

IDEALIZED REALMS AND POETIC PROPHECIES: THE UTOPIAN LANDSCAPES OF XANADU, TARTARY, AND BYZANTIUM

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Abstract:

This paper examines the poetic and utopian depictions of three idealized realms named Xanadu, Tartary, and Byzantium in literature and history. The article exposes how these poetic domains have been erected as sceneries of mystery, excellence and divine capacity. Through the lens of Romantic poetry, particularly focusing on the works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Walter De la Mare and W.B. Yeats, the study analyzes the symbolic bulk of these realms as intended places of beauty, power, and insight. Xanadu, the domain and realm of Kublai Khan, represents a fusion of Eastern magnificence and intellectual grandeur. Tartary, often associated with vast, colorful realm, serves as a background for the connection of exploration and exotism. Byzantium, with its splendor architecture and mystical depth, proposes a consideration on cultural steadiness and the decline of domains. Through an examination of these dominions, the paper discusses the interaction between self-imposed escapism and the cultural desires for superior spaces that represent utopian standards that bridge the primeval and the modern. Moreover, the work presents the reflection of poetic paradise and common desires of the readers.

Introduction

Utopian realms are often explored by romantic poets. These utopias are in fact poets' idealized lands. Some historical, mythical, mysterious and abandoned places have been painted as a medium to represent ideals of general harmony and excellent beauty. The realms of Xanadu, Tartary and Byzantium are among the most attractive and charming fictional lands every described in poetic genre. Coleridge, Walter De la Mare and Yeats have included these utopian ideals as paradises of grandeur and spiritual perfection. These realms serve not only as symbols of romanticism, but also as imitations of the authors' ideas and means of escape. Whether in the superb scenes of Coleridge's Xanadu, the unusual variety of Walter De la Mare's Tartary, or the cultural magnificence of Yeats' Byzantium, these utopian realms offer an excellent viewpoint through which to review the juncture of imagination, history and idealism in verse form.

The utopian insight, as exposed through these perfect lands, requires a close look at these idealized realms and human limitations. Byzantium categorized cultural and social brilliance, mainly in the verse created W.B. Yeats, where it becomes a symbol of spiritual rebirth inside social and cultural decay, yet also reflects a world that ultimately yields to the passage of time. Sociocultural issues are a complex yet integral part of human life (Javaid et al., 2024; Ramzan et al., 2023). They can range from challenges related to cultural integration (Umar et al., 2024), social inequality, and systemic discrimination to issues surrounding gender norms, identity, and generational conflicts (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023), trauma, or personality disorders (Javaid et al., 2024; Ramzan et al., 2023). Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach that includes psychological (Sohail & Akram, 2025), emotional, social (Al-Adwan et al., 2022), and environmental interventions (Akram et al., 2022; Javaid et al., 2023). Understanding the underlying factors and offering practical solutions can significantly enhance an individual's quality of life and overall well-being (Javaid et al., 2024; Ramzan et al., 2023; Ma et al., 2024).

Samuel Taylor Coleridge immortalized Xanadu, the mythical Mongolian citadel of Kublai Khan, in one of his famous poems, *Kubla Khan* (1797), as a symbol of imposing artistic vision, control, extravagance and, while also mentioning the brief and eventually misleading nature of utopian magnificence. Likewise, Tartary—a fabled monarchy created by De la Mare—is full of superb and grand scenes. This graceful picture presents the interesting activities of the royal court and palace. Historically *Tartary* was a vast region in Asia, designated as a place of mystery and vast wealth—has appeared in English literature as an idealized land of freedom and unrestrained natural beauty, often compared with the stiff structures of European society. Meanwhile, English literature is extremely important for expanding our knowledge of human experiences and world issues, including ecological concerns (Akram, 2020; Amjad et al., 2021; Ramzan et al., 2023), because of its rich history and diversified body of work (Li & Akram, 2023, 2024; Ramzan et al., 2021). Its universality enables it to cut across cultural divides, offering a forum for considering and addressing urgent environmental issues (Ahmad et al., 2022; Abdelrady & Akram, 2022; Ramzan et al., 2020).

