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RAILWAYS AND RAILWAYMEN IN *MUGBY JUNCTION*¹

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the impact of the Victorian railways on railwaymen in relation to labour and social economy, the industrialisation of travel, and urban modernity in three short stories: “The Engine-driver” by Andrew Halliday, “The Engineer” by Amelia Edwards and “The Travelling Post-office” by Hesba Stretton in *Mugby Junction*, edited by Charles Dickens in 1866. Regarding the history of the railway, emphasis has shifted from the cultural and social aspects to psychological interpretations of the influences of science and technology on individuals. These stories provide an insight as to how the machine ensemble played a critical role in altering railway workers’ physical, emotional and psychological states, and transformed them into haunted “modern” subjects. The representations of mystery, death, crimes and spectral images in these stories not only address deep anxieties and a changing mode of life, but also acknowledge the reader about how the Victorians reacted to the rapid expansion of the railway network within and beyond the British Isles.

Keywords: Victorian railways, railwaymen, *Mugby Junction*, mystery, railway stories

MUGBY JUNCTION'DA DEMİRYOLLARI VE DEMİRYOLU ÇALIŞANLARI

ÖZ

Bu makale, 1866 yılında Charles Dickens'ın editörlüğünde demiryollarını konu alan *Mugby Junction* sayısındaki Andrew Halliday'ın “The Engine-driver”, Amelia

¹ This study is a revised subpart of my M.A. thesis entitled "An Age of Duality: Body and Mind, the Conscious and Unconscious in Victorian Fiction during the Railway Age, 1840-1870" submitted to King's College London (UK) in 2011 and it has not been published elsewhere.

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Edwards'ın "The Engineer", ve Hesba Stretton'ın "The Travelling Post-office" adlı kısa hikâyelerinde Viktorya dönemi demiryollarının çalışanlar üzerindeki etkilerini, çalışma ekonomisi ve sosyal ekonomi, seyahatin endüstrileşmesi ve kentsel moderniteyle ilişkilendirerek incelemektedir. Demiryolu tarihiyle ilgili olarak, son yıllarda çalışmalar kültürel ve sosyal yönlerden bilim ve teknolojinin bireyler üzerindeki psikolojik etkilerine kaymıştır. Söz konusu hikâyeler, demiryolları sisteminin çalışanların fiziksel, duygusal ve psikolojik durumlarını etkilemede kritik bir rol oynamasını ve onları sorunlu "modern" bireylere dönüştürmesini ele alır. Bu öykülerdeki gizem, ölüm, suç ve korku öğeleri, yalnızca derin kaygılara ve değişen yaşam tarzına değinmekle kalmaz, aynı zamanda okurları, Viktorya dönemi insanların Britanya adaları ve çevresindeki demiryolu ağlarının hızlı bir şekilde genişlemesine tepkileri konusunda da bilgilendirir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Viktorya dönemi demiryolları, demiryolu çalışanları, *Mugby Junction*, gizem, demiryolu hikâyeleri

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the railway is usually considered to be a dramatic signifier of modernity and an engine of "progress, a promise of imminent Utopia" in the nineteenth century (Schivelbusch, 1986, p. xiii). The period has even been named "the railway age" by some critics, which started with the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830, leaving its mark upon landscape, cities, social, cultural, economic and political developments in Britain and throughout the world (Robbins, 1998, p. 5). The newly constructed railways also had a huge impact on the Victorian public imagination. Yet, the question remains as to what extent the Victorians were aware of the railway's influences on their body and mind. How did they reflect the psychopathological effects of the industrialisation of travel in literature? The accelerated pace of technological and scientific developments certainly fascinated the individuals, but at the same time forced them to "find coherence and meaning" in their new world (Gilmour, 1993, p. 25). Despite being aware of this unique experience and modernisation process, they also unavoidably became victims of this new culture.

The railway had paradoxical effects on the Victorians' mental and corporeal health, signifying the impact of technological advancements over the transforming individuals. Whilst the railway system facilitated traveling from one place to another in a shorter time and contributed to social, economic and cultural developments, it also led to some unexpected psychological and physical discomfort among the passengers and railway workers. The Victorians were gradually transformed by the industrialisation of travel that changed their perception of time and space, caused a loss of control over the senses, attention and subjectivity through accelerated time, and triggered social transformation in both suburban and urban areas by creating new physical, mental and social spaces. The railway "established the material foundation for reorientation", just as technological

developments such as the telephone and automobile “shape[d] consciousness directly” (Kern, 1983, p. 1). The period also witnessed a radical breakthrough in “the modernisation of traditional city” that took place on a developing and dynamic new landscape reshaped by “steam engines, ... railroads, new industrial zones”, all of which grew up “overnight” (Berman, 1983, pp. 150, 18). Modernisation of the city meant modernisation of “its citizens’ souls”, and this was what the Victorians profoundly experienced in response to the growing railway system in Britain (Berman, 1983, p. 147). The mental life of the individual in the metropolis was deeply affected by his/her ability to cope with “the profound disruption with which the fluctuations and discontinuities of the external milieu threaten[ed] it” (Simmel, 1950, p. 409). Critics have observed that the common response of the individual to these abrupt changes was the “least sensitive” since the public was generally satisfied with the progress in the railway system and tended to disregard its possible negative physical and psychological effects (Simmel, 1950, p. 410).

There was an increasing number of illuminating and convincing products of art and literature worldwide regarding the social, cultural and psychological impacts of the railway system in the nineteenth century. For instance, Tolstoy’s famous character *Anna Karenina* (1877) throws herself under a moving train in Moscow; the engine Lison in Emile Zola’s *La Bête Humaine* (1890) “becomes a real character, an iron horse” and lies “mortally wounded” after a crash; the romance between Margaret and John in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* (1855) “becomes threatened” by meeting a stranger at the Milton Railway Station (Landow, 2010). Sensational plays such as George Spencer’s *Rail, River and Road* and Alfred Rayner’s *Danger* dramatise climactic scenes of “locomotive engine and railway terror” reported by *The Era* in the 1860s. The famous painting, J.M.W Turner’s *Rain, Steam and Speed* (1844) refers to “the casualties of progress” and “the impossibility of not changing” while caricatures of George Cruikshank’s *A Radical Reformer* (1819) and *The Railway Dragon* (1845), and John Leech’s *The Railway Juggernaut* (1845) usually characterise the train as a monster “reversing over its prey” with a “ravaging mouth” and frantic eyes (Carter, 2001, pp. 64-5).

