

## **CLASS EXPLOITATION IN RON RASH'S *SERENA* NOVEL: A MARXIST CRITICISM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research has examined the marxist feminist and patriarchy as the types and form of female issues based on research questions. By using qualitative method, this research uses qualitative research managed to find the issues that occur in this film about how capitalists and patriarchy create the issues toward women. This research tries to identify the types of woman issues contained in the film *Suffragette*. This film is directed by Sara Gavron. The *Suffragette* film was inspired by the true story of a group of women activists led by Emmeline Pankhurst, in fighting for women's rights to political and economic participation. *Suffragette* tells the story using the perspective of the character of Maud Watts, a laundry service worker who joined Pankhurst in raising the issue of women's rights to vote before Parliament; which allowed mainly for upper class men. This research shows the imbalance of political opportunity between the upper class and lower class the dominance of masculinity over female workers. The values of Marxist Feminism were seen through scenes when the character of Maud Watts testifies before the court and in the Horse Race scene in which the *Suffragette* groups protest. The court scene shows opposition from women's labor groups, representing women to fight for equality between men and women.

**Keywords:** Feminist, female, patriarchy, suffragette, equality, male dominance, women, vote.

### **ABSTRAK**

*Penelitian ini mengkaji kaum feminis Marxis dan patriarki sebagai jenis dan bentuk isu perempuan berdasarkan pertanyaan penelitian. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif, penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif yang berhasil menemukan masalah yang terjadi dalam film ini tentang bagaimana kapitalis dan patriarki menciptakan masalah terhadap perempuan. Penelitian ini mencoba mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis persoalan perempuan yang terkandung dalam film *Suffragette*. Film ini disutradarai oleh Sara Gavron. Film *Suffragette* terinspirasi dari kisah nyata sekelompok aktivis perempuan yang dipimpin oleh Emmeline Pankhurst, dalam memperjuangkan hak perempuan atas partisipasi politik dan ekonomi. *Suffragette* bercerita dengan menggunakan perspektif karakter Maud Watts, seorang pekerja laundry yang bergabung dengan Pankhurst mengangkat isu hak perempuan untuk*

*memilih di parlemen; yang memungkinkan terutama untuk pria kelas atas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan ketimpangan peluang politik antara kelas atas dan kelas bawah dengan dominasi maskulinitas terhadap pekerja perempuan. Nilai-nilai Feminisme Marxis terlihat melalui adegan ketika karakter Maud Watts bersaksi di depan pengadilan dan dalam adegan Pacuan Kuda di mana kelompok Suffragette protes. Adegan pengadilan menunjukkan penentangan dari kelompok buruh perempuan, yang mewakili perempuan untuk memperjuangkan kesetaraan antara laki-laki dan perempuan.*

**Kata kunci:** *Feminis, perempuan, patriarki, hak pilih, kesetaraan, dominasi laki-laki, perempuan, suara.*

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

The issue of unequal rights toward women more and more became a crucial issue in society. Generally, women fight for their right to getting equality in many aspects of social life, whether socially or economically. Those issues could be seen in many literary works including film. The film could portray a social issue, reality, or current condition. The film is not only to entertain us as the audience, but it also has a message to tell. The Message in the film could be a portrayal of social issues.

As in the film titled "Suffragette", the film directed by Sarah Gavron with a setting took place in London in 1912 that lifted the story of activists in the early era of the feminist movement, forced to fight underground against the forces of a cruel government. These women are not from the upper classes who are educated, but the lower-class women who see that peaceful protests are useless.

Suffragette film tells how women fight for their right to their equality at the expense of many things. In example women were tortured, had more hours of work and were paid less than men, they were imprisoned only because they broke the law, they did not get child custody and were not permitted to meet their children just because they had to follow the rules given by the government in 19th to 20th centuries. Moreover, this movie describes the history when women fight for equality and women's right, not always to be underestimated, demeaned and considered unreliable for certain matters.

In addition, Suffragette is a film described a patriarchal system in which this issue is being debated up to now by feminists. Man is portrayed as the dominant character, who takes control of the woman. Considered superior than the woman. As the dominant movie characters, men always control women and feel superior to them. Women have been portrayed as the supporting character to fulfil all the men's needs.

