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Abstract

Literary discourse analysis – viewed legitimately as a branch of discourse analysis– is a new approach to literature. In this article we begin by studying its emergence, taking into account the evolution of the relationship between literature and linguistics throughout the 20th century. That allows us to bring to the fore its main characteristics. We then discuss two concepts of interest to literary discourse analysis: self constituting discourse and scenography. We close by explaining that the introduction of discourse analysis to the field of literary studies, modifies its map, from an institutional and an epistemological viewpoint. This assumption implies a distinction between two paradigms: “hermeneutic approaches” and “discourse approaches”.

1. Introduction

The label “literary discourse analysis” is still seldom used: we are always hearing of “discourse analysis” and “literary discourse” but very few scholars claim to practise “literary discourse analysis”.

Among the people who claim to practise literary discourse analysis, very few do it in reality: most of the time they only apply pragmatic concepts to literary texts, without changing the way they understand literature, as if a discourse analytical outlook were an “approach” like any other one. So, many people give to the term “literary discourse analysis” a “weak” meaning, using it to refer to approaches that bring to the fore enunciation activity, genres, contracts, implicatures, speech acts, etc. Undoubtedly, taking into account pragmatic phenomena is very important, but discourse analysis wants more. It aims to consider the reciprocal envelopment of text and context, which implies shifting the core of the analysis: from the creator and his or her work to the conditions that make literary discourse possible.

2. Literature, linguistics and discourse analysis

The people who claim to tackle literature as discourse analysts must fight on two fronts: traditional literature studies, of course, but also discourse analysis. The development of a branch of discourse analysis dedicated to the study of literature is scowled at not only by the scholars who work in the area of traditional “humanities” but also by most discourse analysts, who consider that “true” discourse analysis must ignore literature, that the study of everyday conversations must be the hard core of their activity.

As a rule, the study of literature takes place in Humanities departments“ (or the “*facultés de lettres*”, to retake the French category), in which two kinds of scholars work on literary texts: most of them are specialists of literature, whereas a few come from the area of linguistics and comment on texts with a “stylistic” outlook. Now, if we practise “literary discourse analysis” the situation is much less clear: in spite of its tight connection to linguistics, discourse analysis cannot be located in a specified area of the university but can develop as much as in Humanities as in Social and Human sciences. It makes a big difference to the situation we have been accustomed to until now. Roughly speaking, from the nineteenth century, literary studies implied a main (or principal) frontier : On the one hand, the study of “context”, which is supposed to be “outside” text ; on the other hand, the study - stylistic or not - of texts considered in themselves.

2.1. Until the sixties

Until the sixties, the relationships between literature and linguistics were fairly peaceful. The scholars who commented on old texts had recourse to philology to study lexicon or grammar. Others used linguistics for a “stylistic” outlook on texts. In fact, two main stylistic approaches can be distinguished:

- An approach in the continuity of classical rhetoric which aimed at analysing the way authors manage to provoke determined « effects » on their addressees. This approach was based on the assumption that one can establish systematic connections between “procedures” and “effects”: if you want to trigger *this* feeling, you can use one of *these* procedures. It is an “atomistic” stylistics: a text is the result of the right use of a

linguistic toolbox in which the author finds what is necessary to his/her style. This toolbox can be described by specialists of stylistics, who select the relevant categories of descriptive grammar or rhetoric.

- The other stylistic approach can be characterised as “organic”. It is tightly connected to romantic aesthetics. Literary works are considered as the “expression” of the conscience of their author, who shows in his/her work his/her own “vision of the world”. With this approach one must associate Leo Spitzer, inspired by Marcel Proust, who wrote a famous commentary on Flaubert’s style (1920). This organic stylistics, in fact, has a loose connection with (or to) linguistics. For it, literary style cannot be analysed only as a specific use of language. Spitzer is very clear about that: “the blood of poetic creation is the same everywhere: in language, in ideas, in plots, in composition (...) Because I happened to be a linguist, I took the viewpoint of linguistics to penetrate the unity of works” (1948 : 18). In such a stylistic approach, works are viewed as the projection of obsessive schemata inside the mind of their creators. The analyst does not attempt to work out a classification of the procedures that are at the disposal of the writers, but puts to the fore the uniqueness of each work, which is considered as a closed universe whose entire aspects reflect the “sun” (that is Spitzer’s metaphor) of his/her creator.

