

SHALLOW OR PROFOUND: AN ANALYSIS ON THE SELF-ABSORBED ROSALIE HALE

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Rosalie Hale is the most beautiful vampire from the *Twilight saga*. Having had a perfect human life that ended tragically, Rosalie begins her vampire life with regrets and painful memories. Over time, she avenges her rapists and tries to move on with her new life as a vampire. Her adopted sibling Edward Cullen falls in love with a human – Bella, who wants to be transformed into a vampire. Rosalie has a heart to heart conversation with Bella in all honesty, trying to make Bella understand the value of human life that she is ready to throw away. She recounts to Bella all her regrets and all the possibilities that she misses because she has been frozen in time during her transformation into a vampire. Rosalie does not wish for Bella to have any regrets in the future and so she advises her to reconsider all her options and possibilities that could be presented to her only while she remains human. The purpose of Kohut's self-psychology is to help the analysand determine their own problems, come to terms with it and thereby find a solution with the assistance of the analyst. In the *Twilight saga*, Rosalie narrates her past life as a human to Bella, where she confesses about her realizations and her efforts to rise above. This paper focuses on Rosalie Hale one of the supposedly minor characters from the *Twilight saga*. Perceived to be rather shallow with a focus on the material, Rosalie's real characteristics and true traits are being side-lined. This paper focuses on bringing out the other side of Rosalie Hale and proving that she is a deeply profound character, using the experience-near empathic mode of observation founded by the Austrian psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut.

Keywords: Self-psychology, Empathy (experience-near empathic mode of observation), Autistic shell (separation-individuation), Self-absorbed/Shallow, Transformation (profound)

Abbreviations: TSOIG – *the twilight saga: official illustrated guide*

INTRODUCTION

The *Twilight Saga* is a popular teen vampire romance fiction. Though the most celebrated characters are Edward, Bella, Jake and Alice, this paper is going to deal about Rosalie Hale – a supposedly minor character in the Saga. She is described to be the most beautiful vampires in the Saga, she is also said to be *self-absorbed, rather shallow with focus on the material* (TSOIG 111). The focus of the paper is to determine that Rosalie Hale leads us to believe that she is shallow while she is one of the most profound characters in the Saga, by applying Austrian Psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut's theory of *experience-near empathic mode of observation*.

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REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Stephanie Meyer has given a detailed review of Rosalie Hale along with those of all the characters mentioned in the *Twilight Saga* in her book titled *the twilight saga: the official illustrated guide*. Many psychoanalysts have worked on and improved on Heinz Kohut's *theory of self-psychology*. Dr. Arnold Goldberg, M.D., training and supervising analyst at the Institute for Psychoanalysis, Chicago, has published a paper titled *The Mutuality of Meaning*. He concludes that the analysts' "task is to interpret the meanings that capture and envelope each of the participants in this very unique conversation" (Goldberg). Dr. Phil Mollon, Ph.D., in his article *Releasing the Unknown Self* concentrates on the *threat of fragmentation* and discusses about *releasing the true self* in an adult who was affected as a child, this healing process which could probably *result in a great anxiety* (Mollon). Crayton E. Rowe, Jr., M.S.W., B.C.D.-P, the founder of the American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work, has published a paper titled *Sorting Out the Maze of "Self Psychologies"* which he presented at the 2002 Annual Conference of the New York Institute for Psychoanalytic Self Psychology. In this paper, he discusses about the various *disparate models of treatment* and says that "Kohut was clear that self psychology is an extension of psychoanalysis that embodies his fundamental contributions of selfobject and selfobject transferences. Treatment modalities that dismiss and/or redefine these fundamental contributions cannot be considered self psychology" (Rowe).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to establish Rosalie Hale's profundity, the author has chosen to apply Heinz Kohut's *empathy as experience-near mode of observation*. Kohut is the founder of *self-psychology* which he introduced in the early 1970s. Having shifted from neurology to psychoanalysis, he received training in and practised the classical tradition of psychoanalysis grounded in the two basic principles of his admired master – Sigmund Freud – namely, *transference* and *resistance*. Kohut's concepts were born out of psychoanalytic treatment with attention to the development and analysis of the transferences. In particular, the case of Ms. F. led him to discover his *theory of the self*.