The patriarchal system brought women controled of their father and husband while women were commonly referred to as mothers and wives. In this system, the role of mother and female sexuality is considered to require protection from father and husband. Often such understanding creates class differences between men and women through work, economics, politics and the things that make women brought in men's control.

In addition, men and women do not have the same thinking in political matters. If men allow women to choose, that means social loss. According to Johnson, Men assume that women are also represented by their fathers, brothers, husbands after the votes are given, it is impossible to stop there. Women will demand the right to become members of parliamentary, cabinet ministers, and judges. For decades women have campaigned peacefully for equality and Suffragette but their arguments were ignored.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Literature**

According to Klarer literature was derived from "littera" which mean letter, letter was the smallest alphabetical writing. Literature was a product from certain human wish to leave a trace in literary of literature. The product was manifestation of human expression, experience, imagination, and creativity (1). Meanwhile many experts categorize literature into two kinds of text, writing literature and non-writing literature. Wellek and Warren state that literature is a writing text but they also states that not all writing text literature are literature. Culture have been around human in many era and time, literature was also a product of culture itself. According to them, culture is one of the biggest relationships why literature had a lot of cultural diversities. (Wellek and Warren 11).

In another view, Klarer also explains that literature was close to human expression and when a human has a feeling, they make a text and document that text or document so-called literature. Literature is referred to as the entirety of written expression with the restriction that not every written document can be categorized as literature in the more exact sense of the word (1). From this view, it means that literature aim of written text with expression but, not all written document is literature because literature has aesthetic inside of it.

#### **a. Film**

Film as a semi-textual genre both influenced by and exerting influence on literature and literary criticism. The film was predetermined by literary techniques; conversely, a literary practice developed particular features under the impact of the film. Film's idiosyncratic modes of presentation such as camera angle, editing, montage, slow and fast motion often parallel features of literary texts or could be explained within a textual framework. Although the film has its own specific characteristics and terminology, it was possible to analyse film by drawing on methods of literary criticism, as film criticism is closely related to the traditional approaches of textual studies. The major developments of literary theory have therefore also been borrowed or adapted by film studies (Klarer 56).

#### **b. Character**

Gill said that Character is one of the intrinsic elements in a story. The character is a figure man in literature (99). Character is also a character or personality that distinguishes an individual from other individuals. Character could be said also as the actual state of being in an individual, which distinguishes himself from other individuals.

Character is defined in literature by and rendered as individuals because in each character there was feature and authenticity them self “characters in a text could be rendered either as types or as individuals. A typified character in literature was dominated by one specific trait and was referred to a flat character. The term of round character usually denotes a more persona with more complex and differentiated features (Klarer 17).

### **c. Characterization**

Chatman categories characterization into types; they are direct and implied (indirect). Chatman says “if a character assaults several people, we may safely conclude that he was violet, but if he is afraid to speak his mind, we may well conclude that he was timid” (61). Direct was a characterization process that is shown by the narrator through actual words and typical adjectives. Otherwise, implied (indirect) is a characterization process that is indicated through action, speech and thought of the character (what they like).

According to Kenan, characterization is a component within element of literature that describe traits of character (61). These traits are used to analyze and determined how a character that is decribed in a story.

## **2. Feminist Criticism**

Feminist Criticism is one of the theories in literary works that try to divide literary works through the perspective of women. Historically, the concept of feminist criticism in a book of “Literary Criticism” written by Charles Bressler, explained that historically, Feminism in Biblical narrative described that places of the blame for the fall of humanity is on Eve, not Adam. (Bressler 180). From Bressler's explanation, we know that originally gender discrimination had already happened in the past.

## **3. Marxist and Socialist Feminism**

In this theory, Rosemarie Tong describes the basics of feminist Marxist theory in general. Then continue the translation of Karl Marx between Marxist ideology and feminist thought. Marxist theory explains the structure of modern industrial society with a special emphasis on class and labour.

The term Marxist and socialist feminist criticism consists of two words namely Marxist and feminist. A combination of feminist and Marxist means that feminist Marxist was related to social women's classes in society. Socialist feminist is one of the sub-point understandings of Marxist. This theory was to understand that the history of mankind was a struggle to determine their social class in society and life.

