Image:

Separation (1896) by Edvard Munch

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A romantic breakup involves the termination of the relationship and usually a grief process. A romantic breakup can carry a narcissistic injury at different levels. During this stage, even persons with apparent ego strengths may regress into immature maladaptive behaviors, which involve splitting and primitive demonization of the lost loved one. Individuals with poor coping skills may develop a narcissistic rage that can be directly proportional to the degree of their narcissistic injury, implying hateful feelings toward the loved one which unfortunately can lead to verbal, physical or hidden aggression toward their ex-partner.

Romantic disappointment is a common reason for people to make the decision to see a psychiatrist. In these clinical scenarios, due to a lack of specific diagnostic category, patients are often diagnosed with adjustment or depressive disorders. The risk of that is that patients can receive broader treatment, which doesn’t necessarily, imply specific management of their love struggles.

As clinicians, we should make an effort to stay mindful and explore when the symptoms of our patients are more directly related to romantic disappointment. In that case we can then help them shift away from splitting and other maladaptive behaviors and encourage healthier defenses during their grieving processes. This way, we will ultimately help them develop healthier relationships in their future romantic lives.

_Fernando Espi Forcen, M.D_
Separation is one of the most significant life events that we all witness. From birth, we experience our first separation from the maternal womb. A few years later, we experience another significant milestone; a separation of babies and toddlers from their caregivers, children feel and show true anxiety and be upset at the prospect – or reality – of being separated from a parent, from the person who protected them and cared for their early needs. As Khalil Gibran said “Ever has it been that love knows not its own depth until the hour of separation”. It is the moment when we feel the strong attachment to our loved ones, toward a place that we long for and most profoundly toward our romantic relationship and our strong ties with our family, children and friends.

Pain, loss and separation are inevitable emotions on the path of love, and the only way of avoiding them is by deciding not to take that path at all. Munch illustrates the man’s sorrow at parting from his love; the end of the story began in his painting of The Kiss. Separation in “Separation” is without hope. The painting is a representation of both past and present of human experience of separation from one’s love. The past and the external world are painted “incarnated” in the background of the painting. Out of the disturbing mood and melancholy of the separation “the flower of pain” grows beside the man’s leg. The girl’s hair is a continuation of the earth. Her face is erased by Munch’s pain. She is earth and air, and the curves of her figure are that of the water, representing all elements of life. Although they go their separate ways, he is still caught up in their relationship, symbolized by the woman’s long hair that still holds his heart in a tight grip. The woman’s hair like tentacles is a symbolism we find in many of Munch’s paintings that embody the relationship between the two sexes, including Jealousy, Vampire and Towards the Forest.

The death of his older sister Johanne Sophie (1862 - 1877) from tuberculosis at the age of 15 year old has transformed Munch and made him revisit this deeply traumatic event again and again in his art, over six completed oil paintings and many studies in various media. Munch said, “I don’t believe in art that has not forced its way out because of an individual’s urge to open his heart. All art, literature as well as music, must be produced with one’s own life-blood. Art is one’s life-blood.”
The First Love: The “Mother”

Fernando Espi Forcen, M.D., Department of Psychiatry, The University of Chicago

Jose de Ribera (1591-1652) was a Spanish painter during the Baroque period. He was born in the town of Jativa (Valencia, Spain) and moved to Italy during his adolescence. Then he finally settled in Naples where he created most of his artwork. Due to his short stature and the fact that he signed his paintings as Jusepe Ribera, “El Español”, he was nicknamed in Italy “Lo Spagnoletto” (The Little Spaniard). At the beginning of his career he was highly influenced by Caravaggio’s tenebrism. His engravings became popular all over Europe. One of his later pieces was “The Bearded Woman from Abbruzzi,” the painting portraits Magdalena Ventura together with her husband and newborn baby. By the time the painting was done, Magdalena had three grown children and was fifty-two years old. The baby and the young looking breast contrast with the face and thick beard adding a dramatic tone. A Latin inscription in the painting suggests this case is a wonder of nature.

Magdalena likely suffered hirsutism, a medical sign characterized by excessive male-pattern hair growth in women. Hirsutism appears in several medical conditions such as polycystic ovarian syndrome, congenital adrenal hyperplasia, ovarian tumors and some medications.

From a psychoanalytic perspective Ribera’s Bearded Woman could be seen as a depiction of Kleinian psychology. Melanie Klein (1882-1960) was an Austrian psychoanalyst who contributed to the development of object relations theory. According to this theory individuals social behavior is strongly influenced by their inner mental representation of the objects (people) they encounter at an early state of development. The most important objects are usually the father and the mother. Depending of the positive
or negative impact, they will be perceived by the baby as “good” or “bad” objects. According to Klein during the first 6 months of development, the baby won’t be able to identify the caretaker as a whole object, instead the baby identifies only parts of the objects such as a “the breast.” In that case, the baby will only be able to make a distinction between a “good breast” and a “bad breast” rather than a “good mother” or a “bad mother.” This stage of development is called the “paranoid-schizoid position.” During this stage, the baby has paranoid anxiety toward possible bad objects and splitting between “good” and “bad” will be the major defense. A failure to cope in this stage may result in maladaptive splitting behaviors in adult life contributing in part to the alterations in personality structure, for example borderline personality disorder.

Ribera’s Bearded Woman shows a representation of a comforted baby calmly being nourished by a healthy breast. In this case, Ribera’s bearded woman would be a depiction of a “good part-object” during the paranoid-schizoid position of Kleinian development. On the contrast, we see an older looking bearded woman and her husband, which reinforces even more our theory of a Kleinian psychology depiction in Ribera’s bearded woman. While traditional object-relation theorists emphasize the importance of the mother at this stage of development, Fonagy and other more recent authors use “the mother” in less strict sense of the word, therefore, “good-mothering” can be carried by the mother, the father, the nanny or any other caretaker.