In time Kohut hypothesized that this sequence of disruption and reparation of the empathic connectedness between the analyst and the analysand is an inevitability in any effective treatment; at the same time, he suggested that if these disruptions of empathy are kept to an "optimal" (vs. "traumatic") level, they are not harmful but, in fact, are an essential ingredient in the development of the psychic structure and analytic cure. (<http://www.selfpsychologypsychoanalysis.org/whatis.shtml>)

Based on his observation that the analysand's previous sense of well-being is quickly restored when the analyst captures their feelings and offers a response that more or less reflects what they are thinking and feeling, Kohut termed this

mode of observation as *experience-near* which he viewed as *empathy*. Therefore, in order to establish that Rosalie Hale is in fact profound, the author has applied the *empathy as experience-near mode of observation* in particular to the conversation between Rosalie and Bella in *New Moon* where Rosalie narrates her past as a human trying to make Bella understand the value and possibilities of the human life.

In addition to proving Rosalie's profundity by applying the theories on Kohut's *transference* and Mahler's *separation-individuation*, the reasons for her shallowness is explained by applying Kohut's theories of *displacement*, *resistance*, *narcissism*, *traumatic failure* and Mahler's idea of the *autistic-shell*.

ROSALIE HALE

The *Twilight Saga* is one of the most celebrated series of novels and movies based on vampire teen-romance. Though Rosalie Hale is considered to be a minor character, she plays indispensable roles in different parts of the saga which lead to the turn of events in the story.

Rosalie Hale is one of the vampires in the Cullen family. Born in 1915 to a banker and his wife in Rochester, New York, Rosalie grew up to be the most beautiful in the whole of New York. She was engaged to be married by Royce King, the wealthiest man in New York. Rosalie was transformed into a vampire in 1933, at the age of eighteen, by Carlisle who found her abandoned in the road. In 1935, Rosalie found Emmet – her mate, who was being mauled by a bear. She saved him and took him to Carlisle to be transformed.

ROSALIE HALE AS PERCEIVED BY THE TWILIGHT SAGA CHARACTERS

Carlisle Cullen, following the scent of Rosalie's blood, found her abandoned in the road. He transformed her into a vampire merely to save her life. Carlisle and his wife – Esme, hoped that she would become Edward's mate. Unfortunately, Rosalie was neither pleased with this life as a vampire nor interested in Edward – the two were not attracted to each other. Later on, they loved each other as siblings. The naturally happy Emmet adores Rosalie and does everything he can to keep her happy. Edward, because of his special ability to read thoughts, feels that Rosalie is self-absorbed and shallow as he usually hears her constant thoughts of herself and her beauty, and was therefore never much interested in Rosalie. Alice joined the Cullens with Jasper by using her special ability to see into the future. While Jasper finds it challenging to stay a vegetarian vampire like the rest of the Cullens, Alice – a naturally happy person/vampire, bonds easily with the Cullens. Though Rosalie is admired by her siblings, she is considered to be self-absorbed and shallow. Esme, who loves all the adopted vampires as her own children, looks at Rosalie with hope and affection. She loves Rosalie as she is and hopes that her siblings would

cut her some slack and give her the opportunity to show that she is more than what they perceive her to be.

ROSALIE HALE'S CATHARSIS

Rosalie Hale portrays herself to be *self-absorbed* and *rather shallow* with *focus on the material* and this is how everyone believes her to be. She loves being the centre of attention and enjoys every such moment. Though her siblings feel she is shallow, the Cullens love and support each other.

During her human period

Rosalie was born in 1915 as Rosalie Lillian Hale in Rochester, New York, to a banker and his wife. She had two younger brothers. Her family was *moderately wealthy* and Rosalie was content with what she had. Since her father's bank stayed solvent during the Great Depression, it "was only a troublesome rumor" in her home (Eclipse 198). Rosalie's beauty increased as she grew and her parents *hoped her loveliness would open doors for them* (Meyer 111). Rosalie was considered as the most beautiful girl in Rochester at the age of eighteen. She was provided with everything and she wanted nothing – she was content and happy with her life. *Rosalie envied no one...except for her friend Vera* (TSOIG 111). Vera was the breathing reality of her dreams – Rosalie longed for a loving husband and a baby of her own while Vera was leading that life.

