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The Study of Free Will in the East and the West

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THE STUDY OF FREE WILL IN THE EAST AND THE WEST

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to understand the origins of the enduring differences between the Eastern and Western interpretations of free will and determinism. In my piece, I work to determine the roots of these differences and to what degree these differences have been challenged and disrupted in the 20th century. In this pursuit, I analyze the different philosophies of free will in the East and West and then apply these philosophies to the literature of both regions. For the eastern scholarship, I am using Yukio Mishima's *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea* and Motojirō Kajii's "Lemon." For the Western works, I am analyzing Kurt Vonnegut's *The Sirens of Titan* and Ursula K. Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." After thoroughly analyzing the pieces, I discuss the dialogues between the East and the West to help fully realize the legitimacy of the claim that the two regions continue to harbor distinct interpretations of free will and determinism.

Dedication

For Kris, Joe, Jacob, and Lourdes

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LITERATURE REVIEW

The current discussion regarding the interpretations of free will in the East and the West is very sparse. As far as I am aware, there are no scholarly works that deal with this specific topic. There are plenty of works that discuss free will in the West as well as Western interpretations of Eastern beliefs. However, for my study, I am attempting to use region-specific scholars as my primary source of information, and then cross-regional interpretations in a supplementary role.

In Dongshick Rhee's "The Tao, Psychoanalysis and Existential Thought," he focuses on common misunderstandings in the titular areas. Rhee draws connections between Eastern Tao and Western psychoanalysis and claims that they have many common traits, which are frequently overlooked or misunderstood by Western psychoanalysts. He goes on to claim that in Buddhism, Confucianism, Lao-tzu's teachings, Chuanh-Tzu's teachings, Western psychotherapy, and humanistic psychology, the goal is a form of self-liberation. Ultimately, Dongshick Rhee concludes that "Western existential thinking is in this sense the gate which leads to Eastern Tao" (26).

Likewise, Inoue Katsuhito explores the philosophies of Meiji Japan in his piece titled, "The Philosophical World of Meiji Japan, The Philosophy of Organism and Its Genealogy." Katsuhito depicts the modernizing world of Japan during the Meiji period, and he explains how this caused an influx of Western philosophy in the country. This Western philosophy melded well with the modernizing culture, and many Eastern thinkers incorporated it into their studies. Katsuhito frequently notes how German idealism is complementary to Buddhist beliefs as they both deal with "truth and matter-mind in the relationship between reality and phenomena" (22).

It would seem as if Katsuhito's ideas fall in line with Rhee's analysis that Eastern and Western approaches are not the same but share common ground.

In Bernice and Sanford Goldstein's piece titled "Observations on *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea*," The authors first attempt to ascertain what "the Western reader [is] to make of this novel," by comparing the text to Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. In this comparison, they find that the novel is representative of Japan modernizing and moving away from its traditional values. Bernice and Sanford Goldstein fundamentally claim that Mishima's book deals with the transforming role of men and masculinity in postwar Japan. This piece is not directly related to my topic; however, it is useful to include as it helps situate my work within the scholarly conversation.

Jerry S. Piven's book, *The Madness and Perversion of Yukio Mishima,* is an in-depth look at the author of *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea.* This text explains the intricacies and oddities of Yukio Mishima's often confrontational and extreme demeanor. Piven deconstructs Mishima's ideologies and compares his writing to well-known western authors such as Hemingway and Joyce. Piven does not shy away from the grotesque aspects of Mishima's life as he grapples with the author's eventual ritual suicide and the implications this act has on interpretations of Mishima's prior works. This text substantially informed my understanding of *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea* and it will be crucial in my analysis of the novel regarding my discussion of free will.

"Darkness Transformed: Illness in the Work of Kajii Motojirō" by Stephen Dodd studies the role that illness plays in the construction of Kajii's works, including "Lemon," the short story I am using to represent free will in the East. In addition to this, he writes that Kajii is severely

underrepresented in Western studies, especially considering how influential he has been to the Japanese literary field. Throughout the work, Dodd ponders the possibility of spirituality inherent in Kajii's works, especially "Remon," otherwise known as "Lemon." This mention of spiritually will be vital in my interpretation of the free will present in "Lemon," and it can even suggest the presence of a spirituality ingrained within Eastern philosophy.

Planetary Modernisms, Provocations on Modernity Across Time by Susan Stanford Friedman is a source that will help me develop the framework for my comparison. In this text, Friedman analyzes different modernist movements from the 1500s to the 1900s. She chooses to focus on atypical concepts such as "rupture, mobility, speed, networks, and divergence" that will enable her to "get outside a purely Western framework" (Friedman 16). By focusing on these underrepresented topics, she uncovers connections between disparate regions and attempts to reverse assumptions like the belief that the West invented modernity. In applying this text to my studies, I will be able to discover connections between the Eastern and Western interpretations of free will.

In Monica Calvo Pascual's piece, "Kurt Vonnegut's *The Sirens of Titan*: Human Will in a Newtonian Narrative Gone Chaotic," she explores the ideas of human identity through the lens of Vonnegut's style of free will. This text is directly related to my thesis topic as she analyzes a similar aspect of the novel; although, I am not focusing on human identity through free will. I am solely focusing on free will. This article is the first and one of the only pieces that address both the text and the topic of my thesis. While I agree with her assertions, I will not rely on this work heavily in my interpretation, as I want to avoid being too dependent on one scholar's specific descriptions of the free will presented in *The Sirens of Titan*.

Following suit with the previous text, Raymond Radford's "'Somebody Up There Likes You': Free Will and Determinism on a Journey through Space in Kurt Vonnegut," examines "the concept of free will, choice and determinism within both a fictional world and a real-world in which all characters believe they are in control of their own destiny" (149). Radford seems to interpret Vonnegut's style of free will as one that implies it is virtually nonexistent. While I do not entirely agree with his interpretations, this article will still be useful in situating my argument. Seeing as there is much more scholarship on Kurt Vonnegut than there is on any of my other authors, I can be more selective. Rather than choosing scholars I wholeheartedly agree with, I am opting for ones that provide arguments that counter my own, to diversify the analysis.