Karl Marx was the founder of Marxist social class theory. This theory was about the human struggle in society about their social class from the upper class, middle class, to the lower class. From this view, how humans must fight for their social class in society and not only social class, but also the structure of power that exists in that social class because each part in society has the potential to create social change. In social classes, there is a rolling and a controlled one.

### **a. Domination The Marxist Theory of Economics**

According to “Marxist and socialist feminists”, to the degree Marxist and socialist feminists believe women’s work shapes women’s thoughts and thus “female nature,” these thinkers also believe capitalism was a system of power

relations as well as exchange relations. When capitalism was viewed as a system of exchange relations, it is described as a commodity or market society in which everything, including one's own labour power, has a price and all transactions were fundamentally exchange transactions. But when capitalism was viewed instead as a system of power relations, it was described as a society in which every kind of transactional relation was fundamentally exploitative. Thus, depending on one's emphasis, the worker-employer relationship could be looked at as either an exchange relationship in which items of equivalent value are freely traded labour for wages or as a workplace struggle in which the employer, has superior power, takes advantage of workers in any number of ways (Tong 98).

From the view above, if work could create everyone's thinking that women are only assigned to stay at home and eventually they automatically become feminists whose tend to be weak and fragile, then when capitalism was seen as a system of exchange relations and capitalism is described as a community or market in where everything that is meant by someone's labor has a price and all transactions are fundamental exchange transactions and emphasis on the relationship between workers and employers can be seen as an exchange relationship where goods of equal value are wages (98). That means the high class as an employer and the low class as subordinates or workers. In this exchange system, the lower classes ask for wages and the upper classes provide wages resulting in an exchange relationship between capitalism so that the lower classes are trampled on and considered low and weak by the upper classes who begin to oppose, insult and feel that they are the strongest. Employers were the uppermost pyramids that use workers to get huge profits.

## **b. The Marxist Theory of Politic**

According to Tong, Class struggle takes a certain form within the workplace because the interests of the employers were not of the workers. Whereas it was in the employers' interests to use whatever tactics may be necessary (harassment, firing, violence) To make workers to works more effective and efficient for less wages than their work was worth, it is in the workers' interests to use whatever countertactics may be necessary to limit the extent to which their labor power was used to produce sheer profit for their employers (99). From this view, the class struggle takes a certain form in the workplace because the interests of employers were not in the interests of work. In this case, if woman was a worker, then they are class warrior to protect their class so that they can be higher in social structure.

According to Tong, Marx thought that as workers became increasingly aware of the exploitation and alienation around them, that was when they reached class consciousness. In this case workers can unite so they can fight their employers to control the means of production. If the workers manage to win this fight, Marx claimed that a highly committed, politically savvy, well-trained group of revolutionaries would subsequently emerge from the workers' ranks. Marx termed this special group of workers the "vanguard" of the full-scale revolution for which he hoped (101). From this view, if women are increasingly aware of their alienation in society, then women increasingly want to fight the alienation they had gained from within their communities, families and workplaces.



## **4. Patriarchy**

The concept of patriarchy was taken from the word 'patriarchy', literally means the rule of the father or the 'patriarch', and originally it was used to describe a specific type of 'male-dominated family' the large household of the patriarch which included women, junior men, children, slaves and domestic servants all under the rule of this dominant male. Now it is used more generally "to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterize a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways" (Bhasin 3).

Patriarchy, in its wider definition, means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. It implies that "men hold power in all important institutions of society" and that "women are deprived of access to such power." However, it does not imply that "women are either totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence, and resource" (Lerner 239).

### **a. Male Dominance**

Patriarchy was male dominated in that positions of authority political, economic, legal, religious, educational, military, domestic are generally reserved for men. Heads of state, corporate CEOs, religious leaders, school principals, members of legislatures at all levels of government, senior law partners, tenured professors, generals and admirals, and even those identified as 'head of household' all tend to be male under patriarchy. When a woman finds her way into higher positions, people tend to be struck by the exception to the rule and wonder how she'll measure up against a man" (Johnson 6). All of those positions' majority are held by male, while female are not because woman are portrayed as the weak creature.

