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## ***Pathos, Logos and Ethos: Rhetorical Duel between Brutus and Antony in William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar***

According to Brian Vickers, "Shakespeare's poetic language was nourished by rhetoric" (1970: 163). It is then hardly surprising that the application of rhetoric as an analytical tool for the study of Shakespeare's works has a long tradition; L. C. Knights observes that "the works of T. W. Baldwin, Sister Miriam Joseph, B. L. Joseph and Brian Vickers – to name no others – have established beyond doubt the importance of rhetoric in Elizabethan poetics" (1980: 2). Taking into account the history of the shaping of poetic verse in England, the rhetorical perspective seems to be one of the most rewarding approaches towards the sixteenth-century literature; as pointed out by C. S. Lewis (1954: 61), "nearly all our older poetry was written and read by men to whom the distinction between poetry and rhetoric, in its modern form, would have been meaningless." The art of oratory was the axis of the Renaissance theory of composition and had a profound influence on the way Shakespeare and his contemporaries perceived and employed language. **Bibl. Jagi**

The paper is an attempt at describing the functioning of three rhetorical persuasive proofs: *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos* in two speeches of Antony and Brutus from William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. The two *orationes* from the Forum scene (III. ii) are widely ranked among "purple passages," the best known passages from the playwright's oeuvre and offer the most fruitful material for rhetorical and stylistic investigation.

The division into three persuasive appeals, *pathos*, *ethos* and *logos*, is one of the basic elements of the traditional theory of rhetoric.<sup>1</sup> The technique of *pathos* consists in inducing certain emotions in the audience to secure their favourable reaction to the orator's words. "The audience begins to *feel* that the speaker must be right, and is won over to his side" (Dixon 1990: 25). Through *pathos* a skilled speaker should be able to put the listeners into a receptive frame of mind and then manipulate their emotions, "arousing delight or sorrow, love or

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Kennedy 1963, Dixon 1990.

hatred, indignation or mirth" (Dixon 1990: 25). Through the technique of *ethos* the speaker shows himself good and noble and thus worthy of trust. Aristotle (*Rhetoric*, I. ii. 4<sup>2</sup>) sees this appeal as the most potent, since by displaying himself a credible man the speaker may exercise all other persuasive appeals much more effectively: "we place confidence in the good to a wider extent and with less hesitation, on all subjects generally; but on points where no real accuracy exists, but there is room for doubt, we lay even entire confidence in them." Gideon Burton points out in *Silva Rhetoricae* that using the technique of *ethos* was recommended in *exordium*, the initial part of the speech, when the speaker's credibility with the audience is established and when the framework for the speech is constructed. Finally, the third persuasive proof, *logos*, is based on reason. By employing this technique the speaker draws on logic, constructing his utterance on the framework of the syllogism or *enthymeme*, a syllogism without one premise.

According to Wolfgang Müller (1979: 118), "No school rhetoric may explain the nature, aim and dangers of rhetoric better than Brutus's and Antony's speeches in the Forum."<sup>3</sup> The Forum Scene is the turning point of the action of the play and a moment of unique dramatic tension: during the funeral of Caesar two political opponents, Brutus and Antony, fight a rhetorical duel trying to win the plebeians for their political ends. Brutus, one of the assassins, makes an attempt at explaining the murder and convincing the crowd that Caesar had to be sacrificed for the benefit of Rome. Antony, on the other hand, wants to persuade the audience to recognize Brutus as a villain and it is he who wins the duel by convincing the crowd to turn against Brutus and other conspirators. Shakespeare arranges the two characters' speeches one immediately after the other. Such planning of the scene results in the intensification of dramatic tension and enhancement of its dynamic qualities. The speeches characterize Brutus and Antony and become the expressions of their political views. Consequently, the whole scene becomes not only a duel of rhetorical skills, but also a confrontation of two strong political personalities.

Parallel as Brutus's and Antony's *orationes* are, there are great many differences between the persuasive strategies employed by the two speakers. Brutus's speech is primarily based on *logos* and *ethos*. Antony, on the other hand, makes ample use of the fact that he was allowed to deliver his speech after the assassin

<sup>2</sup> Traditionally, the references to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and Cicero's *De Inventione* do not point to selected pages, but to particular sections of treatises (book, chapter, section).

