

Story of Man's Creation for Shelley's *Frankenstein*: A Case Study on Ecofeminism

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ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to examine ecofeminism in the patriarchal society of *Frankenstein* of Shelley. At first glance, the novel is a manifestation of the patriarchal world of Shelley because the male characters are present, and almost all of the women in the novel either kill or die. But it can be perceived that Shelley's female characters are present in their own ways because they are present in nature, as a matter of fact, the female character's absence and passivity are the emblems of their overwhelming presence so much that even the monster also has some feminine features, and he is used to being passive, because when he appears, it is either dark or moonlight, both of them have feminine attributes. The narrations of novel events are almost described in the sea, which is also the female symbol. Hence, Shelley tries to increase the women's presence in her own ways in her novel through natural features. The presentation of natural elements influences Monster so much that he also reveals the feminine, goddess features. It can be concluded that the research method of this study is to find Shelley's ecofeminism attributes, the actual presence of women, and their virtual absence due to ecofeminism, because Shelley has used their own specific ways to show that women are very present in her patriarchal society so much that even all of the male characters have dual features and the feminine features are not absent but they are very present in nature and characters of the novel. Therefore, women's absence is Shelley's method to reveal their absolute presence.

Keywords: Women, Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Female, Novel.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ecofeminism or the approach to the originality of nature and woman is the product of the simultaneous concern for the domination of nature and woman. On the one hand, it is considered a branch of radical feminism and the deep ecological approach; besides, ecofeminism is considered by environmental ethics and feminism. Françoise d'Eaubonne first used it in his book, *Feminism or Death*. (2023, p.12)

The modern ecofeminist movement was also born out of a series of conferences and workshops held in the United States by a coalition of academic and professional women during the late 1970s and early 1980s. They met to discuss the ways in which feminism and environmentalism might be combined to promote respect for women and the natural world and were motivated by the notion that a long historical precedent of associating women with nature had led to the oppression of both. (Miles, 2023)

Additionally, ecofeminism considers; the domination of men over women throughout history/man's domination over nature, the relationship between domination at the same time, men over women and nature, the harmful aspects of this domination over both women and men in nature

as well as the differences between men and women's attitudes towards nature. (Buckingham, 2015,845-850) Furthermore, ecofeminists believe men embody the attributes of ambition, aggression, and destruction, especially in natural resources and the environment are known and the crisis in the environment is related to men's negative values and men's attitudes about nature.(Nirmal,2020,p.285-293)

It can be also perceived that ecofeminists have the different tendencies emphasize various topics. However, their defaults are common to all of them. As Warren, author of several works in the field of feminism and bioethics environmental, socialist ecofeminist (emphasis on social justice), cultural ecofeminist (critique of patriarchal culture and emphasis on biological and symbolic relationships between woman and nature), the liberal ecofeminist (emphasis on government structures and laws) Ecowomanist and extremist ecofeminist,can be considered as trends of this approach (2011,125-p.146).

Despite presenting a coherent typology of ecofeminism, Plumwood presented the two main branches of ecofeminism entitled Cultural and Social Ecofeminism, he suggests the difference between the two tendencies and their attitudes go back to the relationship between the two concepts of woman and nature. Cultural ecofeminism shed the light to women and nature concerning each other; because it is believed that women according to their personalities, have cognitively more specific perceptions of nature than men have (Plumwood, 2003, p.46).

Besides, the cultural ecofeminism is a considerable approach, it is believed that women can understand nature better than men because of their biological features, and because of biological properties like the task of providing water and fodder and having more contact with the earth, they are more connected to nature, and they are most influenced by environmental degradation. (Lorentzen, 2007, p.19).The elements of nature such as trees and forests in terms of cultural ecofeminists are feminist phenomena; because like the land, itself, their features are fertility; that is, cultural ecofeminism establishes an inherent relationship between women and nature which is rooted in both culture and biological characteristics, but social feminism pays attention to the social network and power relations throughout history that are gradually in social structure and individual relations are institutionalized. In social ecofeminism, ecofeminism considers culture as a kind of reductionism. This approach has been brought with civil and political movements. Although the categorization of ecofeminism is controversial, what unifies these heterogeneous things is a claim that Warren describes as follows: "Important relationships between domination, there are women and the domination of nature (Lorentzen, 2007, p.23).

