

Negative Expressions in Thomas Deloney's English¹

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0.1. The scope of the present article on the negative expressions in the prose works of Thomas Deloney is restricted to the three negative particles *never*, *not*, and *no* combined with either nouns or the pronoun *one*. First, our concern with the negatives *never* and *not* is their combination with a singular noun preceded by an indefinite article. These examples express a negative idea of total exclusion. Second, our concern with the negative *no* is its combination with any noun—a countable noun, whether singular or plural, or an uncountable noun. With regard to the negative meaning of *no* two main divisions are to be noted. In some examples, the nouns are not affected negatively. In these examples the sentences as a whole express total exclusion or entire absence. On the other hand, some nouns with *no* are affected negatively.

0.2. Deloney's prose works with abbreviated titles are as follows:

<i>The pleasant Historie of Iacke of Newberie</i> (c1597)	[JN]
<i>The Gentle Craft</i> (c1597)	[IGC]
<i>The Gentle Craft. The second Part</i> (c1600)	[2GC]
<i>Thomas of Reading</i> (? c1600)	[TR]
<i>A declaration made by the Archbishop of Collen</i> (1583) (translation from Latin)	[DA]

NEGATIVES WITH (PRO) NOUNS

Never a with Noun or Pronoun

1.1. The negative unit *never a*+(pro)noun denotes non-existence or total

exclusion of the thing or person called by that name. When the negative unit means non-existence, it is typically an object of a verb such as *have*, *carry*, *bear*, etc.

JN 63.17-18. Ifaith if I doe it not in the nicke, giue mee *neuer a penny*[.]

IGC 75.28-29. a poore man that *hath neuer a penney* ready towards the payment of his rent.

IGC 110.23-24. a bad nut, which, being opened, *hath neuer a kernell*[.]

1.2. Often prepositional phrases denoting locality are added to the negative unit.² In the first example 'thou hast' is understood.

JN 59.35-36. What, *neuer a shooe to thy foote*, hose to thy legge, band to thy necke, nor cap to thy head ?

IGC 87.41-88.2. Neuer was Saint Hugh so bare ... to carry *neuer a whit* of skin upon his bones ; / Nor thou neuer so bare ... to beare *neuer a penny* in thy purse.

2GC 146.30. I *haue neuer a Last* in my shop long enough for thy foot[.]

JN 5.24-25. he *hath* proper land, a faire house well furnished, and *neuer a child* in the world.

1.3. Exclusion includes the whole number of persons when the singular noun of the negative unit refers to one of the persons belonging to some place as in the following example, or refers to one of the persons among the collective whole as in the section below (1.4.).

2GC 151.5-7. I would not come to learne of *neuer a woman* in Westminster how to deale in such affaires[.]

1.4. In some examples *never a* + (pro)noun is accompanied by *of them all*. In the first of the examples below "them all" refers to indefinite persons generally suggested by the preceding "any other whatsoever"; in "never a + noun + of them all" reference of "them all" is suggested by the preceding singular noun.³

JN 55.4-7. as old and withred as I am my selfe, I could become a hood well enough, and behaue my selfe as well in such attyre, as any other whatsoever, and I would not learne of *neuer a one of them all*[.]

JN 55.31-33. I would order the matter so, that you should set euey thing about you in such sort, as *neuer a Gentlewoman of them all* should staine you.

2GC 190.12-14. well I meane to be better entertained ere I goe, for there is *neuer a Flemming of them all* shall out face me, by the morrow Masse I sweare.

1.5. In some examples, expressions of comparison (e.g. *more ... than*), or exception (e.g. *but ...*) are added to *never a* + (pro)noun. The modified meaning of the construction is the contrast of negation and affirmation. Exception to the negation is expressed after *than* or *but*, but sometimes it is to be supplied from the contexts.

In the following examples, the noun or pronoun with *never* denotes a person. For the nouns with *no* denoting either persons or things, see 3.5.

2GC 197.12-13. Faire Widdow ... *neuer a one* in the world would haue vrged me to be friends with him *but your selfe*[.]

2GC 171.3-4. I warrant you there is *neuer a Knight* in this countrey *that goes with so great a train*.

2GC 180.32-34. I tell you what, there is *neuer a shoemaker* in England *that kept so many men as I did* at that time.

