

# ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННЫЙ ОБРАЗ ГОРОДА | CITY'S ARTISTIC IMAGE

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## The image of Yerevan in Bulgarian literature (paper I)

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### ABSTRACT

The article investigates the image(s) of Yerevan in Bulgarian literature of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, where 'literature' is understood in the wider sense transcending fiction and poetry. Travelogues, a diary, and poems – published and unpublished alike – are submitted to close reading with two aims in mind: to test the relevance of the presumption that Yerevan-mentioning Bulgarian texts would interiorise two discourses – that of long-term historical Bulgarian-Armenian fraternity (emblematised by Mt Ararat and Pejo Yavorov's poem “Armenians”, 1899) and that of vivifying communist construction under Soviet Moscow's patronage – and to assess the relative weight of these discourses within the sources analysed. Sources testify to the domestication of the pre-Soviet fraternity discourse by the Soviet one, culminating around 1966, and to the peripheralization of the Soviet discourse beginning in 1972. This publication constitutes the first part of the study, focusing on two travelogues: one published by a politically prominent publisher (1977) and the other kept as a manuscript in the State Archives of Bulgaria (written in 1968). While due attention is paid to the 1977 book as a verbal-visual composition, semantic analysis discerns strategies of Sovietising an intercultural encounter and of undermining a Sovietised horizon of expectations, respectively. The second part of the study will appear in the following issue.

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## 1. Introduction

Bulgarians and Armenians are both neighbors and non-neighbors. Had they been only non-neighbors, Yerevan could have become the emblem of Armenia(nness) for Bulgarians (like Paris for France and Frenchness, and London for England and Englishness).

The silhouette of Yerevan slowly emerged in the early 1920s<sup>1</sup>–late 1950s, to be publicised and widely circulated in 1966, enjoy almost ‘full-length’ (‘size’) plan depictions in 1968, 1977 and 1982, and wane away after the 1980s. Had the USSR and the “Soviet bloc” survived longer (and had the process of intra-imperial integration persisted), the symbolic value of Yerevan in Bulgarian imagination could have been different. Unlike image(s) of Armenia(ns/-nness), image(s) of Yerevan did not enter the core of Bulgarian literary culture: Yerevan remained in travelogues/diaries and, randomly, in second-order, both from the standpoint of socialist officialdom<sup>2</sup> and of post-communist rewriting(s) of the literary canon, lyrical poetry. One of these travelogues was written by a belletrist at the top of the Stalinist establishment. However, it remained in the shadow of his novels and short stories<sup>3</sup>. Some of the poems were written by one of the ‘three top’ poets of the first post-Stalinist generation, the so-called April Generation, promoted by the new Communist Party leader in 1956. However, his ‘Armenian’ poems were peripheral within his oeuvre (one of them remained unpublished, others were published only in periodicals, and those that reached book format did not receive compositional prominence).

Throughout its existence, the image of Yerevan hosted, as its important component rising to the value of a semi-hidden core, an alternative, pre-Soviet emblem of Armenianness and Bulgarian-Armenian contacts or, rather, mutuality<sup>4</sup>.

The pre-Soviet emblem persisted after the 1980s, but that inquiry falls outside the scope of this research. It would suffice here to say the following. First, the co-presence of the two (potential or actual) emblems of Armenianness in the Bulgarian imaginary (Yerevan and the statue of the Bulgarian poet Pejo Javorov in front of a Yerevan secondary school bearing his name) is worth exploring with an eye on the ideological collision between Russian Pan-Slavism and Czecho-Slovak ‘Slavic Mutualism’. (The collision, or rather diglossia, is well known to historians of Eastern and ‘East-Central’ Europe)<sup>5</sup>.

Second, the pre-Soviet emblem is absent in the earliest Bulgarian written account of Soviet Yerevan (1958) known to me. However, that account undermines Soviet self-affirmation in a subtler, and indeed radical, way (tacitly juxtaposing the images of Stalin and Satan, and of Soviet large-scale construction activities with the archetypal desert).

The monument to Javorov was erected in the spring of 1966. This fact alone, and a circumstance about its first year of existence (see below), drive me to re-assess its

<sup>1</sup> When some newspapers announced the establishment of Soviet power there or about the Dashnakist uprising soon afterward.

<sup>2</sup> With one exception: the poet Andrej Germanov.

<sup>3</sup> The travelogue was never republished.

<sup>4</sup> See (Selvelli, 2011) as an introduction to the Bulgarian-Armenian mutuality/-ism. The discourse and the correlative practices probably culminated in the collaboration and commemoration between members of the Inner Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organisation and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation in the 1900s–1930s. Despite strong secularism in both organisations, the mentioned mutualism can be viewed as a modern re-articulation of the ideology of a ‘New Israel’ and thus as basically anti-imperialist.

<sup>5</sup> Regarding the mentioned ideological collision/diglossia, I would single out as a suitable introduction the collection of papers (Glanc et al., 2005), and esp. the contributions of Vladimir Svaton, Marek Přihoda and Ekaterina Velmezova; on the concept of “Slavic mutuality” and its history see the contribution of Pavlova.

symbolical status. The statue is not so much the alternative to Yerevan (and more real) emblem of Armenia(ness) in the Bulgarian imaginary, but the crossroads, the symbiosis of Yerevan and what is indeed the alternative emblem – Javorov’s 1899 poem ‘Armenians’; or the symbol of domestication of the pre-Soviet emblem by the Soviet one.

Each of the Soviet-era Bulgarian images of Yerevan has its own center of structural reason. These centers are: a glass of cognac in combination with a bunch of grapes (Daskalov, 1956/59); iconography of Jesus being tempted by the devil in the desert (Matthew 4:1–11) (Kiril, 1958); the poetics of an illuminated letter (Xajrabadjan<sup>6</sup> & Georgiev, 1968); an image of a mountain-stone-human ‘thinking and sensing matter’ (Grudev, 1968); a multi-photo postcard (Xristov, 1976); a double-exposure image of an artist’s atelier fluctuating between a one-room studio and an open-air country-wide enterprise (Indžov, 1977); an architectural space extending around and beyond interior walls<sup>7</sup> (Vürban Stamatov, 1982–83); and a minimalist image of a lighthouse (Gavrilov, 1989).