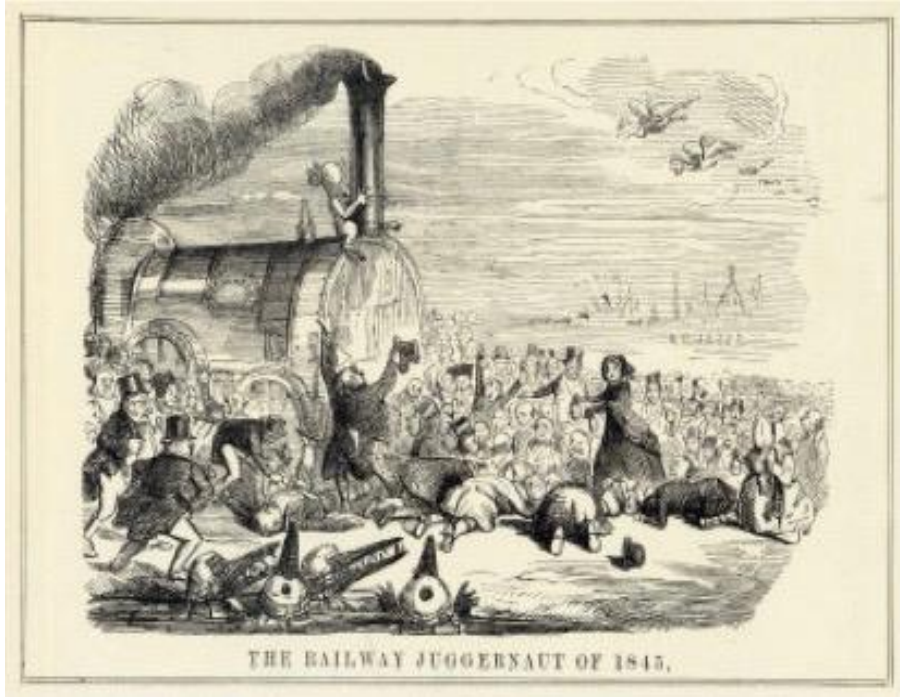


Figure 1. John Leech. *The Railway Juggernaut*. (1845).
Cartoon from *Punch*, London.

These themes and images depicting railways dramatically shifted the attention to mystery, accident, crime, death, shock and trauma. This trend reinforces the idea that the hideous and paradoxical influences of railways were far more dominant or effective than its visible progressive influences on the human mind and everyday life.

Prior to Freud's (1915) well-known definition of the unconscious mind as a repository for feelings, ideas, urges and memories outside of our awareness or repressed, the Victorian notions of the unconscious were very pervasive and diverse with a complex set of determinants and meanings on the workings of the body and mind, consciousness, instincts, memories, and hysteria (Ellenberger, 1970). In the early decades, the Victorians' world was occupied by new questions about the "intimate mutual dependency of mind and brain" and consciousness as "the by-product of the bodily machinery", generating an array of terminology that was "awkward, opaque, and unsettled" (Matus, 2009, p. 28). During the period, "the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious mind and the significance and workings of memory were central to the debate about the nature of individual and social identity" (Shuttleworth and Taylor, 1998, p. 65). The human mind was claimed to "contain far more latent furniture than consciousness informs us it possesses" and, it was argued, this consciousness "[was] made up largely of unconsciousness" (Shuttleworth and Taylor, 1998, p. 65). Critical works

such as Carl Gustav Carus' *Psyche: On the Development of the Soul* (1846), William Carpenter's *Principles of Mental Physiology* (1874), Henry Maudsley's *The Physiology of Mind* (1876), and F. H. Meyer's *The Subliminal Consciousness* (1892) addressed issues of memory, mechanisms of thought, conscious actions, and unconsciousness from different perspectives. The importance and role of associationism and unconscious was emphasised by Thomas Brown in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Mind* (1820) where he suggested that the mind develops new associations through "an active process of suggestion" (Shuttleworth and Taylor, 1998, p. 65). Mesmerism and dreams were likewise used to demonstrate both the "separateness and connectedness of the conscious and the unconscious mind" (Shuttleworth and Taylor, 1998, p. 67). Henri Holland's dispute about the brain as "a double or divided organ" was followed by new ideas on "double consciousness" or multiple personalities in the second half of the century (Shuttleworth and Taylor, 1998, p. 68). All these discussions brought another crucial aspect of the self to the surface:

Victorian psychologists acknowledged that the sense of a continuous self depends on the awareness of the connections -on what William Carpenter termed 'consciousness of agreement' between past and the present; that when memory breaks down, so does a coherent, directed identity. But they also knew both that our minds contain far more than they ever consciously recall and that memory itself is profoundly unreliable ... The very substance as well as the contents of the brain are undergoing constant transformation, and that a stable identity is an illusion, a fiction spun out of the narratives of the individual past. (Shuttleworth and Taylor, 1998, p. 69)

Jill Matus (2009) notes that whereas the Freudian unconscious was full of "repression, fantasies and disallowed or taboo knowledge", the Victorian unconscious enabled control of the mind through a "division of labour" that would make the bodily system work automatically when it was suspended (p. 24). The conscious mind was even likened to "the steam whistle of a locomotive engine (the brain)" by Huxley in 1869 (Matus, 2009, p. 25). That is, in the 1850s there was a move from "the study and knowledge of the soul" to "psychology", a term which began to be used widely in reference to mental science (Matus, 2009, p. 26). This study specifically focuses on the Victorians' ambivalent interpretations of their own emotional, physical and psychological states by relating them to the developing railway system, rather than taking a Freudian approach to the period.