Causes for the dominating shallow character-traits

Rosalie's parents, being *social climbers* (Eclipse 138), were eager to move in higher social circles. They took pride in her beauty.

Rosalie enjoyed her parents' pride in her looks, her father's pleasure in buying her beautiful clothes, her girlfriends' envy, and the admiration of every man she passed. The result of all this attention was that Rosalie tended to be self-absorbed and rather shallow, with a focus on the material. (TSOIG 111)

Rosalie projects the desires of her parents. It is evident that Rosalie has snuggled in the "autistic shell" (childdevelopmentmedia.com) created by her parents and has not come out of it – Rosalie has not built her individuality as she has not crossed the separation-individuation phase during her human years. Margaret Mahler was a Hungarian born former paediatrician and child analyst who represented a group of ego psychologists interested in the development of psychic structures.

Separation-Individuation is the name she gave to the process by which internal maps of the self and of others are formed. These experiential maps, or internal representations, are built up through interactions with caregivers during the period spanning birth to three years of age, and consist of both positive and negative aspects of experience within the relationship. According to Mahler, it is the ability to integrate frustrating and pleasurable aspects of

experience with another person that leads to a stable sense of self that can tolerate fluctuating emotional states within the self and with others. (www.encyclopedia.com)

As a vampire, Rosalie continues to be self-absorbed, rather shallow with a focus on the material. According to the vampire law, the vampires are supposed to keep their existence a secret from the humans. In order to abide by this law, the Cullens keep relocating and the siblings are enrolled in school – the younger they start in a new place, the longer they can stay before having to relocate. The Cullens are currently residing in Forks, a small town under constant rain and clouds in the state of Washington. Chief Swan's daughter Bella moves in from Phoenix, Arizona and is enrolled in the same school as the Cullens – Forks High School. Edward is powerfully attracted to the scent of Bella's blood. The Cullens realize that she is his *singer* – "...a specific human will smell nearly irresistible to a specific vampire... Singers are individual phenomena; a person whose blood sings for one vampire will not have the same effect on all vampires" (TSOIG 75). While the rest of the Cullens accept Bella Rosalie remains disinclined towards Bella because of two reasons. Firstly, she does not want to have to move from Forks since they just moved in. Secondly, she feels disappointed that Edward is attracted to the plain looking Bella and was not attracted to Rosalie's beauty when they met.

Rosalie's true but hidden traits

Rosalie cares about Bella despite the guard she held up against her. When Bella asks the Cullens to vote for her to become vampire or stay human, Rosalie is the only one who votes no apart from Edward. While Edward does not want Bella to lose her soul Rosalie does not want Bella "to be rash about permanent things" because "once it's done, it can't be undone" (Eclipse 150) and explains, "It's just that...this is not a life I would have chosen for myself. I wish there had been someone there to vote no for me" (New Moon 471).

Rosalie decides to explain to Bella her reasons for voting no to Bella's transformation. "I was silly and shallow, but I was content...My parents' influence had been such that I also wanted the material things of life" (Eclipse 139). Rosalie has an honest conversation with Bella. She tells her about her perfect human life, social climbing parents and the way she was adored by all. She was content with her human life – her father provided her with all the material things she needed and she was engaged to be married by Royce King the Second. The Kings were the wealthiest family in New York and Royce sent her bouquets every day of their courtship. Rosalie's only desire was to be "allowed to be married to someone who loved" her and to "have pretty babies" (Eclipse 145), but all her dreams were shattered by Royce and his friends who were drunk and brutally assaulted and raped her and left her abandoned in the streets. Rosalie feels that her dreams were permanently frozen when she was transformed into a vampire and so does not wish for Bella to miss her possibilities that she might miss in the future thereby

regretting her decision to be transformed. Rosalie merely puts forth to Bella the outcomes of her decision to transform and the possibilities she still has as a human. Rosalie hopes Bella would not throw away her life as a human, the value of which she still hasn't fully understood.