All structure-generating images, or (more properly) ‘semantic-visual anagrams’ listed, originate from travelogues/diaries. The 1968 (Grudev, 1968) and the 1958 ones can be related to more or less prominent specimens of Armenian (Eghishe Charents) and Bulgarian (Sevda Sevan) poetry. Yerevan is present in the works of three Bulgarian poets (Germanov, 1972; Sevan, 1974; Petkova, 1979). Its presence in their oeuvre cannot be reduced to a single structure-generating image.

The main sources used are 12, of three kinds. I consider “a source” a narrative piece; a group of all lyrical pieces relevant to Yerevan/Armenia within a poetic oeuvre; and a group of short heterogeneous pieces devoted to a single event. Thus we have: Kiril (1958), Daskalov (1959), multiple authors (in a 1966 newspaper), Xajrabadjan & Georgiev (1968), Grudev (1968), Germanov (1972; 1979), Sevan (1974), Xristov (1976), Indžov (1977), Petkova (1979), Stamatov (1985), Juli Jakubov (1986a) and Gavrilov (1989). I rely on three additional sources: selections of poems by Silva Kaputikyan (1959), Č‘arenc‘ (1971) and Paruyr Sevak (1981) in Bulgarian translation.

Some of the texts about Yerevan are inscribed within the generic logic of a pilgrimage, while others within that of a eulogy. Some focalize Yerevan/Armenia as such, while others inscribe them in a larger Soviet space: either ‘syntactical’ (with a Russian core and non-Russian periphery), or ‘paratactical’ (built by a sequence of ‘exotic’ Soviet spaces, in one case by the co-presence of all ‘autonomous’ Soviet spaces, exotic and non-exotic alike). Some of the texts were commissioned by poles of political heteronomy within the field of cultural production. Others were lyrical (published) and diary (non-published) self-expressions. One seems to pertain to both symbolic regimes (the execution of the top commission and self-expression) (Stamatov, 1985). One was created due to extraordinary circumstances and, as a result, may fall under both mentioned regimes (Gavrilov, 1989). Two of the works occupy more or less an intermediate position between private and public (or, rather, circulatable) texts (Kiril, 1958; Xristov, 1976).

The article is organized according to typological criteria to allow greater attention to individual sources, which are hardly known even in Bulgarian-language scholarship, and even less so in Anglophone. Out of considerations of balance and space, I will use external sources very sparingly. As a rule, I will provide biographic data in accordance

<sup>6</sup> Deliberately transliterated as if a Slavic name.

<sup>7</sup> A simile of a traditional Japanese house or of a cluster/conjuncture of Mies van der Rohe villas in the vein of Villa Tugendhat, or a house-level analogue of a ‘garden city’.

with the standard biobibliographic notes prefacing each personal collection in the State Archive<sup>8</sup> of Bulgaria.

## 2. *Heights and Foothills/Bottoms: Yerevan as an artist's studio in open air, 1977*

### 2.1 Rhythmic structure of the book

The travelogue of Indžov, *Heights and Foothills/Bottoms* (Висоти и подножия), makes zigzag movements to and from Yerevan, beginning with a de-individualised image of a Yerevan artist's studio (Indžov, 1977, p. 5)<sup>9</sup>. Then it jumps to Matenadaran (Indžov, 1977, p. 40), postulated as a climax yet more as a foothill, and combined with Ararat<sup>10</sup> (Fig. 1), then to the cognac factory with the statue of its first technologist, Markar Sedrokyan (Indžov, 1977, p. 81). Thus, more than half of the book (the chapters “Ateliers”, “The Centuries-Aged Contours”, “Foothills”, “An Atomic Apple”, and “Stars and Constellations”, five out of nine, occupying pp. 5–110 out of 196) is over.



Figure 1: [Rajko Aleksiev], “Okolo tŭdjavašniĵa Ararat...” [Around over-there Ararat...]: “And everything was flooded by the deluge, and only a mountain [called] Ararat remained non-flooded”... [caricature]. Subscript: [-] What a multitude of Noah’s arks, wow! Yet if all of them decide to land on the mountain, they may shake it...

Source: newspaper *Šturec* [Cricket/Grasshopper], 1940, vol. 8, no. 581, March 29, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Държавен архив, Dŭrŷaven arxiv; in the references below, unless in the role of author, – [SA] (Central SA, SA – Varna, etc.).

<sup>9</sup> Hereafter, only the page numbers will be indicated in the text.

<sup>10</sup> “[...] I would compare the Matenadaran with Ararat, because Ararat – this is the great natural height of Armenia, while the Matenadaran – this is the human height of Armenia. Which of the two peaks is higher and which one is seen [from] more afar, I do not know” (42). In line with Armenian grammar, but contrary to *normative* Bulgarian, the author appends the name of the museum with an article.

What remains reveals a different rhythm. The bulk of pages 111 to 121 are devoted to the C/children A/art G/gallery<sup>11</sup> in Yerevan, then more Yerevan objects and issues follow, and more sparingly. These are the singing fountains (and the future museum of contemporary art) (Indžov, 1977, p. 132); the deliberation whether tuff has to be the universal building material (Indžov, 1977, 136 etc.); the opening of the city southwards toward Ararat, as foreseen by the general plan of Tamanyan (Indžov, 1977, p. 143); the macro-ensemble consisting of “[t]he memorial to the victims of the genocide in 1915, the [sic] ‘Razdan’ stadium, the panoramic cinema ‘Russia’” (144); the city’s location in “the bottom” of “a natural amphitheatre” (Indžov, 1977, pp. 144–145); the planning of an artificial lake in the canyon of “Razdan”, “I saw it” (Indžov, 1977, p. 145; Yerevanyan Lake is meant).

