

NEWS FROM THE  
**DEPARTMENT OF GERMAN**  
 AT GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

## Celebrating Heidi Byrnes:

Reflections on a Retiring Professor's Illustrious Career

by Peter C. Pfeiffer



*GU faculty, graduate students, and alumni celebrate with Byrnes as she receives the 2012 ACTFL/Wilga Rivers Award for Leadership in Foreign Language Education*

When I was chair of the German Department a few years ago, I once had a meeting with the dean to review faculty members' annual reports. When we came to Prof. Heidi Byrnes' report, the dean looked up and asked with a smile and a hint of disbelief: "How does she do it?" - I think many of us have asked ourselves the same question.

This summer, when Heidi, as she is known to us, will retire after 36 years as a professor of German, we will find out how *we* will be able to do it without relying on her. She has helped shape the direction of the German program at Georgetown through her own research on language learning and, in particular, on how the understanding of language advanced by Systemic Functional Linguistics can further language learning. More than a hundred research articles and sixteen co-written, edited, and co-edited books speak not just of Heidi's astonishing intellectual productivity but also manifest the enormous impact her work has had both nationally and internationally. Every single professional organization in her field has bestowed honors on

## WILLKOMMEN!

Welcome to the 2015 spring issue of the German Department Newsletter!

This second issue showcases a range of events and people, most importantly, our own Heidi Byrnes – dear colleague, professor, and friend – who will retire this summer! I'd like to take this opportunity to invite all friends of the German Department to a reception in her honor on May 19, 5:00-6:30 pm, Dahlgren Quadrangle (RSVP to [conor.sinclair@georgetown.edu](mailto:conor.sinclair@georgetown.edu) if you plan to attend)

A big thank-you goes to Doria Killian, the newsletter editor. We hope you will enjoy browsing through the spring issue and, as always, we welcome your feedback and suggestions for future issues.

Mit besten Wünschen für das Semesterende und den Sommer,

Friederike Eigler  
 Chair, German Dept.  
[eiglerf@georgetown.edu](mailto:eiglerf@georgetown.edu)

Newsletter editor:

Doria Killian  
*Ph.D. Student, German Department*

We welcome comments and contributions!

Contact:  
[dbk26@georgetown.edu](mailto:dbk26@georgetown.edu)

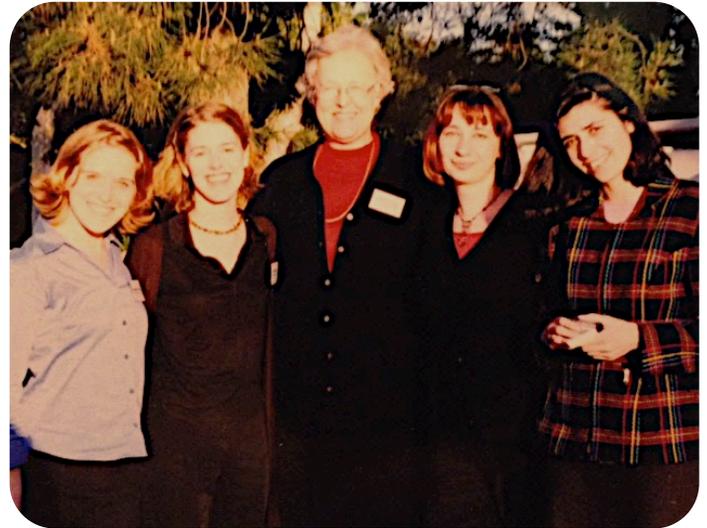
**Celebrating Heidi Byrnes (Continued)**

her for the impact of her academic contributions and professional service. Her international stature is documented by collaborative work done with German, Australian, and Chinese scholars and through Heidi's appointment as Global Partner in the Halliday Centre for Intelligent Applications of Language Studies in Hong Kong.

