Prose and Passion in *Howards End* and *Mrs. Dalloway* เหตุผลและจินตนาการในฮาวเวอร์ดสเอ็นด์ และมิสซิสดัลโลเวย์

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บทคัดยอ

บทความชิ้นนี้เป็นการศึกษาเชิงเปรียบเทียบแนวคิดเกี่ยวกับนวนิยายสมัยใหม่ของ เวอร์จิเนีย วูลฟ์ และ อี เอ็ม ฟอร์สเตอร์ โดยเสนอว่าถึงแม้นักเขียนทั้งสองจะมีวิสัยทัศน์ ต่อชีวิตสมัยใหม่ที่คล้ายคลึงกัน แต่เขาทั้งสองใช้กลวิธีทางวรรณศิลป์ที่แตกต่างกันเพื่อนำเสนอ วิสัยทัศน์ดังกล่าว จากตัวอย่างนวนิยายสองเรื่องของนักเขียนคู่นี้ ได้แก่ *ฮาวเวอร์ดส เอ็นด์* ของฟอร์สเตอร์ และ*มิสซิส ดัลโลเวย*์ ของ วูลฟ์ เราจะเห็นได้อย่างชัดเจนว่า ในขณะที่งานของ ฟอร์สเตอร์ยังคงอิงอยู่กับกลวิธีการนำเสนอในขนบของวรรณกรรมแนวสัจนิยม งานของวูลฟ์ จะทดลองใช้นวัตกรรมทางวรรณศิลป์แบบสมัยใหม่

Abstract

The article is a comparison study of Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster's concept of modern fiction. Despite their similar vision of modern life, they employed different novelistic devices to convey such vision. To demonstrate this, the article examines two representative novels of these authors, namely *Howards End* by Forster and *Mrs. Dalloway* by Woolf. In these works, it can be seen clearly that while Forster continues to rely on realistic literary tradition, Woolf embarks on modernist literary innovation.

Among the great modern British novelists in the early twentieth century, E. M. Forster and Virginia Woolf resemble as well as differ from each other. Both were brought up in the "intellectual aristocracy" family. They belonged to the same intellectual circle, the Bloomsbury group. While Forster was on the periphery of the circle, Woolf was at the center of it. Besides being highly acclaimed

novelists in their time, they were also essayists, biographers, book reviewers, and literary critics. While Forster's career as a novelist was brief when compared with his long writing career, Woolf continually experimented with a new form of the novel one after another until her death. Both upheld the value of interpersonal relationship and the importance of spiritual life as opposed to materialism.

Nonetheless, they differed greatly in their use of forms and techniques to express their similar vision.

Forster and Woolf were aware of these differences. In her famous essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Woolf, while excluding Forster from the Edwardian novelists such as John Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett, and H.G. Wells, complained that Forster still used old methods to convey new vision. "Such, I think, was the predicament in which the young Georgians found themselves about the year 1910. Many of them I am thinking of Mr. Forster and Mr. Lawrence in particular spoilt their early work because instead of throwing away those tools, they tried to use them. They tried to compromise." (Woolf, 107). For Woolf, "the tools", the realistic conventions in fictions, fail to depict life as it really is. Woolf's own definition of life is that "life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end" (Woolf, "Modern Fiction." 154).

In Woolf's perceptive and critical essay, "The Novels of E. M. Forster," she again points out the discrepancy between Forster's vision and methods. Woolf admires Forster's lucid insight; however, she criticizes

Forster for confining his insight in a realistic form.

It is the soul that matters; and the soul ... is caged in a solid villa of red brick somewhere in the suburbs of London. It seems, then, that if his books are to succeed in their mission his reality must at certain points become irradiated; his brick must be lit up; we must see the whole building saturated with light. We have at once to believe in the complete reality of the suburbs and in the complete reality of the soul (Woolf, "The Novels of E. M. Forster," 167).

Woolf has no objection to Forster's use of realistic description in his works. What she objects to is that Forster fails to connect the actual thing with the symbolical meaning behind it. "Yet if there is one gift more essential to a novelist than another it is the power of combination the single vision" (Woolf, "The Novels of E. M. Forster," 166).