### **b. Male Centeredness**

In patriarchal system, male centered, means that the focus of attention was primarily on men and boys and what they do. At some time, woman are only portrayed as the supporters or as the creatures who were always controlled by men "fussing over their support work of domestic labor and maintaining love relationships" (Johnson 10), always preparing all the things what men need or want to.

### **c. The Obsession with Control**

The third characteristic of patriarchy was an obsession with control as a core value around which social and personal life are organized. As with any system of privilege that elevates one group by oppressing another, control was an essential element of patriarchy: men maintain their privilege by controlling both women and other men who might threaten it. Given the primacy of control, it becomes the cultural standard for a truly superior human being, which was then used to justify men's privileged position. (Johnson 14)

To be unemotional (except for anger and rage), to present themselves as invulnerable, autonomous, independent, strong, rational, logical, dispassionate, knowledgeable, always right, and in command of every situation, especially those involving women.

## **C. RESEARCH METHOD**

McMillan and Schumacher (31) describe research design as the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research question. The purpose of a research design is to provide the most valid, accurate answer possible to research question. The design of this study was descriptive qualitative research. A descriptive study determines and reports the thing that will be analysed by the clear explanation without using the graphic calculation. It means that in a descriptive study the research happens naturally and supported by the theory that will be used, and the researcher has no control over the condition and the situation, and can only measure what already exists.

### **1. Data and Data Sources**

The data consists of the dialogue, the scenes and pictures. The dialogues would be taken from the characters' dialogues and supported by the dialogue from the movie's scripts itself. The scene described and explained the specific actions of the characters that this research needed towards the identification of patriarchy and also women characters. The pictures were in the form of the screenshots that would be taken from the film. They would be put along with the dialogues and the scenes to strengthen the evidences towards the identification of Marxist Feminist and to analyse patriarchy system.

### **2. Data Collection**

First of all, the researcher was watched the *Suffragette* movie thoroughly then mark the important picture and video, Read the script of "Suffragette" film carefully, The researcher was identified the Marxist feminist types based on the Marxist theory of economics and politics, The researcher was identified the patriarchy types in *Suffragette* movie, such as male dominance, male centeredness and the obsession with control and Last, the researcher was concluded the results of the study.

### **3. Data Analysis**

There are some steps in the data analysis. Miles and Huberman described that there are three main components of data analysis: Data collection, data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification. Data collection was the process of collecting data that the researcher found. Then, after collecting data, the researcher chooses what data were analysed. Data reduction was processing of the data that has been collected by the researcher. For this research, after collecting the data from conversations, dialogs, scenes and the words that explained the action from some characters that related to the Marxist feminist in the film, all of the data were selected again and filtered further in order to be specific. Data display was process in indicated and analyse the data. The information from previous research and related theories are organized to identify the compatible data to the research question of the study. After that the process to analysed the data were done in order

to answer the research question. Conclusion Drawing and verification was the last process after analysing the data. The conclusion were made after assured that all of the data were valid and relevant in answering the research question.

#### 4. Triangulation

According to Miles and Huberman , triangulation is the methodology that is used in research to support and to strengthen the findings of the reseach by using more than one approaches. The use of triangulation in qualitative research is also to avoid the bias of the finding or analysis. Triangulation is used to establish the validity of the finding in qualitative research and the susceptible to the subjectivity that should be avoided. There four forms of triangulation:Data Triangulation, Investigator Triangulation, Theoretical Triangulation and Metodological Triangulation.

### D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 1.1 Marxist and Socialist Feminist in Suffragette film

Marxist and Socialist feminist in the film can be seen, hen women does enter the workforce, they are delegated to jobs that are deemed appropriate for their gender and were usually underpaid for their works.

Marx was the founder of marxist social class theory. This theory was about human struggle in society about their social classes from upper class, middle class, to lower class. From this view, humans fight for their social classes in society and not only social class, but also the structure of power that exists in that social class. In social classes there is a rolling and a controlled one.