*More than a hundred research articles and sixteen co-written, edited, and co-edited books speak not just of Heidi's astonishing intellectual productivity but also manifest the enormous impact her work has had both nationally and internationally.*

As editor-in-chief of one of the top publications in the field, *The Modern Language Journal*, she has been formative in moving the research agenda of Second Language Studies forward. Through her literally hundreds of performance reviews of colleagues and departments both nationally and internationally, Heidi has had a direct impact on the profile of the profession. She is known and admired for her dedication to students, both as a teacher and as a mentor. This is also reflected in the many publications which are collaborative efforts with students or colleagues. She was among the first female full professors at Georgetown, providing a role model for following generations of women. Her administrative work helped lay the groundwork for moving Georgetown's Main Campus into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. She was a key member of the group who put together the founding proposal for the Center of

German and European Studies, now known as the BMW Center.



*Byrnes with past graduate students (including Prof. Marianna Ryshina-Pankova, far right) at the UC Conference on Language Learning in March 2002, where she delivered the keynote address*

We will miss the energetic intellectual curiosity that Heidi brought to every conversation. I will miss the door of her office always open, inviting students and colleagues alike to come in. I will miss most of all the good fun and the "schallendes Lachen" that would usually punctuate even serious discussions. Heidi will remain a presence as professor emerita, of course. She will continue for some time as editor-in-chief of the *Modern Language Journal*. She will continue a long-term research project on data collected from "Gabriel," an anonymous student from our program. This should prove to be a groundbreaking longitudinal study of language learning development. So this is not the end, but it is a significant change. Most of all, of course, we all wish Heidi Byrnes well and hope to see as much of her in the Department as she cares to be here. ■

*Byrnes delivers a keynote address at this year's Graduate Student Conference at Georgetown on Multilingualism and Multiculturalism*



## German Department Helps Organize First Interdisciplinary FLL Graduate Student Conference

The first interdisciplinary FLL Graduate Student Conference took place this semester on February 27 and 28, led by GUGD PhD student Christina Butler. Titled “Conceptualizing, Investigating, and Practicing Multilingualism and Multiculturalism,” the conference was a joint effort among four departments, including German, Spanish and Portuguese, Arabic and Islamic Studies, and Linguistics. The conference kicked off on Friday evening with an introduction by Butler, our own Professor Friederike Eigler, and Professor John Norris of the Linguistics Department, who was instrumental in seeing the conference come to fruition. Conference attendees also enjoyed a faculty roundtable on Friday discussing the status of multilingualism and multiculturalism in academia, followed by a keynote address by Professor Anna de Fina of the Italian Department.

On Saturday, the ICC played host to dozens of graduate student presenters, hailing from New York, New Mexico, Illinois, Arizona, the UK, Poland, and Belarus, as well as every university in DC, Maryland, and Virginia. The topics were diverse and engaging, from “Contrastive Rhetorical Writing by Multilingual and Multicultural

Collegiate Students” to “Multilingualism and Nationality in German Writers After Adorno.” An Alumni Roundtable took place around lunchtime, in which graduate alumni discussed the many paths open to students after graduation. The evening was capped with an engrossing keynote by Professor Heidi Byrnes on multicompetence and the challenges facing foreign language teaching today. ■



*Butler (far right) moderates the Faculty Roundtable, which included GUGD/BMW Center Professor Katrin Sieg (third from left).*

## Envisioning the PhD of the Future: Changes in the Graduate Program

As part of the recently concluded faculty review of the graduate program, the Department conducted a **graduate alumni survey**. – *A big thank-you to all who participated!*

The survey results confirmed that alumni perceptions of the graduate program and their career paths are largely in line with the program’s overarching goal, namely to educate scholar-teachers for academic and other professional contexts. Alumni commented favorably on the breadth of academic education (Literature & Culture; SLA); the quality of teacher preparation; the role of collaborative departmental projects; and the significance of “soft skills” for a range of careers. They also made helpful suggestions many of which informed recent program adjustments.

In an effort to further strengthen the graduate

program, the Department implemented a number of changes this spring. In brief, **these changes include**: improving the transition from coursework to dissertation by introducing a seminar on academic writing and by reconceptualizing the Ph.D. qualifying exams; broadening the available dissertation formats; integrating the summer months into the Ph.D. program (with guaranteed summer support) and thus further improving time-to-degree. The overall direction and spirit of these changes also align with the recommendations in the recent **MLA Report on Doctoral Study**.

