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MOOSE, FOOSE and FAMOSE

by Judy Grahn, Ph.D.

Archeomythology, a genre defined by Marija Gimbutas, catches the imagination by ordering multiple sets of findings from the Neolithic into a single origin story. That an origin story rests in the Sacred Feminine is what makes it news. Poets and mythographers, Jungians and many indigenous people and the grassroots Goddess movement have all put forward female origin stories; but they did not have archeological input or scientific standing. Origin story has been an integral part of archeology but until archeologist Marija Gimbutas the underlying Western story consisted of what I call Male-Only-Origin-Story-Example (MOOSE).

By crossing into other fields, which she lists as history, folklore and mythology, Gimbutas has tied the physical evidence of past civilization to the narrative folklore of its present or recent past. This deepening of story to a prehistory 25,000 years long has a number of uses. By using archeological techniques of turning fragments into motifs - in mythology - she emerged with physical evidence for story itself. It is possible to see how story evolved from physical enactment of major life and idea themes.

Because she brings mythology to bear on her archeological findings, her work emphasizes the sources of how we come to place credence on one story over another. Her methodology also highlights that in science just as surely as in religion, we rely on mythology to make sense of knowledge. We are fortunate that Gimbutas had such a rich unsuppressed folklore from which to draw her own motherlode of feminine story. This strain had not disappeared under the weight of male-only-origin-story, instituted by church, state and literary media within historic times in the geographic region of her investigations.

Thus she mined two previously untouched streams of culture with Neolithic roots; the one in clay from deep underground, the other out of official sight in the tales told round winter kitchen tables or whispered in Lithuanian church yards, and taught to her as a child. Since much of folklore is vested specifically in women's culture, this body of materials is in a sense an "archeology" of women's narratives. In matching the two disciplines of folklore and archeology, Gimbutas produced an extraordinary contribution: Female-Only-Origin-Story Example (FOOSE).

All of archeology makes use of origin story, and story for the most part works from the premise of telling originations. Origination story usually sets consciousness in a context of time, place and cause-and-effect or other relationship. The grammatical structures of Latin languages set events in the context of time and space through tense and adverb; and of course also forces gender choice along binary lines. The subject as creative force is rarely "it" or "them"; hence creation story has been gendered. The major creation stories have been MOOSE.

To give an example, Louis Leakey caught both scientific and popular imaginations not only by the antiquity of his skull findings at Oldovai Gorge. All due credit should go to the Leakey family and other archeologists who have demonstrated human origins as African. However, the story to which his fragments immediately became attached was already deeply entrenched as gendered: male hunters created culture. Imaginative tales of cave men and mammoth hunters in the icy slopes of ancient Europe had become doctrine by the time Leakey postulated that the crushed skull of Oldovai Gorge was a result of prehuman male aggression; the vast entrenched panorama of male-only origin story was receiving one more example of its “truth” - the oldest known physical evidence that warfare and aggression is the root of our humanity and our use of stone tools.

Leakey’s argument rested on his belief that the broken skull had to have been caused by a deliberate forceful blow. Let’s for a moment consider that crushed skull from the point of view of two female narrators, Gimbutas and myself. Suppose that instead of the Leakey family, we found that skull fragment. While Gimbutas’ story rests on women’s “life-giving” properties, especially of birth, mine rests on the connection between menstrual cycles and the moon, and hence on the “menstrual mind” - a set of relationships - as formulator of culture.

Marija Gimbutas uses the word “symbol” for the motifs in the goddess figures she both studied and unearthed. I use the word “metaform.” I consider my term to be a contribution to and a furtherance of the discourse on origin story inclusive of the female that Gimbutas has led. Metaform, briefly, means an embodied or enacted idea with menstruation at its base. While menstruation per se is not an overt theme

for Gimbutas it is covertly present in her many references to female moisture, streaming, flow and energy swirls.

