

Masculine Authority In Disguise In Jasper Fforde's The Eyer Affair: A Metafictional Study

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Abstract

The current paper seeks to provide a metafictional study of Jasper Fforde's novel *The Eyer Affair*, and testify its intertextual connections to traditional texts such as Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. *The Eyer Affair* also borrows its structural and thematic principles from certain outstanding literary texts. During the last few decades, many critics and literary figures have increasingly been attracted by the term metafiction. It is a form of literature which focuses on the work's own constructedness. It alerts literary audience who are reading or seeing a fictional work. This category of literary genre draws attention to their position as artifacts, either explicitly or indirectly. In point of fact, the target of several metafiction writers is to break the restriction of conventional literature and innovate new narrating techniques. Literary specialists associate the term metafiction with postmodern literature. Ultimately, the paper exposes several perspectives which are elucidated profoundly to manifest such an entity.

Key words: metafiction, constructedness, specialists and postmodernist literature.

Introduction

William Gass was the first person who used the term 'Metafiction' in the late 1960s. His aim was to describe certain kinds of fiction that were somehow about fiction itself. Metafiction was coined in the 1970s and characterized as a type of fiction that contains self-awareness, self-knowledge, and self-consciousness as well as sarcastic self-distance. However, this meaning raised a lot of problems. To begin with, it is self-evident that the majority of postmodern literary theories do not ascribe selfhood and awareness to writers. However, they only consider fictional works. So the idea of self-consciousness is in opposition to such theories. Second, since metafiction is not conscious of its own definitive traits so it cannot be defined by its self-consciousness. All what it knows is that it is a fiction and this is not logically adequate. With the passage of time certain literary terms emerged and others vanished. Literary critics and specialists may reread traditional literary works with new standers. The flourishing of the term metafiction has seen a thorough transformation of literary criticism. Recent critical theories are now commonly taught as part of a literary studies degree. The most famous example is *The Eyer affair* novel by the novelist Fforde, Jasper. Certain traditional literary masterpieces, such as William Shakespeare's masterpiece *The Tempest* and Charlotte Bronte's one *Jane Eyre*, have contextual ties to this novel. These

works reveal it as an illusion. Self-reflexive narrative is used in these works to raise concerns regarding the nature of postmodern literature and the link between fiction and reality. Postmodern literature investigates the issue of metafiction which is highlighted in certain literary works. The Eyer affair novel by Fforde Jasper is from among the most famous examples of this form of literature. He uses metafiction as an illusion in his novel to question the connection between reality and fiction. Apart from the general perspective, metafiction has progressively caught the attraction of so many literary figures over the last few years. With the passage of time there appears to be an urgent need in comprehending the latest revisions in literary theory, particularly the practical effects of the new theories within the order of new readings. This need is crucial in searching for guidance in a rapidly changing critical environment.

In spite of the fact that postmodernism, as a literary movement, may only be comprehended within the framework of the social environment, the thing which must be considered is that metafiction does not need any social understanding. This is so because the self-reference is inherent in the plot of the literary work itself. Metafiction is considered as the original movement in the contemporary arts which are called postmodern. Advocates from all over the world have become increasingly aware of a fundamental link between metafiction and postmodern literary works. In order to grasp the full implications and possible uses of both of the terms, it is essential to see them put to work. Literary critics and specialists use metafiction to talk about a postwar fiction which was obviously passing in its methods and assumptions from the time of prewar modernism.

The Problem of Study

Reviewers continue to overlook and undervalue Jasper Fforde's work. So, this study tries to fill in the gaps by showing how Fforde's works vary from other English novels, displaying his brilliance, and exhibiting his mastery. Jasper Fforde's *The Eyer Affair* delves into metafictional topics as well as the consequences of male authority. Masculine authority and metafictionality in *The Eyer Affair* render them problematic and imprecise notions. There are no fixed definitions for such standards and values, and their meanings shift as time passes. The link between fiction and reality is explored in self-conscious narrative. Jasper Fforde's work is about metafiction and masculine dominance. It is written in the style of a parody and known for its self-reflexivity. Feminists argue that masculine power is a kind of oppression against women. This type of tyranny against women has resulted in women being unable to enjoy their freedom in a number of countries. In numerous ways, the work resembles Charlotte Bronte's classic *Jane Eyre*.