2. METHOD

The study uses the ecofeminist perspective as a theoretical framework to examine the female overwhelming presence, while it seems that the novel is male-dominated because all of the novel characters are men, and a male scientist middle in nature and he ironically creates a monster, this scientist resembles a woman who gets born, but he bears a monster, this ironical substitute leads to the monster's destruction. Resembling ecofeminism, Shelley has considered the gender relationship, because ecofeminism experts examine the relationship between gender and the environment, emphasizing the relationship between women's oppression and the exploitation of nature. (Gebreyohannes,2022,p.179)

Using this framework, the aim of the study is to examine the portrayal of women and nature in the novel and explore the way in which Shelley challenges patriarchal beliefs. The study uses a textual analysis approach to explore the narrative and symbolism of the novel. The analysis focuses on

images of women and nature, especially the lack and passivity of women and the female characteristics of male characters and monsters. This study is an attempt to express the actual overwhelming presence of women in the natural forms while they are virtually absent while it seems that Shelley has omitted the female characters in some ways. Furthermore, the study applies an ecofeminist interpretation in the textual analysis of the novel. Drawing on an ecofeminist perspective that links women to life and peace, and argues that war is a manifestation of male violence, the study explains Shelley's specific manifestation and portrayal of women in the novel as a deliberate attempt to challenge patriarchal values. Analysis reveals Shelley's use of women's absence as a way of emphasizing their indelible presence.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Ecofeminism and Natural Manifestations

This study is an attempt to examine the women's dominating presence, ecofeminism, and natural female elements in Shelley's *Frankenstein* which is merely considered to be a patriarchal novel. This article tries to introduce this mythical and legendary godlike creature due to ecofeminism. Studying symbols, myths, and customs of different nations and ethnicities can help us to understand and accept ecofeminism to achieve the manifestations of the historical and cultural connection between nature and women. Ruether presents the Western cultural practices and hierarchical and dual perceptions of the world. These are in line with the organization of the world. Ruether claims that is, dual conceptual structures that are recognized for women, the characteristics such as "femininity", "body", "earth", "sexuality" and "lust" and men with characteristics such as "masculinity", "soul", "mind" and "power". This claim proves that men have inherent power over women and nature. This dual structure was supported by the Greeks and continued by Christianity. Later, it was strengthened during the scientific revolution. In this cultural space, the simultaneous domination of women and nature seemed justified and natural. This domination is mainly due to "religion", "philosophy" other "cultural symbols", "media networks" and "structures" that were strengthened (Lorentzen & Eaton, 2002, 52). In this regard, Agarwal has described four major concepts of ecofeminism. First is that men are more related to culture and women are more related to the environment. Culture is considered superior to the ecological environment. Therefore, women and the environment are dominated by men who are considered to dominate the ecological resources. Women are related to the environment. The contribution of women and the environment to a lower position allocates to them. Third, the degradation of women and nature occurs simultaneously, and women are responsible for ending male-centered domination in both cases. Fourth, ecofeminism seeks to combine feminism with ecological thinking, both of which are hierarchically structured and non-hierarchical. (Agarwal, 2010, p.36).

The ecofeminism movement, despite the very wide-ranging conflicts within, was devoted to the struggle against patriarchy and the system of male domination. The dominant system was based on a culture that has long been based on dual beliefs such as woman/man, emotion/intellect, nature/culture, uncivilized/civilized, passive/active, etc. In this cultural situation, the simultaneous domination of women and nature seems to be justified and natural. (Lorentzen & Eaton, 2002, p.78)

At this stage, it was natural that the feminist movement should rise against those who made a special, biological connection between women and nature; because the connection of the first parts of these dualities was not in favour of women and justified the superiority of men. In the first and second waves of feminism, the trend of duality continued; but with the beginning of environmental discussions that were raised in the late twentieth century, an ideological turn between the feminist views has an exceptional biological, psychological, and natural connection in the structure of women's creation. They show their empathy and greater understanding of women in the care and protection. They interpret the special merit and superiority of women.

