

INSIDE TUCKER HALL

FROM THE CHAIR OF ENGLISH

Welcome to our newsletter! We are immensely proud of our inaugural issue, and very grateful to Professor Jennifer Putzi, her team of student journalists (Joel Calfee, Rachel Coombs, Kiana Espinoza, and Leonor Taylor Grave), and Justin Schoonmaker, Creative Director of University Web & Design, for all the work they have put into planning, writing and designing it. We hope you enjoy reading about faculty and friends, old and new, and about everything that's going on in Tucker Hall.



We're nearly three months into the new academic year, and already so much has happened. We were thrilled to welcome our new President, Katherine Rowe – the first woman president of the College and, we are proud to say, an English professor and member of our own department.

We said temporary goodbyes to no fewer than four of our faculty, all of whom were offered exciting – and prestigious – opportunities to study and teach elsewhere for the year. Chelsey Johnson and Kara Thompson are at Northern Arizona University; Adam Potkay is the Laurence T. Rockefeller Visiting Professor of Distinguished Teaching in the Center for Human Values, Princeton University; and Lee Alexander is a Fulbright Lecturer at Liepaja University (Latvia) this fall, and an English Language Fellow at the State University of Santa Catarina (Brazil) in the spring. We bask in their reflected glory, though we miss them and look forward to their return.

On a brighter note, we have welcomed no fewer than five new faculty, although two of them were already familiar faces. Jon Pineda joins us from the University of Mary Washington as an Assistant Professor of creative writing (fiction). We were also delighted to welcome back Suzette Spencer, in her new role as an Assistant Professor,

jointly appointed with Africana Studies, and specializing in nineteenth century African American literature and film. We have three new Visiting Assistant Professors: Kevin Kritsch, who is teaching Old English, Beowulf, and medieval literature; Jenna Hunnef, who comes to us from Toronto, where she specialized in indigenous literatures and literature of the American West; and finally, fiction writer Andrew Blossom, who has been teaching creative writing for us for a number of years, is now with us full-time. Olaocha Nwabara and Annelise Duerden are with us for a second year, teaching African American and African diaspora literatures, and early modern British literature, respectively, and we are so glad that we were able to keep them as part of our community.

We have had several exciting events already this semester. On Homecoming Weekend, Deborah Morse, who was recently named the Sara E. Nance Professor of English, gave her inaugural lecture, "Resistance, Art and Animals in Anne Brontë," with Peter and Judy Nance, who generously endowed Deborah's professorship in memory of their daughter, in attendance. We've also hosted five writers in the Patrick Hayes Writers' Series: fiction writers Lorrie Moore and X.C. Atkins, poet Elizabeth Spires, and film-makers and poets Michele Poulos and Gregory Donovan.

By the time you read this, final exams and winter break will be upon us, with all the anxiety and anticipation of the season. Whether you are experiencing the Yule Log from afar, or studying till the small hours in Swem Library, or anticipating an onslaught of blue books awaiting grading, we wish you a wonderful holiday season full of family, friends and – of course – good books.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Suzanne Raitt".

– Suzanne Raitt

INTRODUCING PROFESSOR JON PINEDA

By Rachel Coombs ('20)

"Eternal apprenticeship is the life of the true poet." - Theodore Roethke.

Professor Jon Pineda quoted Roethke after I asked him if he had any advice for students interested in pursuing creative writing. "I just agree with that!" he said, letting out a hearty laugh. "I'm writing books because I have questions, and if I feel like I have all the answers I'll never write again, and that's a day that I don't want to happen. I want to keep writing; I want to live in a world where I have questions." True to his profession, Professor Pineda believes that to grow as a writer and to stay committed to the craft one must cultivate their curiosity. His primary advice for young authors is to "read and read and read!" so they can "feed [their] love of language." He believes if we keep our minds open and remain curious and continue to expose ourselves to the voices and styles of others, we will transform and elevate "the way [we] approach the page."

Although Professor Pineda just recently joined the William & Mary faculty, his advice is of a quality that emphasizes his skill as an author and his passion as a creative writing professor (focusing in the areas of poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction). Growing up in the Tidewater area, Pineda has been familiar with William & Mary from a young age. When he saw that they were hiring, he "jumped at the chance" to join the Tribe.

Professor Pineda has already been impressed by the students and faculty here, stating that his classroom has an "energy that's palpable" because his students "[come] to class prepared [and ready] to engage," and are all "driven to learn and make each other better writers." He has also noticed the way discussions and themes cross classroom walls, as students

will bring in insights from conversations they have had with other professors, and this shared dialogue allows him to "feel the community of [his] colleagues." "It's a great dynamic to have!" he says, smiling.