These romantic realms, while tempting in their ideal depictions, often comprise elements of contradiction. The question arises: what do these fictional sites tell us about the poets' desire for utopia, and the unavoidable disenchantment that goes with such lofty dreams? This research seeks to examine the two-fold nature of these utopian sites in poetry, revealing how they embody both the potential for human greatness and the limits of nostalgia.

By investigating Xanadu, Tartary, and Byzantium through the lens of poetic works by Coleridge, De la Mare and Yeats who have invoked these places, this work aims to expose the symbolic meanings and philosophical suggestions rooted in these utopian visualizations. Are these poetic creations presenting an escape from the complications and frustrations of current life, or are they indirectly evaluating the very ideals they present? Can these poetic innovations serve as outlines for social transformation, or do they function as cautions of the dangers inherent in the search for perfection?

This study, through exploring these questions, will not only contribute to the insight of poetic utopianism but also offer a deeper understanding into the cultural and historical forces that formed these imagined realms. The poetic landscapes of Xanadu, Tartary, and Byzantium—though created in immensely different cultural and historical settings—share a common strand of human desire for perfection, yet also recognize the transience and intricacy that form all efforts to create an ideal society. Through this examination, it will be examined how these legendary landscapes become more than just substances of captivation; they are symbolic of the everlasting tension between dreams of excellence and the reality of human restriction.

1. Research Questions

1. Are the utopian lands of Xanadu, Tartary, and Byzantium portrayed by poets chiefly as a desire for escape, revealing a craving for idealized worlds away from current struggles and boundaries?
2. To what scope are the utopian landscapes of Xanadu, Tartary, and Byzantium constructed mainly for aesthetic pleasure, serving as imaginative and physical places intended to captivate and delight the readers.

2. Research Problem

The poetic realms of Xanadu, Tartary, and Byzantium are often seen as idealized utopias, but it remains indistinct whether these places are shaped by poets as a means of escaping reality or principally for the aesthetic pleasure of the reader. This research will reveal

whether these utopian lands reflect a yearning to escape social issues or if they serve as imaginative places meant to amuse and captivate audiences.

Literature review

The study reviews the relevant available research on the topic of idealized utopias focusing on Xanadu, Tartary, and Byzantium to locate the gap and to fill it with this study. The idea of utopian kingdoms, often portrayed in fictional and poetic works, has long captured the thoughts of both audiences and creators. In revealing the ideal sceneries of Xanadu, Tartary, and Byzantium, researchers have underlined the complex interaction between myth, culture, and geography in formatting these areas as symbols of excellence and divine capacity.

The notion of utopian sceneries, as revealed in both literature and environmental scholarships, embodies idealized monarchies of excellence and beauty. In *Sustainable Landscapes: Contradiction, Fiction or Utopia?*, Antrop (2006) claims that the idea of *sustainable landscapes* is often observed as a utopian goal due to the continuous changes landscapes suffer. He analyses the use of economic ideas like social and natural investment in landscape development, which often overlook the cultural and environmental implication of landscapes.

This concept matches the depiction of spaces like Xanadu, Tartary, and Byzantium in literature, where these lands mirror societal ideals. Both in environmental scheduling and literary depiction, landscapes are lively, shifting in response to historical, literary and cultural changes, underlining the continuing tension between ideal images and reality.

MacLeod and Ward (2002) inspect the complementary sceneries of utopia and dystopia inside modern cities. They claim that contemporary urban places are a collaged of idealized, utopian surroundings, such as redeveloped localities and edge cities, and dystopian regions, like disadvantaged ghettos and uninhibited industrial locations. These spaces, though physically close, are institutionally and communally separated, revealing the rising disparities inside urban development and society. Utopian areas are presented as restricted, perfect places, while dystopian districts are more and more relegated. This concept reflects the literary descriptions of idealized lands like Xanadu, Tartary, and Byzantium, where utopian lands often exist together with disturbed, unreachable spaces.

In his article Arias-Maldonado (2020) studies the argument of utopian ideas in the Anthropocene, a stage noticeable by environmental tasks. The Anthropocene analyzes humanity with both the enormity of stretched period and the imminent danger of a greenhouse Earth, improving dreams of the future. Frenetic viewpoints often lead to restrained, frugal ecotopias captivated on sustainability, similar to the idealized backdrops of mythical realms like Xanadu or Tartary. This strain between experiential disaster and transformative prospect mirrors a wider reimagining of utopia in reply to environmental deprivation.

