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The Image of Utopia in Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters*

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((إِنَّا زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِزِينَةٍ الْكَوَاكِبِ))

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Dedication

To our and inspiring parents.

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First, we are greatly indebted to our supervisor Asst. Lect. Muhannad Ajel who contributed a lot in the fulfillment of this paper with his advice, help, continual support and encouragement.

Abstract

Writing at the turning point of the century pushes any writer to face and reflect the changes of this critical period. Chekhov comprehends this challenge; therefore, it becomes a recurrent theme that appears in most of his works which is a valuable resistance and survival against the social and economic changes that happened clearly in the modern age which have a great impact on man's life and psych. This leads Chekhov to endeavor, portraying the image of Utopia in most of his works, including The Three Sisters

For that reason, this paper is divided into two chapters. Chapter one deals with Anton Chehov's life and career, while chapter scrutinizes the image of Utopia in his masterpiece, The Three Sisters.

Finally the conclusion sums up the findings of the study.

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Chapter One: Anton's Chekhov's Life and Career

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov was born on January 17, 1860, in Taganrog, a provincial Russian town on the Sea of Azov. He was the third son of a merchant, and the grandson of serfs. Both of his grandfathers had been born into serfdom and both of them managed to buy themselves and their families out of slavery. Two generations later, Anton was a famous writer and social activist. Chekhov's father, Pavel, was a cruel, tyrannical man who sermonized endlessly. Though his sons would later have painful memories of the brutal upbringing their father gave them, they also found humor in their father's incessant grandstanding. He kept a shop in Taganrog and employed his three eldest sons, Aleksandr, Kolia (Nikolai), and Anton, from very early ages. In spite of the Chekhov children's violent, relentlessly difficult childhoods, they were a close, ebullient family and would remain so throughout their lives.¹

In 1876, Anton's father, Pavel, left Taganrog under cover of night to escape his creditors. He was deeply in debt and would not be free of financial obligation again until Anton became a literary success. Pavel moved in with his two eldest sons in Moscow, where they were attending university. He lived off the money they were able to scrape together, even though the sons themselves were impoverished to the point of near-starvation. Back in Taganrog, he left fifteen-year-old Anton to keep up a household that included his mother and his three

younger siblings. This was the beginning of a pattern of dependency on Anton that would not change again. By the time he was in his mid-twenties, Anton was supporting everyone in his family. His first play, written in 1877, is entitled Fatherlessness.²

In the fall of 1879, Chekhov entered medical school in Moscow. In March 1880 he published his first short story and in November of 1882 he began to publish weekly in a magazine called Fragments, becoming a regular contributor. This was not merely literary drive, but his chief means of providing for his dependents. In 1884 he graduated from Moscow University Medical School, and in June of that year his first collection of short stories was published. His literary reputation grew, and he acquired a life-long publisher and friend, Aleksey Suvorin. In 1887 he won the Pushkin Prize for literature.³

These successes were dimmed by the constant presence of illness, however. Chekhov had tuberculosis from an early age, and in 1884 at the age of twenty-four, he experienced his first serious hemorrhage. From this point, his health would gradually deteriorate, with a number of extended remissions, until his death at the age of forty four. How early Chekhov knew his fate is not known, but having been a doctor who saw a vast number of friends and relatives suffer and die from TB, including his brother Kolia (Nikolai), he must have known he would not live long. Kolia's death in 1889, was deeply disturbing for Chekhov. Although Kolia had been a talented painter, he had sunk into a bottomless

depression (generally perceived as laziness) years earlier and had never recovered. This depressive tendency would manifest itself in all the Chekhov siblings from time to time, though Anton would surmount it with endless work and social activity.⁴

In 1890, Chekhov left Moscow to travel across perilous Siberia and visit the grim penal colony at Sakhalin Island. Acting as doctor rather than writer, he did a sociological study of the people there and came back to write a nonfiction book about his experiences. On his way back he traveled through Hong Kong, Singapore, Ceylon, and Port Said. In 1892, he fulfilled a life-long dream of purchasing a country estate in Melikhovo. He became the owner of over five hundred acres, two ponds, a house, an orchard, horses, cows, and dogs. When he saw the amount of work necessary to maintain the estate, he was for a time aghast at his decision to buy it, but he eventually came to love it.⁵