JN 4.39-40. shee had *neuer a Prentise* *that yeilded her more obedience than he did, or was more dutifull*[.]

2GC 190.34-36. Ile lay my life, had I not brought thee with me, *neuer a man* should haue *had more welcome then I*[.]

JN 54.27-29. thanks be to God, there is *neuer a Gentleman* in all Barkshire *that is better able to beare it*.

2GC 153.26-28. Good Richard think yourselfe welcome, for in troth I haue *neuer a friend* in the world *that can be better welcome*[.]

2GC 204.3-8. And is it true (quoth the Greene king) doth want of money part good company, or is my countenance chaunged, that they do not know me? I haue seene the day when *neuer a knaue* of them all, *but* would haue

made much of my dog for my sake, and haue giuen me twenty salutations on a Sunday morning, for one poore pint of Muskadine[.]

1.6. By way of comparison, the use of *never* accompanied by a countable noun without an indefinite article may not be out of place here. In fact, indefinite articles are dispensable in sentences containing *never* as a frequency adverb:⁴

2GC 170. 7-11. in all that space had not his wife any child: Wherefore Robin would often say, that either his Master was no perfect man, or else his Mistresse was in her infancy nourished with the milk of a Mule, which bred such barrenesse in her; for till her dying day she *neuer* had *child*.

2GC 180. 39-42. That is pretty well (quoth Tom) but what say you to him that for halfe a yeere together, kept waiting on him aboute a hundred men that *neuer* did him *stitch* of work? this was a shoemaker of some account[.]

TR 230. 21-23. Well (quoth he) I will let them alone, to see a little more of their knauery. *Neuer* did *Cat* watch *Mouse* so narrowly, as I will watch them[.]

TR 239. 35-38. Away dissembler (qd. she) how can I beleue thee? thou hast said to me as much a hundred times, and deceiued me, it is thy churlishnesse that hath killed my heart, *neuer* was *woman* matcht to so vnkind a man.

2GC 185. 16-20. And yet perhaps (quoth Harry) none so good a Master as his was. / *Neuer* did *man* speake *truer word*, said the Knight, for he was to me good kind and liberall, but howsoeuer he hath banisht me his house, yet shall my heart serue him while I liue[.]

In the following example, however, the indefinite article is expressed:

TR 253. 43-45. With reuerence I may speake it (said the Physitian) to tell the truth, and auoid flattery, I *neuer* saw a *more misshapen nose* so foule to sight.

Not one ; Not a [one] with Noun

2.1. In most of Deloney's examples below, *not* and the noun with an indefinite article are either preceded by a finite verb or separated by a non-finite verb. This may suggest that the negative is more closely tied with the verb, so that the combination between the negative and the noun may be called in question. But, nevertheless, besides the meaning of sentence negation another facet of the negative meaning is to be noted in these examples. Here we have the negative focus on the singular noun by which is expressed a negative idea of total exclusion of even a single specimen or person specified by the noun. This stands in contrast to a simple sentence negation, such as :

JN 10.23-24. this is *not a place* to conclude of such matters[.]

Here only this particular place is being negated. It is not an example of total exclusion, and therefore, such examples have been omitted from the present section (2.1(1)-(3)).

In Deloney the negative units *not one*, *not a + noun*, and *not one + noun* are used for referring to any of the following :

- (1) Non-existence, or exhaustion of either a thing or a person :

JN 38.10-13. Diuers of the Noble-men did in like sort entertaine some of those children into their seruices, so that (in the end) *not one* was left to picke wooll, but were all so prouided for, that their Parents neuer needed to care for them[.]

IGC 132.9-10. when the shot came to be paid, each one drew out his money but I *had not one peny* in my purse[.]

TR 248. 44-45. notwithstanding, there *was not one man* would stirre to be the Catchpoles aide.

- (2) Non-utterance :

JN 13.35-36. At this the Widow laught heartily, and the men were striken

into such a dumpe, that they *had not a word to say*.

2GC 158.7-9. but in the meane space looke you play mum-budget, and *speake not a word* of this matter to any creature.

2GC 157.25-26. I *would not utter one word* more, no *not halfe a word, nor one sillable*.

- (3) The minimum unit of measurement, with a singular noun as adverbial accusative of measure :

2GC 171.9-10. whensoever you try him, Ile warrant you shall finde he *will not flie a foot*.