In my imagining of Gimbutas' version the skull was female, and the act of aggression was by a barbaric male member of a barbarian group. The males were overpowering a more advanced, peaceful, female-led group, who had already created complex culture, and were being taken over by the simpler, aggressive, male group (FOOSE: Female-Only-Origin-Story-Example). Gimbutas thought Old Europe consisted of matristic, agrarian communities characterized by complete absence of weapons of warfare or of fortifications. She hypothesized that invasions by "less civilized" horse-mounted, sky god worshipping "Kurgan" (barrow-building) people destroyed the thousands of years long reign of the peaceful Mother goddess culture. Her critics point out that the story of barbaric cultures over-throwing civilizations is no longer credible to historians. Nevertheless Gimbutas' work highlights powerful imagery of the sacred feminine through the Paleolithic into the advent of agriculture in the Neolithic, in large regions of the European peninsula.

In my metaformic version the skull was not crushed as an act of aggression. The skull was crushed as a blood sacrifice. The force of the blow was not anger or a fight over territory; the intent was to kill the victim quickly, "humanely," since the person was not an enemy, but rather was cherished. The purpose was metaformic, to make the victim's blood flow so it could be equated with the flow of menstrual blood and therefore become connected to the lunar cycle and other female-centered ideas. In my version, either sex could have delivered or received the blow, though at least

one would probably have been male, as the purpose of the rite is to teach males to entrain with lunar and other cycles and thus become encultured human beings.

In Leakey's (et al) origin story, only males participated: men crush other men's skulls for male purposes, territory, sexual competition, using alleged "innate aggression" and this creates culture in the use of stone tools.

In Gimbutas' version, females first created culture and then invading groups of marauding males made war on them, usurped and replaced them; the reasons she cites for the peaceful cultural development are the "life-giving" properties of females, and the awe these were given by related males.

In my version, the gender of both the victim and the stone wielder are unknown, but at least one is male, because the assumed purpose was the artificial inducing of blood flow; since women flow blood naturally, artificially inducing blood flow was for the benefit of the males, to entrain them to the primary metaformic culture as it was developing. In this teaching to men of ideas contained in women's *r'tu*, (a Sanskrit word meaning both ritual and menstruation), even if both participants were male the underlying purpose of the act rests on the bedrock of women's *r'tu*. This is Female-And-Male-Origin-Story (FAMOSE).

Note that in my story version "aggression" is not accepted as a fundamental biological innate human trait leading to culture either formative or barbaric. Rather, my metaformic story implies that what we now understand as male aggression and blood lust has its roots in imitations of female *r'tu*, and therefore is a construct of our peculiar human formation. Both aggression and the woman-killing relations that sometimes exist between the genders are explained in terms of a cultural dialectic

rather than as biology or innateness. The essentialism (about women's innate peacefulness and men's innate aggression) of both Leakey's and Gimbutas' stories are thus turned on end, and a new relational element is added: the bond of blood that is common to both genders, yet accessed differently.

Necessity to witness or experience for themselves blood flow leads to the creation of the use of flint weapons for men; they did this to keep pace with women's developing ideas, embodied as Metaformic entrainment with natural cycles. And for that matter, necessity to display blood-based ideas to men and boys leads to development of cutting tools by women. Metaformic FAMOSE does not imply that males created tools "first," or created a stone clobbering instrument "first" or created anything at all without the participation of women and women's ideas.¹

Then what of aggression and the measuring of testosterone levels? But glands evidently are sensitive and interact with story. Words spoken and written easily evoke tears, even sobbing. Sexual arousal urgently requiring orgasmic release is a frequent result of certain tales. Women of various cultures report that discussion of menstruation can bring on an unexpected period. So too testosterone correlated aggression must result from mythic reality. What we construct as "real" follows from our stories - and vice versa, as many philosopher/transformers from Plato to Marx to Jung to Louise Hay have variously pointed out.

The biblical origin story of Eden blames the Mother of humanity, Eve, for the ills and that horrific forerunner of child abuse, "original sin," but at least she is in the

¹ This is substantiated by recent observations of wild chimpanzee mothers spearing (animals) and their sons imitating their behavior.

story. In the MOOSE directly following and reacting to the origin story of Genesis, the female creative principle has no place at all, no existence. The feminine has no active principle, it is inert, an object to be carried to Paleolithic caves, lusted after, used, adored or hated, bought, traded, fought over and so on.....

