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Sibling rivalry, separation, and change in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*

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The paper explores a process of growth represented in the interplay of Jane Austen's characterizations of Marianne and Elinor Dashwood in Sense and Sensibility, approaching the text through the lens of psychoanalytic theories on oedipal sibling rivalry, separation, and processes of change. A close reading of Sense and Sensibility tracks Marianne Dashwood's repudiation of any 'second attachment' as the surface of an unconscious fantasy, denying a rival for the mother's love. A psychoanalytic view contrasts Marianne's lack of separation from her mother, her use of denial and projection, and her near death after losing the man she loves, with her older sister Elinor Dashwood's capacities for depression, reflection, and greater acceptance of loss and separation. The narrative portrays Mrs. Dashwood's identification with and idealization of her daughter Marianne, which contribute to her oedipal sibling 'victory'. In the language and structure of the novel, the projections, identifications, aggressions, and separations (conscious and unconscious) of the sisters in the vicissitudes of their adolescent loves and rivalries constitute a process of growth. Austen's novel brings to life, with the vividness and coherence of great literature, forces and fantasies in oedipal sibling rivalries, inspiring renewed attention to their subtle presence in the transference and countertransference of the psychoanalytic process.

Keywords: Contemporary Freudian and Kleinian perspectives on Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, loss, separation anxiety, oedipal sibling rivalry, mourning, melancholia, exclusion from primal scene, rhetoric of defense, psychic change

Introduction

This paper explores a process of growth represented in the interplay of Austen's characterizations of Marianne and Elinor Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* (1990 [1811]), approaching the text through the lens of psychoanalytic theories on separation, oedipal sibling rivalry, and change. Marianne and Elinor Dashwood are alive in the minds of Austen's enormous 21st century readership. No reader, no period, no approach has exhausted the novels of Jane Austen. In this reading of the novel, contemporary Freudian and Kleinian perspectives on mourning and melancholia, on exclusion from the primal scene, and on sibling oedipal rivalry illuminate heroines' thoughts and interchanges, showing how Austen's sibling relationship facilitates growth.

Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* opens with the death of Mr Dashwood, the heroines' father. John Dashwood, a son from a first marriage, inherits their home, the Norland estate and its income. At 17 and 19, Elinor and Mari-

anne Dashwood must mourn their father's death and find husbands to re-establish their own and their mother's security. But what happens when adolescents lose the parent from whom they are trying to separate? "A great deal can be learned about the state of the ego and the developmental level of the various ego functions" when an adolescent has to cope with the death of a parent (Laufer, 1966, p. 286). Both sisters fall in love soon after their father's death, lose the men they love to a rival, and struggle with a complicated mourning in different ways.

The broad outlines of the plot set up a series of comparisons between the two sisters Elinor and Marianne under these pressures, beginning with somewhat stereotypic distinctions between their capacities for sense (judgment) and sensibility (feeling). As the novel's action unfolds, the sisters develop, integrating aspects of each other's capacities for emotion and for judgment. When John Dashwood takes over Norland, Mrs Dashwood and her three daughters move away to Barton Cottage on the property of their cousin Sir John Middleton. The novel contrasts Elinor's developing an attachment to her sister-in-law's brother Edward Ferrars with liking, respect, and knowledge of his character as its basis, and Marianne's falling passionately in love at first meeting, with the unknown, charismatic John Willoughby. Elinor's ways of thinking and suffering when she learns that Edward had entered a foolish engagement to Lucy Steele at 19 to which honor keeps him bound, are contrasted with Marianne's despair and near-death after losing Willoughby to a rival with a fortune. In the end Edward is freed by Lucy (who "transfers" her attachment to his brother, heir to the Ferrars' estate) and marries Elinor. Marianne recovers from her fever, and marries Colonel Brandon (friend of her cousin) who has loved her throughout. The story of Marianne Dashwood's passionate love for Willoughby, her loss of him to a rival, followed by her near death from an illness she brings on herself, suggests that she has introjected the lost object in her melancholia. Marianne's reaction to loss is set in the context of Elinor's contrasting restraint, thought, and contained feelings, as she responds to the knowledge of Edward's prior engagement. Austen's characterizations of Marianne and Elinor convey a predominantly generative relationship set in the context of sub-plots filled with shallow, aggressive and avaricious sibling rivalries, which are fixed, circular, and repetitive.

In approaching the novel from the point of view of Austen's psychological comparison of the two sisters, the paper enters the heart of the novel, which was responding to the philosophical debate between ethical rationalism and the proper use of sentiment or feeling (see Butler, 1975; Pinch, 1996; Galperin, 2003; Knox-Shaw, 2004). In this 18th century war of ideas, Hume believed that good moral decisions were based on "sympathy" (fellow feeling), rather than on intellectual judgment, but he also made a distinction between "emotional contagion" (in which one loses recognition of the otherness of the other), and "sympathy" for the other (in which sufficient separation of the subject from the object is maintained). Rationalist moral theorists opposed his emphasis on feeling. Elinor and Marianne are portrayed with varying capacities for sense (judgment) and sensibility (feeling) (see Mudrick, 1952; Tanner, 1986; Johnson, 1988). Austen's implicit

view is complex, for the novel presents Elinor's concern, prudence, realism, and control of deep feelings as leading to greater empathy with others and more considerate behavior than Marianne's excessive sensibility.

Sense and Sensibility deepens the psychological issues underlying the 18th century debate, in ways consistent with a psychoanalytic understanding of mourning and melancholia. The novel contrasts Marianne Dashwood's lack of separation from her mother (internal and external) and her melancholic response to loss, with Elinor Dashwood's more separate reflections and capacity to mourn. Freudians and Kleinians have elaborated the idea that when separation or loss threatens the integrity of the ego (as in Austen's Marianne) this is because a "particular link of attachment remains between the ego and the object" and "parts of the ego are insufficiently differentiated from parts of the object" (Quinodoz 1993, p. 26). The lost (unfaithful) object is introjected and the reproach against the object, now part of one's own ego can lead to a suicidal impulse. Through the lens of theories about melancholia (Freud, 1917a), about failures to separate from the mother (Kulish and Holtzman, 2003), to accept the parental couple (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1991) and to negotiate the oedipal/sibling rivalries (Kaes, 2008), Austen's novel receives a new reading, a richer and more precise understanding of the heroines, their thoughts and feelings, their interchanges, and their transformations.