At William & Mary he hopes to "help writers find their voice and their relationship with their voice." To achieve this, the revision process is vital, he says, because it is imperative to look at yourself and your work from a critical perspective to truly grow as an author. He recommends "developing a healthy relationship with rejection," because all artists will inevitably face both criticism and rejection, and those seemingly devastating moments can actually function as positive opportunities. They provide a chance to reflect upon your work, consider possible improvements, and allow you to reaffirm your belief in yourself and your confidence as a writer in the face of adversity. "I'm [not here] because doors were open, I'm here because doors were closed...and I just kept knocking."

His expressed persistence is reflected in Professor Pineda's successes. He has published a memoir, (which was listed on the Barnes and Noble Discover selection), two novels, and three poetry collections (the third of which won a Library of Virginia Literary Award). The paperback of his latest novel, *Let's No One Get Hurt*, will come out in March, and because he has joined the faculty, William & Mary will be mentioned in his bio – hoorah!

Throughout our interview I was impressed by how knowledgeable Professor Pineda is about the creative writing process. It is clear he is passionate about helping

students grow as writers as well as refining his own skills as an "eternal apprentice" of language. He has found a home among us already, and I have no doubt he will have an incredible impact on his students here at William & Mary.

Welcome to the Tribe, Professor Pineda!



CREATIVE WRITING AT WILLIAM & MARY

By Brian Castleberry (Senior Lecturer, English)

This fall has been a busy one for the creative writing program – our Patrick Hayes Writers Series brought five authors over the course of one semester!

We started in September with an outstanding reading from fiction writer and national treasure Lorrie Moore (author of *Birds of America* and *Self-Help*). Then October saw a landslide of events, including poets Elizabeth Spires, Gregory Donovan, and Michele Poulos, and fiction writer X.C. Atkins. We also partnered with Film & Media Studies to screen the film *Late Style of Fire*, directed by Poulos.

Our creative writing students, of course, continue to amaze. In November, Jessie Urgo read from her work and was honored as winner of the 2018 Concord Traveling Scholarship. In the spring, submissions will open for our annual student literary prizes, so keep an eye out for posters and emails.

The minor in Creative Writing offers students an opportunity to hone their writing skills, but also to work closely with others who share their love of storytelling, poetry, and film. Graduates with the CRWR minor show that they know how to give and receive constructive criticism, think creatively, and communicate professionally. All it takes is five CRWR courses and two upper-level ENGL courses. If you've got any questions, feel free to reach out to me at: bcastleberry@wm.edu.

Coming up this spring, Patrick Hayes is bringing two more amazing authors. On February 6th, we'll host novelist Jenny Offill (*Dept. of Speculation*) and then on March 28th, we'll host poet Patricia Smith

(*Incendiary Art: Poems*). Watch for posters and announcements as these events near.

All our events are free and open to the public!

*X. C. Atkins reads from his book
Grace Street Alley and Other Stories
on October 18, 2018.*



COURSE SPOTLIGHT

“WRITING PATERSON”, TAUGHT BY PROFESSOR CHRIS MACGOWAN

By Kiana Espinoza ('19)

When William & Mary began the switch to the COLL curriculum three years ago, English professors were faced with the challenge of adopting new courses that included not only different texts, but also different disciplines.

In reaching out to different knowledge domains, professors have applied their expertise and creativity. Among the courses that have been offered thus far, “Writing Paterson” stands out, as it invites students to rethink the way in which English literature courses have been structured at the College thus far.

While other courses organize material based on authors, genres, themes, or time periods, Professor Chris MacGowan’s “Writing Paterson” focuses on the historic — but often overlooked — Paterson, New Jersey. When Professor MacGowan began thinking about the course, he found inspiration in *Paterson*, the five-volume epic poem by William Carlos Williams. MacGowan’s area of specialty is modern poetry and he published the only fully edited version of *Paterson* in 1992; throughout this project, he visited the local museums in the town and began to learn more about the art, history, and culture that Williams discusses in the poem. With the beauty of the Paterson Falls in mind, as well as the rich history of the region, Professor MacGowan began to craft a course that used the complexly articulated modern poem as a starting point.

In 2016, director Jim Jarmusch released a critically acclaimed movie entitled *Paterson* that centers on Williams’ poetry and the daily life of Paterson’s citizens. Starring Adam Driver, this film introduced a way to relate the poetry of *Paterson* to popular culture. The film mentions various celebrities who have come from Paterson and how their individual backgrounds

demonstrate a great variety of identities and ethnicities that coexist in the historical area. Bud Abbott, of the comedic duo Abbott and Costello, Allen Ginsburg, the modernist poet, as well as the rapper Fetty Wap are just a few of the cultural icons who hail from the “Silk City.”