Questions of Study

- 1- What is metafiction literature?
- 2- How does Jasper Fforde represent the concept of metafiction and masculine authority in his novel *The Eyer Affair*?
- 3 How does Jasper Fforde introduce *Jane Eyre* in a parodic way.

Aims of the study

The current study aims to:

- Detect elements of metafiction in Jasper Fforde's *The Eyer Affair*.
- Examine masculine authority in the novel.

Methodology

The current study is analytically designed through a process of a document analysis, targeting

the elements of metafiction, masculine authority and their implications in *The Eyre Affair* by Jasper Fforde.

Definition of the Metafiction Literature

Metafiction, also known as self-reflexive narrative, is a fictional form which stresses its construction to the point that readers are continually reminded that they're reading or seeing a work of fiction. It's satire that's self-aware of language, literary form, storytelling, and metafictional works that overtly or implicitly highlight their status as artifacts (Waugh, 1984). William Gass used the term 'Metafiction' for the first time in the late 1960s. He wanted to describe recent fictions that were somehow about fiction itself. Although it is hard to make a precise definition to metafiction due to its complication and depth, the term has become a popular conception and it has deeply influenced the contemporary culture and ideology in contemporary western and eastern cultures. Metafiction is a literary phrase that is frequently used as a satire or an instrument to investigate the link between literature and reality, life, and art. (Imhof, 1986).

The main focus of several metafiction writers is to break the restriction of conventional literature and innovate new narrating techniques. They are aiming to reveal their perspectives on reality. Metafiction has a lot of characteristics and writing techniques including fictionality, parody, non linear etc. No doubt that the authenticity and fictionality are important skills of literary criticism and literary creation in the writing techniques of metafiction. Several authors started to abandon the old method of writing, instead they chiefly focus on the mound of characters, the continuity of plots since 1960 s. They rebuild the metafiction merely pursuit text's self-revealing. Metafiction phenomenon and the definition of it can be clearly understood through the authenticity and fictionality interpretation of certain texts such as Jasper Fforde's novel *The Eyre Affair*. Several writers including Jasper Fforde have successfully broken the restriction of conventional literature and used some writing techniques of metafiction in their novels as in the case of *The Eyre Affair* respectively. They have talents of applying these techniques in their works. they expose the fictional nature of metafiction through the description of characters, plots and themes. Their purpose is to probe into the artificiality of reality. They always interrupt themselves during their narration and directly comment on the content of their former narration. Interpreting metafiction reveals the literary figures' innovation and mediation of the creation process in the form of fiction. While many critics and literary experts identify self-conscious narrative with Postmodern literature, others see them as two distinct notions and see self-conscious story as a feature of all writing. A very vital feature of a metafictional text is its purposeful and deliberate self awareness of itself as a piece of fiction. In his *Life was a fiction anyway*, Katja (2015) writes:

In literary discourse metafiction is often considered first and foremost a part of postmodernist literature. Some literary scholars even go as far as stating that the two concepts are practically interchangeable, whereas others point out that in fact metafictional features have been present to varying degrees throughout the lifespan of the novel (p. 12).

In his *Metafiction*, Currie(1995) writes:

If metafiction characteristically internalises the relationship between authors and readers, fiction and criticism or art and life, we find its antecedents throughout literary history. Chaucer's elaborate framings of *The Canterbury Tales*, Shakespeare's plays within plays, the extensive use of epistolary forms in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century poetry and fiction, or the intrusive narrators of Fielding and Richardson, are all in a sense precursors of the metafictional paradox (P. 5).

Accordingly, as a dubious discourse, metafiction is regarded as a sort of writing which stands on the margin between criticism and fiction, and regards that boundary as its subject. As a result, it is regarded as a crucial notion in literary theory initiatives, whether in modernity or postmodernity, which have used the borderline as a key source of energy. According to Currie, the history of metafictional paradoxes may be traced back to the Middle Ages. Many traits of metafiction that Currie talks about have been in frequent usage for centuries. Waugh (1988) states that ". . . metafiction is just one form of post-modernism . . . (p. 69)" He links postmodernism and metafiction with each other. Most of the literary specialists concentrate in their works on the metafiction of the postmodernist period rather than maintaining that metafiction was invented by the postmodernists. Hallila (2006) points out that "metafiction is not a part of postmodernism, nor is it its feature ." Metafiction is an essential component of the novel form, according to him, but it becomes a more fundamental and obvious feature of the book throughout the postmodernist age. Hallila points out that Hutcheon finds postmodernism to be too "limited" for a notion as vast as metafiction in her 1980 book *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*. Metafiction is now regarded as an expression of postmodernism, despite the fact that researchers disagree on the name.