The Victorian era, thus, witnessed a wide range of works dealing with "speed, suspense and mystery ... with a contemporary setting" during

the early literature of modernisation (Daly, 2004, pp. 3, 39). Among the Victorians who showed an increasing interest in “the slippery definition of madness, the mutability of self, and the problematic nature of memory” were authors such as Charles Dickens, Charlotte Bronte, Elizabeth Gaskell and Robert Browning, as well as the sensation writers Willkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon who re-worked the explanation of the supernatural and created a new narrative tension by “testing and expanding the boundaries of realism (Shuttleworth and Taylor, 1998, p. xvii). This understanding was facilitated by the changing perception of mind and ghosts that became “psychological projections [rather] than entities in the world, while the mind itself becomes haunted”, usually explained in terms of atavism and phantasmagoria (Armstrong, 2000, p. 31). It was “the thought” that transformed into an “elusive, ghostly entity in materialist philosophies” in the period (Armstrong, 2000, p. 31). This process was accompanied by the dark and alien presence of the train which was “dramatised through its inhuman languages”, such as semaphore, telegraph, alarms, lights and whistles (Daly, 2004, p. 25). With its contradictory features, the train “both embodied the spirit of rationalism and invoked the spectre of irrationalism” at the same time (Beaumont and Freeman, 2007, p. 13).

“When Locomotion, No 1, began regularly trundling along the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825, the first nucleus of railwaymen in the world came into being”, notes R.S. Joby in *The Railwaymen* (1984, p. 9). Railway employment grew more rapidly than any other employment in the early- and mid-Victorian period and became a significant part of the whole working population in Britain (Kingsford, 1970, p. xiii). By 1847, the number of the railway workers had reached to 50,000 (Joby, 1984, p. 9). In 1860, 127,450 persons were employed in railways and it was the fifteenth largest occupation in the country (Kingsford, 1970, p. xii). Besides the railway passengers, the railwaymen who worked for railway companies also experienced these contradictory influences of the system. The physical, emotional and psychological states of workers changed with this new mode of technology. The elaborate division of labour enabled a large number of locals to be employed as drivers, signal-men, or mechanics; however, these men were “peculiarly susceptible to the alienating effects of an industrialized system that nonetheless required individual workers to perform their duties in relative isolation” (Beaumont and Freeman, 2007, p. 19). Robbins (1998) provides a good account of being employed as a railwayman:

The work of the railway, when it is properly done, is precise, exacting, and unceasing. The work is always with him; it is a life rather than an occupation. It needs patience, consistency of attention to repetitious actions and processes, slow accumulation of experience to found judgement on and above all ... a certain element of strong, plain common sense. (Beaumont and Freeman, 2007, p. 69)

As for the British railway system, neither a devised plan nor private training in new skills existed in early decades: “Learning by doing was the way with the pioneers, learning by ‘sitting next to Nellie’ was the way with their successors” (Joby, 1984, p. 9). The government gave maximum freedom to the directors of the railway companies to improve their system (Joby, 1984, p. 9). Most of the features in railway operation were established by the Liverpool & Manchester Railway in the 1830s and continued for about a century. The rules and regulations for safe operation generated a railway discipline in terms of safety, good time keeping as well as long working hours “in return for the relatively high and regular wages” (Joby, 1984, p. 13). The engine-drivers and firemen were amongst the earliest specialised railway workers who had “their initial training in the collieries of Tyneside and Lancashire” (Joby, 1984, p. 10). By 1870, the number of grades of posts in the railway system had almost reached a hundred (Kingsford, 1970, p. xiii).



Figure 2. London-Brighton and South Coast Railway workers in 1871.
Hayes Peoples History (2012).

While for railway passengers, collision and derailment were the most common causes of deaths or casualties, the most common reason for firemen and enginemen was boiler explosions (Kingsford, 1970, p. 35). However, railway accidents were most often the result of human errors

rather than “machine failings”, which demonstrates the importance of the railwaymen who were responsible for the safety of the passengers (Kingsford, 1970, p. 35). Kingsford argues that the real problem with the enginemen was that they were “taken from a class where habits of sobriety, carefulness and control are much less common than in a more elevated condition of society, and this, it seems, produced a consciousness of inferiority” (1970, p. 10). The railway workers were supposed to work for long hours without any interruption to their attention and performance, which obviously influenced the possibility of making an error or falling asleep on duty. To illustrate, between the period of 1841-1866, the main cases in railwaymen were reported to be “drunkenness, disobeying signals, causing collision, accident, negligence, asleep on duty, errors” (Kingsford, 1970, pp. 18-9). On the other hand, long practice forced them to adapt to this process so as not to lose their job. In many companies’ provisions the high degree of liability to injury, sickness and death was partly ignored (Kingsford, 1970, p. 169). As a Victorian author, Dickens was also “born into the coaching world” and “forced to confront new railways’ relentless modernity” (Carter, 2001, p. 66). Long after publishing *Dombey and Son* in monthly instalments from 1846 to 1848, he experienced a railway accident in 1865. Dickens’ contributions to *Household Words* (1850–59) and *All the Year Round* (1859–70) “contain extraordinarily complex narratives of the railway’s institutional and psychic transformations of everyday life” (Martin, 2017, p. 428).² His depiction of Staggs’s Gardens in *Dombey and Son* suggests that, socially and economically, railways could be an agency of progress and the death of old modes of living for less-developed districts in the metropolis. Staggs’ Gardens is an important example to show how a “creative destruction” took place in local and old districts, “unable to cope with the new volume of traffic and thus, modernisation and modification become necessary” (Schwarzbach, 1979, pp. 104-5). About twenty years after the publication of the novel, Dickens “narrowly escaped death” in a train accident while he was travelling from Folkestone to London in 1865 (Matus, 2009, p. 83). Also known as the Staplehurst Disaster, the distinctive aspect of this railway accident did not lie in the accident itself, which was an acknowledged and possible consequence, but in the post-traumatic effects of the accident on passengers who were not physically injured.