Hartig (2005) in *Literary Landscaping: Re-reading the Politics of Places in Late Nineteenth-Century Regional and Utopian Literature* examines the role of dwelling in determining struggle and geographic subjectivity in literature. The study contends that lands in literature should be read as meticulously created foundations, similar to thematic mapmaking, and as political mechanisms that involve examination, explanation, and historicization. Through a close examination of Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* (1884) and Pauline Hopkins's *Of One Blood* (1902-03), Hartig uses regional literary theories and cartographical criticism to disclose the gaps in both local and utopian literary criticism, chiefly concerning the prohibiting of *outsider* texts and downgraded voices such as African American and Native American writers.

Finally, the paper highlights the unstable and personal nature of the political power of literary settings and reviews the institutionalization of genre-specific analysis practices.

in *Walter de la Mare* (1923), van Doorn examines the fascinating and utopian realm of Tartary, as imagined by Walter de la Mare. He offers Tartary as a pulsating and captivating empire, filled with colors and enjoyments, a place planned for the enjoyment of its ruler, the king. In his poetic image, the poet himself acts the role of the ruler, dwelling and governing this formed world. Tartary becomes a perfect place where the borders of imagination and reality blur, revealing the utopian desire for a perfect, pleasant-sounding world. The poem exemplifies how the poet not only visualizes a fanciful dominion but also places himself as the ruler of this fictional place, strengthening the theme of creation and control over a utopian land.

In *Walter de la Mare* (1923), van Doorn inspects the poet's formation of Tartary as a utopian land. De la Mare envisages Tartary as a lively and fantastic kingdom, full of color and enjoyment, intended to provide to the pleasures of its ruler, the king. This imaginary place signifies a perfect place where peace, satisfaction and serenity prevail, mirroring a utopian idea of faultless synchronization and contentment. In this poem, de la Mare places himself as the ruler of Tartary, exemplifying the idea of control and dominion over this utopian world. The poem shows the theme of creative creation, where the poet forms a utopian kingdom to replicate a yearning for a perfect, avoidable world.

.....In *In Quest for the Romantic Imagination (II): All Roads Lead to Xanadu* (2016), Stroe explores the concept of the romantic imagination, with a focus on the iconic symbol of Xanadu as portrayed by Coleridge. The study examines three distinct yet interconnected stories to understand the essence of the romantic imagination: 1) the post-romantic city of Zenith from Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* (1922), 2) the science-fictional world of Symzonia, an Eden-like land in the Hollow Earth, and 3) the romantic vision of Xanadu. Stroe compares the imagined city of Zenith, which is bound by moderation and standardization, with the free and unbound imagination of Xanadu, where exuberance, natural luxuriance, and transcendental elements like the "milk of paradise" embody a state of perfect harmony. The study argues that Xanadu represents an idealized, metaphysical paradise of the imagination, where the interplay of opposites (health and disease, order and disorder) creates a dynamic equilibrium. This utopian space is seen as a metaphorical earthly paradise that transcends the extremes of life, death, and creativity. The study concludes that, in understanding the romantic imagination, all roads metaphorically lead to Xanadu—a place of ontological ecstasy and profound balance, though it also carries the cost of losing creative power.

Ouyang, in his 2012 article, *Utopias, Dystopias, and Heterotopias: The Spatiality of Human Experience and Literary Expression*, analyzes the space of utopias and the role of space in literature, drawing on Foucault's idea of heterotopia to inspect the connection between spatial property and human experience.

The research points out how these measures reflect societal apprehensions and human wishes. Dystopian and utopian places often present perfect or serious descriptions of the world, while heterotopias offer complex spaces that challenge social values. His research is vital in revealing how literature makes worlds that assess the human condition.

Bremser (1993) in his research *The Voice of Solitude: The Children's Verse of Walter de la Mare*, inspects the themes of isolation and contemplation in Walter de la Mare's children's poetry. She claims that his poems arouse a sense of clandestine and emotional profundity, often revealing loneliness and imagination in ways that reverberate with both children and grownups.