3.2. Patriarchic World: Secure/Insecure World

MacKinnon, says, "All of the problems in society are rooted in the division of human/nature. In his view, the dualities of man/nature, God/creature are also from a kind of subordination of the second component; just like the male/female debate » (2012, p.45). *Frankenstein* is a good example of the belief that his bifurcated body is dual, human, and godlike combined at the same time, there is also a link between woman and nature. The creature is a legendary, godlike figure, on the one hand, he is a creature like a robot or an idol and he have some interactions with humans, especially women. He has a simultaneous relationship with man and nature, the creature or monster has especially significant distinction behaviour with both men and women. The two body parts of this creature show the strange behaviours which have also doubled him in his interaction with humans; sometimes he falls in love with them and sometimes like nature is angry with them to the point that the storyteller tries to duplicate this behaviour attribute to two types of behaviours with two distinct colours, light and dark. "Was man, indeed, at once so powerful, so virtuous and magnificent, yet so vicious and base? He appeared at one time a mere scion of the evil principle and at another as all that can be conceived of noble and godlike, in this sense, he is actually like human being who has both devil and angel aspects. To be a great and virtuous man appeared the highest honour that can befall a sensitive being; to be base and vicious, as many on record have been, appeared the lowest degradation, a condition more abject than that of the blind mole or harmless worm (Shelley, 2010, p.92). Collins believes that male-dominated or patriarchal culture is supported by four interrelated elements, which include gender, racial, class discrimination, and ecological degradation (2017, p.34).

Concerning her femininity, Shelley has been able to highlight the godlike character of a creature in *Frankenstein*, Shelley gives him a role like the environmental change from the perspective of the indigenous women. In Shelley's novel, women and godlike creatures play the main role. Their relationship and their behaviours at the sea embody nature which is not restrained, their behaviours are different. The godlike creature as a mythical one has some relations both with the sea and with the human especially women. Along with this idea, "Ecofeminism claims: i) there are important connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature; ii) understanding the nature of these connections is necessary to any adequate understanding of the oppression of women and the oppression of nature; iii) feminist theory must include an ecological perspective; iv) solutions to ecological problems must include a feminist perspective" (Ottuh, 2020, p.177).

3.3 Female Natural Symbols

Water is a feminine element in mythology, and an ancient symbol for the womb and fertility as well. It is a symbol of purification and rebirth.” This ‘fluid body’ is interpreted by modern psychology as a symbol of the unconscious, that is, of the non-formal, dynamic, motivating, female side of the personality. The projection of the mother-imago into the waters endows them with various numinous properties characteristic of the mother (Cirlot, 2001, p.102).

Most of the narrations of the novel happened in the sea, symbolizing femininity. Everybody knows that the world is made of four elements: water, wind, soil, and fire. Water and soil represent females, and fire and wind show males, they are placed high. With this interpretation, there is a double confrontation of gender that is considered in the novel. The godlike creature is a mystical figure with the body of a god and human. Zimmer says, “The ocean is also to be found as a symbol of the woman or the mother (in both her benevolent and her terrible aspects) (2008, p.56). According to Cirlot, flowing water or fountains or springs, floods and waterfalls are female equal and because of their relationship with water and their meaning is contradictory; that is, as much as they can observe birth and fertility are related to death and nothingness. “The symbolic significance of the sea corresponds to that of the ‘Lower Ocean’—the waters in flux, the transitional and mediating agent between the non-formal (air and gases) and the formal (earth and solids) and, by analogy, between life and death. The waters of the oceans are thus seen not only as the source of life but also as its goal. ‘To return to the sea’ is ‘to return to the mother’, that is, to die (2001, p.89).