December 17, 1898, was the inauguration of the Moscow Art Theater, founded by the great theater theorist and teacher Constantin Stanislavsky, and The Seagull was produced in its first seasonwith great success this time. In the following year, the Moscow Art Theater produced Uncle Vanya, and then in 1901 they produced The Three Sisters. In May of 1901, Chekhov married a prominent actress of the Moscow Art Theater, Olga Knipper.⁶

Chekhov's last play, The Cherry Orchard, premiered on January 17, 1904, at the Moscow Art Theater, in honor of his 44th birthday and in

celebration of his 25th anniversary of literary work. Soon after he traveled to Germany in a vain attempt to improve his health. On July 2nd he died. His body was returned to Russia on a train car meant for the transportation of oystersan irony Chekhov would undoubtedly have appreciated.⁷

The affinity between the Art Theatre and Chekhov was much greater than the general public realized. The relationship between Chekhov's artistic ideas and their influence on the theatre was so profound that they seem incommensurate with their brief duration. It really only lasted for about five-and-a-half years. In the first year of the Theatre's1 existence, Chekhov knew nothing of the Art Theatre, while in the Theatre very few people knew Chekhov personally. Others understood and loved him only after their own creative gifts had been harnessed to Chekhov's creative power. Then, after five years of work with the Theatre, he died. In this brief period such creative unity was consolidated that in today's Theatre [1914], there is scarcely a single serious rehearsal in which, for one reason or another, Chekhov's name is not mentioned.⁸

Notes

¹Lydia Avilov, *Chekhov in My Life: A Love Story* (London: J. Lehman, 1950), 65.

²Jean-Pierre Barricelli, *Checkhov's Great Plays: A Critical Anthology* (New York: New York University Press, 1981), 3.

³Ibid., 4.

⁴W. H. Bruford, *Chekhov and His Russia: A Sociological Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), 61.

⁵Ilya Ehrenburg, *Chekhov, Stendhal and Other Essays* (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1962), 32.

⁶Ibid., 33.

⁷William Gerhardi, *Anton Chekhov: A Critical Study* (London: Macdonald & Co., 1949), 76.

⁸Vera Gottlieb, *Anton Chekhov at the Moscow Art Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2005), 3.

Chapter Two:

The Image of Utopia in Chekhov's Three Sisters

In *Three Sisters*, which debuted in January, 1901, is the principal play Anton Chekhov composed particularly for the Moscow Art Theatre.It manages the Prozorov family: Olga, Andrei, Masha and Irina throughout four years. The family lives in common Russian town. The family feels ceaselessly dislodged and dreams of coming back to Moscow where they have grown up. The play starts on the most youthful day which is sister Irina's name additionally the primary commemoration of their dad's demise. Olga, the oldest sister, is unmarried and miserable in her activity as an educator. Masha is hitched and seeks after an illegal issue with a wedded man, Vershinin. Irina is single and wants to overlook the pursuing of her suitor as she longs for being adored and hitched back in Moscow, later on, she acknowledges, under the social weight, to wed the Baron.¹

To his sisters' alarm, Andrei wedded to an unsophisticated and apparently bashful neighborhood lady called Natasha who later controls the family unit. Being hitched to Natasha, Andrei's arrangement to wind up a researcher is foiled. In this way, to adapt to his depression, he begins betting without end the family's legacy as he in the end contracts the house to pay off his obligations. It is critical to know the present

circumstance of the Prozorv's family, keeping in mind the end goal to see how Chekhov displays his cheerful vision without bounds.²

All through the play the once prosperous place of the Prozorv falls and deteriorates, with the desires and dreams of Olga, Masha and Irina being constantly baffled and at last dashed. The decay of the Prozorv's family symbolizes the conclusion to the noble world. Refined social orders fall when they are gone up against by the powers of bourgeoisie self-intrigue, rightist triumph or comrade upset. The material attitude of the Prozorv family can be comprehended because of the sisters being dormant. Be that as it may, Chekhov picks them to speak to his idealistic vision without bounds ³.