One year later, Dickens edited *Mugby Junction* as a Christmas edition for 1866. *Mugby Junction* serves as a platform for fictional representation of the Victorian railway system and the expansion of the railway network in mid-nineteenth-century Europe. By 1850, the railway

² See Charles Dickens’ “Chip: Signals and Engine Drivers”, in *Household Words*, 14 (1856), 179–80; “Up and Down the Lines”, in *Household Words*, 15 (1857), 601–07; “Self-Acting Railway Signals”, *Household Words*, 7 (1853), 43–45; and “A Flight,” “Railway Strikes,” and “Railway Dreaming,” in *Charles Dickens: Selected Journalism 1850–1870*, 137–92.

network “had reached over 6000 miles of completed lines and another 6000 under construction” (Freeman, 1999, p. 1). This system contained railway stations, tunnels, engines, signalling systems, freight, trade, passengers and “an army of employees” (Slater, 2016, p. 2). In the collection, each story takes place on a branch line connected to a train station named “Mugby Junction” and depicts a distinctive feature of the British railways. In the first story entitled “Barbox Brothers” by Dickens, “the central character- the gentleman from Nowhere- explores the tracks that radiate outward” and gets disoriented due to the “threads of railway” as if “woven by iron-spinning spiders” (Slater, 2016, p. 2). In the *Mugby Junction* stories “the sense of inevitable death”, hauntings and mystery are predominant and the railway is described as an “inscrutable, uncontrollable, sinister force” (Gavin and Humprey, 2015, p. 10). The human names are often replaced by railway duties and “the line between machine and human is blurred” (Gavin and Humprey, 2015, p. 11). An incomplete “combination and synchronisation” of railwaymen and the machine ensemble appears as part of a symbolic representation of the Victorian modernity (Slater, 2016, p. 4). Another well-known story of Dickens in this edition, “The Signalman” is about a character working at a solitary railway cutting and becomes the victim of an unknown recurring spectre. The uncanny experience of the signalman is successfully projected in this story “via spectrality, as well as the symbolic and gloomy setting, eccentric characterisation, and finally his mechanical duties, narrated by a rational narrator” (Harputlu, 2016, p. 204).³

In this study, I examine less known railway stories in *Mugby Junction* such as “The Engine-driver” by Andrew Halliday, “The Engineer” by Amelia Edwards and “The Travelling Post-office” by Hesba Stretton and provide an insight as to how the machine ensemble and labour economy of the railway system played a critical role in altering the financial, social, physical, and psychological conditions of the railwaymen, and transformed them into haunted “modern” subjects. The representations of mystery and hauntings in these stories not only address deep anxieties and a changing mode of life, but also acknowledge the reader about how the Victorians reacted to the rapid expansion of the railway network in Britain and in Europe. In this respect, in the following story of “The Engine-driver”, the reader finds an insider’s point of view and a more intimate approach to the effects of labour and social economy, a graded structure for promotion, and a changing perspective towards death and railway accidents. “The Engineer” highlights the expansion of the railway network in Europe and the story is interwoven with friendship, love, revenge and ghostly metaphors of the machine ensemble. “The Travelling Post-office”, on the other hand, extends this link to the transport of letters, news and messages with a mysterious

³ See also Norris Pope, Dickens’ “Signalman” and Information Problems in the Railway Age, *Technology and Culture*, 2001: 42 (3), 436–61.

incident solved in Alexandria in the nineteenth century. These three branch-line stories, thereby, not only feature distinctive aspects of the British railway system and its expansion throughout the world, but also represent the railway as a platform for mystery, hauntings, uncanny spaces and spectral images.

1. The Engine-Driver

The significance of “The Engine-driver” by Andrew Halliday comes from its autobiographical narrative, which provides further insight into the perception of railways and this new type of industrial labour, as well as the impact it took on their emotions in the early Victorian period. A locomotive engine-driver of twenty-five years, Jim Martin is a “a thick-set, ruddy-faced man, with coal black eyes”, talking “in earnest” about railway accidents and his pride in his relatively safe record (25): “Well. Altogether, since 1841, I have [only] killed seven men and boys. I ain’t many in all those years ... When I say seven men and boys, I mean my mates-stokers, porters, and so forth. I don’t count passengers” (Halliday, 2010, p. 25). This statement is an important indication of the different approaches to death in the early years of railway mania. Whilst railway accidents were chief causes of shock, and trauma or death for travellers, railwaymen could significantly underestimate the number of people who died, even ignoring the number of passengers killed by the trains they operated. The nature of the railway discipline was addressing the fact that despite the requirements of safety and the necessity for strict observance of time, the safety of persons and property was still under threat as most workers were actually unskilled (Kingsford, 1970, p. 13). However, the frequency of dismissal due to neglect or error was not very high and diminished considerably with the need for railway workers and “men were not so often punished for accidents as in the forties” (Kingsford, 1970, p. 21). Then, how could death and accidents have a shocking and traumatic influence on passengers, while they were “normal” or “not shocking” for a locomotive engine driver? How could this experience be perceived very differently by an engine-driver and a passenger?

The attitude of the engine driver towards the death of people killed by his machine reveals several crucial points about the human mind: self-protective mechanism, learned/reinforced behaviour and normalisation which connect both the unconscious and conscious state of mind to overcome new difficulties appearing in the Victorian era. This can also be explained by the long period of time an engine driver had to work, which helped him absorb or repress the shocking or emotional reactions to accidents that were expected in that period due to the non-professional workers and the railway system. The engine driver develops a self-protective mechanism because he is conscious of his duties and possible dangers of his job and time helps him to normalise casualties and death as a possible and expected result, which in turn prevents long-term shock or trauma. The

engine-driver “must internalise the qualities of a machine” in order to cope with its post-traumatic effects (Gavin and Humprey, 2015, p. 11). Yet, it would be inaccurate to claim that even the least sensitive responses of the individual reflect a healthy body and mind since no event takes place without leaving a trace on the identity, memory and mind.