Gimbutas has not only provided a Female-Only-Origin-Story Example (FOOSE), she is also the first person to back a FOOSE story with physical evidence. She bases her argument in the sacralization of the female body and of women's work, especially in the fertile productions of the body: of pregnancy, of milk, and "flow." She sees in the icons of female figures holding certain creatures a link between women and nature, natural in general. I do not see this, or at least, I frame it differently. From metaformic standpoint, the connections between women and nature are always cultural connections and contain cognitive content. Gimbutas believed this as well but by framing so much of her argument in terms of female fertility she de-emphasized female conscious mind and contributions to ritual. She also discounted the masculine as an integral part of cultural creation story.

Meantime MOOSE is the primary story line in the West, unfolding and grabbing center stage for twenty-five hundred years, unchallenged except for Gimbutas and a few mythologists who have seen clues similar to those used by her in her folklore studies.

The horns of MOOSE clash and argue, creating the illusion of variety. In the fight between Christian biblical literalists and secular humanists, everything at issue remains MOOSE. Ideas of Darwin and even Marx while challenging literalist interpretations of biblical mythology yet are two versions of the same story.

Biblical belief established as “real” the myth of exclusively male creation principle. That in monotheism the deity is gendered as only male is the basis of MOOSE in secular theory as well. Darwin and Marx grew from this male root following the Reformation - the doctrine by which everyone can interpret the root MOOSE creation myth for himself. Both Darwin and Marx even though tempered by Engel’s discussions of “early matriarchies” establish rationales for the myth that human males alone have created culture.

Darwin’s contribution to MOOSE was his provision of the idea of evolution toward the greater good by means of competition over scarce resources. Since competition is considered a masculine characteristic, “survival of the fittest” (the current doctrine of biological sciences) is a MOOSE myth. This is very much a materialist ideology: the prehuman ape evolved into human by means of aggression, competition, survival of the fittest and innate, genetically endowed “intelligence” (by which is meant qualities displayed or believed to be displayed primarily by certain classes of males). Social Darwinism grew and inevitably continues to grow directly out of this MOOSE, which also establishes and reinforces a racialized and economic caste system. This myth teaches that the more material culture a man or group acquires the more superior and evolved he/it is considered. Thus the myth is self-proving.

Marx developed his theory of dialectical materialism as a corrective for the gross social inequalities of early capitalism as men followed the dictum, “survival of the fittest” and acquisition of material wealth as a sign of superior quality of life. Although he had access to information about female-centered social institutions of

the Iroquois people (through Engels and Louis Henry Morgan) Marx, along with Engels, saw the matriarchies as a primitive form which fortunately - in their view - were overthrown and replaced by patriarchies that went on to higher evolution and material civilization. The dismissal in both Marx and Darwin of religion as a useful or desirable social form is a reflection of the degree to which they were challenging, successfully and at cost, the biblical story of origins.

From a Metaformic point of view, religion not only provides myths of origin (in most cases patriarchal and therefore archaic myths). Religion also provides food for emotional and sensory intelligence. Religion provides ritual, and its repeated gestures of lighting a flame, standing in a circle, drinking red fluids, blessing with water, being rebirthed, and so on, replicate some of the oldest human gestures, all of which are deeply related to women's menstrual rituals. This sensory history, which could be millions of years old, alone accounts for the powerful bonds that draw women in particular to religion, even when the origin story being told is one that directly leads to their oppression by the men in their lives, or female as well as male members of the families into which they have married.

To return to Marx, by concentrating on the idea of physical "need" and material well-being as motives for existence, his ideas continued MOOSE and justified belief in it. Human beings evolve culture to fulfill material "needs" this version says. The reason we developed culture was to provide ourselves with certain essential bodily necessities. The belief in physical "need" as the prime motivating force of culture is a Marxian foundation, and leads directly to competitive "survival of the fittest" philosophy, and also to the idea of the supremacy of mankind over

animals - since they are, by definition, “too unintelligent” to develop material culture, and hence along with the rest of nature, part of the raw material of production.