Figure: In this detail of Ribera’s painting, we can see a baby pleasantly introjecting a good breast during the paranoid-schizoid position of development

Source: fundacionmedinaceli.org
With the advent of the internet, came new avenues of communication and ultimately was born the concept of “cyber love” and “online dating.” In its infancy, it was limited to chat rooms, instant messaging, and emailing, largely populated, according to the media, by pedophiles and teenage girls. But with time, technology and the explosion of social media, online dating has become increasingly socially acceptable and popular. Not only because less and less of the relationships are online, behind computer screens, and between individuals that have never and may never meet, but rather, because finding love online has become a multi billion dollar industry. According to a recent statistic, 1 in 5 relationships start online. Which sounds promising given that 50% of all marriages ultimately end in divorce.

Five years ago, as a busy medical student, I wasn’t having much success finding love the organic way. At that time, my mother suggested I join an online dating site. I immediately told her “N-O. Only ugly weird people are on there and I will not do it.” Why one might ask was I so opposed? I was caught up in the “what other people might think” mindset, and I didn’t want to meet a creep or more importantly, be judged by my peers for “online dating.” Following a little prompting, I acquiesced, after all, what did I have to lose? Could a couple of free dinners really be that bad?

After signing up for the site, I created a profile with the help of a friend and gave myself the screen name Shopgirl, like Meg Ryan in the ever popular 90’s flick “you’ve got mail.” Suddenly, this “dating site” became a part time job. Every evening it was my duty, between reading Robbins Guide to Pathology and reviewing the lectures from the day, to spend a few hours emailing potential candidates and responding to messages that I had received. Initially, within hours of signing up, my inbox was flooded with unsolicited messages from “older” men living in far away places like Boca and New Jersey, well outside of my requested search criteria. But, in lieu of attracting bad Karma, I painstaking responded to each solicitor, thanked him for his interest, and wished him well. Simultaneously, I also scanned the thousands of profiles for any man that caught my eye- like an all you can eat buffet of available bachelors. Within a day, I had my generic email down: “Dear ____, I noticed you like to ____ I have/have never/ love to _____. I look forward to hearing from you soon to chat more about this. ~Shopgirl”

Some responded, some didn’t, which didn’t bother me as I could hardly keep with the correspondence up as it was. Interestingly,
statistics show that more than 90% of the profiles on traditional dating websites are inactive. So I didn’t judge my success by the number of responses, rather, the quality. By the end of the second week, I had gone on 3 dates, one was a marathon date that ended awkwardly, and we never spoke again. The second, turned out to be the ironman-running-vegan-older brother of a friend I knew from childhood who, needless to say, required a rescue call to end the date early. Last but not least was my third and final date with a man who is now my husband and father of my first child. We exchanged 2 emails each, he called me to arrange a date, location, and time for a dinner date, and we met at the restaurant. As soon as I walked in, I was pleasantly surprised by how handsome he was in person- his pictures and phone voice had done him no justice- and by the end of the date, called my cousin and said “I met someone tonight and this is the man I am going to marry.” Our courtship was a whirlwind and there was nothing “online” about our dating. He called the next day as promised, we saw each other 4 times the first week and countless number of times after that. 2 short years and 2 days later, we were engaged, about 1 year after that married, and less than 2 years after that, new parents.

I often joke that my husband is the best thing I ever bought on the internet, and his response is always that I am the most expensive. Needless to say, without “cyber love,” none of “life” as I know it would be possible. So, to all those single ladies and gentleman out there, I say, throw away your pride and put on your typing shoes because finding a mate is like applying for a job, you have to anticipate a lot of dead ends before you find the golden ticket.

Kolcha Love

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*Kolcha is the Creole (Kriol) spelling for Culture*

The song “Love is a Many Splendored Thing” could not be closer to the truth when it comes to Belize. Love can be played out in many ways and Belize is no exception. Nicknamed “Mother Nature’s best kept secret,” Belize is fast becoming one of the most loved countries in the world. It exudes the essence of beauty -- from its land, which features the rainforest, the Maya ruins, numerous waterfalls and caves, to its waters, which encompass the second largest barrier reef in the world, the Blue Hole (second to none) and its more than 200 beautiful cayes that are natural habitats to amazing birds, fauna and flora. Its largest island (Ambergris Caye) was awarded by Trip Advisor the Traveler’s Choice Award for The Best Island In The World – 2014, tell me what’s not to love?

Similarly, the people of Belize are some of the most fun-loving you will encounter. A melting pot of ethnic groups, Belize is synonymous with none when it comes to showing love. We are warm and welcoming -- hugging is a casual gesture. To indicate how loving Belizeans can be, in 1926 Henry Edward
Ernest Victor Bliss (Baron Bliss) arrived in Belize after visiting Bahamas, Trinidad and Jamaica. He spent most of his time sailing, exploring the coastline and fishing. Of course, he fell in love with the waters; however, it was the loving nature of the local fishermen offering him food and companionship that would enthralled him most of all. At the time of his death, Baron Bliss had never set foot on the mainland; nonetheless, he left nearly two million dollars to Belize as a testament of his love for the country and its people.

Unfortunately, love is not that simple! It is rather complex with many meanings and temperament. It exhibits so many different emotions and can be devastating in relationships gone wrong. With love, the psyche comes into play when emotions and passions are factors. It can quickly turn to sorrow, to hate and, even worse, to tragedy -- playing like an opera -- from a smile, a hug, a kiss on the cheeks and eventually death. In Belize, however, we are passionate people with a twist. Kriol cultural traditions have labeled the suffering of emotional love in various stages depending on how deeply afflicted you are with a person.

Kriol taak: Poa joa mi ga bad makoabi wen di gyal lef ahn (Poor Joe became so love-sick when his girlfriend left him)

Disbelief

K. E. Frederick

Writing about love. I could write about my unbelievably thoughtful and doting husband. I could write about my unconditionally loving father for whom I am still a six year old princess. I could write about my free spirited sister who accepts me absolutely. I could write about my obsession, perhaps addiction, of chocolate. Or obviously, I could write about being pregnant for the first time. First child. First four months of motherhood.

When I first found out I was pregnant, I began noticing the numerous pregnant women walking around. It seemed to be a city of expecting women. Pleasantly plump ladies with the healthy hair bouncing off their shoulders and shining smiling faces, brimming with joy and...
the new life developing within them. All of these beauties wearing cute exercise outfits or flowy dresses that just so snuggly and perfectly hug the cradle of their stomachs.