Into Explication : Jasper Fforde's The Eyre Affair

Jasper Fforde is an English writer and philosopher, famous for his adult comic fantasies. Many critics compare him with other contemporary writers like, J.K. Rowling, Woody Allen as well as Sara Paretsky. The man was Born in London, England, in 1961. He is famous as a filmmaker and as a novelist. Nursery Crime series, Thursday Next series and Shades of Grey are among his most extensively recognized works. Fforde's father was a very famous banker in the United Kingdom. London and Wales are the places where Fforde lived his childhood and adulthood. He studied abroad and after his graduation in 1979, the man began his job as a film producer including, *The Pirates of Penzance* and *The Ploughman's Lunch* during the 1980n's. Along with this Fforde also worked as an assistant cameraman for famous movies such as *The Mask of Zorro* and *The Saint*. In spite of his cinematography experience, Fforde faces so many troubles before publishing his first novel. For over a decade, several manuscripts of his first novel were rejected before publishers accepted his first work to be published. His writing career began his writing career with *The Eyre Affair* in 2001. The novel contains elements of surrealism and mystery factors. It is a recreation and a re-imagination of (1847) *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte. The novel revolves around Thursday Next, a literary detective who is in search of a master criminal in *Jane Eyre*, a world of Charlotte Bronte, a 1985 alternative. Fforde earned a respected position among famous figures in literature for the use of complex theme, structure, plot and assimilation of diverse genres into one single piece of fiction, thus, challenging the way of novel writing altogether (Hamilton, 2011).

He composed a number of novels revolving around Thursday Next, a female literary detective, after he has his first work well-received. *Something Rotten*, *The Well of Lost Plots*, *Lost in a Good Book*, and *One of our Thursdays Is Missing*, are major works of the series. *Nursery Crimes* is another fantasy series by Fforde. It revolves around Sergeant Mary Mary

and Jack Spratt, a detective inspector. The Big Over Easy in 2005 is the first book of the series. The mission of the sergeant and the detective is to search for the criminal who is responsible for Humpty Dumpty's fall. 2006 witnessed the publishing of the sequel to the book entitled The Fourth Bear. The Dragonslayer trilogy and Shades of Grey are two new series published in 2010, in addition to many short stories. He is interested in the idea of including so many varied genres in one book and investigating the use of language. His works contain elements of romance, thriller, fantasy, science fiction and satire. In spite of the sense of satire, he addresses serious issues in his works. The boundary between reality and literature, in his novels, is blurred. Fforde received the comic fiction Wodehouse prize in the year 2004 (James, 2002).