Bremser highlights de la Mare's capability to create fantastic, poetic verse that attracts readers into a world of soft reflection. Her scrutiny helps update my study by underlining how themes of loneliness and self-reflection are articulated in children's works.

Peers (2010) Peers debates how artists like Willem de Kooning and institutions like the Rothko Chapel and the Byzantine Fresco Chapel Museum in Houston, Texas, revealing Byzantine imagery. He explains in his research work, In *Utopia and Heterotopia: Byzantine Modernisms in America* how images of Byzantium impressed modern art in America during the preceding century. He examines the dual nature of these ideas, molded by ideal and utopian desires for an idealized world and by heterotopian views, where Byzantium is seen as both an idealized and contested concept. These sites represent both utopian dreams and heterotopian places where Byzantine culture and American modernism interconnect, generating new creative and artistic senses.

A.G.C. Savvides (2005) states, the idea of a single-volume, all-surrounding history of the Byzantine Realm is a utopian model that supervises the state's vast historical and geographical condition. The study of Byzantine history has long been visible and perceptible by the challenge of generating a complete and reachable description of this complex realm straddling over a epoch, from the rise of Constantinople in the 4th century to its decrease in 1453, Byzantine history includes an extensive range of social, political, religious, and cultural growths that challenge reduction to a succinct account. Researchers have recurrently tried to recapitulate Byzantine history in single dimensions, yet these efforts often try to balance the workings of majestic ascendancy, armed conflicts, religious discussions and economic schemes. Savvides points out that such efforts, while appreciated, certainly neglect vital features of Byzantine life, and thus, the research on Byzantium needs a clearer approach that holds the variety of sources and viewpoints obtainable. This analysis is vital for understanding the limits of preceding research works and underlines the need of particular, multi-layered studies that do justice to the complexity of Byzantine history.

Research Gap

While existing researches on the idea of utopian paradises have mainly focused on their physical existence and structure, predominantly in terms of architecture and geography, little attention has been given to the profounder psychological and literary objects behind these utopias. Most research views these utopias chiefly as geographical and physical entities, negating the symbolic purpose they may serve. The role of utopian constructions by poets—such as Tartary, Xanadu, and Byzantium—has not been carefully explored in terms of whether they are intended to gratify the aesthetic feelings of readers or whether they act as symbols of escape for the writers themselves. This gap in the literature offers a chance to examine the double role of these utopias as both aesthetic concepts and expressions of particular or cultural escape, a viewpoint that has not been adequately addressed in previous research.

Discussion

The discussion chapter explores the deeper symbolic functions of the utopian landscapes of Xanadu, Tartary, and Byzantium, examining how these idealized realms serve not only as aesthetic constructs but also as expressions of escape and prophecy within the poets' creative imaginations.

1. Aestheticism in Utopian Landscapes: The Role of Beauty and Form in Xanadu, Tartary, and Byzantium

In this section it will be examined how the poets have used utopian realms for their readers to enjoy aesthetic beauty. Walter de la Mare states in his poem. In the first edition of *The Listeners and Other Poems* (1912), the poem *Tartary* appears on page 44.

If I were Lord of Tartary,
Myself, and me alone,
My bed should be of ivory,
Of beaten gold my throne;
And in my court should peacocks flaunt,
And in my forests tigers haunt,
And in my pools great fishes slant
Their fins athwart the sun.

Walter de la Mare in his book *The Listeners, and Other Poems* (1919), arouses a romantic and contented world in his poem *Tartary*. In this famous romantic poem aestheticism is central and vital to the depiction of *Tartary* as a perfect kingdom. The poet visualizes a world where lavishness expresses every element, from the *ivory bed* to the *beaten gold* throne. These comfortable and expensive things are not just practical but are reasonably selected to create a physical experience fixed in luxury and alteration. The descriptions of peacocks dancing in the court and tigers roaming in the forests elevate the graphic place, merging the natural world with an artistic sense of control. This watchful construction of beauty is a symbol of aestheticism, where the expedition of striking pleasure surpasses realism, offering a world where form and elegance govern.