2.2. Structuralism and « Nouvelle critique »

The trends of literary criticism in the sixties contrasted sharply with the previous approaches to texts, by giving great importance to linguistics. Literary structuralism, like Russian formalists, claimed to take on modern linguistics to develop a true science of literary text. But if linguistics means “a discipline that studies the properties of Human language”, it can easily be observed that most of structuralist research did not work with categories such as “adjective”, “phrase”, “aspect”, “determination”, “focus”, etc., neither with categories such as dialect, variation, stress, etc. In reality, the notions that were mainly used were “paradigm”, “syntagm”, “connotation”, “pattern”, etc. many specialists of literature denounced linguistics as “imperialist” ; but it was an imperialism of semiotics, not one of linguistics. The fields most developed by literary structuralism were narratology, poetics (in the narrow meaning of a science of verse) and lexicology.

Narratology, in spite of some rather metaphorical loanwords (“narrative proposition”, “mode”, etc.), developed without precise reference to linguistics. The case of poetics is different. The famous definition of poetic function as "the projection of the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection to the axis of combination", is a structural characterisation, not a linguistic one. The perfect harmony between the organisation of verse and the basic assumptions of structuralism must be stressed: both were founded on the primacy of paradigmatic oppositions.

The only field of linguistics that was really active in structuralist criticism was lexicology: the vocabulary of literary works was studied by applying the methods of structural lexicology : distributionalism and componential analysis...or with the help of lexical statistics (in France for example P. Guiraud or Ch. Muller’s work). As a rule, the lexical networks were supposed to be representative of the work they were extracted from : they were not often connected with text structure. Structural linguistics, focused on sign, favoured this approach, which, besides, made sociological or psychological interpretations of texts easier.

However, in spite of the problems that it raised, structuralism changed our way of considering the relationship of text and context. Hitherto, this relationship was not enigmatic at all: having recourse to popular psychology or sociology, it was not difficult to state that a writer was “influenced” by such or such traumatic event in his or her life, that a novel “reflected” the preoccupations of the group the writer belonged to, and so on. But, from the sixties on, the relationship text/context became problematic; people looked desperately for a “theory” of the “articulation” of text and context. At least, they claimed to look for such an articulation; for it can be supposed that they were secretly satisfied with the impossibility of such a theory: it proved that Humanities departments – to which nearly all of them belonged – were autonomous, that literary works were in a space out of reach of the social or human sciences.

But the very frontier text/context was not really questioned by structuralism, in the sixties and the seventies. On the contrary, it was preserved, and even strengthened. Of course, the study of context was marginalized by the new trends of literary criticism, which focused on the structural properties of texts, but the very principle of separating the study of texts and the study of their contexts was preserved.

From the late seventies on, structuralism was less and less influential: new approaches transformed our way of considering language activity, and consequently literature. Among them, one must bring to the fore “text linguistics”, enunciation theories, pragmatics. They did not exert influence at the same level, but their effects converged, to question the very frontier of text / context. The last step was the emergence of the field of literary discourse analysis.

3. Discourse analysis, text and context

By its nature, discourse analysis exceeds the boundaries of the usual distinction between text and context. Discourse analysts are threatened by two dangers, one that could be named “textualism” and the other, “sociologism”. The former consists of reducing to the text the scope of the analysis; the latter consists of studying the setting of the speech independently of discourse activity. So, it is no wonder that in literary discourse analysis the notion of genre plays a key role.

Here I am using “genre” as usually defined in discourse analysis. I know that “genre” can refer to groups of texts of any kind. But in discourse analysis, as a rule, “genre” refers to communication frames, to sets of norms associated with a certain category of speech situations. From this perspective, an interview on TV or a PhD, for example, are genres, but polemic or political texts do not constitute genres. Considered at a given moment of history and in a given society, literature can be considered as a network of genres, a certain configuration of legitimate speech activities. This network is not only constituted of literary genres – I mean the genres of literary works –, it includes also genres dealing with literature but belonging to other areas: conversations in salons or in academies, newspapers, journals, handbooks, TV programs, biographies of great writers, and so on. That does not mean that a novel and its commentary in a newspaper, the autobiography of a poet and his/her poems belong to the same category, it means that one must consider the whole network to understand the functioning of literary discourse. Discourse analysts try to take into account at the same time how texts are produced and consumed and how they are commented on, transformed, ordered or stocked: these dimensions are inseparable.