The study of fictional characters in applied psychoanalysis

But is the analysis of a fictional character an outmoded or discredited approach in applied psychoanalysis? Psychoanalysts have continued to create complex readings of literary works and to elaborate psychoanalytic aesthetics (see Sharpe, 1929, 1946; Kris, 1952; Segal, 1952; Green, 1975; Orgel, 1974, 1994; Shengold, 1988, 2004; Hanly, 1986, 1990; Britton, 1998; Poland, 2003; Kristeva, 2007; Schwaber, 2006, 2007; to name only a few). Some academics and analysts have protested against the use of psychoanalytic theory to interpret literature (Felman, 1977). However, many literary critics have embraced psychoanalytic interpretations as illuminating "the play of desire in time", as offering a "dynamic model of psychic processes" in fiction (Brooks, 1984, pp. xiii, xiv), and as "providing profound and unexpected insights into literary texts" (Jacobus, 2005, p. vii). A renewed interest in Austen's characters by eminent Austen scholars supports the traditional study of fictional characters by psychoanalysts. Readers have always known that "mimesis is a mirage and that characters are textual effect, while believing in their 'reality'" (Todd, 2006, pp. 26–7). Scholars have been explicit in treating Austen's heroines as "psychological realities": "imagining characters as actual beings is the primary natural act of reading the realist novel, and ... re-reading is a poor thing if this is lost sight of" (Wiltshire, 2014, p. ix).

Psychoanalytic critics have not only approached the illusion of fictional characters, through analyzing novelists' choice of words and rhetorical strategies as they represent the inner life of characters, they also bring to the task, attention to indications of unconscious fantasies as hidden motivations in a fictional character's speech and acts (Skura, 1981; Baudry, 2007). The eye of the psychoanalyst is on unconscious dynamics, contents, process,

and formal characteristics, which penetrate the manifest surfaces of speech and action. Burke (1957) in a seminal essay presented the idea that in specifying the psychodynamics of condensation, displacement, and key defensive functions, Freud gave literary critics "a science of tropes". Later critics mapped the defenses resonating with underlying desires, as explored by psychoanalysts, onto the figures of speech in novels and poetry (Trilling, 1950; Bloom, 1975). This reading of Austen's characterization of Marianne Dashwood, and by contrast the characterization of her sister Elinor in *Sense and Sensibility*, works in this tradition paying attention to the rhetorical strategies (linked to desire and characteristic defenses) used by Austen to represent their struggles with loss, separation anxiety, and rivalry in a dialogue in which growth takes place.

No second attachment: Austen's characterization of Marianne Dashwood

Marianne Dashwood's "favorite maxim" is that second attachments are "criminal" (once you've loved someone you can't love someone else). But Elinor Dashwood strives to accept the need to mourn loss, and love again. Discovering that Edward Ferrars has made a foolish engagement when very young, Elinor struggles with the loss of her prospects in marriage to a man she loves: "after all that is bewitching in the idea of a single and constant attachment, and all that can be said of one's happiness depending on any particular person, it is not meant – it is not fit – it is not possible that it should be so" (p. 229). The intense emotion in Elinor's speech as she struggles to accept loss and separation from Edward is brought to life in Austen's rhetoric with Elinor's hesitations as she tries to find words: "it is not meant – it is not fit – it is not possible".

The narrator in *Sense and Sensibility* introduces Marianne Dashwood, presenting similarities and differences in the sisters, and articulating Marianne's ongoing lack of separation from her mother: "Marianne's abilities were, in many respects equal to Elinor's. She was sensible and clever; but eager in everything; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting: she was everything but prudent. The resemblance between her and her mother was strikingly great" (pp. 4–5). Austen then introduces a motif through which she conveys a key aspect of Marianne's "inner life": her belief that no "second attachment" is "pardonable". This belief is described in a dialogue between Marianne's sister Elinor and Colonel Brandon (her cousin Sir John Middleton's friend who has fallen in love with Marianne, and who himself had an adolescent love which ended in tragedy):

> ... in conversing with Elinor [Colonel Brandon] found the greatest consolation for the total indifference of her sister.... His eyes were fixed on Marianne, and, after a silence of some minutes, he said with a faint smile, 'Your sister, I understand' does not approve of second attachments.' 'No', replied Elinor, 'her opinions are all romantic.' [Brandon] 'Or rather, as I believe, she considers them impossible to exist.' [Elinor]'I believe she does. But how she contrives it without reflecting on the character of her own father, who had himself two wives, I know not'. ... [Brandon]

> 'Does your sister make no distinction in her objections against a second attachment? Or is it equally criminal in everybody? … [Elinor] 'I only know that I never yet heard her admit any instance of a second attachment being pardonable'.
>
> (pp. 47–8)

The narrator makes clear how public Marianne's opinion on second attachments is, how much all her friends know it as her guiding principle. Edward Ferrars visiting at Barton, teases Marianne about what she would do with a fortune: "Perhaps, then, you would bestow it as a reward on that person who wrote the ablest defence of your favorite maxim, that no-one can ever be in love more than once in their life" (p. 80). This reading of the novel explores how Austen links the "favorite maxim" to Marianne's nearly dying when Willoughby deserts her. With no second attachment possible, how can she mourn her loss? The novel moves far beyond the period novels of sentimental heroines who die when abandoned, which Austen satirized at 14, in *Love and friendship* (1789). Laura, Austen's heroine, achieves an amusing climax of sensibility when her Edward dies, a sensibility, which Laura, herself, minutely describes: "My Voice faltered, My Eyes assumed a vacant stare, my face became as pale as Death, and my senses were considerably impaired" (Austen, 1986, p. 120). Austen's narrator returns to Marianne's cherished belief that no one can love more than once in the last pages of the novel as she marries Brandon:

> Marianne Dashwood was born to an extraordinary fate. She was born to discover the falsehood of her own opinions, and to counteract, by her conduct, her most favorite maxims…. Instead of falling a sacrifice to an irresistible passion – … she found herself at nineteen, submitting to new attachments, entering on new duties, placed in a new home.
>
> (p. 333)

Denial by fantasy, idealization, and their effect on reality testing

Marianne's denial by fantasy of any second attachment implies that after loss of love, no recovery is possible, and so she experiences Willoughby's treachery as brutal, shocking, ending all possibility of love for her. When Willoughby's 'carelessness' and greed win out over his love for her, Marianne is utterly unprepared, and her aggression following the painful loss turns back against herself. While conveying the powerful hold the maxim has on Marianne, Austen depicts its connection with the enmeshment of the maternal-daughter dyad: Marianne is her mother's "darling child" (p. 20).

