



STUDY THE AESTHETIC ASPECTS OF GOETHE'S POEM

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ABSTRACT

Goethe, the prominent German poet, writer, philosopher and scholar should be regarded as a joint between the literature of Classicism and Romanticism. Some of his works belong to the classical movement and another part of his work belongs to the radical and progressive movement in German Romanticism. In fact, Goethe is known as a poet, scholar and philosopher between the two main streams in Europe: Classicism and Romanticism. He carries the ideas of Classicism and also establishes new ideas of Romanticism. Hence, in terms of aesthetics, he is considered to be among the leading theorists of Romanticism school because he has reflected many creative and pure ideas of Romanticism in his literary and philosophical works. German literature owes to Goethe's intellectual and aestheticism. This article tries to display aesthetic aspects of Goethe's poem in addition to study the literary and artistic features and characteristics of Romanticism school.

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Keywords: Poetry, Aesthetics, German literature, Romanticism, Goethe.

Contribution/ Originality

This study is one of very few studies which have investigated about Goethe and its Aesthetic poetry. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe is one of the German Poets, Writers, Philosophers, and thinkers that he should see a Joint among Classicism and Romanticism literature. Some of his works has belong to the classical movement and another part of his Works belonged to the Radical Movement Romantic is in Germany. He is a Harbinger of the Classicism Ideas and Thoughts and to establish New Ideas of Romanticism Movement. Thus, in terms of aesthetics, he is one of the leaders Romanticism Movement in Germany.

1. INTRODUCTION

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, an author whose frequent maturity and pretty creative can be flourished in every arena, was born in the free imperial city of Frankfurt, next to Maine in 1749. He was a very lucky person for receiving intellectual trainings and living in a growing environment

(Giri, 1998). He worked for a short time in his hometown after finishing law at Leipzig and Strasbourg. He was invited to visit Karl August, Duke of Weimar Sachs due to his fame as the author of successful and controversial play (Reed, 1995).

In the same year, Goethe along with artists such as Johann Gottfried von Herder and Friedrich Schiller, who influenced him so much, was known as German leaders of a literary movement born in the late eighteenth century and containing the seeds of Romanticism in it. This movement insisted on the rejection of many contracts (Giri, 1998). With the publishing of *Götz von Berlichingen*, a historic drama in Shakespeare's style, Sturm und Drang movement was begun in German literature. It was a youth movement, the youth, for youth, which aims to advance to its end, to reject all traditional disciplines and institutions in art and in society. Actually, the teachings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau supported the movement (ibid: 17).

However, Rococo (a tributary of the artificial baroque) can be named as the first work of Goethe. Then, the era of 'melee and effort' arrived (Sturm und Drang: a pre-romanticism resulted in the authorship of Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* and Werther and Friedrich Schiller's *The Robbers*). The Goethe's romanticism began after that with the creation of *Iphigenia in Tauris*, if can be called so, in 1779. Goethe, who was regarded as a national celebrity at that time, turned to Classicism in the middle of his long life, called Romanticism a radical movement, and defended the balance of Classicism.

This age ended by Goethe's productive travel to Italy in 1787. He experienced a sort of re-birth and acquired a new perception of full balance with reflection on the sun burnt beauties and considering all the arts of the South. Torquato Tasso's dramas, *Hermann and Dorothea* (that is the only successful epic poem in Europe after *Paradise Lost*), and *Remy requiem* are the results of Goethe's efforts to overcome the remiss art and ideas of younger years. The text of *Iphigenia in Tauris* depicts Goethe's initial understanding of tragedy (Secretan, 1996).

Indeed, artists like Goethe have 'two forces higher than the average, sensual life and intellectual life; the two force make him revolutionary and begin a confusing and even less realistic force tending towards the future. As Goethe announces, there is arrogance and audacity trait in every artist on which laid the growth of every talent. Arrogance is risen due to the twosensual and intellectual forces; they are the largest and most powerful stimulant of life in any artist' (Mann, 2000).

