

A Search Beneath the Surface: Analyzing Farrington's Case Again^{*}

Hee-Whan Yun

I

Schematic approaches to James Joyce's "Counterparts" have attempted a thematic connection between the three scenes—i. e. Mr. Alleyne's legal office, Dublin pubs, and Farrington's home—on a certain day in Farrington's life. Such readings successfully point to the incremental repetition of Farrington's anger, repression and frustration, from scene to scene, as time lapses on the same day. Even the gnomonic reading, which underlines the duplication of power-ideology in various discourses such as class, gender, and sections of Ireland under British colonial rule, does not stray beyond such a mechanical interpretation which categorizes Farrington's story as one of entrapment, disappointment and futile gestures in *Dubliners* (Weir 348). Following such readings, we easily identify the collection's many Farringtons, for instance, Corley and Lenehan in "Two Gallants"

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and Little Chandler in “A Little Cloud,” and Tom Kiernan in “Grace,” to name a few. To lump the protagonist of “Counterparts” with them is to trace him from the outside, following his speech, actions, and gestures as narrated. Such a grouping doesn’t recall Farrington fully, nor does it show his deep motivations and responses to his plight. Thus, here analyzed is Farrington’s inner life: his secret desire and repression, aspirations and disappointments. Such an approach balances our understanding of the fictional personality because much has been observed about Farrington from outside. To grasp a character from within, while lacking narrational information, is a tentative process. We therefore must be perceptive to silence, ellipsis, sighs, glances, subtle tones, and unsaid and half-said thoughts. We read between the lines creatively to plunge beneath the surface into an overall, sympathetic grasp of the main character, whom I would argue is no simple alcoholic.

II

Many critics see no other options in summing up Farrington as a chronic alcoholic. Circumstantial evidence betrays that from the first line to its end he is never wide awake. One suspects his inebriation even during work hours. If no one is born an alcoholic, then Farrington’s uncontrolled drinking developed, and I suggest tentatively his job as a copyist may have caused his disease. Farrington, unlike such jobless street denizens like Corley and Lenehan, has a decent job in downtown Dublin. Unlike those leeches who survive by deceiving the lowest of the social hierarchy, the slavey, Farrington has married and fathered three boys.

That he works in Mr. Alleyne’s legal office, a Protestant firm, together with professional colleagues of English background (i.e. Miss Parker, Mr. Shelley, etc. (Brown 290)) means Farrington was able enough to be hired. His boss is a man with a “North Ireland accent” (*D* 82), as well as a different religious denomination. He works as a scrivener, copying legal documents or contracts in long-hand

because, as Brown points out (274), typewritten documents were not legally binding. Though Farrington's job is legally important, what he does day in and out is to copy. He is simply a "human Xerox-machine" (Henke 32), so to speak. Unlike colleagues who bear the drudgery, Farrington can hardly endure. One line powerfully betrays his innermost entrapment.

All the indignities of his life enraged him. . . . (D 86)

That Farrington feels anger about his life shows that he longs for alternatives, i.e. a decent life. His existential state (i.e. his work, family, finances, etc.) is bereft of dignity he dreams of. The essence of Farrington's overall discontent, I would argue, is occupation.

For a man of "tall [height] and of great bulk" (D 82), sedentary, repetitive work may have been tortuous. He needed a work, more appropriate to his physical mass (Ingersoll 99). Farrington writes in anger "*Bernard Bernard*" instead of "*Bernard Bodley*" (D 86). Such repetition is a metonymy for Farrington's tedious job and the vicious circle of his life. At this point, readers of Melville are well reminded of another scrivener in the 19th century New York, whose copying job leads to his eventual demise. To understand how monotonous, repetitive work causes Farrington's gradual breakdown, we might briefly consider *Bartleby*. In the employment of the narrator, a Manhattan lawyer dealing in mortgages, deeds, and bonds, *Bartleby* appears skillful, producing a large volume of high-quality work. One day, though, when asked by the narrator to help proofread a copied document, *Bartleby* gives what soon becomes his stock response: "I would prefer not to" (Melville 337). For awhile *Bartleby* stays at his main work of copying but eventually ceases this as well, finally doing nothing. At last, the narrator discovers *Bartleby* has died of starvation. Evidently he preferred not to eat. The narrator learns that *Bartleby* had worked in a dead letter office but lost his job there. The narrator reflects that the stray dispatches would have sunk anyone of *Bartleby*'s temperament into deepening gloom. Through *Bartleby*, the narrator glimpses the

pointlessness the miserable scrivener must have known.