<sup>3</sup> "Kein Schulrhetorik kann Wesen, Ziel und Gefahren der Rhetorik besser verdeutlichen als die Reden des Brutus und Antonius auf dem Forum" (English trans. M. Ch.).

and directs his speech to subvert Brutus's *oratio*, combining all three persuasive strategies. The two *orationes* differ in the number of rhetorical figures: Brutus's oratory is much more figurative and adorned with numerous figures and tropes; "Brutus speaks to the people neatly, clearly, rhythmically and reasonably – in prose" (Hulme 1964: 134), whereas Antony relies on "a masterly blend of emotional appeal and false logic" (Sanders 1967: 34).

At the beginning of III. ii the plebeians demand explanation for Caesar's death: "We will be satisfied: let us be satisfied"<sup>4</sup> (III. ii. 1). The people want sufficient clarification to enable them to rest content with what happened to Caesar. With the stirred mob gathered in the Forum the speech of Brutus is a political necessity. The assassin has to ascend the pulpit and sufficiently explain his actions lest the people might turn against him and the other conspirators. In order to secure his political position Brutus has to persuade the mob that the killing of Caesar was unavoidable.

In III. i Brutus gives specific instructions as to the shape of the funeral. The ceremony will start with him delivering the first speech after which Antony will enter with Caesar's body and deliver his own speech as a friend of the late ruler. Cassius opposes the idea to allow Antony to the pulpit: "Do not consent / That Antony speak in his funeral" (III. i. 231–32). The conspirator is well aware of the oratory skills of Caesar's "friend" and knows that the speech may turn the people against them ("Know you how much the people may be moved / By that which he will utter" III. i. 233–34). Brutus ignores the advice and insists on his plan. He is determined to speak first and has no doubts that his explanations will content the mob while Antony, who will deliver his oratory "by leave and by permission" (III. i. 239), cannot alter the people after they have been won by his speech. Brutus assures Cassius that the ceremony shall "advantage more than do us wrong" (III. i. 242) if the people are given proper explanation and Caesar is to be buried with full honours. Brutus assumes that when the people see that the conspirators hold the murdered ruler in great respect and praise him even after his death they will be more easily convinced that the assassination was unavoidable for the benefit of the country and was not dictated by their animosity towards the ruler. Brutus gives Antony direct instructions as to what he should include in his speech: "You shall not in your funeral blame us, / But speak all good you can devise of Caesar" (III. ii. 245–46). Brutus wants Antony to deliver a *laudatio*, a speech of praise, a clear instance of epideictic

<sup>4</sup> All quotations are taken from the Arden Edition of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. D. Daniell. The Arden Shakespeare. London: Thomas Learning, 2005).

oratory, which would not go beyond the matter of expressing respect for the late ruler and which would not in any way touch upon the moral assessment of the conspiracy. A great quality of Antony's oratory skills is that he is able to turn a *laudatio* into an *accusatio* (a speech in which the orator accuses somebody of a crime) and a *deliberatio* (a speech in which the speaker tries to persuade the hearers to a certain course of action). The speaker mixes the three genres of oratory, gradually turning the speech of praise into a strict moral criticism of the conspiracy, which compels the plebeians to rise against the conspirators.

Most critics agree that Brutus's decision to allow Antony to the pulpit is his greatest political mistake. Brutus strongly believes that the plebeians will understand and accept his reasons for killing Caesar and will share his idealist approach. At this point Brutus may be accused of the lack of political wisdom and of the ability to foresee the political consequences of his decision – he rejects the possibility that Antony will go against his instructions and will win the crowd to his side. By doing so he also seems to underestimate the manipulative power of rhetoric and to reject the possibility that another speaker's neatly devised oratory may easily outshine his rational explanations. The reason for Brutus's failure in the duel does not consist only in the fact that he allows Antony to speak, but primarily in the style of his oratory. As observed by Jean Fuzier (1981: 51):

Instead of explaining the political situation which led to Caesar's murder, and justifying this act, if necessary, by a detailed account of Caesar's encroachments upon the secular liberties of the Roman Republic, he speaks in his own name, as though he alone were the instigator and author of the killing of Caesar, and he cannot bring himself to charge him with anything more precise and more condemnable than "ambition"; in fact he speaks like a guilty man who has just realized his guilt, and is unable to plead his own cause convincingly.