Austen's language describes moments of excited merger of mother and daughter. When Mr Dashwood dies, Mrs Dashwood and Marianne "encouraged each other in the violence of their affliction … and resolved against ever admitting consolation" (p. 5). When Marianne falls in love with Willoughby and puts her trust in a relative stranger, "In Mrs. Dashwood's estimation, he was as faultless as in Marianne's" (p. 41). "Mrs. Dashwood entered into all their feelings with a warmth which left her no

inclination for checking this excessive display of them" (p. 46). When Willoughby leaves suddenly for London (having been disinherited by his cousin Mrs Allen who discovered his abandonment of a girl he had made pregnant), Mrs Dashwood tries to justify his behavior on leaving. But Elinor is aware that there had been no communication of an actual engagement and that the seemingly frank and warm-hearted Willoughby had acted strangely as he left, not returning Mrs Dashwood's "kindness with any cordiality". Projecting her fears, Mrs Dashwood berates Elinor for her suspicions:

> 'Oh! Elinor, how incomprehensible are your feelings! You had rather take evil upon credit than good. You had rather look out for misery for Marianne and guilt for poor Willoughby, than an apology for the latter. You are resolved to think him blameable, because he took leave of us with less affection than his usual behavior has shewn. And is no allowance to be made for inadvertence, or for spirits depressed by recent disappointment? … And, after all, what is it you suspect him of?'
>
> (pp. 67–8)

Austen has Mrs Dashwood project her own fears onto Elinor, "misery for Marianne and guilt for poor Willoughby", thereby maintaining her idealizations of Marianne and Willoughby, refusing to believe that Marianne would have acted in the way she had, unengaged, or that Willoughby could have been so careless or so deceitful. Yet, she did, and he was. A psychoanalytic understanding of these defensive strategies illuminates the narrative as it forges an implicit relationship between the projections, the idealizations, and the failure to recognize or accept reality.

After the ball, when Willoughby offers a cold courtesy to the passionately distressed Marianne, Elinor begs her to try to calm her grief: "'I cannot, I cannot,' cried Marianne; 'leave me, leave me if I distress you; leave me, hate me, forget me! but do not torture me so …'". The speech, "leave me, hate me, forget me!", portrays Marianne's self-deprecating imagination of Willoughby's feelings, projected as he leaves her, projected onto Elinor and turned back on herself. Any hate for Willoughby for his betrayal of her is buried in the projection and reversal. Later, after Marianne reads Willoughby's cruel letter of explicit rejection (written by his jealous fiancé) stating that his "affections had long been engaged elsewhere" and insinuating that he had never been in love with her, Elinor sees "Marianne stretched on the bed, almost choked by grief … [Marianne] put all the letters into Elinor's hands; and then covering her face, almost screamed with agony" (pp. 157–8). Marianne feels an "excessive affliction … most nervous irritability" (pp. 155–6). Subsequently, she stops taking care of herself, becomes seriously ill, and late in the novel, reflects, "Had I died, – it would have been self-destruction" (p. 303). Austen writes of Marianne's "affliction" over Willoughby's desertion as "excessive", as leading in the narrative sequence to a destructive act against herself. (The narrator had described the "violence" of her "affliction" after the death of her father.) Austen thus represents the unconscious dynamic of melancholia in which Marianne attacks the faithless lost object taken into her ego.

Sense and Sensibility portrays a dramatic gulf between Marianne's idealizing belief in Willoughby's unalterable love, and his actual character as demonstrated in his actions, his speech, and his betrayal. By his later admission, having long before decided to marry a wealthy woman to relieve his debts, he began by "trying to engage [Marianne's] regard without a thought of returning it" (p. 280). Elinor's realistic doubts about whether Marianne and Willoughby are engaged are denied by Mrs Dashwood's idealizations which leave her fixed in her beliefs: "You must think wretchedly indeed of Willoughby, if after all that has openly passed between them, you can doubt the nature of the terms on which they are together" (p. 69).

Projection as a defense against aggression

Marianne and her mother seem to fall in love with Willoughby together, overvaluing him, projecting their ways of feeling and loving onto Willoughby. When Marianne's trust is betrayed by Willoughby, she loses a guiding principle, a core organizing belief in one true love. In her state of grief, jealousy, and self-reproach, on finding out Willoughby is engaged to Miss Grey with her fortune, Marianne cries out:

> 'I came only for Willoughby's sake – and now who cares for me? Who regards me? ... 'Elinor, I must go home. I must go and comfort mama. Cannot we be gone tomorrow?'
>
> (p. 165)

In pain over Willoughby, Marianne's impulse is to exclude Elinor, to dismiss the care she is giving her ("who cares for me? Who regards me?"). In Austen, every turn of phrase has meaning and every detail has a relation to the rest. Marianne cries out that she "must go and comfort" her mother, and thus Austen's rhetoric conveys Marianne's attempt to defend against her pain, to project her need for comfort onto her mother. The projection also maintains a defense against oedipal rivalry, for in their mutual identification, Marianne and her mother love, lose, and mourn the same man. Once again Marianne feels that she and her mother are united, inconsolable in their affliction. Marianne's projection thus implicitly denies exclusion from the parental couple. The oedipal sibling rivalries dramatized in Austen's novel confirm a psychoanalytic view that oedipal dynamics are present (though sometimes hidden) in female struggles with separation from the mother and from the couple (Kulish and Holzman, 2000, 2003).