## 2.2 Generic and intermedial structure of the book

As mentioned, the book consists of nine chapters, in most of which (nos. 2, 4–7) the narrator styles himself as the “Stranger”, who now and then dialogizes with important locals<sup>12</sup>. Such are Andranik Čağaryan<sup>13</sup> (professor, Director of the Anthropological Laboratory at the Academy of Sciences) in Chapter 2; Jurij<sup>14</sup> Xoĵamiryan (DTechSc, 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy-President of the Gosplan of Armenian SSR), Ch. 4; Ludvig Mirzoyan (DMathSc, Dept.-Director of the Byurakan Institute of Astrophysics) and Suren Melkunyan (Permanent Representative of the Government of ASSR for the Government of USSR in Moscow), Ch. 5; Alik Ĵaparize (Georgian architect) and Henrik (“Xenrix”) Igit‘yan (DArtSc, director of museum and art galleries of Yerevan), Ch. 6; and Arcvin Grigoryan (DArchitSc, President of the Union of Armenian Architects), Ch. 7.<sup>15</sup>

The image of Yerevan is gradually introduced and, near the end, accelerated into monumentality: that is, architectural emblematicism and visual representation. Most architectural emblems of the city are either mentioned or shown through photos, or both, on page 41 and then on pages 158–169 and 176–185 (within Chapter 8, “Heights”). The emblems are: the Matenadaran, the Sardarabad monument, the statue of “David” of Sasun, the Genocide memorial, Mother Armenia, the Singing Fountains, the park around a lake<sup>16</sup>, the lake itself, Lenin avenue as viewed from Matenadaran, Hotel Armenia (only shown), the Swan Lake, and the Opera House (only shown). The indicated page spans include illustrations 22–26, 30–31, and 33–36, i.e., eleven out of thirty-seven<sup>17</sup>. Verbal focus on architectural emblems of Yerevan and quantitative equality between verbal and visual text coincide within the page interval 158–185. Thematic domination of Yerevan is relativized twice here. First, by re-mentioning and showing three emblems of Soviet

<sup>11</sup> Deliberation about capitals reflects the uncertain – as implied by the narrative – institutional status of the enterprise at that moment.

<sup>12</sup> The text introduces both parties in capital letters, on a separate line and followed by a colon; but n-dash indication of direct speech afterwards is missing.

<sup>13</sup> Reconstructible as Ĵagaryan from the Bulgarian text.

<sup>14</sup> Transliterated as Slavic form.

<sup>15</sup> Chapter 1, from its very beginning, is a lyric prefiguration of these quasi-dramatic exchanges of lengthy monologues. It starts with dots and a tirade addressed to the narrator, who later, while compiling the book, cannot remember anymore its author: “whether Mik‘ael Oganesyanyan [Hovhannisyanyan] or Anatoli Grigoryanyan, whether Feliks Golanyanyan or Alexandr T‘opč‘yan, or maybe Arkadi Grigoryanyan – all of them young, all ferocious while disputing [...]” (5–6).

<sup>16</sup> Vardavar; both the lake and the park remain unnamed.

<sup>17</sup> None of them is titled.

Armenia industrialization (overhead power lines, ill. 27; a plant, ill. 28; the telescope of Byurakan observatory, ill. 29). Second, by introducing the topic of inventive childhood into the image of cityscape (through ill. 30–32: children on a walk in a park near gigantic counting hands with fingers protruding out of the ground; children setting sail of toy-ships in a city lake; children constructing a toy-airplane indoors, without any signs of topographic concreteness).

This crest of Yerevan-centered emblematisation and intermediality is followed by a completely verbal (non-visual) end-chapter. It is approached/preceded by a semi-private image of Yerevan which evolves from ‘chamber-ness’ (6–9) to bird-eye topographism<sup>18</sup> (143–149).

As a whole, topography of Yerevan is present in the book as polycentric (and polyaxial, 146). It evades being captured in a monumental (architectural, non-private, condensed) image – except for the ‘pre-final’ ‘acceleration’. Bird-eye topographism serves as a bridge between the accelerated monumentalism of the penultimate chapter (NB, “Heights”) and the semi-private image of the bulk of the book. “Heights”, like ‘the bulk’, starts with an image of a painter in his atelier, but of a particular – and emblematic – one (Saryan).

“Heights” objectifies – that is, brings to condensed, elevated and homogenised visibility – the polycentric presence of Yerevan from ‘the bulk’ of the book. (Most of ‘the bulk’ is structured, as mentioned, like a series of dialogues, inner or not, between a local expert in something, see a list here above, and the narrator/traveller; “Heights” is a monologue). An entanglement of bird-eye topographic images (Indžov, 1977, pp. 143–156) across chapter breaks serves as a plural lens.

‘The bulk’ starts with a generalised image of a Yerevan visual artist’s atelier (5ff) and ends with the singing fountains (together with the future Museum of Contemporary Art) (Indžov, 1977, p. 132).

### 2.3 The historical mind-set in/behind the structure

The potential symbol of “natural amphitheater” remains unused. Two more generalizations appear. “The pink Yerevan – this is the city of the capital-city administration. The new Yerevan – this is the city of a strong working class, of vast scientific and technical intelligentsia, of the thousands of repatriates [...]” (Indžov, 1977, p. 146). Byurakan observatory and the anthropological laboratory, “Matenadaran and the children gallery, the returning [repatriating] Armenians and the nearby border guards unit” are the “psychological supporting points of Yerevan” (Indžov, 1977, p. 146).

These generalizations prove more viable within the kind of mind that organizes the book. And they paradigmatically surpass earlier Bulgarian accounts by going beyond the leitmotif of (pink or chromatic) tuff and, respectively, explicitly suggesting that the city and surrounding landscapes form a dynamic unity with a permeable border between the two constituents. Most notably, it is the only account which assigns a purposeful place to the remnants of the old (pre-Tamanyan) city: “[a] trace of the old city” that was “known only for its production of cognac”, are the small houses over the stadium on the steep slope of Razdan, which (will) serve as a museum in open air (Indžov, 1977,

<sup>18</sup> Incl. discussion of Yerevan’s General Plans – Tamanyan’s and Grigoryan’s.

p. 135, 146)<sup>19</sup>. (Other accounts either dismiss them as just ugly remnants of the past or do not mention them at all).

*Heights and Foothills/Bottoms* is the furthest from some kind of cosmographic conceptualization (cf. here below) and from receiving/conceiving in Christian mental forms (the same), despite considerable attention to traditional, esp. ecclesiastic, architectural forms and objects (Indžov, 1977, pp. 42–74, 142; photos 5, 6, 8–19). The past has been subsumed to rational control, to the degree of museifying it and to the degree of non-letting ‘obsolete’ mental tools co-rule<sup>20</sup> the capacity to receive.

