

Feeling Colonialism: A Comparative Affective Analysis of Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and Younes/Jonas in *Ce que le jour doit à la nuit* (2008)

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Submission: 11/09/2025

Acceptance: 10/12/2025

Pulication: 26/12/2025

Abstract:

This paper investigates the representation of identity formation in colonial and postcolonial literature through a comparative study of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and Yasmina Khadra's *Ce que le jour doit à la nuit* (2008). Both novels depict protagonists negotiating hybrid identities within the constraints of colonial power. Drawing on affect theory, the study examines how emotions, moods, and atmospheres, such as shame, longing, nostalgia, and inspiration, shape lived experience and subjectivity. Identity is understood not as a fixed or purely ideological construct, but as a process continually marked by affective tensions within family, religion, nationalism, and colonial hierarchies. While Stephen Dedalus channels these tensions into artistic resistance,

Younes/Jonas embodies the ambivalence and estrangement of fractured belonging. By situating these narratives side by side, the paper demonstrates that colonial modernity produces shared affective burdens across different contexts. The analysis highlights how literature reveals the emotional dimensions of colonial identity, underscoring the usefulness of affect theory for understanding the complexities of selfhood in divided societies.

Key words:Affect theory; Colonial identity; Hybrid subjectivity; Comparative literature; Postcolonial modernity.

1- Introduction :

Postcolonial literature has consistently served as a space for grappling with the complexities of identity, belonging, and cultural negotiation. Across geographies and histories, colonial rule imposed both political and economic domination and deep psychological and emotional fractures, unsettling established traditions and forcing individuals into fraught negotiations of selfhood. In literary narratives, these tensions are often exemplified through protagonists who embody the lived contradictions of colonial modernity, highlighting wider social and political struggles.

James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) is a modernist text that charts the identity formation of Stephen Dedalus, a young Irish Catholic whose journey unfolds against the backdrop of British colonial rule, religious orthodoxy, and nationalist aspiration. In contrast yet in parallel, Yasmina Khadra's *Ce que le jour doit à la nuit* (2008) follows Younes, later renamed Jonas, whose movement from rural poverty into the orbit of European settlers in colonial Algeria reveals the dislocations and ambiguities of colonial subjectivity. While Joyce's narrative interrogates the competing demands of Catholicism and Irish nationalism, Khadra's novel

lays bare the fractures of an Algerian society divided by ethnicity, faith, and colonial hierarchy.

Despite their distinct settings, both texts converge around a central concern: how individuals navigate hybrid identities in fractured colonial worlds. This paper takes up a comparative reading of these two works through the lens of Affect Theory. By foregrounding the circulation of moods, feelings, and atmospheres, Affect Theory allows us to move beyond ideological or discursive frameworks and to examine how identity formation is lived and felt in the body. Shame, longing, nostalgia, inspiration, and ambivalence emerge as forces that shape Stephen's and Younes's lives as much as religious doctrine or colonial politics.

The aim of this study is therefore twofold: first, to demonstrate how affective experience provides a crucial, and often overlooked, dimension of colonial subjectivity; and second, to highlight the value of comparative analysis across different colonial contexts. By bringing Joyce and Khadra together, the discussion underscores how literature across centuries and traditions reveals the enduring affective struggles of identity under colonial modernity, reminding us that colonialism's legacy is carried not only in institutions and ideologies, but also in the emotions and atmospheres that shape everyday life.

1. Historical and Sociopolitical Contexts

1.1 British Colonial Rule in Ireland

Ireland's experience under British rule left deep marks on politics, culture, and everyday life, with the consequences becoming especially visible in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the very moment in

which Joyce situates Stephen Dedalus's growth in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). As Foster points out, British control was reinforced through structures like the Protestant Ascendancy, a small but powerful Anglican elite that preserved its dominance through land seizures and the Penal Laws (Foster, 1988). These laws, as Brown reminds us, restricted the rights and economic opportunities of the Catholic majority well into the nineteenth century (Brown, 1985). Asch also highlights how such legal and institutional frameworks ensured that Protestant power remained entrenched long after its formal introduction (Asch, 2005).