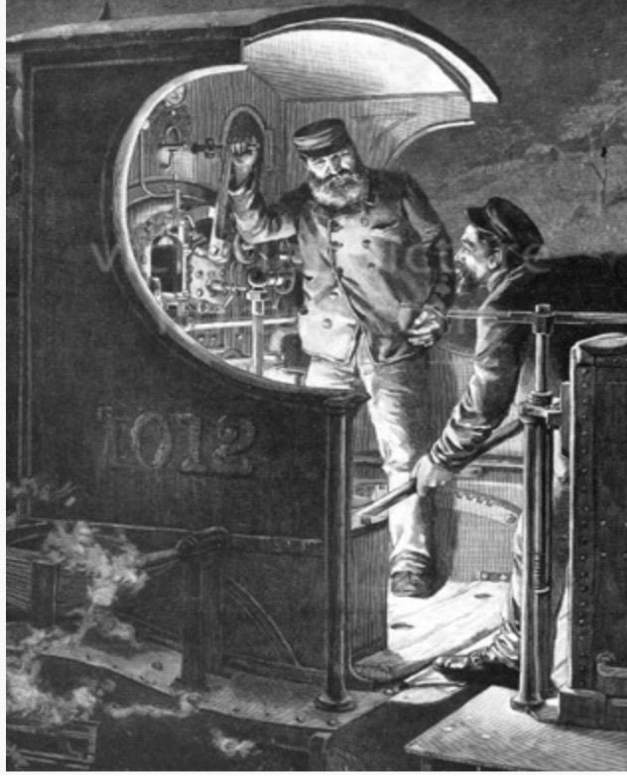


Figure 3. Steam Locomotive with Engine-driver and stoker.
Victorian Picture Library.

The early years of the railway age encountered a number of problems, such as the difficulty of finding qualified workers to run the trains. The route to become an engine driver was not in fact training as a driver, as is also summarised by the engine driver. He originally breaks up “coals for the stoker”, then becomes “a stoker, first on board on a boat, and then on a locomotive” (Halliday, 2010, p. 26). Originally, the enginemens were not required to have much knowledge of the locomotive system. Attentiveness, sufficient knowledge of how to run the train effectively and physical endurance were the main requirements of a locomotive engine driver. They were also known as the “men of the great activity and great ability to get out of a difficulty” (Kingsford, 1970, pp. 4-5). This training should not consist of “scientific knowledge of the principle of the engine inside” according to the engine driver, who believes that “if one knew what a complicated machine it is, he would never eat, or drink, or dance, or run, or do anything

for fear of busting something” (Kingsford, 1970, p. 26). Despite being an engine driver, he cannot understand the mechanics of the machine and yet he goes ahead. If the engine driver could understand the complexity of his mind and the railway, we may doubt he would ever want to drive that “wonderful machine” again. In fact, in both cases, the high degree of anxiety and knowledge of the system would disable the proper functioning of the machine and of his duty.

As of the 1840s, the lack of special training of the staff partly explains why so many people were killed in railway accidents in the early years, adding to problems caused by machine and system problems. As the engine driver notes, there were many accidents that “never get into the papers”, therefore, remained unannounced to the public (Halliday, 2010, p. 27). Interestingly, the risk of death or injury on duty seems comparably low; for instance, the Casualty Fund of the Railway Benevolent Institution reported that, in 1860, 189 persons out of 150,000 (1 in 679) were injured or killed (Kingsford, 1970, p. 47). Yet, the engine driver personifies the train in a positive way. He associates the train with horses: both can be exhausted and the driver has to be careful not to exhaust them. As for the passengers, bad conducting of the machine threatens them, such as an unexpected stop during the journey. In fact, any interference with the normal functioning of the train, including movement and jolts, are sufficient to alarm the passengers and alert them of danger on the railroad. The fact that the passengers are often alert to any signals of danger justifies their repressed fear and anxiety. The lives of passengers depend on the driver, he says, as well as “a good road, a good engine, and not too many coaches behind”; he highly values his responsibility and is conscious of the significance of his position as an engine driver (Halliday, 2010, p. 26).

In *Victorian Railwaymen* (1970), Kingsford discusses the idea that the railway system brought about an entirely new era in the history of humankind, and that “no class of men in the entire community were exposed to more constant risk to life and limb in the public service than railwaymen” (p. 46). The problems that railwaymen had to confront in those years are clearly described by the engine driver who seems to have been accustomed to living that way for a long time. He exclaims, “we never think of danger ourselves” (Halliday, 2010, p. 27). In normal conditions, it is expected that an individual will not consciously endanger his/her life, but a railwayman accepts working with a high risk of death or injury, thinking about the passengers and not himself most of the time. In order to perform his duty properly he has to avoid too much anxiety and this might explain why controlling his feelings is a new learned behaviour. However, he states that “an engine-driver’s chief anxiety is to keep time”; this is what he thinks about most, reflecting how the concept of time became a determinant of behaviour not only for the passengers but also for the railwaymen (Halliday, 2010, p. 27). Some of the main complaints of the engine-driver are security,

regularity of payment, freedom from anxiety, and short hours. Though problems in relation to the first two could be solved, latter two issues remained the same for a long while (Kingsford, 1970, p. xvi). Long hours of working was mentioned in the *Lancet* too: “Suppose that men wearied out by long journeys and exhausted by fatigue and want of sleep are ordered, on pain of dismissal, to undertake immediately fresh duties for which they were rendered incapable by previous exhaustion of body and mind” (as cited in Kingsford, 1970, p. 116). The Board of Trade inspectors further claimed that excessive hours of work was a contributory cause of accidents such as “those in Blackheath Tunnel in 1864 and near Daubhill on the London and North Western in 1865” (Kingsford, 1970, p. 116).

Provided with watches and undergoing an inspection of soberness before a railway journey, railwaymen had to work in conditions that were “cold as ice, hot as fire; wet one minute, dry the next” (Halliday, 2010, p. 27). The most serious physical influence of the railways, the engine-driver believes, is the death of the railwayman at an early age due to “cold food and the shaking”, which “knocks a man up, after a bit” (Halliday, 2010, p. 27). This issue was discussed in *The Book of Health* in 1884, referring to men “becom[ing] a part of the machine in which he has placed himself” as he was jarred by the repetitive movement, subject to its impact on his nerves, skin and muscle, all of which can be considered effective “because they are unconsciously inflicted” (Schivelbusch, 1986, p. 113). Both passengers and locomotive workers responded to this movement in the same way: they tried to “absorb with their own bodies what the suspension mechanism were unable to absorb” (Schivelbusch, 1986, p. 117). The engine driver is not very satisfied with his wages and the fact that he has to pay income tax and he further complains that twelve hours hard and anxious work makes it difficult to spend time with his family. Compared to other worker’s wages, the standard of living for enginemen was actually well above the poverty line and “their security was relatively high” (Kingsford, 1970, p. 46). These complaints reflect the capitalist exploitation of workers’ rights within the railway system in Britain. There were railway’s “definitely channels of advancement and promotion and real opportunities for the more ambitious” (Kingsford, 1970, p. 46). The vast majority of workers with a good job had indeed started at the bottom. Therefore, it was “experience, not apprenticeship or training, [that] was required for promotion” (Kingsford, 1970, p. 147).