If celebrities did not manage to draw students in, the history seemed to attract just as much interest. Alexander Hamilton’s role in creating the Society for Useful Manufacturers initiated a source of industry for the town, paving the way for industrial development. Waves of people came to Paterson to build their lives around the waterfall that supported the factory power supply.

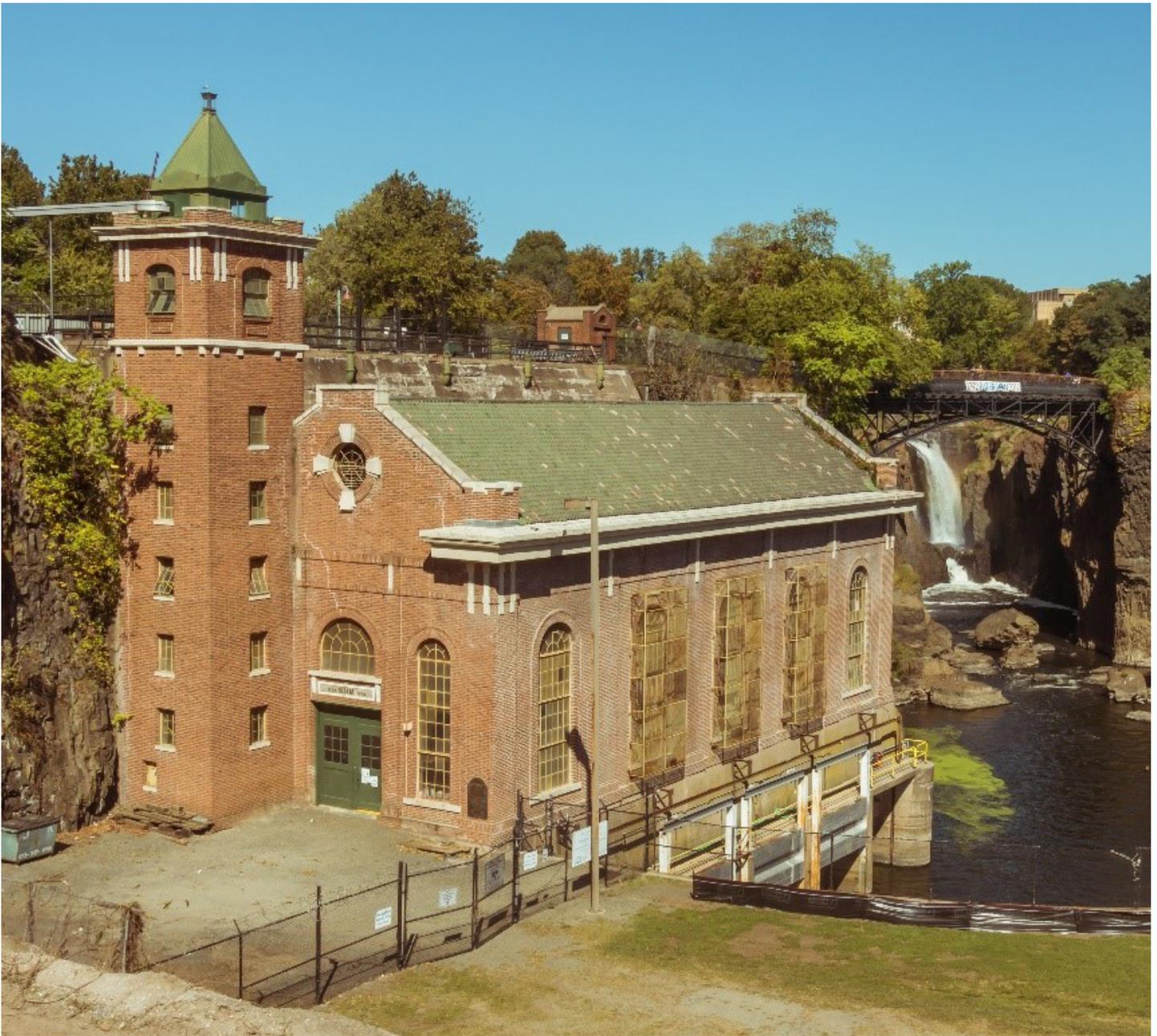
As students in “Writing Paterson” worked their way through history and culture, they were able to share their own research in presentations on the historical, cultural, and political contexts on which each of their assigned texts was grounded. As one student listened to and researched rap music, another had a phone call with an employee of the local museum. Others dove into the Hamilton story because of their love for the hit Broadway musical.