For a man of lively imagination like Farrington, the solicitor's firm may have been a "dead letter office" to Bartleby. Unlike Bartleby, who gradually declines to work, simply repeating "I would prefer not to," Farrington attempts his duties while drunk. However, he finds he just cannot bring himself to his toil. His frustrations are threefold. First, his mind is too cloudy to focus on copying. "Five times in one day" (*D* 85), the chief clerk complains, Farrington slips out of the office for drinks, and his hangover persists, one would suspect, all day. Second, he is summoned by Mr. Alleyne and scolded for failing to complete the Bodley and Kirwan document by four o'clock. In addition, the boss even warns Farrington of his excessive lunch time. We suspect Farrington spends the one and a half hours to drink more. Third, Farrington well knows he cannot make the deadline, try as he might. Pressured from all over, Farrington is a time bomb: "The barometer of his emotional nature was set for a spell of riot" (*D* 86). Mentally, emotionally and morally disoriented, he cannot bear his situation soberly. Caught, not knowing who he is, what to do, or where to go, he feels the necessity of alcohol: "He felt that he must slake the thirst in his throat" (*D* 84).

The story's title "Counterparts" suggests Farrington's copying job is neither creative nor self-fulfilling. To interpret the title as signifying pairs of interacting characters, for instance, employer and employee, father and son, husband and wife, or two competitors in an arm-wrestling contest, is tempting. But the title can also mean a written copy. Furthermore, the word suggests that in his work Farrington is "merely a replaceable cog in a mechanical operation" (Scholes 384). That Farrington is no more than an expendable employee is confirmed when Alleyne threatens him with firing at any time: "You'll quit this, I'm telling you, or you'll apologize to me!" (*D* 87). Scholes goes on to remark that Joyce invites highly engaged reading exemplified by "counterparts" (387). Searching for the real Farrington beneath the narrative surface corresponds to Scholes' suggestion. Varied interpretations are invited because Joyce never explicitly, definitively refers to the title. In post-structuralist terms, the title becomes a "floating signifier" (Slethaug

647), deferring continuously textual clarity. Going back to my argument, Farrington's meaningless copying, as well as his instability in the firm, deepens his feelings of alienation, exhaustion and disappointment.

Farrington, a functionary in British colonial era Dublin, exemplifies capitalist production, as Georg Lukács elucidates. Following Lukács's diagnosis of modern working conditions, we deplore Farrington's alienation from his own labor, which transforms him into a listless, contemplative being.

As labour is progressively rationalized and mechanized, his lack of will is reinforced by the way in which his activity becomes less and less active and more and more *contemplative*. The contemplative stance adopted towards a process mechanically confirming to fixed laws and enacted independently of man's consciousness, and impervious to human intervention, i.e. a perfectly closed system, must likewise transform the basic categories of man's immediate attitude to the world: it reduces space and time to a common denominator and degrades time to the dimension of space. (89)

Lukács describes the process whereby individual workers lose control over the production and reproduction. Like Joyce's other characters, Farrington is in this powerless state a human subject throughout the narrative. Farrington tries to copy, or reproduce, legal documents but finds he cannot strive in such a drudgery. The "[t]ime-bound orderliness of the office" exasperates him (Frawley 100). Blind repetition, as Heller puts it, is the temporal equivalent of living death (26). He continues his human functions, and his activity is "displaced into certain kinds of false consciousness" (Williams 1989, 438). Yes, Farrington persists, but not as an active worker in the office but as a day-dreamer in his private world. To remain in such a hypnotic state, Farrington needs continuous alcohol to defer his encounter with reality (Williams 1991, 432). Via alcohol, Farrington successfully dodges the reality, and ignores deadlines coming that very day. When reality threatens, "[h]e felt that he must slake the thirst in his throat" (*D* 84).