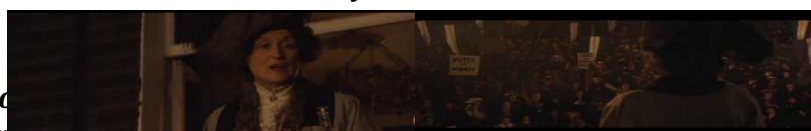
##### c. The Marxist Theory of Economics



*Mrs. Maud. And we work a tina more the hours.*

From the data Mrs. Maud can be seen, there sharp distention between male and female labour in get wage from their employers, Mrs. Maud explain that they only “get 13 shilling a week”, while male labours get 19 shilling, that higher than women. Even though they work hard with the longer working time than men. From this case it shows unfair treatment of the employer toward women labour, without any compensation. For their additional work in Glass House Laundry the women workers are forced to work hard by (Mrs. Maud, Mrs. Violet and Mrs. Maggie) the employers there, that indicated a form exploitation toward them. In this case it I clear that women get unequal right in society especially in the economical side, when they get more lower wage than male.

##### d. The Marxist Theory of Politic



*from the lives*

*In which every little girl born into the world, will have an equal with her brothers.*

*We do not want to be lawbreakers. We want to be lawmarkers.*



***Be militant, each of you in your own way.***

***Those of you who can break windows, break them.***

Based on the data above, even a little girl born into the world has the right to get the same rights as her brother. Women's struggle in equality the rights of women and men did not mean they want to be lawbreakers, but they only want to fight for equality and whatever prevents them from obtaining equality, they would continue to fight for equality. From this case it could be concluded that how important that equality. The purpose of political Marxists is to achieve a prosperous society with social rules based on ownership of the same social class, money and state.

## **1.2 Patriarchy**

Patriarchy or patriarchal system in this society had developed in many ways. Not only by how the position of women in society as inferior to men, but nowadays how the patriarchal system were developed as the power to portraying the different position between men and women by identifying the types of Male Dominance, Male Centeredness and The Obsession with Control.

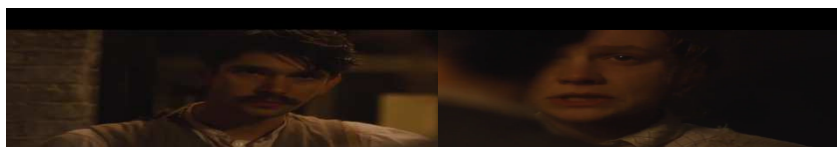
### **a. Male Dominance**

Male domination was a type of patriarchal system that focuses on the dominant male position in every aspect of social structure such as the political system, military aggression, government economic activities, and other aspects. In this film there were scenes showing some aspects of being led and held by men.

***Men: If we allow [redacted] social structure. Women are well represented [redacted]s. Once the vote was given, it would be impossible to stop at this. "Women would then demand the rights of becoming MPs, cabinet ministers, judges".***

This scene shows that men are more dominant to be heads of government and even women could not get the same opportunities as them. To occupy important matters such as the political system and legal affairs. It was shown by Mr. Taylor as Head of Laundry at Bethnal Green as Head of Laundry Guard. The dominance of men was how men had control in every aspect even to determine the position of men who were taller and more important than women. That shows how this man's position was an important position and was higher than the woman shown by Mr. Taylor as Head of Laundry at Bethnal Green.

### **b. Male Centeredness**



The picture above shows that women were always controlled by men who made a fuss about their support work at home. In this case women can not do everything without control over men, where women are only assigned to be a mother, and do all household chores. Men often create problems in their lives so that

they can become a major center in society that they portray themselves as heroes and have more courage than women.

**c. The Obsession with Control**



*Men : Your wife*

*is a fucking*

*disgrace, Sony.*

*Men : "You Should be keeping her under control.*

This scene shows that men always want to have an important position as a husband who must control their wife. Men always take control in their government and household. The picture above provides evidence of the obsession with control that is often done by men in their lives. The men in this film were made superior as seen by women through their position in the social structure. The third characteristic of this patriarchy was about the obsession with control as a core value around organized social and personal life. Like any system of privilege that uplifts one group by oppressing another group, control was an important element of patriarchy in which men retain their privileges by controlling women who may threaten them. This would be the superiority of control over a culture which is then used to justify the privileged position of men.