#### 2.4 The plein-air artist studio in history

The book was one among fifteen devoted to the USSR republics, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution. Partizdat (the Publishing house of the Bulgarian Communist Party) published it<sup>21</sup>. Apparently, the book was intended to be a travelogue-eulogy of *Soviet Armenia*. At a subtler level, it evolves into a pilgrimage – to a poet’s monument (see below) and to the untouchable and ubiquitous remains of the already deceased Martiros Saryan<sup>22</sup>, the only Armenian whose visual portrait is contained in this book (Indžov, 1977, p. 153, photo 20)<sup>23</sup>.

Yerevan serves the purpose of eulogizing Soviet Armenia as an integral part of the USSR in diverse ways; perhaps most notably by emphasizing scientifically informed industrial progress and a secure state border (thematized in the last chapter). The presence of brotherhood of peoples under the auspices of the Soviet Union is being felt. Within this image and this presence, older ones are inscribed: of the Bulgarian poet Pejo Javorov, and of the Bulgarian-Armenian fraternity under and against the Ottomans (and, earlier, the Byzantines). This is the link between pre-communist modern Bulgaria and pre-communist (and diasporic) modern Armenia. In communist Yerevan, a school was named after Javorov, and his statue was erected in front of the building. This statue and this cultural memory are given near-utmost compositional priority in the book, as ill. 36 (the penultimate). This picture combines the architectural and children’s topics across the illustrations and is thus a pictorial culmination. However, it bears Soviet decoration<sup>24</sup>, and

<sup>19</sup> The book contains a similar passage (Indžov, 1977, p. 148) referring to diverse objects in the city center and to the neighborhood of Kond as well. However, it is part of a monologue by Arcvin Grigoryan, not the narrator.

<sup>20</sup> Speaking of such co-rule, a case in point is Grudev’s account, co-created by a non-believing or at least secular ‘external’ author and an implicit author committed to Christian cosmography.

<sup>21</sup> Partizdat publishes some of the books from the series; while others are published by Narodna mladež (the publishing house of the Bulgarian Komsomol).

<sup>22</sup> “Armenia today is Martiros Saryan, whom I was not able to see personally [...]. [...]n whatever direction I looked amidst monasteries and observatories, amidst antique manuscripts and industrial contours, I saw something from the canvases of this painter. [...]he eternal presence of Saryan [...] is present in the very breathing of Armenia” (Indžov, 1977, p. 154).

<sup>23</sup> A third, a lyrical autobiographic layer of the text is exposed when the author confesses he had been in Armenia for the first time about ten years before (14). He first quotes nine quatrains from his own narrative poem inspired by that trip (Indžov, 1977, pp. 14–15) and then reconstructs in prose the following poetic vision: “Yerevan... / I saw it for the first time in an unusually foggy winter. Through the bluish smoke of the cold and windlessness the city appeared to my sight at times here at times there with rising through the fog pink contours, as if I grasped the glare of a fireplace which flares up out of the breathing of a human” (Indžov, 1977, p. 133).

<sup>24</sup> On the school façade behind the statue, one sees a banner with the Bulgarian-language slogan “[L]ong Live the Fraternity between the Bo[l]garian and Armenian People”, where Russian *o* stays for Bulgarian *o*

the text (Indžov, 1977, p. 181) lacks essential information linking the two ages of Bulgarian-Armenian fraternity (pre-Soviet and Soviet).

Beyond the artist who embodies that fraternity and the monumentalized memory of this embodiment, lie two objects: illustration thirty-seven<sup>25</sup>, and the pictureless last chapter, “Shield” (the zone of the sublime-prohibited-for-direct-representation).

### **3. From Leningrad to Yerevan (A Lyrical Travelogue): Yerevan as a metaphysic unity of humanity and stone, 1968**

The unpublished travelogue of Stefan Grudev, *От Ленинград до Ереван: Лирически пътешествие*, distills a syntactic ensemble of Soviet spaces present in the texts of Patriarch Kiril and the Dimitrov Prize laureate Stefan Daskalov from the late 1950s. The spatial ensemble is grounded in the structure of 19th-century Russian imperial space. The latter has been textually shaped, most notably from the perspective of our concern, by such texts as the travelogues of a French geologist from the 1890s (Stanislas Meunier, *De Saint-Pétersbourg à l'Ararat*) (Meunier, 1899)<sup>26</sup> and of a Russian modernist writer from the 1920s (Andrei Bely, *Wind from the Caucasus* (Bely, 1928; Bely, 1985)).

Unlike Bely's and like Meunier's, Grudev's text has Armenia as the center of its 'trans-Caucasian' experience. Unlike Meunier's, Grudev's text does not stop narrating after Armenia. It enters into spaces not implied by the title – Baku and, upon the expected return to the 'imperial' 'core', Moscow, to Jasnaja Poljana: the site of pilgrimage to the remains of Lev Tolstoj, a world-famous novelist and, in his late years, a Christian sectarian with worldwide impact.

The 'Armenian' chapter occupies ff. 201 (from the middle) – 224 (the upper one-sixth), out of 268.

#### **3.1 Spatial axes: topography into cosmography**

Oscillation along an axis linking Lenin Square (as immediate environ and starting point) and Matenadaran (as site of anticipated experience) – this is the main movement within Yerevan in Grudev's travelogue, charted early in the narrative (Grudev, 1968, f. 205–206<sup>27</sup>). Along this topological axis, we have a reversal of the topographic perspective as determined by the relief: Matenadaran is said to be at the bottom, not the top, of Lenin Avenue (f. 206; quotation below). We see here a kind of 'reverse perspective'<sup>28</sup>, known from cult images of the Byzantine realm, in service of an atheistic narrative. To-and-fro movements along the axis are preceded (f. 203) by (and, in effect, made more complex through) rhythmic penetrations across unspecified but several 'facades' of boulevards into the “backyards” of narrow streets and neglected backyards proper<sup>29</sup>. Thus, an infra-

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in the first syllable of “Bulgarian”; and a Russian-language poster with the title “[A] Decade of Bulgarian Culture [in Armenia]”.

<sup>25</sup> It presents a definite contrast to ill. thirty-six and a kind of visual epilogue to the visual facet of the book: one sees a motorway coming from the left and going to the right, flanked by two poplars on each side, and by Sis and Masis on each side of the poplars.