In this respect one can hardly accuse Brutus of lying and deceit. Müller (1979: 119) argues that Brutus's *oratio* is an example of *genus iudiciae*, a speech in which there is no discrepancy between what the speaker believes in and what he wants others to believe he believes in. The speaker takes the liberty to speak his mind. This would suggest that Brutus is mostly honest in his argumentation and the speech he delivers reveals a number of important traits of his character.

Vickers (1979: 242) points to the "skeletal purity" of Brutus's speech, which strikes the reader with its "remarkable rhetorical symmetry." The opening of Brutus's *exordium* is very effective. In order to win the plebeians' attention the speaker uses apostrophe and addresses them "Romans, countrymen and lovers"

(III. ii. 13). The three epithets constitute a figure of *tricolon*, which in Classical rhetoric was often used as verbal ornament.<sup>5</sup> However, the address does not solely perform aesthetic function. As the communicative effect of these words consists in attracting the plebeians' attention, they establish the speaker-hearer relationship and prepare the grounds for the words that follow. The words are a part of the strategy of *ethos*: Brutus lays primary emphasis on the epitaph "Romans," which allows him to highlight the bonds of nationality between him and his hearers and suggests that since they are all Romans, the plebeians may expect him to be honest and trust him. The strategy of achieving the audience's goodwill is particularly strengthened by the last epithet "lovers," which in this context is semantically equivalent to the word "friends" (Daniell 2005: 253). From the very beginning of his speech, Brutus constructs the image of himself as a patriot, a friend of the people and a Roman who is able to sacrifice his friend for the sake of his country. The epithets are followed with three imperative clauses in which the speaker calls the people to "hear" (III. ii. 13) his cause, to "be silent" (III. ii. 14), to "believe" him (III. ii. 14), to "have respect" (III. ii. 15) for his honour, to "censure" (III. ii. 16) his speech and to "awake" (III. ii. 16) their senses to his words. The imperatives perform a number of functions. Primarily, they are aimed at silencing the crowd and making it "well-disposed, attentive and receptive" (*De Inventione*, I. xx). By enhancing the *exordium* with such a number of imperatives Brutus also clearly takes over the control of the situation and assumes the role of a person legitimately entitled to command others. The figure of *chiasmus* allows the speaker to lay particular emphasis exactly on these words, which play a significant role in the development of his persuasive techniques. The repetition of the words "hear" and "believe" intensifies the force of the imperatives and helps him to attract full attention of the people; on the other hand, the repetition of the word "honour" aids the strategy of *ethos*. The imperative clauses used by Brutus also perform several persuasive functions: by referring to his "honour" the speaker surreptitiously assures the mob of his noble character and continues the construction of his positive image. By making himself look like a noble patriot, the speaker wins the audience's favour. His request to be judged is strengthened by the use of the figure of *paranomasia*, a repetition of words similar in sound but different in sense, in "*Censure me in your wisdom and awake your senses*" (III. ii. 16–17) [italics mine]. The words in which he asks the people to judge him are to prove that he is not afraid of their assessment since, as he suggests,

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Burton, *Silva Rhetoricae*.

he has nothing to hide and the people are bound to acknowledge the political necessity of killing Caesar.

In the *argumentatio* Brutus focuses primarily on *logos*, using patriotism as his main argument. Entering the dialogue with a hypothetical member of the audience he declares that he killed Caesar not because the ruler was not dear to him, but because he loved “Rome more.” With the comparative form of the *correctio* (*non X, sed Y*) the speaker reveals to the audience the hierarchy of values he wants them to believe he holds: his mother country is for Brutus the utmost priority and no other issue or value may outweigh his love for Rome – at this point *logos* is turned into *ethos*. The speaker explains that the killing of Caesar was necessary for the benefit of Rome and for the sake of his country he is even able to sacrifice his own friend. The rhetorical power of the word “Rome” is further strengthened by the echo of the first epithet from the *exordium*. In a series of rhetorical questions Brutus tries to put himself in the position of a tragic hero who has to choose between two equal values: friendship and the love for his country. He also tries to present himself as a benefactor of the people: the speaker once again uses *logos* to construct the syllogism: when Caesar was alive (*minor premise*) he posed a threat to the plebeians’ freedom (*major premise*), therefore his assassination secured the political being of the people (*conclusio*). For the audience it becomes much harder to disbelieve the man who protected them and to condemn the deed which secured their well-being.