Elbow Room, The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting, by Daniel C. Dennett, explores the idea of Free Will. Dennett systematically addresses different interpretations and aspects of free will, such as determinism, practical reason, self-control, freedom, and nihilism. He ultimately claims that we, as humans, do have free will, to some extent, and that we can be active agents in our environment. I am mainly using this novel as a reference point for my interpretation of the western texts; however, it will prove useful in my chapter on dialogues between the East and the West. This text and Dongshick Rhee's "The Tao, Psychoanalysis and Existential Thought" will create a productive discourse when it comes to free will across the East and the West.

Robert Tally Jr's *Kurt Vonnegut and the American Novel, A Postmodern Iconography,* is essentially a re-reading and analysis of all Kurt Vonnegut's novels. Through his studies, Tally argues that Vonnegut is, at heart, a modernist writer situated in a postmodern literary world. The implication of this assertion seems to be that Vonnegut's novels are representative of the

tumultuous American society in the twentieth century. For my thesis, I will mostly be utilizing the chapter that deals with *The Sirens of Titan*; yet, the novel will prove useful for positioning my work in the broad discussion regarding Vonnegut's works.

"Determinism, Free Will, and Point of View in LeGuin's *The Left Hand of Darkness,*" by Eric S. Rabkin, looks at the types of free will presented in one of LeGuin's most famous works. He claims that LeGuin employs Taoist views into her application of free will. This claim is the main reason I chose Rabkin's article, as it will help in drawing connections between Eastern and Western philosophies. While I am not using *The Left Hand of Darkness* in my work, the ideas presented in Rabkin's work will still apply to LeGuin's short story I am analyzing, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas."

In Jerre Collins' "Leaving Omelas: Questions of Faith and Understanding," he posits the idea that the short story is representative of the ignorance of the American populace when it comes to their prosperity in comparison to that of third world countries. Collins also claims that LeGuin is commenting on different ideas of morality present within modern society. This text will allow me to draw compelling parallels between free will and morality, in an attempt to see if the two are inherently linked in Western philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

Universities of the West, much like the University of Central Florida, seem to be lacking reliable representation of Eastern studies within their respective humanities departments. There is no shortage of Western philosophy in these universities, as many English departments contain an abundance of classes and scholars who focus on western thought and ideas. This longstanding preference is easily detected with a cursory glance at the department indexes of different universities. Eastern scholars are seemingly avoided in favor of Western ones for multiple reasons. These reasons can include a lack of diversity in faculty, lack of access to translated works, and even an often-institutionalized predisposition to value western thought over anything else.

Following this line of thought, students in Western universities would be exposed to Western interpretations of free will more frequently than ones from Eastern scholarship. It would be highly beneficial to consider texts and geographical regions that are often underrepresented in the literary and scholarly canon in order to gain a more well-rounded understanding of the topic. I am inclined to believe that one can discern a noticeable difference between each respective geographic interpretation.

Despite the differences between Eastern and Western interpretations of free will, I am not working to cement these differences. Instead, I am attempting to uncover why these differences arose and how they are maintained. I will also explore the possibility that these differences may not be as firm as they seem. Instead, there may be an exchange of ideas present between the East and the West. Discovering the origins of the philosophical divide is crucial in the furthering of Comparative Literature as an academic field, yet it is sorely overlooked.

Studying free will is necessary because it applies to a broad group of people, not only those in academia. To further the discipline of Comparative Literature, we must focus on topics that can speak to both members of the academic community and a wider audience. Writing accessible works is essential, as we need dialogue outside of the relatively closed system that exists within academia. To that end, grappling with our futures is a common factor between people across the world. Free will, in some form, is present in nearly all works of Literature. Therefore, it is simultaneously a unifying and distinguishing feature across Literature. All humans experience or contend with ideas of free will, but they do so in distinct ways. Through identifying these diverse approaches, I will be able to draw connections between seemingly disparate belief systems.

I will analyze these newfound connections by using the ideas presented by Susan Stanford Friedman in *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time*. In my search for the presence of global affiliations across literature, I explore the possibility of cross-pollination between cultures. In this examination, I ultimately suggest the existence of a bidirectional exchange of ideas rather than a unidirectional stream of information.

My first chapter, "Free Will in Eastern and Western Philosophy," focuses on the broader philosophies of free will found in the East and the West. This chapter will not delve into the types of free will presented in my texts. Instead, it will highlight the major tenets of each region's respective interpretations. In doing so, I will provide a framework with which I will analyze my chosen Literature in the subsequent chapters.

The lack of translated works in Eastern philosophy makes researching the dominant depictions of determinism and free will rather difficult. In an attempt to analyze Eastern

Literature using Eastern Philosophy, I will be using Dongshick Rhee's "The Tao, Psychoanalysis and Existential Thought" and Inoue Katsuhito's "The Philosophical World of Meiji Japan." These works will inform my analysis of the manner of free will present in *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea* and "Lemon."

I am basing the majority of my Western interpretations of free will and determinism on Daniel C. Dennett's *Elbow Room: The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting*. In this text, Dennett broadly analyzes ideas and concepts related to free will, and questions the beliefs held by many Western philosophers. I will apply this text to my comprehensive interpretations of Western free will as well as the versions of free will present in Vonnegut's *The Sirens of Titan* and LeGuin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas."

In the following chapters, I will analyze the different portrayals of free will present in my chosen representations of Eastern and Western Literature. Through this endeavor, I will further discuss each region's respective beliefs. Basing these discussions in Literature will allow for a more concrete discourse, rather than one that is solely abstract. Afterward, I will investigate the possibility of dialogues between the East and the West. These possible dialogues will help situate my work in the greater field of Comparative Literature.

FREE WILL IN EASTERN AND WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

In this chapter, I will be investigating the prevailing models of free will that are present within Eastern philosophy and Western philosophy. In this pursuit, I will discuss the typical characteristics of each region's beliefs, thereby providing a means for comparison between the two areas. Through this comparison, I will work to reveal the underlying causes of the existing distinctions between the East and the West.

