of self-expressive creative writing (others may try music or painting; while others may try to satisfy this need through food, drink, or sex); this is provided by the presently recognized art of writing and the opportunity provided today as writing for publication and readers' consumption.

Freud, via Derrida, has a different way of looking at writing – in two stages: the writing off (death) of the subject, and; the writing by the subject who pleasures in this process even if he does not know that he is actually reliving his loss.

Writing into the subject's psyche is also saturating that which remains "open" in the subject's slate; it is imposing something on the subject, robbing him of his individuality. On the other hand, the writing of the writer from and about his memory is a reliving of that loss. He does this because it is pleasurable – a self-gratifying process to capture something to compensate for that which is lost. Writing is birthing a material (book, published story) to dramatize the subject's loss and gain in the world that initiates every obliteration of unique individuals through established rituals. Thus, the subject's writing could be understood as a vengeance against the world that has "written him off" as an individual self. Writing is thus creative pleasure; it re-introduces the self, but this self re-introduction is itself a correction of the world experienced as a threat to (Bella's and Edward's) experiences of love and life. Writing, in this sense, amplifies the expressive character of literature as a drive towards self-affirmation and self-resurgence.

Therapeutic

The writing process is also a therapeutic process; it brings about a material that could cure a mind already oppressed by images it neither invited nor wanted to keep. Writing, in re-expressing these images, becomes a struggle against an imposed universe. The product of therapy being the text becomes an exhibit of creativity and reorganization and thus of healing; the self will even admire itself but still attempts to seek further recognition through its product.

Writing (and reading) as therapy is part of a continuum of the dream-thought/dream-content transformation. The enjoyment and excitement that the writer experiences show the desirable result of a writing struggle brought about by an imposed original writing into one's psyche by an impersonal world, an object forcing itself legibly on the subject's memory slate.

Writing is a self-pleasuring and a pleasurable expression of memory traces. It is an externalization of the repressive process and its agents (in the worlds of production, consumption, or routines); itself a rite of recovery of the self; also a self-exorcism. Writing tries to relive a pleasurable process that somehow highlights the original scene of writing on the memory apparatus. Thus making the subject feel his presence without him realizing that what he is doing is also a personalized and gratifying process of re-living his burial. Death of the subject was the imprinting; reliving of that death being pleasurable; one writes to achieve a different kind of death – something willed, as if the subject is really present and alive. Yes, this is our predicament that when writing we refer back to the occasion of our erasure: when our society, the market, the institution, the prescriptions, bureaucracy, impress on us their image and likeness. We recognize or celebrate our life out of the inevitable perversity of commonplace everyday activities.

Critical

Twilight series as a product of dream-work is a writing by an individual triggered by various experiences in the world. The writing on her memory slate by the pressures and dents of quotidian routine and pragmatic life had incited her psychic apparatus to wish for something and which the archived traditional world could actually offer – this is, at least, suggested by the *Twilight* heroes and their settings. Writing about this made that world more visible, something to share, something to be already enjoyed by searching readers, also yearning for the immortal. It has also become a shared experience of social criticism, even if this is not something consciously raised by the writer and readers of fiction.

Meyer has appropriated traditional values which she feels must constitute a world for a plain girl and a gorgeous vampire who did represent that chivalry in a world suffering from the absence or lack of focus, commitment, tenderness, and disciplined and dedicated passion.

What modernity has repressed in the workplace or the neighborhood and registered in psyches will indeed always return as a “rebellious” writing as well

as involved reading. Some writers capitalizing on these themes will actually laugh their way to their bank.

But there is here mirrored in Meyer's appropriation of the traditional a correlative moment of repression and appropriation – the traditional having repressed the newborn modern individual and the adult modern counter-represses the traditional. It is, however, in distinct compartments that we see clearly that repressive measures as selective. One could observe the official Catholic sexual morality as traditionalist but when it comes to social morality it actually shares one of the more modern (and post-modern) positions around. On the other hand, modernity promotes rationality, autonomy, freedom, democracy as regards sexuality but not as “rational, open, democratic or free” when it comes to socio-economic issues – it truly *calculates to the point of unthinking habit* everything that it could get and give. That is why within the Catholic “universe,” many people affected by traditionalism are hoping for change towards greater tolerance and openness; while those affected by the instrumental rationality of the liberal-capitalist universe are hoping for change towards the more traditional values of solidarity and immortalized fidelity.

Readers of the *Twilight* series are asked to plunge themselves into a world that brings alive (again and again) the heroic and marvelous – they plunge into this experience of the traditional world which represents moral values that are marginalized or subordinated. In this sense, *Twilight*, even if a form of escape from the effects of urban living, is also a form of critique on the present-day lived-world which no longer effectively represent immortal values of sentimental tenderness, patience, self-control, singularity of romance, redemption, and salvation.