That day, reality confronts Farrington again and again. He hears how far behind

schedule his work is. Mr. Alleyne reprimands him for not finishing the Bodley and Kirwan document by four o'clock. The boss obliquely notes day-time drinking by referring to his overlong lunch. With time running out, Farrington feels desperate with "still fourteen pages to write" (*D* 86). Then, Farrington is asked to submit the Delacour case before half past five. Far from giving his all to complete, Farrington submits the copy with two letters missing. Abandoning his duty as a legal copyist, Farrington vainly expects his mistake to be undiscovered by Mr. Alleyne. Next, the chief clerk mentions Farrington's frequent flight from the office for drinking and asks him to attend to his work. Farrington, reproached in front of two male clients, feels chagrined. Finally, Mr. Alleyne, noticing the incomplete Delacour case, furiously abuses Farrington in front of his colleagues and Miss Delacour. Instead of admitting his wrongdoing, Farrington lies, sparking a heated argument between the enraged employer and the shameless employee, humiliating Farrington.

Man's complexities are all connected. His body registers the malfunction of his booze-soaked mind. His feelings reach the point of irrevocable outburst. Pouring out repressed anger and frustration, Farrington keeps muttering "Blast it!" Longing to scream, smash anything with his fist, blurt out with his tongue, he is ready to "rush out with his legs and revel in violence" (*D* 86). Farrington targets his fury on Mr. Alleyne's hairless head, "like a large egg reposing on the paper (*D* 82)." The boss' head looks like a "polished skull" (*D* 83), the narrator describes. The employee stares "fixedly" and, we sense, desires to strike that fragile egg to truly reveal the "skull." Farrington transforms Mr. Alleyne into a "manikin," and likens the latter's anger to "a dwarf's passion" (*D* 87). Mr. Alleyne's dehumanization occurs in Farrington's imagination. Examine this point, "the inverse relationship of power" (Weir 349) between boss and worker. Farrington, a big man, possesses great strength, yet is powerless. Mr. Alleyne, a small man, possesses effective power. Farrington's compensation for powerlessness is achieved by picturing his fist descending upon the boss' head.

Farrington's other compensation is his heated language. When questioned about the two missing letters, Farrington pretends he knows nothing about it. Inflamed by

Farrington's irresponsibility, Mr. Alleyne feels ridiculed: "Do you think me an utter fool?" (D 87). Farrington's abrupt retort proves the *coup de grâce* to the boss.

—I don't think, sir, he said, that that's a fair question to put to me. (D 87)

Farrington's response is worthwhile quoting because he repeats this verbal victory to his friends from this point on. Superficially polite, Farrington's reply actually mocks the validity of Mr. Alleyne's question infuriatingly. Farrington falls unaware into a verbal riot. His tongue, out of control, utters what it should not to the boss. Was this a "felicitous moment" (D 87), as the narrator states? Unlikely; the victory is false because power structure between the two men is not overturned. Farrington repeats his "temporary, rhetorical triumph" (Williams 1991, 432) to flatter himself. His false consciousness still possesses him and denies an accurate view of reality.

The same day, punctuated by Farrington's defeats and disappointments, witnesses two elegiac, contemplative moments when he evaluates his situation reasonably. He becomes contemplative, watching the cashier passing out, and trying in vain to extract an advance. He knows well that his impertinence would make his workplace "a hornet's nest" (D 88) because Mr. Alleyne, he frets, would grant him not an hour's rest. Farrington genuinely regrets not holding his tongue, and curses his life as "a hell to him" (D 88). Such contemplation is only half realistic because his life is fully hellish already. He can fall no further than now. The next moment of meditation comes when Farrington, spending all his proceeds on pub-rounds, stands sullenly awaiting his Sandymount tram for home.

He was full of smouldering anger and revengefulness. He felt humiliated and discontented: he did not feel drunk; and he had only twopence in his pocket. He cursed everything. He had done for himself in the office, pawned his watch, spent all his money; and he had not even got drunk. He began to feel thirsty again and he longed to be back again in the hot reeking public-house. He had lost his reputation as a strong man, having been defeated twice by a mere boy. His heart swelled with fury and, when he thought of the woman in the big hat who had brushed against him and said *Pardon!* his fury nearly choked him. (D 93)

Self-reflection by a character regaining subjectivity comes rarely in the collection. Such a moment sobers Farrington, leaving no hangover. Self-awareness of his utter failure, however, leads nowhere, for he has nowhere to seek resolution. Defeated, discontented, humiliated, even revengeful, Farrington thirsts at this very moment of self-recognition. He longs for the public-house as guarantee of self-forgetting. Here Farrington can boast, without sensing his mask is fake.