IGC 81.18-19. like a prisoner fast fettered in irons, he *could not stir a foot* for his life[.]

JN 4.9-10. goe along with vs, thou *shalt not stay a iot*.

2GC 179.9-13. it will be hard for such as neuer were brought vp to the bodily labour to frame their fine fingers to any course faculty. / *Not a whit* (quoth Harry) for labour by custome becommeth easie.

- (4) Insignificance, with a singular noun as adverbial accusative denoting small value :

2GC 157.41. though my Master *do not care a straw* for her, yet

2.2. The *OED*'s definition of *never a* is 'not a, no ... at all' (*never, adv.* 3). Yet when *never a* [etc.] and *not a* [etc.] are compared on the basis of Deloney's examples, the usages are not always the same between the two. First, in Deloney both negatives express the idea of non-acceptance of even a single item or person. Second, in Deloney the negative *never a* [etc.] is sometimes followed by phrases either denoting or implying the partitive sense such as "of them all," "in the world," "in all Barkshire," etc., whereas such phrases do not follow *not a* [etc.]. When accompanied by a partitive phrase, the negative unit *never a* [etc.] expresses exclusion of everything or everybody one by one to the last in the group expressed by the partitive expression. To sum up, in Deloney *never a* [etc.] is either with or without a partitive phrase, whereas *not a* [etc.] is never followed

by a partitive phrase.

Incidentally, the distinction in Deloney's usages may not be carried too far ; the *OED* (not, 7.) quotes "...not a hair of their heads should be touched," where *not a hair* is followed by a prepositional phrase of partitive sense, though the quotation is not from Elizabethan English.

No with Singular & Plural Nouns

3.1. *No* is combined with countable nouns either in the singular or in the plural, or with mass nouns. This neutrality as to the choice of noun forms may imply that the emphasis of the negative meaning of *no* is not on negating each separate thing or person individually but the thing or the person common to the whole group or class. Thus the total exclusion or entire absence by *no* is, as it were, the result of negation without discrimination.

3.2. In some combinations, like the examples with *never a* [etc.] and *not a* [etc.], the negative *no* is used for sentence negation without affecting the meaning of the noun negatively ; in some combinations, however, the negative affects the meaning of the noun combined. In sentence negation *man* in 'no man' denotes 'man' without being affected by the negative. In some other examples, however, 'no man' means quite other than a man.

3.3. *No* with nouns can be used for generic statements. The negative idea of total exclusion includes either the indefinite members in general or the whole species.

JN 3.31-33. *No man* could entice him from his businesse all the weeke, by all the intreaty they could vse :

TR 219.27-28. Now *no man* regards mee, *no man* cares for me, and albeit in secret they might beare mee good will, yet who dares shew it ?

TR 217.22-27. if a woman keepe her house, then you will say shee is melancholy, if shee walke abroad, then you call her a gadder ; a Puritane, if shee be precise : and a wanton, if she be pleasant : so *there is no woman in the world* that knowes how to please you : that we thinke our selues accurst to be married wiues, liuing with so many woes.

IGC 88.19-21. if the powder thereof be mingled with the runnet ... *no mouse*

dares touch it[.]

3.4. *No* with nouns can be used to refer to some limited members. For instance, in the first example that follows 'man' does not refer to people in general but those sitting at table :

JN 13.10-14. at length the old woman (in a merry vaine) spake thus vnto the company : I haue had much good meate among you, but as for the drinke I can nothing commend it. / Alas, good Gossip (quoth the Widow) I perceiue *no man* hath drunke to thee yet.

IGC 123.41-45. Let it be granted, that I will not giue my Table whereon I breake my fast for a thousand pounds, that is no consequence to proue it is worth so much, my fancy to the thing is all : for doubtlesse *no man here* would giue me a thousand shillings for it when they see it.

3.5. In some instances, exception to the negation is added, or is implicitly understood. In the first example, "no (other) man in the world (than he)" can be contextually supplied. Expressions of comparison are added in some examples, as in the examples of *never a* [etc.]. The nouns with the negative *no* are either persons or things. (cf. 1.5.)

TR 254.12-15. The Knight beholding it with great wonder, said, he thought that *no man in the world* had bin troubled with such abundance of corrupt bloud in his whole bodie, as lay in his mis-shapen nose[.]