In his *Three Sisters*, Chekhov organizes an existence of standard individuals carrying on with a commonplace Russian life. They all lead their dull common lives in which nothing specific happens. The main thing they can do is to sit tight for their would like to work out as expected, a fantasy which evidently never materializes. They play cards, prattle, philander, drink vodka, and go to their workplaces while never having the capacity to beat their apathy. All are tired to death of their void. Numerous characters in Chekhov's plays talk about the future and their exchanges mirror these philosophical thoughts. They have lost their expectation for future. Chekhov's *Three Sisters* is the portrayal of sitting

tight for a Godot like figure, however in type of a city, Moscow, in that the sisters yearn for backpedaling to the eminence and peace they were having "eleven years prior" as Olga says first and foremost lines of Act I.⁴

OLGA: . . . Father was put in command of a brigade, and he rode out of Moscow with us eleven years ago. I remember perfectly that it was early in May and that everything in Moscow was flowering then. It was warm too, everything was bathed in sunshine. Eleven years have gone, and I remember everything as if we rode out only yesterday Oh, God! (24)⁵

The dramatist depicts in *Three Sisters* a world which has all appearances of insignificant craziness since humankind has neglected to make life significant by declining to work with nature during the time spent change and development. The Prozorovs' assurance to come back to Moscow, where they were conceived, just communicates their want for a full and throbbing life. In any case, the common bog is more grounded. The sisters can't backpedal to Moscow in light of the fact that doing as such would imply that they have acknowledged innovation and

how it has changed Moscow and their lives. The sisters keep on seeing Moscow as the upbeat place from their adolescence and not the industrialized urban focus that it has moved toward becoming. They warmly recall Moscow as one would recollect a relative.⁶

All through the play, recalling is their most basic activity. They recall Moscow, their folks, and each other. The sisters don't comprehend that continually recalling keeps them from pushing ahead and just keeps them before. While they were cheerful before, the past isn't the way to their future satisfaction. For whatever length of time that they proceed with battle the future, they will never be upbeat .The sisters' agony could end effectively with a straightforward buy. Be that as it may, neither they nor their sibling prevail with regards to removing themselves-as opposed to living, they are constrained just to exist. Irina whines.⁷

I have been working for years, my brains are drying up, I am getting thin and old and ugly and there is nothing, nothing, not the slightest satisfaction, and the time is passing, and one feels that one is moving away and being drawn into the depths. I am in despair and I don't know how it is I am alive and have not killed myself yet.6

It isn't their blame just that every one of their endeavors are pointless and that things go from awful to more awful. Chekhov's point is to make his crowd mindful of the dormant, doltish and fair lives they all lived and, thusly, influence them to comprehend this isn't the unavoidable destiny of mankind. He trusts that work, training and business would enable accelerate the change of life as his character to work in an anecdotal world in which individual and social improvement is conceivable. In this way, it winds up one of the primary subjects is to discover a reason to life through socially helpful movement.⁸

The different philosophical talks all through the play between the sisters and the warriors about how life will be on earth two a long time from now, the criticalness and the need of nature for humankind's presence, and the will to forfeit and work for the better implied of all are articulations of the estimations of the world which the sisters speak to. These qualities are rehearsed by them all through the play; the sisters open their home to the nearby town's kin who have lost their homes in the city fire. Olga even gives the vast majority of her garments to the individuals who never again have any. By differentiate, Natasha dislike the shelters in the house and takes her disappointments out on Anfisha, the elderly family nurture.