Goethe engaged in writing all through his life and tried to create literary and philosophical works from the endless source of his genius. This resulted in the authorship of two masterpieces in the classic German literature, which are still interesting and inspiring: masterpieces like *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* and *Faust*. *The Sorrows of Young Werther* is another acclaimed work. His novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, was a storm in Europe. Young men wore a blue coat and yellow pants in praise of his hero to emulate him; in England, cultural Wertherism was prevalent and Napoleon read the novel seven times.

1.1. Romanticism

Goethe was a Romantic poem. While he may sometimes criticize the ideas of Romanticism directly or indirectly, some of his most famous works are thematically included in Romantic style.

Despite its idealistic characteristics, revolutionary and social Romanticism was not far from objective issues, especially social life. Many Romantic works contains some obvious realistic and naturalistic points. Therefore, Romanticism was not replaced by Realism and Naturalism suddenly; the weakening of imaginary Romanticism and strengthening of social Romanticism paves the way for the replacement (Seyed, 2008).

With contradiction to Romantic aestheticism, Realism changed the emphasis from the artist to social and historical context and it provides the context for broad social and historical works of art, the development of critical thinking, and the continuity of Enlightenment's legacy (Ahmadi, 2011). Romanticism has retained its indestructible and lasting impact on human culture after the ebb the same as any intellectual, literary and fundamental social school. Romanticism is so important that embodies the roots of the modern world and a new era in social, economic and cultural terms (Purdy, 2015). Hauser says:

There is, in fact, no product of modern art, no emotional impulse, no impression or mood of the modern man, which does not owe its delicacy and variety to the sensitiveness which developed out of romanticism. The whole exuberance, anarchy and violence of modern art, its drunken, stammering lyricism, its unrestrained, unsparing exhibitionism, is derived from it. And this subjective, egocentric attitude has become so much a matter of course for us, so absolutely inevitable, that we find it impossible to reproduce even an abstract train of thought without talking about our feelings (Hauser, 1998; Hauser, 2005; Abuhamedh and Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

Goethe had always been unhappy from the mechanical spirit of the eighteenth century and had always spoken against this mechanical spirit in all his works. He expresses his feelings about the strict and mechanical attitude of the eighteenth century in this way:

Whenever I heard the name of the authors of Encyclopedia, or I opened a volume from many available volumes, it seems to me that we had fallen among the myriad movements of the wheels and gears of a large factory with a harsh noise bothering the eyes and senses, with incomprehensible arrangements that its components are interwoven in the most complex manner, and the kinds of things we need to make a piece of cloth while we are sick of the clothes we wear. (Cassirer, 1983)

If one considers Romanticism a great, destructive and constructive depression, it is possible to argue that the classic man could pass a critical Romantic stage and adapted to new conditions with the power of the middle class and development of industry and urbanization. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Romanticism disappears at a certain date. Most of scholars who work on Romanticism have reminded the Romantic stable elements from the post-Romantic eras to our day (Jafari, 1998).

In the early fall of Romanticism in mid-nineteenth century, the school has been criticized and ridiculed from different perspectives. However, with the gradual strengthening of realism and naturalism, artists and authors found that the proposed objectivism is not defensible and achievable

because the artists' imagination cannot be ignored in the creation of artistic works. Romanticism found a wide appeal again as a promising perspective with the popularity of the positivist, materialistic, and scientific attitudes in the late nineteenth century; neoclassical values and principles were considered as well (Zarrinkoub, 2010).

Critics and scholars have a single view of the romantic heritage and each judge differently in this matter according to his assumptions and social and literary perspectives. In general, the evaluation of Romanticism as well as many other aspects of the school has been controversial. Most important of these assessments can fit in two distinct points: some scholars have sympathy with the views of Goethe in the second period of his artistic life scholars have sympathy with the views of Goethe in the second period of his artistic life and considers Romanticism as the illness of soul; others believes that Romanticism is some sort of Renaissance and rebirth, and quite useful rebel eliminating all obsolete and deteriorated principles and resulting to the creative freedom of the mind and the soul.

