



The Transformation of Intrinsic Elements in The Adaptation of *The Viscount Who Loved Me* into TV Series by Shondaland

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the transformation of intrinsic elements in *The Viscount Who Loved Me* novel into the TV series entitled *Bridgerton Season 2* by Shondaland through the adaptation theory by Linda Hutcheon. Transformation in the adaptation process leads to the ideology contained in novel and TV series. Mythology by Roland Barthes is used to uncover the ideology behind the adaptation, and it will bring us to the motive of the adaptation. The data are in intrinsic elements such as character, characterization, and plot were taken from the texts in *The Viscount Who Loved Me* and the TV Series *Bridgerton Season 2*. The result of this study shows that there

are differences in ideologies. In the novel, the ideologies are filled with patriarchy and social class, while in the TV series they focus on American values, feminism, and liberalism. These ideologies reflect the motives behind the adaptation, which are cultural capital and economic lure.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 1 March 2025

Revised 13 March 2025

Accepted 14 March 2025

Keywords

Adaptation, Myth, Ideology, Motives, Novel Into TV Series

Fitria, S. N. R., Ilham, M., Wahyuningsih, I., et al. (2025). The Transformation of Intrinsic Elements in The Adaptation of The Viscount Who Loved Me into TV Series by Shondaland. *TRANSFORM: Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*. Vol 14(1). 47-61. <https://doi.org/10.24114/tj.v14i1.67335>

INTRODUCTION

The adaptation of audio-visual such as films and TV series is not new today, but it has been going on for a long time. Adaptation is a work that comes from existing literary works. Hutcheon provides a conceptual framework for understanding how stories can move across genres, media, cultures, contexts and permit to think about how the adaptations allow people to tell, show, or interact with the story. In this study, the adaptation of the novel *The Viscount Who Loved Me* into a TV series is a part of telling into

showing mode. This is due to the transformation from novel to audio-visual. Hutcheon (2006:7) said that adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication. This means that there will be a transformation in the adaptation work. The transformation that occurs in adaptations is caused by multiple factors, such as target audience, medium shift, and the adapter's motivation. Each adapter possesses unique goals and reasons for creating an adaptation. These motives may be influenced by cultural contexts, the adapter's personal beliefs, and their background. Adapters may modify elements such as the story, characters, or plotline from the original source to impart specific meanings. The transformations that are made to convey a particular meaning make an adaptation become an original work.

The Viscount Who Loved Me is a novel by Julia Quinn, it is about historical romance that takes place in London 1814. It tells the story of Anthony Bridgerton and Kate Sheffield. Anthony Bridgerton should face his struggle against the trauma of love influenced by the death of his father who died young in order to find a potential wife to be his viscountess. Anthony convinces himself that he will meet the same fate as his father. Kate Sheffield is a girl who was born into a family that is less wealthy ranks of the ton. Kate is fiercely protective of her younger sister, Edwina, whom she loves dearly, and determined to see her well-married. This protective streak drives her initial antagonism towards Anthony Bridgerton, whom she views as a threat due to his rakish reputation and seemingly superficial intentions towards her sister. Anthony and Kate's relationship starts off contentiously, with plenty of verbal sparring and miscommunications. Despite this, there is an unmistakable chemistry between them. As they are forced to marry due to a situation that puts both of their families at risk in society, their initial prejudice towards each other begins to turn into deep affection and love.

The overall plot is essentially the same as the original story. However, Shondaland cut, added, and changed the story in parts as it re-imagines regency London society where not only white people are aristocrats and part of the sovereign class, adding diversity not present in the book, as well as the difference the love story between Kate and Anthony both in novel and series. The love development in the novel is intricately linked to societal expectations, emphasizing social status, family reputation, and financial consideration as the novel takes place in the Regency era. In the series, the love story focuses on the character's development to find true love before marriage life. This follows the modern

audience that there has been a significant shift in attitudes towards marriage, with greater emphasis on personal choice, individual happiness, and inclusivity across race and social class. It assumes that the changes in several parts of the novel into new parts in the adaptation work are caused by the adapter's motivation.