The cultural impact of these structures was equally significant. Brown observes that the Irish language, once central to daily life and education, was increasingly sidelined under colonial policies and dismissed as a marker of backwardness (Brown, 1985). This marginalization was not only linguistic but also educational. As Hadaegh and Shahabi argue, institutions such as Jesuit schools embodied both religious formation and colonial discipline, teaching intellectual rigor and conformity to imperial norms (Hadaegh and Shahabi, 2021). Even within Catholic education, Joyce shows how the structures of hierarchy, authority, and surveillance reflected the broader colonial order (Brown, 1985; Slugger O'Toole, 2025).

Joyce dramatizes these realities in Stephen's school experiences. The Catholic school she attends provides space for intellectual growth and spiritual reflection, but at the same time, they operate as instruments of colonial influence, reinforcing obedience, religious orthodoxy, and a sense of deference to imperial authority (Hadaegh & Shahabi, 2021; Slugger O'Toole, 2025).

Economic pressures deepenthispicture. Brown connects the Dedalusfamily'ssteadyfinancialdecline to the broaderfragility of Ireland's colonial economy, whereindustrialunderdevelopment, rural depopulation, and the legacies of famine leftmanyfamilieswithdwindling prospects (Brown, 1985). Mass emigration and the collapse of Irish industries onlyadded to the sense of instability, leaving middle-class families like Stephen'swithshrinking social mobility.

Politics, too, addedanother layer of difficulty. The fall of Charles Stewart Parnell, once a leadingvoice of Irish nationalism, dividedStephen'sfamily and symbolized the fractured state of Irish politicsundercolonialism (Foster, 1988; Brown, 1985). In this light, Stephen'spursuit of artistic and personalindependenceisneversimplyindividual,itbecomesentangledwith the religious, economic, and politicalconstraints of colonial society. As Hadaegh and Shahabi argue, his rejection of conventionalpathsisbetterunderstood as a struggle to carve out an identityseparatefromimperial power (Hadaegh&Shahabi ,2021).

Takentogether, Joyce'sportrayal of turn-of-the-century Ireland shows how colonial structures touchedevery aspect of life, fromlanguage and education to politics and family. Through Stephen Dedalus, Joyce givesvoice to the difficulty of forging a sense of self in a world where colonial power shapedbothexternalcircumstances and innerconsciousness (Foster, 1988; Brown, 1985;Hadaegh&Shahabi, 2021).

1.2 French Colonial Rule in Algeria

French colonial rule in Algeria, which began with the invasion of 1830 and lasted until independence in 1962, reshaped the country's social, political, and cultural fabric. Historians such as Benjamin Stora remind us that this was not a brief episode of occupation but one of the longest and most entrenched colonial projects in the modern era (Stora, 2001). Unlike many other colonies, Algeria was integrated directly into France and administered as three départements, while at the same time hosting a powerful settler community, the *pieds-noirs*, whose presence defined colonial life (Shepard, 2006).

The settler colonial model created during hierarchies. Fertile land was seized and redistributed to European settlers, while Algerian peasants were dispossessed and forced into poverty or migration to urban centers (Ageron, 1991). The 1870 Crémieux Decree further institutionalized inequality by granting French citizenship to Algerian Jews, while the Muslim majority remained governed by the restrictive *Code de l'indigénat*, a system of law that curtailed rights of movement, political participation, and economic opportunity (Lorcin, 2006).

Culturally, colonial power operated as much through language and education as through military force. French became the language of administration, law, and schooling, while Arabic and Berber were pushed to the margins (Stora, 2001). Religious institutions were monitored, and traditional knowledge systems were systematically undermined. Todd Shepard argues that this created a form of “colonial double bind”: Algerians were pressured to assimilate into French norms but were continually denied full equality (Shepard, 2006). This contradiction produced generations of Algerians who lived between worlds, educated in

French schools and fluent in its cultural codes, yet legally and socially excluded.

By the early twentieth century, these fractures became increasingly visible. Many Algerians who sought mobility through French institutions found themselves alienated from both colonial elites and their own communities. The frustrations accumulated, and following World War II, the demand for independence intensified, culminating in the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962), a conflict marked by extreme violence and deep psychological scars (Evans and Phillips, 2007).