When women talk of pregnancy their eyes become ever so slightly hazy as they exhale and recall the beautiful experience. Families laugh and smile knowingly when the possibility of babies is brought up. Everyone coos when a stroller is pushed into the room. But no one talks about the months were you don’t feel anything. The popular book, “What to Expect When You’re Expecting” refers to this emotion as “disbelief.” It is under one of the categories of what you might “feel” that week. It’s more than disbelief. It’s the absence of feeling.

In the first few months, I have not lovingly stroked my stomach or held my belly, daydreaming of the little life inside of me. I have not considered the incredible little independent life it will one day have. Instead, I have dreaded waking up because that meant a new bout of nausea. I have tried breathing through my mouth to avoid smelling anything that might make my stomach turn and have me running to the nearest toilet. I don’t feel love towards my changing body. I don’t anxiously await the day it will be born, because right now, I am hoping the strange cramps on my sides won’t prevent me from standing up out of my chair. My eyes have dark circles of stress that seem to echo days and nights of hiding under the covers hoping to feel better if I sleep for one more hour.

My in-laws speak gleefully about how excited they are and how they love the little life growing inside of me with all of their hearts. They talk of all the parties and celebrations we will have to celebrate the new addition. And I keep thinking how much the food sitting in front of me gives me a visceral urge to run or fight, either would work. How I hate entertaining at parties. And what if I don’t want to celebrate? What if I don’t want to have hundreds of people surround me while I try to stay awake and feed every two hours, or change dirty diapers every hour. What if I don’t like being a mother? What if I’m a terrible mother?

I love my new boobs. I hate the widening hips or rising scale. I love eating chocolate milkshakes whenever I get the urge (because anything is better than no food, right?). I hate the waves of tears and sobs that accompany a deep rooted fear of longing for what once was. I do love pancakes for dinner. But I am not myself. And I hate it. I don’t feel awake or energetic or lively like I used to. Perhaps I will feel differently when I am further along. I have no doubt I will love the baby more than I can imagine. And I will look back this rant and feel a tremendous guilt for ever permanently admitting this lack of love on paper. But for now, it needs to be said. This is not love at first sight. Love does not come immediately when you learn of the potential life you are supporting. We need time to grow on each other. We need to be introduced to each other’s personalities (and one of us needs to develop a personality). But as I write this, there is a shift happening in my lower abdomen. Perhaps it is the little one kicking me for cursing this process and speaking too quickly before giving it a chance. Perhaps it is right. Perhaps I am only a selfish, privileged woman who has the luxury to lament and ponder on the minute details of pregnancy. Perhaps I have the luxury to question love and instead I should just keep quiet and wait for this “disbelief” to pass.
Romantic love: a universal, deep, and complicated feeling that men and woman have been experiencing throughout history. This complex emotion is defined as the display of strong affection towards another person and has been defined as a fast-paced ecstasy that provides moments of passionate happiness, euphoria and satisfaction.

Relationships based on love are extremely important in a healthy social life, and love, as an essential human impulse, drives people to find a partner rooted in our primitive instincts, without which perpetuation would cease to exist. It has even been considered ‘The most powerful human motivation’, despite the emphasis usually given to the great impact war has on our society.

This feeling has for centuries been falsely tied to the heart, when in reality is nurtured by the only organ capable of such control- our brain. It is a complex response led by neurotransmitters and important brain reward systems.

Many parts of the brain are activated when we fall in love, however, there are key areas. The reward system is mainly based on the dopamine in the accumbens nucleus (site of action of highly-addictive drugs such as cocaine and amphetamine, which indeed cause an increase in dopamine levels in this area), and it can also be modulated by cortical areas like the anterior cingulate cortex (which also appears to have a role in rational cognitive functions, such as empathy, impulse control, and emotion).

According to Dr. Helen Fisher from Rutgers University, one of the leading scientists in this field, the first stage of love is driven by lust. Fascination and infatuation are at the root of this stage. “To inspire with a foolish or extravagant love or admiration” is one of the definitions of infatuation. It is easy to mistake infatuation for committed love but it is only a strong attraction to another person. This period is led by the sex hormones testosterone and estrogens in both men and women. The more testosterone, the more libido, and a study found that men with high levels of testosterone are less prone to getting married and have higher chances of getting divorced once married. Women’s testosterone peaks during ovulation, this effect also correlates with species conservation since is the most fertile period for women.

After the lust period, the romantic love stage, or romance stage, is driven by different chemicals but mainly dopamine. This neurotransmitter produces euphoria, increased energy, less need for sleep and food, and has
also been postulated as designed to ‘deliver pleasure’. In fact, it activates the aforementioned reward centers of the brain and amplifies the effects of sex hormones when the two molecules are released simultaneously.

Other chemicals related to stress and excitement are elevated as well, such as cortisol and norepinephrine (also known as noradrenaline). The effects of the norepinephrine can include sweaty palms, a pounding heart, hyperactivity, insomnia, lack of appetite, anxiety and fear. Knowing the effects of dopamine and norepinephrine on appetite makes me remember the first time I couldn’t finish my dish of pasta; my father asked me right away ‘are you in love?’ I might have blushed.

On the other hand, a neurotransmitter called serotonin is low in early romantic love. Low serotonin levels are found in the Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), and this pathology is usually treated with selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI). A prominent feature of the romantic love stage is the obsessive thinking about the beloved one, and lovers spend a considerable amount of time thinking about the significant other. The result is an obsessive pursuit of the desired person, a relentless optimism, and even some kind of addiction. To confirm this hypothesis, a transporter of serotonin was analyzed in 60 individuals. 20 subjects deeply in love, 20 patients with OCD and 20 random controls. The results showed similar low amounts of the serotonin transporter in the patients with OCD and the subjects in love, while the controls had normal levels. Thus, serotonin can partially explain the obsessive thinking present in the early stages of romantic love.

It has been proposed that the stage of romantic love can last a maximum of 3 years. Then the amount of dopamine receptors starts to drop, hence the activity of the neurotransmitter is decreased. Serotonin levels might also return to normal.