<sup>26</sup> Paris, Société Française d'Éditions d'Art, 1899.

<sup>27</sup> Leaves' reverse sides are usually blank and sometimes contain preferred variant readings of passages on the corresponding (preceding) front sides.

<sup>28</sup> Some detail, and a modifying interpretation, see here below.

<sup>29</sup> “Now and then I was hearing non-understood by me commands to the driver, and the car vehemently darted now along wide boulevards, then along narrow streetlets, and in the end I realised that my guidess

image of sewing and a sewing machine emerges as the background; the physical location of the narrative agency coincides with the needle tip. Yet another, static one backs this dynamic infra-image: of stone and Armenian humanity “in metaphysical unity” (f. 202–203).

The two ‘infra-images’ are foregrounded by a female image – of a young Armenian poetess with the pseudonym of Metakse<sup>30</sup>, the narrator’s guide around Armenia or, in more attentive view, across Armenia’s inferno, purgatory and heaven. During his guided tour, the narrator is accompanied by a younger person of a more prestigious profession and a different ethnicity than his own. That younger person waits at the airport with Metakse and has already spoken to her in the familiar second-person singular (cf. Spanish “tú”) rather than the polite second-person plural (cf. Spanish “Usted”): a Russian mathematician named Jurij. Hence, Metakse is associated with Beatrice, and Jurij with Virgil. The latter association is supported by two details: first, the associative link between Jurij (Russianised form of George) and Georgica, an emblematic work by Virgil; second, an inter-ethnic proportion that juxtaposes genealogy, chronology, and symbolic rank: Romans to Italians is like Russians to Bulgarians. (A mental topos of Russian-Bulgarian historical ‘friendship’ is that Russians took the gift, or the archetypal invention, of the Slavonic script from Bulgarians and brought it to unprecedented geographical expanse and intellectual depth, and have since about the 17th century been returning it to the Bulgarians.) In various and subtle ways, the modern grandeur of Russia and hence the figure of the ‘bigger brother’ within the discourse of Bulgarian-Russian/Soviet friendship is essentialized and extrapolated into the past. To put it aphoristically: ‘Child has become/is father to the man’. This semantic mechanism cannot but work – or be referred to or undermined... – in a Bulgarian text from the communist period.

The chronotope of Armenia in this travelogue approaches the tripartite chronotope of Christian Otherworld through three key points of resemblance. First, it is the feeling of heaviness inexplicable by heat, experienced by the narrator in his initial encounter with the Armenian landscape (Grudev, 1968, f. 202)<sup>31</sup>. It is, second, the repeated urge, voiced by Metakse addressing both the narrator and Jurij, to take a bath in Sevan to “wash out the unpleasant experiences of Yerevan” (Grudev, 1968, f. 221, 222). And, third, it is the final non-appearance of Ararat to a narrator who has declined the purification procedure and who is granted, instead Ararat, the farewell image of a lake Sevan coloured in grey and, less clearly, the memorized image of Metakse<sup>32</sup>. The text builds a half-hidden image of a tripartite, Otherworld-like Armenia, turning her heavenly dimension away from the narrator. Within this image, Yerevan is anchored in the zone of Inferno, while one of its most important sub-locations, Matenadaran, takes the position of Inferno’s *entrée*, the habitus of ‘virtuous pagans’.

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had not at all the vainglorious intention to show me only the parade side of the (sic) throne city, but also the backyard” (203).

<sup>30</sup> Grudev’s handwriting was often enigmatic to me. I wondered between various readings of the poetess’ name, opting in most cases for “Litona”. Acquaintance with the published travelogue of Stamatov (Stamatov, 1985) solved the problem. – I refrained from the spelling “Metaxe” (the expected one for Anglophones) in order to preserve x for a different sound (like the last one in *loch*) in transliterations / transcriptions from Armenian and Bulgarian.

<sup>31</sup> The image of metaphysical symbiosis between men and stone that comes as an explanation diverts reader’s attention from the topic of Otherworld.

<sup>32</sup> Heaven is denied but probably not forever, but probably not any heaven: a possible one would have shown itself, either allegorically or symbolically, through a ‘Platonic’ love between Metakse and the narrator, had the author been more amative and the narrator less virtuous.

It is stressed (Grudev, 1968, f. 204) that the duration of the narrator's stay in Armenia is three days, which could have supported the identification of the travelogue with a cosmography. Moreover, the stress is made stronger by the omission from the count of the arrival day, which is tacitly taken for 'day zero'.

The 'zero' day includes two general tours across Yerevan, the second including Ere-buni and "Cicernagaberd", the statues of "David" of Sasun and of Mother Armenia (Grudev, 1968, f. 202–209). The first day includes Garni and the Yerevan school named after Javorov, as well as Gegard (f. 209–214). The second one – Eĵmiacin, Zvart'noc', and a ballet performance in the National Opera (Grudev, 1968, f. 214–218). The third one – Matenadaran, *again* "Cicernakaberd"<sup>33</sup>, Historical Museum, a meeting with a high func-tionary<sup>34</sup>, Sevan, and departure (Grudev, 1968, f. 218–223). It is possible to trace a cos-mographic route that vaguely follows the expected upward sequence: 'on the ground' (day zero), 'under the ground' (first day), slightly 'above the ground' (second day), on a higher elevation (third day) – the last object being the highest (lake Sevan). Or a route which extrapolates the 'Dantean' sequence onto the horizontal plain: as short (1<sup>st</sup> day), a bit longer (2<sup>nd</sup> day)<sup>35</sup> and a longer (3<sup>rd</sup> day, 60 km) excursion out of Yerevan. A third option would be to recognize a sequence of trips to the right (East, from then Hotel Armenia on then Lenin Square), then to the left, and finally straight ahead. A minor detail in the sight from a high point on the highway to Sevan supports the general relevance of cosmo-graphic reading: "Ararat with its two extramundane/transcendent (запределни<sup>36</sup>) peaks fantastically outlined itself in the azure" (Grudev, 1968, f. 221). Metakse "reads the thoughts" of the narrator and offers a politico-theological and historiosophical expli-cation (or, rather, a questioning)<sup>37</sup>, which adds to the metaphysic air of "запределни" a cosmographic concreteness and dimension. The repeated reference (Grudev, 1968, f. 221, 222) to the superstition (a personal superstition of Metakse?) that one has to take a bath in Sevan in order to cleanse his/her "bad impressions" from Yerevan/Armenia adds an *ecclesiological* dimension. One is able to associate now Ararat with an apse behind a church altar, Lake Sevan with an in-church baptistery, and Gegard–Garni and Zvart'noc'–Eĵmiacin with the left ('north') and right ('south') prolongations of a transept respectively.<sup>38</sup> Biographical exploration would clarify whether and to what extent the cosmo-ecclesiological plan of the Armenian chapter in Grudev's travelogue is inten-tional. It would suffice to say here that the general title, *From Leningrad to Yerevan*, whereby the chapter "Yerevan" is not the last one, makes the positive answer likelier. Within this vision, Yerevan itself coincides with a (part of a?) nave.