The land of Tartary is displayed not only as a symbol of authority but as a space planned for aesthetic delight. The fish *slanting their fins athwart the sun* is another example of how nature itself is inclined to propose visual enjoyment. The natural elements are idealized, expanding their appeal in an almost whimsical way. Through these images, de la Mare mirrors a idea of utopia where corporeal pleasure and beauty reign. The domain of Tartary becomes a display of aestheticism, where the beauty of the world is carefully composed to create a pleasant-sounding and visually charming environment. In second stanza the poet further paints his aesthetic pictures in the following verses

If I were Lord of Tartary,
Trumpeters every day
To every meal would summon me,
And in my courtyard bray;
And in the evening lamps would shine,
Yellow as honey, red as wine,
While harp, and flute, and mandolin,
Made music sweet and gay.

In the imagined utopia of *Tartary*, aesthetic preferences overflow, producing a world where colors, music, beauty and light form a sensory paradise. Each day is indicated by the trumpets that call the monarch to dinner, filling the air with a rich, majestic sound that indicates both felicity and celebration. This daily routine is a symbol of the synchronization between nature and civilization, where music and movement intersperse

every moment. As the evening prevails, the scene is immersed in the colorful lights of lamps, their yellow glow as rich as honey and as red as wine, forming an appealing atmosphere of color and luxury. The bright imagery of the landscape arouses not just physical radiance but also and sensitive warmth, producing a realm of peace and love. Through the soft evening times, the gentle tunes of the harp, flute, and mandolin drift through the air, filling the environment with strains that are both sweet and elevating. These strains, a perfect replication of the realm's stately posture, provide a background to the passive understanding of the sovereign's court, where colorful activities and music serve not only as entertainment but also as expressions of a perfect society. In this vision, *Tartary* becomes a dominion where every physical experience is personalized to arouse peace, harmony, pleasure and beauty exemplifying an ideal world of aesthetic ecstasy.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* is often considered an image of Aestheticism, with its emphasis on beauty and sensory experience. Coleridge's glowing imagery, such as the *stately pleasure-dome* and *sacred river Alph*, invites readers to appreciate beauty for its own sake (Coleridge, 1816). Critics claim that Coleridge's use of the awe-inspiring, where beauty is entangled with respect and terror, adds intricacy to this aesthetic vision (Bloom, 1985). The poem also highlights the power of the fancy, an important element of Aestheticism, signifying that art exists for its own sake, independent of reality (Coleridge, 1816). Nevertheless, the incomplete nature of the poem raises questions about the limits of artistic construction and the inaccessibility of perfect beauty (O'Neill, 1997).

Overall, *Kubla Khan* embodies Aesthetic ideals, merging beauty and imagination, while also frustrating discussion about the nature of art and the confines of artistic expression.

2. Escape and Imagination: The Symbolic Function of Utopian Realms in Poetic Prophecies

Normally the poets use utopian realms for escape purpose. Romantic poets like Keats often involve in escapism to get rid of the worldly pursuits and problems.

In *Tartary*, Walter de la Mare examines the act of escapism through the lens of speaker's idealized image of a phantastic realm. The speaker sees himself as the monarch of Tartary, a city where he enjoys limitless luxury and autonomy. The imagery of golden thrones, mysterious beasts, and lively sceneries generates a plain contrast to the restraints of the real world, letting the speaker escape into a substitute, perfect reality (De la Mare, 1923). This longing to escape into an idealized world synchronizes with Kuo, Lutz, and Hiler's (2016) wish of active escapism, where people submerge themselves in alternative realities to find serenity and gratification not present in their normal lives.

The poet's rich corporeal images, such as *silver-pale rivers* and *citron-trees* increase the attraction of this fictional realm, revealing how escapism provides an emotional and psychological escape from the limitations of the mundane (De la Mare, 1923). Through the repeated phrase *If I were Lord of Tartary*, de la Mare highlights the tenacious nature of escapism,

representing the continuing desire for a world of personal autonomy and fantasy, as discussed in the background of active escapism (Kuo, Lutz, & Hiler, 2016).

In *Kubla Khan*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge constructs a fantastical vision of the Mongol ruler's citadel in the unusual land of Xanadu, a world packed with mystery and beauty. The poem highlights escapism by carrying readers into a dreamy and vivid location, where reality is postponed. Through Coleridge's rich imagery, such as the *stately pleasure-dome* and the *river running with a sweet sound*, the poem arouses a utopian world that proposes both psychological and physical escape from the routine realities of everyday life (Coleridge, 1816).