It is within this historical backdrop that Yasmina Khadra situates *Ce que le jour doit à la nuit* (2008). The novel dramatizes how dispossession, assimilation, and cultural erasure shaped personal identities. Younes's transformation into Jonas reflects what Stora calls the "ambivalence of colonial modernity" (Stora, 2001): the seduction of French cultural belonging coupled with the pain of exclusion and loss. His fractured self is not simply an individual dilemma but a mirror of Algeria's broader colonial condition, where land, memory, and subjectivity were contested and often violently reshaped.

1.3 Theoretical Framework: Affect Theory

This study draws on Affect Theory as its guiding framework, a perspective that emphasizes the role of embodied, pre-conscious, and atmospheric forces in shaping identity. Rather than seeing emotions as simply private feelings or rational responses to external conditions, affect theory highlights the intensities and moods that move through and between people, often before they can be fully articulated. As Massumi explains, affect

is that “autonomous force” which precedes language, a bodily stirring that resists neat translation into words. Emotions, in this sense, are what happens when these intensities are named and made socially recognizable (Massumi, 2015)

One of the central insights of affect theory is that affect circulates. Feelings do not remain locked within individuals; instead, they travel between people, objects, and spaces, creating atmospheres that shape how we experience the world. Sara Ahmed describes this process as an “affective economy,” where emotions stick to certain subjects and signs, giving them particular weight and meaning (Ahmed, 2014). This stickiness explains why certain places or encounters carry a sense of heaviness, comfort, or unease that exceeds what can be explained rationally. For Gregg and Seigworth, affect is always relational; it emerges in the spaces between bodies, in fleeting encounters, and in the atmospheres that settle around daily life (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010).

From this perspective, identity formation is not only about ideology, discourse, or conscious choice but also about how people inhabit and negotiate affective landscapes. Shame, joy, fear, or longing do not simply accompany identity; they actively shape how individuals come to understand themselves and their place in the world. Colonial power, then, is enforced through institutions and laws and also through atmospheres of intimidation, shame, or desire that take hold in everyday life (Ahmed, 2014; Massumi, 2015).

For literary analysis, affect theory opens up new ways of reading texts. Instead of focusing solely on arguments or explicit representations, this approach encourages attention to the sensory and emotional textures of

narrative. Bodily descriptions, silences, repetitions, or fragmented rhythms in the text become significant because they dramatize affective intensities at work. Scenes of collective ritual, moments of sudden shame or elation, or atmospheres of tension and belonging are not just narrative details; they are key sites where affect reveals how identity is lived and contested (Ahmed, 2014; Massumi, 2015).

Importantly, affect theory complements postcolonial and decolonial approaches rather than replacing them. Where postcolonial theory tends to analyze power through discourse, institutions, and cultural hybridity, affect theory highlights the « felt dimension » of these structures: how colonialism enters the body, shapes moods, and produces atmospheres of belonging or estrangement (Ahmed, 2014; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010). This dual lens makes it possible to see both the structural and the embodied ways in which colonial modernity shapes identity.

At the same time, affect theory requires caution. As scholars remind us, affect should not be treated as determinative in itself. It needs to be read carefully alongside historical and social contexts so that literary characters' experiences are not reduced to mere "feelings" detached from their colonial settings (Massumi, 2015; Ahmed, 2014). Attention must also be paid to the ethical dimension: interpreting affect in literature should avoid exoticizing suffering or instrumentalizing emotions, but instead treat them as part of the lived complexity of human experience.

For this study, affect theory will be applied in three ways. First, I will identify moments of affective intensity in the texts, scenes where mood, bodily sensation, or atmosphere become central. Second, I will trace how affect circulates between characters, spaces, and social structures, showing

how shame, pride, or longing are transmitted and transformed. Finally, I will consider how narrative form itself, its rhythms, silences, and sensory detail, serve as a vehicle for affect. Taken together, these steps allow for a comparative analysis that foregrounds the emotional and embodied dimensions of identity under colonial rule.