When of the last demonstration, Natasha blames Andrei for the clamor that he is making since it is irritating the kids. She diverts Andie from a potential researcher to a spouse pushing babies around that may not be his. His most noteworthy accomplishment is a post on the town board, which is led by his better half's sweetheart. Scrutinizing her, Andrie says: "There's something about her which pulls her down to the level of a creature... a kind of mean, visually impaired, tough creature at any rate, not a human being." (318)¹⁰

As she studies her recently overcomes domain from a window, she chooses to chop down the trees in the road and challenges enough to scrutinize Irina for her poor taste in garments. One critical thing to see about Natasha that she doesn't need anything to advise her that the family was once of the Prozorov's and not of Natasha's, an issue which discloses her request to reject Anfisa, and changes in the road. Truth be told, Natasha is the best case of complete impression of time, and how her kids physically drive the sisters out of the house, additionally the obligation from the selling the house underpins her rich way of life. In the long run, Natasha's prosperity demonstrates the cost of obscenity triumphing over taste, bourgeoisie self-enthusiasm over blue-blooded forfeit, and material riches over spirtitual optimism. The sisters and Andrie can't avoid Natasha an issue which makes a condition where

underhanded - the nonattendance of any ethical heading for people and society-can thrive and have ruinous outcome.¹¹

Through the individuals from the Prozorv, Chekhov exhibits an exceptionally touchy individual, looked by the harsh and heartless rivalry in current the other hand, achievement is a dynamic of the corrupt, the coarse, and the revolting. Chekhov, be that as it may, views it with a doubt which has been pounded in light of the fact that they expected or even requested from life more than it could give. The cost of their disappointment, maybe, isn't completely futile. They learn new things out of their disappointment. As Irina's gestures of recognition the excellencies of work in the last act.¹²

Someday people will know why such things happen, and what the purpose of all this suffering is... Meanwhile we must go on living... and working. Yes, we must just go on working! Tomorrow I'll go away alone and teach in a school somewhere; I'll give my life to the people who need it... I'll go on working and working (329).

To work in the administration of others gives a plausibility to

oppose malicious. What Irina proposes is work for the improvement of society. It is an endeavor to decipher the participatory method of reality from relaxation to work, along these lines protecting oneself and one's general public from a subjective way to deal with life that enables wickedness to thrive. There is one huge prerequisite in working in the administration of others which is capacity to relate to someone else's misery that empowers the acknowledgment that all people are equivalent. Olga's relationship with Anfisa, Masha sensitivity of Vershinin's circumstance being familial not able leave his self-destructive spouse and his two girls and Irina's with the destitute after the news of executing her life partner.¹³

Something else Chekhov reflects through the cost of the Prozorovs' disappointment is the likelihood that they are paying the bill for the bliss of the following ages, whose life will be less jumbled and idiotic than theirs. In any event that plausibility of an importance which declines to hammer her entryway an all expectations. The topic of cheerful future created all through the play from the Prozorovs' own would like to the following ages' expectations. From the earliest starting point, there is an expectation. For Irina, Moscow is the chance to contact her potential and meet the man she had always wanted. Moscow symbolizes the general public for which they all goomed. For Olga, her want for Moscow is one of impractical memory-her musings and dialect are in the previous tense.

Since Olga is the oldest sister and surrogate mother figure, she lives for Irina's expectations. This desire for the people to come and the battle to safeguard it turns out to be specifically vital as it more than once surfaces in the play.¹⁴

The portrayal of life as it is induces a longing for an existence as it ought to be. The Prozorovs are cognizant that their own expectations and goals are hindered, yet don't know that they have lost control over their own property. When they understand that they recognize that their future is decimated: Andrie surrenders his fantasies to be an educator, Olga acknowledges changeless outcast of life at the neighborhood secondary school, Masha respectably gives up her adoration for Vershinin, and Irina sobs for the Baron, her life partner, who has been killed in a duel by one of her previous suitors. Having inward clash between whom they were previously and whom they want to be later on, the sisters get themselves compelled to accommodate their fantasies with reality. Everything they can do is just work and live. 15

Olga, being inspired by Vershinin's vision of life in which the present generation must prepare the way for a better life for those yet unborn:

I feel as if I wanted to live! Merciful God! The years will pass, and we shall be gone for good and quite forgotten... our faces and our voices will be forgotten and people won't even know that there were once three of us here... there'll be a time when peace and happiness reign in the world, mid them we shall be remembered kindly and blessed. (329)