To analyze this adaptation, Hutcheon's theory of adaptation is used to know that novel and adaptation work have some differences. The value of adaptations is that they can be analyzed as stories repeated in a particular culture for a reason. Furthermore, mythology by Roland Barthes is also employed as a method to discover the ideologies behind the TV series. After the ideologies are discovered, the motives behind the adaptation are revealed.

METHOD

This research is a qualitative research because the data is qualitative data, which means it focuses on non-numerical sources of data taken from novel and TV series. Qualitative research involves converting information obtained from observations, reports, and recordings into data presented as written words or visual pictures (Denscombe, 2010: 325). The source of data for this research is collected from *The Viscount Who Loved Me* novel and TV series entitled *Bridgerton* Season 2. The data is classified according to the specific elements of the story required for analysis, such as characters, characterization, and plot found in novel and TV series. For each data that has been categorized, mythology by Roland Barthes is used to uncover the ideologies between the two works. The ideology is discovered by analyzing the signs presented in the data. The last step is to find out the motive behind the adaptation. The author's ideology leads us to understand the reason beyond the adaptation work. Understanding the adapter's reasons enables us to trace it back to the adaptation works' motives, as stated by Hutcheon in the theory of adaptation. Adapters are attracted for various reasons to appeal the adaptation, and they have their own motives.

RESULTS

Based on the transformation in the intrinsic elements, a different ideology emerges between the novel and the TV series. In the novel, patriarchy and social class are found. Patriarchy is shown by male roles, often holding positions of power and influence, while

female roles are expected to adhere to traditional gender roles. The novel also portrays social class as an ideology faced by women, who are constantly pressured to marry well and secure a favorable social position. In TV series, the ideologies found are American values, feminism, and liberalism. These ideologies emerged as the reflection of the adapters' intention to connect with contemporary audiences.

In the process of adapting from text to audio-visual, several changes will be unavoidable or even deliberately made for certain motives (Hutcheon, 2006:86-95). There are four motives: economic lures, legal constraints, cultural capital, and personal & political motives. As mentioned above, the ideologies reflect the motives behind adaptation, which are cultural capital and economic lures. The adapters wanted to tell a story that felt inclusive and representative of today's audiences, including issues like gender, class, and race. It gives the show new cultural capital because it reflects today's values of inclusivity and representation, which increases its value or cultural capital. The economic motive in this adaptation work refers to the success of *Bridgerton Season 1*. The adapters gain more profit in making the next season, which is *Bridgerton Season 2*.

Table 1. Table of Differences in Ideology Between Novel and TV Series

Elements	Novel	TV Series
Characterization	Anthony Bridgerton Patriarchy: Women's personal qualities as an object of men's desire	American values: Freedom to choose a partner
	Kate Sheffield/ Sharma Patriarchy: Women are expected to be well- suited as wives to support their husband	Feminism: Kate's character portrayed as an Indian independent woman
Plot	Relationship Between Anthony and Kate Patriarchy: Women are expected to maintain sexual purity	Feminism: Freedom to make choices
	The Love Between Anthony and Kate Social class: Social economy plays a significant role in the decision-making process regarding marriage	Liberalism: Romantic freedom across social status and cultural

DISCUSSION

Adaptation involves modifying elements such as characterization and plot from the novel to produce a unique product. Therefore, the adapter's transformation process brings about changes by adding, removing, or altering intrinsic elements, creating a new and distinct work as a result of adaptation itself. The transformation that happened in novel and TV series, mythology by Roland Barthes is applied to uncover the ideologies of both the author and the adapter. Then, the motives are discovered after uncovering the ideology behind the adaptation. The first discussion is about the transformation of characterization in the character. There are two characters, which are Anthony Bridgerton and Kate Sheffield/Sharma. The second analysis is about the transformation in the plot. There are two plots between novel and TV series that will be analyzed.

The Transformation of Characterization

In the novel, it is described that Anthony Bridgerton takes his responsibilities seriously as viscount, particularly those concerning his family's well-being. Anthony wants to pursue Edwina because she is deemed the season's incomparable, beautiful, accomplished, and the ideal choice for a viscountess. In the Regency era, woman's personal qualities, such as her beauty, intelligence, and character, were important in attracting a suitable husband as seen by Anthony in Edwina. This statement considered as objects of men's desire, and it indicates that there is a patriarchal ideology in this novel. The societal structures were heavily patriarchal during the Regency era. Men, particularly noblemen, were expected to uphold family honour, continue the family lineage, and manage estates and finances. According to Tonsing & Tonsing (2019), in patriarchal societies, men are often expected to find a wife who fits certain social norms, such as beauty, youth, and social status. This can lead to a focus on external qualities rather than internal compatibility. Marriages were often seen as alliances between families rather than unions based on romantic love. This is evident in the character of Anthony Bridgerton, who wants to pursue Edwina.