Anger at betrayal turned against the self in Marianne's melancholia

Marianne is unprepared for a betrayal in love because of the failure of her reality testing when Willoughby does not propose. Willoughby leaves Barton for London (when disinherited by Mrs Allen) to court Miss Grey with her fifty thousand pounds. He avoids Marianne in London, but at last she sees him at a private ball and rushes to greet him. With a cold formality, he addresses himself to Elinor asking how long they have been in town:

> Marianne's face crimsoned over and she exclaimed in a voice of the greatest emotion, 'Good God! Willoughby, what is the meaning of this? Have you not received my letters? Will you not shake hands with me? … [Willoughby tries for politeness] ' I did myself the honour of calling in Berkely street last Tuesday …' … 'But have you not received my notes?, cried Marianne in the wildest anxiety. 'Here is some mistake I am sure – some dreadful mistake. What can be the meaning of it? Tell me Willoughby; for heaven's sake tell me, what is the matter?'
>
> (pp. 152–3)

Marianne's reliance on his unalterable love is dramatically portrayed. Willoughby replies briefly and turns away to join his fiancé:

> Marianne, now looking dreadfully white, and unable to stand, sunk into her chair, and Elinor, expecting at any moment to see her faint, tried to screen her from the observation of others … Marianne continued incessantly to give way in a low voice to the misery of her feelings, by exclamations of wretchedness.
>
> (p. 153)

Austen presents Marianne, following Willoughby's public engagement to Miss Grey, as unable to feel anger towards him. Elinor confides to Brandon, "You know her disposition, and may believe how eagerly she would still justify him" (p. 174). The plot shows Marianne's anger turned back against herself. She became "faint and giddy from a long want of proper rest and food", and then catches the "putrid fever" from which she nearly dies. The denial of the existence of rivals and the idealization of Willoughby's care act as defenses against aggressive or ambivalent feelings and also block the perception of important realities for Marianne. Idealization interferes with the process of giving up the object in mourning and leads to further defensive strategies.

Sibling rivalry: Projections, identifications, conflict and growth

In the crisis and resolution in the novel, Austen creates plot situations in which the sisters exchange capacities for judgment and for feeling. In the scenes leading up to Marianne's near death from fever, Austen portrays Marianne's idealization of feeling, and her propensity for denial, in contrast to Elinor's more separate identity and realism. At Cleveland, home of the Palmers in Somersetshire, on her way back from London to her mother at Barton, Marianne broods over her loss of Willoughby, whose estate Combe Magna is nearby: "In such moments of precious, of invaluable misery, she rejoiced in tears of agony to be at Cleveland". Austen's narrator presents the underlying psychological problems in Marianne's sensibility: her denial and minimization of dangerous symptoms, and the role of that denial in the turning back of a destructive impulse on herself, as she attacks the introjected lost object in her melancholia. Walking

> where the trees were oldest and the grass was the longest and wettest, had – assisted by the still greater imprudence of sitting in her wet shoes and stockings – given Marianne a cold so violent, as, though for a day or two trifled with or denied, would force itself by increasing ailments on the concern of everybody, and the

> notice of herself … prescriptions poured in from all quarters … all declined … heavy and feverish, with a pain in her limbs, a cough, and a sore throat, a good night's rest was to cure her entirely.
>
> (p. 267)

The narration is precise in presenting Marianne's minimization and denial of a dangerous situation, which was "trifled with or denied". The narrative presents her use of denial in the working out of her self-destructive impulse. Only after her "violent" cold with its increasing ailments had "forced itself … on the concern of everybody" did Marianne's severe physical symptoms force themselves on "the notice of herself". Marianne is last to notice the physical realities that threaten her, declining prescriptions as if "a good night's rest was to cure her". A realistic anxiety is blocked in the fantasy "as if", by motives that are unconscious to Marianne. Marianne develops a dangerous "putrid fever" (from which Austen's young cousin had died, Honan, 1987) and after being weakened by not eating or sleeping well for weeks, she comes very close to dying.

Austen's characterization of Elinor Dashwood

The novel represents Hume's idea that sympathy requires contact with feelings, but not emotional contagion, in the portrait of Elinor. But Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* dramatizes psychodynamics that are more complex than the psychology of the late 18th century "war of ideas". The novel shows Elinor as able to mourn the loss of Edward to Lucy Steele and yet still to compete with Lucy as her rival. The extent to which Elinor uses aggression in managing the dialogue with her rival Lucy Steele, "who … hoped at least to be an object of irrepressible envy to Elinor" (p. 203) has been recently explored in detail (Wiltshire, 2014).

The narrator portrays the complexity of Elinor's feelings about her sister. As Marianne lay ill at the Palmer's estate, Brandon (deeply in love with Marianne) rides off to bring back Mrs Dashwood. Elinor returns to Marianne's sick chamber. Her reverie includes half conscious and half preconscious feelings of worry, sibling rivalry and ambivalence:

> It was a night of almost equal suffering to both. Hour after hour passed away in sleepless delirium on Marianne's side, and in the most cruel anxiety on Elinor's, before Mr. Harris [the physician] appeared…. The servant who sat up with her … only tortured her more by hints of what her mistress [Mrs Jennings] had always thought. Marianne's ideas were still, at intervals, fixed incoherently on her mother, and whenever she mentioned her name, it gave a pang to the heart of poor Elinor, who, reproaching herself for having trifled with so many days of illness, and wretched for some immediate relief, fancied all relief might soon be in vain, that everything had been delayed too long, and pictured to herself her suffering mother arriving too late to see this darling child.
>
> (p. 273)

Austen's narrator portrays Elinor's acceptance that Marianne is her mother's "darling", and conscious of her own immense loss if Marianne

dies. But Austen's language contains multiple meanings: "whenever she [Marianne] mentioned her [mother's] name, it gave a pang to the heart of poor Elinor, who, reproaching herself for having trifled with so many days of illness … pictured to herself her suffering mother arriving too late to see this darling child". Elinor pictures Marianne dead and her mother suffering, an imagination that depicts preconscious revenge wishes fulfilled.

Marianne is loved by Elinor as her child and her double, and is dead in a momentary imagination, as her sibling rival (see Kaes, 2008). Austen's language represents the conflict between Elinor's wish for and fear of the favorite child's death. After their father's death, with a realistic worry about Willoughby's intentions, Elinor had become more protective of her sister than was her idealizing, romantic mother. On the way to London (and to Willoughby in Marianne's mind), Elinor watches her sister as "delightful expectation … filled Marianne's whole soul". Elinor "resolved" to protect her, "not only on gaining every new light as to [Willoughby's] character … but likewise on watching his behavior to her sister with zealous attention, as to ascertain what he was and what he meant" (p. 137). "If the result of her observations were unfavorable, she was determined at all events to open the eyes of her sister; should it be otherwise, her exertions would be of a different nature – she must then learn to avoid every selfish comparison" (p. 137). Elinor's feelings are conflicted: Marianne is loved and protected by Elinor and yet Marianne's love relationship can evoke a painful comparison. The sibling relationship is portrayed as a forum for conflict and for growth (Edward, 2011).