This discourse, which closes Checkov's vision without bounds, introduces the disclosure of another reason and the acknowledgment of the torment, and diligent work that must be performed to guarantee the bliss of who and what is to come. Truth be told it is a critical sign of the tone Chekhov may have been endeavoring to make for the last scene. Chekhov was an informed man of science, who was composing for another, advanced and some may contend, cutting edge theater. He cherished his embraced home of Moscow as it was in the present day. He grasped change and advancement and maybe just needed his kindred kinsmen to go along with him. ¹⁶

The city in which the play is set is a country setting far from the metropolitan culture with a rising bourgeoisie, however in rustic

environment. It isn't conceivable subsequently, to isolate Chekhov from the shameful acts and brutalities of the Russian culture he saw. Meanwhile, he can be promptly connected to any of the social-social and political developments disturbing the intellectual elite which were obviously preparing for the fate of Russian culture. Three sisters was composed in 1901 and From the late 1880s, Chekhov's work centered around the streams of the circumstances, reflecting philosophical and political thoughts in prevalent idea. In The Order of Discourse, Foucault utilizes the term episteme, to assign the foundation for learning and all its related talks which implies the state of their plausibility in a unique timeframe. Later on, he included the majority of episteme which may coincide in the meantime, as they are different parts of energy information framework. ¹⁷

The commonplace life in an apparently residential community has no shading for this family, as they are in disengagement from the immense occasions of the day The Prozorov kin are living in a status of semi-outcast and they are beneficiaries to the social capital of one such mechanical city Moscow. Olga, Irina, and Andrei endeavor to facilitate their weight as bearers of European Enlightenment by getting to be themselves instructors for nearby school youngsters, and Vershinin predicts that the three sisters won't have lived in the areas "without impact," regardless of whether they themselves will never be capable

completely to "overcome the dim masses encompassing them. Their holding up is an inactive one. This sitting tight for a superior life is likewise present in the expressions of Tusenbacj and Vershinin. The characters words are their actual activities, and no immediate activity could be seen all through the entire play.¹⁸

Vershinin: A man must work, toil in the sweat of his brow, whoever he may be, for that is the meaning and object of his life, his happiness, his enthusiasm. How fine it is to be a workman who gets up at daybreak and breaks stones in the street, or a shepherd, or a schoolmaster, who teaches children, or an engine-driver on the railway.... My God, let alone a man, it's better to be an ox, or just a horse, so long as it can work, than a young woman who wakes up at twelve o'clock, has her coffee in bed, and then spends two hours dressing.... Oh it's awful! Sometimes when it's hot, your thirst can be just as tiresome as my need for work. And if I don't get up early in future and work, Ivan Romanovitch, then you may refuse me your friendship. (186)

Such long talks in their most profound level give off an impression of being negligible long methods of insight about existence which are in evident Catch 22 with the circumstance of individuals in the play. Notwithstanding their apparently repetitious articulation, each and every character in the play has a specific issue in his or her life. They are not like established saints ready to control their lives' occasions toward their own particular advantage. Since they are desolate, they discuss schedules and their long words substitute their impotency in making any move. The roughly irrational monologs, apparently jabbing fun at the discourses prospering out of the most profound contemplations which could be heard on the phase back to Shakespeare's circumstances, are molded by the encompassing conditions at the season of their creation.¹⁹

Chekhov's distinction started to spread through blade de-siècle Europe and he passed on in 1904, just before the main Russian upset of 1905". Political occasions from that point in the end prompted the topple of the Tsars in the upheaval of 1917 and the foundation of socialist control in Russia. Chekhov' developmental years and working life, in this manner, were in a Russia experiencing a time of political and social turmoil, which is analyzed in Chekhov's work.²⁰

One of the principle wellsprings of grievance for the courageous

women of The *Three Sisters* is the absence of refined and instructed individuals in their town. They feel marooned in an ocean of obliviousness numbness that is saturating their home through despondent relational unions to a portion of the town's hicks. Once the sparkling any desire for the family, their scholastically and masterfully gifted sibling Andrey gradually turns into a little time card shark and a hen-pecked spouse.²¹

In addition, the most feared occasion the inescapable takeoff of the marginally more refined officers happens in the last demonstration. At last, the sisters are dislodged from their own home by their shabby, average sister-in-law Natasha. As the Prozorov island of refinement sinks into insensibility, Chekhov puts forth a bigger expression about the vanishing of the favored class in Russia.²²

