Love under Threat

The Emotional Valences of the *Twilight* Saga

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In Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*, the first of the four volumes of the *Twilight* saga, the heroine Bella Swann muses on the effect her mysterious classmate Edward Cullen has on her: "His fingers were ice-cold […] But that wasn't why I jerked my hand away so quickly. When he touched me, it stung my hand as if an electric current had passed through us".[1] These electrifying effects clearly are emotional. They call forth a physiological response in Bella that is based on changes in bodily expressions and action tendencies. These effects occur very fast and uncontrollably. Moreover, they make Bella aware that this meeting is significant to her life and wellbeing.

Bella's infatuation with Edward is both exhilarating and perilous: she is obsessed with a man who may kill her any minute. She is enchanted and spellbound by Edward: his looks, voice, smell, touch as well as his mind and talents. Sibylle Baumbach defines such a response as fascination consisting of a mixture of wonder and admiration as well as terror and trepidation.[2] She argues that fascination is an emotion because it triggers physical effects in the body and immobilizes it. It also suspends rational decision-making. In combining attraction and danger, fascination is a seductive pleasure.

Given that the *Twilight* saga is a vampire romance, its every page is infused with emotion. In the romance novel genre, fascination provides the grounds for the romantic choice of a partner, a process involving a number of stable elements of the generic plot structure. Choice is slowly consolidated through these stages and turned into commitment. The generic conventions of romance shape, steer,

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1   Meyer 2006a: 38.
2   Cf. Baumbach 2015: 11.

and even dictate the emotions of characters. Lauren Berlant argues that all genres are distinguished by the affective contract they promise.[3] Such a contract addresses both characters in the fictional world as well as implied and real-life readers. As its name indicates, the romance novel's generic contract centers on delivering an optimistic and reassuring experience of love. Typically, it promotes an idealizing script of the good life that combines intimate relationships with morals and economics. It advances enduring affection and emotionally fulfilling intimacy in couples and families; moreover, it rewards such commitment with economic security. In placing my examination in the context of genre, I rely on Pamela Regis' formulation of the plot elements that shape the treatment of relationships in the romance novel.

The *Twilight* saga has an audience exceeding over a hundred million readers. As John Cawelti argues, bestsellers are typically viewed as fantasies shaped by the specific cultural and historical contexts of their production and consumption. According to this view, such cultural fantasies simultaneously express and evade components of readers' social and collective reality. They voice anxiety-provoking issues while at the same time providing fantasy resolutions to them.[4] Eva Illouz has coined the term "emotional style" to describe various linguistic, scientific, and interactional techniques to apprehend and manage the emotions these fantasies call forth. Such techniques address the ways in which we organize our emotions concerning the self and its relation to others as well as imagining the self's potentialities.[5] They play a key role in structuring the fantasies bestsellers convey.

Berlant specifies that cultural fantasies in general strive to express conventional scripts for the "good life". They promote persistence in pursuing the activities spelled out in the scripts of these fantasies as a means of achieving the good life. It is in this sense that they are infused with optimism. These fantasies promise to enable readers to attain the "satisfying something" needed to establish a meaningful relationship to the world that they cannot generate on their own. This nebulous "something" – for example, an emotion, a thing, a circumstance or a characteristic – provides the fantasizer with the missing piece that would allow her to achieve the fullness of the good life script. Berlant argues, however, that many of our cherished cultural fantasies have become self-defeating in that they no longer feed a genuine sense of optimism. That is, they cannot inscribe and sustain a hopeful view of personal and collective transformation toward which subjects strive. Instead, they are infused with cruel optimism: what we desire

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3   Cf. Berlant 2011: 66.

4   Cf. Cawelti 1976: 35-36, see also Illouz 2014: 21-22.

5   Cf. Illouz 2007: 6-7.

actually turns into an obstacle to our flourishing. The objects that incited our attachment actively impede the aims that brought us to them initially.[6]

In this essay I examine how the *Twilight* saga's notion of love is linked with its emotional style. I treat emotional style as primarily addressing the various ways in which romance-novel conventions manage emotions. I analyse this style from three different perspectives. First, I examine the characters' moments of fascination as gateways to the concept of love on which the saga relies. Second, I pay attention to the most typical motifs of romance in order to demonstrate how they organize and shape the representation of emotions. I ponder the degree to which these motifs still are capable of sustaining the genre's optimism about intimate relationships. Finally, I consider how these representations are linked with our contemporary understanding of love. Throughout, I draw on romance-genre research and analyses of the changing historical and sociocultural contexts of love.

LOVE AS THRILLING MAGNETISM

The eight indispensable elements of the romance novel are in place in the *Twilight* saga: "the initial state of the society", "the meeting of hero and heroine", "the attraction between them", "the declaration of love", "the barrier(s) to their union", "the point of ritual death" when the union seems impossible, "the recognition" of the means to overcome the barrier(s) and "the betrothal". These scenes may take place in any order; they may be multiplied, repeated, merged together or reduced.[7] Moreover, as the genre favours passionate heroines,[8] readers are expected to experience vicariously what the seventeen-year-old protagonist-narrator Bella is going through.

Three elements often employed in the beginning of the romance novel – "the initial state of society", "the meeting", and "the attraction" – demonstrate how fascination shapes Bella's relationship with Edward. At the start, both the community and characters desire change, and this is the stage that first inscribes the optimistic stance of the romance genre. The coveted change is associated with culturally scripted fantasies of the good life. Bella's family is dysfunctional; her divorced parents are incapable of supporting her emotionally or financially. Given the Swann family's modest finances, whatever future Bella wants to have,

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6 Cf. Berlant 2011: 24-25.

7 Cf. Regis 2003: 30-38.

8 Cf. Radway 1984: 55.

she must carve it out for herself. As for Edward Cullen, he believes that being a vampire equals being damned. He is convinced that life no longer holds happiness for him. From the communal perspective, there is an ancient violent conflict between vampires and the local Quileute tribe who metamorphose into werewolves. This strife is revived when the Cullen family of vampires settles permanently in Forks. Consequently, the saga's opening describes a setting in which change is needed. This situation turns "the meeting" of the primary couple into an intense experience, as is seen in the following excerpts: "I was consumed by the mystery Edward presented. And more than a little obsessed by Edward himself."[9] "About three things I was absolutely positive. First, Edward was a vampire. Second, there was a 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."[10]

Typically, this stage opens up possibilities for the primary couple. Because the Cullens have a good social standing and are cultured and rich, dating Edward promises personal growth, a supporting familial context and upward mobility for Bella. Although Bella repeatedly protests that she is not interested in the accoutrements of the Cullen life style, nevertheless, the emotions Edward calls forth in her are inextricably linked with these prospects. No wonder then that a physical and mental magnetism keeps Bella riveted with Edward. In particular, Edward's charisma draws Bella to him. Baumbach explains that charisma is a personal magnetism, an exceptional quality of an individual personality, suggesting that he or she is gifted with supernatural, superhuman, or extraordinary powers or qualities.[11] This description is literal in Edward's case because he *is* a supernatural and superhuman creature.[12] This specific characteristic is tied up with the optimistic fantasy script of the romance novel, because when the charismatic person evokes fascination, the experience changes the admirer. This person "feels magically transformed and elevated, [her] imagination aroused. [She] sees visions of gods, supernatural creatures, mythic events".[13] Again, this feature is literal, as Edward opens up a supernatural world for Bella. Therefore, we need to consider what role the promise of a supernatural metamorphosis plays in the optimistic fantasy of the *Twilight* saga.