In "The Tao, Psychoanalysis and Existential Thought," Dongshick Rhee focuses on Eastern Psychotherapy and the misconceptions that Western researchers hold on the topic. He outlines the ultimate goals of different Eastern belief systems by focusing on the means to do so in each respective system. He writes that:

> In Buddhism the goal of practicing Tao is to become a Buddha by liberating oneself from attachment (bondage), reaching emptiness (nonattachment). In Confucianism one becomes a sage by liberating oneself from desire and reaching no desire (the Mean). In Lao-tzu's teaching one becomes a true man by liberating oneself from striving and thereby reaching a state of doing nothing (wu-wei). In Chuang-tzu's teaching one becomes a peak man (i.e. a perfect man) by liberating oneself from the sufferings of birth and death, thereby reaching the state of being freed from being hung upside down (Rhee 22).

While these belief systems are all distinct, they are not entirely different from each other. Each belief system holds unique end goals, and their methods of achieving these end goals are defined differently; however, they all strive to reach a plane of higher existence. Fundamentally, they

outline how to become the best version of oneself. When analyzing this passage with free will in mind, one can infer that a devotee of one of these systems would consider their liberation as their utmost objective. Therefore, they would use their free will in ways that best allow them to achieve their goals. In these belief systems, the self is an actualized being with free will, but the individual is not valued over the ultimate goal of transcendence and liberation.

Analyzing philosophies of the 19th and 20th centuries in a vacuum is tricky, as ideas were continually shared worldwide. In Inoue Katsuhito's "The Philosophical World of Meiji Japan," he discusses the implications of the modernization of Japan as well the introduction of German philosophical thought into the country. The modernization of Japan drastically altered the nation's belief systems and the everyday lives of citizens. Japanese intellectuals focused on practical studies to assimilate with the encroaching western colonial forces throughout the East. Many scholars focused on "transplanting Western positivism and utilitarianism into the intellectual soil of Japan" (Katsuhito 10). This introduction resulted in an ideological clash that is visible in literature of the following century. Eastern and Western traditions stood in opposition as "the tradition of Confucianism that strove to include humans in the eternal universe stood diametrically opposed to the epistemology of modern Western philosophy with its separation of subject and object and, hence, its subjugation of the natural world to the knowing subject" (14). Essentially, there was a conflict between the value systems of each discipline: Eastern philosophy focused on the harmony between humans and the natural world, while Western philosophy fixated on controlling the natural world.

The implications of Western influence on Eastern thought are resounding as it becomes extremely troublesome to discern which aspects of free will were cultivated solely in the East

and which were results of the encroaching Western ideologies. According to Katsuhito, to find key differences, one must examine the foundations of Eastern and Western thought. He claims that "the foundation of an Eastern way of thinking … differs from the Western dualistic thinking with its assumption of an absolute transcendence subsisting outside the immanence of phenomenal reality" (28). In essence, Eastern thought and Western thought may converge in contemporary times, but the paths that both systems have taken to arrive at that convergence significantly differ.

After applying the aforementioned Eastern preferences and ideologies to the concepts of free will and determinism, I maintain that their version of free will favors a non-fatalistic view of the world. While this is by no means representative of all Eastern interpretations of free will, this is the viewpoint that most closely aligns itself with the two Japanese works that I will be analyzing in later chapters. Even though the topic is extremely niche, it is still possible to extrapolate Eastern views on free will. Ultimately, I claim that Eastern philosophers' interpretations of free will and determinism favor a nonfatalistic view of humanity. By this, I mean that free will can upend the idea of fate. Being fatalistic essentially means one is succumbing to fate. Thus, being nonfatalistic would mean that one does not believe in fate and believes they can control their own future. Essentially, humans can control their destiny and are not subjugated to a predetermined plan for their lives. Katsuhito exemplifies this idea while quoting Zhu Xi when he writes that, "the great original is the body of the Way and those who master the way become its working" (28). Katsuhito is speaking of a "teleological harmony and mutuality between the whole and the parts" (28) that essentially claims Eastern philosophy, regarding the self, is based around "the notion of essence and function" (29). Katsuhito's

metaphor of the water and the waves best demonstrates the connection between the harmony of the body and nonfatalism. In this metaphor, he explains that

> Water becomes waves through the external causality of the wind (afflictions), but water continues to be the same water it always is. Its surface is whipped up into waves as the wind arises and returns to a glassy mirror as the wind subsides. Whatever waves the *activity* of the wind may produce, the *wetness* that makes it water remains unchanged. However giant the wave, the depth of the water is unchanged. In this sense, whatever shape water takes, it maintains its identity as water and *transcends* the shape of the waves. Water itself, in its transcendent unity, is aroused to take shape in various forms of waves (26).

The water represents the body, and the waves represent events in our lives. Humans are in control of their fate because the events that occur throughout life do not actually change the substance or essence of who they are. Some aspects may shift over time, but the fundamental elements remain constant.

In *Elbow Room*, Dennett notes that free will is different for everyone, and discusses the validity of free will as a concept in general. His claims are not necessarily at odds with those presented in Eastern interpretations; however, they show that free will in the West seems to focus on the individual. Westerners want free will because they do not want to be controlled by others. The individual takes precedence over all other aspects. Dennett presents this ideology when he claims that

> There is still no denying that the imagined exercise in controlling the controllers are precisely the sort of activities we human beings dislike, resent, and seek to avoid. We don't like being controlled by others in this sort of way, so apparently, we do feel that we are controlled (to some extent) by such activities (57).

In this excerpt, Dennett is effectively highlighting the self-implicating aspects of claiming that humanity has free will. We may not be aware of it, but in the process of fighting against those who supposedly control us, we admit that we are being controlled. Therefore, we are not actually free.

Free will cannot exist if we believe in either determinism or indeterminism. If we place belief in either determinism or indeterminism, we are limiting the amount of free will and control that we have over our lives. Dennett writes that "Nature does occasionally 'conspire' to thwart us, constricting our choices, compelling – if not coercing – our actions" (62). Herein lies the paradoxical nature of Western interpretations of free will: We believe that there could be some self-created higher power controlling or influencing our actions, yet we attempt to circumvent these all-powerful forces.