Darwinian/Marxian MOOSE is so pervasive a belief I want to take time to give a counter example or two that seem to me to directly contradict both “material need” and survival of the fittest as motivations of human development. “Material need” is a justification for industrialization; one “needs” a coat in cold weather, though in utter contradiction to this a number of cultures discovered by Europeans in the nineteenth century displayed no such characteristics. The Panamanian hunters dressed in casual hides flung over the shoulder without so much as a button much less a seam, in one of the world’s more chilly climates at the tip of South America. Heavily clad in woolens, the “settler-invaders” tried in vain to bring in from the cold people who appear to have reveled in their nomadic lifestyle. Another striking example of how culturally and ritually bound we all are, whether we acknowledge this or not, is the archeological story of the Vikings who settled in Greenland, and starved all the way down to eating their cattle and then their dogs—all the while surrounded by the richest fisheries in the world, on which their Inuit neighbors had lived for millennia. Perhaps eating fish was taboo - hardly a materialist value. My point is one the hard working anthropologists have revealed repeatedly: we humans are not what we think we are. There are many kinds of reality on this earth.

Let me be clear, the brilliant ideas of both Darwin and Marx have fed into Metaformic Consciousness. But they are also still telling a MOOSE story. The application of both Darwinism and Marxism (especially when “fittest” is misinterpreted) forces class categories and conflicts, since by definition those without complex material culture, especially of “use” or “need,” are considered stupid or at best “underprivileged”; while those classes and cultures that excel at collecting and producing stuff are by definition considered “privileged” and constant efforts are made to “educate everyone” to be “smart” and “advanced” enough to collect excesses of material culture. In the encroaching environmental crisis different origin stories may provide a different set of answers.

Freud added the individual’s own inner and personal life experience and relationship to the body, especially to the phallus, as his contribution to MOOSE. Little boys have something more, little girls envy them. This MOOSE is so well-accepted that even a prominent woman biologist has described the clitoris, not as large and unique and the only organ specifically orgasmic in function, but rather as a “vestigial penis.” That is to say, not only do males differentiate critically from the “feminine” in order to individuate, women do this as well! A friend told me a story illustrating how artificially induced the concept of “penis envy” of little girls is: Her three year old niece began crying after the girl’s mother explained to her that a boy has a penis and a girl does not have one. Responding to the inconsolable sobbing, her mom elicited a tearful explanation, the injustice that little boys get to have “peanuts” while she did not get to have any “peanuts.” Therein lies the power of story. And the power of inequity.

We are surrounded by MOOSE myths, from the classic “taming” of the West as a shoot out between two or more men to the marketing of women’s cooking and healing traditions as if they were invented by U.S. marketeers: Bayer aspirin, Budweiser Beer, Coca Cola, and Colonel Sander’s Fried Chicken. Our society holds to the myth that acquisition is “necessity”; the myth of random chance in evolution; the myth of oedipal complex; the myth of the withering away of the state after communism forcefully gains power and redistributes goods; the myth of intelligence as the ability to retain and regurgitate abstract vocabularies and patterns; and all the myths of race, class, and gender characteristics; the myth of a single “building block” of the universe; the “big bang” theory; the mind/body split; and a variety of materialist myths about the nature of time, of spirit, of how the mind is constructed, how the body “operates.”

We live in a sea of MOOSE. Gimbutas is our first usable raft.

With her brilliant combining of both archeology and mythology Gimbutas has created the first FOOSE that uses materialist evidence. This particular combination is why hers is such an important myth for our time. She knits together two forms that have been separated. Hard science and mythology are not even in the same schools, departments or buildings in our college system. They are split the way the mind/body is split. Few scientists admit or perhaps think about how thoroughly origin myth informs their theories, shapes and directs the nature of their inquiries and enables the popular imagination to grasp, admire and use their conclusions. So authoritarian and exclusive is materialist MOOSE that it has used its narrow vision to nearly destroy the word “myth” itself. The popular media, emulating science leaders,

uses the word myth to mean lie or fantasy. This furthers the illusion that one single story is true, is the only possible version.

While my theory differs from Gimbutas' in important ways, it can also be seen as a descendent/daughter of hers, not in the way I constructed it (without her) but rather in a historic sequence. She gives us a solid foundation of female imagery from the distant past, and a marvelous emblematic language underlying European culture. Also helpful to me is that she emphasizes "female moisture" as a major motif, so menstrual themes are - at least implied - in her work. That her theory of female deification rests so squarely on metaphors of birth and supposed awe toward this, and that her portrayal of the Kurgan people as though they were male barbarians mounted on horseback gives her work a more woman-only focus than might otherwise be true, and makes it FOOSE. Men haven't enough to do in her "matristic" ideal world except wait for their barbarian entrance waving overhead the sinister flags of sky gods and authoritarianism (hierarchy).