The presence of a hero was an essential principle for the restless Romantic spirit. Napoleon was biggest champion in Europe and of course for the Romantics. Victor Hugo described the Napoleon's degrading retreat from Moscow in a poem named "The Expiation" and Tolstoy explained the consequences of Napoleon's war with Russia in 'War and Peace'. Beethoven's Third Symphony is dedicated to Napoleon; but after the coronation of Napoleon and clarification of his authoritarian figure, he wrote under the title of his symphony "Heroic Symphony, Composed to celebrate the memory of a great man." All the evidence points to the fact that Napoleon was indeed the embodiment of the spirit of the romantic ideal, a restless and quiet spirit that could not bear any restrictions. Goethe's Faust and Byron's Manfred are the manifestations of the Napoleonic-Romantic rebel soul that will not be satisfied with what is achievable in their extraordinary effort to fulfill impossible aspirations (Payandeh, 1994).

In any case, Romanticism crisis revealed itself in the eighteenth century in the early development of Romanticism. Peckham argues that the the earliest manifestations of the crisis revealed in the character of Goethe's Werther and the philosophy of Kant (Peckham, 2011). The spirit of age for individuals like Werther and Kant was so that they believed neither God nor nature could provide human salvation and human beings should deliver God and nature because man cannot survive without redemption, salvation and commitment to a value. Realization of this salvation in turn leads to what is perhaps the most important achievement of Kant and Goethe; in other words, artistic work was regarded as the most complete and most effective means to achieve salvation and its symbolic embodiment because artistic creation is rooted in Archetypes and the human soul; this is the only capable world to be placed correspond to external nature. In the new approach, religion is not a source of knowledge and it is assumed that the official religious idea is just a fallacy that its sophistry is beyond the understanding of intellectuals. In such circumstances, art (not religion) is the source of values and the artist (not a pastor or theologian) gives value to the world. The art also does not originate neither from the world nor out of the sky, but from the artist's unconscious mind (Peckham, 2011).

For Peckham, Romanticism underlies the formations of such a massive transformation; it provides a new support for traditional man having been wandering in the threshold for entry into

the modern era. The support, which is the deepest layers of the human being, is discovered in this age (Bacon, 2015)

2. ROMANTICISM AND GERMAN LITERATURE

The first German Romantics decided to continue the tradition having been maintained within Sturm und Drang movement, Baroque era and even religious roots of German literature. Travelling to Italy, Goethe moves against Rationalism, which had been called *Le Démoniaque*. He defined ‘*Le Démoniaque*’ as what cannot be solved by our reason. Undoubtedly, Faust is the reflection of his own life; it is an attempt to dominate it omnipotent force that is far from reason’s capacity, or it may oppose to reason. By the end of his life, Goethe considered ‘magic’ as the source of inspiration for himself in what he knew. Poetry uncovers nature’s secrets (or revealing the secrets of nature) and it employs metaphor and allegory to solve the mystery. He believed that all objects are symbols for a balance that covers our death and life. His scientific studies and researches were accepted by his contemporaries with doubt because they emphasized on mysterious facts opened to him by the nature (Alexandre, 1994).

All Romantic poets believed in the ultimate reality and wrote their poems on its basis; but they found the ultimate reality in different ways and employed it in different ways. Each poet considers the known world important and presents a particular expression for it. On the one direction, Blake believed imagination is a divine force and source of all facts. Nature provides raw material for imagination and nature will eventually be destroyed according to Blake; then, spirit is free to begin a creation independently. As long as nature exists, man derived his symbols from nature to interpret the unseen world. The real home of Blake had been placed in the world of manifestation and revelation. In this imaginary world, he witnessed transformation of sensuous perceptions by giving full freedom to his creative imagination. He thought imagination could go beyond the objects and uncover the reality behind visible aspects of them. The known world provides some clues for the hidden reality that must be followed:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour. (Bowra, 1994).

One of the most important effects of Goethe poetry was to emancipate German literature, especially poetry, from the limitations of shortsighted Academism dominated literature after the Baroque era. Afterwards, all audacity was possible. Then an accident smashed all defined frameworks: the French Revolution. This revolution was the impetus for every newborn thing in Europe, directly or indirectly and improper or proper. In Germany, new thoughts arose against the religion of skepticism and hedonism of the ruling classes; in this manner, philosophers have preemption (Alexandre, 1994).