Elinor experiences "a most cruel anxiety" when Marianne becomes dangerously ill. Austen's language depicts the fantasy of the dead sister as a fear, not a wish, in Elinor's imagination, the second meaning not quite surfacing. But Elinor is conscious of her envy, of comparisons, and of competition, especially in the substitute sibling rivalry with Lucy Steele. Whereas, Marianne's envy, jealousy, and anger are depicted as rendered dynamically unconscious through denial and projection, until Marianne learns that Elinor has lost Edward. Then, Austen's novel brings to life more explicitly the oedipal sibling rivalries in the sisters' interchanges, in their shared bedroom, dramatizing a process of interchange within a deep attachment.

Sisters as substitutes for oedipal rivals: Marianne and Elinor

A moment of particular bitterness related to exclusion from a sexual couple, arises between the sisters in their bedroom when Marianne is expecting a letter from Willoughby, for both she and Elinor have been injured by the mistaken idea that the other has been keeping secrets:

> 'you have no confidence in me, Marianne.' 'Nay Elinor, this reproach from you – you who have confidence in no-one!'
>
> (p. 146)

The language shows that Marianne has felt excluded from an imagined engagement between Elinor and Edward and that Elinor has felt excluded

from what seemed to be a hidden engagement between Marianne and Willoughby. The painful interchange of the siblings elaborates what often remains unconscious in the oedipal triangle.

In the relationship of the sisters, when Edward's engagement to Lucy is revealed, Marianne admits to an earlier reproach against Elinor: "'What! – while attending me in all my misery, has this been on your heart? – and I have reproached you for being happy!'...". In the moment when Elinor speaks of her broken heart, Marianne reveals that she has 'reproached' her sister for 'being happy', and she is tempted to underestimate Elinor's pain and loss. But, Elinor responds, conveying passionate feelings, as intense as any of Marianne's:

> It was told me, – it was in a manner forced on me by the very person herself, whose prior engagement ruined all my prospects; and told me, as I thought, with triumph.... I have had her hopes and exultations to listen to again and again.... I have had to contend with the unkindness of his sister and the insolence of his mother; and have suffered the punishment of an attachment without enjoying its advantages.... If you can think me capable of ever feeling – surely you may suppose that I have suffered now.
>
> (pp. 228–30)

Marianne is subdued and whatever resentment was alive in her 'reproach' against Elinor 'for being happy' with Edward, becomes self-reproach. "Oh! Elinor, ... How barbarous have I been to you! – you, who have been my only comfort, ... is this my gratitude! ... Because your merit cries out upon myself, I have been trying to do it away'" (p. 230). Marianne's remorse and Elinor's heartfelt expression of her own suffering suggest the beginnings of change in each. However, Marianne's remorse becomes a persecutory guilt. The uncaring hated Willoughby inside Marianne's ego is punished in her illness. And only after reflecting on this impulse to self-destruction can she experience a more productive guilt and remorse, and reclaim the right to a second attachment. Elinor presents a more passionate side of herself in expressing her feelings to Marianne, her grief at losing Edward, her suffering under Lucy's 'exultations'. Marianne's 'reproach' against Elinor 'for being happy' shows her pain and jealousy at exclusion from her sister's 'happy' couple, and this more robust sibling conflict is Austen's idea of a process in which there are changes in the ways the sisters function psychologically.

Chasseguet-Smirgel (1991) refers to papers by French Freudians (McDougall, 1972) and Kleinians (Britton, 1989), which emphasize the importance for psychic development of the eventual acceptance of a genital procreative parental couple. These two psychoanalytic schools, along with Bion, have underlined the connection between thought processes and the primal scene, viewing the accomplishment of internal separation from the maternal dyad as being linked to the acceptance of exclusion from the parental couple. This psychoanalytic formulation illuminates Austen's novel in its dramatization of the links between experience of sibling and oedipal rivalries, separation from the internal mother, and acceptance of exclusion from the parental couple.

In the rivalry to be best loved, each sister has believed the other concealed a sexual love that was exclusive. At the intersection of oedipal and oedipal sibling rivalries, the child's exclusion from the parent's sexual love relationship is repeated in the siblings' exclusion of each other, creating a field for the eventual acceptance of a creative parental couple. Austen shows that the adolescent sibling rivalries present a second chance to work through dependency, aggression, and guilt, to further separate from internal and external parents. At the conclusion of the novel, both Marianne and Elinor marry and live in accord. Austen dramatizes movements in their relationship from dyadic to triadic oedipal constellations; the plot presents new editions of separation and oedipal challenges in late adolescence, in a process of sibling identification and differentiation (Provence and Solnit, 1983; Neubauer, 1983; Kaes, 2008; Edward, 2011).

The mother's contributions to failures of the preferred child to separate

Mrs Dashwood's preference for Marianne contributes to her guilt-ridden oedipal sibling victory entrenching failures in reality testing and the inability to mourn. As Marianne continued to mend every day from her illness, Mrs Dashwood repeatedly declared herself to be "one of the happiest women in the world. Elinor could not hear the declaration, nor witness its proofs without sometimes wondering whether her mother ever recollected Edward" (p. 294), and Elinor's loss. Mrs Dashwood rejoices: "'Colonel Brandon loves Marianne. He has told me so himself'". Elinor feels "by turns both pleased and pained, surprised and not surprised" (p. 295). Mrs Dashwood continues:

> 'I should have fixed on Colonel Brandon's marrying one of you as the object most desirable. And I believe that Marianne will be the most happy with him of the two'. Elinor was half inclined to ask her reason for thinking so, because satisfied that none founded on an impartial consideration of their age, characters, or feelings could be given.
>
> (p. 295)

Mrs Dashwood's identification with Marianne blinds her to Elinor's interests and to her suffering: "'You are never like me dear Elinor, or I should wonder at your composure now'" (p. 295). In the light of Mrs Dashwood's 'desire' for Marianne to marry Brandon, ambiguities in her speech portray Mrs Dashwood thinking about Brandon as if he were to be her own husband: "'His fortune too – for at my time of life everybody cares about that; – and though I neither know or desire to know what it really is, I am sure it must be a good one'" (p. 297). Despite the reciprocal identifications, Marianne's loss of Willoughby, her near death, and her painful reproach against Elinor for 'being happy' generate enough internal separation from the mother and from the parental couple to allow her to marry Brandon.