*For more information, see: Friederike Eigler and Marianna Ryshina-Pankova, “Educating Scholar-Teachers: Reforms of the Graduate Program in German at Georgetown.” ADFL Bulletin: forthcoming 43/3 (2015).*



*Dr. Sieg with his two eldest children in front of the Capitol*

## An Interview with Max-Kade Guest Professor Christian Sieg

*The German Department has been fortunate to host Dr. Christian Sieg (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster) as the Spring 2015 Max-Kade guest professor. Sieg completed his Habilitation entitled "Politische Autorschaft als Feldstrategie zwischen 1945 und 1990: Die 'engagierte' Literatur und die Religion" last year. Earlier this semester, he sat down with Doria Killian to discuss his interest in literature, and his hopes for the semester.*

### **Was lesen Sie im Moment?**

Ich habe gestern Abend Dave Eggers' *The Circle* beendet. Das wurde auch in Deutschland ganz groß besprochen und spielt in Kalifornien. Es geht um Google bzw. Social-Networks. Es ist ein toller Roman. Wir haben heute im Seminar über Döblin gesprochen, über Beschleunigung und Zeitwahrnehmung in der Moderne. Das ist sehr interessant in diesem Zusammenhang, weil Eggers' Buch heute, in der Spätmoderne, spielt und eine ganz andere Facette dieses Zusammenhangs betont. Auch bei Eggers spielt Zeit eine unheimlich große Rolle, weil seine Protagonistin, Mae, ständig am

Arbeiten ist, *nur* eigentlich. Dennoch dreht sich alles um ihre Individualität, die eine sehr eingeschränkte Individualität ist – „smiley“ oder „frowny,“ das ist die Entscheidung, die sie am Tag etwa zweitausend Mal zu fällen hat. Das Buch kann ich sehr empfehlen.

### **Warum ist Fiktion Ihrer Meinung nach wichtig?**

Einerseits ist es so, dass sie uns ermöglicht, bestimmte Dinge durchzuspielen. Bestimmte Konstellationen, die wir als Probleme wahrnehmen, können in der Fiktion viel anschaulicher und damit erstmals erfahrbar werden. Durch Fiktion wird es möglich, etwas zu verstehen, was man vielleicht bisher nur sehr abstrakt begriffen hatte und lediglich wusste, dass es existiert, eben keinen wirklichen Zugang dazu hatte. Eine andere Funktion von Fiktion, die, glaube ich, gerade heute nicht zu vernachlässigen ist, besteht darin, die sprachliche Vielfalt und die Möglichkeiten des Ausdrucks von Erfahrungen, zu bewahren. Da hat die literarische Fiktion auf jeden Fall andere Möglichkeiten als andere Medien, wie der Film oder das Computerspiel.

**Interview with Dr. Christian Sieg  
(Continued)**

***Was hoffen Sie, Ihren Studenten dieses Semester beizubringen?***

Fangen wir mit den Undergrads an. In diesem Seminar wenden wir uns den 50er-Jahren zu, also der Nachkriegsgesellschaft. Und zwar durch die Linse des Radios. Das Radio ist vielleicht *das* Medium in den 50ern Jahren, weil es sofort nach dem Krieg einsatzbereit war und es unglaublich viele Nutzer hatte. Zudem stellte es natürlich für Autoren ein sehr attraktives Betätigungsfeld dar. Was mich daran besonders fasziniert ist nicht nur die historische und kulturelle Konstellation, sondern auch die künstlerischen und medialen Möglichkeiten des Hörspiels als Gattung. Es ist eine ganz faszinierende Gattung, weil man ja im Hörspiel auf Visualität notwendig verzichten muß, also nur etwas hört. Das Auditive, die gesprochene Sprache, wird in den Vordergrund gerückt. Im Radio wird die lebende Sprache, das Gehörte und das Lautbild stärker betont und es ist ganz spannend, Aufnahmen aus diesen Jahrzehnten zu hören, weil man wirklich eine andere Form des Zugangs zum Material hat.

Im Graduate-Seminar beschäftigen wir uns nicht nur mit der Literatur der klassischen Moderne, sondern auch mit den Forschungsperspektiven auf diese Literatur. Diskutieren werden wir verschiedene Definitionen dessen, was als die klassische Moderne bezeichnet wird. Ich lege den Schwerpunkt hier eher auf die Methodenreflexion. Also wie sprechen wir über diese Literatur der klassischen Moderne, in welcher Perspektive nehmen wir sie wahr, und was sehen wir deswegen auch nicht? Ich hoffe, dass die Studierenden gewisse Muster erkennen und mit diesen Mustern dann auch kritisch umgehen können. Möglich sollte es damit auch werden, die Primärtexte anders zu verstehen, neue Perspektiven zu entwerfen.