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9   Meyer 2006a: 57.

10   Ibid.: 170-171.

11   Cf. Baumbach 2015: 58.

12   A charismatic person is thought to be able to read the mind and moods of every person he meets (ibid.), another feature characterizing Edward, for his vampire talent is mindreading. The only mind he cannot read, however, is Bella's.

13   Ibid.

The real possibility of being killed by Edward entices Bella. He could acci-
dentally destroy her simply by hugging her. This feature ties in with fascination
in that it is a borderline experience. Fascination "arises from the combination of
two opposing forces and marks the concurrent awakening of deep attraction and
intense repulsion".[14] Danger keeps the grander scale of things in Bella's view.
This element of deathly danger accounts for Bella's intensive emotional en-
gagement. Edward resembles the Byronic hero in that his threatening nature
makes him much more interesting and enticing than any conventional suitor.

The *Twilight* saga illustrates practices and values of courtship and marriage
that are intimately linked with concepts of love. It is worth noticing that Bella
denies that love in any way involves a choice: "Love didn't work that way, I
decided. Once you cared about a person, it was impossible to be logical about
them anymore".[15] At another point she muses that "[l]ove is irrational [...] The
more you loved someone, the less sense anything made".[16] Portraying falling in
love as overwhelming and irrational fascination subscribes to an age-old model
of so-called "enchanted love", that, according to Illouz, consists of the following
features: enchanted love is experienced as a unique event, which erupts brutally
and unexpectedly in one's life; it is inexplicable and irrational; and it operates as
a deep commotion of the soul. This type of love is also felt to be fateful in the
sense that you cannot choose it: it chooses you even against your will.[17]

Fascination and enchanted love are not the same, but they are united by the
intensity of the subject's emotional experience. Such an emotion is part and
parcel of the romance novel's optimism, for intensity guarantees its genuineness.
This encounter takes over the body as well as stymying the senses and reason.
The love object is unique and definitely beyond comparison. The force of the
emotions calls forth a willingness in the lover to sacrifice oneself for the love
object. Fascination differs from enchanted love in that the dangers it evokes are
always real. This danger rivets the fascinated subject, making him or her deter-
mined to face the threats the object embeds. In the *Twilight* saga, this face-off
with the deadly menace of fascination potentially transports Bella into another
ontological realm, for she would remain "alive" as a vampire. Thus, her death
would include loss, but also the possibility of a new beginning, another feature
that fits the optimism of the generic script.

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14 Ibid.: 3.
15 Meyer 2006b: 304.
16 Ibid.: 340.
17 Cf. Illouz 2007: 89-90.

In the romance genre, fascination leads to the "declaration of love" stage, the placement of which varies.[18] Given that the *Twilight* saga relies on "the love at first sight" model, this stage takes place early on. No matter where it is placed, this stage centers on the act of choosing, even despite what the protagonists may claim. As was already stated, Bella thinks her infatuation lies outside rationality and choice. Yet Illouz stresses that attraction, passion and love cannot but be culturally and socially shaped, because our context always affects these emotions in multiple ways. She explains that what she calls the "architecture of romantic choice*"* is a cultural mechanics that steers us in our evaluation of the love object. The ways in which we draw on our emotions, knowledge and reasoning in perceiving a potential love object as well as in decision making are organized by this architecture. Such consultation shows that the socio-cultural environment systematizes even our most intimate choices. The architecture of romantic choice is framed by the "ecology of romantic choice", that is, the social environment that steers us to make certain kinds of choices.[19] Today, this ecology emphasizes choice as a category of an individual's cognition and (self-)reflexion because we hold that we realize our individuality in the act of choosing a love object. This act is proof of our freedom, rationality and autonomy: it is a right and a form of competence.[20]

Fascination places the fascinated subject in between conceptual categories.[21] It makes him or her waver between categories, making the act of choosing difficult. Such a state feeds into the "barrier" stage of the romance novel. As a generic element, "the barrier" refers to a series of scenes at different points providing either internal or external reasons – or both – why the protagonists cannot establish a permanent relationship.[22] As regards the ecology and architecture of romantic choice, these difficulties are revealing of the socio-cultural room for maneuver of choice. They are especially tangible whenever the heroine has more than one suitor to select from. Making a choice plays a weighty role in romance novels because the heroine must distinguish the "right" suitor from the "wrong" one. So it is in the *Twilight* saga, too, for besides the vampire Edward, also the werewolf Jacob woos Bella.

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18 Cf. Regis 2003: 34.

19 Illouz 2012: 19.

20 Cf. ibid.: 18-19.

21 Cf. Baumbach 2015: 22.

22 Cf. Regis 2003: 32.

BARRIERS TURN INTO IMPASSES

The obstacles of the romance plot place intimate relationships in a context sur-passing the individual. They may deal with any psychological problem or any economic, social, cultural, familial or geographic circumstance.[23] The conven-tions of the romance novel favor pitting two men as rivals for the same woman and vice versa. These male and female foils of hero and heroine illustrate reject-ed character traits as well as negative relationship models.[24] Hence a typical feature of the "barrier" is the heroine's challenge to distinguish among the suit-ors the "right" one. The character foils, however, do not always provide genuine triangular relationships, because the rival is often an obviously weaker alterna-tive.[25] In the *Twilight* saga, Edward meets his match in the werewolf Jacob. They are true rivals, as the division of the audience into "Team Edward" and "Team Jacob" as the "right" decision for Bella illustrates. Unlike Edward, Jacob is of a sunny disposition, friendly, and easy-going. By being kind, loyal and attentive, Jacob kindles Bella's feelings, making her ponder whether she should choose him. Significantly, Jacob also evokes fascination, for in his werewolf form he is gorgeous, strong and fast, but also unpredictable and quick-tempered. His wolf brother, Sam, exemplifies what a werewolf may do once his emotions fuel up: Sam has badly disfigured his beloved's face in the heat of the moment.

In the saga, the "barrier" is grounded in ontological difference, requiring that Bella negotiate between such categories as human/inhuman, human/animal, mortal/immortal, spirit/flesh, and salvation/damnation. These combinations of allure and danger affect Bella's choice making. Fascination's element of danger implies that she may be fatally mistaken about the character of the love object. Both suitors might unintentionally kill Bella. If she chooses Jacob, she will have to live with that threat for the rest of her life, for werewolves are impulsively violent. If she chooses Edward, and if Edward bites her with the intention of changing her into a vampire, there is nothing to guarantee the success of this measure. With both men, Bella will have to keep secret the real character of her partner, hiding large sections of her life from ordinary humans. What Bella makes clear, however, is that no ordinary guy will do for her. While the romance novel conventions invariably paint the romantic hero in idealizing colors, it is nevertheless significant that the *Twilight* saga rejects a human male as a potential partner. To be sure, this preference is in keeping with the genre of fantasy, but it

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23 Cf. Regis 2003: 32.

24 Cf. Radway 1984: 122, 131-133.

25 Cf. ibid.: 122-123.

nevertheless raises the question of whether only supernatural creatures are able to sustain the optimism of romance.

Because Edward holds that vampirism means the loss of one's soul and damnation, he forsakes Bella in *New Moon*. He wants to save her from himself. Obviously, terminating the relationship forms an insurmountable "barrier", one that leads to the element of "ritual death". Regis defines the latter as the point when there seems to be no means to lift the obstacles and, hence, the union of the couple appears impossible.[26] The *Twilight* saga combines the "barrier" and "ritual death" elements together. After Edward forsakes Bella, she slides into a catatonic state, as is evidenced by the four "chapters" running from October to January with no text of any kind.[27] Significantly, the "barrier" stage acquires tones of what Berlant calls "an impasse", deriving from a profound crisis that entails bearing an extended vulnerability for an undetermined duration.[28] As there seems to be no way out, the crisis situation slowly changes into a daily routine.