When romantic love decreases, another type of love arises. This stage is called attachment, and is characterized by emotional states like security, peace, union and calm, which are usual feelings in long-term relationships. Scientists think there might be two major hormones involved in this feeling of attachment along with endorphins; oxytocin and vasopressin (both small molecules made of 9 aminoacids). During orgasm, vasopressin levels increase in men and oxytocin levels in women. These chemicals deepen the feelings of attachment and makes couples feel much closer to one another after they have had sex. Since the theory goes that the more sex a couple has, the deeper their bond becomes, just enjoy!

Not only sex, but cuddling and hugging stimulate the release of oxytocin, thereby strengthening the relationship. The functions of oxytocin are numerous, but specifically social-effective: high levels facilitate social behaviors (it has been called ‘social glue’); it seems to reinforce the strong bond between mother and baby and is released during childbirth. It is also responsible for the production and releasing of milk in nursing mothers. Furthermore, a study found that people trust strangers to a larger degree when they have extra oxytocin.

The potential role of vasopressin in long-term relationships was discovered when scientists looked at the prairie vole. Prairie voles (mouse-like rodents) indulge in far more sex
than is strictly necessary for the purposes of reproduction. Like humans, they also form fairly stable pair-bonds. When male prairie voles were given a drug that suppresses the effect of vasopressin, the bond with their partner deteriorated immediately as they lost their devotion and failed to protect their partner from new suitors. In humans, the vasopressin receptor AVPR1A has been linked to pair-bonding behavior. In men, one particular variation of this gene, called allele 334, was associated with lower scores on partner bonding and greater odds of marital conflict.

Final remarks

- The process of 'falling in love' is not some abstract, coincidental occurrence. Instead, it's more accurately described as a gradual chemical change in a person's body. No matter what you have heard, you don't love anyone with all of your heart. You love from the depths of your ventral tegmental area, your nucleus accumbens, and other vital areas of the brain.

- Remember that oxytocin gets released with physical contact, especially when it's sexual, so frequent physical contact, both sexual and non-sexual is an important element of love in a relationship.

- Love is a drug potentially more potent and addictive than cocaine. Therefore, not seeing a partner for a while can lead to feelings of withdrawal and depression. Thus, people ‘in love’ are in a chemically altered, but ultimately preferable, state that becomes quickly associated with the presence, and the ideal projection, of their loved one.

- None of this, however, explains those enviable couples who walk hand in hand together through their entire lives into the twilight of their years. It's also important to remember just how complicated the topic of human affection is. Our culture, our education, and the people surrounding us during our lives help to change those chemicals and networks. It is not and it won’t be just a genetic test to check the copies of the vasopressin receptor or the brain hormonal levels. There is hope for everybody.

Peace and much love.

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http://www.ted.com/talks/helen_fisher_studies_the_brain_in_loveb
The Trap of Romantic Love in Cinema

Sergio Espi Rubio, Scriptwriter and Journalist, El Periodista Digital, Madrid, Spain

A boy and a girl meet in a bar. They like each other. They kiss each other and meet again the following day, and the following one and the following one until they finally become boyfriend and girlfriend. After six months they move in together. They introduce each other’s families and after two years, they get married. She hates some of his habits and he hates her hermeticism. The relationship has ups and downs but soon they have children. They bring them up and take care of them until they leave the house. Is this story worthy of top box office film? Most likely not. Why? Because it violates the basic rule of the cinematographic script: There is no conflict.

Instead, what would happen if the boy was a rich heir promised to another girl and she was just a poor employee? What if there were religious, political or racial conflicts placing obstacles in the way of the love of the couple? What if she had a terminal illness that she discloses to her boyfriend only when it is too late? What if he was from a different planet and she was merely human being?

The narrative models in romantic films:

Cinema, like any other narrative art, does not necessarily reflect real life. It is actually a reinterpretation of reality with the purpose of communicating a message. Cinema is an industry, and thus, its goal is to generate revenue. As a result, there will always be a conscious manipulation to maximize its marketability. Is there a better way of marketing something than by using the universal language of love? No script would work if there are no feelings involved.

Let’s give an example: Titanic (James Cameron, 1998) has the second top grossing box office revenues in the history of cinema, however, it has one of the most torpid scripts ever seen. In the plot, a dapper and poor young painter falls in love with a beautiful girl from high society. From there, all the topics in romantic cinema meet: Class struggles, a castrative mother, an evil and jealous man, tacky sequences and a final sacrifice. And though the argument is basic, we understand that it could not have been different. Why? Because when someone spends more than two hundred million dollars in making a movie, it is logical that they attempt to reach the widest possible audience.
In some films, the type of romantic love shown starts from the adolescent needs of transcendence, the need of feeling that they are special and that their lives could be nicer and more exciting than they actually are. These kinds of feelings promote evasion, which in turn sustains the cinema.

Due to its status of being a massive method of communication, cinematographic art creates and maintains societal models of conduct. As a result, it would be of interest here to make a critique on the behaviors imposed by the cinema about romantic relationships.

In regards to romantic affect, films are fed by myths originated in oral traditions such as the Bible, the Greek culture and the Medieval culture. These, are normally centered on the idea of the “better half,” the fate and the eternal, exclusive, unconditional love.

The trick of the happy ending:

In addition to the above comments, we must be aware that romantic movies always leave the story unfinished. Either one of the characters dies, which contributes to the idea of eternal love, or the couple ends up more bonded than ever. This is the point in which we fall into the trick of the happy ending. Who says that these two characters will stay together loving each other for eternity with the same intensity? Does anyone believe, for example, that the prostitute and the millionaire of “Pretty Woman” were going to get married and have kids after they kissed in the end of the film? Most likely not. Usually, in these scenarios the character of the viewer is tested: Are you a dreamer or a cynicist? Are you optimistic or pessimistic?

Films that promote romantic prototypes are many. From classics well reviewed by the critics (“Love Story,” “Wuthering Heights,” “Bringing up Baby,” “Romeo and Juliet...”) to cheap and easy to consume products. Perhaps one of the most important recent examples of this kind of story is the “Twilight” saga.