Meyer made this escape and critique possible by giving the readers Isabella Swan and thus ride on what would transport them into uncharacteristic experiences. The attribution of clumsiness, whininess, and plainness has become the magic wand's trick that made readers to withdraw from their own forms of drudgery and move towards Forks and participate in Bella's extraordinary experiences; in her predicament, unusual discoveries and transformations have happened – some things which amaze and attract readers who are constantly soaked in their own daily grind.

What then are those that the traditionalists hope for their present-day concerns? What do moderns/postmoderns long for amidst present-day preoccupations?

One thing that is clearly shown in Meyer's case is that repression is not total; it is somewhat selective and at the same time partially successful. What is repressed in her personality will still be expressed whether via common traditions or through personal hopes and memories. There is always the possibility of the return of the unsuccessfully repressed portion of deep old-fashioned morality. Readers who sense in the writing the presence of their hopes will naturally connect and maintain connection. Once this process

of connection is opened, the reader-writer engagement through the text will find life.

**ESCAPE FROM HOMOGENEITY, ESCAPE TOWARDS INDIVIDUALITY:
SURVIVING SERVITUDE THROUGH WRITING AND READING**

But there is a danger to this escape even if coupled with critique. This danger is linked with the danger inherent in writing and reading – the danger of disengagement from what is actually shared by people. Writers and readers are in fact constantly asked to find time and space to detach themselves from what is common, even if this is identified with the common good or the good of other people, especially those excluded – those who cannot participate in our affairs for lack of endowments.

Reader's passage through common time will be suspended by the control of the presence of Edward and Bella whose journey of love is ineluctably rushing towards immortality. This suspended sense of reality is actually triggered by a longing for death and immortality, taking momentary grip of everyday mortal life. The commoners' humanity will be seduced to enter into a material that represents an elevated life for which writer and readers are accomplices of perpetuating through continuing acts of writing and reading.

Reading is not natural... it was made possible by many social factors and not by one's genes. But the constant practice of reading has also disposed many to the practice itself, and this, for sure, would alter how the brain approaches the practice, becoming a habit, eventually registering something more permanent into one's genes.

The need to record one's property made people write something on clay and others who have "read" it were forced to look into the claims and assumptions of the "writer."

The moment "writers" expanded on their coverage of documentation to include other things they do not own, the "readers" would become more involved in other matters and thus force their brain coverage to expand towards unlikely activities as well.

Reading makes possible one's uniqueness and solitude to enter into a world created by another person even if that person would not even have invited you into that creatively organized world.

Writing and reading may be autonomous processes, but through a cooperative activity both writer and reader could form a unity; the successful expression of the writer would have to be met by the successful consumption/immersion by the affected reader for a successful interaction to be realized. The writer's engagement with his craft is nothing but a self-expression without the reader's engagement with the crafted material; writers are successful when they have captured an audience. But the captivity of audiences does not really just rely on a passive ingestion of material; the material must incite and elicit response; this can only be possible if it connects or concerns the world or dispositions of the reader.

Reading a book forces one to follow the process of withdrawing from one's lived-world to an "imaginary" world of the creative writer/author. This withdrawal brings the reader into a more individualized mode of existence. This means one is literally forced to detach oneself from other entities and bring one's senses into a sustained connection with the literature's world. Into this world, the individual becomes perched and nested but at the same time temporarily withdrawn from his own reality. The withdrawal is an indispensable condition for connection with the author. Degrees of withdrawal and degrees of connection are, however, what is involved in the process. The temporary, partial, contrived, convenient, provisional, incited, mimetic forms are feasible forms of withdrawal. Total and infinite forms are only imaginary or wishes of the heart. Withdrawal, thus, is something the reader only could put into action, not complete, only so much.

Reading is a participation in the author's point of view. Readers are somehow forced to adapt to the writer's and printer's point of view. Once the link is established the process of discovery is experienced and the reader's world expands as he also expands and expounds on the writer's world.

But once the reader withdraws from his lived world and plunges himself into depths of the writer's own world, the connection becomes almost a "lived" reality. The characters, plot, disasters, conflicts, resolutions, and denouement will be joined to the self, to one's individuality. The book would thus vibrate and become engaging, interesting, significant, relevant, exciting, or very good.

What we see in print brings to life a non-existent; makes visible the invisible. That is why readers are hooked on the text when what they see could compensate for what is absent in sound or hearing within their lifeworlds. Or when their lifeworld saturates them with too much ordinariness and the textual allows them to see and feel rare and exciting worlds.