Spontaneously, nowadays when they analyse texts, most scholars oppose two forms of subjectivity: that of the “enunciator” (who can be a “narrator” for a tale or a novel), to whom the responsibility of the utterance is attributed, and that of the “real” person, the author outside text. This opposition is very useful and comfortable, but it does not correspond to the immense complexity of discourse. A third instance must be introduced: the writer, I mean. the instance who plays a role in the literary field. The writer determines certain options concerning his/her behaviour as a producer of works: he or she assumes a pen name or not, gives interviews or refuses to see journalists, publishes in certain genres and not in others, writes forewords, etc. Besides, he or she behaves according to the representations of the writer status in his/her society. Let us take the case of a poet of the sixteenth century who writes love poetry in the manner of Petrarch: a tacit contract prescribes to the reader the thought that the person who says “I” in these poems is not really in love with the great lady to whom he is addressing his sonnets. But in the nineteenth century when a romantic poet writes “I love you”, by virtue of another tacit contract, the person, outside text, is supposed to be really in love. Obviously, this

difference is not inside text, it is a consequence of the variation of the institutional status of the writer and of literature.

We must bear in mind that the writer, willingly or not, is at the same time the producer of *his/her* text and a minister, a representative of literature as institution. By the way, one can notice that the word “author” is ambiguous, when used for example in the foreword of a novel: the author is both the person who has produced the work and the role that claims the responsibility for it. Anyhow, notions such as “writer” or “author” exceed the dichotomy enunciator/person, the latter being considered from a sociological or psychological viewpoint. Besides, if we do not restrict our interest to a very limited stock of works, many texts – probably most of them - are beyond that distinction. For example, to *whom*, must we attribute autobiographies or diaries that are published by writers ? We can say the same thing for forewords or manifestoes: *who* writes them ? That cannot be the enunciator, nor the writer, nor the person outside literature... The mere distinction between text and context does not allow us to answer such questions.

Another consequence of the development of a discourse analytical approach to literature is the integration of literary studies into larger spaces.

If we give up focusing only on texts considered in themselves, many phenomena that were previously outside the legitimate scope of literary studies become relevant: for example the way the writers produce their works (what I call “genetic rites”) or literary life: the places in which artists meet, the groups they constitute, the way they play their role in the media, etc. The way texts circulate, the way they are consumed, the way writers live, the way school deals with literature, etc. cannot be dissociated from what is unduly considered as being “inside” text. For discourse analysts, there is no inside and outside text. What is “inside” must construct its own “interiority” through interdiscourse.

So, whereas classical approaches (psychological or sociological) agree to remain “outside” text, waiting for an “articulation” of text and context, discourse analysis questions the very idea of “outside text”. Pierre Bourdieu’s attitude is interesting from this viewpoint. Undoubtedly, his research on literary field contributed to the promotion of literary discourse analysis, but he preserved a form of distinction between inside and outside text. For example, in his study of Flaubert’s work (Bourdieu, 1992) he claims that his outlook does not take into account the “contents” of the novels, except when a clear

correspondence can be established between the life of Flaubert and the life of his characters.

Contrary to this attitude, to transform the conditions of research on literature. one needs to open a new space, that of *discourse*. I would like to quote some lines of Michel Foucault, who says it much better than I could do:

But what we are concerned with here is not to neutralise discourse, to make it the sign of something else, and to pierce through its density in order to reach what remains silently anterior to it, but on the contrary to maintain it in its consistency, to make it emerge in its own complexity. [...] I would like to show with precise examples that in analysing discourses themselves, one sees the loosening of the embrace, apparently so tight, of words and things, and the emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practice. [...] A task that consists of not – of no longer – treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents of representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. [1989: 52-54]

But it cannot be denied that the approaches that belong to discourse analysis are not the only way for linguistics to deal with literature. Discourse analysis can be used to comment on texts, like traditional stylistics did, but also to understand the functioning of literary discourse, as part of the discursive practices of a given society. So, it is convenient to distinguish four modalities for linguistics to intervene in the field of literary studies.