In this way, affect theory reminds us that colonial identity is never only about positions taken in discourse or ideology. It is also about what it feels like to live in unequal worlds, the tightening of a throat, the heaviness of silence, the warmth of fleeting solidarity, or the ache of loss. By turning to affect, this study seeks to recover those dimensions of subjectivity that remain in motion, resisting closure, and yet shaping the lives of Joyce's and Khadra's protagonists.

2. Protagonists' Journeys and Identity Negotiation

2.1 An Affective Reading of Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

From its beginning, Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* insists that identity is not built in abstract categories but in the textures of lived feeling. Stephen's early life is punctuated by a series of emotional shocks and atmospheres that leave lasting imprints on his developing sense of self. At Clongowes Wood College, for example, Stephen is not simply a student in a new institution; he is a boy adrift in an alien landscape. The "long corridors and dark nooks" (Joyce, 1916, p. 15) do not just describe physical spaces, but environments heavy with affect, generating sensations of confusion, shame, and vulnerability. As Sara Ahmed reminds us, affect sticks to places and bodies, circulating through collective moods (Ahmed, 2014).

Stephen's homesickness is not a private failure but the product of an institutional atmosphere designed to discipline, to regulate, and to isolate. His fear is lived through the body, through cold beds, whispers in the dark, the sting of a prefect's punishment.

When Stephen experiences his religious crisis in Chapter Three, Joyce pushes this bodily register even further. Father Arnall's sermons about sin and damnation operate less through doctrine than through affective force. Words reverberate as sounds that shake Stephen into visceral terror: the imagery of hellfire makes his stomach churn, his breath falter, his skin prickle (Joyce, 1916/2003, p. 110). Affect theory helps us see this not simply as a matter of belief but of transmission. Stephen is caught in the collective contagion of Catholic guilt, where emotions move across bodies, making the atmosphere heavy with dread. His eventual turn toward confession is therefore not just intellectual assent but a surrender to an overwhelming tide of feeling.

Nationalist debates in Stephen's household likewise form another affective crucible. Around the Christmas dinner table, family members quarrel over Parnell with voices raised, silences stretched, and glances exchanged that communicate as much as words. Stephen absorbs this atmosphere of anger and loyalty, pride and shame, but cannot fully claim any side. His identity is shaped less by arguments than by the emotional push and pull of these encounters. The boy learns that belonging to a nation, like belonging to a family, is never a purely rational choice; it is mediated by the warmth of solidarity, the sting of reproach, and the confusion of feeling out of place (Brown, 1985; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010).

Art, for Stephen, emerges as the one sphere where affective intensities can be transformed rather than repressed. His epiphany by the sea, where the

sight of a young girl wading in the water overwhelms him with joy and awe, is not presented as a clear thought but as a rush of sensation: “Her image had passed into his soul for ever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy” (Joyce, 1916, p. 170). Brian Massumi calls affect “autonomous and impersonal”; it surges before words can capture it (Massumi, 2015). This moment of ecstasy illustrates how Stephen’s search for freedom is not just about escaping political or religious “nets” (Joyce, 2016) but about pursuing a different intensity of living. Art, in this sense, is less a discipline than a way of inhabiting and amplifying affect, of opening oneself to unpredictable currents of joy and desire.

Even Joyce’s narrative form participates in this affective project. The stream-of-consciousness technique, with its fragmented syntax, abrupt shifts in tone, and sudden bursts of rhythm, does not merely describe Stephen’s thoughts; it performs their volatility. Readers are pulled into Stephen’s sensations: his nervous dread, his guilty longings, his ecstatic flights of imagination. As Ahmed notes, affect often exceeds what can be said (Ahmed, 2014), yet Joyce finds a way to inscribe it into the very texture of language.

Seen through affect theory, Stephen Dedalus’s journey is not the story of a mind gradually asserting autonomy, but of a body repeatedly moved, unsettled, and reoriented by the atmospheres around him. He is made and remade through feelings of fear, shame, pride, longing, and joy. His eventual decision to leave Ireland is not only a rejection of church and nation but also a leap toward a life more attuned to intensity, creativity, and sensation. Identity here is neither fixed nor rationally chosen; it is carved,

moment by moment, in the emotional currents that flow between self and world.