The “Twilight” saga and the role of the woman in romantic love:

Based of the book series by Stephenie Meyer, the saga made more than two billion dollars worldwide. As if consisting of an adolescent review of “Dracula” by Bram Stoker, the films narrate the story of Bella, a shy, hostile and torpid high school student who moves with her father to a small town called Forks. There, she meets Edward Cullen, an adolescent vampire who represents the trope of the “ideal” man: good looking, faithful, polite, rich and dedicated. In addition, Jacob, a dapper wolf-man, also falls for Bella serving as counterpoint to the story. Jacob is the “bad boy” who is unable to control his impulses but has a
good heart. The funny thing is that we do not even get to know why everyone falls for Bella. What makes this character so “special”? The only fact that men love her.

One of the most present archetypes in the Twilight saga is that the woman is valued only by the values that the man who choses her represents. It is congruent with the phantasy that a woman can change a man and that a man could pick any woman, for some reason he would chose only one. Love in this setting is not the result of a conscious decision but a sexual urge that goes beyond one’s will. The question is more based in the desired object (being loved) than the subject (the one who loves). The main character Bella, is rescued physically and emotionally by a vampire and only when she becomes a mother (in the last film of the saga), she becomes a more active and capable person.

Figure: Bella only abandons her passive role after becoming pregnant. Source: nocookie.net

The sexist myth of the passive woman who is rescued by a man is not new. Children’s literature is full of similar examples. For instance, in the traditional tale “Snow White,” a princess flees and does everything men ask her to do. First, the hunter pities her and abandones her in the forest. Later, she becomes a servant for seven dwarfs and finally when she falls in a deep sleep after biting a wicked apple (referring to the original sin in the Bible) she is rescued by the kiss of a prince. But, how does Snow White feel? Which virtues make her so special? They don’t know or they are not interested.

Figure: We never get to understand which virtues make Snow White so special. Walt Dysney, 1937. Source: fangirlsarewe.com

Would the Twilight saga have been as succesful if the helpless human had been a man and the powerful immortal being a woman? Probably not. For centuries we have been listening the same stories and for better or worse, cinema perpetuates them. These kind of beliefs can lead to a general feeling of frustration.

A film becomes successful when it balances the same dose of identification and evasion. Romantic films, as well as all narrative arts, tend to be aspirational. The audience can dream and expect to go through the same emotions and conflicts, and hope that their lives will become as transcendental as in the cinema. But, let’s go back for a second to the couple discussed at the begining of this paper: The boy and the girl meet at a bar and face an “extraordinary-ordinary” life together. He is not a vampire, nor a millionaire with difficulties
creating obstacles to marry the woman he loves, he is not a bohemian painter struggling with socioeconomic classes. She is not a damsel in trouble that needs to be rescued. There are not unexpected turns, nor signs of fate, nor is their heroic love is tested. There are conflicts, but they are more common, more real, and subsequently less cinematographic.

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Cómo crear personajes inolvidables, de Linda Seger
The Tragic Story of Joanna the Mad

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Joanna (1479-1555) nicknamed “The Mad” (In Spanish Juana la Loca), was the daughter of the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile. The monarchs union, along with the conquest of Granada in 1492, contributed to the formation of Spain as it is known today. During her adolescence, Joanna was a good-looking and avid student who mastered the major Iberian peninsula (Castilian, Catalan and Galaico-Portuguese) romance languages, as well as French and Latin.

In 1496, at the age of 16, Joanna married Philip The Handsome, Duke of Burgundy and moved to Flanders to live with him. There, she had three children. One of them was Charles, who would later become the first Spanish Emperor. While she was still in Flanders, Joanna’s elder brothers and sister passed away and the Cortes of Castile recognized her as the heiress of the throne. (1)

In 1504, Isabella became sick with a fever and Joanna went back to Castile to visit her. At that time, Joanna was eating and sleeping very little. An altercation happened between her and her mother. After that, Joanna planned to leave Castile and return to her husband. At that time, a return to Flanders through France was very dangerous since Castile was at war with France. Despite this, Joanna insisted she was going, claiming that Castile was at war but she wasn’t. To prevent her reckless plans, her travelling companion Bishop Fonseca took the horses back to the stable. Joanna reacted by yelling and shaking the bars of the stable. She remained up all night, contributing to the drama by refusing blankets or any kind of comfort. (2)

After her mother’s death, Joanna became the Queen regnant of Spain, a battle for the Castilian throne began and Joanna’s father Ferdinand made an attempt to mint coins under his name and Joanna’s. Her husband Philip, in an attempt to become the King of Castile, also minted coins under his name and Joanna’s. (3) During this time, in response to accusations throughout the empire that she was insane, Joanna wrote a letter to Señor Vere denying insanity, stating that she simply had jealousy issues that she believed she had probably inherited from her mother. (4) The succession battle for the throne ended with Ferdinand abandoning his interest in reigning Castile, leaving such ambitions and responsibility to his “beloved children.” Some time after that, Philip and Ferdinand signed an agreement asserting that Joanna was mentally incapable to rule Castile and should be replaced. Philip became the King regnant but would
die only a few months later from a fever. It is recorded that Joanna took care of her husband religiously during his final days. (2)

After Philip’s death, Joanna’s mental health deteriorated further, though she again became the Queen regnant of Castile. Coincidentally, Castile fell into a crisis aggravated by a plague. Despite the political instability at that time, Joanna’s chief concern was to travel throughout the kingdom with Philip’s dead carcass. Despite many objections, Joanna repeatedly refused to be separated from her husband’s body and abandoned her own self-care, for example she stopped bathing and slept on the floor. In a new attempt to gain control of Castile, Ferdinand traveled to Castile but could not unseat Joanna, who refused to sign his proposed documents. Ferdinand would become the administrator of the kingdom under his daughter’s regency. In 1506, he put Joanna in forced confinement at the monastery of Santa Clara in Tordersillas. After Ferdinand’s death, Joanna’s son Charles would come from Flanders to become the king of Spain. He also kept his mother confined at the monastery until her death. Nonetheless, Joanna remained credited as the Queen of Spain for the rest of her life. During her stay in Santa Clara she developed paranoid ideas of being poisoned by the nuns. After her death, she would be buried with her parents at the Royal chapel of Granada. (1,2)

Joanna’s mental illness has been a subject of debate across the centuries. Some scholars even propose that Joanna did not have a mental illness but was a naïve person who was victimized by her father and husband in their attempts to gain control over the throne of Castile. However, while it is likely possible that some of that happened, many witnesses who interacted with Joanna during her life agreed that she suffered significant mental challenges which significantly hindered her capability to effectively rein Castile.