In the romance novel, the obliteration of the "barrier" is linked with "recognition," that is, new information making the desired union possible. This element includes any number of things that the heroine recognizes, ranging from changed external circumstances to growth as a person.[29] In *New Moon* the abandoned Bella hears Edward's voice in her head whenever she is in danger. In order to make him speak to her, she jumps off a cliff, only to be saved by Jacob. Bella's suicidal jump makes Edward consult the Volturi, a law-instituting group of vampires, about killing him. Bella, however, saves Edward's life at the last minute. These multiple brushes with death lead to the "recognition" element that she experiences as "an epiphany".[30] It is Bella's manipulation of the internalized image of Edward that eventually leads to the events enabling this realization. Thus, the love relationship would not develop if it were not for her provocation.

Edward loved me. The bond forged between us was not one that could be broken by absence, distance, or time. […] As I would always belong to him, so would he always be mine […]

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26 Cf. Regis 2003: 35.

27 This section is located between the pages 84 and 93. It neither has page numbers nor is mentioned in the Contents of *New Moon*. It only records the names of the months.

28 Cf. Berlant 2011: 62.

29 Cf. Regis 2003: 36.

30 Cf. Meyer 2006b: 526.

"You love me," I marvelled. The sense of conviction and rightness washed through me again.[31]

Bella's epiphany defuses her sense of inferiority that formed a key internal obstacle. She understands that fascination and enchanted love surpass the individual, enabling her to rise above whatever personal shortcomings she has. In accordance with the optimistic script of the romance genre, the goal of love is elevation and transcendence. Yet in spite of this newfound conviction, the "barrier" between the couple is not lifted. Bella's father is strongly against Edward. The Volturi now form a dangerous threat as do also the werewolves. But most importantly, the ongoing bickering and disputes between Edward and Bella poses "a barrier." Not only do these remaining "barrier" elements anchor the saga in the contemporary ecology and architecture of romantic choice but also they imply that "barriers" are on the point of permanently turning into "impasses". While the notion of a barrier implies a temporally finite state, an impasse presents an unsurmountable dead-end. In an impasse, agents must come up with new means of dealing with the confounding situation. What characterizes this situation is that there is no going back to what was before, but neither is there the possibility of overcoming the impasse. What do characters do in situations that test their potential for achieving the good life expressed in the romance script?

NEGOTIATING LOVE AND MAKING COMPROMISES

Bella's epiphany about mutual commitment takes place early in the saga, in its second volume. Even so, their relationship continues to be plagued by discord and insecurity. That the couple continues to have "issues" suggests that things have not reached a generically satisfactory point. Instead, the crisis situation persists. The following example provides a typical illustration of moments of disharmony between Bella and Edward. This scene takes place in *Eclipse* and thus comes much later than Bella's epiphany:

[Edward's] face was hard and his posture tense. He glared at me wordlessly. […]
"Bella," he whispered. "Do you have *any* idea how close I came to crossing the line today? […] Do you know what that would have meant? […]"

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31 Ibid.: 527.

He ground his teeth together. His hands were balled up in fists at his sides. He was still standing against the wall, and I hated the space between us.[32]

The couple's quarrels repeatedly address the same subjects, such as the the vampires' strife with the werewolves, the danger posed by the Volturi, the presence of Jacob in Bella's life and the ontological difference between the lovers. Edward acts patronizingly and coercively, insisting that his actions stem from protectiveness. Bella repeatedly defies the rules Edward imposes, even escaping from his home to meet Jacob. When Edward left her, she learned to love Jacob, and in *Eclipse* she begs him to kiss her even after she has committed herself to Edward.[33] Today, two independent emotional selves must repeatedly renew the reasons and the emotional conditions defining why they started their relationship.[34] The discord requires that Bella and Edward continually revisit these reasons. Their arguments also concern the reciprocity and symmetry of the relationship because of the discrepancy between them, not only in economic and social standing – as well as age, for Edward's life as a vampire has lasted over a hundred years – but also in ontological status. Bella is adamant that only becoming a vampire will create equality and emotional equity. Until then, Edward always has the upper hand. Moreover, Bella interprets Edward's refusal to transform her as his unwillingness to commit fully to the relationship. Illouz explains that especially women worry about achieving a stable, intimate relationship, because they find men emotionally elusive and routinely resisting long-term commitment.[35]

These negotiations, arguments and compromises between Bella and Edward turn love into an object of endless investigation and self-scrutiny. Berlant identifies "the conversation"[36] as a narrative motif designed to handle moments during which characters search for means of adjustment and look for modes of living on. This motif is thus one means of dealing with "the impasse". Bella and Edward have ongoing discussions about desires, needs and goals. Although Illouz does not consider her findings within the same theoretical frameworks as Berlant, it is significant that she, too, names conversations, negotiations and making compromises as the vehicles through which men and women manage intimacy and love relationships. While love relationships still in the nineteenth century stressed the spouses' ability to play their marital roles successfully,

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32 Meyer 2007: 140-141.

33 Cf. ibid.: 525.

34 Cf. Illouz 2012: 39.

35 Cf. ibid.: 66.

36 Cf. Berlant 2011: 57.

feeling and expressing the emotions attached to these roles, Illouz claims that expectations have changed considerably in our day. The negotiations exhibit the contemporary ideal that intimacy include verbal disclosures of emotions and the act of sharing these emotions with a partner. These disclosures reveal and lay bare the lovers' emotional selves so that they get support and recognition, while simultaneously safeguarding their individuality and freedom.[37] Such negotiations show self-awareness, ability to identify and name feelings, talk about them and empathize with each other's position. These listed features – fitting the desires and goals of two separate individuals, achieving reciprocity and symmetry, engaging in self-reflection and negotiating how to meet each subject's needs – figure as hallmarks of the contemporary architecture of choice. It is through such measures that individuals arrive at a decision about who fits them as partner the best.[38] They are indications of what Illouz calls emotional intelligence,[39] which plays a key role in romantic choice. In pinpointing the same narrative motif of "conversation", both Berlant and Illouz highlight the large amount of emotional work that goes into sustaining intimacy. As this motif does not address talk where one settles things once and for all, but an ongoing, constant series of discussions, it suggests that romantic relationships are repeatedly threatened by "barriers" and even "impasses". Therefore, they need steady vigilance in order to stay intact. Together, these features imply that the capacity of the romance novel to sustain optimism is currently weakening.

The *Twilight* saga resorts to extreme means in order to salvage the optimism of the romance genre. What is notable is that the generic structures and conventions of romance alone are not enough to provide a means out of the impasse. The saga employs both fantasy and vampire Gothic genres in order to rescue the romantic relationship. Consequently, the terms in which the impasse between Bella and Edward is reworked into an obstacle that can be overcome recontextualize the love relationship by making it address the binary of human/inhuman. Only by opting for vampirism and superhumanity can Bella put the anxieties concerning love to rest.

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37 Cf. Illouz 2012: 38.