David Daniell (2005: 55) observes that the *oratio* of Brutus is “so coldly effective that at the end the confused want him to have either a statue or a triumph or to be crowned Caesar.” The people gathered in the Forum cry that it is he who should be Caesar (“Let him be Caesar” [III. ii. 51]) and seem to have been completely won by the oratory. The reaction of the people reveals the irony of the situation: Brutus killed Caesar to prevent him from being crowned and to preserve the republic, yet after the speech of the assassin the mob wants to have him crowned as Caesar, ending the republic anyway. Daniell concludes that “logical, balanced, heavily patterned, economical to a fault, coolly self-justifying in ‘as he was ambitious, I slew him,’ in its self-consciousness of gesture, the oration matches the individuality, the physical shape, of Brutus” (2005: 55). The speech expresses the orator. Brutus hardly ever resorts to *pathos* – he relies more on logical reasoning and presenting himself to the audience as a noble and valorous man. He does not try to instigate in the audience the emotions of pity or fear; the primary emphasis of his speech is laid on the construction of a respectful political and moral image of himself and relies on the appeal to the audience’s reason. It is a speech of

a politician who wants to convince the people to his ideas through reason and by promoting his own integrity. This strategy of Brutus is used against him by Antony, who delivers a speech that cunningly undermines the assumptions of the first speaker's oratory.

The oration of Antony is markedly different from Brutus's. The discrepancies between the speeches concern both the formal aspects of the oratory as well as the content. Antony's speech is three times longer than Brutus's *oratio* ("close to 1,100 words, against Brutus's 350" [Daniell 2005: 72]) and represents a different type of organization of the speech. Fuzier observes that Antony's use of the art of rhetoric is "less systematic and more devious" (1981: 32). Brutus bases his oratory on the combination of two strategies: *logos* and *ethos*; Antony, on the other hand, conjoins all three modes of persuasion. Müller argues that if Brutus's oratory may be described as an instance of *genus iudiciae*, Antony's rhetoric is dominated by *ductus subtilis* (1979: 127), a mode in which the speaker constructs his rhetorical strategies on seeming, deception, and irony.

The first words of Antony's *exordium* seem to mimic the opening of Brutus's oratory. The speaker addresses the plebeians with an apostrophe and asks for their attention: "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears" (III. ii. 74). Antony, like the first speaker, uses three epithets to address the audience; yet, he arranges them in a different order. Antony uses "Friends" as the first epithet which is clearly set "against Brutus's more formal 'Romans'" (Daniell 2005: 257). The first word of the second speech "allows immediate warmth, and thus access to their [the plebeians'] hearts" (Daniell 2005: 257). From the very beginning of the oration Antony suggests close bonds of friendship between himself and the people in the Forum; the bonds of common nationality emphasized by Brutus are for him of lesser importance. Daniell (2005: 257) observes that in Antony's *oratio* the "movement from the personal to the national is reinforced by expansion: *Friends* (one syllable), *Romans* (two syllables), *countrymen* (three syllables)." The echo of the first word of the speech is undeniably the strongest and immediately sets a certain perspective for the whole oratory: Antony will employ the suggested bonds of friendship in his appeals of *pathos* and *ethos*. The speaker declares that he came "to bury Caesar, not to praise him," which is an open lie: Antony does plan to praise Caesar in the next part of his speech; what is more, as was emphasized above, he is using the conventional form of *laudatio*.