Of course Joanna denied being mad or insane in her letter to Señor Vere (3). Lack of insight regarding one’s own insanity is common among individuals with mental illness. Other letters written by Joanna indicate that she felt very deep romantic feelings for her husband Philip. While primitive idealization is common in people during romantic states, the attempt to keep Philip’s body and sleep with it, impeding a proper burial suggest a bizarre behavior consistent with someone who has mental illness.
Within the last century, several scholars have attempted to elucidate what was Joanna’s diagnosis by using modern psychiatric nosology. While retrospective diagnosis is usually very difficult, in the absence of other methodologies we will for this purpose have to rely on it. Nevertheless, extreme caution must be taken and the fact that a definitive diagnosis is not possible must be assumed. (5)

Using the biopsychosocial model (6) to understand Joanna’s problem. It is known that her maternal grandmother, Isabella of Portugal was also forced in confinement by her stepson at the Arevalo Castle in Castile due to her mental struggles. Therefore, it is likely that Joanna inherited vulnerable genes. From a psychological perspective, Joanna was the daughter of two busy monarchs who spent most of their marital lives separated. Her mother Isabella had multiple duties as Queen regnant of Castile at a time that the Kingdom was expanding with the ending of the Reconquista and during the funding of naval companies that led to the discovery of the New Continent. It is possible that Joanna did not somehow receive the necessary attention from her mother in her childhood, leading to a conflictive relationship that was evident by the altercation at the time of her mother’s death. Also, Joanna had to grieve the premature deaths of her brothers and sister, in addition to the death of her mother. Furthermore, the death of her beloved husband Philip The Handsome is thought to have contributed to the deterioration of her mental health. From a more sociological point of view, Joanna was obviously raised in an environment of much wealth. However, after the deaths of her older brothers, she unexpectedly became the heiress of Castile, which could have been very stressful considering her documented naïve character. This could have also aggravated her mental health. After her father secluded her in the monastery of Santa Clara, she was not allowed to contact anyone outside. As a result she likely suffered from long term isolation perpetuated by her son Charles.
If we were to use current psychiatric diagnostic classification to understand Joanna’s mental disorder, (7) a wide differential should be included. Several traits of psychiatric disorders are suggested in her biography. For instance, her primitive idealization, reckless decisions, transient paranoia, mood swings and at times violent behaviors would suggest a borderline personality disorder. Joanna also had abnormal eating habits, which could be consistent with an eating disorder, something also highly comorbid in borderline personality disorder. While this diagnosis is possible, the fact that she experienced isolation and confinement, her prominent negative symptoms, bizarre, reckless and dangerous behaviors with possible delusional thinking, it is very likely that Joanna suffered from a more severe deteriorating mental illness. Another factor that would suggest a severe disorder is the fact that the threshold for concern of mental illness in the Renaissance was likely much higher than today, which corroborates even more our theory. Some scholars have suggested that depression was the causation of her affliction, however, it is known that Joanna could spend days without eating or sleeping and was often very irritable, which would be more consistent with a bipolar rather than unipolar mood disorder. This possibility is further supported by the fact that she had psychotic features including delusions of paranoia and jealousy. On the other hand, while affective symptoms were very prominent during Joanna’s life, in bipolar disorder periods of remission of symptoms between episodes is common, something less likely in this case, since she remained in confinement across her life and many years later her own son Charles commented that it was dangerous to let her talk to anyone outside. Therefore, with the information that we have today, it would be reasonable to speculate that schizophrenia with prominent affective symptoms was a likely diagnosis for Joanna’s mental affliction.

Figure: The Dementia of Ms. Joanna by Lorenzo Valles (1867). In XIX century, during the Romanticism Joanna’s story became very popular in the arts. Source:wikimedia.org
Some scholars have viewed mental illness historically as a disorder that affected the poor, proposing a social causation hypothesis for mental illness throughout history. However the tragic story of Joanna The Mad is an example of severe mental illness suffered by one person from a very high socioeconomic class. Her story and her later deterioration support the drift hypothesis rather than the social causation hypothesis for mental illness, a theory that is more widely supported by the psychiatric scientific community. (8,9)

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Cinema and Psychiatry

Addicted to Love: Casablanca (1942)

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A kiss is still a kiss, a sigh is just a sigh  
The fundamental things apply, as time goes by  
And when two lovers woo, they still say, “I Love You”

Casablanca (1942), directed by Michael Curtiz, is a quintessential American movie depicting love and romance during wartime. The movie is based on a stage play “Everybody comes to Rick’s,” by Murray Burnett and Joan Alison. Set during the early times of World War II, it centers on an expatriate torn between Love and Virtue.

Casablanca is a coastal city in Morocco. Set in 1941, early part of WWII, Rick Blaine (Humphrey Bogart), as ex-patriate is the proprietor of a swanky night club and gambling den in Casablanca called Rick’s Café Americain. The clientele vary from refugees to hard-core gamblers, from Nazis to the Resistance, and some plain-old crooks. In particular, this café attracted people from Nazi-occupied Germany. The café was a haven for many transients trying to get out of Europe. Rick, who once harbored tons of idealism, had put himself at risk while fighting fascism in the past. He’s now cynical and detached as he professes: “I stick my neck out for nobody.”

Ugarte (Peter Lorre) kills two German couriers and gets hold of letters of transit and ends up in Rick’s café. The papers that he has custody now, would allow the bearer to travel freely around German-controlled Europe as well as neutral zones like Lisbon and Portugal. It was relatively easier for one to reach the United States from Lisbon. Knowing the fact that these papers are priceless to many refugees lingering in Casablanca to get out, he plans to sell them off and make a fortune for himself. He makes a deal with the highest bidder who was due to arrive at the club later that night. Unfortunately, before the exchange, Ugarte gets arrested by a group of policemen under the command of a
Then a pretty face which happens to be Rick’s past love interest enters into his café as he quotes, “Of all the gin joints, in all the towns, in all the world, she walks into mine.” Enter Ilsa Lund (Ingrid Bergman), the female protagonist of the movie along with her husband Victor Laszlo (Paul Henreid). Laszlo is a famous Czech Resistance leader who was fortunate enough to escape from a Nazi concentration camp and is here to purchase the letters. Rick recalls that while in Paris, Ilsa Lund had met him for the first time and had instantaneously fallen in love with him. She believed that her husband had been killed. Unfortunately for Rick, Ilsa discovered that her husband was still alive and she left Rick abruptly without even offering an explanation to him and returns to Laszlo. This leaves Rick betrayed. Ilsa feels that she owes an explanation to Rick and returns to the café to explain. Rick, saddened by fact of her return, his wounds were reopened again, gets punch drunk and bitterly refuses to listen to what she has to say.