The sisters' delicacy comes from their refined childhood in Moscow and inconveniences them in the wide open. What's more, being physically wiped out is a significant abnormal state of inconvenience, on the off chance that you ask us. Most likely how superstars feel when they're compelled to do philanthropy occasions with ordinary individuals.²³

Masha: Most of the people in this town are so vulgar, so unpleasant, so stupid. Vulgarity upsets me, it wounds me; I get physically sick when I see someone who lacks finesse, who lacks kindness and gentleness. (2.33)

Chekhov demonstrates no propensity towards socialism. He saw no expectation in the development of a socialist society in Russia, which could be a defense for his portrayal of a sad holding up in Three Sisters. Chekhov rose up out of the legacy of serfdom, from destitution, brutality and mastery and he did whatever he could to end up a well known craftsman and scholar in a subdued and hazardous society. Unavoidably, his works, the two his plays and short stories do reflect such inconveniences of this sort of life. The nineteenth century Russian intellectual elite is known by fomenting for social change. Its individuals were reformists and the social activists who were not content with the political circumstance of their nation under the rule of Tseras. They were target to the situation of Russia's country populace ²⁴.

Notes

¹Rose Whyman, *Anton Chekhov: Routledge Modern and Contemporary Dramatists* (London and New York: Routledge,2011), 13.

²Ibid,p.14.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid,p.18.

⁵ Anton Chekhov, *Anton Chekhov: Four Major Plays* (London: Penguin Books, 1954),p.24. All further quotations are taken from the same copy.

⁶ Jefferson Gatrall, "Exile and the Death of Languages in Anton Chekhov's "Three Sisters" *Ulbandus Review*, Vol. 7,2003,p.35.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid,p.38.

⁹ Marc Slonim, From Chekhov to the Revolution: Russian Literature: 1900-1917. A Galaxy Book (New York: Oxford University Press,1953),p.76.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Robert Brustein, *The Theater of Revolt* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company,2000),p.43.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid,p.45.

¹⁴Marwa Ghazi Mohammed, "The Utopian Vision of the Future In Chekhov's Three Sisters" *University of Baghdad College of Education for Girls / Department of English Language* 2009 p.9

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid,p.10.

¹⁷ Ibid,p.11.

Harold Bloom, ed. *Anton Chekhov: Modern Critical Views* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1999),p.173.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Marwa Ghazi Mohammed, p.13

²¹ Ibid.

²² Geoffrey Borny, *Interpreting Chekhov* (Australia: The Australian National University, 2006),p.53.

²³ Ibid,p.55.

²⁴ Ibid.

Conclusion

Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters* are incapacitated: in adoration, depleted, abundant, kind, narrow minded, cheerful, and crushed. They battle with both the catastrophe and the silliness of regular day to day existence as they look for comfort in their fantasies of development, of advance, of the perfect world they call Moscow. Their reality is a tangle of warriors, sweethearts, suitors, troublesome in-laws, uninvolved siblings, maturing servants, baffled artists, and unsuitable day employments all walking to the tune of time passing and deserting them.

The *Three Sisters* has been gotten as the play which swarms with worrier thoughts towards life and its importance. The characters and their long discourses don't picture a cheerful life, for themselves as well as for the following ages to come. Chekhov never had a hopeful person see for the revolutionists who trusted that by clearing ceaselessly the old request they would set up peace and concordance on earth .

In the *Three Sisters*, the characters battle against the energy of detail, there is an inward clash between the character and condition. Technicality is an unsafe power that wrecks and traps the lives and dreams of the primary characters that figure out how to confront it and considerably vanquish it by the energy of continuance and the endeavor to make a superior life for the who and what is to come .

Chekhov is occupied with displaying a dream of life on the stage, and life is for him giggling and tears, both expectation and sadness, both yearning and detail. He takes a shot at having this passionate scale by building up a methods for effectively showing both 'life as it is' and 'life as it ought to be' by figuring out how to display the last capacity in a roundabout way through suggestions.

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