- The first one is that of traditional stylistics (atomistic or organic): studying linguistic phenomena is supposed to help the analyst to interpret texts. The linguistic analysis is only a tool.

- The second modality is that of the approaches that use concepts and methods from pragmatic, text linguistics or discourse analysis. We can distinguish two purposes: a) elaborating interpretations of a work or a group of works; b) working out a model of the linguistic properties of a corpus, which can be defined according to various criteria. For

example, describing a genre or the properties of texts belonging to the same aesthetic position (naturalism, surrealism...) or written by the same author.

- In the third modality, the analysts claim to study *works*, but they attempt to question the frontier between text and context by taking into consideration not only works but also larger units such as literary field, discourse communities and so on.

- The fourth modality is the most radical: the works are no longer the focus of the analysis. The object is *literary discourse*, considered as a network of manifold genres (and not only the genres of the works). That means that anthologies of literature, literary chronicles in newspapers, commentary practices at the university or at school, interviews that the writers give on TV, and so on, are part of literary discourse. From this viewpoint, literary discourse analysis must not be viewed as a new trend of literary criticism, but as a new way of constructing the object "Literature". There does not exist a stable "treasure", constituted of great works that each period would interpret with the help of new tools: in this fourth modality, the purpose of discourse analysis is not to interpret a thesaurus, it is, among other things, to understand the construction, the management and the role of this treasure in discourse practices.

In my view, the modality (1) does not pertain to discourse analysis; modality (2) pertains to literary discourse analysis in a « weak » sense; only modalities (3) and (4) pertain to discourse analysis in a "strong" sense.

4. Two notions: self constituting discourse and scenography

Now, I am going to illuminate my ideas by introducing two concepts that seem to me to be useful in Literary Discourse Analysis: "self-constituting discourse" and "scenography".

4.1. Literary discourse as self-constituting discourse

For quite some time, I have been studying a wide range of texts, particularly religious, scientific, literary and philosophical texts, and I noticed that, if we disregard superficial differences, many descriptive concepts could be transferred easily from one set of texts to the others. So I came naturally to the assumption that in the discursive production of a

society a specific area could be delimited (the area of «self-constituting discourses») and that bringing those discourses together in a new discursive unit may open up an interesting research area.

The status of «self-constituting discourses » (Maingueneau 1999) is very particular: discourses like others, they are also discourses which claim to be above any other type of discourse. As discourses bordering on unspeakable meanings, they must negotiate the paradoxes that such a status implies. To hold up other discourses without being held up by them, they must set themselves up as intimately bound with a legitimising Source and show that they are in accordance with it, owing to the operations by which they structure their texts and legitimate their own context. Analysts have no access to the world beyond limits of speech, but they can analyse the textual operations by which self-constituting discourses manage their self-foundation.

But I have still not justified the use of the expression « self-constituting discourses ». The word « constituting » connects two semantic values:

- « Constituting » as action of establishing legally, of giving legal form to some juridical entity: self-constituting discourses emerge by instituting themselves as legitimated to utter as they utter.
- « Constituting » as forming a whole, an organization: self-constituting discourses produce texts whose structures must be legitimised by discourse itself.

Each type of society has its own self-constituting discourses and its specific ways of connecting them: speaking « anachronistically », one could say that mythical discourse in traditional societies is at the same time “literary”, “philosophical”, “scientific” and “religious”. In modern societies, as was already the case in classical Greece, *various* self-constituting discourses exist concurrently, thus competing with each other. This variety is irreducible: self-constituting discourses’ life is made of it. The common sense belief is that each self-constituting discourse is autonomous and has contingent relations with others; actually their relation to others is a part of their core identity; they must manage that impossible coexistence and the way they manage it *is* their very identity.

Self-constituting discourses are not compact blocks, but form *discursive fields* in which various *positions* compete: in modern societies, ideological frames are steadily discussed and “discursive fields” are the space where the diversity of those “positions” is structured. The content of this notion of “position” (doctrine, school, party...) is very poor; it only implies that the identity of each position emerges and is kept up through the interaction, often conflicting, with the others. That is a motto of various discourse analysis trends: the relevant object is not discourse in itself, but the system of relations with other discourses. Of course, most producers of such discourses claim that their message proceeds directly from a true apprehension of God, Science, Beauty, Reality, Reason, etc., but in order to understand how such discourses really work, we must allocate positions to the place they hold in their field.