38 Cf. ibid.: 241-246.

39 Cf. ibid.: 64.

SAVING THE ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP

Many romance novels conclude with nuptials. From a generic perspective, Bella and Edward's marriage ought to mark the pinnacle of their love. In the *Twilight* saga, however, this conventional crowning element of commitment supplies a new barrier. Bella insists that the couple have sex during their honeymoon while she still is in her human form. Edward manages not to kill her, but his passionate love making leaves Bella badly bruised. Consequently, he wants no more sex, at least not until they both are vampires. Things deteriorate between the couple when it transpires that the newly-wed Bella is pregnant with a half-human, half-vampire child. Edward wants her to abort it, because the fetus threatens her life. Hence, even this event that consolidates the relationship in the romance novel turns into a further obstacle. By refusing abortion, Bella is ready to die for the child; also, she continues to hope that giving birth will compel Edward to meta-morphose her in spite of the risks. Edward performs an emergency Caesarean section, but Bella's heart stops beating. In order not to lose her, Edward stabs her heart with his venom and bites her all over her body:

It was like he was kissing her, brushing his lips at her throat, at her wrists, into the crease at the inside of her arm. But I could hear the lush tearing of her skin as his teeth bit through, again and again, forcing venom into her system at as many points as possible. I saw his pale tongue sweep along the bleeding gashes […].[40]

Edward finally fully commits himself to Bella by transforming her when she is no more than a horridly mangled corpse. What is remarkable in this scene is its gruesomeness, which moves the narrative into the realm of the vampire Gothic. The child breaks Bella's spine, her stomach is slashed open, she is bathed in blood, and bit all over by a vampire. With narratives of fascination, remarks Baumbach, readers are usually granted a "shelter of safe spectatorship", enabling them to immerse themselves in the allure of fascination and to stay insulated from its dangers.[41] Because Jacob narrates this scene, readers are provided with some distance to its violent nature, as Rachel DuBois observes. The uncertainty about Bella's fate is resolved when she finally wakes up. A painful transfor-mation process has turned her into a vampire: "As a human, I'd never been best at anything. […] After eighteen years of mediocrity, I was pretty used to being average. […] I was amazing now – to them and to myself. It was like I had been

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40 Meyer 2008: 326.

41 Cf. Baumbach 2015: 61.

born to be a vampire. […] I had found my true place in the world, the place I fit, the place I shined."[42]

Bella's reference to "shining" reveals that she now has the personality, looks and sexiness with which to impress others. Her new gorgeous body is made for evoking desire as well as giving and receiving pleasure, qualities that play a greater role in securing a relationship than before.[43] Significantly, once the lovers are ontologically the same, all tensions vanish, and they need neither to negotiate anything nor make compromises. Instead, from the moment of Bella's metamorphosis, the couple is seamlessly united into one. The couple's concord is crowned when Bella finally lets Edward read her mind as proof of her love.

DuBois observes that Bella's metamorphosis marks a breach with readers, for after it Bella no longer functions as a site of narrative and physical possibility for them: she becomes alien, an other.[44] I have argued elsewhere that what this means for the romance script is that *the end vaporizes fascination*. The *Twilight* saga unties the knot between danger and death and thus empties out its strongest emotional source. With the shared ontological status of the lovers, the enticing danger vanishes, and is replaced by vapid, soft-pornographic allusions to continual great sex.[45] The dissolution of the fascinating tension becomes apparent in the manner the saga changes track after Bella's transformation. The latter part of the expansive fourth volume, *Breaking Dawn*, deals with the strife between the vampires called the Volturi and the Cullen clan supported by the werewolf allies of Jacob's Quileute tribe. It moves into the terrain of the family saga. While establishing a benevolent communal context for Bella's vampire family motivates this shift, the fact remains, nevertheless, that it pushes the saga's primary romance relationship into the background.

While a "happily-ever-after" conclusion is part and parcel of the romance novel denouement, the *Twilight* couple's union will literally last forever. Here the saga departs from its conventional counterparts. Consider, for example, Jane Austen, whom Regis characterizes as "the master of the romance novel".[46] Austen invariably places her romantic couples in a larger communal context, drawing attention to an array of various types of marriages. In *Pride and Prejudice,* the happy unions of Elizabeth and Darcy and Jane and Bingley are contrasted with the quarrelsome marriages of Lydia and Wickham as well as Elizabeth's parents. The rational marriage of Charlotte Lucas to the intolerable Mr Collins

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42 Meyer 2008: 484-5.

43 Cf. Illouz 2012: 44-45.

44 Cf. DuBois 2012: 141.

45 Cf. Pyrhönen Forthcoming.

46 Regis 2003: 75.

provides a further reminder of the realities of adult life. By marrying Bella off to a supernatural creature, however, the *Twilight* saga rejects the human dimension of intimate relationships. It is as if the long-term crises and the various impasses Bella and Edward encounter could not be resolved in any other than a superhuman way. If we regard genres as affective contracts as Berlant does,[47] then the *Twilight* saga suggests that the romance genre alone no longer provides as satisfying a vehicle of desire as before. The genre's ability to provide continuity in the readers' belief in the possibilities and promises of life has become defective.

Interestingly, even the scant descriptions of vampire married life suggest that this ending opens the door to boredom. Only Carlisle, the patriarch of the Cullen family, has a meaningful occupation as a doctor. Edward and his siblings study indifferently, lounge around, have great sex, as well as shopping and consuming high fashion and gadgets. Thanks to Alice Cullen's ability to look into the future, the family's investments secure great wealth. The consumer society's script of the good life is roundly fulfilled. Furthermore, the saga turns the ideal of commitment into eternal love; consequently, stability turns into stasis and immovability. There is no need for any kind of growth. Brendan Shea observes that romantic love is not capable of providing meaning over unending repetition and time stretching to near infinity because our capacity to love arises from our vulnerability and mortality. It is the limited character of our lives that makes our desires and purposes meaningful.[48]

Let us now put our finger on the main features of the *Twilight* saga's emotional style. Doing so enables us to be more precise about its fantasy nature. I have argued that in its reliance on the generic stages of the romance novel, the saga constructs a "double emotional structure". It expresses a longing for love and sexuality that do not produce anxiety, negotiation and uncertainty. It promotes the notion that readers should tenaciously believe in love in order to achieve it in their lives. In so doing, it insists that love still is a worthy cause.[49] On the one hand, fascination allows characters and readers to express longing for enchanted love that is based on self-sacrifice, fusion and affirmation of absolutes. Enchanted love speaks to us because it implies transcendence of the mundane human condition. Its appeal is tinged with nostalgia, for, as Illouz remarks, we no longer can sustain belief in this type of love; neither can we feel the emotions appropriate to it. Instead, the rationalisation of our approach to love has spred deep-seated disappointment. Yet we still yearn for a sense of the sacred and the capacity to believe because disenchantment has meant that the mystery

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47 Cf. Berlant 2011: 6.

48 Cf. Shea 2009: 91.

49 Cf. Pyrhönen Forthcoming.

of love has become disparaged and meaningless.[50] On the other hand, fascination based on the dangers of dating a vampire unleashes just those anxieties that are familiar from contemporary life. Today, the criteria for mate selection are more diverse than ever and they have become integrated into the private dynamics of individual taste. Like us, Bella can only rely on herself in choosing a partner, and this choice results from a complex process of emotional and cognitive evaluation.[51] Consequently, the *Twilight* saga enables readers to experience contradictory emotional valences: longing for and belief in an outdated mode of love together with contemporary insecurities and anxieties about the challenges of romantic choice.