Contrary to what the term “romantic” induces, Romantic poets not only were not oblivious to the social and political upheaval but also showed empathy in different ways. For instance, Shelley composed a poem addressing British workers and toilers as follows:

The seed ye sow, another reaps;

The wealth ye find, another keeps;
The robes ye weave, another wears;
The arms ye forge, another bears.
Sow seed—but let no tyrant reap:
Find wealth—let no imposter heap:
Weave robes—let not the idle wear:
Forge arms—in your defense to bear.

In 1804, Blake was declared guilty for “disorderly statement” and he was near to be sentenced to long imprisonment. Two years after the France and Britain war, Coleridge spoke in opposition to the policies of the British government in 1795 and it led him to the secret government security agents’ consideration. The spirit of liberty was so powerful in Lord Byron (another English Romantic poet) that he left England to help Greek military separatists who fought against the Turkish government; he finally was killed in Greek secession war while he has 36 years old (Payandeh, 1994).

2.1. Aesthetics and the Poetry of Goethe

It is notable to argue that Romanticism, contrary to common perception relates neither to flowers, butterflies and poetic view nor to fantasies and travel in the heavens. In fact, it is a school based on certain philosophical foundations claiming to provide a “more realistic” interpretation of the world and its phenomena.

Undoubtedly, evolution is reflected in the poetry of Goethe. Perhaps, no one else has composed so much great poems; certainly, no one else has left so much evidence of poetic-sensibility evolution in the period of almost sixty years old. He has some incomparable works like the lyric poems about the glorious disobedience of Prometheus, hymns and Roman elegies (1975) the awakening effects of Venetian Epigrams wonderful songs in 1798, lyrics in 1815, and his epochal work West-Eastern Divan at the age of seventy. In all of these courses, Goethe wrote his exciting love poems; from “Welcome and Farewell” at the age of twenty to “The Marienbad Elegy” at the seventies of his life. These poems uncover the reasons that Goethe’s love poems have been included in Germany secondary school curriculum because unfamiliarity with Frederick, Loti, Lily, and the rest shows that one is illiterate (Kaufmann, 1999).

West-Eastern Divan is most detailed book of Goethe’s poetry; it is one of the three main works of Goethe at the aging years of the poet along with Faust and Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship. The idea of writing this poem was started in Goethe’s mind with his acquaintance with Hafiz whose lyrics were first translated into German and published in Stuttgart in 1814. The Austrian translator, Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall, sent a copy to Goethe. Having been influenced by Hafiz’s lyrics, Goethe wrote poems in Western mood for ten years; the result of this mood is West-Eastern Divan published in 1819. A copy of the first print was sent to Mirza Abolhasan Khan Shirazi one year later in 1820 to give to Fath Ali Shah Qajar as a gift. There is no trace of this copy in Iran. However, some parts of the copy were translated into Persian from French on the occasion of Goethe’s 200th years of birth.

This poetry of aging Goethe, West-Eastern Divan, is indeed the outcome of his attention to Oriental literature and his modeling of the great Persian poet Hafiz. Goethe writes to Hafiz:

Ah ! let the whole world slide and sink,
Hafiz, with thee alone the strife
Of song I seek. Twin-brothers we,
Our pain, our pleasure common be!
To love like thee, like thee to drink,
Shall be my pride, shall be my life (Goethe, 2004)

West-Eastern Divan contains twelve large books relating to each other. The theme of ‘abstain’ recurs frequently in the poem. The ninth book, Zuleika Namah, is a conversation between Hatam and Zuleika (lover and beloved). The concepts of “unity and duality” and “contact and separation” are described in “Ginkgo Biloba.” The important subject of classic literature, willingness to comply obvious variations, is repeated again in the poem:

This tree, entrusted by the East
Unto my garden-ground, doth show
A leaf whose hidden sense can feast
Their hearts who are skilled to know.
Is it one living being that doth
One life through dear division run?
Or are these two, self -chosen, and both
Fain to be known as one. (Ibid: 31)

Although the aging Goethe sees Hafiz’s poetry as a challenging and enriching paradigm, he acts differently in the selection of his style because his artistic mind- as a person influenced by East and classicism- is in contradiction to what he has understood from Hafiz; it is some sort of ‘non-style’ for him. In the section ‘Comments and Notes,’ Goethe wrote that this is a method combining the most sublime and most vile images fearlessly and juxtaposing disparities aside to create dramatic effects; we are flown in a blinding flash from the earth to the sky and returned to the earth again, and vice versa (Parvizfar, 2002). Therefore, Goethe had chosen a paradoxical image of his own poetry as the paradigm. Thus, it had a transformative effect on him and made this great classicist a great Romanticist.