That evening, Farrington duplicates his verbal triumph over Mr. Alleyne to linger in self-deception. Farrington embellishes his sharp retort to the boss: "As he walked on, he preconsidered the terms in which he would narrate the incident to the boys" (*D* 89). To glorify himself, Farrington wraps his story in bigger words. He omits that he was forced to apologize to Mr. Alleyne by calling it "abject" (*D* 88). A narrative omission rescues Farrington so that readers never hear his excuse, "abject" or not. His story is rehashed to Nosey Flynn. The third is to O'Halloran and Paddy Leonard. The fourth is made by Higgins, who works in Farrington's office. This vivid performance of Mr. Alleyne at a loss evokes uproar among them. For surrogate satisfaction, Farrington and his friends keep recounting Mr. Alleyne's defeat. Such verbal "copying" of the scene betrays that Farrington survives on the periphery. Powerless, he simply imitates the speech and action of his boss who holds real power. It is only a matter of time before Farrington craves further aggrandizement and is disappointed at Davy Byrne's (Leonard 180).

To interpret Farrington's defeat by Weathers at the trial of strength (arm-wrestling) as one more example of his disappointment that day is tempting. True, the loss enrages and humiliates Farrington, defeated twice "by a mere boy" (*D* 93). To lose his fame as a strong man feels unbearable. But to reinterpret Farrington, the arm-wrestling loss, like the inflated, regurgitated story at Davy Byrne's, shows that Farrington and his comrades' existence is barren, crude and futile. Whenever queried about assignments not done and mistakes made, Farrington never faces them head on. Instead, he lies and makes pretexts. Worse, he longs for "the comfort of the public-house" (*D* 88), even during work hours. If Farrington were a copyist worth his salt, he would have proven his professionalism by completing his

assigned documents within the deadline. He might have shown manliness, not by physical strength, but by carrying out the duties set before him by the modern, industrial society. To push our argument one step further, why Farrington cannot cope with his work when his colleagues (Miss Parker, Mr. Shelley, Higgins, etc.) silently bear their loads? The first-half of this paper pinpoints the cause of Farrington's alcoholism in his career choice, i.e. copying legal documents. Also, I pointed out Farrington's instability as an employee replaceable at any time. The second-half of this paper, however, suggests that he failed to adapt to a mechanistic workplace that is less than creative, challenging, or rewarding.

Whenever Farrington faces the reality, feels savage and vengeful, he imagines "a good night's drinking" (*D* 83). His senses are sated, blunted thereby: "He felt his great body again aching for the comfort of the public house" (*D* 88). His mind wanders toward hot punch in "the glare and rattle of the public-house" (*D* 86). An inveterate alcoholic, his case is pathological. Ironically Farrington never gets drunk in the pub. He and his friends keep swapping copied stories theatrically, standing rounds amid the din of chatter and glasses at the Scotch House. As long as money and alcohol flow, festivity reigns (Williams 1991, 431). What hinders Farrington's complete drunkenness? First, standing rounds repeatedly depletes his funds. Recall, he has pawned his watch-chain for just six shillings at Terry Kelley's. His limited budget constrains him. Second, Farrington feels mooched upon by friends: "If there was one thing that he hated it was a sponge" (*D* 91). Third, during the drinking party, new, different sort of desires awaken. Sexually aroused, he hasn't enough money to gratify his need. He curses himself for wasting his money all evening. Deferred sexual gratification frustrates him again. Leaving the pub, Farrington feels more infuriated and curses all.