Foster's concept of what is essential in a novel fundamentally resembles that of Woolf. Forster, like Woolf, insists that the novel does not simply portray reality but also something beyond. Praising Dostoevsky's prophetic vision, Forster explains that:

Dostoevsky's characters ask us to share something deeper than their experience. They convey to us a sensation that is partly physical the sensation of sinking into a translucent globe and seeing our experience floating far above us on its surface, tiny, remote, yet ours. We have not ceased to be people, we have given nothing up, but "the sea is in the fish and the fish is in the sea" (Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, 134).

Both Forster and Woolf evidently use the image of light to characterize a special quality of the novel. While Forster talks about "the sensation of sinking into a translucent globe," Woolf insists that reality in the novel must become "irradiated," and be "saturated with light." Nevertheless, Forster differs from Woolf in that he would prefer to have these two elements "the actual and the spiritual" coexist in a state of equilibrium, whereas Woolf would rather have them fuse together to produce aesthetic effects.

Thus, while Woolf complains of Forster's over-meticulousness in realistic description in his works, Forster raises his objection to Woolf's ability to render characters. In his essay, "The Novels of Virginia Woolf," first published in *New Criterion*, Forster admires Woolf's insight and her

innovative form; however, he questions her methods of creating characters. He praises her creative gift to convey the characters' actual process of thinking but he feels that her characters lack dynamic dimension. Forster comments on her characters: "I feel that they do live, but not continuously, whereas the characters of Tolstoy (let us say) live continuously. And the problem before her ... is to retain her own wonderful new method and form, and yet allow her readers to inhabit each character with Victorian thoroughness" (Forster, "Novels of Virginia Woolf," 113-114). Forster and Woolf seem to agree the form must correspond with the content. Nevertheless, they have different opinions on how they should correspond. Forster admires Woolf's new form but feels that it diminishes the dimensions of her characters. Woolf, on the other hand, urges Forster to adopt a new form to embody his modern vision.

Forster's Howards End and Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway illustrate similarities in their vision and differences in their forms and techniques. Howards End with its epigraph "Only connect ..." undeniably heralded the themes of fragmentation and dissolution which prevailed largely in the literary works after the first World War, notably in W. B. Yeats's "The Second Coming" (1920) and

T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land (1922). The year the book was first published, 1910, is also significant. It was the year that, according to Woolf's bold statement, human character changed. "All human relations have shifted—those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, condepicts the problems a modern man faces duct, politics, and literature. Let us agree to place one of these changes about the year 1910" (Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," 92). Michael Rosenthal asserts that Woolf made this statement with reference to the first Post-Impressionist Exhibition at the sister describing a house filled with love and Grafton Galleries organized by Roger Fry, a prominent member of Bloomsbury Group (Rosenthal, 29-30). Nevertheless, Howards End certainly voices a grievous concern on the human predicament resulted from the rapid rise of industrialism and social disruption. Furthermore, as its epigraph explicitly suggests, the book offers a solution to prevailing problems of social and personal displacement—only connect.

The framework of the book is consisted of a series of dichotomies in

E. M. Forster, Howards End, Signet classic edition. (New York: New American Library, n.d.), p.7. Further page references to this book will

various levels ranging from the polarities between man and nature, materialism and intellectualism, man and woman, prose and passion, the seen and the unseen, all of which are embodied in the confrontation and the final reconciliation between the Schlegals and the Wilcoxes.

On the largest scale, Howards End in a time of drastic changes. A rapid rise of commercialism imposes a threat to sweep away all of human values and personal relationships. The book begins with a personal letter of a woman to her intimate warmth and located in a pastoral-like setting. However, Forster juxtaposes this pastoral with a description of London—the center of commercialism—menaced by a flux of changes in a following chapter.

One had the sense of a back water, or rather of an estuary, whose waters flowed in from the invisible sea, and ebbed into a profound silence where the waves without were still beating. . . . [The older houses], too, would be swept away in time, and another promontory would rise upon their site, as humanity piled itself higher and higher on the precious soil of London.1

appear in the text.