The Eyre Affair Novel

The Eyre Affair is clearly a fictionalized form of Jane Eyre, with the roaming of Jane with her relative, St. John Rivers, to India to help in his efforts with the expedition. It was the first novel by Jasper Fforde, which appeared in 2001. A literary detective, Thursday Next, is on the trail of a professional criminal across Jane Eyre's setting in this alternate 1985. In the course of the novel, people tackle literary questions, interrogating Shakespearean authorship and other issues such as murder and gang wars. The depiction of The Crimean War with its ramifications on both sides is also obvious, although the call for peace is not considered with the prevail of a peace movement in Britain. At the same time, Goliath is making a plasma rifle named "STONK" as an attempt to defeat the Russians. Thursday Next, a woman of thirty-six year old, is the protagonist of the novel and all the events revolve around her. She lives in London and works as a literary detective and she is an expert of the Crimean War. After fighting in the Crimea during the 1970's, Thursday Next is haunted by the horrible memories of The Crimean War. In Thursday's time, People have been interested in literature and Baconians publically interrogating the Shakespearean authorship over his plays, persuading people that these literary pieces were all written by Francis Bacon. Thursday Next shows a great talent at her job, but authenticating manuscripts waste much of her time. She privately rejects the continuation of the war because Landen Parke-Laine, her fiancé, hurt his leg in fight and her brother was murdered in action. For her the war is a waste of time and energy. She ends her relationship with Parke-Laine several times because of the trauma of the war before they reconcile and marry. At the beginning of the story, Thursday offers help in the capture of Acheron Hades, a serious terrorist. She already knows the man as her former university professor and she is only living person who can recognize him. In spite his being a man of knowledge and intellect, he has become a mysterious criminal mastermind. She almost arrests him during a stakeout. But, Hades is a man with many noticeable superhuman abilities. His extreme durability and mental manipulation are among such abilities. He tries to withstand Thursday's gunfire by using his powers. Thursday's entire team is almost killed at his hands and he evades capture. While trying to capture him, she is shot, but fortunately she is saved by a Jane Eyre copy which stops Hades' bullet, thus saving her life. Before the paramedics arrive, Thursday is aided by a mysterious stranger who leaves behind a handkerchief, beautifully embroidered with "E.F.R." letters and a 19th-century style jacket. Such letters are recognized by Next to be referring to a fictional character in Bronte's Jane Eyre, that is Edward Fairfax Rochester. In a childhood flashback, Thursday enters into Jane Eyre world. In this supernatural event she meets the fictional character, Rochester. After numerous failed attempts to apprehend Hades, Thursday learns that he was murdered in a vehicle accident while recovering in the hospital. Hades is still alive, according to a future version of herself, who tells her to look for a career in her hometown of Swindon. When she arrives, she learns that her relatives formed a

tool that permits individuals to join fictional works. While at home she and her previous fiancé Parke-Laine meet again and renew their love. She also comes upon Jack Schitt, a high-ranking Goliath operative on the hunt for Hades. Hades is also responsible for the theft of Charles Dickens' original manuscript of *Martin Chuzzlewit* and the murder of Mr Quaverley, a character from the same book. He wants to blackmail the literary world by kidnapping Polly, Prose Portal and Mycroft because changing the plots of the original manuscripts of novels leads to the change of other copies. When he does not fulfill his demands, Hades kidnaps Jane and steals the original manuscript of *Jane Eyre*. That is why, all copies of the novel *Jane Eyre* finish roughly in the centre of the work at the time of Jane's kidnapping. After a long time of trouble, Next finally kills Hades and also regains the poem. At the same time many events occur such as Thornfield Hall is burned, Bertha dies, and Rochester is seriously hurt. Later on, Thursday finds out that all of the characters in the novel are assumed to relive their lives, with complete understanding of how actions go on, with the lack of ability to change any of them. The reader catches a happy ending of the novel in which Rochester and Jane are reunited. By using the Prose Portal, Next and Jack Schitt release Aunt Polly. Goliath's plasma rifles are supposed to bring or guarantee victory according to the advocates of the war but Next overtly discovers that the plasma rifles are useless. This leads to a turning point in the novel when Britain is obliged to rethink its position, starting peace negotiations to put an end to the war and. While Parke-Laine and another woman are about to get married, they are interrupted by Rochester's lawyer and meanwhile, Thursday Next arrives at the church. After a long time of struggle with one another, eventually Parke-Laine and Thursday Next marry after reconciliation. Next is so pleased with the fatherly advice and kindness of her father. Towards the novel end, Thursday Next is noticing something unusual: it is the positive reaction of the public to *Jane Eyre*'s new ending and the other consequences including the fury of Goliath (James, 2002).