Cosmographic ('added') value of topographical objects does not necessarily coincide with their topographic ('natural') one: "In the bottom of the Lenin Avenue Metakse points out to us the famous book depository Matenadaran, of which I already mentioned"<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> This time, on f. 220, with -k-. The narrator does not explain that he is there for a second time.

<sup>34</sup> The chair of the Union of (Soviet) Armenian Writers.

<sup>35</sup> But actually, Eĵmiacin is closer to Yerevan than Garni.

<sup>36</sup> Lit. 'beyond the limits/margin/boundary'.

<sup>37</sup> "– Noah, after the Deluge, landed with his ark on Ararat. After Adam and Eve [it is] from Armenia [from where] started new life on earth. [...] But after this godly choice was it necessary for the fate to allot us Turkey for a neighbour?!"

<sup>38</sup> I believe that the improper orientation of this design within the geographic space (the altar apse occurs in the southwest instead of east) does not rule out the interpretation.

<sup>39</sup> A verbatim translation; with normal English word-order: 'Metakse points us to the famous [...] at the bot-tom of [...]'.  


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(Grudev, 1968, f. 206). As well known to anyone who has visited Yerevan (or who has inspected relevant maps), Matenadaran is located at the top of the mentioned avenue. The strange reversal may be accidental or not. On the one hand, immediate lexical context is indicative of intention: “To my question whether we are going to visit it, our guidess with a *smashing* smile answered: / – This pride of ours is not visited in a *fluttering* way, time is needed” (Grudev, 1968, f. 206; emphasis added), – spatially low position is associable with heaviness/gravity. On the other hand, my perception did not stumble upon other such instances of contrast between the topographic vs. cosmographic value of an object. One may safely hypothesize that, had the manuscript been published, the contrast would have either being removed or multiplied (depending on the poetological strategy of the travelogist).

Armenian ‘Beatrice’-Metakse co-builds the image of Mother Armenia, in concert with the eponymous statue overlooking Yerevan's central part from the north(east). Metakse has a five-year-old child (Grudev, 1968, f. 209) and is married, while the aforementioned statue is quite unobtrusive; it is mentioned (and paid tribute to) only once (Grudev, 1968, f. 207). (Being prominent in central *published* travelogues from 1968 and 1977). Metakse is married to a scientist in physics<sup>40</sup> who is introduced as the actual ‘author’ of the thought that Armenians are the only people metaphysically linked to stone (f. 203), hence the ‘author’ of the grounding image of the travelogue. Thus, the basic ‘principle’ of “dialectic materialism”, the Leninist redaction of Marxism, namely, “the conflict and unity of opposites” is embodied in the foundation of the travelogue’s imagery and plot. On the level of plot, the principle is deployed mainly through the opposition between explicit youth (the guiding Armenian poetess) and implicit old age (the guided Bulgarian writer and scholar – explicitly characterized only as a musician/musicologist<sup>41</sup>, but here the art-theory topos of ‘architecture is frozen music’ is present to reveal another facet of the “principle”).

The Lenin Square–Matenadaran axis is complemented with two more. One runs perpendicularly and links the Erebuni fortress (in the southeast) and the monument to the victims of the Hamidian massacres in 1895–1896 and of the Genocide (in the southwest) (f. 207). The other is almost a double of the basic one and links the Mother Armenia statue and the statue of Lenin on Lenin Square. The first can be called an axis of memory/turmoil:

We ascend the hill Arin-Berd, where now too [/even now] excavations are made. Starting with its foundation [...] the city had been destroyed several times [...] During the Civil War<sup>42</sup>, in 1919, in Yerevan 20,000 people die from diseases and starvation. But Yerevan *has not forgotten as well* the perished in 1895 and 1896 [...]. On the heights Cicernagaberd, we stay humbly before the memorial<sup>43</sup> of victims (Grudev, 1968, f. 207–208; emphasis added).

<sup>40</sup> Had *From Leningrad to Yerevan* been a fictional work, I would have said that combination of professions in Metakse’s family refers to the ostensibly central competing pair of subcultures in the Soviet 1960s, brought to the surface in a 1959 poem by Boris Sluckij. As argued in (Ignatova, 2015), an emerging hiatus between cultures of people educated in natural sciences and those educated in the arts and humanities had been underway on both sides of the Iron Curtain and had been discerned a bit earlier by the physicist Charles Percy Snow in a public lecture from May 1959, “The Two Cultures”. Ignatova’s research article of nowadays shares the ‘dialectical optimism’ of Grudev’s travelogue.

<sup>41</sup> “Metakse knows that one of my legs is in music [...]” (Grudev, 1968, f. 217).

<sup>42</sup> As usual, Russian realities are normatively superimposed on the history of peoples from the imperial realm. This superimposition serves the double task of retroactive presentation of that realm as constant in its span and duration and of downplaying the role of non-Bolsheviks in 1917–1920.

<sup>43</sup> The word *памятник* is usually translated as “monument”, but the word’s root, *памят*, means ‘memory’.

And the second one – an axis of victory/stability:

The huge *statue* of “Mother Armenia” with a withdrawn sword is an image-symbol of the found at last calm – under Soviet power – path to peaceful and constructive labour. [...] We are again on Lenin Square. On a granite postament rises the impressive *figure* of the proletarian leader (Grudev, 1968, f. 208; emphasis added).