After a short *sententia* (which is a means of the technique of *logos*) Antony repeats the main accusation against Caesar: "The noble Brutus / Hath told you Caesar was ambitious" (III. ii. 78–79). Antony conditions the validity of the

accusation in Brutus's nobility – by undermining one of the statements, i.e. Brutus being noble or Caesar being ambitious, one subverts the other and that is exactly what he tries to do in the rest of his speech, by gradually changing the semantics of the words “honourable” and “noble.” Sister Miriam Joseph (1966: 139) comments on the speaker's strategy in the following terms: “An outstanding instance of *antiphrasis* is the repetition of ‘honourable man,’ spoken at first with apparent sincerity [. . .], but growing in biting irony.” Antony's words “For Brutus is an honourable man; / So are they all, all honourable men” (III. ii. 83–4) weaken moral uniqueness of Brutus, as all the conspirators share the common feature of being “honourable” and may be described in similar terms. This particular effect is achieved by the figure of *epizeuxis*, “the emphatic repetition of a word with no other word between” (Fuzier 1981: 33), which lays particular emphasis on the word “all.” The information that Brutus is “honourable” is given a number of times and each repetition gradually diminishes the semantic strength of the phrase and its positive connotations. The word becomes a neutral, common label for all the conspirators and finally gains purely pejorative tone with one of the plebeians asking: “They were traitors: honourable men?” (III. ii. 154). At this point the word “honourable” becomes semantically equivalent to the word “traitor.” In his use of the phrase Antony resorts to irony, a means of rhetoric defined by Burton as “speaking in such a way as to imply the contrary to what one says, often for the purpose of derision, mockery or jest” (*Silva Rhetoricae*). However, the speaker follows the idea of *ductus subtilis* and pretends not to be aware of the persuasive techniques he exercises. The force of his use of irony depends primarily on being gradual and so disguised as to make the speaker seem perfectly unconscious of manipulating the language. Antony relies to a large extent on understatement and craftily manipulates the audience to make sure they understand and swallow all his intricate insinuations.

Next, Antony proceeds to refuting Brutus's accusation. By exercising *logos* he provides a list of reasonable proofs which counter the conspirator's claim that Caesar was ambitious. The arguments advanced by the speaker are, in fact, a praise of Caesar and prove that Antony's initial declaration is false. The list of arguments in defence of Caesar is long. Firstly, Antony points out that the murdered ruler was his “friend” and always remained “faithful and just” to him (III. ii. 85). Secondly, he emphasizes that Caesar's military campaigns brought fortune to Rome and secured the development of the country. Next, Antony resorts to the appeal of *pathos*: “When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept” (III. ii. 92). The speaker wants to construct the image of a ruler who did not put himself above the common people and was compassionate, especially to the



weakest. Finally, Antony emphatically resorts to an ocular proof: “You all did see, that on the Lupercal / I thrice presented him a kingly crown, / Which he did thrice refuse” (III. ii. 96–98). By referring to the would-be coronation Antony ultimately dismisses the charge that Caesar was ambitious and provocatively asks a rhetorical question: “Was this ambition?” (III. ii. 98). After presenting each proof in defence of Caesar the speaker consistently contrasts his arguments with Brutus’s claim: “But Brutus says, he was ambitious, / And Brutus is a honorable man” (III. ii. 87–88). The disjunctive words “But” and “Yet” signal semantic turns. Antony persuasively contrasts his arguments with the arguments of the first speaker; the latter being grounded in the alleged “honour” of the orator, the former in common knowledge and ocular proofs. Such construction of the arguments plainly undermines Brutus’s points, which turn out feeble and false. Simultaneously with the validity of the conspirator’s line of thought, Antony deconstructs the positive image Brutus struggles to construct in his *oratio* through the use of *ethos*.

After refuting Brutus’s arguments Antony denies doing it: “I speak not to disapprove what Brutus spoke, / But here I am to speak what I know” (III. ii. 101–2). One of the first actions Antony performs in his speech is contradicting Brutus’s words (in declaring that he does not intend to praise Caesar); afterwards the speaker consistently refutes the arguments of his political opponent. The declaration is an instance of *ethos*; it is aimed at making a positive impression and constructing his own image as a just and honest person. Antony clearly does not want to be considered an orator who exercises manipulative techniques on the people, but a speaker who speaks only what he holds true. This “self depreciation is meant to pass for *tapinosis* (belittling or debasing device)” and may be understood as a “subtle private joke which Antony enjoys while the citizens are contented to take his words at their face-value, and are ironically spurred to mutiny not by plain Antony, but by Antony’s image of Brutus, the arch-rhetorician” (Fuzier 1981: 41). The strategy of belittling one’s own skills, *depreciatio*, which is selected by the speaker, turns out to be a communicative necessity. Antony confronts the audience that has already been won by the previous speaker and he has to be very careful in his planning of the oration. Avoiding open confrontation with Brutus is the best way to confront the unfavourable audience. This strategy not only helps Antony in creating his positive image, but simultaneously undermines the position of the previous speaker, who, in the light of Antony’s suggestions, becomes a manipulator and a liar.