Bliss and Bliss (1949) analyze *Kubla Khan* in standings of the poem's creative procedure and its connection to the dreamy world, signifying that the poem itself is a creation of the cataleptic mind's craving to escape the restraints of normal experience. They contend that Coleridge's depiction of the palace and its surrounding landscapes reveals a personal wish to access a profounder, more mystical realm, free from the confines of the objective world. The *pleasure-dome* becomes a symbol for the poet's own idealized land, a place of perfection and imagination.

According to Bliss and Bliss (1949) this form of escapism is aligned with the wider idea of creative activity as a medium of escaping the confines of reality. The vision of Xanadu in *Kubla Khan* is both a bodily escape and a symbolic expedition into the psychological unexplored terrains, where the limitations of the probable are continually redefined.

Just like Walter de la Mare in *Tartary* and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in *Kubla Khan*, W.B. Yeats delves into the journey of escape in *Sailing to Byzantium* through an image of exceeding the limitations of the present world. In *Tartary*, de la Mare generates a perfect, fanciful realm, while in *Kubla Khan*, Coleridge offers a legendary palace that presents an escape from the limitations of reality. Likewise, Yeats represents an escape from the deterioration of corporeal presence and the momentary nature of contemporary civilization by exploration to the everlasting, imaginative world of Byzantium. The speaker yearns to leave behind the dying generations and enter a kingdom where the soul can attain immortality through art and unworldliness (Yeats, 1928).

Azad (2017) studies Yeats' *Sailing to Byzantium* as a visionary escape, where the poet pursues refuge not only from the physical decline of his figure but also from the transience and dishonesty of modern society. Poet's representation of Byzantium signifies a land of artistic and spiritual permanence, a realm where the soul can exceed the body and live on perpetually through the creation of art. This escape reflects the wider literary tradition of desiring refuge from the confines of time-based living, similar to the escapism in Coleridge's and de la Mare's romantic poems.

Azad (2017) also links Yeats' dream of escape with that of John Keats in *Ode to a Nightingale*, where both the creators of the visionary places imagine perfection from the material world into a dominion of everlasting beauty and truth. For Yeats, Byzantium is not only an escape but a symbol of the opportunity of attaining agelessness through creative creation. The poet's desire to be *made immortal* through the creativity of Byzantium mirrors a literary desire to escape time and physical deterioration, signifying that through art, one can attain liberty from impermanence.

3. Conclusion

The imaginative realms of Xanadu, Tartary, and Byzantium, as portrayed in the romantic poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Walter de la Mare, and W.B. Yeats, definitely mirror both an

yearning for escape and a decisive creation of places planned for aesthetic recreation. These utopian sites serve double functions: they represent as means of imaginative and artistic escape for the authors, while also fascinating and entertaining the reader through colorful and delightful fancy places.

Sailing to Byzantium by Yeats merges escapism with a desire for ingenuous perfection, showing Byzantium as a realm where the soul can escape transitoriness through art and immortality. Coleridge's creative land Xanadu, in *Kubla Khan*, is a fantastic world that offers the poet an escape from the limitations of the worldly quests, particularly through the creation of an ideal realm. Likewise, in *Tartary*, de la Mare's dreamlike land offers a space of individual freedom and luxury, an escape from the materialistic fetters of standard life.

The complete images, musical tide, and unearthly settings create seats that are both imaginary and aesthetically beautiful. This double stress—on the poet's escape and the reader's pleasure—submits that these utopian territories are formed as ingenious escapes intended to both reflect personal needs for freedom and offer a phantastic experience for the readers. These backdrops are not just echoes of personal escape. The decorative images and physical beauty in each of these poems also serve to captivate the reader, drawing them into these unreal worlds for pleasure.

Consequently, the utopian kingdoms of Xanadu, Tartary, and Byzantium are not simply thoughts of escape from social materials or corporal boundaries. They also describe domains created for artistic enjoyment, intended to absorb the reader's intent and minds. Through their rich, idealized depictions, these creative domains function as both retreats for the poets and imaginary sites that fascinate their readers, offering a musical combination of escapism and artistic satisfaction.

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