The club’s piano player, Sam (Arthur Dooley Wilson) is asked by Rick and Ilsa individually to play “As Time Goes By,” a song which they loved when they were together in Paris. As the song is being played, Rick reminisces about his affair with Ilsa. Paris was on the verge of attack by the German army and hence both of them decide to take a train to Southern France to escape the German army. After hearing the news that her husband Victor Laszlo was probably alive, she fails to turn up at the station where Rick receives a hand written letter from her that she can’t explain why she was leaving him but she loves him. So, Rick and Sam leave without her.

Laszlo suspects that Rick has the letters and speaks to him privately about obtaining them. Rick refuses to sell at any price, telling Laszlo to ask his wife the reason. Later on, they are interrupted by a group of Nazi officers following which the club had to be closed. Later that night, Ilsa confronts Rick in the deserted café. Even when threatened by a gun, he doesn’t oblige and refuses to handover the papers to her. She is unable to shoot and confesses that she still loved him. He convinces her that she would stay back with him and hence decides to help Laszlo.

On some minor charges, Laszlo is put behind the bars. Rick convinces to release Laszlo, assuring to set him up for a much more serious crime of possessing the letters of transit. However, Rick not only double crosses Renault but also makes him assist in Laszlo’s escape by holding him at gunpoint. Just when we start
thinking that Laszlo would leave and Rick would have Ilsa for the rest of his life, Rick makes Ilsa to get on the plane with her husband telling her that if she stayed back she would regret, “Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon and for the rest of your life.” This betrayal of Renault by Rick ends up in the beginning of a new friendship, Renault covers up for Rick, and they plan to join the Resistance.

Love is a complex neurobiological phenomenon, relying on trust, belief, pleasure and reward activities within the brain. At first, each new romantic encounter will be accompanied by a rush of euphoria – new experiences, new pleasures. Every detail become associated with those intense feelings: places, times, object, faces, or simple musical piece like A Kiss is Still a Kiss.

Can love be considered an addiction? There is growing interest in the classification of certain behavioral disorders as addictive. Commonalities between compulsive disorders and substance addiction have been identified in terms of symptomatology, neurobiochemistry and adaptations in brain function (Shaffer, 1999; Holden, 2001; Potenza, 2006; Leeman and Potenza, 2012). Love is often described as an addiction. It is a subtle and poetic metaphor that contains seeds of truth. Romantic attachment is rarely thought to be a pathological disorder (Plato and Rowe, 1986; Bédier and Belloc, 2004). However, when the diagnostic criteria for substance dependence are looked at side-by-side with related phenomena observable in normal human relationships, striking parallels emerge. There are various types of love addicts which have been described. One type of love addict which Rick closely fits into us that of a Torch Bearer. Torch Bearer is type of Avoidant Love Addict (ALA) who obsesses about someone who is unavailable. This can be done without acting out (suffering in silence) or by pursuing the person they are in love with. Some Torch Bearers are more addicted than others. This kind of addiction feeds on fantasies and illusions. It is also known as unrequited love.

Similar to the experience of a person exposed to drugs of abuse, a person who falls in love also experiences powerful feelings of reward and euphoria that lead to reinforcement of drug-taking behavior. Addicts are also willing to sacrifice in order to obtain and consume drugs; and these self sacrificing behaviors can also be seen in a person plagued with love as we see in this movie where Rick aids the fleeing of Ilsa and Laszlo even though he did not want to stick out his neck for anybody. These two behaviors share more than just psychological similarities. A deep and systematic concordance exists between the brain regions and neurochemicals involved in both addiction and social attachment (Burkett and and Young, 2012).

The partner addiction hypothesis:

Both attachment and addiction processes can be understood in relation to an object of addiction, whether that object is a
partner (partner addiction) or a substance (substance addiction). In the nascent phase of addiction, large amounts of sensory information are gathered about the object of addiction. In substance addiction, this applies to the sensory modalities appropriate for the drug: the taste and smell; the particular experience unique to the drug; and the context in which the drug is taken. With partner addiction, this information is primarily social: looks, touches, words, scents, the shape of the body and face, and possibly sexual experiences (Burkett and Young, 2012).

Probably, human love is the most powerful of all emotions. The psychology of human love and drug addiction share powerful overlaps at virtually every level of the addictive process, from initial encounters to withdrawal. There are observations which suggest that treatments used to reduce cravings may be effective in treating grief from loss of a loved one or a bad break-up (O’Malley et al., 1992; Volpicelli et al., 1992; Koob and Zorrilla, 2010; Minozzi et al., 2011). Data also provide evidence for the theory that social attachment systems governing maternal bonding and pair bonding to a mating partner are subverted by drugs of abuse to create addictions that are just as powerful as natural attachments. To make it lucid, we may be addicted to the ones we love.

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Source of pics: IMD
Cronenberg’s “The Fly” and its parallels with Kafka’s “Metamorphosis”

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“The Fly” by David Cronenberg (1984) narrates the story of Seth Brundle, a famous scientist who has designed a revolutionary teletransportation technique with the use of telepods. Early in the film, Seth meets Veronica, a journalist for Particle Magazine whose editor is Veronica’s former lover Boran. Veronica is assigned to write a paper about Seth’s scientific discoveries for the magazine. Seth shows her his new experiment. So far he has been successful to teletransport inanimate objects but an earlier trial with a living being (a monkey) was catastrophic.