Dennett's argument also focuses on control as an expression of free will. Or, more accurately, the only realistic form of free will available to humans. Humans want to have as much control over their future as possible. Despite this, "we *never* choose a course of actions as the best course *all things considered*; it would be insane to try to consider all things" (Dennett 70). Essentially, one can never feasibly consider all the possibilities. Does this inability to consider all possibilities represent a lack of free will? Trying – and failing – to consider all

possibilities represents an inherent lack of free will. Accepting that all options can never be considered is effectively admitting that there are aspects or outcomes that cannot be controlled. We do not expect to have control over all results of every situation. Fundamentally, we want "lots of elbow room. We want a margin for error; we want to keep our options open, so that our chances of maintaining control over our operations, come what may, are enhanced" (63).

Dennett seemingly refutes the classical Western expressions of free will in *Elbow Room*. Conventional interpretations, like those present in Abrahamic religions, claim that humans do have free will. Yet, they place restrictions on the level of freedom available, by showcasing the punishments if one does not follow the right path. Western philosophic interpretations also favor the idea that humans have free will. This iteration of free will acts as a means to an end, the goal being control over ourselves and the world around us. Dennett's approach is not necessarily representative of these expressions of free will. Instead, his ideas are a critique of those longstanding interpretations. Importantly, and unlike Eastern representations of free will, the Western philosophic and the religious arguments seem to be quite different from each other. This difference might lie in the structures of each region's respective belief system. Eastern belief systems such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, are not structured in the same way as Western belief systems.

In this chapter, I have claimed that the expressions of free will are different between the two regions. However, the essential aspects to note are not that they are different. Instead, why and how they are different are the most critical elements of my comparison. Through uncovering these crucial differences, I can begin to draw connections between the respective philosophies. In the subsequent chapters, I will analyze the texts with a particular focus on the ideas of liberation,

transcendence, control, the self, fatalism, and nonfatalism. I will search for the presence of these ideologies within the texts in an effort to determine if these approaches are realized in Literature, or if they reside mostly in philosophical contexts. Essentially, I will evaluate the viability of these philosophies in concrete applications, rather than in abstractions.

FREE WILL IN *THE SAILOR WHO FELL FROM GRACE WITH THE SEA*

For my analysis of Eastern interpretations of free will in Literature, I chose *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea*. The author, Yukio Mishima, is relatively unknown in the West. However, he is particularly famous in Japan because of his adherence to classical Japanese ideals. He was notably conservative in his views on the Japanese government, and his writings reflected those notions as well. He hated the modernizing government and idolized the power of former Emperors. While the views he held were extreme, analyzing his work allows me to get a picture of Eastern scholarship with minimal Western influence.

The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea is essentially a battle of conflicting perspectives and expectations. The novel takes place in a post-WWII Japan, during a time when Western thought was encroaching upon the existing Japanese ideals. The story revolves around a young boy named Noboru, his mother, Fusako, and Ryuji, a sailor. Noboru loves tails of heroic deeds, and after meeting Ryuji, he comes to idolize the man. Meanwhile, Fusako and Ryuji fall in love. Noboru likens Ryuji to the heroes he adores from stories, and he feels that Ryuji is the preeminent example of what a man should be. Noboru views Ryuji as a "fantastic beast that's just come out of the sea all dripping wet" (Mishima 49). To Noboru, Ryuji is a beacon of freedom in the ever-constricting society in which they live. He earnestly believes that Ryuji "is really going to do something [terrific]" (50).

To rebel against their confining society, Noboru and his friends are a part of a gang, where they are all assigned numbers, as opposed to names. Their leader, Chief, is the driving force of the gang. He teaches them how to become detached from their emotions to free themselves from the constraints placed upon them by their families and their culture. After Ryuji

returns from a voyage, he proposes to Fusako, much to the dismay of Noboru, who feels Ryuji is giving up his life of freedom to settle down. The gang hates the role of fathers in society, and after Ryuji assumes this role, they label him as a traitor and decide that he must be killed to return him to his days of glory. They lead him far from the city under the guise of exploration and the desire to hear Ryuji's stories. However, once they reach their destination, they poison Ryuji's tea and ultimately kill him.

Jerry Piven, author of *The Madness and Perversion of Yukio Mishima*, concisely summarizes the novel when he writes that

> *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea* narrates the story of an adolescent who witnesses his mother consummate an erotic relationship with a heroic seaman. The boy admires the sailor but comes to despise him after he falls from grace by wedding the boy's mother and forsaking the sea. The boy finally rescues the sailor by killing him (207).

He claims that Mishima's novel is substantially representative of "disgust with vulnerability, the body, and death" which all manifest in "the vivisection of a kitten and finally the murder of a sailor" (207). Within this proclaimed madness and perversion, lies another struggle. The characters grapple with ideas like predestination, free will, glory, paternity, and fundamentally, control. They yearn for control over their destinies and attempt to upend fate, or rather, the illusion of fate.

The sections of *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea* that most clearly illustrate conflicts regarding control are those that focus on the gang and their ideologies. The gang, and Noboru, desire to rid themselves of all emotional attachments. They imagine themselves to be

prescient adolescent philosophers who are inherently superior to adults. In their minds, adults too easily conform to societal standards and effectively give up their freedom to be accepted by their peers and their government. Fatherhood is the role they hate the most. This hatred is best exemplified in Chief's speech to the gang when he proclaims:

> There is no such thing as a good father because the role itself is bad. Strict fathers, soft fathers, nice moderate fathers - one's as bad as another. They stand in the way of our progress while they try to burden us with their inferiority complexes, and their unrealized aspirations, and their resentments, and their ideals, and the weaknesses they've never told anyone about, and their sins, and their sweeter-than-honey dreams, and the maxims they've never had the courage to live by - they'd like to unload all that silly crap on us, all of it! (Mishima 136)

To the gang, fathers represent everything negative in the world. They are bastions of compromise, conformity, and ignorance. The role of the father embodies a lack of freedom. Noboru idealizes the man who is not tied down by societal restrictions, a truly free man, hence his obsession with Ryuji, the heroic seaman who leads a life full of adventure. While he believes he is mature beyond his age, Noboru still yearns for adventure, in a way that would be expected for a boy of his age. When peering out over the ocean, he pictures "the adventure lurking in some tropical backland," imagines a "many-colored market at the hub of clamor and confusion in some distant seaport," and dreams of the "bananas and parrots sold from the glistening arms of black natives" (54). Therefore, when Ryuji leaves the life of the sea behind and begins to act more fatherly, Noboru feels betrayed. To him, sailors are the pinnacle of freedom and epitomize man's control over their destiny. Noboru truly believes that "Ryuji … was an authentic hero"

(69). Consequently, when Ryuji began to court Fusako, “the fulsome odors of shore routine adhered to the sailor: the odor of home, the odor of neighbors, the odor of peace, odors of fish frying and pleasantries and furniture that never budged, the odor of household budget books and weekend excursions … all the putrid odors landsmen reek of, the stench of death” (134). Noboru associates domestication and paternity with death. This death is not necessarily literal, but rather, the death of one’s power and integrity.