From the psychological view Jung makes the sea an independent and sometimes imperfect manifestation of feminine characteristics of the subconscious (2012, p.67). And the large portions of *Frankenstein’s* narrations also occurred in the sea accompanying the feminine aspect which seems passive but it is present. Frankenstein and all passengers are in the ship, it is like a carrier or womb. The feminine absence shows its overwhelming presence, this absence has begun in the first chapter when Victor makes the creature devoid of its female counterpart and he is also called “creature” when he was found in the sea. “He must have been a noble creature in his better days, being even now in wreck so attractive and amiable” (Shelley, 2010, p.82). Pon discusses the idea of masculine creation outside of the influence of the feminine. She contends that the monster, as a creation, is strictly masculine without the influence of the feminine. Further, Victor’s act of creation leaves behind the traditionally necessary female counterpart, which is further demonstrated by the deaths of women in the narrative (Pon, 2000, p.23).

3.4 Parent and Child’s Attachment

Victor was attracted to his parent’s attention for a long time until his mother decided to take Elizabeth an orphan as her daughter, “For a long time I was their only care. My mother had much desired to have a daughter, but I continued their single offspring (2010, p.52). Her presence symbolizes the patriarchy conditions in the novel because Victor does not like her as much as she does. “All praises bestowed on her I received as made to a possession of my own. We called each other familiarly by the name of cousins. No word, no expression could body forth the kind of relation

in which she stood to me—my more than a sister, since till death she was to be mine only (2010, p.49). Victor's patriarchal possession, unquestionable love, and mean emotion toward Elizabeth and his mother can be found in the different parts of the novel, "I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel (Shelley, 2010, p.63). This picture is an example of female degradation. This picture accompanies by the presence of the moon, "every limb became convulsed; when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created (2010, p.83). Here Victor attributes the feminine features, he carries his creature devoid of female presence, which is why "the dim and yellow light of the moon forced its way through the window shutters", it shows the dim presence of the female character. "When patriarchy superseded matriarchy, a feminine character came to be attributed to the moon and a masculine to the sun" (Cirlot, 2001, p.95). According to ecofeminism, the connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature are conceptual: they are embedded in a patriarchal framework and left to the logic of domination which functions to explain, justify and maintain the subordination of both women and nature (Warren, 2005, 35). Additionally, Davis says, Man is the enemy of Nature: to kill, root up, level off, pollute, to destroy are his instinctive reactions. A woman is the ally of Nature, and her instinct is to tend, nurture, encourage healthy growth, and preserve the ecological balance (2018, p.45).

The vein struggle of the mother to increase the number of female characters appears when she accepts to rear Justine as a family member and Victor's aunt paid attention to her, but his aunt died and all of her family also died. Almost all of the female characters of the novel are either in bed ill or dead, they are in the memory.

3.5 Gender Study: Female Degradation

Victor's sense of degradation toward women is so much that when he prefers not to mention his intercourse with a woman, he instead says "my fellow creatures", it may also show his homosexual desire, he says, "study had before secluded me from the intercourse of my fellow creatures and rendered me unsocial, but Clerval called forth the better feelings of my heart; he again taught me to love the aspect of nature and the cheerful faces of children. Excellent friend! How sincerely did you love me and endeavour to elevate my mind until it was on a level with your own! A selfish pursuit had cramped and narrowed me until your gentleness and affection warmed and opened my senses; I became the same happy creature who, a few years ago, loved and beloved by all, had no sorrow or care (Shelley, 1818).

Despite all of these degradations, there are many feminine features in the novel for example, at the first of the novel, Robert Walton begins the journey to undiscovered lands, "I am going to unexplored regions, to 'the land of mist and snow,'" (2010, p.46), "You will smile at my allusion, but I will disclose a secret. I have often ten attributed my attachment to, my passionate enthusiasm for,