Separation, oedipal sibling rivalry, and psychic change

How does the novel portray the changes in Marianne's psychic functioning? Have the derivatives of Marianne's unconscious fantasy of exclusive possession of the mother's love (still sustained by the mother) altered when she marries Brandon? The narrator reports on a change in her life: Marianne finds herself "submitting to new attachments, entering on new duties, placed in a new home, a wife, the mistress of a family". But Austen's ending creates uncertainty (typical in Austen endings) about the nature and extent of the psychic changes in her heroine, and hints at limits. Marianne is presented as submitting to her mother's desire, and fulfilling Elinor's wishes. Mrs Dashwood "desired nothing so much" as Marianne's marriage to Brandon. Elinor and Edward wished "to see Marianne settled at the mansion house.... They each felt [Brandon's] sorrows, and their own obligations". (Edward's clerical income comes from Brandon's estate.) "With such a confederacy against her – with a knowledge so intimate of his goodness – with a conviction of [Brandon's] fond attachment to herself, which at last ... burst on her – what could she do?" (p. 333). A family confederacy and Brandon's fond attachment are persuasive; we do not hear of Marianne's desire.

The novel first presents Marianne as idealizing her own passionate feelings and attachments, and devaluing Elinor's judgment, restraint, and realism. But through the process of their many and varied exchanges, Marianne expresses gratitude to Elinor at last, in a positive identification and with a generative remorse: "I saw in my own behavior since the beginning of our acquaintance with him [Willoughby] last autumn nothing but a series of imprudence towards myself and want of kindness to others. I saw that my own feelings had prepared my sufferings, and that my want of fortitude under them had almost led me to the grave" (p. 303). Here Marianne shows a new capacity for reflection and for greater separation from Willoughby, although still with her tendency for self-reproach.

The ending of the novel presents a softer and more sympathetic Elinor, with less prudence and superiority to her mother. Elinor becomes more like her mother and sister in her empathic response to Willoughby when he arrives at Cleveland in the middle of the night, believing Marianne is dying. A 15 page chapter in the third volume of *Sense and Sensibility* is given to Willoughby's 'vindication' of his actions to Elinor. Now married to Miss Grey, he expresses his passionate love for Marianne, saying that her letters on arriving in London, "affectionate, open, artless, confiding", were "a dagger to his heart" and had made him realize that his "conduct" was "hateful". His physical presence and ardent speech have a powerful effect on Elinor.

> Willoughby, 'poor Willoughby', as she now allowed herself to call him, was constantly in her thoughts; she would not but have heard his vindication for the world, and now blamed, and now acquitted herself for having judged him so harshly before. But her promise of relating it to her sister was invariably painful. She ...

> doubted whether after such an explanation she [Marianne] could ever be happy with another; and for a moment wished Willoughby a widower.
>
> (p. 294)

In this section, Austen is focusing on a change in Elinor who feels and then repudiates a wish for Mrs Willoughby's death. In its momentary penetration of her consciousness, Elinor is very like Marianne experiencing "emotional contagion" from Willoughby, forgetting for a moment "the guilt of his conduct towards Eliza" (the 15 year-old girl whom he made pregnant and deserted). Austen's narrative style (see Morini, 2009) reflects Elinor's inner thoughts in a further step in the unconscious and conscious exchanges between the sisters in their reciprocal influence in a process of change. The passage also hints at a moment of unconscious oedipal aggression surfacing in Elinor with the murderous wish to a sister's rival in the fantasy, further elaboration of oedipal conflicts.

Brandon's sibling rivalry with Willoughby for Marianne: His second attachment

In their use of psychoanalytic theories, literary critics have employed the idea of the unconscious of the text referring to a reassignment of values where the author's vision is distributed over the whole design of the work, viewed through the lens of an unconscious fantasy (see Skura, 1981). This paper has explored the idea of a core structuring fantasy underlying Marianne's idea that no second attachment is 'pardonable': the small child's fantasy that a mother's forming a second attachment to a new baby or to its father is unpardonable or 'impossible'. We can track this fantasy in *Sense and Sensibility* in its variations in the subplots. Colonel Brandon, in conversation with Elinor, first put words to Marianne's maxim, asking if Marianne considered the forming of a second attachment as "equally criminal in every body" (p. 48). Later, Edward describes Marianne's maxim as: "no-one can ever be in love more than once in their life" (p. 80). Both Colonel Brandon and Edward Ferrars had prior attachments, before falling in love with the Dashwood sisters. But, as Marianne is so like Brandon's first love Eliza, with whom he grew up, and Elinor is the half-sister of Edward's brother-in-law, Austen is never far from incestuous longings in the attachments of her fictional lovers (Hudson, 1992).

Colonel Brandon's love for Marianne is intimately connected in Austen's narration to the tragic outcome of his adolescent love. Brandon confesses to Elinor that he "once knew a lady who in temper and mind greatly resembled your sister, who thought and judged like her, but who from an inforced change – from a series of unfortunate circumstances' – Here he stopt suddenly …" (p. 48). Later he tells Elinor his story: his father's ward Eliza (who possessed a fortune) with whom Brandon grew up, whom he loved and wished to marry, was forced by the father to marry his older brother, to increase the family fortune. Brandon's older brother's infidelity and cruel treatment of Eliza was the context in which she had an affair and was eventually isolated from society and impoverished. When Brandon

returned from military service in India, he found Eliza in a poorhouse, with her 3 year-old child, dying of tuberculosis. Brandon takes the child (named Eliza) into his care. Much later, while in Bath with a school friend, she is seduced by Willoughby, made pregnant and abandoned. In 'ruining' Eliza's daughter, Willoughby becomes a displaced brother-rival, associated with Brandon's older brother, the favorite of his father.

Willoughby becomes Brandon's rival for Marianne, and Brandon initiates a duel with him over his treachery to the 15 year-old Eliza, in which both could have died. In the end Brandon marries Marianne, the woman Willoughby had come to love. As these vicissitudes of substitute sibling rivalry (with murder, treachery, and self-destruction) are acted out, re-experienced, and retold to Elinor, Brandon seems to gain confidence in his right to love again, his right to a second attachment and actively seeks Marianne in marriage. The unconscious fantasy linked to the idea that a second attachment is unpardonable is distributed over the whole design of the novel; moreover, there is evidence in the complex working out of the plot, that the fantasy shifts to allow new couples to form.