The gang’s philosophy is informed by a perverse version of the Eastern lenses presented in Chapter One. Those philosophies share the goal of achieving an enlightened form of oneself. The gang’s enlightened form is one that hopes to have power over life by not resigning to society’s burdens. By becoming detached from their emotions, the gang members can free themselves from all shackles. When Noboru is tasked to kill a kitten, he “seized the kitten by the neck and stood up. It dangled dumbly from his fingers. He checked himself for pity; like a lighted window seen from an express train, it flickered for an instant and disappeared. He was relieved” (Mishima 57). In successfully freeing himself from guilt over the heinous act he is about to commit, Noboru has achieved the heightened state of being that the gang covets. When they kill the kitten in a ritual-like manner, they claim control over life and death. Noboru’s careful contemplation after killing the kitten best represents this sense of superiority:

> Noboru had withstood the ordeal from beginning to end. Now his half-dazed brain envisioned the warmth of the scattered viscera and the pools of blood in the gutted belly finding wholeness and perfection in the rapture of the dead kitten’s large languid soul. The liver, limp beside the corpse, became a soft peninsula, the squashed heart a little sun,

> the reeled-out bowels a white atoll, and the blood in the belly the tepid waters of a tropical sea. Death had transfigured the kitten into a perfect, autonomous world (61).

In the minds of the gang members, death can return living beings to their purest form: a form that is no longer restrained by conventions of the mortal world from which only a few are free. Noboru's description of the cat reflects their viewpoint. He imagines that "The skinned neck, draped gracefully on the floor, seemed to be wearing a cat mask" and believed "The cat was only an exterior. Life had posed as a cat" (59). The gang exploits their childhood freedom to liberate themselves from their perceived social constraints. In their minds, they can wield their limited free will to award themselves an even greater degree of freedom.

The gang takes their philosophy to the extreme when they ultimately resolve to return Ryuji to his former glory, by killing him. They believe that "the sailor's death is to once more transfigure him into this authentic hero totally related to the sea" (Goldstein 120). In doing so, they are utilizing their strength, the very strength that adults overlook and ignore. The Chief professes that by creating laws that forgive juveniles, adults show their hopes for the younger generation. The adults idealize children, and they assume that they are not capable of such evil acts. However, they are also admitting that they exist within a rigid system, one that does not allow for their autonomy. The chief claims that this is man's fatal flaw, as "they've assumed just because they've roped themselves so tight they can't even budge that we must be helpless too; they've been careless enough to allow us here, and only here, a glimpse of blue sky and absolute freedom" (Mishima 166). Adolescents are awarded a degree of freedom, like that of a sailor, because they are not yet fully integrated into society. By employing their freedom – and murdering the kitten and Ryuji – the kids can "achieve real power over existence" (57). They

refuse succumb to fate. While the children's actions should not be valorized, their behavior represents how one can utilize free will. The gang's actions are twisted depictions of Rhee's and Katsuhito's descriptions of how free will can be employed to achieve liberation and a higher plane of existence.

The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea represents the clashing of Eastern and Western ideologies. In the novel, Fusako represents the quickly westernizing world of post-WWII Japan, while Noboru represents a yearning for the classical Japanese ideals. Ryuji, previously the embodiment of these traditional ideals, is being fundamentally altered due to Fusako's influence. Noboru and his friends refuse to reconcile with their changing environment, as they believe they have the power to control their destinies. These beliefs align with the views of free will and determinism I described in Eastern philosophies. Despite this similarity, they are extreme corruptions of the concepts. The liberation and transcendence that the gang yearns for are not the typical iterations found in Eastern philosophy. They have fundamentally altered the classic ideals to fit their goals. Noboru's defiance in the face of fate depicts the inclination towards nonfatalism that I previously mentioned was present in Eastern philosophy.

FREE WILL IN *THE SIRENS OF TITAN*

For my primary analysis of the Western interpretations of free will in Literature, I chose *The Sirens of Titan*, by Kurt Vonnegut. Unlike Yukio Mishima, Kurt Vonnegut is widely known across academia and in the general populace. I decided on a Kurt Vonnegut novel because he often offers conflicting viewpoints in his novels. Having multiple perspectives on free will within one work allows me to analyze both Kurt Vonnegut's opinions and those harbored by most of the West.

This novel is difficult to summarize linearly as Vonnegut hides many details from the reader throughout. *The Sires of Titan* begins by describing the farfetched luck of Malachi Constant. Malachi's extraordinary luck leads him to believe divine powers from above favor him. Meanwhile, Winston Niles Rumfoord, a wealthy man, turned space explorer is perpetually catapulted through space and time after passing through a chrono-synclastic infundibulum (A funnel-shaped irregularity in which time does not exist linearly). After entering this anomaly, Rumfoord can see both the past and the future. Rumfoord foresees Malachi's future and tells him that he will travel to Mars, father a child with Beatrice, journey to Mercury, return to Earth, and then will finally end up on Titan.

Fundamentally, *The Sirens of Titan* is about Malachi Constant's struggle for free will while on a tumultuous journey through space. The novel features characters who all want to decide their futures, yet they are consistently thwarted by greater powers. These higher powers take the form of Winston Niles Rumfoord, the Tralfamadorians, and ultimately, an uncaring universe. To compartmentalize my analysis, I will focus on each character's individual struggle for free will.