By the early nineteenth century, the term “emotion” was described as “non-intellectual states of mind”, but it was also the “royal road to the hidden self” (Matus, 2009, pp. 44, 60). Nevertheless, for the railway workers, it was something to be avoided. The way in which emotions were kept under control by railwaymen is reflected in an example from the engine driver. Usually only thinking about “his engine rather than the passengers”

the only time he really feels anxious is when his little son Bill travels on the same train as him:

My hand trembled as I turned on the steam. I felt my heart thumping as we drew close to the pointsman's box; as we neared the Junction, I was all in a cold sweat. At the end of the first fifty miles I was nearly eleven minutes behind time ... I was never so thankful in my life as when I shut off steam to enter the station Peterborough ... It would never do, you see, for engine-drivers to know too much, or to feel too much. (Halliday, 2010, p. 28)

This is a useful example of the way in which an engine driver considers emotions and knowledge a threat against a safe railway journey. He consciously avoids learning about the mechanics of the train and tries to restrain his feeling of anxiety when he drives. However, the presence of his son on the train revives his repressed anxiety, and physical symptoms such as trembling hands, increased heart beats, and cold sweat make his journey quite difficult. Being aware of the distraction that feelings would cause, the engine-driver always tries to keep them under control when he is on duty.

2. The Engineer

In *A Generation of Materialism* (1941), Carlton J. H. Hayes notes that “two events of 1869- the opening of Suez Canal and the completion of the first transcontinental railway across America- nicely presaged the perfecting and expansion of” the railway system which had begun in England about forty years ago (p. 88). By the 1860s, Western Europe was already familiar with the railways, locomotives, and trains of passengers and commodities: the railway mileage open in Great Britain had reached to 16, 798, while in Belgium it was 1,729, in France 9, 167, in Germany 11,089 and in Italy 2,404 (Mitchell, 1975, pp. 581-84). Until the 1900s, the railway mileage in the European countries increased from 66,000 to 172,000, chiefly in Russia, Austria-Hungary, and the Balkans, while new constructions in America, Siberia, Argentina, India, Japan and Austria “raised total world mileage from 130,000 to nearly 600,000” (Hayes, 1941, p. 88).

In "The Engineer", the expansion of the railway network in Europe determines the setting of the story and the occupation of major characters. It is also a story interwoven with friendship, love and revenge, ending up with a ghost appearing on a train and preventing a deliberate railway accident in the 1860s. Two best friends and engineers, Benjamin and Matthew, were born and grew up in the village of Chadleigh; they both take on projects providing locomotives for various countries, such as France, Holland, Belgium, Germany and Italy. Promotion is possible in their occupation and when they are both appointed to “superintend the transport of the engines” they decide to live in sunny and lively Italy, instead of going back to “the

Black country” they came from (Edwards, 2010, p. 43). As newly modern subjects of the Victorian age, their jobs enable displacement and new adventures as well as strong emotional and psychical strain, which ultimately result in Benjamin’s supernatural experience of seeing the ghost of his friend at the end of the story.

Shifting their service to Italy, the two friends fall in love with a *femme fatale* called Gianetta who “had no more heart than a marble statue; [they] discovered by-and-by, to bitter cost” (Edwards, 2010, p. 43). Their affair with the lady ends with the death of Matthew after Benjamin stabs him in “a moment of blind fury” (Edwards, 2010, p. 45). Despite Benjamin’s deep sorrow and regret, Matthew dies, leaving Benjamin with just his anger and hatred of both Gianetta and “all mankind” (Edwards, 2010, p. 46). After the death of his friend, Benjamin works in different countries undertaking various railway-related jobs and he finally becomes an engine-driver between Mantua and Venice as he considers “it suited with [his] sullen temper” (Edwards, 2010, p. 47). The speed of the train and “the worse weather” suit his mood and reflect a rushing movement temporarily taking away his thoughts and psychic pain (Edwards, 2010, p. 47). Towards the end of the story, the railway appears more clearly and effectively than ever before. On a stormy day in March, a flood destroys the embankment and causes “great confusion and annoyance” among passengers as their journey is interrupted (Edwards, 2010, p. 47). This inconvenience also makes all their time-tables inapplicable, which reflects a disruption in their everyday life since railways could easily cause disorder and panic among the public. *The Lancet* pamphlet discusses this issue as “an often experienced condition of uneasiness, scarcely amounting to actual fear ... The possibility of collision is constantly present to such persons, and everyone knows how, if by chance a train stops at some unusual place, or if the pace be slackened, or the whistle sounds its shrill alarm, a head is projected from nearly every window, and anxious eyes are on the look-out for signs of danger” (Schivelbusch, 1986, p. 118).

After this incident, the engineer is asked to run a special train from Mantua to Padua at midnight. Accidentally discovering that one of the passengers is Gianetta, Benjamin feels that his “whole soul was in a tumult of rage and bitterness”, evoking his memory and emotions regarding his experience with his friend and the *femme fatale* (Edwards, 2010, p. 47). There are two climactic scenes in the story, the first is when Benjamin loses his temper and murders his best friend and the second is when he is determined to kill Gianetta for what she caused; both are about temper, blood and death. This reminds us of the fact that “emotions are involuntary; they come over us irresistibly, or steal upon us when we least expect it” (Matus, 2009, p. 45). Beginning his midnight journey, Benjamin’s mind is preoccupied with murdering and he is in a state of trance:

My blood was on fire. I no longer trembled or hesitated. I felt as if every nerve was iron, and every pulse instinct with deadly purpose. She was in my power, and I would be revenged. She should die – she, for whom I had stained my soul with my friend’s blood! ... The stations flew past ... Faster and faster-hedges and trees, bridges and stations. Flashing past-villages no sooner seen than gone-telegraphy wires twisting, and dipping, and twining themselves in one, with the awful swiftness of our pace! (Edwards, 2010, p. 48)