Conclusion

This paper tracks a process of change represented in Austen's characterizations of Marianne and Elinor Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* (1990 [1811]). Through the lens of theories on melancholia (Freud, 1917a), separation from the mother (Kulish and Holtzman, 2003), acceptance of the parental couple (Britton, 1989; Chassguet-Smirgel, 1991) and oedipal sibling rivalries (Kaes, 2008), Austen's novel receives a new understanding of the heroines' characters and their transformations. The paper explores the changes in psychic functioning in Austen's fictional heroines in the aftermath of their father's death, loss of income, and the need to marry to re-establish security. Marianne must give up her maxim that no second attachment is pardonable which supported her denial of oedipal and sibling rivals and maintained an unconscious fantasy that she has sole and permanent possession of the mother's and father's love, and then of Willoughby's. The novel presents a sequence in a process of change: Marianne's inconsolable "affliction" over her father's death and an excessive "affliction" over the loss of her beloved Willoughby; Marianne's cruel dismissal of Elinor's care and her self-reproach for it as "barbarous"; Marianne's denial of dangerous symptoms in a self-destructive self-neglect; and, in the end, Marianne's remorse, insight and greater separation from Willoughby and from her mother. The narrative shows that through her trials, Marianne separates enough from her lost objects to form a new attachment in marriage to Brandon. Freudian and Kleinian theories of mourning and melancholia (Quinodoz, 1993) are consistent with, and shed light on the novel's language and action: Marianne cannot reproach Willoughby but finds reason to reproach herself, indicating that parts of her ego are insufficiently differentiated from the lost object, and that Marianne's lost (unfaithful) object was introjected. The novel represents Marianne's identification with a cruel object, when she realizes that she had dismissed Elinor's care as if it meant

nothing: "How barbarous have I been to you! – you, who have been my only comfort" (p. 230). Marianne reproaches the part of her ego identified with the 'barbarous' Willoughby (an attribute that belongs to his actions not hers), a self-reproach that contributes to her self-destructive acts.

Austen presents contrasting attributes in Elinor, in her judgment, prudence, emotional control, and sympathy. Elinor has a capacity for reality testing, which separates her from her romantic mother and her sister who tend to idealize and to project. Elinor can be conscious of comparisons and of competition with Marianne and of aggressive feelings in her rivalry with Lucy Steele. Austen also presents Elinor as influenced by Marianne's sensibility when she expresses passionate feelings about her lost prospects with Edward and her sufferings under Lucy's exultation. In the ending of the novel Elinor becomes more like her mother and sister in her warm response to Willoughby's vindication when he is filled with remorse and self-justification, believing Marianne is dying.

The language of the novel dramatizes the re-experience of childhood rivalry in the sisters' adolescent rivalry, as each strives to re-secure the family fortunes in marrying well. In the rivalry, each sister believes the other has concealed an engagement, and left the other out from her confidence. The plot creates a second chance to work through dependency, aggression, and guilt, to further separate from internal and external parents.

The paper draws on recent psychoanalytic books and papers on sibling rivalry (Sharpe and Rosenblatt, 1994; Mitchell, 2003; Kaes, 2008; Legoretta, 2013), which extend classic views by focusing on the potential for growth in the analysis of the unconscious fantasies in the sibling transferences. Psychoanalytic authors have reinvigorated Freud's (1917b, 1922) and Klein's (1975) revolutionary observations on the child's possessive love for the parent, on the aggression, envy, and narcissistic injury in sibling rivalry, focusing on the emergence of the sibling rivalries in the transference and countertransference. Powerful unconscious fantasies and impulses of early childhood are projected, elaborated, and worked through to facilitate change. In Austen's novel the sibling and oedipal fantasies and impulses are re-lived, expressed, and worked through in the adolescent sibling relationships.

Sense and Sensibility brings to life the idea that development can be reinitiated for the sisters as they come into the sexuality and competitiveness of adolescence and that a new version of the sibling experience within their mutual attachment increases tolerance for separation and loss.

> ... among the merits and the happiness of Elinor and Marianne, let it not be ranked as the least considerable, that though sisters, and living almost within sight of each other, they could live without disagreement between themselves, or producing coolness between their husbands.
>
> (p. 335)

The unique impact of Austen's novels on her large reading public gives special weight to her fictional representations of sibling rivalries enacted in family life, in the girl's struggle to separate from her mother and from the

parental couple. These early struggles, alive in psychoanalytic transferences, place intense after pressures on the psychoanalytic couple, and may not be as well integrated into analytic practice as they are established in theory. Thus, Austen's novel contributes to our field, bringing to life, with the vividness, coherence, and integration of great literature, forces and fantasies that demand renewed attention and containment in the transference and countertransference of the psychoanalytic process.

Translations of summary

Rivalité fraternelle, séparation et changement dans *Le cœur et la raison* de Jane Austen. L'auteure de cet article explore le processus de croissance inhérent à la mise en scène par Jane Austen de l'interaction entre les personnages de Marianne et d'Elinor Dashwood dans son roman *Le cœur et la raison*, à partir des théories psychanalytiques de la rivalité fraternelle œdipienne, de la séparation et des processus de changement. A travers une lecture attentive du roman, elle analyse le rejet de tout « attachement second » de la part de Marianne Dashwood à la lumière d'un fantasme inconscient de déni de l'idée d'un rival avec lequel il faille partager l'amour maternel. L'incapacité de Marianne de se séparer de sa mère, son recours au déni et à la projection, et le fait qu'elle se retrouve à l'article de la mort après avoir perdu l'homme qu'elle aime, tout cela est mis en contraste, d'un point de vue psychanalytique, avec les capacités de sa sœur aînée, Elinor Dashwood, du côté de la dépression, de la réflexion et de l'acceptation de la perte et de la séparation. Le récit dépeint l'identification de Mme Dashwood, la mère, avec sa fille Marianne, ainsi que son idéalisation de cette dernière, ce qui contribue à sa « victoire » dans la situation de rivalité œdipienne avec sa sœur. L'écriture et la structure du roman mettent en évidence le rôle joué par les projections, les identifications, les attaques et les séparations (conscientes et inconscientes) des deux sœurs, à travers les vicissitudes de leurs amours et rivalités adolescentes, dans la constitution d'un processus de croissance. Grâce à l'éclat et la cohérence de ses qualités littéraires indéniables, le roman de Jane Austen donne vie aux forces et fantasmes de la rivalité fraternelle œdipienne, et renouvelle l'attention portée à la subtilité de leur présence dans le transfert et le contre-transfert inhérents au processus analytique.