Malachi Constant, the novel's protagonist, is the character who most directly struggles with a lack of control. In Raymond Radford's "'Somebody Up There Likes You': Free Will and Determinism on a Journey through Space in Kurt Vonnegut's *The Sirens of Titan*," he claims, "Within the world of *Sirens*, both free will and determinism are acted out through the experiences of the characters. Constant, especially, attempts to act as an agent of his own free will, despite a deterministic universe setting in motion all that will happen" (157). Malachi Constant simply could never determine his future. The Tralfamadorians dictated his entire life before it had even begun. The predestination presented by Vonnegut is representative of his beliefs regarding free will and the inherent futility of attempting to achieve it. Dennett, like Vonnegut, believes that humans "do not want to be mere dominoes; [they] want to be moral agents" (100) and that "[they] prefer to find [them]selves in circumstances where [they] can indulge in a modicum of spontaneous exploration" (72). Malachi represents all members of humanity that believe their good fortune is due to favor of the divine rather than just sheer luck. Malachi never attains even the slightest agency, and his misfortune shows Vonnegut's disapproval of those who believe they are inherently superior to others. Malachi's line of thinking embodies the idea that those who are rich and powerful were always meant to be, and those who are poor and helpless are forced to fend for themselves because they were not destined to be any different. In direct denunciation of Malachi's beliefs, Rumfoord – and thereby the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent – proclaims that "there is nothing more cruel, more dangerous, more blasphemous that a man can do than to believe that – that luck, good or bad, is the hand of God" (Vonnegut 257). In reality, their destinies were decided indiscriminately. Instead of being divinely favored, Vonnegut believes that some humans are luckier than others,

and that “luck is the way the wind swirls and the dust settles eons after God has passed by” (Vonnegut 257). This ideology is shared by Dennett, as he writes that “there is really no such thing (we think) as being lucky in general, being reliably lucky; there is only being lucky on particular occasions” (93). Malachi’s father seems to have accepted this outlook, as he believes that “some people are lucky and other people aren't and not even a graduate of the Harvard Business School can say why” (Vonnegut 89). Malachi’s character exists as a critique of the classical Western concept of the individual. Western philosophy heralds the individual as the pinnacle of existence that, “According to our traditional understanding … [is] primarily or directly responsible for … ‘voluntary’ actions” (Dennett 78). As an individual, Malachi enjoys all the power and wealth one could feasibly conceive. The individual, and therefore Malachi, is seemingly awarded the potential to alter and disrupt both their environment and their future, yet Malachi can never truly free himself. *The Sirens of Titan*, through Malachi’s character, ultimately demonstrates that the individual has no control. The individual cannot conceivably alter their future to any degree, and everyone is “a victim of a series of accidents” (Vonnegut 233).

Beatrice’s character is Vonnegut’s means of criticizing people who believe they do not need to engage with those around them. Beatrice believes that “She owed the world very little indeed” (Vonnegut 4). She refuses to accept the future that Rumfoord foretold for her, and she feels that “she hasn’t got the courage to” (20). Beatrice is resigned to her future. She lets events happen to her, rather than trying to influence them. When discussing *The Sirens of Titan* in his work, *Kurt Vonnegut and the American Novel: A Postmodern Iconography,* Robert Tally Jr. claims that, “the individual and the human race as a whole are understood to be in a vast

mechanical ensemble" that is "a reflection on *la condition humaine* or *man's fate*" (Tally 32). Beatrice represents someone who does not outwardly struggle against fate but refuses to accept that she is not in control of her destiny.

Winston Niles Rumfoord is a God-like character in *The Sirens of Titan*, and even he is not truly free to decide his own fate. While Rumfoord can see the past and the future, he is unable to alter them. His inability to do so makes him extraordinarily bitter and resentful towards the Tralfamadorians because he believes that they "reached into the Solar System, picked [him] up, and used [him like a] handy-dandy potato peeler" (Vonnegut 290). Rumfoord tries to be an active agent in his life, coinciding with Dennett's profession that humans feel the need to be free agents and not spectators. Rumfoord – and most humans – believe that "as free agents [they] can introduce an arbitrary disturbance into the universe and thus destroy any pre-arranged harmony; under the transformations that our arbitrary interventions produce, only real regularities will be preserved and coincidental and pre-arranged ones will be destroyed" (Dennett 128). After trying his hardest to thwart fate, he was unable to reshape his future in any meaningful way.

Despite having harmful intentions, Rumfoord was able to create a religion on Earth that greatly benefited the world. He created the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent, which professes that "Puny man can do nothing at all to help or please God Almighty, and Luck is not the hand of God" (Vonnegut 183). The religion is a straightforward depiction of Vonnegut's feelings towards organized religions and predestination. To him, free will is not attainable, and all humans can do is love those around them, because everything that happens in life is down to pure chance and luck. The prayer of the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent also provides insight into the book's message regarding free will and higher powers:

> Oh Lord Most High, Creator of the Cosmos, Spinner of Galaxies, Soul of Electromagnetic Waves, Inhaler and Exhaler of Inconceivable Volumes of Vacuum, Spitter of Fire and Rock, Trifler with Millennia — what could we do for Thee that Thou couldst not do for Thyself one octillion times better? Nothing. What could we do or say that could possibly interest Thee? Nothing. Oh, Mankind, rejoice in the apathy of our Creator, for it makes us free and truthful and dignified at last. No longer can a fool point to a ridiculous accident of good luck and say, 'Somebody up there likes me.' And no longer can a tyrant say, 'God wants this or that to happen, and anyone who doesn't help this or that to happen is against God.' O Lord Most High, what a glorious weapon is Thy Apathy, for we have unsheathed it, have thrust and slashed mightily with it, and the claptrap that has so often enslaved us or driven us into the madhouse lies slain!" -The prayer of the Reverend C. Horner Redwine (218).

The prayer is simultaneously a satirization of prayers in the real world and a direct statement of Vonnegut's beliefs on free will, agency, luck, and humanity in general. By believing things happen to them for a reason other than pure chance, humans are essentially weaponizing their feelings of self-importance. The prayer implies that in a world where humans acknowledge their lack of a caring God, they can finally attain freedom. In accepting their lack of free will, they become free.

Vonnegut includes the Tralfamadorians as another example of a higher power who lacks free will. The story of the Tralfamadorians is as follows:

> Once upon a time on Tralfamadore there were creatures who weren't anything like machines. They weren't dependable. They weren't efficient. They weren't predictable.