As a Cullen

Rosalie projected her parents' social aspirations to climb higher in the social ladder and enjoyed being the centre of everyone's attention. She was satisfied with her perfect life, parents who took pride in her loveliness, admired by every man she passed and envied by her girlfriends. Rosalie carried this human trait along with her even as a vampire. Though the Cullens keep her happy she feels frozen in time unable to move on and have the possibilities of human life – growing old, having children and grandchildren and finally “under gravestones” (Eclipse 138).

Reaction to transformation

Carlisle followed the smell of blood and found Rosalie abandoned in the streets after being brutally assaulted and raped. He transforms her with the sole intention of helping her but Rosalie wished to be dead. Rosalie confesses to Bella that she felt irritated when Carlisle was working on her to save her life. She remembers Carlisle's profusely apologies during her transformation. When her transformation was complete, Carlisle explains to her about her being transformed into a vampire and Rosalie begins to believe in the evident reality of her transformation. She is irritated by Edward's retaliating reaction for saving Rosalie as it would be evident due to her former social popularity. But she is pleased that the Cullens knew that Royce was guilty.

Rosalie confesses to Bella saying, “I'd never liked Dr. Cullen or his wife and her brother...It upset me that they were all more beautiful than I was, especially that the men were” (Eclipse 143). When Rosalie saw her reflection in the mirror for the first time after becoming a vampire she felt better as she was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen. It took Rosalie a while to reminisce about her shallow human life but she admits to Bella that she began to blame the *curse* of the beauty which caused the tragic end of her human life.

Retaliation and theatrical revenge

Despite her regret of being transformed, Rosalie used the opportunity to take revenge on the five men who brutally assaulted and raped her. Rosalie recounts to Bella:

“I did murder five humans...If you can really call them *human*. But I was very careful not to spill their blood – I knew I wouldn't be able to resist that, and I didn't want any part of them *in* me...I saved Royce for last. I hoped that he would hear of his friends' deaths and understand, know what was coming for him. I hoped the fear would make the end worse for him...I was overly theatrical. It was kind of childish, really. I wore a wedding dress I'd

stolen for the occasion. He screamed when he saw me. He screamed a lot that night. Saving him for last was a good idea – it made it easier for me to control myself, to make it slower –” (Eclipse145-146)

Rosalie was more humane as a vampire. She holds a proud record of being a vegetarian vampire who has never tasted human blood even once. Rosalie murdered her rapists because she wanted justice, she wanted to instil fear in them as they died and she succeeded.

Individuality and asserting her rights to choose her partner/love

Rosalie wanted to be allowed to marry someone who really loved her and have pretty babies, since she still could marry someone who loves her, she wished for that longing to happen. When Rosalie found Emmet being mauled by a bear, she noticed his *dark curls, dimples and the strange innocence on a grown man’s face* (Eclipse 149), she was reminded of Vera’s son Henry and wanted to save him. Though it was utterly selfish, Emmet adored and loved her truly. They fell in love and over the years have married and remarried as Rosalie enjoys being the centre of everyone’s attention, especially as a bride. Emmet does everything in his ability to keep Rosalie happy and also gives her the space to spend time in privacy.

Interests and hobbies

Rosalie *enjoys enhancing cars* (TSOIG 110). She has a red BMW M3 Convertible which *is recognized as one of the best all-around sports cars in the world* (TSOIG 457). Her choice of car resembles her own personality – *ostentatious*, in the words of Edward (Twilight 195). Rosalie heavily modified Emmett’s red Jeep Wrangler with *mechanical superiority* – this modification signifies Emmett’s transformation and his *immense strength* (TSOIG 459).