That the saga's emotional style enables contradictory emotional valences arises from its nature as a cultural fantasy. Illouz remarks that such a fantasy presents and distorts reality. It incorporates reality, defends the self against reality, and yet helps one live with it. Fantasy affirms and denies the emotions and concepts on which it rests. This double emotional structure is of such a nature that it embeds both explicit and hidden instructions readers can take away from the reading experience.[52] Perhaps luckily, becoming a vampire is not among the suggested options. Yet the protagonist Bella does function as key to what is offered as a useful carry-over for readers. The character of Bella could perhaps best be described as a "manager of emotions*"*: she is capable of using language in order to express her inner self. It is in this sense that she has a great deal of emotional intelligence. What this means is that, for her, language provides a tool for making sense of difficult emotions which she can then communicate to Edward. As Illouz remarks, contemporary culture prizes language because it enables couples to construct a narrative of verbal intimacy that they can share and use to enhance this intimacy further. In fact, this advice is in line with present-day therapeutic self-help manuals that emphasize the injunction to share needs and feelings as a significant factor in sustaining and fostering love in a relationship. It is notable that this ideal of communication, aimed at managing emotions and instituting emotional control, privileges woman's selfhood and perspective. It empowers women readers by attributing to them the capacity to carry on relationships according to fair procedures of speech but also burdens them heavily with the responsibility for doing so.[53]

Finally, the saga's double emotional structure allows for two ways of reading. It enables readers' hold on the optimism of the romance novel. Hence, it

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50 Cf. Illouz 2012: 158.

51 Cf. ibid.: 50, 54.

52 Cf. Illouz 2014: 22-24.

53 Illouz 2008: 226-227, 236.

provides what Berlant calls "a cluster of promises" that sustain hope in enduring intimate relationships. Yet, because only a supernatural transformation finally saves the romantic relationship, readers may also see the saga as heralding a situation of cruel optimism: the notion of love it promotes no longer provides tools for envisioning a good life.

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Detuned Selves

Evoking and Conveying Affects and Emotions in Depression Writing

A NNA O VASKA

I am sad

I feel that the future is hopeless and that things cannot improve

I am bored and dissatisfied with everything

I am a complete failure as a person

I am guilty, I am being punished

I would like to kill myself

I used to be able to cry but now I am beyond tears

I have lost interest in other people

I can't make decisions

I can't eat

I can't sleep

I can't think

I cannot overcome my loneliness, my fear, my disgust

I am fat

I cannot write

I cannot love[1]

The passage is a list of symptoms written down by Sarah Kane for her play text *4.48 Psychosis*. It is also a list that is directly borrowed from Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI), a test used by medical professionals to assess the severity of a

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1   Kane 2001: 206-207.

patient's depression.[2] Yet, in the context of Kane's work of art, the words become distanced from the medical discourse. They are meant to be read (and likely are read) as an expression of someone's inner experiences – of deep feelings of distress and pain. A voice names the sadness, the hopelessness and the loss of capabilities that characterize depression. Behind the words, we imagine a person whose experiential world is altered. Through the act of reading and empathizing with the speaking I, the words of medical discourse turn into an evocative expression of a depressed mind.

This article focuses on affects and emotions that are constructed and conveyed to readers in depression writing. How can fictional texts evoke the experiential world of depression? How are the often distressing and unsettling experiences of depression mediated through writing? Phenomenologists and theorists of embodied cognition have in recent years emphasized the interaffective, interpersonal and embodied nature of depression.[3] In these views, depression is understood as a disorder of "intercorporeality and interaffectivity" and as "a 'detunement' of the resonant body that mediates our participation in a shared affective space".[4] The aim of this text is to show how this new understanding can help us to see why depression writing is able to evoke such powerful corporeal and emotional responses in its readers, and also how depression writing may point to the embodied and interaffective nature of the human mind, thus opening up new possibilities for understanding mental experiences.

The first section introduces two particularly affective texts which employ different narrative and poetic strategies in order to evoke and convey experiences of mental illness to their audiences: British playwright Sarah Kane's performance text *4.48 Psychosis* (2001) and Finnish writer Maria Vaara's autobiographical novel *Likaiset legendat* (*The Dirty Legends* [1974]). Both works of art challenge the common cultural and clinical view of depression as a "mental" disorder that is "inside the head". Instead, they pay attention to the affective and bodily experiences of depression and portray depression as a mode of being in

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2 In the questionnaire first developed by Aaron T. Beck in the 1960's, a patient chooses the experience closest to theirs from a list of choices such as the following: "(0) I do not feel sad. (1) I feel sad. (2) I am sad all the time and I can't snap out of it. (3) I am so sad or unhappy that I can't stand it". On the multiple citations, allusions and intertexts used in *4.48 Psychosis*, cf. Diedrich 2013, also Ovaska 2016. Kane's monologist hints about the references for example by speaking about being the "last in a long line of literary kleptomaniacs", as if pointing to the method of writing the text (Kane 2001: 213).

3 Cf. Fuchs 2013a, Ratcliffe 2015.

4 Fuchs 2013a: 219.

which the basic structures of experience and being in the world (and being with others) have changed. In their work, depression is not understood as a "pathology of the mind", but rather as a reaction of the embodied and social mind to extreme experiences or circumstances.

The second section demonstrates how Kane's and Vaara's descriptions of depression resonate with the embodied cognitive view according to which affects and emotions are not something "interior" (or "inside the head"), but rather structures that frame our bodily being in the world and our attunement to other people. The section outlines how affectivity – ranging from simple bodily feelings and intensities to more complex moods and emotions – connects us to the world and to others, and how in depression these affective structures have been altered, resulting in a self that is "detuned". The discussion draws from the work of phenomenologists such as Thomas Fuchs and Matthew Ratcliffe and philosophers of embodied cognition such as Giovanna Colombetti and Michelle Maiese who have in recent years focused their attention on the role of affects and emotion in human experience in general, and more specifically, in psychiatric disorders.

Finally, the theoretical understanding of the role of embodiment and affectivity in depression is put to use in the analysis of Kane's and Vaara's writing. The last section shows how language and narration evoke affects, emotions and bodily feelings, and how fictional texts can invite readers to enact the alterations of affectivity that characterize depression.

DEPRESSION IN SARAH KANE'S AND MARIA VAARA'S WRITING

If being healthy means that I understand even more clearly the borders between people and myself, I think it is easier to be ill.
Then I want to be ill.[5]

British playwright Sarah Kane (1971-1999) and Finnish writer and autobiographer Maria Vaara (1931-1992) were very familiar with depression through their own experiences, and these experiences are also reflected in their writing. Both authors paint a striking picture of severe depression, Kane in her famous

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5 Vaara 1974: 58: "Jos terveenä oleminen on tällaista, että tajuan entistä selvemmin rajan ihmisten ja itseni välillä, on kai helpompaa olla sairas. / Silloin haluan olla sairas". All translations by A.O. unless indicated otherwise.

play *4.48 Psychosis* and Vaara in her less-known autobiographical novel *Likaiset legendat*. Both writers employ their readers' sociocultural understanding of the illness by referring to clinical and folk psychiatric accounts of depression and by utilizing generic conventions of illness narratives and patient–therapist conversations.[6] But most importantly, both bring forth distressing bodily, affective and intersubjective experiences, and show how depression is connected to a person's relationship to the world and to other people.

Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis* is a performance text which depicts severe depression on the brink of psychosis.[7] In a fragmented monologue, Kane's nameless protagonist describes some of the most painful symptoms of depression, for example the heightened feelings of guilt and shame which debilitate her/his social being. The monologue is filled with repetitive voices which take the form of self-accusations: "Shame shame shame. / Drown in your fucking shame".[8] The narrating I also outlines the most extreme symptoms of depression, like the loss of the sense of self, and the loss of interest in being alive: "I cannot touch my essential self";[9] "I have been dead for a long time",[10] the narrator complains. In addition, s/he describes changes in her/his bodily experiences. There is a sense that one's body is something separate, either a barrier between the self and the world, or something that is separated from oneself:

Here am I
and there is my body
       dancing on glass[11]

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6   Vaara uses psychoanalytical terminology and refers to psychoanalytical notions like transference love, repression and loss. Kane quotes new diagnostic tools like the BDI, but refers also to the psychoanalytical understanding of depression (cf. Ovaska 2016).

7   *4.48 Psychosis* was written in 1998-99 and first performed posthumously in 2000 at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Upstairs in London. Kane referred to her plays as "texts for performance", and *4.48 Psychosis*, too, is meant to be performed on stage. It however lacks all the usual stage directions and consists of a collection of short monologues and dialogical fragments (cf. Ovaska 2016). In this article, Kane's play is approached as a text and attention is paid to its narrative and poetic techniques. For an analysis of affects and emotions in the performances of *4.48 Psychosis*, cf. Campbell 2005.

8   Kane 2001: 209.

9   Ibid.: 229.

10   Ibid.: 214.

11   Ibid.: 230.

Maria Vaara's autobiographical novel *Likaiset legendat* deals with similar themes, images and techniques.[12] The narrating I (Maria; "the librarian") describes feelings of guilt and shame, and experiences of estrangement and loss of sense of agency:

And no one knows that the librarian is not a part of this reality, because she does not exist. Now I sit at home, I listen to records and I cry. I don't know really what I am crying about and who is crying. I should probably call the town doctor, he is the closest there is.
I would still like to live this week and the next.[13]

Like Kane's protagonist, she describes experiences of social alienation and feelings of separation from herself. She is not a "part of this reality", she "does not exist". The narrating I is also constantly observing herself ("Maria") from the outside. In their most extreme manifestation, the self-reproaches take the form of hallucinatory voices: "– Maria, it would be better if you were dead, one of the Scattered said."[14] The monologue of the narrating I is constantly interrupted by voices, like "the Scattered", which thematize the loss of a unified self and offer a vivid description of the experiences of worthlessness and failing in social relationships that are common in depression.[15]

Both Kane and Vaara depict experiences which slowly lead their protagonists to a psychotic breakdown.[16] The narrator-protagonists lose their sense of a

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12 *Likaiset legendat* was the first novel in Vaara's autobiographical trilogy published in Finland between 1974 and 1978. In her autobiographical novels, Vaara describes her experiences as a schizophrenia patient in 1970's Finland. It is, however, unclear whether she was actually suffering from schizophrenia, or only from severe depression and psychotic episodes which were misdiagnosed as schizophrenia (cf. also Vaara 1980).

13 "Eikä kukaan tiedä, että kirjastonhoitaja ei ole todellisuudessa mukana, koska häntä ei ole olemassa. Nyt istun kotona, kuuntelen levyjä ja itken. En oikein tiedä, mitä itken ja kuka itkee. Minun kai pitäisi soittaa kunnanlääkärille, hän on lähimpänä. Tahtoisin elää vielä tämän viikon ja ensi viikon" (Vaara 1974: 60).

14 Ibid.: 57: "– Maria, sinun olisi parasta olla kuollut, irrallinen sanoi".

15 On the problems in interpersonal experiences in depression, cf. Ratcliffe 2015: 218-226.

16 Thematically, the breakdowns in both texts are tied to a loss experienced during psychiatric treatment: Kane's protagonist is mourning (or rather failing in mourning, as psychoanalysts would put it) the ending of therapy. In her/his dialogic fragments, s/he goes through the (past) therapeutic encounters and problems of the therapy (cf. Ovaska 2016). Vaara's narrator likewise suffers from a feeling of being abandoned by

unified self and become unable to make distinctions between reality and hallucination, the outside world and their inner worlds. In addition, both texts are framed as stories of failed therapeutic relationships, which worsen the situation: both protagonists cling on to their therapists as a last source of hope, and end up planning suicide as they feel abandoned by their therapists.

Kane's and Vaara's portrayals of severe depression engage in a dialogue with common clinical accounts of depression (though, as we will see, they do not fit neatly into any specific diagnostic categories). Diagnostic manual DSM-5, for example, defines major depressive disorder as a combination of depressed mood, heightened feelings of shame and guilt, and diminished interest in being alive.[17] In general, depression is understood on the one hand as an affective disorder characterized by the depressive mood, and on the other hand through its cognitive disturbances, such as delusions of being judged or despised by other people, memory alterations (negative or painful memories are often heightened in depression) and difficulties of expression.[18]

The cognitive problems inherent in depression are often seen to have consequences also for writing about depression. It is difficult for individuals to express these experiences, and linguistic problems and negatively embellished memories also distort autobiographical writing.[19] Both Vaara and Kane reflect these difficulties in the structure of their works: both texts are constructed out of monological fragments, and the linearity of the stories is disrupted by flashbacks. The text is often gappy, and the perspectives change: in both texts the monologue of the narrator-protagonists is interrupted by dialogical elements (patient–therapist conversations) which may either be interpreted as hallucinatory or imaginary inner dialogues, reports of past conversations, or scenes in the actual world of the text.

Depression researchers have been quite sceptical about whether it is possible to gain knowledge about the illness through first-person accounts such as memoirs or self-narratives because of the memory problems and linguistic problems.[20] It is true that we need to be cautious of not drawing too far-reaching

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her therapist and falls into psychosis. Both texts implicitly refer to the well-known psychoanalytical view of depression as an inability to mourn a lost object: what is lost, is incorporated into one's bodily ego as an object of eternal sorrow. Like Freud's theory (Freud 1985), both Kane and Vaara emphasize the bodily aspects of depression experience and connect their experiences to a painful loss.

17 Cf. DSM-5 2013.

18 Cf. Fuchs 2013a.

19 Cf. Radden/Varga 2013; also Ratcliffe 2015: 25.

20 Cf. Radden/Varga 2013.

conclusions from depression narratives, but I also suggest that there is a different kind of value in the autofictional depression writing produced by both Kane and Vaara. Neither of the writers seeks to create clinical knowledge of depression. Rather, they use fiction and experimental writing as means to express these experiences and to convey them to their readers in ways that break the distinctions between the mind and the body, and the self and the world. In addition, both writers emphasize the universality of these experiences. The experiences are not something impossible to understand: even though they are often extreme, they are still tied to the ways we all – whether suffering from depression or not – experience our bodies, feel emotions and relate to other people.

Despite the connections to common understanding of depression, both Kane's and Vaara's writings thus pay attention to experiences that are often disregarded in clinical and folk psychiatric accounts. The experiences they describe are not just *affective* problems or *cognitive* problems that are somehow separate from one another and unrelated to other people and to the shared world. Especially bodily experiences and affectivity have a significant role in their representations. Much like the embodied cognitive and phenomenological accounts of depression, Kane's and Vaara's written, artistic descriptions show that we need a different kind of understanding of the relations between embodiment, affectivity and cognition in order to understand these experiences. Most importantly, Kane's and Vaara's texts invite us to pay attention to the ways the mind, affectivity and relations to the world and to other people are intertwined.