the dangerous mysteries of the ocean" (2010, p.67). "Mystery", "ocean", "water", and "unexplored" are attributed to female aspects. Cirlot says, "passivity has the feminine principle" (2001, p.78). It is the first chapter of the novel when Frankenstein created the monster, he used to call, "hideous quest". "I stepped fearfully in: the apartment was empty, and my bedroom was also freed from its hideous guest. I could hardly believe that so great a good fortune could have befallen me, but when I became assured that my enemy had indeed fled" (2010, p.132). It seems as if the monster contains some feminine characteristics, but he is not able to remain hidden so much, "A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch" (2010, p.43). Monster is used to appear when it is dark and moon lightening in the sky. Both darkness and moon attribute to feminine, "A flash of lightning illuminated the object and discovered its shape plainly to me; its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the filthy daemon, to whom I had given life" (2010, p.98). It may, the monster tries to diminish the overwhelming patriarchy in the society with the female aspects. It is why the monster makes Frankenstein's world full of fear to substitute for his role, "My person was hideous and my stature gigantic" (2010, p.72). "Eco-feminism is a response to the perception that both women and Nature have been devalued in Western culture and that both can be elevated and liberated through direct political action. The earth is being dominated by male-controlled industrialization, technology, and science. Women are being dominated by the complex of social patterns called capitalist patriarchy - in which men labour in the marketplace and women labor in the home" (Warren, 2011, 39).

In patriarchy, nature, animals, and women are objectified, hunted, invaded and colonized, owned, consumed, and forced to yield and produce (or not). This violation of the integrity of the wild, spontaneous being is rape. It is motivated by fear and rejection of life and it allows the oppressor the illusion of control, of power, of being alive (Collard, 2008, p.56).

This gigantic stature is the stature of patriarchy and now, Frankenstein like women should be in the hide. It is because that monster asks Frankenstein to be in his service and he creates a female monster, "What I ask of you is reasonable and moderate; I demand a creature of another sex, but as hideous as myself; the gratification is small, but it is all that I can receive, and it shall content me. It is true, that we shall be monsters, cut off from all the world; but on that account, we shall be more attached to one another. Our lives will not be happy, but they will be harmless and free from the misery I now feel. Oh! My creator, make me happy; let me feel gratitude towards you for one benefit!" (2010) Like ecofeminists, the monster tries to live in peace beside "a creature of another sex" Ecofeminism generally introduces the similarities between women and nature in terms of fertility, peace-seeking, creating unity, and finally, they compare it with the man and the existing contradictions "(Longenecker, 2007, p.59). The monster's asking for a female character's approval, and the pacifist ecofeminist groups pay attention to the very special structure of women's creation that seeks to further protect and preserve nature and the environment. They seek peace and tranquillity between different people.

Additionally, Shelley prefers to show the monster with female features such as absence, passivity, darkness, silence, etc. "A flash of lightning illuminated the object, and discovered its shape plainly to me; its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the filthy daemon, to whom I had given life (p.83). The monster used to be silent. In the first scene after his creation, he is not able to speak even when he appears he is in the hide. "He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks" (Shelley, p.59). Like the water or sea that is the setting of the novel, the monster also has dual attributes, male and female. The sea (water), as seen in myth, has two faces: both the manifestation of life, and creation and the manifestation of destruction and death; both of them cause the survival of man and others It is a creature and it floods, and it becomes the sea and it swallows human beings. Besides, the monster appears when the moon lightens in the sky and the moon is conceived feminine. Ecofeminists simultaneously consider the duality of man and nature as well as the duality of man and woman. They seek and simultaneously defend woman and nature and they destroy the domination of man and nature at the same time. There are some relations between the sea, moon, nature, and monsters. Ecofeminists believe that women have a greater understanding of nature for a variety of reasons they are closer to nature. The common feature between women and nature is one of the important reasons that make women that have a greater understanding of nature than men; for example, fertility, care, nutrition, and upbringing are common in women and nature. According to what was said in the dual confrontation between man and nature, more emphasis is placed on the confrontation between men and nature throughout history. The conceptual or cultural/symbolic interactions that ecofeminists believe between woman and nature have existed throughout history and they are also found in myths. In this sense, Zonana believes,

Not only does she assert that what has been regarded as "body" is also "spirit," but she criticizes hierarchical dualism itself, insisting that Western culture's valuation of "spirit" over "body," "Man" over "Nature," "masculine" over "feminine" is a destructive philosophical commitment. In doing so, she approaches the perspective of contemporary ecofeminists. Who asserts not simply that women and nature have souls, and thus have rights, but that the devaluation of the body inherently found in Western culture is problematic. (Zonana, 1991).