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Forster uses the water image here to suggest the flux of changes represented by newly built flats that will sweep away all of the human values represented by the older houses. The symbolic meaning of the water image is made even more explicit later on when Margaret complains to Henry: "I hate this continual flux of London. It is an epitome of us at our worst—eternal formlessness; all the qualities, good, bad, and indifferent, streaming away—streaming, streaming for ever. That's why I dread it so. I mistrust rivers, even in scenery' " (HE, 144).

Even more explicit than the water image, Forster uses the image of a motor car to convey a state of man being swept away in endless motion. The Wilcoxes, especially Charles, are always associated with motor cars. When first seen, Charles moves about with his car, making a stop here and there for business errands. Throughout the book, a car, like the water image, becomes a symbol of a destructive force that not only literally kills a cat on the road but also destroys human compassion. Margaret thinks of her journey by a car to Oniton: "But she felt their whole journey from London had been unreal. They had no part with the earth and its emotions. They were dust, and a stink, and cosmopolitan chatter, and the girl whose cat had been killed had lived more deeply than

they" (*HE*, 169). The car separates man from his surroundings and distorts his sense of space.

Forster, in contrast, uses images of earth and houses as antithesis to the sweeping motion of water and cars. On Margaret's first visit to Howards End with Henry by a car, the appearance of earth and the house restores her sense of space and compassion (HE, 158, 162). Ironically, the Wilcoxes, with an exception of Mrs. Wilcox, who own seven or eight houses all over England never associate themselves with any house at all. To them, the house is for to be bought, let, sublet, or sold. In fact, Henry appears to be more comfortable with hotel, with "the civilization of luggage." The Schlegal sisters, on the other hand, feel more attached to the house and recognize human values behind it. That Margaret, Mrs. Wilcox's spiritual heir, finally possesses Howards End suggests the triumph of human values over the business values.

The Schlegal sisters also differ from the Wilcoxes in their attitudes towards life and human relationship. They represent the intellectual liberalism, whereas the Wilcoxes are an emblem of commercialism. While the sisters value human compassion, the Wilcoxes manage their life on a business competency basis. A business-like manner the Wilcoxes

handle Mrs. Wilcox's enigmatic request to give Howards End to Margaret epitomizes their callousness to personal appeal (HE, 78-79). Nevertheless, Forster points out, though rather unconvincingly, that their business shrewdness helps found civilization, from which the intellectuals undeniably also benefit. The Schlegal sisters, especially Helen, on the other hand, handle everything even business matters with human compassion. Helen's involvement with Leonard resulting in her having a child out of marriage suggests the danger of completely surrendering oneself to emotions. Leonard's death is resulted from both Charles's inhumanity and Helen's emotional indulgence.

The marriage between Margaret and Henry, improbable though it may seem, is thus a symbolic act of connecting commercialism with liberalism, the head with the heart. Margaret, in fact, sets herself this task when she agrees to marry Henry. "She might yet be able to help him to the building of the rainbow bridge that should connect the prose in us with the passion. Without it we are meaningless, fragments, half monks, half beasts, unconnected arches that have never joined into a man" (*HE*, 147). Their almost collapsed marriage at the end, however, seems to suggest the impossibility of bridging this two arches. Their differences are not merely

temperamental but moralistic. "But she failed. For there was one quality in Henry for which she was never prepared, however much she reminded herself of it: his obtuseness" (HE, 148). The narrative comment made soon after Margaret agrees to marry Henry foreshadows the outcome of their marriage. The comment, however, is ironic because it is not Henry's obtuseness but his moral hypocrisy that destroys their marriage. While Margaret forgives his unfaithfulness to Mrs. Wilcox, Henry condemns Helen for having a lover. That their marriage does not break up at the end offers no hope for their moral integration. Henry yields to Margaret not because he accepts her moral stand but because he cannot function competently any longer as he admits to his wife, "I'm broken—I'm ended'" (HE, 264). At the very end of the book, we also realize that Henry's outlook remains unchanged. He still attributes Mrs. Wilcox's wish to give Margaret Howards End to her fancy and whim. Henry cannot and will never be able to connect.