Goethe named his returning to the East Higrā (to return) in the first poem of the Divan. This is his spiritual return, not to the geographical place of Iran that was challenged by war at the age of Fath Ali Shah (the same as Germany and Europe); the Higrā, or return, aimed to a the distant past, to the origins of human. It refers to the age of prophets, simple human life, the governance of elders on their own tribal family and blood (not states on people). This journey to East is as an old man is recalling of the young days, or the innocent years of childhood. Returning, here, means pondering on lost times, not the concept of cutback. ‘Higrā’ complains Napoleonic Wars as following:

NORTH and West and South up breaking!
Thrones are shattering, Empires quaking;
Fly thou to the untroubled East,

There the patriarchs' air to taste!
What with love, wine, and song
Chiser's fount will make these young. (Goethe, 2004)

The poems written by Goethe during 1814 to 1815 are mostly under the influence of Hafiz's book of poems and they have the Eastern feelings and themes. After he met Marianne von Willemer again in 1815, love became the central concept of West-Eastern Divan and love was the symbol of Goethe's Zuleika; in this manner, Hafiz and his poems became a means to express his spiritual love the meaning of perfect life; even he could comprehend the meaning of mystical love in Hafiz's poems and the place of mystical love in Hafiz's view (Goethe, 2004).

Goethe was the first German poet and thinker who spoke of the idea of world literature and played an important role in linking Eastern culture and literature in German literature. The realization of world literature and Goethe's thought to attain it was laid on the idea that East and West are not detachable. This idea is included deliberately in the following lines as a notable proof for attachment of East and West, and his universal literature:

HE who knows himself and others
Here will also see,
That the East and West like brothers,
Parted ne'er shall be.
Thoughtfully to float forever
'Tween two worlds, be man's endeavor
So between the East and West
To revolve, be my behest! (Goethe, 2013).

Paying special attention to the East was one of the notable basic elements of Romanticism in Germany since excessive Western rationalism had limited the mysterious world. Nevertheless, in the West, there were still powerful and mysterious myths. Hence, the East was so important for them. Faust is the only Goethe's work comparable to his own life. On the one hand, Goethe was working on Faust for sixty years; on the other hand, due to his perception of poetry and its relation to thoughts, Faust is neither just an allegory nor visualization or the induction of any philosophy of life.

In fact, Faust's tragedy is his most important work after his Classicism. The first part of the book was published in 1808 by Goethe and expressed the destiny of scientists whose desires were not satisfied by science. Mephistopheles, the devil, serves Faust on the cost of capturing the spirit of Faust; they make a contract in this regard. Faust says:

When thus I hail the Moment flying:
"Ah, still delay—thou art so fair!"
Then bind me in thy bonds undying,
My final ruin then declare!
Then let the death-bell chime the token.
Then art thou from thy service free!
The clock may stop, the hand be broken,
Then Time be finished unto me!

Faust's entire life was directed by Mephistopheles, when Faust's love to Gretchen placed him in a position over Mephistopheles, the evil powers causes her misfortune so that she killed her child, and then hanged herself.

The second part of Faust was published in 1832. This part occurs in Ancient Greece in middle ages. Euphorion, the son of Hellen and Faust, is the main character of the work. The contract of Mephistopheles and Faust is met in the second part. Faust expected eternal beautiful moments, but Mephistopheles gave them the limited present time. Parallelism and development of story line by repeating the obvious symbols such as 'night' and 'Walpurgis' are techniques used by Goethe in both parts of the tragedy

While Goethe's hero cannot be regarded simply as allegorical anthropomorphism, Faust is regarded incorrectly as the poet's ideal figure. Goethe's male heroes are certainly not ideal. They are unfinished astral projections – magnified images of traits that are a fault when separated from the total body. In Faust and Mephistopheles, Tasso and Antonio, and Egmont and Origin, Goethe divides himself into two parts – concluding that both characters are inferior than the poet. However, the creation of these great caricatures lets him breathe freely (Kaufmann, 1999).