Soon, Seth and Veronica begin a romantic relationship which infuriates Boran. Then led by jealousy Boran decides to publish some of the secret information Seth had shared with Veronica. In the meantime, Seth manages to teletransport a baboon and frustrated that he cannot celebrate his success with Veronica, he thus tries the telepod on himself. After that, Seth soon realizes he is changing. He notices an unusual strength and other physical skills. Seth believes that these changes are related to purifying properties of the telepod but he starts to develop personality changes too. Later he cheats on Veronica with a girl he meets in a bar. He becomes more arrogant and ego centered and accuses Veronica of being jealous of him. After his nails fall, he understands there might be something wrong with him. Doing some research within his operating system, he discovers that a fly was in the telepod during his transportation and the system fused both Seth’s and the fly’s DNA.

Seth begins to metamorphose into something not human, a being that he calls Brundlefly. Veronica realizes that she is pregnant and not knowing if she got pregnant before or after Seth’s fusion with the fly, she asks Boran to help her arrange an abortion in the middle of the night. Brundlefly overheard the conversation during Veronica’s last visit and abducts her before the abortion takes place. Boran follows them into the apartment and once he gets in, Brundlefly corrodes his hand and foot with his saliva.
Brundlefly reveals his plan to fuse Veronica, the baby and himself into a new being. Right before his plan is about to be carried, Boran is able to shoot at the cable telepod containing Veronica. Brundlefly tries to leave but does not have enough time and the system fuses Brundlefly with elements of the telepod. Then, new creature resulting from Brundlefly, cables and metallic elements leaves the third telepod. At this moment, Brundlefly understands that he cannot leave like that anymore and in a lucid moment of humanity signs Veronica to shoot him in the head. Veronica is initially hesitant but agrees to do it to alleviate her lover’s suffering, after that she crashes on the floor crying and grieving the death of her partner. The dramatic ending of “The Fly” is perhaps one of the most moving moments in the history of American cinema.

The parallels between Cronenberg’s The Fly and Kafka’s metamorphosis are pretty evident. Similarly to Seth Brundle’s story, in Kafka’s novel, Gregor Samsa turns into a giant insect and has to learn how to live with his new nature with the consequent embarrassment of his family members. After he dies, his loved ones will experience similar mixed symptoms of grief and relief.
Dear Sir

In your Editor’s note ‘Towards Humanism in Psychosis’ (Vol. 2/Iss.1, Winter, 2014) you wrote: ‘Etymologically, “psychosis” comes from the Greek word “psyche” (soul) and “-osis” (abnormality).’ This is indeed correct, insofar as it goes.

I had been reviewing the etymology of the word ‘spiritual’ and would like to share some of my findings which seem pertinent to the origins of the word ‘psychology’.

In Greek psychein means to blow or to breathe, which later gave us psyche and hence psychology. The Online Etymology Dictionary notes that in Greek psyche means “the soul, mind, spirit; breath; life, one’s life, the invisible animating principle or entity which occupies and directs the physical body; understanding” (personified as Psykhē, the beloved of Eros), akin to psychein "to blow, cool"...The word had extensive sense development in Platonic philosophy and Jewish-influenced theological writing of St. Paul. (The) meaning, “human soul” is from 1650s. In English, (the) psychological sense "mind," is attested by 1910” (1).

In Latin to breathe is rispare, which eventually produced the word, spirit. Latin spiritus means "breathing (respiration, and of the wind), breath; breath of a god" (1). Similarly the expression 'to expire' (as in, to die) literally means to breath out ones (last) breath.

Is there a common origin for Greek psykhe and Latin spiritus?

Then the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

In this Hebrew extract from Genesis, three words יִפַח, נִּשְׁמַח, נֶפֶשׁ are central to the Ancient Hebrews’ concept of the creation of life. This extract will also help us to understand the genesis of the words spirituality and psychology.

In most English bible translations the Hebrew words yipach (יִפַח) and neshama (נִּשְׁמַח) are translated the same – 'to breathe'.

This cannot be accurate, since they are different Hebrew words. Yipach (יִפַח) has a connotation of inflating or expanding, just as would occur when the lungs are filled with air. In modern Hebrew this word gives rise to uses such as: swollen legs, blowing up a balloon, and a
person with an over-inflated image of himself (a swollen ego). I suggest transitive verbs such as 'to blow', 'to distend' or 'to inflate' would be more precise in conveying the biblical meaning.

Neshama (נשמה) in modern Hebrew, means the soul. This is derived from the verb linehom (לנות), which means to breathe. However in the context of the Biblical passage it means the soul and not to breath, and relies on yipach to describe inflating the erstwhile lifeless body with the spirit of life. It is the breath of life, as when a newborn baby takes its first gasp of air, and the soul becomes animated. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation is a good medical metaphor. There is not only an attempt to inflate and distend yipach (יפח) the lungs through the oro-nasal airways, but also a desire to save the person’s soul neshama (נשמות). Thus ‘the breath (yipach) of life (neshama)’ is the intangible evanescent aspect of life. It is without substance just as a breath or the wind cannot be touched nor directly seen. Wind (differential of air pressure) is seen only indirectly by its effects on the visible physical world.

This is contrasted with the third core-word of the biblical passage – nefesh (נפש). Nefesh refers to the tangible aspects of life we can touch or feel. One can hold flesh, touch blood, and feel breath. Nefesh probably does not refer to the soul, as the soul is understood today. Any living thing – animal or human (and according to some commentators, plants) – has a nefesh. Of interest is that neshama (soul) described life in the plural hence referring to the abstract concept - whereas nefesh (a living being) addresses a single life, emphasizing the idea of a living being.

These mistranslations have given rise to misconceptions – sometimes accidental, and at other times maybe driven by theological doctrine. When the Old Testament was translated into Greek and then Latin their respective words for 'to breathe' took on the dual meanings of physical and non-physical attributes.

The ArtScroll Stone Edition in my view most accurately translates the Hebrew: 'And God formed the man of dust from the ground, and blew [yipach (יפח)] into his nostrils the soul [neshama (נשמה)] of life; and man became a living being [nefesh (נפש)].' (3)

Thus it would seem that psyche and spirit are related albeit through a picturesque image in the Old Testament. This anticipates the notion that at some level religion and psychiatry are related in that both deal with invisible forces.

I am,

Sincerely yours,

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Future Issues

- Summer Issue 2014: Music and Dance

- Autumn Issue 2014: Aggression

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