JN 14.15-18. and hope not after mee, for I am already promised. / Now Tanner, you may take your place with the Taylor (quoth the Parson) : for indeede the Widow is for *no man but* my selfe.

JN 3.15-17. hee was called of old and yongue lacke of Newberie : a man so generally well knowne in all his cuntry for his good fellowship, that he could goe in *no place but* he found acquaintance[.]

IGC 95.28-31. Thou hast so well pleased me in making of these shooes, that I cannot but reward thee in some good sort ; therefore Shoomaker, take this, and from henceforth let *no man* make my shooes *but* thy self.

JN 36.39-41. [His Majesty] both admired, and commended him, saying

further, that *no Trade* in all the Land was *so much to bee cherished and maintained as this*, which (quoth hee) may well be called, The life of the poore.

TR 218.42-44. Now sir, Cutbert of Kendall was of another minde, for *no meat* pleased him *so well as mutton*, such as was laced in a red petticoate.

TR 243.14-16. The princely pleasures that in Worcester were shown the King, were many and maruelous, and *in no place* had his Maiesty receiued *more delight then here*[.]

DA 287.42-43. the auncient Christians. Whiche dyd knowe *no greater grieffe then* the renouncing of pietie[.]

3.6. *NO* with nouns can be used to refer to non-existence or absence of things material or immaterial, persons, consciousness, etc.:

IGC 77.40-41. where it is supposed *no women do liue*[.]

TR 213.14-18. And it was verily thought, that the one halfe of the people in the land liued in those daies therby, and in such good sort, that in the Common-wealth *there were few or no beggers at all*[.]

IGC 92.17-19. What, *haue you no friends or acquaintance* in these parts *to go to* (said the Shoomakers) by whose means you might get preferment?

TR 263.20-21. it is said that Galino *breeds no Serpents*, nor doth Englands forrests nourish Beares or Lyons[.]

JN 25.29-30. shepheards and ploughmen who were not able to lead an Army, *hauing no skill* in martiall affaires.

2GC 144.27-31. What doe you thinke by Richard of the Rose, the wakeful cock of Westminster? / Oh, he (quoth Meg) is that the man? *there is no reason* I should thinke amisse of him that euery man commends: neuerthelesse, he is no body in respect of riches[.]

TR 254.4-6. All this we will quickly remedy, said the Phisitian, *haue no doubt*: and with that, he very orderly prickt him in the nose, but not in any veine whereby he might bleed[.]

TR 269.36-38. The vnmistrusting man *thinking no euill*, went to the doore where presently an Officer arrested him at his mans suite.

TR 258.6-7. No (said he) although I am heauy, I *haue no mind* to go to bed

at all.

JN 47.31-32. When Master Bennedicke saw shee *made no reckoning of* his sorrowes, at length hee blabored out this broken English[.]

3.7. Absence is turned into abundance when a verb denoting scarcity takes a *no*-phrase as object :⁵

JN 22.19-20. who being a man so well beloued, *wanted no company*, and those of the best sort[.]

3.8. The combinations with nouns *no doubt* and *no way*, and the prepositional phrase *by no means* are used adverbially :

IGC 92.35-36. if you will be iust and true, and serue God, *no doubt* you may do well enough. Come in, my lads, come in.

JN 43.35-37. When I had well thought hereon, I found that nothing was more needefull herein, than a faithfull vnity among our selues. This sore of necessity can *no way* be cured but by concord[.]

JN 39.19-20. the smell being somewhat strong, Will could *by no meanes* abide it[.]

3.9. By extension of the use of non-existence or absence we have the construction *there is no* + noun used to denote the situation with no alternative.⁶ The nouns used in Deloney are *excuse*, *nay*, *remedy*, and *shift*.

DA 277.30-35. that all Princes and Magistrates of this world, might open their gates to the king of glory, that thereby we may learne to knowe our duty in the charge to vs committed, knowing *there is no excuse* for vs, at the last day, when Christ shall come in iudgement : what time we must render account of the charge and office wherein he hath placed vs.

JN 10.28-30. The Taylor was scant out of sight, when she met with the Tanner : who albeit he was aged, yet lustily hee saluted her, and to the wine she must, *there was no nay*.

IGC 116.14-17. you are strangers to my table, and to strangers common

courtesie doth teach vs to shew the greatest fauour, and therefore let me rule you in mine house, and you shall rule me in yours. / When Simon found *there was no remedy*, they sat them down[.]