ALTERATIONS IN AFFECTIVITY

In recent views of the mind as embodied, affectivity is seen as the basis for our being in the world and our being with others. Affectivity or 'affective framing' is understood as a way in which bodily agents engage with their surroundings.[21] To be affective means to be cognitive, and changes in affectivity have a deep impact on the ways one makes sense of the world. As Michelle Maiese puts it: "A shift in affective framing changes not just how one perceives the world, but what someone remembers, how one engages in practical reasoning, how one relates to other people, and even which object-directed emotions one experiences."[22] In other words, affectivity is a mode of being bodily attuned to and engaging with the world. Affects are ways of making sense of and caring about one's surround-

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21 Cf. Colombetti 2014; Maiese 2014, 2016.

22 Maiese 2014: 525.

ings: they influence the ways we perceive, remember, feel and reason.[23] Affectivity also connects us to other people, creating intersubjective and interaffective spaces, as Thomas Fuchs and Sabine Koch suggest: "Our body is affected by the other's expression, and we experience the kinetics and intensity of his emotions through our own bodily kinaesthesia and sensation."[24] Ever since early infancy, we are tied to others through bodily resonance, and this forms the basis for intersubjective relations.

The view of affectivity as a mode of "making sense" of the world and being with other people has consequences also for our understanding of depression. In this account, depression is understood as an alteration in the ability to affectively engage with the world and with others. According to Fuchs: "our participation in interaffective space is mediated by a fundamental bodily resonance. In depression, this attunement fails, and the lived body, as it were, shrinks to the boundaries of the material body."[25] Rather than as a "mental" problem in some interior sense, depression is thus understood as a problem of interaffectivity and bodily resonance.[26]

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23 Cf. also Fuchs 2013b: 613. In the background is the idea that a living organism always "cares" for its surroundings and its existence. Giovanna Colombetti defines affectivity as "lack of indifference": as sensibility for or interest in one's existence (cf. Colombetti 2014a: 1-2). On this very primitive level, affectivity is a mode of making sense of the world: a mode of evaluating one's environment and navigating this environment (cf. Maiese 2014, Colombetti 2014a). There are different kinds of affective states, ranging from the more simple to the more complex or enriched: the *primordial affectivity* just described is in the background of everything that is alive (cf. Colombetti 2014a). In addition, there are *background feelings* or what Matthew Ratcliffe has called *existential feelings* or *Stimmung* (for instance, the feeling of being alive, the sense of belonging to the world, or the feeling of being dead or alienated) – and these form the background of experience (cf. Ratcliffe 2009, 2015, Fuchs 2013b). Furthermore, there are longer lasting moods and atmospheres (like the depressed mood, or the feeling of uncanniness). And finally, there are shorter lasting and more complex *emotional episodes* that are usually intentional, i.e. oriented towards objects in the world or other people (like experiences of shame or guilt). Cf. Fuchs 2013b for a discussion on the phenomenological distinctions between different forms of affects and emotions.

24 Fuchs/Koch 2014: 5.

25 Fuchs 2013a: 234.

26 Fuchs (2009) and Colombetti (2013) have combined enactivist (embodied cognitive) theories and phenomenological insights in their analysis of mental disorders. For similar ideas on the basis of phenomenological theories, cf. Ratcliffe 2009, 2015.

The detunement, or loss of bodily resonance, which happens in depression helps in understanding the different symptoms of depression, like the feelings of bodily alienation and social estrangement. In addition to the loss of connectedness to oneself, the loss of bodily resonance diminishes the ability to connect with other people, which in turn results in the experiences of having failed socially or being judged by others. It explains one of the central paradoxes of the illness: how there can be at the same time symptoms like the loss of caring for one's existence and loss of will to live, and heightened social emotions like shame and guilt.[27] Clinical manuals like the DSM acknowledge the multitude of different kinds of bodily, affective and intersubjective alterations in their symptom listings, but focus on separate symptoms without paying much attention to the ways they are connected in the actual experiences of depression: in the ways the changes in how one perceives oneself, the world and others, remembers one's past, engages with the world and others, and experiences one's body are linked to each other.

This complex network of different kinds of experiences and changes in the experiential world is also what Kane and Vaara describe in their texts, focusing especially on the bodily experiences and on problems in intersubjective relations. As Kane's narrating I states:

I have reached the end of this dreary and repugnant tale of a sense interned in an alien carcass and lumpen by the malignant spirit of the moral majority

I have been dead for a long time[28]

Kane's poetic writing brings forth the experiences of alienation and the loss of will to live – and the heightened, painful experiences of hopelessness that result as the world seems to offer no more possibilities: "No hope No hope No hope No hope No hope No hope No hope".[29] The narrating I also describes cutting her/himself and pays attention to the ways depression medication changes her/his body. The general experience of depression is closely tied to changes in bodily being – and articulated for example in the image of the body as an "alien carcass".

Vaara, on the other hand, portrays how corporeal experiences are connected to the efforts of staying alive. The narrator tries to control her life by controlling her body: "I am tired, but I have to go skiing. / Maria says: –You have to ski,

27 Cf. Fuchs 2013a.

28 Kane 2001: 214.

29 Ibid.: 218.

you have to fast, you have to lose weight."[30] The ability to control one's body is depicted as a chance for hope (in this sense depression comes close to eating disorders). Yet, on the other side of these efforts of control is the loss of all meaning: "– It does not matter, nothing matters, I do not care."[31]

The embodied cognitive view of the human mind offers a clearer understanding of these kinds of experiences and of the ways one's body, mind and the social world are intertwined. In addition, it helps us to understand how these experiences can be conveyed to other people. When we listen to others, we are moved by them, and we may even bodily imitate what is being told. We are also moved by absent or imagined others through texts: writing, especially the emotional writing of depression narratives, becomes expressive of others' experiences. This is particularly clear in texts like Kane's and Vaara's, which deal with phenomena such as changes in bodily experiences and heightened negative emotions, and use different poetic and narrative strategies to evoke affective resonance in their readers.[32]

WRITING DEPRESSION

Humans have a tendency to attribute experiences to other people and other animate and inanimate creatures.[33] We also quite easily find expressions of feelings, affects and emotions in written texts. As anthropologist Niko Besnier aptly puts it, "affect permeates all levels of linguistic and communicative structures, all utterances, and all communicative contexts".[34] Narrative texts are able to tap into

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30 Vaara 1974: 44: "Maria sanoo: –Sinun on pakko hiihtää, pakko paastota, pakko laihtua".

31 Ibid: 62: "–Se on yhdentekevää, kaikki on yhdentekevää, minä en välitä".

32 Also neurocognitive research suggests that language is connected to bodily experiences: listening to stories activates some of the same neurological processes as telling them (cf. Hydén 2013: 235).

33 Cf. Colombetti 2014a: 178.

34 Besnier 1990: 437. Developmental psychologists suggest that language is grounded in early embodied interactions between the infant and the caregiver: in affect attunement, or in the "cross-modal matching of vocalizations and bodily movements in terms of rhythm and intensity". Cf. Stern 1985; Colombetti 2014b. Prelinguistic processes also appear in language, in phenomena like rhythm and melody. This is most visible in face-to-face encounters, in speech prosody and gestures. It is perhaps less visible in

readers' bodily and affective background by soliciting our tendency to attribute and simulate experiences, as proposed by cognitive narratologists.[35] Depression writing may invite us to re-enact affective states which are a part of our past bodily, perceptual and emotional experiences, and writing can also point to experiences that are perhaps unfamiliar to readers. In the following, I will look at the ways Kane and Vaara evoke experiences of depression in their writing by manipulating the temporal and spatial structure and perspectives of their narratives, and by using emotive words, bodily metaphors and images, as well as different para- and extralinguistic means to create affective resonance in their readers.