Both in the novel and the TV series, Anthony is depicted as a dedicated and dutiful Viscount, taking his responsibilities seriously. His mission for the season is to find a suitable bride, prioritizing duty and family legacy over love. While in the TV series, Anthony's mother, Violet Bridgerton, plays a significant role in influencing Anthony. She encourages Anthony to pursue a marriage based on love rather than duty alone and

provides emotional support and understanding to him. Anthony's mother reflects on how American cultural practices shape and sustain romantic relationships. This statement has a connection with the freedom to choose a partner and this concept has a contextual background of American values. As the series is produced by Shondaland, a house production based in the United States, American values can be seen as a cultural phenomenon where individuals are influenced by societal norms and expectations in their choice of a life partner. This can include the adoption of Western values and norms, such as individualism and egalitarian gender roles, which may differ from traditional cultural practices (Bejanyan et al., 2014). According to Bejanyan et al. (2014), in individualistic cultures like the United States, people tend to prioritize personal freedom and autonomy in their romantic choices. In contrast, the Regency era often emphasizes family and social expectations in mate selection.

In addition, Julia Quinn describes Kate Sheffield in her novel as older sister who has taken on a paternal role since her father's death. Kate often compares herself to Edwina who is more beautiful and charming. She is keenly aware of her perceived shortcomings and feels overshadowed by Edwina's attractiveness. This self-criticism erodes her confidence and reinforces her belief that she is less worthy of attention and affection. In the Regency era, women were expected to be well-suited as wives. This statement placed women to be submissiveness and supportiveness and this concept has a contextual background of patriarchal society in gender roles that assign men to dominant social roles and women to subordinate roles (Liu, 2024). In the nineteenth century, women were expected to be "pious, pure, submissive, and domesticated," with the ideal woman transforming her home into a refuge for all that was civilized and spiritual in an otherwise materialistic world (Vickery, 1993). According to Betts (2015), women were responsible for managing the household, performing domestic chores, and caring for children. This was seen as essential to a good wife and it was one who supported the husband's endeavors and decisions, contributing to the family's stability and harmony. The patriarchal system encourages Kate's insecurity about herself as less desirable due to her attractiveness and worthiness.

But, in the TV series, Kate Sheffield is adapted into Kate Sharma. This change involves a shift in her cultural background, portraying Kate and her family as being of Indian descent, Kate is the daughter of an ordinary Indian clerk who remarried an

aristocrat, Mary Sheffield. Mary's parents, the Sheffields, never approved of their marriage, leading them to run and move to India. This created a scandal in society for the Sheffield family. Kate, with her background as the daughter of commoners, is aware that she cannot marry a nobleman to save her family from poverty because she is not Mary's biological daughter. Therefore, she sacrifices herself to ensure Edwina is accepted in society. If in the novel Kate lacks of confidence due to her insecurities, meanwhile in the series, Kate bravely fights back without caring about her background by having an agreement with the Sheffield couple to inherit their fortune. Kate's character demonstrates her feminist ideals through her decision, by making an agreement with the Sheffield couple in order to secure her family. According to Putra (2023), feminist ideology emphasizes women's autonomy and decision-making power which is in line with independent women who are characterized by their ability to make choices and decisions.