It is Margaret and Helen who have changed, who have been able to make a connection between prose and passion within themselves, if not between different people. Forster's principle of "only connect" seems to work well only at an individual level. It is true, as Crews points out, that Helen

shares many traits of characters with Henry, their differences are only that they go into the opposite extreme. "Helen and Henry together are people who isolate and simplify rather than allowing their imaginations to play across a broad range of related circumstances" (Crews, 120). However, Helen comes to accept a variety of human aspects and personal relationships at the end. Her admitting to liking Henry shows her willingness to connect, if not between Henry and herself, between what Henry used to stand for, prose, and her own passion. After Margaret preaches about the necessity of "eternal differences" in life, Helen makes a symbolic gesture in response. "Helen took up a bunch of grass. She looked at the sorrel, and the red and white and yellow clover, and the quaker grass, and the daisies, and the bents that composed it. She raised it to her face" (HE, 267). Helen's holding multifarious grass implies her embrace and recognition of eternal differences which foresees her ability to connect.

At the very beginning of the book, Margaret already shows her recognition of the variety aspects of human life. She accepts the world in which the Wilcoxes live and admits that their business ethic has its own virtue. Margaret's skepticism to Helen's tendency to substitute one form of art with

another—music with literature, painting with music—also suggests Margaret's recognition of eternal differences (*HE*, 31). Like arts, each person has his/her own distinctive characteristic which should not be simply dismissed but recognized and respected.

Margaret's problem thus is how to connect these eternal differences not only between Henry and herself but also between the prose and passion within herself. In trying to bridge the gap between Henry and herself, Margaret has undergone many changes within herself. Although their marriage fails to connect them together largely due to Henry's adamant callousness and self-righteousness, Margaret is able to connect her own prose and passion within herself. While retaining her human compassion and sympathy, she also acquires business competency that enables her to pull both families together after Leonard's death. Helen's compliment at the end is not far from truth. "But you picked the pieces, and made us a home. Can't it strike you—even for a moment—that your life has been heroic? Can't you remember the two month's after Charles's arrest, when you began to act, and did all?" " (HE, 268). To act and accomplish something has never been a distinctive characteristic of the Schlegals. Margaret has finally succeeded in connecting prose and passion.

Howards End explores various aspects of human predicaments in a time of drastic changes and adjustment. It touches upon the social issues, the class conflicts, the sexual liberation; however, in the final analysis the book concerns primarily on the personal relations and individual salvation. "Personal relations are the important thing for ever and ever, and not this outer life of telegram and anger" (HE, 137). Here Helen expresses not only her own idea but also the book's premise.

When we turn to Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, we also find that the themes of personal relations and an attempt to connect prevail prominently. However, while Forster explores these themes by the use of plot and actions, Woolf examines them at a deeper level—the human consciousness. In a strict sense, the book has a loosely-knitted plot. The only two major events in the book are Clarissa's party and Septimus's suicide. Nevertheless, by revealing the working of characters' consciousness, Woolf portrays how the characters are striving to come to term with their lives, to integrate themselves with others, to connect their past with present.

The struggle to connect the past with the present and to combine each fragment of life into a meaningful entity is best shown in Clarissa. For Clarissa, the party represents more than just a meaningless social gathering. It signifies her attempt to come to term with her life no matter how meaningless her life may appear to be. During the day she repeatedly reminds Peter and her daughter to "remember my party tonight." In a superficial sense, Peter may be right to complain that Clarissa gives a party just to satisfy her female vanities, to pose as a successful hostess (MD, 183). However, Clarissa perceives a deeper meaning of her party. "And she felt quite continuously a sense of their existence, and she felt what a waste, and she felt what a pity, and she felt if only they could be brought together, so she did it. And it was an offering; to combine, to create; ... " (MD, 185). Giving a party is thus Clarissa's attempt to connect not only between different people whom she has known but also to connect her past and present. The death of Septimus and the appearance of Peter and Sally, who had tremendous influence on Clarissa in the past and have loomed largely on her mind during the day, provide Clarissa a chance to look at her whole life in a proper perspective and with a better understanding.

² Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, Harvest edition, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1925), p.72. See also p. 191 where Clarissa repeats the same words to her daughter. Further page references to this book will appear in the text.

Throughout the book, Clarissa constantly struggles between the desire to preserve her own individuality and to gain public recognition. She refused to marry Peter because "with Peter everything had to be shared" (MD, 10). Yet her marriage life with Richard somehow has reduced her to "being Mrs. Dalloway, not even Clarissa any more" (MD, 14). Also she feels wounded when Lady Bruton did not ask her to a lunch party. Moreover, she always projects herself as a perfect hostess giving a successful party, standing at the top of the stairs like the Queen (MD, 25). Clarissa's dual desire is depicted in her last interior monologue by presenting her two opposing thoughts occurring simultaneously (MD, 280-284). While thinking of Septimus throwing his life away in defiance of the intrusion of the external pressure, she also thinks that "she would have to go back, the rooms are still crowded; people kept on coming" (MD, 280). The setting of this section also reflects the contrast between the polarity between private and social life. Clarissa retreats from the party to be alone in a small room contemplating about the death of a young man whom she has never met or known. By connecting herself with Septimus, Clarissa has come to understand her life better. She is ready to go back to the party to the social life, while remaining aware of her private self.

Clarissa's mind also struggles between the past and present. Throughout the day she has been continuously thinking about her past and present. Her mind moves back and forth between incidents in the past, especially her love affairs with Sally and Peter, and the actual present—her party in the evening. Woolf's use of interior monologue to reveal Clarissa's consciousness intensifies the state of confusion in Clarissa's mind. Past and present are almost indistinguishable. Her vivid memory of the past very often supersedes the reality of the present. Although Clarissa repeatedly tells herself that she loves "this moment of June" (MD, 5), "here, now, in front of her" (MD, 15), her mind keeps going back to the past as if she could not distinguish between past and present. While constantly striving to grasp the sense of the clock time, she often submerses herself into the past. Clarissa's confusing sense of time lies in the fact that she cannot connect between past and present. She wants to live in the present; however, her present unhappy marriage always evokes her to yearn for the happy life in the past. As Susan Dick points out, "This continual return to the past emphasizes the characters' awareness of the fugitive present. To remember is to confirm one's mortality. This is the darker side of memory, the side that Clarissa tries to ignore. When she thinks of her death she

assures herself of a kind of immortality by assuming that she will be remembered" (Dick, 187).

Septimus exemplifies "the darker side of the memory." While Clarissa lives in a fluctuation of past and present, Septimus lives entirely in the past and is virtually unaware of the present. He cannot tell his wife the time, when asked (MD, 106). The death of his best friend, Evans, becomes more real than what is going on around him. Finding no connection between past and present, Septimus only exists in a traumatic past. He commits suicides in order to preserve his past and to deny the cruel and inhuman present imposed on him by doctor Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw.

Peter, on the other hand, strongly resists to be reminded of the past. When Clarissa keeps talking about their past, he is thinking: "Stop! Stop! He wanted to cry. For he was not old; his life was not over" (MD, 64). The past for Peter means death. Although his mind, evoked by the meeting with Clarissa, keeps going back to the past, he tries to resist it by concentrating on his present, and looking forward to future (MD, 75). His made-up pursuit after the girl walking on the street is his attempt to live in the present and to forget the past. More-

over, the working of Peter's mind always separates past from present. Thus, in Peter's recollection of the past, we are constantly aware of the separation between past and present. "As a child he had walked in Regent's Park—odd, he thought, how the thought of childhood keeps coming back to me—the result of seeing Clarissa, perhaps; for women live much more in the past than we do, he thought' (MD, 83). Peter, unlike Septimus, tries to forget his traumatic past and wants to live only in the present. 'Life itself, every moment of it, every drop of it, here, this instant, now, in the sun, in Regent's Park, was enough" (MD, 120). By denying the past, Peter does not see his failure, nor does he understand why Clarissa rejected him. Refusing to connect past with present, Peter repeats his mistake by falling in love with one woman after another as a surrogate of his love for Clarissa.