2.2 An Affective Reading of Younes/Jonas in *Ce que le jour doit à la nuit*

Reading Yasmina Khadra's *Ce que le jour doit à la nuit* (2008) through the lens of affect theory draws our attention away from purely ideological or rational frameworks and toward the felt textures of Jonas's life: the moods that saturate his experiences, the bodily discomforts that mark his difference, and the fleeting intensities of joy, shame, and longing that shape his hybrid identity under colonial rule. As Ahmed and Gregg and Seigworth remind us, affect is not simply emotion as we articulate it, it is the atmosphere that presses upon the body before it can be fully named (Ahmed, 2014 ; Gregg and Seigworth, 2010). Younes's journey, then, can be read as a story of cultural negotiation but of affective survival in a world structured by dispossession and ambivalence.

Younes's earliest rupture, his displacement from the rural world of Jnane Jato to the surfaces of Oran, is charged with more than poverty and privilege. It is an affective dislocation (Massumi, 2015). The earthy smells, rough textures, and sounds of his birthplace remain inscribed in his body as sensory memory, resurfacing as haunting reminders of loss. When he enters his uncle's European-style home, the shift is not just material but atmospheric: ordered routines and polished manners carry a quiet violence that makes his body tense, his movements awkward, his silences heavy (Khadra, 2008). Assimilation here is never seamless; it is felt as an ache, a tightening, a quiet sense of being out of step.

Friendship, too, is an affective battleground. With his companions, Jonas experiences laughter, solidarity, and the intoxicating ease of belonging. Yet these moments are fragile. The same currents of joy that bind him to others can suddenly turn into exclusion, envy, or betrayal when colonial divisions resurface. Affect theory foregrounds these fragile, fleeting atmospheres: belonging is never fixed but continually produced and undone by the ebb and flow of collective moods (Khalifa, 2017). Jonas learns to live with these oscillations, but the instability leaves its mark, each rupture reinforcing his sense of being neither fully inside nor outside the group.

Love intensifies this predicament. Jonas's longing for Émilie is not expressed in rational deliberation but in bodily surges of elation and despair: his chest tightening at the sight of her, the warmth of desire followed by the cold sting of rejection (Khadra, 2008). The shame of unfulfilled love, as Benamara notes, is lived not in words but in the blush of the skin, the sinking of the stomach, the heaviness of solitude. Colonial difference intrudes here as well, silently shaping the borders of intimacy. Jonas's desire is genuine, yet it collides with unspoken hierarchies that tell him he will never truly belong in her world.

Political upheaval brings another layer of affective intensity. Scenes of unrest in Oran are not only historical markers but atmospheres thick with fear, anxiety, and collective anger. Jonas does not simply witness these events; he is swept up in their affective contagion. His body absorbs the unease of the crowd, the dread of violence, the disorientation of uncertainty. Colonial violence here is not only external but atmospheric: it seeps into everyday life as a mood that weighs on bodies, leaving Jonas's self fractured and unsettled (Bouchenne, 2023).

Across these moments, Jonas's hybrid identity emerges less as a rational balancing act and more as an affective predicament. He yearns for belonging but is persistently shadowed by feelings of estrangement. Joy is possible, but it is fragile, shadowed by melancholy that never fully dissipates. Affect theory allows us to see how colonial power operates not only through law, economy, or ideology but also through the micro-textures of life: through the tightening of a throat, the heaviness of silence, the warmth of fleeting solidarity, or the ache of rejection (Ahmed, 2014; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010).

Khadra's narrative, in this way, reveals how the colonial subject is shaped as much by atmosphere as by argument. Younes's story is not just about divided allegiances between colonizer and colonized, but about how longing, shame, joy, and grief circulate through his body, structuring his sense of who he is and where he belongs. His search for home, love, and identity unfolds as a navigation of feelings as much as of cultural categories. In this way, *Ce que le jour doit à la nuit* offers a powerful reminder that colonial subjectivity is always affective: lived through sensations that exceed words, yet mark the contours of a fractured and unsettled self.