Geschwisterrivalität, Trennung und Veränderung in Austens *Verstand und Gefühl*. Der Beitrag untersucht einen Entwicklungsprozess, der im Zusammenspiel von Jane Austens Charakterisierungen von Marianne und Elinor Dashwood in *Verstand und Gefühl* darstellt wird. Die Autorin betrachtet den Romantext durch die Linse psychoanalytischer Theorien über ödipale Geschwisterrivalität, Trennung und Veränderungsprozesse. Bei sorgfältiger Lektüre des Romans erweist sich Marianne Dashwoods Ablehnung jeder „zweiten Bindung" als Oberfläche einer unbewussten Phantasie, die die Existenz eines Rivalen um die Liebe der Mutter verleugnet. Eine psychoanalytische Interpretation vergleicht Mariannes fehlende Getrenntheit von der Mutter, ihr Rekurrieren auf Verleugnung und Projektion und ihren Beinahe-Tod nach dem Verlust des geliebten Mannes mit den besser entwickelten Fähigkeiten ihrer älteren Schwester Elinor Dashwood, Depression zu ertragen, zu reflektieren und Verlust und Trennung zu tolerieren. Das Werk porträtiert Mrs. Dashwoods Identifizierung mit ihrer Tochter Marianne; die Mutter idealisiert Marianne und trägt auf diese Weise zu deren ödipalen „Sieg" über die Schwester bei. In Sprache und Struktur des Romans konstituieren die Projektionen, Identifizierungen, Aggressionen und (bewussten und unbewussten) Trennungen der Schwestern in den Schicksalen ihrer adoleszenten Liebeserfahrungen und Rivalitäten einen Entwicklungsprozess. Mit der Anschaulichkeit und Kohärenz großer Literatur erweckt Austens Roman die in ödipalen Geschwisterrivalitäten wirkenden Kräfte und Phantasien zum Leben; gleichzeitig wird die Aufmerksamkeit des Lesers auf deren subtile Präsenz in der Übertragung und Gegenübertragung des psychoanalytischen Prozesses geweckt.

Rivalità fraterna, separazione e cambiamento in *Ragione e Sentimento* di Jane Austen. L'articolo esplora i diversi modi in cui, attraverso il rapporto tra i personaggi di Marianne e Elinor Dashwood nel romanzo *Ragione e sentimento* di Jane Austen, viene rappresentato un processo di crescita. L'autrice si accosta al romanzo della Austen attraverso la lente delle teorie psicoanalitiche sulla rivalità edipica fraterna, sulla separazione e sui processi di cambiamento. L'analisi testuale mostra come il rifiuto da parte di Marianne Dashwood di qualsiasi tipo di 'secondo attaccamento' sia la manifestazione superficiale della fantasia inconscia di negare chi potrebbe rivaleggiare con lei per l'amore della madre. Adottando una prospettiva interpretativa psicoanalitica, vengono messe in luce le differenze tra l'assenza di separazione dalla madre che caratterizza Marianne (accompagnata dal frequente ricorso alla negazione e alla proiezione, e ben manifesta anche nel momento in cui, perdendo l'uomo amato, Marianne stessa

rischia di morire) e la capacità della sorella maggiore Elinor di tollerare vissuti depressivi, di riflettere e di accettare maggiormente la perdita e la separazione. Il romanzo descrive il modo in cui Mrs. Dashwood idealizza la figlia Marianne identificandosi inoltre con lei, e contribuendo in tal modo alla sua 'vittoria' edipica sulla sorella. Nel linguaggio come nella struttura del libro le proiezioni, le identificazioni, le aggressioni e le separazioni consce e inconsce delle sorelle nel corso delle varie vicissitudini che segnano i loro amori e le loro rivalità di adolescenti sono tutti elementi che fanno parte di un processo di crescita. Con l'intensità sensuale ed emotiva e con la coerenza che appartengono alla grande letteratura, il romanzo della Austen dà vita propria alle forze e alle fantasie in gioco nei rapporti di rivalità edipica fraterna, e al tempo stesso serve da fonte di ispirazione per osservare con rinnovata attenzione la loro sottile presenza nel transfert e nel controtransfert all'interno del processo psicoanalitico.

Rivalidad entre hermanos, separación y cambio en *Sentido y sensibilidad* de Jane Austen. Este trabajo explora el proceso de crecimiento representado en el interjuego entre las caracterizaciones que hace Jane Austen de Marianne y de Elinor Dashwood en *Sentido y sensibilidad*. Se aborda el texto a través de la lente de las teorías psicoanalíticas sobre la rivalidad edípica entre hermanos, la separación y los procesos de cambio. Una lectura minuciosa de la novela identifica el repudio por parte de Marianne Dashwood de cualquier "segundo apego" como la superficie de una fantasía inconsciente que niega la existencia de una rival en el amor de la madre. Una perspectiva psicoanalítica contrasta la incapacidad de Marianne de separarse de su madre, su uso de la negación y la proyección y el hecho de que casi se muere luego de perder al hombre que ama, con la capacidad de su hermana Elinor para la depresión, la reflexión y una mayor aceptación de la pérdida y la separación. El relato describe la identificación de la Sra. Dashwood con su hija Marianne y su idealización de esta, que contribuyen a la "victoria" de Marianne sobre su hermana en la rivalidad edípica. En el lenguaje y la estructura de la novela, las proyecciones, identificaciones, agresiones y separaciones (conscientes e inconscientes) de las hermanas en las vicisitudes de sus amores y rivalidades adolescentes constituyen un proceso de crecimiento. La novela de Austen da vida, con la intensidad y coherencia de la gran literatura, a las fuerzas y fantasías desplegadas en las rivalidades edípicas entre hermanos, despertando renovada atención sobre su sutil presencia en la transferencia y contratransferencia del proceso psicoanalítico.

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