Faster and faster, driving to take his revenge with a determined state of mind, Benjamin is shocked when he suddenly realises he is not alone with the engine. The fireman’s expression changes “from remonstrance to a deadly terror” and Benjamin falls back “in a shock of surprise” when the unknown man “stepped nearer; took my place at the engine and turned the steam off” (Edwards, 2010, p. 48). The real shock, however, occurs when the man turns his face to the engine driver and it is revealed to be Matthew Price. The only reaction that he has is uttering “one long wild cry, flung[ing] his arms wildly above his head and fell as if he had been smitten with an axe” (Edwards, 2010, p. 48). Following this terrifying incident, he simply rejects any objections to his story:

I expect, as a matter of course, to be told that this was an optical illusion, or that I was suffering from *pressure on the brain*, or even that I laboured under an attack of *temporary insanity* ... My own mind has been made up upon this subject for many a year. All that I can say – all that I know is – that Matthew Price came back from the dead to save my soul and the lives of whom I, in my guilty rage, would have hurried to destruction (Edwards, 2010, p. 48) [Emphasis added]

At this point, the destructive power of the railway is realised by the individual who is haunted by his own emotions and memory after a traumatic incident causing the loss of his loved one. In the Victorian discourse, the term “brain fever” (similar to “pressure on the brain” in the text) was used to refer the “inflammation or affection of the mind” usually caused by “either emotional shock or overuse of the brain” (Matus, 2009, p. 5). Influences on the nervous system were considered to cause “nervous shock” in the mind of the victim who was possessed by “the shocking event” with continuous alarms (Matus, 2009, pp. 85-7). Before the 1880s “the deterioration of the spinal cord [also known as ‘railway spine’] due to mechanical shock” was considered purely pathological, however, this was replaced by a psychopathological understanding and the railway spine began to be referred to as “traumatic neurosis” towards the end of the century (Schivelbusch, 1977, pp. 136-7). As Freud later noted, this was a condition

that “ha[d] long been known and occur[red] after severe mechanical concussions, railway disasters and other accidents involving a risk to life” (Matus, 2009, p. 84). The traumatised subject usually experienced a loss of “perception and consciousness fall[ing] directly into the psyche” therefore memory became inaccessible (Matus, 2009, pp. 88-93). This also demonstrates the complexity of the human mind and the Victorian discourse of the shocking nature of the experience that brings all memories and feelings back as powerfully as before. The story of the engineer represents the traumatised subject, whose reason and consciousness is temporarily blocked. He insists on believing in the ghost rather than his own state of terror and nervous shock that summons his friend from the dead to stop him; that is, the ghost is easier to believe in than the highly complex and unknown aspects of the human mind. This reflects how the Victorian body and mind were challenged by the negative effects of the railway system during the early decades of the century. Accepting the supernatural seems to be more rational than thinking of this as a manifestation of the unconscious, which would turn the mind itself into a ghostly entity.

3. The Traveling Post-office

The central character in this short story is a clerk in a travelling post-office running along the railway line from London to a small town called Fazeley, in Midland Counties (Stretton, 2010, p. 34). The story begins with an encounter between strangers and the mysterious disappearance of a valuable dispatch box in the railway post-office van which is finally resolved in Alexandria in the mid-nineteenth century. The plot and setting of the narrative suggest a new alternative space for encounters, mystery and conflict between public order and private desires: in railway carriages. In this sense, an expanding space for unconscious desires and violence emerges through the modernisation of both railwaymen and passengers in “a resort of mystery and darkness” (Daly, 2004, p. 15). Furthermore, the role of the railway network and labour in the story addresses the displacement of the individual, which increases the possibility of new encounters and threats that confirm the disorientating pathological and psychological influences of railway.

By the 1830s, Great Britain had already enjoyed a good postal service. Since 1784-86 mail-coaches had been running from London along the chief main roads operated by contractors bound to the Post Office by strictly-drawn agreements (Simmons, 1991, p. 219). The idea that the railway might be used for the conveyance of mails reaches back to the 1820s: Liverpool & Manchester trains conveyed the first mails on 11 November 1827 (Simmons, 1991, p. 220).

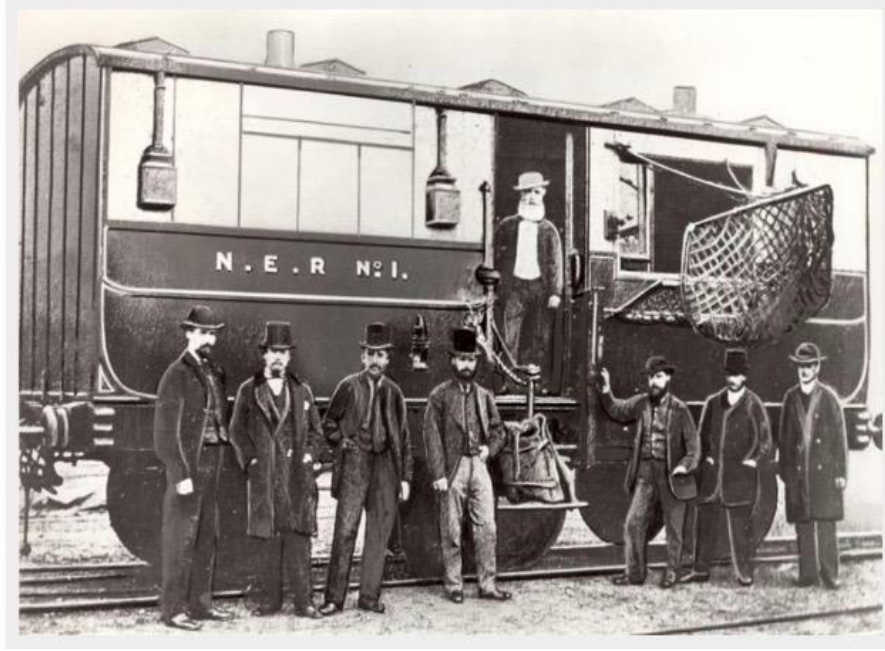


Figure 4. “The first train coach used to sort mail on the North Eastern Railway.” *The British Postal Museum & Archive* (2014).