The Transformation of Plot

One of the transformation of plot that can be seen is the relationship between Anthony Bridgerton and Kate Sheffield. In the novel, their relationship undergoes a significant development during the bee incident. Kate gets stung by a bee, and Anthony, who has a traumatic fear of bees due to his father's death from a bee sting, reacts by trying to suck out the venom in her chest. They are discovered in this compromising position, which is misinterpreted by others as something more intimate which forces them to be married. During the Regency era, being caught in a compromising situation could severely damage an individual's reputation and social standing. Women, in particular, were judged harshly and could be deemed ruined or fallen, which would significantly impact their prospects for marriage and social acceptance. According to Grace (2016: 33), a compromised woman was seen as dishonorable, and her family's reputation was often damaged as well. The most immediate solution to a compromising situation was for the couple to marry. This was seen as a way to restore honor and mitigate the damage to their reputations (Grace, 2016: 33). In the Regency era, marriage is a solution to avoid scandal. An ideology that emphasizes the importance of maintaining strict moral and social norms, especially about sexual behavior and the institution of marriage. This statement is related to patriarchy. Patriarchal norms often emphasize the importance of maintaining a social

reputation. According to Taylor (2021), purity culture is often based on patriarchal ideologies that view women as fragile and in need of protection. Women are expected to maintain sexual purity, often until marriage. This is seen as essential for maintaining family honor and social respectability for the “feminine” honor code that emphasizes chastity and conformity values (Christianson et al., 2021).

In the TV series, the bee incident creates tension and an unspoken attraction between Anthony Bridgerton and Kate Sharma, pushing their relationship into more complicated territory. In the novel, the bee incident puts Anthony and Kate in a compromising situation, but in the TV series, they are not witnessed by anyone. As Anthony is determined to marry without emotional attachment he chooses Edwina as his bride, despite the growing attraction between Anthony and Kate. However, Edwina recognizes their true feelings and she decides to call off the wedding. This decision, though painful, is driven by her understanding that a marriage without love would be a mistake. The cancellation of the wedding causes a scandal, leading to significant repercussions for both families. By choosing to cancel the wedding, Edwina exercises her agency, making a choice that aligns with her values and desires rather than succumbing to societal expectations or pressures. This statement relates to feminism which women should be empowered to take action and make decisions that affect their lives, rather than being passive recipients of decisions made by others. According to Budgeon (2015), the commitment to autonomy values developed by feminism embodies the basic claim that women have the right to make choices that reflect their desires. This perspective holds that any choice a woman makes— whether related to career, family, lifestyle, or body— should be respected and valued as long as it is made freely and without coercion. It focuses on the right of women to define their paths and make decisions that best suit their individual circumstances and preferences (Budgeon, 2015).

The other change of plot in the novel is Kate’s accident of a horse-drawn carriage, bringing Anthony’s emotions to the surface, forcing him to acknowledge how much he truly loves Kate. As Anthony admits his love to Kate, it shows that following societal norms and expectations, such as getting married, can result in the development of true love and emotional connection between partners. In Regency England, marriage is not just about love but it is also about securing social standing, family alliances, and lineage. The pressure to marry “well” was immense, especially for the upper class. Anthony and

Kate come from a noble family which makes them fulfill the societal norms that nobles should marry the same nobility. Nobles and members of the aristocracy were generally expected to marry within their own social class to maintain family status, wealth, and influence (Kane, 2012). It tells the story that Kate and Edwina Sheffield make their debut in London society to secure advantageous marriages and prioritize finding a wealthy and titled husband. This would elevate their social standing and provide financial security. It is indicated that during the Regency era, social status and wealth played important roles in determining marriage choices among the nobility. The Sheffield sisters, Kate and Edwina, are both presented at the London season with the hope that they will marry well. This desire for advantageous marriages is driven by the family's relatively modest means and the need to ensure financial stability and social standing. According to Badinjki (2019), many young women were ready to marry wealthy upper-class men to secure a comfortable future. It is related to the Sheffield's condition that Kate and Edwina must marry a nobleman to secure the family.

Meanwhile, in the TV series, Kate's accident due to her horseback riding is more tense and dramatic, highlighting the seriousness of her injury. Anthony's fear of losing Kate forces him to confront his true feelings. He realizes he cannot deny his love for her any longer, which sets the stage for his heartfelt confession of love. Anthony's confession of love to Kate is a romance that transcends societal boundaries, including race. He acknowledges his feelings despite societal expectations, demonstrating emotional and a willingness to defy norms for the sake of love. Kate Sharma as an Indian heritage and the daughter of an ordinary Indian clerk breaks the stereotype that nobles should marry the same nobility. It is related to how love can cross social status and culture. This portrayal aligns with liberalism that embraces individual choice in romantic relationships, promoting the idea that love transcends social and racial boundaries. According to Holtug (2021: 19), shared liberal values can foster social cohesion, which is essential for supporting relationships that cross social and cultural divides. This perspective is in line with the broader liberal commitment to individual freedom, which supports people forming relationships based on mutual consent and respect, without facing discrimination or coercion (Krause, 2014).