Metafiction and Masculine Authority

Despite all what have been said about Fforde's despair with his writing at the beginning of his career, he remains a novelist conscious of his art. He composed a complete corpus of critical writing that lived up to the standard of that of J.K. Rowling, and was very careful to line out his aims and principles as far as his works are concerned. His literary piece, *The Eyre Affair* is more than just a metafictional postmodern parody of Bronte's work; it serves as a model for how popular culture interacts with both Charlotte Bronte and *Jane Eyre*. The novel belongs to the metafiction trend in which literary and critical discourses mirror each other. The novel is also considered a postmodern parody of *Jane Eyre*, despite the fact that its events, beliefs, and assumptions indicate a conservative concept of feminine subjectivity in relation to cultural capital rather than a progressive or evolutionary one, where wealth equals greater social advancement and authority. The work presents a discourse on female strength and knowledge, and it addresses feminine difficulties by stressing feminine subjugation to masculine knowledge and romantic narratives that justify orthodox gender stereotypes under the pretext of humour (Hateley, 2005). *The Eyre Affair* is a serious-minded work of postmodern metafiction that is half science fiction and partially detective story. It employs a realism narrative that is infused with fantasy elements. Hateley says in her book *The End of the Eyre Affair: Jane Eyre, Parody, and Popular Culture*:

Bearing in mind Pratchett's model of the reificatory possibilities of fantasy fiction, we can read Fforde's novel not just as postmodern parody of *Jane Eyre*, but also as parody of the postmodern novel itself. Fforde's text not only reifies the central elements of the intersections between *Jane Eyre* and popular culture, but also some of the qualities of the postmodern novel (p. 1025)

The novel embodies the repetitive structure of the postmodern novel as a metafictional work. It's the important repeat in Hutcheon's parody structure. The usage of symbolic names for the principal characters is a form of parody. The change of St. John Rivers into Acheron Hades, for example. It also appears as the main storyline of the novel *The Eyre Affair*, which redrafts and references Jane Eyre's work in narrative and linguistic ways that are obvious. There is a resemblance between Thursday Next, the independent protagonist of the novel and Jane Eyre. Thursday Next, the novel's protagonist, resembles Jane Eyre in appearance; she is independent, outspoken, and looks determined to make her own decisions about her life. Despite all kinds of oppression that she faces, Thursday Next resembles Jane in her free will to choose her way of living, "she's everything a woman should be. Strong and resourceful, loyal and intelligent" (169).

Her last option was to return home by an ostensibly magical means. After years apart, Thursday is reunited with her long-time love and the two marry. The structural resonance of Bronte's work, as well as the reader's knowledge of the novel through the intertextual ties between the characters of Thursday Next and Jane Eyre, demonstrate the narrative's repetitive nature. These intertextual connections of the text to Jane Eyre either overtly allude to conventional forms to indicate its artificiality or appropriate thematic and structural ideas from previous narratives. Jane is literally depicted by Thursday Next as a good example "I stared at her intently with a mixture of feelings. I had realized not long ago that I myself was no beauty, and even at the age of nine had seen how the more attractive children gained favor more easily."(66) Although a child, Thursday is able to appreciate Jane as a representative "But here in that young woman I could see how those principles could be inverted. I felt myself stand more upright and clench my jaw in subconscious mimicry of her pose." (Ibid.)

Both of Fforde's and Bronte's novels end happily. This modeling exemplifies Jane Eyre's often-described "feminist" discourse, notably, Bronte presents a comparable inspirational model based on an understanding of Jane's actions and views, whereas such actions and views provide a female reader with a potential point of identification and inspiration "that Victorian women novelists like the Bronte's are not so much unconsciously 'written by' gender codes as they are actively engaged in rewriting them" (Warhol 858).

According to Maria Lamonaca (2002), *The Eyre Affair* exhibits a similar blending of the "professional" and personal to the discourses on gender and spirituality that are intertwined in Bronte's writing. Fforde's and Bronte's novels share a considerable resemblance through the portrayals of the protagonists Jane and Thursday, both receive marriage proposals from a pair of potentially good but ultimately disappointing mates. Bowden Cable is another manifestation of St. John Rivers. Along with Thursday recount the plot of Jane Eyre and give their comment on both Jane Eyre and Charlotte Bronte.

Here is Charlotte Bronte" concluding her novel—presumably something which has a sense of autobiographical wishful thinking about it—in a manner that reflects her own love life. If I had been Charlotte I would have made certain that Rochester and Jane were reunited—married, if possible (270).