The verbalization of emotions like shame and guilt is one powerful way to evoke experiences of distress. We can for example recall Kane's repetitive "Shame shame shame. / Drown in your fucking shame"[36] or Vaara's "–Maria, it would be better if you were dead, one of the Scattered said."[37] In both texts, the emotive words and the second person is used to create vivid accounts of self-accusations. At the same time, the "you" also addresses the readers – inviting them to take the other's perspective and perhaps evoking similar experiences in them.

The invitations for the readers to interact with the texts are visible also in the descriptions of experiences of loss and pain. Kane shows this in a particularly vivid manner in an early scene where the narrating I seems to be recollecting a past event:

It wasn't for long, I wasn't there long. But drinking bitter black coffee I catch that medicinal smell in a cloud of ancient tobacco and something touches me in that still sobbing place and a wound from two years ago opens like a cadaver and a long buried shame roars its foul decaying grief.

[…]

I trusted you, I loved you and it's not losing you that hurts me, but your bare-faced fucking falsehoods that masquerade as medical notes.[38]

The memory is induced by a sensory experience (smelling coffee), and the powerful bodily similes and metaphors ("like a cadaver"; "long buried shame roars

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non-poetic or non-narrative written texts, but again, extremely visible in poems and stories.

35 Cf. Caracciolo 2014.

36 Kane 2001: 209.

37 "–Maria, sinun olisi parasta olla kuollut, irrallinen sanoi" (Vaara 1974: 57).

38 Kane 2001: 208–210.

its foul decaying grief") capture the physical experiences of shame, grief and loss. The text portrays how the smell transports the narrating I to the past experience, and the bodily images and the curses evoke the experience of distress. The unsettling effect is also strengthened by the syntax – by Kane's long, exhausting sentences. Even though the main aim of Kane's text is to portray deep depression, these words depicting pain and grief are likely to resonate with anyone who has experienced love and loss, whether they have experiences of depression or not.[39]

Another dominating feature in Kane's and Vaara's texts is their fragmentation, which leaves a lot of room for readers to fill in the gaps with their own experiences and emotional reactions. Fragmentation is visible on the story-level (it is often difficult for the reader to make distinctions between what happens in the actual world of the text, and what is remembered, imagined or perhaps hallucinated), but also on the material, textual level in both texts. Vaara, for example, uses typographical changes and spaces in a scene just before the narrating I falls into psychosis. As in the previous example from Kane, in Vaara's novel this climactic scene reveals how the feelings of deep loss and pain are connected to the loss of another person, the therapist Johannes:

It is dark.
–Could someone please help me?

Maria has gone away, I have gone away. The others have come.

JOHANNES HAS GONE SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY[40]

Vaara's narrating I suggests repeatedly during the novel that her life is tied to Johannes, who now seems to have abandoned her.[41] After this scene, the actual world of the text disappears and the second part of the novel consists of short hallucinatory stories and is mostly controlled by the solipsistic view-point of the hallucinating, narrating I. In the end, however, there is at least some hope of

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39 Cf. Ovaska 2016: 5; Greig 2001: xvii. Kane's narrator-protagonist also repeatedly challenges diagnostic categories and binary distinctions like the "ill" and the "healthy": "I am not ill. I am depressed. Depression is anger" (Kane 2001: 212).

40 "Pimeää. / –Eikö joku voisi vielä auttaa minua? // Maria on mennyt pois, minä olen mennyt pois. Ne toiset ovat tulleet. // JOHANNES ON MENNYT JONNEKIN KAUAS POIS" (Vaara 1974: 63).

41 This is the narrating I's interpretation of the situation, but it becomes clear to the readers that Johannes is actually only on vacation.

recovery, as the narrating I finally breaks out of psychosis. She has "gone through" her "dirty legends",[42] and the novel ends with a scene where Maria is shown to reach Johannes again: "I hear Johannes' voice on the phone".[43]

Kane's performance text, on the other hand, ends with a scene that can be interpreted as suicide.[44] The narrating I has – like Vaara's Maria – gone through her/his story with the therapist, and although we do not get a reliable picture of what has happened between them, it seems that there is no hope of recovery – not even though s/he states that "I have no desire for death / no suicide ever had."[45] Directly following these words, in the final lines of the text, Kane creates an effect of movement through typography and repetition. The "falling" words express the disappearing subjectivity:

watch me vanish
watch me

    vanish

watch me
watch me

    watch[46]

As suggested, gaps and fragmentariness invite readers to interact with the text, and para- and extralinguistic elements like typography and prosody evoke emotional intensity and movement. The repetition of the "falling" words on the page casts a calm, melancholic tone. The reader of the text (or the performance audience) is once again directly addressed and invited to witness the disappearance of the narrating I, and a connection between the protagonist and the audience is created.

In a similar fashion, the narrating I in Vaara's final chapter addresses her readers:

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42 As suggested in another part of the autobiographical trilogy (cf. Vaara 1980).

43 "Puhelimesta kuuluu Johanneksen ääni" (Vaara 1974: 272).

44 Cf. Ovaska 2016.

45 Kane 2001: 244.

46 Ibid.

I do not know if this is the final chapter.
Maria does not know either.
Johannes does not know.
None of us knows at the moment.
At the very least none of you.[47]

In Vaara's ending, the narrating I reminds her readers of the impossibility of experiencing another person's experiences: it is not possible to feel what another is feeling. Yet, this does not mean that we would be unable to empathize with others: we can connect with others through our shared world and through our own bodily and affective experiences and histories.[48] Kane's narrating I makes the same point, emphasizing the ultimate blessing in the difference between the self and the other:

Despair propels me to suicide
Anguish for which doctors can find no cure
Nor care to understand
I hope you never understand
Because I like you.[49]

Conclusion: Making Sense

As mentioned, there are problems in the autobiographical testimonies of depression due to the distortion of memories and the ineffable nature of the experiences. However, both Kane's and Vaara's (auto)fictional writing actually uses these problems for its own ends. The problems are thematized, as we have seen, and there are different techniques and literary devices through which Kane and Vaara invite their readers to enact these experiences.

The descriptions, verbalizations and images discussed earlier solicit readers' experiences and memories of loss and pain. Different discursive and structural choices trigger readers' experiences of perceiving, imagining and remembering, as well as their experiences of the ways the borders between perceiving, imagin-

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47 "Minä en tiedä, onko tämä viimeinen luku. / Mariakaan ei tiedä. / Johannes ei tiedä. / Kukaan meistä ei sitä tällä hetkellä tiedä. / Kaikkein vähimmin joku teistä" (Vaara 1974: 266).

48 On empathy, cf. Gallagher/Zahavi 2012; Ratcliffe 2015.

49 Kane 2001: 239.

ing and remembering are sometimes blurred. Emotive words, unsettling images and bodily metaphors evoke spontaneous corporeal reactions. In addition, non-verbal elements, such as typographical changes, gaps (extralinguistic features) and word repetition, alliteration, and prosody (paralinguistic features), solicit readers' kinesthetic experiences. Both Kane and Vaara use bodily and affective metaphors and images as well as structural and typographical changes to evoke the physical and kinesthetic character of affective experiences: to create tension and movement.

These kinds of affective and bodily phenomena are familiar to everybody and they are at work in different kinds of narrative and poetic texts, but they often become highlighted in depression writing. Vaara's and Kane's texts tap into our most basic affective experiences and forms of sense making, evoking experiences of alterations in affectivity, and thus creating unsettling experiential worlds – but also meaning. Depression may be a state where the meaning of life is lost, but Kane's and Vaara's writing is all but meaningless.

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