***Und was hoffen sie, dieses Semester zu lernen?***

Vieles! Ich bin in dieser Hinsicht auf das Graduate-Seminar sehr gespannt. Die klassische Moderne ist ein Thema, mit dem ich mich schon lange auseinandersetze und natürlich hat man auch seine eigene Betriebsblindheit. Durch sehr lebhaft Diskussionen, die wir schon in den ersten Sitzungen hatten, hoffe ich, auf andere Aspekte der Texte

aufmerksam zu werden, die mir bisher entgangen sind. Auch in dem Undergraduate-Seminar gibt es sehr lebhaftes Feedback auf die Texte und teilweise verblüffende Einsichten. In Deutschland gebe ich keinen Sprachunterricht und ein Ziel dieses Undergrad-Seminars ist es, die deutsche Sprache auf einem akademischen Niveau sowohl schriftlich als auch mündlich besser beherrschbar zu machen. In dieser Hinsicht bin ich sehr gespannt darauf, welche Möglichkeiten sich hier durch das Medium Hörspiel ergeben.

***Sie haben drei kleine Kinder, die in die USA mitgereist sind. Was sind die wichtigsten Fragen, die sie sich während dieser Erfahrung stellen sollen?***

Die Kinder sind zwischen zwei und neun Jahre alt. Eine ganz wichtige Erfahrung für die beiden Älteren, die jetzt hier zur Schule gehen, wird sich sicher daraus ergeben, dass sie ohne Kenntnisse der englischen Sprache kommunizieren müssen. Ich hoffe, dass wir sie darin unterstützen können. Schon in den ersten Schultagen haben die Kinder gemerkt, wie wichtig es ist, freundlich aufgenommen zu werden. Ich glaube, dass diese Erfahrung unheimlich produktiv sein kann, weil sie zeigt, wie man Fremdheit überwindet bzw. mit ihr umgeht. Aus dieser Erfahrung resultieren sicherlich viele Fragen. Schon jetzt haben die Kinder ja mitbekommen, dass es hier einen anderen zwischenmenschlichen Umgang gibt als in Deutschland. Gestern sagte mir mein Sohn beispielsweise: „Papa, die sind alle so nett!“ – er erfuhr also, dass es in anderen Ländern andere Kulturen und Verhaltensweisen gibt, dass man sich also auch selbst anders verhalten kann, wobei dieses Andere gar nicht besser oder schlechter sein muss, sondern es Vor- und Nachteile hat. Und mit der ganz Kleinen, na ja – schauen wir mal. ■

## Inga Wildermuth: “I get by with a little help...”



*CPT Inga Wildermuth graduates this spring with a Master's degree. Below, she discusses how her two years in the German Department have impacted her.*

Before arriving at Georgetown, I had spent the preceding eight years on active duty in the Army: training, deploying, and training again—far removed from academia. While my military experience had taught me quite a few life skills that transferred well to this new environment, the transition was harder than I could have imagined. Thankfully, I was not alone.

Our small cohort of students quickly turned into friends. We bonded over long walks to school, long books to read, long papers to write, and even longer conversations. There is no doubt that facing challenges together encourages the development of trust and deep friendship, but I am hesitant to take that friendship for granted. One of the most profound gifts the German Department has given us is the permission to see one another as colleagues instead of competition.

During my first year of coursework, everyone was required to take a class called Literacy and Foreign Language Teaching. One of the key tasks was to observe classes being taught at each level, and write a paper discussing the observation in light of theories reviewed in class. The papers were fairly straightforward, but the demands of working with strangers were significant. That is, until we discovered how much more interesting our ideas were when we talked about them. The very existence of the task established that collaboration was valued in the Department and led to us asking for and giving feedback in more informal ways, simply because we respected each others' voices.