The Motive Behind The Adaptation Work

The ideology contained in the novel often changes when it is adapted into another work. The reason for the change will show the motive behind the adaptation work. This is because the adaptation must be adjusted to different audiences and the cultural context prevailing at the time of production. According to Hutcheon, transcultural adaptation from one culture to another is influenced by the context of space and time, especially the social and cultural context. It explores what happens when a work migrates from the context of creation to the context of reception (Hutcheon, 2006: 141-157).

Based on Table 1, the transformation in the intrinsic elements has been found. The ideology of American values in adaptation work can be seen due to the involvement of Shondaland, an American house production founded by Shonda Rhimes. As an American studio undertakes the adaptation of a work, they typically leverage their expertise and creative insights to make the content resonate with American audiences. This involves understanding the cultural nuances, preferences, and storytelling conventions that appeal to viewers in the United States. The studio might make changes to characters, settings, and plotlines to ensure the adaptation feels relatable and engaging to its target audience.

The issue of feminism in the adaptation work demonstrates that the female characters present a mix of rebellion and conformity within a patriarchal society. It showcases women reclaiming agency in various ways. It is related to the backgrounds of the adapters, Shonda Rhimes and Chris Van Dusen, who often made strong female characters in their work, such as *Grey's Anatomy* and *Scandal*. As shown in *Bridgerton Season 2*, it has a diverse casting, particularly with the introduction of South Asian female characters who portray various ethnic backgrounds. This helps to broaden the narrative of female empowerment as seen in the characters of Kate Sharma, who is portrayed as an independent Indian woman, and Edwina Sharma, who reflects the equality that women should have their own choices in making decisions.

Shonda Rhimes and Chris Van Dusen have a professional relationship from their collaboration on various television projects. Van Dusen worked under Rhimes as a writer and producer on several of her hit shows, including *Grey's Anatomy* and *Scandal*. When Rhimes' production company struck a deal with Netflix, Van Dusen stepped up to lead the adaptation of *Bridgerton's* novels, turning them into a highly successful TV series. During an interview with Valentini from Shondaland, Van Dusen said that working directly with

Shonda for so long, it became very clear that she had an incredible ability to know what audiences wanted to see and to create relevant yet nuanced characters (Valentini, 2020). This made Van Dusen realize that after working with her for so long, part of that would rub off on him. Rhimes, together with Van Dusen, makes a "colour-blind casting," which includes diverse casting in their work. Feature a wide range of characters from different racial and cultural backgrounds. This inclusive representation often includes interracial relationships and cultural intersections, reflecting a more diverse and realistic portrayal of contemporary society. This reflects on the plot's ideology, which is liberalism. As seen in Anthony Bridgerton admits his love for Kate Sharma.

The liberalism shown in the story of the plot is a value that adapters want to convey. This is related to Chris Van Dusen's background as gay. He has spoken about how his identity influences his approach to storytelling, especially in creating inclusive and diverse narratives in his work (Reynolds, 2022a). During an interview with Reynolds from Out, Van Dusen said that the importance of diversity is a key component of Bridgerton's success. He got this directly from Rhimes, a pioneer in pushing for representation in Hollywood. He continues that this representation is not superficial. "I want the show to be glamorous and luxurious, and I want to celebrate the beauty of this world," he says. "But underneath all that, if you look closely, I want there to be 21st-century commentary on all kinds of issues like gender, class, race, and sexuality". According to Van Dusen, part of the fun of Bridgerton is that he gets to do things, explore stories, and create characters that have never been seen before. He thinks that by looking at the period genre, whether it is white, straight, or a bit conservative and traditional, he wants to take that genre and change it.

From the explanations above, cultural capital motives tend to be strong to be realized in the adaptation work. Cultural capital is a term that was introduced by Pierre Bourdieu. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital refers to the knowledge, behavior, and skills that a person can use to show their cultural understanding, which can help them gain higher status in society (Huang, 2019). Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital intersects with Hutcheon's cultural capital motive by explaining how adaptations can be driven by the desire to accumulate social prestige and legitimacy. Hutcheon reveals that one way to gain respect or increase cultural capital is by using adaptation as something

upwardly mobile (2006: 91), which means an adaptation may seek to gain legitimacy, prestige, or recognition within a particular cultural or social framework.