As these histories converged, so too did the varied ethnic groups who were immigrating in and around Paterson. This created a diverse group of literary voices: Irish immigrants arrived at the onset of Updike’s novel, *In the Beauty of the Lilies*. Hispanic voices emerged with a strong surge in Dominican and Puerto Rican immigration represented in part through Junot Diaz’s novel, *The Brief Wondrous*

Life of Oscar Wao, as well as Judith Cofer’s *The Line of the Sun*. Amy Stuart’s novel about the first woman sheriff in the U.S., *Girl Waits with Gun*, introduced students to early debates over gender in Paterson. Historical fiction also emerges to tell the story of Paterson’s black population, particularly the history of Hurricane Carter, a renowned boxer who was falsely accused of a crime.

MacGowan is currently revamping the course so that the next time he teaches “Writing Paterson,” he will discuss even more diverse groups of writers, possibly including detailing black Paterson through inventive contemporary literature recommended by a professor at William Paterson University. As he works to introduce new texts in preparation for the Spring, MacGowan notes that one of his few regrets is that the students are not able to go and see Paterson for themselves as they read about the beauty of the falls.

With the model that “Writing Paterson” has set for the English department, maybe the students and faculty can look forward to additional courses that highlight the intersection of geographic location and the literary voices of diverse groups.



The Paterson Great Fall showing the hydro-electric powerplant.

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A VERY FRANKENREADS HALLOWEEN

By Rachel Coombs ('20)

On October 31st, 2018, in William & Mary's Earl Gregg Swem Library, students and faculty gathered on the first floor to listen to a reading of Mary Shelley's classic *Frankenstein*.

Decorated cookies, flavored drinks, fall colors, and a large blowup of Frankenstein's monster surrounded the podium where participants took turns reading sections of the novel in ten-minute intervals. This event, called "Frankenreads," was hosted by Professor Kim Wheatley who specializes in Romantic-era novels, but the event was not unique to William & Mary's campus. All around the world, 696 partners and 43 countries participated in Frankenreads – a celebration of the 200-year anniversary of *Frankenstein* put together by the Keats-Shelley Association of America.

Since its original publication in 1818, *Frankenstein* has transcended print to become a cultural icon. From the 1931 film *Frankenstein* to the comical spoof *Young Frankenstein* to TV shows with Frankenstein-esque characters like *The Munsters*, the transformation of the monster through the ages can only be explained, observes Professor Wheatley, by the tendency for art to take on a life of its own. People commonly make the mistake of referring to the monster himself as Frankenstein when, in Shelley's novel, the monster has no name, and Victor Frankenstein is the man who creates him. The monster also originally has yellow skin, grayish eyes, and long black hair, but now if you say the word "Frankenstein" the image you will most likely evoke is one of a figure with a boxy head, green skin, yellowish eyes, and short ugly hair. (Thank you, Boris Karloff!)

Despite some of the changes made in Hollywood, however, two hundred years later the fascination over *Frankenstein* is still present among children and adults alike. What is it about the story that makes

Frankenstein such an infamous figure in popular culture? Professor Wheatley believes it is the noteworthy psychological effect of the book as "one of the first [gothic] novels that blends the hero and the villain" together, so that "there's always [a] question [about] who the [real monster is]." The novel is so intriguing because, she says, it asks the reader to "sympathize with a ruthless killer."

The themes explored in Shelley's novel continue to interest society because of the questions they provoke "about choice and agency" and what truly makes a person human. Mary Shelley confronted her audience with these questions when she was just eighteen years old, but two hundred years later we are still addressing these themes, still reading *Frankenstein*, still coming together to revel in her terrifyingly provocative work.

Two hundred years later and we sit in the lobby of Swem Library – cookies in hand, ears open and eager – to lose ourselves once again in her gothic masterpiece. As William & Mary celebrates its one hundred years of women at the college, it is fitting for our campus to honor the literary contribution of a female author who unwittingly influenced both romantic literature and the way we celebrate Halloween with her timeless novel *Frankenstein*.



POETRY: HENRY HART AND JESSIE URGO

This was a good year for poets in the English Department!

On July 2nd, Professor Henry Hart, the Mildred and J. B. Hickman Professor of English and Humanities, was sworn in as Poet Laureate of Virginia. The first Poet Laureate from William & Mary, is the author of several books of poetry, as well as books about poets Robert Frost, Robert Lowell, James Dickey, and Seamus Heaney. Professor Hart's student Jessie Urgo ('20) is the winner of the 2017-18 Concord Traveling Scholarship, which allowed her to travel to Argentina, where her maternal grandparents have lived since the rise of Benito Mussolini in Italy and Francisco Franco in Spain. Both poets have graciously allowed us to publish a sample of their work in this first issue of our newsletter.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

My poem "A Gift of Warblers" originated from something I read in college about the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. Somewhere he said he liked to think of a poem as a gift that you passed through a hole in a fence to someone on the other side.