What I mean here is that Gimbutas' brilliant theoretical work leaves us without a dialectical tension that can explain evolutionary progress and interaction without dismissing entire peoples as "the bad guys who destroyed what was good." And, while her work leaves women identifying with their bodies, their birthing, and the earth, and these are wonderful and refreshing perspectives, and we should welcome them, at the same time the singular focus in this direction also leaves women outside the realm of "sky gods" and nomadism, and all the amazing contributions of hunter-raider-warrior peoples. The Kurgans after all, were, like everyone else, Metaformic.

But the sheer variety of her findings and her deciphering of a language of symbol and motif in imagery and incised geometry on the icons of Old Europe give us a way to stand outside MOOSE and differentiate ourselves from it. And then to formulate new origin stories that are at the very least more gender inclusive (swallow MOOSE and FOOSE with FAMOSE) to guide us into the next era.

If we live in a sea of MOOSE and Gimbutas is our first raft, my metaformic theory is new land in a new place.

One reason men frequently think that women make no contribution to culture is that they see the vast strata of women's contribution as "nature"; and they see this because their own MOOSE philosophers have taught them that the basis of development is "material necessity." So they think that women's accomplishments of home, hoe, and hearth are somehow "natural" when they actually required the most primal and startling originality.

FAMOSE teaches that the purposes of all culture were fundamentally the holding of ideas: consciousness, in conjunction with both "material necessity" and the rituals we now call "religion" created culture. Necessity may be the mother of invention, but not of creation. Metaformic thinking is the mother of creation.

My metaformic theory is not the only FAMOSE, of course. Much of womanism is seeking FAMOSE as community, and all pagan pantheons are rooted in FAMOSE; the creation stories and rituals of many indigenous peoples have richly FAMOSE content.

However, to the extent that these are local or antiquated myth and ritual they cannot compete with global MOOSE with its vast myth and image producing media

and the formidable resources and persuasive power of the corporate-owned hard sciences with which to exert belief systems.

That MOOSE is being challenged as much as it is, is a tribute to both feminism with its ongoing seeking for new stories, and people of color pluralism, such as the surfacing to public knowledge of indigenous stories and rites.

Gimbutas' FOOSE and Metaformic Consciousness are both promising as challenges to MOOSE because their theoretical basis rests on science. In my case, as anthropology, archeology and ethnography effectively spill out more accurate information they contribute to Metaformic Theory, which continues to deepen. Yet Genesis is also Metaformic.

Blood is a more universal human experience than almost anything.

Blood rites are related to consciousness, to rites of passage and to transformation of all kinds, our group identities and to our deepest national and personal motivations.

Metaformic theory is not Eurocentric; it draws its examples from commonalities of every different human culture and every person's relationship to culture and lineage. By making careful politically and culturally sensitive uses of anthropology, ethnography, mythology and folklore coupled with electronic group-self-reflection (say, through groups making videos of themselves) we could see cultural self-and-other examinations become not "big" but grand "little" science of the twenty-first century.

Metaformic theory says that what differentiates humans from animals is menstruation and its connection to a clearly visible exterior cycle, the lunar cycle.

Not that creatures do not have intelligence but that human intelligence is specifically Metaformic.

Menstrual rites pulled human consciousness into being. Two nonmaterial necessities are in effect: necessity of the female gender to teach menstrual consciousness to the nonmenstruating males; and necessity for males to display, use and re-reflect their understandings of consciousness. They did this by developing their own blood rites and seclusion rites. The results have been cultural artifacts and practices that “contain” our ideas.

In seclusions women sat, lay or stood in sometimes difficult but nevertheless meaningful postures, shunned men and sex, ate simply and developed utensils. These practices came from ideas about separating hands or other parts of the body from the numinous blood. Menstruating women in their seclusion rites developed body arts, shapes and protections which have become human clothing and cosmetics, and were or even are still credited with awesome capacity to influence natural forces in village life.

In reflecting their own comprehensions of these mysteries, males excelled at public display, developed their own clubs, engaged in grandiose bloodsheddings and became big storytellers.

This dynamic is why so much of humanity appears to have two strata: a female private strata (thought of as nature) and a male public strata (thought of as culture). Both strata are culture if we understand that all distinctly “human” behavior is based in menstrual and other blood rituals.