2.3 Comparative Affective Struggles in Colonial Contexts

Looking at Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and Younes/Jonas in *Ce que le jour doit à la nuit* (2008) through the lens of affect theory draws our attention away from abstract debates and toward the very « felt experiences » of colonial life. Affect theory, as scholars such as Sara Ahmed (2014) and Gregg and Seigworth (2010) suggest, helps us see how emotions and moods circulate between people, spaces, and

histories, shaping how we become often before we even have words to describe it. Both Stephen and Jonas reveal that identity under colonial rule is not simply about making ideological choices, but about carrying the weight of shame, longing, pride, or melancholy in their bodies and memories.

Stephen's story is steeped in affective intensities. His time at Clongowes and Belvedere is marked less by reasoned reflection than by an atmosphere of unease, the dark corridors, the threat of punishment, the guilt pressed into him during Catholic rituals (King, 2011). These moods cling to him, making school and home alike feel alienating (Ahmed, 2014). Yet these moments of artistic awakening arrive as sudden bursts of sensation, like the vision of the girl by the tide, where desire and beauty overwhelm thought in a rush of feeling (Joyce, 1916). His break with church and nation is not the result of a carefully argued philosophy, but rather the build-up of suffocating shame and the intoxicating joy of creativity. His art is, in a way, his body's response to a lifetime of discomfort.

Younes's journey, in contrast, is shaped less by outright revolt and more by an undercurrent of loss and yearning. Taken from his rural home into the European household of his uncle, Jonas carries with him a sense of dislocation that never fully disappears. Nostalgia and bodily unease shadow his friendships and romances, even in moments of joy (Khadra, 2008; Khalifa, 2017). Love, for him, is never free of tension, envy, shame, and solitude creep in, reminding him that he belongs neither fully to his Algerian roots nor to the colonial society he inhabits (Benamara, 2019; Bouchenne, 2023). His voice, often filled with pathos, shows that this identity is not something he chooses once and for all, but

something constantly shaped and reshaped by affective intensities, grief for what is lost, desire for what cannot be fully claimed (Djafar, 2020).

Placed side by side, Stephen and Jonas remind us that the experience of colonial identity is as much emotional as it is cultural. Both young men live in atmospheres charged with anxiety, shame, and fleeting hope. Yet they process these intensities differently. Stephen channels his discomfort into art, transmuting his discomfort into creative freedom. Jonas, however, remains caught in ambivalence, his nostalgia and longing binding him to both worlds but securing him in neither.

What Joyce and Khadra ultimately reveal is that colonial modernity leaves its deepest mark not just on the political or cultural level, but in the body's registers of fear, longing, joy, and grief. Identity here is not a fixed choice between two paths, but a fragile negotiation lived out through sticky, lingering emotions that shape belonging and selfhood in ways both subtle and profound (Ahmed, 2014).

2- Conclusion :

Analyzing Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and Khadra's *Ce que le jour doit à la nuit* (2008) through affect theory reminds us that identity is not only a matter of ideas, politics, or culture. It is also lived in the body, in fleeting moods, and in the quiet weight of feelings that cannot always be put into words. Stephen and Jonas, though worlds apart, both show us that the experience of colonial life seeps into the everyday: in the awkward silences of family quarrels, in the ache of nostalgia, in the rush of inspiration, or in the sting of rejection.

For Stephen, these emotions eventually propel him toward art, turning discomfort into creation and solitude into a kind of freedom. For Jonas, the same undercurrents, love, loss, and longing hold him in a space of ambivalence, never quite allowing him to settle fully in one world or the other. Both journeys show that colonial identity is not fixed, but shaped moment by moment, through feelings that stick to people and places, sometimes lifting them toward hope, pulling them back into despair.

What affect theory helps us see is that these novels are not only about history or ideology but about what it feels like to live through them. Colonialism is carried in the heart as much as in the law, in the rhythms of daily life as much as in politics. Joyce and Khadra capture this truth with sensitivity, reminding us that literature is one of the few places where the hidden textures of life, its shame, joy, longing, and resilience, can be fully expressed.

In bringing Stephen and Jonas together, we are reminded that the struggle to belong, to resist, or simply to endure is a deeply human one. And perhaps this is the lasting power of both novels: they teach us that identity, especially in fractured societies, is less about certainty than about learning to live with the turbulence of feeling

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