When the reader's world is pierced by the constant presence of a world in print, the reader becomes part of a world he need not even share. It is enough that he consents to be drawn into the writer's world and participate in the life of the characters even if this would mean leaving behind his mundane affairs. When a reader takes a book, he must leave behind his cooking, or gardening, or social networking so as to immerse, really immerse, into that world which make him lose his bearing in everyday preoccupations. Taking a book while cooking or exercising or digging a canal is so unbelievable and even contumacious to other people. The one reading must have to sacrifice either the quality of his work or the quality of his reading.

Audio books offer that possibility of hearing and not seeing a text, but this aural activity forces one to make his mundane affair merge or blend into something that tries to transform or transport a life-worldly reality into another universe. This transporting process converts the reader into an absent-minded being, making his ordinary world blend with the aurally mediated almost-lived world.

Reading and writing are thus dangerous since these could also mean leaving the affairs of our world. Engagement with Meyer's novels is also losing

engagement with what matters to other people. But what really matters may be relative.

There is always this process of inversion happening in the reader's world – when one attaches himself to an attractive world or character this reflects the leaving behind of a too familiar ordinary everyday world or role. The satisfaction of riding on a fresh setting or breathing with a character inverts the ordinary into extraordinary, the unremarkable into amazing, the common into rare, the boring into exciting, and thus the rewarding experience of temporarily subverting one's too-familiar everyday life. It could be that this is a form of escape; but this could at the same time be a form of rebellion, a rejection of a world that forces everyone to become all part of the οἱ πολλοί (*hoi polloi*) “the many”.

CONCLUSION

We have seen that the acts of reading and writing are more than the avowed choices and desires of authors and readers. Texts are not just products of individual decisions by writers; these are also by-products (expressions) of the process of development undergone by authors. Reading of texts is not just caused by readers' choices; it is also an effect of the world's demands that predisposed people into reading preferences that evoke affections. Writing and reading, we have seen, are connected with “things” in the “implicit worlds” of authors and readers.

Reading the *Twilight* series is enjoyable and I realize I have also shared in Meyer's enjoyment of her writing experience. I have often wondered if this excitement should end with every publication of her work. But one thing is sure to come out of every publication: the book will gain life in the hands of every reader.

The young and the young-once readers have enjoyed reading the *Twilight* series and they were ready to sacrifice their time for household chores and studies not in favor of the Facebook or iPad or texting or eating but for this enjoyable activity of consuming *Twilight*. Meyer's work has somehow brought back many young people into reading mode again (with the lack of better sources of stimulation other than video and audio stuff and booze and sex). But what could be said is that young people's fondness for either Bella or Edward is also a reflection of their own dispositions – their psychological/emotional states which truly hanker for fulfillment, love, sentimental attachment... things which Meyer has “offered” for our fantasies or unfulfilled hopes. *Twilight* craze has probably provided adults with an indicator, a barometer, for young (and not-so-young) people's dispositions and dreams.

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WEBSITES

- <http://www.stepheniemeyer.com>
<http://www.thetwilightsaga.com/page/stephenie-1>

ENDNOTES

- ¹ This has to do with the relationship between Meyer and her work. Her own biography reveals her rich imagination, genius, and emotions, shedding light on the expressive aspect of her fiction as an embodiment of her dreams. The work thus becomes an externalization of what is in the internal of the author. To broaden the significance of the work, this expressive aspect may have to be complemented by the way readers appropriate the work. See M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).
- ² This aspect deals with the relationship between the audience and the work. It may be about the effect of the work on readers, but it also points to how readers appropriate the work as something significant and useful for their own purpose. See T.F. Davis and K. Womack, *Formalist Criticism and Reader-Response Theory* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).
- ³ Stephenie Meyer's personal testimony is found in her official website where she yields some valuable information which could either confirm or refute every attempt to understand her and her *Twilight* series. Some of our interpretations may simply be repetition of what she already wrote. That is why it is good to start with her statements; unless otherwise provided, our source is her official website, www.stepheniemeyer.com.

- ⁴ Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005).
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 260.
- ⁶ <http://www.thetwilightsga.com/page/stephenie-1>.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ Stephenie Meyer, *New Moon* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2006).
- ⁹ Stephenie Meyer, *Eclipse* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2007).
- ¹⁰ Stephenie Meyer, *Breaking Dawn* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2008).
- ¹¹ Meyer, *Twilight*, p. 270.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 273.
- ¹³ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 196-231.
- ¹⁴ See John Paul II's encyclical, *Laborem exercens* in Claudia Carlen, *The Papal Encyclicals: 1958-1981*; see also Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*.
- ¹⁵ See Ferdinand D. Dagmang, "Reasonable Solutions of the Social Order: Causes of Suffering for the Poor," *Hapag* 5/1-2 (2008): 139-153; Ferdinand D. Dagmang, "Christian Compassion and Solidarity within Capitalist Contexts," *Asia Pacific Social Science Review* 6.2 (2006): 53-72.