Bridgerton Season 2 is not just a traditional period drama. It mixes the old-fashioned setting with modern ideas, like showing diverse characters. Based on the explanation of cultural capital, this gives the show new cultural capital because it reflects today's values of inclusivity and representation. Hutcheon (2006: 92) states that adaptation work also considers how cultural capital and the mass audience reception. As seen in *Bridgerton Season 2*, the adapters make a traditional period drama by embracing a diverse and inclusive approach and bringing the ideologies that reflect modern society. This adaptation is not merely a replication of historical narratives but an intentional modernization that reflects today's cultural values and intends to develop the adapters' creativity by producing work according to market needs. Since *Bridgerton Season 2* is on Netflix, it is available to millions of viewers around the world. This gives the show a chance to spread its cultural influence globally, which increases its value or cultural capital. Even people who are not familiar with Julia Quinn's books can enjoy the show, giving it more recognition.

Furthermore, most adapters have an economic motive when doing their work. Shondaland's adaptation of *The Viscount Who Loved Me* into *Bridgerton Season 2* presents a compelling opportunity for the production company to capitalize on the momentum generated by the success of the first season. *Bridgerton Season 1* introduced the world to the opulent and scandalous world of Regency-era high society with a captivating blend of romance, drama, and diverse representation that resonates with modern audiences. Then, *Bridgerton Season 2* offers the chance to explore deeper character development, expand on the family dynamics, and introduce new romantic and dramatic conflicts by maintaining a diverse representation that keeps viewers invested. As a result, *Bridgerton Season 2* has achieved remarkable success on Netflix, becoming the most popular English-language series in the platform's history. It accumulated an impressive 627.1 million hours viewed within its first 28 days (Smith, 2022). From this achievement, the adapters gain more advantages for the production house.

Thus, it can be concluded that the motive of cultural capital is dominant in making this adaptation work. Although the economic lure is one of the reasons the adapters made *Bridgerton Season 2*, the show spread its cultural influence globally, which increases its

value or cultural capital. In addition, the adapters' perspective is to maintain diversity and inclusivity in order to retain the audience's interest as well.

CONCLUSION

The intrinsic elements in the adaptation of *The Viscount Who Loved Me* into a TV series reveal various transformations, which are found in characterization and plot. In the novel, Anthony Bridgerton decides to marry someone appropriate and without emotional attachment, but in the TV series his mother influences him to balance his happiness and emotional well-being. Moreover, Kate Sheffield, considers herself an undesirable woman and feels overshadowed by Edwina's attractiveness, while in the TV series, Kate Sharma is portrayed as a woman who bravely arranges to inherit the Sheffield family fortune despite her cultural background. The transformation in the plot is when Anthony and Kate are caught in a compromising position, which leads to an unintended marriage to avoid scandal. However, in the TV series, Anthony chooses Edwina as his bride despite his growing feelings for Kate, yet Edwina recognizes the true feelings between Anthony and Kate, and she decides to call off the wedding, which causes a scandal. The other plot change is when Kate's accident with a horse-drawn carriage brings Anthony's emotions, forcing him to acknowledge how much he truly loves Kate. In the TV series, Kate's accident is more tense and dramatic, highlighting the seriousness of her injury than in the novel and making Anthony decide to admit his love for Kate.

Based on the transformation in the intrinsic elements above, a different ideology emerges between the novel and adaptation work. In the novel, patriarchy and social class are found. In the TV series, the ideologies found are American values, feminism, and liberalism. The ideologies in TV series emerged as the reflection of the adapters' intention to connect with contemporary audiences. The motives of adaptation are cultural capital and economic lures. The shows that the adapters wanted to tell a story felt inclusive and representative of today's audiences. In addition, the economic lure is another motive that the adapters want to gain by seeing the success of *Bridgerton Season 1*. The popularity of the first season likely increased demand for more content, driving the adapters to capitalize on this momentum by making *Bridgerton Season 2*.

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