Farrington's sexual frustration prepares readers for his last home scene. Man is a sexual being, and we trace Farrington's titillation repeatedly that day. Farrington, returning to the office after a g.p. at O'Neill's, senses "a moist odour of perfumes" (*D* 85) following him all the way to Mr. Alleyne's room. He identifies the woman from whom the aroma emanates, Miss Delacour, even before encountering her in

the boss' office. A wealthy Jewess, Miss Delacour is Mr. Alleyne's sweetheart. Farrington's inebriation, we assume, might be heightened by her aroma but she, the boss' lover, is untouchable. Like the rich, voluptuous Jewesses who fascinate Little Chandler in "A Little Cloud" (*D* 78), her exotic fashion (the great black feather in the hat) might have stirred Farrington's desire. Smoothing the handle of the umbrella, she mesmerizes him. Since an "umbrella" means a "condom" in Italian, Miss Delacour's caress of her umbrella insinuate Farrington, Mr. Alleyne, or both. Read this way, Miss Delacour's perfumes, black feather and umbrella can be metonymic highly charged with sexual implications. Frawley also points out the umbrella's "phallicisms" (98). Miss Delacour's smile at Farrington's smart retort to his boss might have made the moment more "felicitous" (*D* 87) for the former, maddening the latter.

Farrington's masculinity is bolstered by the six shillings from the pawn shop. He looks at office-girls passing by, perusing "with proud satisfaction" and stares "masterfully" (*D* 89). Farrington's dwarfed, emasculated ego in the office power-play reasserts itself, enriched by "pawned" proceeds. He feels proud to afford his objects of desire. Of course, that is his secret, momentary, unrequited fantasy. Farrington feels mildly disappointed at the Scotch House when O'Halloran kicks him out when the latter, together with Leonard, goes for "some nice girls" (*D* 90) whom Weathers would introduce to them. He excludes Farrington, a married man, for whom the desire for Weathers' *artiste* girls is "stigmatized as illicit" (Ingersoll 105). Finally, Farrington finds alluring a young woman of outstanding beauty at Mulligan's:

There was something striking in her appearance. An immense scarf of peacock-blue muslin was wound round her hat and knotted in a great bow under her chin; and she wore bright yellow gloves, reaching to the elbow. Farrington gazed admiringly at the plump arm which she moved very often and with much grace; and when, after a little time, she answered his gaze he admired still more her dark brown eyes. The oblique staring expression in them fascinated him. She glanced at him once or twice and, when the party was

leaving the room, she brushed against his chair and said O, pardon! in a London accent. He watched her leave the room in the hope that she would look back at him, but he was disappointed. (*D* 91)

Evidently, Farrington is strongly attracted to the London lass. Not only the metonymic signifiers of his desire (i.e. muslin scarf, hat, bright yellow gloves, etc.) but details of her body catch his eye. Her plump arm lures him. The more she moves it, it seems, the more Farrington is aroused. Half-drunk, Farrington fancies her cognizance of glances. His sexual desire reaches climaxes when she brushes against his chair while exiting. How tantalizing Farrington! That she didn't respond to his final look, however, betrays that he may have just imagined her interest. Again, he presumes if he had enough money, he could spend the night with her but that wish, too, is not validated. Farrington's desire escalates and frustrates him incessantly.

Late that evening Farrington is home. Home, where loved ones find basic creature comforts like food and shelter, offers him neither light nor fire nor food nor anyone in its dark interior. Ada Farrington has gone to chapel. "He loathed returning to his home" (*D* 93). Warmth, hot drinks and friendly talk of the public-house have been Farrington's alternative home all day. Even his way home, he "longed to be back again in the hot, reeking public-house" (*D* 93). A caring wife, who sees to every family member's comfort, makes home warm and cozy. Ada is out at night, not returning during the narrative. A woman who bullies her husband when he is sober presumably, she cannot gratify Farrington sexually that day. To interpret Farrington's violence to Tom, his son, as an inversion of Farrington's impotence at work, and as another version of the arm-wrestling contest at Mulligan's is tempting because all are "analogous situations of power-driven behaviour and hopeless predicament" (Frawley 68). Might we say that the day's rage and frustrations are, as Henke puts it, all paid for by Tom, the only one subject to the humiliated man's fury (33)? Far from it. Deeper than that, Farrington, I would argue, feels no hunger. That there's no food for him and the fire is out doesn't anger him. His dysfunctional home exasperates him. His office and home

are the indignities of his life. Morning to night, loss, shame and ire dog him but he finds no balm.

III

“Counterparts” is a clinical account of Farrington, a Dublin alcoholic. Scene by scene, we sense being there, watching Farrington, and we come to schematize his predicament. Yet we cannot comprehend Farrington without sympathy. Simply following his emotions, we are apt to judge him as simply a severe alcoholic. This paper, however, delves beneath the narrative into Farrington’s ego: subtle changes in tone and mood, nuances of glances and sighs, and thoughts half-said, unsaid, and silent. Such a perceptive reading would, one hopes, unveil his inner wants and goals, blows and rage.