> They weren't durable. And these poor creatures were obsessed by the idea that everything that existed had to have a purpose, and that some purposes were higher than others. These creatures spent most of their time trying to find out what their purpose was. And every time they found out what seemed to be a purpose of themselves, the purpose seemed so low that the creatures were filled with disgust and shame. And, rather than serve such a low purpose, the creatures would make a machine to serve it. This left the creatures free to serve higher purposes. But whenever they found a higher purpose, the purpose still wasn't high enough. So machines were made to serve higher purposes, too. And the machines did everything so expertly that they were finally given the job of finding out what the highest purpose of the creatures could be. The machines reported in all honesty that the creatures couldn't really be said to have any purpose at all. The creatures thereupon began slaying each other, because they hated purposeless things above all else. And they discovered that they weren't even very good at slaying. So they turned that job over to the machines, too. And the machines finished up the job in less time than it takes to say, "Tralfamadore" (Vonnegut 279).

The Tralfamadorians were highly sophisticated people, yet their undoing was due to the same flaw that is held by humanity: the assumption that they existed for some higher purpose. Their life did not have inherent meaning. Realizing this, and failing to accept it, was their undoing. Vonnegut is claiming that nothing in the world has an implicit purpose. In the novel, the only characters who end up happy are the ones who accept that they have no fundamental purpose. If they want a purpose, they have to create their own. Boaz, Unk's shipmate on Mercury, loves spending time with the Harmoniums, small glowing creatures that live on Mercury. He

ultimately decides to live out the rest of his life on Mercury taking care of the Harmoniums simply because their presence brings him joy. He tells Unk, “I found me a place where I can do good without doing any harm, and I can see I'm doing good, and … I'm doing good for now. I'm doing it, and they love me, Unk, as best they can. I found me a home” (217). *The Sirens of Titan*’s underlying message is that the world is devoid of meaning. To be happy and fulfilled, humans need to create their personal means for happiness. Vonnegut assuredly offers a final, uncharacteristically optimistic declaration: that the “purpose of human life, no matter who is controlling it, is to love whoever is around to be loved” (320).

DIALOGUES BETWEEN THE EAST AND THE WEST

Ideas and Literature do not exist in a vacuum. It would be imprudent to claim that the East and the West are wholly disparate regions that have not influenced each other at any point in history. While notable scholars claim that ideas generally move from colonizers to the colonized, I argue otherwise. Coinciding with my argument, Sarah Stanford Friedman's *Planetary Modernisms Provocations on Modernity Across Time* asserts that "Said's theory of affiliation" which "tends to be unidirectional – from colonizing center to colonial periphery as a site of '[fiery]' agency" is not conclusive (219). Instead, Friedman argues for a "notion of archipelagic modernities – multinodal, multidirectional flows of relational representation" in which "writers located at different nodal points in the network of modernities create not in isolation but in linked relationship to creative producers elsewhere" (220). She claims that "colonial [and] postcolonial texts [do not] exist solely in opposition to or reaction against those of the colonizers. Instead, the concept of global affiliations focuses attention on interculturalism at the level of representation" (220). In this chapter, I will analyze two short stories: One from the East and one from the West. In doing so, I will uncover dialogues between the two regions that will help to further illuminate the variations, or lack thereof, between the interpretations of free will within the two areas.

The first short story, "Lemon," is a Dōjinshi. These are essentially short self-publications that do not rely on publishing houses. Therefore, the authors are free to include unfiltered material within their works. "Lemon" was written by Motojirō Kajii. Kajii was a Japanese writer who was afflicted with tuberculosis and died at the age of 31. Similarly, "Lemon" is about a man

dying from Lung disease who loses interest in all the activities that previously brought him joy. After wandering indiscriminately through Kyoto, he eventually finds satisfaction by placing a lemon in his favorite stationery shop and imagining that it was a time bomb that blew up the shop. While not overtly about free will, "Lemon" demonstrates agency on a small scale. Even though the story is small in scope and quite personal, it represents the power and the influence than an individual can have. The form of the Dōjinshi itself is synonymous with free will. The main character wants to leave his mark, as he knows he is not long for this world. After entering his favorite Maruzen store, he becomes depressed once again. Suddenly, he thinks, "Why not pile up a jumble of books of different colors and give the lemon a try to see how it looks" (Kajii 267). After he does this, he feels immense joy. He exits the shop and imagines that the lemon has blown the store to smithereens. While minuscule in manner, he exerts his agency and forces the universe to accept him as an individual. In this text, the main character acts as an author stand-in. The narrator leaves his mark on the world by disturbing the space he occupies. The agency of the narrator was even translated into the real world. Following the story's publication, readers began to place lemons in the shop depicted within the story. The act of publishing this Dōjinshi was an actualization of Kajii's agency. These self-publications are often subversive in nature. More specifically, "Lemon" is an I-Novel, or a Shishōsetsu. Shishōsetsu often focused on "unpleasant, embarrassing, [and] even shameful aspects of modern life," and they lacked "the moral didacticism of pre-modern prose" (Mostow 139). By focusing on the self, Shishōsetsu embody the idea of free will. Kajii disrupted both the fictional and the real world. When discussing the individual with regards to Western philosophy, Dennett posits that "a self is, above all, a locus of self-control" (81). The acknowledgment of the power and free will present within the individual

is not a uniquely western concept. This theory corresponds well to Friedman's work, as she rejects the idea that modernity solely exists as a product of the Western world. She counters that

> The retreat to this familiar and seemingly more manageable timeframe and landscape for modernism is insufficiently transhistorical and planetary; it recapitulates in the aesthetic domain the story of the West's invention of modernity, and leads us to ask how any given non-Western aesthetic text or art resembles the world of such iconic figures as Picasso, Joyce, Woolf, or Eliot. (Friedman 213).

Essentially, academia overemphasizes the reach that Western philosophies have in the world. By claiming that iconic Western figures influenced writers from non-Western regions, scholars are erasing the centuries of cultural formation within those non-Western countries. I am not insinuating that these icons never affect non-Western authors. Instead, I am claiming that the idea that these authors are always shaped by Western philosophical forces is entirely misleading.