3.6 Monster's Wandering

In her novel, Shelley has given special prominence to the dual aspects of men and women, they are also some connections between the indigenous beliefs based on myths and legends, the link between women, the sea, and godlike creatures. Women are close to nature and sensitive, they respond to environmental changes, and differences in their view of nature compared to men. It is the beliefs of the ecofeminists that emerge in Frankenstein's novel. It is a species that can change the duality of man/nature into men/nature. Shelley says, "Was man, indeed, at once so powerful, so virtuous and magnificent, yet so vicious and base? He appeared at one time a mere scion of the evil principle and at another as all that can be conceived of noble and godlike. To be a great and virtuous

man appeared the highest honor that can befall a sensitive being; to be base and vicious, as many on record have been, appeared the lowest degradation, a condition more abject than that of the blind mole or harmless worm (Shelley,1818).

Furthermore, the sea and monster have two different faces, they have either a kind or an angry face in proportion to human behavior. Men in Frankenstein's novel try to overcome the sea rage. The different conditions of the sea are comparable to the temper of the monster. When the sea is furious, the monster is also angry, and ecofeminists' view of men's relationship to anger and peace may change. Feminine identity and acceptance of compassion and kindness and more softness and tenderness of women cause them to change their positions when they are angry or they are at peace. It is why the monster's feminine features erase and substitute with masculine ones, it is why the monster took suicide after killing everybody, especially his creator, Dr. Frankenstein. "'But soon,' he cried with sad and solemn enthusiasm, 'I shall die, and what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct. I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; the winds will sweep my ashes into the sea. My spirit will sleep in peace, or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus. Farewell.'" As he said this, he sprang from the cabin window upon the ice raft which lay close to the vessel. He was soon borne away by the waves and lost in darkness and distance" (Shelley,1818). In these lines, the monster's anger appeases and he turns into the sea mother and he seeks death to return for his lost peace. The desire to die is based on the negative, feminine aspects. Due to ecofeminists, women's experiences are fundamentally different from men's experiences. In this view, the problem is not the difference between men and women, but, instead of valuing and cherishing the gendered cultures and propagating the feminine experiences, they despise them.

4.CONCLUSION

Ecofeminists want to change the world into a better and safer place and they only pave the way for the dominance of females over the world. Shelly's novel is the manifestation of her dream, she is used to showing the presence of feminine features in the natural elements. Even the male characters of novel have both features of men and women. As a matter of fact, Shelley try to show the readers that the presence of women is very visible and overwhelming in the patriarchal society of Shelley. As a result, Frankenstein creates monster, Frankenstein has made him out of one gender. In this sense, he follows Christian belief in Jesus Christ's birth, because he was born by one gender. It was what God wishes. This also refers to the creation of Adam, monoester says, "Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed.'"(Shelley, 2010)

Like ecofeminists, Shelley knows and believes that if all the women join in nature and take control of the world, it is the time when the world will live in peace and tranquillity. Ecofeminists express the different views on women's relationship with nature. Some of them consider this closeness of women to nature as due to the biological structure of women and they believe that women have a unique responsibility for the health and survival of nature and the care of the planet. Many emphasize the unity of women and nature, Shelley's attribute to nature is not just an attempt

to join and become one with it. According to the ecofeminist view, the main issue is not men, but men's social norms which affect how men are motivated to think and behave. In this sense of Ecofeminism, men can be enabled to the wider support and to blame and condemn, it transfers men to an environment for the traditional environment, it promotes the traditional masculine ideals. If the real issue, cultural norms, and social behaviour are learned by them, there is no reason why these norms should not be changed, to live at peace, it is the world that Shelley's novel also seeks.

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