When we work on texts belonging to self-constituting discourses, we deal with highly structured discourses that speak of man, society, rationality, good and evil, etc., that have a large scope, *global* aims. But those discourses are produced *locally*, by few people set in a small sector of society. Literary discourse, like the other self-constituting discourses, is diffused in the mass media and schools, but it is shaped in very limited circles belonging to a specific field. So, a position is not only a more or less systematic set of contents, it associates a certain textual configuration and a certain way of life for a group of people, *discursive communities*, which may be organized in many ways. Inventing a new way of having dealings with other people and of producing new discourses are two dimensions of the same phenomenon. Those communities are structured by the discourses they produce and put into circulation. So, discursive communities are paradoxically united by the texts they produce: the texts are both their product and the condition of their existence.

Moreover, instead of studying only a Treasure of prestigious works, analysts consider a network of discourse practices. Self-constituting discourses are basically heterogeneous and that heterogeneity must be the centre of analysis. High theology or great literature are always accompanied by other less prestigious genres.

One of the implications of such a viewpoint is that meaning is not only inside texts, it emerges from practices that depend on the status of these texts in a given society. And the way a text is published, the way it is presented, depends on this status.

4.2. Scenography

Subverting the traditional distinction between text and context implies also paying attention to the way texts construct their own context.

To each genre corresponds a « generic scene », which attributes roles to actors, prescribes the place and the moment, the medium, the text structures - all conditions necessary to the “felicity” (Austin) of a given macrospeech act. But for many genres another type of scene is implied: « scenography », which proceeds from the positioning of each discourse event. Two texts belonging to the same generic scene may stage different scenographies. A sermon in a church, for instance, can be staged through a prophetic scenography, a conversational scenography, and so forth. In the former case, the speaker will speak in the way prophets do in the Bible and will give the corresponding role to his addressees; in the latter case he will speak in a friendly way to the audience. As a result, addressees interpret discourses through the association of two scenes, two contexts: one (generic scene) is imposed by the genre, the other one (scenography) depends on particular discourses (Maingueneau 1993). But not all texts must invent their own scenography. As a rule, juridical or administrative genres, for instance, merely obey the norms of their generic scenes. On the contrary, adverts or novels have to determine their scenographies.

Here the term « scenography » is not used in its usual way:

- It adds to the theatrical dimension of « scene » the dimension of « graphy », of legitimating inscription, for scenography gives authority to discourse, which has persuasive effects on addressees.

- Scenography is not a frame, a scenery, as if discourse occurred inside a place that is already fixed, independently of discourse. On the contrary, discourse puts progressively into place its own communicational device. So, *-graphy* must be understood simultaneously as frame and process.

Scenographies may be referred to singular communicative events (for example, Jesus’ sermon on the Mount) or prototypical discourse genres (friendly conversation, handbook, talk-show, etc.). They are determined according to the content of discourse:

speaking through a prophetic scenography implies that only prophetic speech is convenient for the very world that the particular work is shaping. Discourse implies a given scenography (a speaker and an addressee, a place and a moment, a given use of language...) through which a certain world is shaped, and that world must confirm the validity of the scenography through which it is shaped. Scenography is both what discourse comes from and what discourse generates; it legitimates a text that, in return, must show that *this* scenography from which speech is proceeding is the relevant scene for speaking of what it is speaking of.

In a scenography a certain representation of the speaker responsible for that discourse, a certain representation of the addressee, of the place (*topography*) and of the moment (*chronography*) of discourse are associated. Those elements are tightly bound. For instance, Victor Hugo's *Châtiments*, a series of poems that were written in opposition to Napoleon III's coup d'état are enunciated through a biblical scenography: the author shows in his speech that he is a prophet in a desert addressing ancient Hebrews; such a scenography combines two settings (that imposed by the genre and the prophethical one, constructed by the very text), which gives authority to the discourse.

In literature like in other self-constituting discourses scenographies must not be considered as mere rhetorical strategies, as is the case in an advertising campaign. When a poet, through his or her enunciation, shows himself or herself as a prophethical figure, somebody who speaks directly, roughly, who denounces sinners and demands intense repentance, this defines implicitly what legitimate literary discourse has to be and, correlatively, the nature of illegitimate poetry: he is reaffirming his or her enunciative identity inside the field.