The orator uses *depreciatio*; he denies his own skills trying to prove the claim that he is “no orator” (III. ii. 210): “For I have neither wit, nor words,

nor worth, / Action, nor utterance, not the power of speech / To stir men's blood" (III. ii. 214–16). *Depreciatio* does not undermine Antony's position; the speaker argues that he can "only speak right on" (III. ii. 216), without resorting to figurative language – once again Antony emphasizes how honest and truthful he is in his oratory. The speaker's words are self-contradictory: he claims that he does not possess any rhetorical knowledge and does not know how to exercise the manipulative techniques, yet, as pointed out by Daniell (2005: 265): "wit (intellectual cleverness), as well as starting a run of alliterations, begins a list of the whole technique of good oratory, followed by words (fluency), worth (authority), action (gesture) and utterance (eloquence), all leading to stirring power." The *enumeratio*, which is to prove Antony's rhetorical incompetence, in fact proves his knowledge of the subject and deep understanding of what is crucial in the construction of a successful oratory. The fact that Antony's *depreciatio* is self-contradictory cannot be observed by the audience, who are unaware of the intricate manipulation which is exercised upon them. The plebeians slavishly follow the speakers, without judging the coherence of the arguments, at the same time, various tricks played by the orators make them even more susceptible to persuasion.

In his declaration: "I only speak right on: / I tell you that which you yourselves do know, / Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths" (III. ii. 216–18), Antony uses a number of rhetorical figures. To emphasize the role of the audience and flatter them the speaker uses *polyptoton*: in "I tell you that which *you yourself* do know" [italics mine]; the repetition of the word "poor" is the device of *epizeuxis*, which is "specifically set aside for appeals to extreme passion" (Daniell 2005: 265). The phrase "dumb mouths," which in itself is oxymoronic, refers to the "Elizabethan notion that a victim's wounds bled afresh in the presence of the murderer" (Daniell 2005: 265). The wounds on Caesar's body "speak for" (III. ii. 119) the orator. The assassin is immediately identified by the speaker in his very next line: "were I Brutus" (III. ii. 119). This line functions as another indirect accusation against the first speaker.

Antony also speculates about what the oratories would look like if he and Brutus changed places. Using *pathos* he argues that then his speech "would ruffle up" the plebeians' "spirits and put a tongue / In every wound of Caesar that should move / The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny" (III. ii. 221–23). Daniell (2005: 265) calls this "an exhilarating rhetorical trick." The juxtaposition of the opposites: Antony and Brutus, two political opponents, who represent markedly different styles of oratory, is constructed around the figure of *syneciosis*, "a composition of contraries" (Joseph 1966: 135). Antony further

distances himself from the conspirators, whose positive image is deconstructed and reversed. The hypothetical change of places is not necessary, since it is Antony who is able to instigate powerful emotions in the audience and it is his command of oratory that turns out to be superior. Joseph (1966: 286) observes that “this oration is simultaneously excellent rhetoric and excellent poetic, for it unquestionably persuades, and it is so woven into the plot as to constitute a twofold dramatic peripeteia: Antony’s fortunes begin to rise, Brutus’s to fall.”

This article does not fully describe the complexity of the two speeches, which offer enough material for a series of papers. By a close rhetorical analysis of the scene the reader is given the opportunity to compare and contrast two markedly different persuasive strategies and to draw conclusions as to the effectiveness of two contrary styles of oratory. The Forum scene in *Julius Caesar* is one of the greatest tributes to the art of oratory made in sixteenth-century English literature. As observed by Gayle Greene (1980: 69), “rhetoric in this play is a theme as well as style.”

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