An important theme, which is stated by Goethe in Faust, is his hatred of hereafter thought and preoccupation with death that was peculiarity of many German Romantic poets; he regarded it as an illness. He did not exceed the boundaries to accept the amazing submission of Prospero (the hero of *The Tempest*, a play by William Shakespeare). Goethe agreed that 'the great world' cannot leave a torment behind and 'the short life will be ended by a sleep.' He did not accept Shakespeare's tragic worldview. As he had learned from his experience and as he wrote in a letter in 27 September 1826 to von Ozenbek, 'how death is always be swallowed up by life.' One of the finest poems of Goethe is ended in this way:

Till you have

Death and rebirth

But a surly guest (Kaufmann, 1999)

Acceptance of personal valuation using the idea of death metaphorically is easier than submission to Goethe's belief in the idea that death and destruction is never the end. One may admire his poetic formulation of the faith and prefer still Prospero's frustration to insist like Shakespeare that "The *summer's flower* is to the *summer* sweet; though to itself it only live and die (ibid: 170). In one of his late poems, "A Legacy," that read to in 21 February 1829, shortly after completing.

No living atom comes at last to naught!

Active in each is still the eternal Thought:

Hold fast to Being if thou wouldst be blest.

Being is without end; for changeless laws

Bind that from which the All its glory draws

Of living treasures endlessly possessed.

Therefore, the trace of Faust's salvation should be found in Goethe's faith, not in his moral virtues. Faust's salvation neither implies that Goethe support of his actions nor means that Faust

had reached the lowest stage of his professional life – this idea is not consistent with his last speech- thus, it requires a supernatural immediate intervention.

Nevertheless, He does not lead himself to perfection.

In the prologue, God says Faust:

Though he's still confused at how to serve me,
I'll soon lead him to a clearer dawning,
In the green sapling, can't the gardener see
The flowers and fruit the coming years will bring.

And in the poem "Farewell," he says:

Who loves when revealing light,
Show the chaotic rush of feeling? (Goethe, 2013).

Some critics argue that Faust's salvation is an obvious sign of Goethe's opposition to Romanticism (Farhad, 1994). Indeed, human downfall, frailty, and instability in the universe, which was the subject of Existentialist philosophers later, were a Romantic subject. Faust did not appear in light to reach clarity like Goethe. At the end, God fulfills his contract in the Heaven. Hence, it is said to Gretchen in the last scene:

Let me guide you to the heavenly bumpers
If he a trace of your being, he ill soon discover you.

The play ends in these words:

The Eternal-Feminine
Lures to perfection. (Goethe, 2013).

Of course, these lines were inspired to the poet through his worldly experiences and recalls the same lines from one of his last poems called "The Marienbad Elegy." Goethe allows Faust to find in heaven what he had searched in his life and had found in his life: redemption and satisfaction.

Faust's last words are:

Then, to the moment I might say:
Abide, you are so fair!
The traces of my earthly day
No aeons can impair.
As I presage a happiness so high,
I now enjoy the highest moment. (Ibid: 392)

3. CONCLUSION

It should accept that Goethe is regarded as one of the classical poets and philosophers. Studying his two important works (West-Eastern Divan and Faust), this article mulls over the poetic and aesthetic themes and concepts. He should be considered as a transitory poet of the eighteenth-century Europe, between Classicism and Romanticism. He belongs to both movements. Some of his works reflect on Classical ideas and others show the thoughts and ideas of Romanticism. Hence, Goethe is a joint between the two movements.

Goethe is influenced by Hafiz in West-Eastern Divan as far as the readers recognize that Goethe tries to present Hafiz's ideas according to Romantic moods and the European taste in order

to makes it a favorable poet for German community; in addition, he mentioned comments and notes at the end of the poem. Using the delicate and poetic themes of Hafiz, Goethe tried to represent his Romantic worldview. Nevertheless, one cannot assert that his work is an imitation. It should be said that West-Eastern Divan is a genuine work like his classic masterpiece Faust.

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