It is possible that I simply came to Georgetown at a unique moment, and by chance found myself among hard-working, brilliant, like-minded individuals that happen to get along, but that would be, I think, a misguided conclusion. Looking back, it is clear that we have been

imitating the model demonstrated to us by our faculty—faculty that will be here long after I and my cohort have moved on.

For these last two semesters, I have had the unique opportunity to serve as a liaison between the graduate students and the German Department faculty. What could have been the simple drudgery of sitting through a monthly meeting has instead been the privilege of peeking behind the curtain to see the way this group of academics works together. The work that this Department has done to revise their undergraduate German curriculum is well documented and widely known, but to watch them interact and listen to one another so intently is impressive on another scale entirely. It is this hard-won ability to collaborate that they have modeled daily, and that we students have taken up, perhaps without even noticing. ■



*Wildermuth with fellow graduate students at a Goethe-Institut event last year*

## German Honors Theses



**Catherine Sandstrom • COL '15, German and Government Majors**

“Von Stille zu Pantomime: Ein Vergleich von Rainer Werner Fassbinders *Ali: Angst Essen Seele Auf* und Yasemin Samderelis *Almanya: Willkommen in Deutschland* im Hinblick auf die Rolle der Kommunikation für den Integrationsprozess”

**Advisor:** Prof. Katrin Sieg

Recent protests by *Pegida*, an anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant organization, have brought increased German and international attention to issues surrounding integration, immigrants, and what it means to be German but the discussion has in fact gone on for much longer. In this cultural discussion, artists have a unique ability to depict as well as shape societal behavior. Using Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Ali: Angst Essen Seele auf* and Yasemin Samdereli's *Almanya: Willkommen in Deutschland*, my thesis examines the position of immigrants in German society, using the ability to communicate as a reference point for cultural change. These two films confine the discussion historically: Fassbinder filming *Ali* in 1973, the same year as Germany's *Anwerbestopp* (end to hiring guest workers), and Samdereli creating *Almanya* in 2010, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of Germany's guest worker program. I am analyzing two scenes from the films in particular, both depicting main characters attempting to purchase groceries. By exploring daily actions, I am able to highlight the artists' opinions on the role of immigrants in German society and the exposure of German behavior opposite immigrants at the time of the film.



**Aletha Smith • COL '15, German and Economics Majors**

“Sprachpurismus im 21. Jahrhundert: Eine Untersuchung der Anglizismendebatte als soziopolitisches Phänomen”

**Advisor:** Prof. Heidi Byrnes

The influence of English on the German language has been one of the most obvious phenomena of post-World-War-II German society. Yet, public interest in the topic has spiked in noticeable ways in the last two decades or so. Specifically, The *Verein Deutsche Sprache*, founded in 1997, has taken over the public debate with a strongly critical voice against the wide-spread use of Anglicisms in German. In my thesis, I evaluate and compare the underlying social arguments and linguistic assumptions in this debate from different perspectives, with a focus on the *Verein Deutsche Sprache* and similar groups as contrasted with academic linguistic researchers. My findings are the following: While the groups attack each other using narrow linguistic arguments about words, language, and language change in regards to the merits or perceived dangers of the use of Anglicisms, the underlying critique from the *VDS* appropriates the phenomenon as a particularly plausible and convenient site for a wider sociopolitical critique against the considerable Anglo-American cultural influence in post-war Germany.

## Graduating German Majors Look Back On Their Time in the German Department



**Hillary Heer**  
COL '15

Growing up with a German dad gave me considerable exposure to the German language and culture, but it wasn't until I found myself at Georgetown that I realized how transferable these skills were to other aspects of my life. After taking Professor Pfeiffer's German Cinema class, I was taught to look for the deeper meaning to the movies we were watching and not to simply "consume" them. Professor Weigert's German Business class showed me how differently countries conduct business and how to successfully navigate these conflicting cultural norms. My semester in Berlin

introduced me to different personalities and I will forever remember how I was able to celebrate Germany's 2014 World Cup win. All these experiences have increased my love for Germany and equipped me with skills that I would never have been able to learn in any other setting.