Metaformic theory teaches that women's culture, the first strata, originates in the containing of consciousness rather than in material necessity. Thus, women gatherers of the ancestral past did not "need" to bring early cultigens home and garden them; this was additional effort, done for the purposes of ritualizing consciousness. Many of the substances carried home to serve as red dyes for ceremonies were originally inedible or poisonous. Some ritual processes such as heating, salting or mixing with other substances enabled them to become edible. Gradually they became the most important foodstuffs for the later economic development: agricultural and industrial people. Such cultigens as potatoes, yams, the major grains, carrots, cola, tobacco, turmeric, saffron, chile, honey, olives and so on were first valued for metaformic purposes - chiefly as red dyes or red paste which could be used for menstrually-based performances of cosmological ideas, ideas that tied men and women together and tied both to plants in ritual relationship.

According to this theory, women were first attracted to little red beans metaformically, and only later roasted them for eating. We see that women first had peanuts.

Metaformic theory promises to be dynamic rather than static, and to posit a dynamic interaction between the genders that propels us in our evolutionary spiral. Sometimes men are predominantly driving new cultural forms, sometimes women are. Always there is a dialectic tension between them that will force the next wave.

Metaformic theory is inclusive, both genderwise and cross culturally; it is relational rather than competitive, and describes some essentials of why we behave in the bizarre and un-animal like ways we do. According to my metaformic theory,

war and aggression are not the central creation principles; they are one disbalanced evolution of male imitations of menstrual rite. Unlike Gimbutas' FOOSE theory, which relegates these male-developed arts to the nefarious netherworld of "barbarian sky-god worshipping" hoodlums, FAMOSE metaformic theory appreciates the cultural contributions and technological accelerations that, in the last few hundred years, were consequences of war. However, warfare has evolved to the edge of the abyss of nuclear annihilation. Even at its "best" wars are vendettas against civilian populations and leave a generation of veterans and masses of others with shattered psyches. We can glorify it no longer. And what is battle basically if not a parallel menstrual rite of passage, a sacrificial rite, for late adolescent boys? To get their heads shaved, eat simple foods, go without sex, stand and sit in prescribed uncomfortable postures, bond with each other, act on behalf of the whole, and shed blood. Can we not imagine better puberty initiations that stop short of violent bloodshed?

The phrase "against casting" refers to a recent mass media method of assimilating nonmale, nonwhite groups to MOOSE. A MOOSE myth, such as the shoot out that perpetually tames the West, features two, usually white, men firing bullets at each other until the designated "bad" one dies. If the main hero is suddenly cast as a female or a dark man, this is called "against casting". In a Civil War film, "against casting" an African-American man as a judge is historically inaccurate, but helps assimilate African-American people to the traditional MOOSE myth. This also makes the teaching of history an exercise in continually revising revisions but never changes the MOOSE plot.

MOOSE myth has led us into serious social problems. Men batter women in part because they are taught they need to be in control of society, since they or a god just like them invented it. In some groups, men taunt each other for failing to “control your woman.” MOOSE religious leaders teaching that god is male and controlling, enforce this code of male “honor.”

Racial and class-based caste systems flourish for lack of FAMOSE myths and rites, which are inclusive of everyone as part of sacred and interactive creation story. Under MOOSE, dark and poor peoples, but especially dark young men are socially constructed as a shadow side of elite white psyche. Liberal white social policy arranges for many dark young men to be outside the “legitimate” economy, angry, alienated and violently expressive. Conservative white social policy polices this behavior by arranging for this group to be publicly imaged, punished, confined (in latter day seclusions) and frequently ill-treated, which keeps the cycle—a blood cycle—spinning. Someone needs to say that both policies are inherently racist and classist. FAMOSE asks, “Why does elite white society *need* a socially enacted shadow side?”

We need now “against writing” and theories of new rituals, the production of non-shoot-out methods of creating and maintaining societies. Women get tired of the ways men bleed, yet continue in shame to hide the peaceful bleeding and its peaceful ritual potential.

Origin stories direct the courses of societies. The new electronic loom of the internet and television visuals are direct results of MOOSE efforts; but used

democratically as we whirl into the next millennia the media should be an instrument for replacement myths that are FAMOSE, FAMOSE, and more FAMOSE.

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