Of these three characters—Peter, Septimus, and Clarissa—Clarissa alone can finally perceive the connection between past and present. Her meeting with Peter and Sally at the party and the news of Septimus's suicide enable her to distinguish and connect between past and present.

They (all day she had been thinking of Bourton, of Peter, of Sally), they would

grow old. A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closures drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death (MD, 280-281).

There is a note of acceptance and recognition of the passage of time in Clarissa's thought here. Peter has changed and so has Sally. They are no longer the same Peter and Sally she knew in Bourton. On the other hand, Septimus's suicide in order to preserve his past encourages her to retain her memory of the past. The party thus enables Clarissa not only to gather people together but also, in a deeper level, to assimilate between her private and public life, to connect past and present, and to reconcile between her death wish and her love of life.

Mrs. Dalloway differs from that in Howards End not only in degree but also in kind. In Howards End there is a strong moral overtone in the necessity of connection between the materialists and the intellectuals.

In Mrs. Dalloway, however, Woolf is more concerned with a metaphysical question. The book tries to answer the question of what is life rather than how to live.

These two books also differ in the use of a narrative voice and structure. In Howards End the narrative voice conspicuously provides comments, directions and explanations for the reader, whereas the narrative voice in Mrs. Dalloway is minimum and hardly heard. In Aspects of the Novel Forster insists on the necessity and the importance of a narrative intervention in a novel. "We are stupider at sometimes than others; we enter into people's mind occasionally but not always, because our own minds get tired, and this intermittence lends in the long run variety and color to the experiences we receive" (Forster, Aspects, 81). Forster further explains that there are two types of the narrative voice: a chatter and a commentator. He cites Fielding and Thackery as examples of the chatters who discuss their characters with the reader. This type of a narrative voice, Forster points out, "is The principle of "only connect" in devastating, it is bar-parlour chattiness, and nothing has been more harmful to the novels of the past." (Forster, Aspects, 82). He cites Hardy and Conrad as examples of the commentator who generalize about the universe and conditions under which their

characters live. However, in *Howards End*, the narrative voice functions in both instances.

In Mrs. Dalloway, Virginia Woolf most of the time presents us with what is going on in the characters' mind with minimum intrusion from the narrator in order to portray her characters as realistic as possible. Woolf mistrusts the use of a commentator in the novel. "I believe that all novels, that is to say, deal with character, and that it is to express character—not to preach doctrines, sing songs, or celebrate the glories of the British Empire, that the form of the novels, so clumsy, verbose, and undramatic, so rich, elastic and alive, has been evolved" (Woolf, "Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Browning," 97). The different use of a narrative voice in Howards End and Mrs. Dalloway thus derives from the different concept both authors have towards a novel.

The structure of these two books also differs. Howards End basically follows the traditional form of a novel. It tells a story in a chronological order. It has a plot which is schematized to convey the antithesis between the commercialism and liberalism. Many incidents are contrived in order to fit the premise of the book. In his interview to Paris Review, Forster admits that certain

incidents are contrived e.g. Helen comes down to Howards End (Writers at Work, 29). Mrs. Dalloway, on the other hand, appears to be without form and structure at all. The book simply records what is going on in one day in London. The formlessness of the book and the disconnectedness between characters, however, reinforce the theme of human isolation in the book. Furthermore, out of these seemingly formlessness and disconnectedness, Woolf creates the rhythm and pattern of the book by using repeated phrases, leitmotif, and symbols. The underlying pattern thus confirms the major theme of the book. Although life seems to be meaningless and chaotic, man can attain harmony and achieve serenity. In Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf seems to fulfil her own intention to create a new form that can best express her vision.

The differences of these two books themselves reflect the polarity between prose and passion. In *Howards End*, we enter into the well-defined world with a help from a guide who inexhaustedly moralizes and rationalizes everything that takes place in that world. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, we plunge into the endless flux of life and are overwhelmed by a poetic expression and enchanting beauty of life. *Howards End* stimulates our intellect; *Mrs. Dalloway* enlightens our soul.

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