**John Haviland**  
COL '15

The desire to learn a foreign language started when I was very young; as a kid, I was always jealous of my friends who could speak foreign languages. This led me to German when I was in sixth grade. I instantly took to the language; I loved the way it sounded, the way it worked, and after spending a year abroad in Austria before Georgetown, I knew I wanted to continue to study the language and its numerous cultures. German at Georgetown has been a polycentric experience. I have been fortunate to have the chance to read classic German texts from centuries ago and become familiar with the

European Union and German business and theater history. The department has really shown an interest in teaching everything relating to the language, and I appreciate the diversity of topics and issues one is able to explore with a German education at Georgetown.

## GRADUATING STUDENTS OF GERMAN *Spring 2015*



### *Graduating German Majors*

John Haviland

Hillary Heer

Michelle Kerwick

Catherine Sandstrom

Aletha Smith

Honore Stainken

### *Graduating Master's Students*

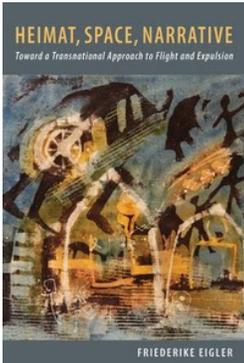
Inga Wildermuth

Simone Willnath

Herzliche Glückwünsche  
und alles, alles Gute für  
die Zukunft!

## Recent Publications

### Faculty Book Publications



**Heimat, Space, Narrative: Toward a Transnational Approach to Flight and Expulsion**

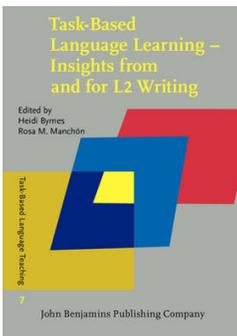
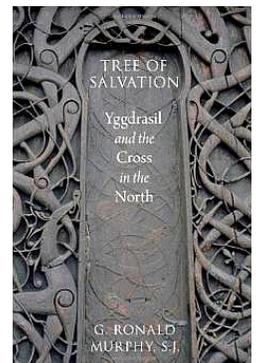
Friederike Eigler  
Camden House, 2014

In her book, Eigler engages with important currents in scholarship – on "Heimat," the much-debated German concept of "homeland"; on the spatial turn in literary studies; and on German-Polish relations – arguing for a transnational approach to the legacies of flight and expulsion and for a spatial approach to Heimat.

**Tree of Salvation: Yggdrasil and the Cross in the North**

G. Ronald Murphy, S.J.  
Oxford Press, 2013

Murphy's book features an examination of the influence of Germanic myth's great tree, Yggdrasil, in the design of the stave churches of Norway, the Dream of the Rude, Bornholm's round churches, and other religious artifacts. The book ends with the Christmas tree.



**Task-based L2 Language Learning: Insights from and for L2 Writing**

Edited by Heidi Byrnes and Rosa M. Manchón  
John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014

The book seeks to enlarge the theoretical scope, research agenda, and practices associated with TBLT in a two-way dynamic, by exploring how insights from writing might reconfigure our understanding of tasks and, in turn, how work associated with TBLT might benefit the learning and teaching of writing.

### Graduate Student Publications

**Reflecting on the Present Burdened by the Past: German-Polish Relations in Robert Thalheim's Film *Am Ende kommen Touristen* (2007)**

Meghan O'Dea

Appeared in: *German Politics & Society*, Volume 31, Number 4, Winter 2013

**A Third Generation Perspective on German-Polish Flight and Expulsion: Discursive and Spatial Practices in Sabrina Janesch's novel *Katzenberge* (2010)**

Claudia Winkler

Appeared in: *German Politics & Society*, Volume 31, Number 4, Winter 2013

**Kübra Gümüşay's Blog *ein fremdwoerterbuch*: Re-Presenting the "Silent Muslima" in the Public Sphere**

Claudia Winkler

Appeared in: *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture*, Volume 20, 2013

## UPCOMING EVENTS

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### Reception for Graduating Seniors and Graduate Students

*May 15, 2015*  
*4-6pm | ICC 462*

Please join us in honoring  
the students of German  
who are graduating this  
spring.



### Reception in Honor of Heidi Byrnes, George M. Roth Distinguished Professor of German

*May 19, 2015*  
*5-6:30pm | Dahlgren Quad*

RSVP to  
[conor.sinclair@georgetown.edu](mailto:conor.sinclair@georgetown.edu)

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