Hateley(2005) states: "The Brontean discourse in the novel is, given Fforde's title, central to the reader's consciousness of metafictionality within *The Eyre Affair*."(1332)

In *The Eyre Affair*, the appearances of Bronte, Dickens, and Shakespeare serve as

iterative narrative, which is crucial to the postmodern book. In Fforde's story, these characters are emblematic of many layers of reality. Their manifestation in Thursday's real world serves as markers of literary culture. Fforde and many other Postmodernist writers often point to early literary works as inspiration for their experiments with narrative and structure. Fielding, Wordsworth, Austen, and Milton all feature in the novel, which matches the narrative's involvement with the literary society that swirls around them. Fforde declares: "Several thousand visitors pass through Gad's Hill every day, making it the third-most popular area of literary pilgrimage after Anne Hathaway's cottage and the Bronte's Haworth House" (11-12). These authors are characters in the postmodern novel's cyclic narrative. Jane Eyre's storyline is structured in a simplistically parodic style by Jasper Fforde. The novel appears repeatedly in multiple works in the form of postmodern parody structurally and symbolically. Jane Eyre becomes a crucial instance for many gender studies and romantic discourses. At the end of Jasper's novel Jane and St. John depart to India as the latter is pursuing his missionary journey. Away from the romantic perspective of Bronte's novel Jane Eyre's reunion with St. John is considered as a kind of female submission in terms of gender roles in the form of the hierarchical structure of master and governess. Thursday has the ability to blur the margins between fiction and reality. She structures the plot of Jane Eyre on the level of fictionality. Another character who transcends the borders of fiction and reality is Acheron Hades who plans to break into the original Jane Eyre manuscript and kidnap the heroine in order to keep her for ransom. There is a common ground between both of the novels. No doubt that Fforde inserts his own narrative authority into the original text, and displaces Bronte's authorial presence with his own. Jasper does not only parallel between the two plots but also intertwine them insolubly. He ends his book by reworking Jane Eyre to fit the one he is familiar with from his own environment. Despite the fact that the novel has a place in terms of genre roles, it is clearly classified by its joyful conclusion. The disappearance of Charlotte Bronte and the presence of Fforde from *The Eyre Affair* is regarded as a suppression of female authorial literary voice. Aside from that, Just the Bronte Federation represents her when she is present. The novel's end favoritism of Jane Eyre, with practically little mention of Bronte, validates this idea, which might also be seen as a rejection of female literary voices from the canon. Under the guise of romantic themes, there is a domination of masculine authority over feminine subjectivity from a gender ideological standpoint. In *The Eyre Affair*, Rochester becomes a masculine voice of paternalistic guidance for Thursday, and this masculine authority is represented in Jane Eyre. "Ignore forgive and concentrate on living. Life for you is short; far too short to allow small jealousies to infringe on the happiness which can be yours only for the briefest of times." (332 – 33) Such a discourse tells the reader about the truth of the human condition, with Rochester's strong male voice authoring Thursday's romantic happy ending. "Farewell, Miss Next! You have a great heart; do not let it go to waste. You have one who loves you and whom you love yourself."

Choose happiness!" (346)

Men demonstrate masculine authority by attempting to dominate through order, whereas females do so through typical performance, as in Charlotte Bronte's novel *Jane Eyre* (Lamonaca, 2002). Through the interpretation of the feminist discourse of *The Eyre Affair*, without a doubt that the conservative romantic ending of the novel is manifested for the sake of patriarchal culture. Thursday Next and *Jane Eyre* live in the same popular culture as Charlotte Bronte does. Hateley (2005) argues that: "Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* is apparently an ideal vehicle for legitimizing containment and restriction of women outside the academy; parody in this context would seem to be patriarchy in sheep's clothing."

Conclusions

To sum up, *The Eyre Affair*, written by Jasper Fforde, is a postmodern spoof of Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. He takes parts from Bronte's *Jane Eyre* to create *The Eyre Affair*, a new version of *Jane Eyre*. Although it criticizes the absurdity of the international military conflict within the context of the Crimean War, Fforde's novel also belongs to the metafiction trend in which literary and critical discourses mirror each other. The novel tackles feminine issues by emphasizing masculine authority over feminine knowledge and empowerment. The feminine discourse of *The Eyre Affair* reveals that under the guise of comedy, conservative gender roles are legitimized. Its events, ideologies and assumptions represent a conservative instead of a liberal or evolutionary understanding of feminine individuality in comparison with cultural capitalism. The absence of Charlotte Bronte's voice in the narration of *Jane Eyre* asserts the theme of masculine authority.

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