### **1.3 Discussion**

In this chapter the researcher had described the struggle of women to obtain equal rights in society, workplaces and in their households. Tong said that Marxist Feminist was a theory that could be used to understand the oppression of women through their classes and works. . In this theory, there were sub-points of the Marxist feminist socialist who had discuss the issue of women in society. Based on the film, the researcher had found out the issues of economics and politics. The discussion on economic issues was when the lower-class female were not paid according to their working hours even though they works longer than men but the wages they earns were lower than the wages earned by men. In this case, women did not got equality regarding their wages in their workplaces. From the issues, Maud's character was asked to spoke up in front of the House of Commons to gave their statement that men and women were equal in their works, so they must got the same rights. Maud expressed her opinion at the trial there was a feeling of fear that came from a position as a woman sitting in front of a dominant male group. Maud was in a position the hearing bringing the message and values of the struggle carried by the Suffragette group. The Suffragette group voiced the rights of working lower-class women to gave their political choices and reject domination, not only men but also women lower-class working groups This struggle's message of the Suffragette had strong values of criticism of Marxist feminism. In the struggle of the Suffragette activists, they were also carried out protest actions in the Horse Race. The horse race was described as an activity intended for the masculine upper class. The horse race activity was a collection of officials and capital owners. Along with members of Suffragette Emily aims to raise the Vote for Women flag in activities to

draw the attention of lower-class women to the movement against male domination. The scene closes with Emily daring to break through the horse race track and unfurling the Vote for Women flag until she died because she was hit by a horse. Maud and Emily were a symbol of resistance from lower-class femininity. The choices of location and time to protest was a form of protest against the elitist attitudes of the upper classes. Regardless the messages raised by Maud and Emily were messages of equality and looking at the whole scene that was trying to be lifted was a class inequality between the upper and lower classes which results in oppression of women, especially lower-class women.

Another problems that made women unavailable to here the same positions as men in government and in their workplaces were political problems. In this film, feminists had pioneers whose help them rise from adversity and suggest women fight against all the problems that prevent them from getting the same rights in society. Tong said that, if a woman was a worker or occupies a certain position, then it was their effort to protect their classes so that they were not lower than men The oppression of women from this film was the evidence to the implementation of capitalist system by the government through economics and politics. Basically, the government was a protector for the people and known as a comfort and equality provider for the people. But the government instead implemented a capitalist system for women through the economic and political system and the patriarchal dominance of women in society. Tong said that there were two causes of oppression of women, the capitalist system and the patriarchal system. In this case, the capitalist system oppresses women as the lower working class while patriarchy oppresses women as women were considered weak and only being used to complete men in their lives.

From the discussion above, the link between Sultana's research and this study was that women were victims of subordination under male domination, unequal exploitation of wages, low wages, oppression, and violence. Other findings were a matter of preference of boys, discrimination against girls, the burden of domestic work, unequal wages, all patriarchal practices also exist in Sultana's findings. Legally women should not be discriminated against in any field that says in family, social, political, economic and cultural life and special legal provisions must exist to deal with violations of equal women's rights. Thus, to improve the position of women, it was very important to protect women from patriarchal subordination. Because all work was done by men and women, there was no reason to differentiate work based on gender.

The relationship between this analysis with Hossain previous study was both of the studies had gender equality problems. Research from Hossain, et al., show that women had difficulty in getting high-pay in works. In terms of employment, the company was the owner of capital which makes women in the workforce get a lower position. Hossain research also had the same issues as this research. One of them was the problem related to gender equality in the community, workplace, and in their household. Another important finding was that women always occupy the lowest position in their works, and women were not permitted to increase their voices and participate in politics. Whereas Abigail's analysis further develops our

understanding of core concepts and important issues of women in society such as social life, domestic workers, the nature of the working class and the role of gender in shaping state ideology and hegemony. Another that had the same finding as the researcher was Marxist feminism was considered went to hand in oppressing women. Abigail's research also finds and tried to understand the objective social, economic and political relations that shape and determine the oppression of women in society. The political culture among some of the most creative and innovative of Marxist theory and history had proven to be strongly opposed to one of the most basic contributions of feminism the recognition of the need for women's involvement in male-dominated discursive spaces.

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