The importance of scenography in literature is particularly obvious if we consider that for many literary works the very notion of genre poses a problem. The genres here are not pre-established frames, but partly a consequence of a decision of the author, who self-categorizes his or her own verbal production as 'essay', 'fantasy', 'thoughts', 'story', etc. If a novelist or a poet calls his or her text a 'meditation', a 'trip' or a 'report', that label claims to define the way in which the text is to be interpreted. Here the name cannot be replaced with another one, it is not a merely conventional label that identifies a verbal practice; it is the consequence of a personal decision, the evidence of an act of positioning

inside a certain field. When a writer calls his or her work ‘meditation’, this category reveals very little of its effective communicative process. Generic labels such as ‘newsmagazine’, ‘talk show’ or ‘lecture’ are given to activities that exist independently from those labels (actually, many discursive practices have no name at all). In contrast to these categories, the label ‘meditation’ given by a poet to his or her work does not refer to the wide range of constraints which characterize poetic publications in a given society. In this case, the choice of the genre “meditation” depends on the way an author brings his or her identity into play. Whereas advertising texts have a specific purpose (chiefly making people buy something) and are always searching for the best way to achieve this objective, writers cannot really define what they are aiming at when publishing their texts: ‘there remain some genres for which purpose is unsuited as a primary criterion’ and which ‘defy ascription of communicative purposes’ (Swales, 1990: 47).

5. The two paradigms

Having recourse to discourse analytical approaches does not mean that the field of literary studies will become homogeneous, that discourse analysis is the new paradigm into which all academic discourse on literature will be integrated. On the contrary, I think that discourse analysts must restrict the scope of their ambition, precisely because they are discourse analysts. They must acknowledge that the very nature of literature, as a self-constituting discourse, prevents them from believing that only the approaches of human and social sciences are legitimate. Obviously, literature is an important part of the symbolic “Treasure” of a society. It is the reason why society gives money and prestige to people who comment on literature. These commentaries contribute to keep this “treasure” alive, by giving new meanings to texts already commented on, or by commenting on texts that, until then, were not worth being commented on.

So, we must accept the idea that, even at the university level, two main approaches to literature will coexist, that obey very different norms “Hermeneutic” and “Discourse analytical” approaches. Their differences can be illuminated by considering various features:

Hermeneutic approaches	Discourse analytical approaches
OBJECT	
Analysis restricted to “true”, “rich” works .	Corpus defined according to the goal of research; it may include paraliterature, texts from associated practices (commentary, teaching, interviews...) or from other kinds of discourses (political, religious...).
SINGULARITY	
Focus on the uniqueness of each work, in relation to the uniqueness of the person who is commenting on it.	Focus on the invariants of literary discourse, study of the way uniqueness is produced.
PURPOSE	
Production of new interpretations (the meaning of masterpieces cannot be exhausted)	Study of the conditions of the “interpretability” of texts in a given place and a moment (which texts are interpreted and by whom, by which procedures the interpretations are carried out, which kinds of interpretations are legitimate etc.).
COMMUNITIES	
Scholars mainly distributed into various communities, whose members are interested in the same author or the same period .	Communities of scholars who share the same concepts and the same methods .

To illuminate the difference between these two academic “cultures”, we can compare the situation of the specialists of literature with that of the specialists of religion. Nowadays, at least in western countries, a clear cut distinction is made between the departments of theology, in which believers study, from a religious viewpoint, the “message” contained in holy texts, and the departments of social sciences - especially anthropology - in which religious texts are considered without any reference to the validity of their doctrines, as an aspect of the functioning of society and the human mind. But, for various reasons that there is no need to explain here, for Literature the same departments of Humanities include both hermeneutic and discourse analytical approaches.

But the separation between these two paradigms does not mean that they can exist independently from each other. Hermeneutic approaches have constantly recourse to discourse analytical concepts to elaborate new interpretations of works. On the other hand, discourse analytical approaches cannot work without the interpretative background produced by hermeneutic approaches. The main criteria is the goal of the analysis: it is clearly different in these two paradigms.

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