To lump off Farrington with other jobless, penniless, alcoholics in *Dubliners* and write him as a social failure, unsuited to be a legal scrivener, is easy. Farrington, however, can hardly be understood without accounting for his drudgery as Lukács analyzes it. Lukács’s modern man alienated from production and reproduction gradually deactivates and contemplates. Amazingly, Farrington’s working conditions exemplify what Lukács expounds in his examination of modern industrial man. A man of imagination and great bulk, copying legal documents all day led to Farrington’s gradual decline and enslavement to the bottle. He is booze-soaked at work, and he longs for more drink in the evening, without ever completing his copying tasks. Hence, Mr. Alleyne’s verbal abuse. For Farrington, no sharp division between work and play exists. His cloudy mind wanders public-houses even during work hours. Farrington’s alcoholism simply blurs reality, prolonging his self-abandonment. Does his pub-crawling genuinely fulfill him? Far from it. Farrington’s recounting of his verbal skirmish with Mr. Alleyne betrays his true weakness as an employee. He cannot feel fully drunk either because his “pawned” proceeds are too meager. He also feels stymied when he cannot gratify

his sexual desire for want of funds. On the periphery “willfully” controlled by false consciousness brings Farrington no resolution.

He ponders his fate with little contemplation. Unfortunately, his reflexive moments suggests no practical rescue. Consider three issues. First, the more he recalls his mouthing off at his employer, the more regret he feels out of worry for his future employment. Second, when he realizes there's not enough money to buy a woman, he regrets squandering borrowed money to treat his friends with drinks. He feels “sponged” on by them, which he detests. Third, Farrington's sexual arousal has been thwarted several times on the same day. His libido rises on meeting Miss Delacour, office-girls in the street, and the young *artiste* from London. Gratification of his masculinity is denied again and again for lack of money or power. At the narrative's end, we therefore see Farrington cursing life's indignities and all those around him.

Farrington's violence at home reminds us no caring, sheltering home softens his marginal existence. Even the public-houses Farrington resorts to, seeking succor, can hardly relieve his restlessness. Mentally, false consciousness controls Farrington. Financially, he lives on “pawned” money. Emotionally, alcoholic haze protects him. Morally, he lacks willpower. In his vicious circle of life, Farrington has lost touch with himself. He avoids knowing who he is, has no place to return to, and is unwilling to work. Only his sensation of despair, vexation, degradation humiliation, and damnation abides. The beginning of this existence we don't know. Its end must be soon. That all we feel confident in Farrington's thwarted life.

(Kangnam University)

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Abstract**A Search Beneath the Surface:
Analyzing Farrington's Case Again**

Hee-Whan Yun

Thus far, most readings of “Counterparts” have been schematic, analyzing Farrington’s action and reaction in the three main scenes (i.e. office, public-house, and home) from the perspective of an exchange power-play of between the powerful and the powerless. Such a reading, however, does not show Farrington’s inner life. This paper plunges into Farrington’s subconscious, and detects his deep hopes, desires, anger and despair. I also put Farrington’s case in the context of working condition in modern, industrial society, as Lukács explains. Farrington’s job as a copyist vividly shows a worker alienated from his (re)production, who feels no control of his world. Meaningless, monotonous, daily copying work, I argue, suggests at least one reason why Farrington has reached mental inertia and alcoholism. Unable to cope with dreary schedule, Farrington falls far behind. His inability at work leads to his unwillingness to try. He escapes into intoxicated day-dreaming. Farrington marks time, not as a willful subject but as one controlled by false consciousness. Such a blinkered life, locked in forgetfulness, instead of facing reality, worsens his situation. His ever increasing level of negativity alienates him from his office, home and even the pubs he resorts to. He vaguely recognizes his problems but simply drifts without stirring because he envisions no escape.

■ **Key words** : Farrington, alcoholism, alienation, anger, frustration, false consciousness, social failure

(패링턴, 알콜중독, 소외, 분노, 좌절감, 허위의식, 사회적 낙오자)

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