These secondary axes have their cross point<sup>44</sup>, both symbolically and (more or less) topographically, in the statue of Davit of Sasun in front of the central railway station building. Davit embodies fight – and an intermediate condition between suffering memory and petrified glory: “The *memorial* of [‘monument to’] this epic people’s hero is erected in front of the railway station. The monumental figure of the bogatir<sup>45</sup>, bestridden a flying horse, menacingly holds the ‘sword-bolt’ [...]” (Grudev, 1968, f. 208; emphasis added). A topographically unaware reader could have acknowledged the aforementioned pairs of physical objects as pairs and axes for three reasons. These are semantic (dis)similarity (note the divide between ‘opaque/exotic’ and trivial names of places), lexical synonymy, and syntactic anaphors: “*hill of Arin-Berd* [...] *heights of Cicer nagaberd*”; “*We are on the ‘Hill of Victory’* [...] *We are again on Lenin Square*” (Grudev, 1968, f. 208; emphasis added). The sequence of mentioning is as follows: Erebuni, Cicer nakaberd, Davit of Sasun, Mother Armenia, Lenin. One is tempted to perceive them as the edges of a five-edged star, but a look at the map precludes such an identification. (Hypothetic contour of a cross remains unsupported too).

### 3.2 The speaking substance

The sensual-emotional ‘substance’ supporting images and rationalizations starts from inexplicable graveness (ostensibly linked with the combination of heat and rocky landscape) (Grudev, 1968, f. 202) and compassion (Grudev, 1968, f. 204), to transmute into a supersensual “lucidity” compared by the narrator to a “beautiful sun spot” (f. 224) and identified by him as the love of Metakse towards her country:

I leave Yerevan: The swarthy face of Metakse is easy to lose track of amidst the multicolourness of the seers off, and next to her [is] her little daughter. [...] I think about the mother [...], and over everything beautiful that I came to know from her about a people [that is] close in its destiny to ours, started floating, even if still unsettled, something lucid like a beautiful sun spot. It [...] still dominates in my idea of the mere [lit. ‘counted’] hours that I spent in Yerevan. It is her love for [her] homeland. This love never asserted itself [...] (Grudev, 1968, f. 224).

It is noteworthy that the transmuted substance emerges into the narrator’s mind after the chapter “Yerevan” is over, within the subsequent one (“Baku”). The specific standpoint is compared by the narrator himself to “images from a[n already] read book” (Grudev, 1968, f. 224), but I would think of cosmological and ecclesiological identifications.

<sup>44</sup> The difference between the two pairs of objects can be identified with the *symbolic* difference between a sea and a harbor; and with the Christian-anthropological one of man being created by *likeness* and in the *image* of God (Gen. 1:26–27). Monuments as memorials require a specific behavior, whereas statues are static images; lastly, with the Christological idea of humiliation *and* triumph in the face of Jesus beaten and crucified *and* in eternal glory.

<sup>45</sup> Bulgarian transcription of the well-known Russian word.

Stony graveness and compassion are given the shape of the Armenian poetess' voice declaiming, in Armenian translation, the rhymed thought of the white-stone effigy of a Bulgarian poet (Grudev, 1968, f. 212). Thus, the potentially 'centauric', stone-human but also male-female, nature of Metakse is given a second expression. This time, humanized stone expresses not *the genius of the place*, but the spirit of Bulgarian-Armenian mutualism; it reminds the implicit reader not of the sword of Mother Armenia, but of Javorov as guerilla activist and memoirist.

Whence the image of humanized stone? The travelogist was born in the distant 1900, and his formative years should have been saturated with much more religious culture than our secular common readerly mind could assume today. In maintaining the 'stone-human' theme he must have been alluding to, or being driven by reminiscence of, the 'crying stones' from the Bible (Luke 19:39-40): "Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples!' / 'I tell you', he replied, 'if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out'". What would they cry out in an Armenia introduced to by Metakse and perceived by Grudev? Memories of violence, humiliation, and spectacular impunity of evil.

Whatever the case, the pathetic solution of the 'centauric' theme receives a parallel 'low' (bordering comic) solution<sup>46</sup>. The second "surprise" prepared by Metakse for him, after the visit to the Javorov statue, was the attendance of a luxurious restaurant to be acquainted with its female manager, Luisa Aršak, who spoke Bulgarian (being a repatriate from Bulgaria or the Bulgarian wife of an Armenian either repatriate or official in Bulgaria). It is left to the reader to conclude that these two women (the second one maybe too emotional, sentimental, and talkative) embodied the spirit of Yerevan.

From the standpoint of 'afterward', the "metaphysic link between stone and humanity" that was said to be peculiar to Armenians, attained its final embodiment, which was relieved from the gravity of stone:

This love [of Metakse to her country] never asserted itself<sup>47</sup>, and though the dialogue was only between the two of us, I firmly acknowledge that through her, the whole of the Armenian people spoke. How I would wish that when a foreigner visits our country, he took with him similar feelings, a similar confidence (Grudev, 1968, f. 224).

This image had been prefigured by the image of Metakse reciting the poem "Armenians" by Javorov at his stone effigy in Yerevan. Both images are structured as sequences of enframing-and-enframed mirrors hosting an Armenian-Bulgarian/Bulgarian-Armenian dialogue.

Linking of stone and humanity in the face of the Armenian people and its poets-associates goes beyond the literary archetype of *Exegi monumentum* twofold: by eliminating the ontological divide between a poet and a public, and by intimately linking itself to the Biblical archetype of "crying stones". There is an Armenian poem known to educated Bulgarians interested in Armenian poetry, which is close to the consensus on stone and humanity that links Metakse and Grudev. The poem could have influenced any of them, as well as its Bulgarian translator, Germanov. It is an untitled stanza of six lines

<sup>46</sup> Grudev was a student and graduate (1920-1924) in Violin and Theatre Studies of the Dresden Conservatory; due to complications after a frostbite of hands, he had to requalify, graduating from the Law department of Sofia University (1927) (State Archive "Grudev" par. 1-2 of 9).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Paul 1 Corinthians 13:4: "love does not parade itself".

by Charents, created in 1937 and not published in his lifetime. “As stones, thrown against Ararat, / your dirty slanders are turning back, / without even scratching me in the short fight – / off the iron will, off [my] character/ricochet [they] into the dirty swamp, back, / as stones, thrown against Ararat” (my literal translation of the Bulgarian text, (Č‘arenc‘, 1971, p. 174)<sup>48</sup>.