After my grandfather died in 1991, I wanted to write a poem about poetic gift-giving because he had a "gift" for writing (he was a poet, fiction-writer, and journalist who had worked as a war correspondent in China), and he had kindly tried to cultivate a similar gift in me.

"A Gift of Warblers" tells the story of making an actual birthday present in the workshop we had in our barn. I was passionate about birds—especially about warblers—when I was growing up, so I made a mobile of warblers. (I refer to the great mobile-maker Alexander Calder, who had a house and workshop near my hometown.)

In the poem, I imagine my mobile hanging over my grandfather's manual Royal typewriter in his studio, which had once been used to store blocks of ice from a local lake for refrigeration. I begin with a reference to an old radio I listened to as I worked in our barn. This was around 1968 when the news was full of political storms as well as the common variety of storms.

A GIFT OF WARBLERS

By Henry Hart

*All summer the brown box radio stammered
news of circling storms. Heat popped the water
jug's cap, warped barn windows shut,
drew odors of cows from the original chestnut.*

*On cool nights I penciled warblers
around knots on plywood slabs. The hand
jig saw raised a burr along the lines.
Sawdust clung to hair like dampened fur.*

*With a camel hair brush dipped in paint
I stroked the wood to olive crests,
blackface masks, yellow breasts,
white wing stripes and dust-blue backs.*

*Glued to strings on a lilac branch
they were Calder cut-outs, tilting as I puffed
their feathers into flight. For years they hung
in my grandfather's ice house studio,*

*his typewriter below, clicking through summers
like ice picks on blocks once stacked
in sawdust where he sat. Today, mold drifts
like snow under the ice house beams.*

*Ragweed scatters seeds across tilting steps.
Cedar shingles, split by lichen,
powder at the touch. The gift still hangs
over the black skeleton of his Royal type.*

*I brush the gray wings and salt white tails.
They turn towards me as once they turned towards him
as he hummed the names: Blackburnian, Magnolia, Myrtle,
Cape May, Cerulean, Black and White.*

BEFORE THE GLACIER GIVES BIRTH

By Jessie Uργο ('20)

*She has buried the memory of fluidity
within a womb of ice.*

*She has carried it like a boulder,
closed it in without thinking,
without paying attention to its weight.*

*She has surrendered to the slow compacting,
the pressing together of decelerated molecules,
the crumpling of fernlike dendrites
and hexagonal plates. She has forgotten
all that was fragile within herself.*

The valley bows down beneath her.

The soil flattens itself as she descends.

She is a monolith, an inexorable ice-river.

*Half asleep, she crawls down from the nunatak,
gathering sandstone and zircon,
marking every summer solstice with a new rib
of rock shards, a record of time
in each moraine.*

*But the stones cry out for her to wake up,
to stop breaking herself against the promontory,
against black rocks and Nothofagus trees.*

*So she shakes herself and reaches up
towards the beeches, towards their footholds
and conversations. The fetus of memory turns
itself inside her uterus. She groans
and waits. Then the water breaks,
rushing out from underneath the glacier.
This water is stronger than ice.*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Over the summer, I traveled to Argentina to visit family and write poetry about the landscape of memory. Originally this meant talking about my family history and the science behind memory. While in Patagonia, I became fascinated with another aspect of this theme—the memories that the landscape itself may hold.

"Before the Glacier Gives Birth" began out of sheer awe at the sight of a glacier. Later, the poem became more of a personal exploration of what it means to be alive, to be strong, to remember. The central metaphor of the poem—the birth—came partly from a private joke with myself about the term "calving," which is when an iceberg breaks off of a glacier. It's also an allusion to a Biblical passage where the natural world is "groaning in labor pains" as it waits for broken things to be made new.

For scientific context: Snow comes in many shapes, including fernlike stellar dendrites and hexagonal plates. Glaciers are formed by accumulated snow that's compressed over time. As they travel, they often carry soil, rock fragments, and huge boulders along with them. A moraine is a bunch of glacial debris. A nunatak is an unexposed ridge or peak surrounded by an ice field or glacier. Nothofagus is the genus of several important species of southern beech trees in the Parque Nacional los Glaciares. Finally, the Perito Moreno Glacier goes through a cycle where one arm of a lake fills with more and more water until it breaks through the glacier and flows into another arm of the Lago Argentino—making water stronger than ice.

INSIDE TUCKER HALL

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