The railways derived steady revenue from the carriage of mails, but it never became crucial to their income, as it did to steamship companies, and airlines later (Simmons, 1991, p. 226). The transport of letters, messages and news throughout Europe was also expedited and expanded by railways and steamships, and it was superimposed by international agreement in 1875, a Universal Postal Union with headquarters at Berne (Hayes, 1941, p. 91). Moreover, once the electric telegraph was added underneath steamship lanes and the submarine cable, European countries had a direct telegraphic communication with the United States, India, Far East and South America (Hayes, 1941, p. 91).

In the story, the incident takes place in a traveling post-office carriage where a mysterious little woman accompanies the clerk one night with an official order to check on how the system works. At first, he discovers that the lady is from the Clifton family, “fair unknown friends” that he has never met but with whom he has exchanged some best wishes notes (Stretton, 2010, p. 35). In the course of the journey, this unprecedented encounter between a female and male in a private space triggers their unconscious sexual desires in a hideous and even an adventurous way:

We were just then approaching the small station where the letter-bag from the great house was taken up ... Miss Clifton manifested some natural and becoming diffidence. “It would look so odd” she said, “to any one on the platform to see a

girl in the post-office van! And they could not know I was postmaster's daughter, and had an order from Mr Huntingdon. Is there no dark corner to shelter me?" (Stretton, 2010, p. 36)

The clerk later admits that it was a very entertaining night because the girl "was full of young life and sauciness and merry humour" and he even experienced "enjoyment to see her hasten to hide herself" (p. 36). Thus, their journey on a mail-train carriage at night evokes repressed desires restricted by their social position and responsibilities. In *Railway and Modernity* (2007), Michael Beaumont describes the railway compartment as "a primal modern scene" where there exist "a staging conflict between the private and public" as well as "the rational order and unconscious desires" (p. 153). In addition to the conflict, this phenomenon addresses a threat against the traveling body that might have to confront violence and murder, reflecting the lack of safety for the passengers caged in a closed box. Consequently, anxiety and fear were ever-present feelings among the Victorians during their railway journeys.

After Miss Clifton leaves the mail-train, the clerk finds out that the Premier's despatch box disappeared on the very same night. Despite all their efforts and investigations, they cannot find the lady or the box, however, the postmaster decides that the "mysterious complicity in the daring theft practiced on the government and the post-office" shall be kept as a secret not to be mentioned again (Stretton, 2010, p. 40). Several years later, the clerk accidentally discovers the box, while working in Alexandria, in the house of the daughter of the district surveyor, Mr Huntingdon. Forcing the daughter to admit the theft and reveal the mystery of the case, he discovers that she and her husband stole the box in return for money to get married. Now that both her husband and Mr Huntingdon are dead, the clerk discloses the secret only to the secretary of the post-office who knows the case well. The fact that a travelling post-office train and railway station are chosen as a setting for this extraordinary circumstance indicates the increasing significance of the railways during the period and the possibilities both of meeting strangers and of delivering valuable information in a short time. The growing network system within and outside Great Britain, therefore, enabled mysterious encounters and incidents that could not be solved in a single place. This circulation takes place not only in information but also among people within the borders of the British Empire. To illustrate, Mrs Forbes is sent to Malta "under British protection" after the mystery is resolved (Stretton, 2010, p. 42). Thus, even in the early days of the railway, its potential to become a stage for mystery, uncanny or strange encounters was realised by the Victorian authors.

The rapidly expanding railway network and post-office occupation indicate not only the possibility of displacement, but also of monotony. This

monotony also refers to the movement of the carriage, as described by the clerk. The clerk suffers a little from “a hurry and tremor of nerve” at first, but soon becomes accustomed to the “unbroken course” of the train (Stretton, 2010, p. 35). The speed of the train was perceived as being both “marvellous and perilous” during the early years of the railway age; however, it does not take long for these characters to adapt to the movement and speed in order to perform their duty on the train properly (Stretton, 2010, p. 35). This is similar to the adaptation of *The Engine-driver* to the mechanical and physical difficulties of running the train. The Victorians adapted to the inevitable changes in order to cope with them, however, the strain did not disappear without leaving any trace on the individuals. The effects sometimes dehumanised, altered and damaged their health and mental stability in a sinister way that often shortened their life span.

CONCLUSION

As illustrated in the short stories in *Mugby Junction*, the railway system created a new platform for adventure, mystery, hauntings, crime and death in both fiction and real life in Britain. This new representational space expanded the imaginative, emotional and mental experiences of the modern subjects of the Industrial era, which was captured by the Victorian authors such as Dickens, Halliday, Edwards, and Stretton. The challenges the Victorians experienced with railways originate from the contradictory nature of mechanics and the human body, along with the mutual dependency of the conscious and unconscious state of mind, and the flourishing of spirituality and materialism in the nineteenth century. The mechanical motion, uniformity and regularity of the train do not comply with nature and the human organism. The train, as a machine ensemble, forces the human body to absorb unending repeated jolts, noise and movements as if they too are a part of the machine. Increased stimuli and velocity cause the exhaustion of senses and mind as well as the nerves of the skin and muscles. The human body then experiences physical symptoms such as fatigue, headache, lowered concentration and digestive problems, as a consequence of an unnatural process. The human mind is also affected by this new encounter of “flesh and steel”, which gradually manifests itself as a psychic disruption. The traumatised subject tries to assimilate this encounter by repeating and normalising railway travel in everyday life. However, repressed fear and anxiety emerge in different forms after every possible sign of danger or a railway accident. Sudden collisions, quicker than human sense of time traumatise the subject and the individual is inevitably victimised in this process. The narratives of railways in *Mugby Junction* emphasise the impact of the railway system on the physical, emotional and mental experiences of the railwaymen. In the story of *The Engineer*, a ghost appears on the train to prevent a deliberate accident. Representations of the supernatural experiences of the industrial workers contest the idea of preserving mental and psychological health in the period of the rational materialism. Where

consciousness and rationality collapse, the irrational and supernatural take their place. However, during this transition process the identity of the individuals shaped by their past experiences and perceptions undergoes permanent changes in order to adapt to the new situation. As a result, the human body and mind either adapt to the machine culture permanently or collapse in different ways, as examined in these literary works.

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