Rosalie loves herself and enjoys being admired by people. She loves wearing new and pretty clothes while Alice loves to design clothes. The two sisters share a flair for designer wear and so work together to make custom designed clothes. Alice makes pretty dresses for Rosalie while Rosalie enjoys the attention in the process. Rosalie always enjoyed being showered with new and pretty dresses by her father during her human period. This interest in pretty clothes still continues in her life as a vampire. As an added incentive, Alice designs the prettiest clothes for Rosalie whose beauty compliments Alice’s talent.

Sisterly love and affection towards Edward

Rosalie blurts out to Edward that Alice saw Bella jumping off a cliff. Thinking her to be dead, Edward too wants to end his existence and hence, decides to ask the Volturi – the vampire royalty, to end him. Since the Volturi refuse to end him thereby destroying his ability to read people’s thoughts, Edward decides to provoke them by breaking the vampire law to keep their existence a secret. With the help of

Alice, Bella reaches Voltura on time and saves him. She explains to him that it was a misunderstanding and that she was recreationally cliff-jumping in La Push. When they return to Forks, Rosalie apologises to Bella saying, “I’m very sorry, Bella. I feel wretched about every part of this, and so grateful that you were brave enough to go save my brother after what I did. Please say you’ll forgive me” (New Moon 438).

Standing by her family irrespective of her opinions

Though Rosalie has an aversion to Bella, she protects her along with the Cullens from James, a vampire who wants to hunt her to quench his thirst for thrill. She even stands against the Volturi, ready to fight a war, in order to protect her family and ensure Renesmee’s safe life.

In the beginning of the *Twilight* it is seen that Rosalie has an aversion towards Bella which is primarily due to jealousy and the need to keep their existence as vampires a secret. But as the saga progresses, a strong bond is formed between Rosalie and Bella, gradually but steadily. She has immense gratitude for Bella for saving Edward from the Volturi. She honestly votes a no for Bella’s transformation because she wants to ensure that Bella gets a chance to fulfil the possibilities presented by human life since she feels the pain of that emptiness. She also wants Bella to know that she would support her decision after she realises what she is naively considering to give up. The impact of Rosalie’s conversation with Bella is seen in *Breaking Dawn* – Bella seeks Rosalie’s help and confides in her about her desire to have her baby while Edward wants to destroy it. Rosalie proves to be a true confidante and protector. She supports Bella throughout the pregnancy and does everything she can to make her comfortable. Rosalie even accepts the presence of Jake in the Cullen house and the werewolves outside their house protecting Bella from Sam’s pack who want to destroy the unknown threat – a human-vampire offspring.

Rosalie is maddened by the smell of Bella’s blood while delivering Renesmee but she returns after getting a hold of herself to take care of the baby. Rosalie’s dream of having a baby is fulfilled through Renesmee. This brings about a great alteration in Rosalie – she starts to care for someone other than herself and learns to put Renesmee’s needs above her own. Rosalie has finally broken her *autistic shell* and attained her individuality completely.

THE EGO-CUM-SELF PSYCHO-ANALYSIS OF ROSALIE HALE

Rosalie Hale is rather conserved in her own space and does not mingle much like her siblings. But she stands up for what she believes in and voices out her opinions in all honesty. While everyone else in the Cullen family except Edward and herself were overjoyed for Bella to become one among them by transforming into a vampire, Rosalie honestly voted no. She even explains her reasons for voting no. Rosalie

does not wish for Bella to lose what she has been long desiring for – a complete family with children, babies of her own. Through their conversation in *Eclipse*, it is evident that Rosalie is going through the process of self-psychoanalysis and the readers can relate to her through the *experience-near empathic mode of observation*.

CONCLUSION

Rosalie Hale proves to be a sensational character from the *Twilight Saga*. In the words of Stephanie Meyer, “There are characters that I have to work for a little bit harder, and sort of get down to their motivations. A few of them – Rosalie, for example – were difficult. It took me a while to figure out what her thing was” (Meyer 112). When Rosalie tells Bella about her tragic human life, Bella reminisces “I wondered if this was why she had so much more bitterness in her than the rest of them – because she’d been within reach of everything she’d wanted when her human life was cut short” (Eclipse 141). Therefore, it can be established that Rosalie Hale who was initially portrayed as shallow has proven to be the most profound character in the *Twilight Saga*.

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