I am inclined now to rethink the *triad* of Ararat (not seen through the clouds), Sevan (physically seen in its light-greyness) and Metakse (seen both physically and metaphysically), as *it* appears in the first page of the chapter “Baku”, in terms of trinitology – as images of Father, Holy Spirit and Son respectively.

### 3.3 Russian supervision undermined

In this unpublished travelogue, the Soviet Russian auspices that overarched the re-articulation of Bulgarian-Armenian mutualism in the 1960s (see below) are minimized. They occupy a marginal discursive position, reduced to a presence in the plot. One can speculate whether the young Russian mathematician Jurij was a KGB agent. More importantly, his superimposition, and implicit cultural superiority (as a scientist and as a Russian), was undermined:

On the heights of Cicornagaberd, we stand in humility before the monument to the victims. [...] Jurij is young. After the guide's account, and unaware of the victims [referred to] on the wall, his mind short of grasping and perplexed<sup>49</sup>, [he] listens about the vandalisms of the neighboring civilized country (Grudev, 1968, f. 208).

I believe the act of undermining was intentional and impersonal. Jurij's youthfulness of mind was partly intended to signify the (perceived) immaturity of Soviet Russian historical memory<sup>50,51</sup>.

The Declamation of Javorov's poem in front of the school/statue may have become a semi-official welcome ritual in later decades.

Almost all Bulgarians who have set foot on Yerevan soil visit the school named after Javorov. [...] And here we are too in front of Javorov's monument in Yerevan. Alongside me, here are Petür Stūpov, Petür Rudar and others. We put fresh flowers. [...] The school director narrates about the school and about what they do with recognition<sup>52</sup> for the Bulgarian poet [...]. A small girl recites the poem ‘Armenians’ in Russian. [...]” (Jakubov, 1986b, p. 3).

The 1986 delegation, which included Stūpov and Rudar, was clearly of higher status than Grudev's in 1968. Metakse “spoke Russian as a Russian woman” (Grudev, 1968, f. 204), and maybe she would have been able to make use of Russian translations if she

<sup>48</sup> Anthropomorphization of mountains in Armenian folklore has not escaped the attention of later Bulgarian travelogue writers, who mention it (Stamatov, 1985, pp. 120–121). – The poem apparently echoes Mark 6:11 (“And whoever shall neither receive you nor hear you, shake off the dust that is under your feet when you depart from there, for a witness to them. Truly I say to you, it shall be easier for Sodom or Gomorrah at the Day of Judgment than for that city.”, cit. aft. New Geneva Edition, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+6&version=RGT>).

<sup>49</sup> The long phrase between the commas stands for недоумяващ.

<sup>50</sup> Unlike Grudev's narrator, I would argue for that memory's cynicism.

<sup>51</sup> The travelogue contains a half-page comparison between Armenian and Russian religiosity (f. 215), which however falls outside our topic.

<sup>52</sup> Признателност – a loose synonym of ‘gratitude’.

had wanted to<sup>53</sup>, but she chose Armenian to recite. Such a choice seems normal within a/the discourse of Bulgarian-Armenian mutuality. Publicization and routinization of ritual have submitted recitation to Russian – the language that bore, in the USSR and the Soviet Bloc, the functions of a vehicular, referential and sacral<sup>54</sup> language at the same time. Paradoxically, recitation in Russian may have been intended and perceived as a furthering of the mutuality discourse, not as its submission to a common patron: Russian in this case may have served as an ‘Ersatz’-Bulgarian<sup>55</sup>. However, the question arises: why did the little schoolgirl not recite in proper Bulgarian? Someone and somewhere in mid-1980s Yerevan, in or outside that school, taught Bulgarian for sure; and there was a non-tiny community of repatriates from Bulgaria, some of them still first-generation. The conclusion is unavoidable: brotherhood had to be monitored and kept in check<sup>56</sup>.

### Conclusion

Indžov’s *Heights and Foothills* (1977) offered opportunities to be viewed as a meaningfully organized verbal-visual whole. As it turned out, macro- and meso-level semantic intimations, based on the combination of codes, supported micro-level verbal propositions that displayed Soviet loyalty and control over pre-Soviet discourse on Armenian-Bulgarian fraternity. The mentioned intimations, however, demarcated a potential alternative to the still-powerful Soviet general image of a country under construction and protection: towards an image that underlines artistic creativity, imagination, and design. Grudev’s *From Leningrad to Yerevan (A Lyrical Travelogue)*, intentionally or not, offered two strategies of undermining the officialized ideology of friendship of peoples under the Soviet-Russian patronage: through building the chronotope of Yerevan inscribed in the one of Soviet Armenia according to a specimen and rules of Christian cosmography, and through dispelling (on two particular narrative occasions) of the premised Russian-Soviet patronage over Armenian-Bulgarian symbolic interaction.

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<sup>53</sup> There had been about four such published by then, and two of them (1913, 1958) should be available in Yerevan. Translations of this poem (into diverse languages) are republished in (Yavorov, 2018 [2019]).

<sup>54</sup> I refer here to the macro-sociolinguistic typology of Henri Gobard (Gobard, 1976, pp. 34–38); the fourth type of language participating within a pluri-lingual setting being the vernacular.

<sup>55</sup> It has been more or less common lore or belief across the USSR and the Soviet Bloc that the proximity of Bulgarian and Russian was on the verge of inter-comprehensibility. I am a personal witness to the longevity of the belief – across different countries in that space – well into the 2010s.

<sup>56</sup> At “the [F]east of [S]ong” in front of the Sardarapat Museum in Eĵmiacin on 9 May (1983?) another Bulgarian travelogue author remembers that the director of the secondary school “Javorov” told him that some years before a Bulgarian poet had cried after hearing pupils recite in class “Armenians” in Bulgarian (Stamatov, 1985, p. 89). Putting ‘accidentals’ (like availability of pupils at a given moment and personal preference) aside, I would suggest that ‘in class’ was a less public place than ‘in front of the monument/school’, so that Bulgarian was appropriate there.

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