I am arguing in opposition to the idea that the West influences every other region. Rather, I claim that philosophies of the world influence each other and can simultaneously adopt beliefs independent of one another. The West can shape the East and the East can influence the West. All areas of the world are constantly affecting each other (Although not explicitly mentioned, the Middle East and the Global South are also influential forces in the global community). While my argument focuses on the East and the West, my theories apply to all regions. Alternatively, each area can develop similar ideas independently from the other. However, claiming that the West is always the origin of all dominant philosophies would be thoroughly disingenuous. Correspondingly, Friedman writes that "the modernities of colonialism and its legacies [exist] in

part because others have so ably examined other aspects of rapid change in the twentieth century but more substantively because I regard the catastrophes of the century not simply as war between nation-states but as seismic conflict among and within global empires" (217). She is implying that the wars between world powers are not only physical; they are cultural, and they can involve the forcible sharing of ideas and philosophies. Friedman continues that "this conflict among European, Russian, Ottoman, Chinese, Japanese, and American empires constituted planetary geopolitics with deep effects among peoples they colonized, including not only the humiliations of colonialism but also intensified and at times creative contact among diverse peoples and cultures" (217). Information did not travel solely from the West to the East, but also from the East to the West. An example of this is found in Ursula K. Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." Le Guin presents an idyllic world. Those who live in the Omelas live in complete happiness. However, the narrator realizes that the only way happiness is preserved is by imprisoning a child in darkness and squalor. All citizens of the Omelas are shown this child. Most choose to stay, thinking that one child's misery is admissible if it allows the Omelas to exist. Some, however, decide to leave the Omelas and travel into the unknown. Unlike "Lemon," Le Guin's short story is openly discussing free will and, in that regard, the individual. The short story closes with the narrator thinking to himself:

> They all know it is there, all the people of Omelas. Some of them have come to see it, others are content merely to know it is there. They all know that it has to be there. Some of them understand why, and some do not, but they all understand that their happiness, the beauty of their city, the tenderness of their friendships, the health of their children, the wisdom of their scholars, the skill of their makers, even the abundance of their harvest

> and the kindly weathers of their skies, depend wholly on this child's abominable misery. (Le Guin 216).

The entire story hinges on choice. The citizens of the Omelas willingly decide to stay, despite knowing the implications. When writing about her inspirations for the story, Le Guin claimed that William James' ideas regarding free will and utopias influenced her (Kennedy and Gioia 274). Despite this, Le Guins's illustrations of free will in "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," and her other texts, are also similar to those present in Eastern philosophies. When discussing Le Guin's works, Eric Rabkin writes that "work[ing] within the deterministic assumptions of Western culture would seem to destroy the possibilities of free will." Yet, "in Le Guin's artistic practice, and in the philosophy of the Eastern world, the left hand and the right hand form a unity by virtue of their difference" (Rabkin 5). Much like my earlier discussion of Eastern interpretations of free will, Le Guin also defies determinism's validity. Therefore, Le Guin's works are a product of philosophies considered to have origins in Eastern and Western thought.

My analyses of both "Lemon" and "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" help to demonstrate that the East and the West are not totally at odds with each other. Literature and ideas "[give] form to the visionary, imaginary, phenomenological, emotional, mimetic, and symbolic modes of human meaning making caught up in the mobilities and fissures of accelerating change, in the networks of often clashing forces in the particular world system of its geohistorical emergence" (Friedman 213). Fundamentally, the world has become increasingly interconnected over the previous centuries. As a result, separate regions of the world influence each other. The movement of information is not a one-way road; it's a system of exchanges.

CONCLUSION

Uncovering the causes of the perceived disparities between Eastern and Western interpretations of free will and determinism is crucial in understanding why the longstanding preference for Western philosophies exists in modern academia. By analyzing these different interpretations, I have shown the merits of including regions other than the West in scholarship. Incorporating and embracing philosophies and viewpoints from non-Western areas allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how ideas are conceived and transmitted.

Initially, I provided the foundation for my argument by showing Eastern and Western scholars' interpretations of free will within their respective regions. I found that Eastern interpretations view free will as a means of achieving liberation. An individual can fully realize his/her potential by utilizing his/her free will to attain a higher plane of existence. From my included scholarship, I ultimately deduced that Eastern free will harbors a non-fatalistic view of the world, while Western free will valorizes the freedom and agency of the individual over all else.

Subsequently, I analyzed Yukio Mishima's *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea* with the intent of finding representations of free will present in a work of Eastern Literature. Through my analysis, I discovered that Mishima's novel contains the interpretations of free will that are in line with Rhee and Katsuhito's arguments: that Eastern philosophies regarding free will are non-fatalistic. Mishima depicts free will in a manner that is independent of the Western perception of free will. He effectively shows a perverse example of how free will can be exploited to achieve liberation, whatever form that may take.

While studying the types of free will present in Kurt Vonnegut's *The Sirens of Titan*, I addressed that Vonnegut, like Dennett, was quite critical of the classic Western interpretations of free will. Vonnegut ultimately professed that humans cannot thwart fate. These beliefs oppose the typical Western assumption that individuals are centers of self-control. This tension works to emphasize the importance of including and acknowledging opposing viewpoints within discussions, rather than merely accepting the dominant opinions as fact.

In an effort to draw connections between the philosophies of the East and the West, I examined Motojirō Kajii's "Lemon" and Ursula K. Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." In this analysis, I indicated the presence of a dialogue between seemingly disparate regions of the world, ultimately demonstrating that academia cannot continue to ignore non-Western works and philosophies in favor of those originating from the West.

This study demonstrates the importance of analyzing multiple interpretations of a concept. My analysis of free will in the East and the West shows the disadvantages of assuming that the perceptions prevalent in Western academia are ubiquitous across all regions and cultures. By examining these outwardly dissimilar texts, and discovering that they possess parallels, I am highlighting a deficiency in universities – that many fail to study works from across the world and lack a truly global perspective. Classes based on the field (and practices) of Comparative Literature are rare in undergraduate university catalogs. Therefore, projects like mine are crucial in broadening the scope of undergraduate programs. An all-inclusive perspective is integral in the advancement of both English departments and in the growth of future scholars in an increasingly globalizing world.

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