2GC 174. 35-41. sblood they be as vnluckie to be met, as a Hare on a iorney, or a sergeant on a Sunday morning, for euer one mischiefe or other followes it, Captaine Strangwidge (quoth he) *there is no other shift but* to seek their friendship, otherwise we are in danger euery houre to be maimed, therefore, to keep our lims sound against we go to Sea, tis best to finde meanes to quiet this grudge.

TR 270.1-4. But in vaine was her paines spent. Then he sent to his kinsfolkes, and they denied him: to his brother, and he would not come at him, so that *there was no shift, but* to prison he must[.]

In the following example *no* is followed by a gerund with *there is* understood:

2GC 183. 30-34. at what time the Priest cried out, hold, hold, for Gods sake, let me rise and I will bury him. / Nay soft (quoth the Knight) thou art not like to rise, *no rising* heere before the generall resurrection, that thou shalt rise to iudgement.

3.10. In some instances, verbs and noun objects with *no* express refusal of any of the thing or person in question:

TR 215. 37-38. Kings and Louers *can brooke no partners*[.]

2GC 196. 34. I *care for no such fauour* (said he).

JN 9. 32-33. for henceforth I *will haue no other locke but a latch*, till I am married.

IGC 103. 42-43. be not abashed to declare thy mind, for I swear, if I may procure thee right, thou shalt *put vp no wrong*.

3.11. *No* with nouns can be used to refer to the absence of the attributes, or qualities described by the nouns, thus implying the opposite qualities, 'quite other than (a).' In these examples the focus of negative value is more on the noun combined with *no* than on negating the relation between the subject and the

predicate.

(1) *No* with predicative nouns :

2GC 183. 40. for they *are* knaues and *no Christians* that will not doe it.

JN 57. 25-26. I *am no gyrl*e I would you should well know, *to bee taught what company I should keepe*[.]

TR 233. 38-41. good husband, if thou louest me, deny not this simple request.

You know I *am no common gadder*, nor haue oft troubled you with trauell.

God knowes, this may be the last thing that euer I shall request at your hands.

JN 53. 23-25. Walke, walk, Barkeshire maides *will be no Italians strumpets*, nor the wiues of Newbery their bauds.

JN 5. 32-34. Beleeue me dame (quoth Iack) I perceiue store *is no sore*, & proffered ware is worse by ten in the hundred than that which is sought[.]

(2) So idiomatic (*it is no marvel ; it is no matter ; etc. :*

JN 27. 34-36. Indeed *it is no maruell* he stands so well prepared, considering what a terrible tyrant he hath to deale withall.

2GC 161. 19-21. *no maruell* if they stayed out till midnight about such matters, seeing we haue sought it this seuen yeares and could neuer find it[.]

JN 62. 6-9. Your Master (quoth shee) ? I knew your Master a boy, when he was called Iacke of Newberie, I Iacke, I knew him calld plaine Iacke : and your Mistresse, now shee is rich, and I am poore, but *its no matter*, I knew her a draggle tayle girle, marke yee ?

(3) *No* modifying attributive adjectives :

JN 55. 38-42. Gossip, you are but a yongue woman, and one that hath had *no great* experience of the World, in my opinion you are something too lauish in expences : pardon mee good Gossip, I speake but for good will ; and because I loue you, I am the more bold to admonish you[.]

2GC 146. 36-39. Well Meg (quoth he) be contented, consider you are a woman of *no ordinary* making, but as in height thou ouerlookest all, so in the

length of thy foot thou surpassest all ; therefore I must haue a paire of Lasts made for the nonce, and that shall be done out of hand.

2GC 170. 8-11. Wherefore Robin would often say, that either his Master was *no perfect* man, or else his Mistresse was in her infancy nourished with the milk of a Mule, which bred such barrennesse in her ; for till her dying day she neuer had child.

2GC 196. 11-15. see, see, how neatly he goes through his work, how handsomely he handles euerything : and surely well may I suppose that he which is so faithfull a seruant, would certainly proue a kind husband, for this hath beene *no slender* triall of his constant heart.

- (4) With *no little* and *no small* the scope of negation is completely on the adjectives :⁷

2GC 161. 11-12. at what time they gaue one another such priuie flouts, that the watchmen tooke *no little* delight to heare it[.]

1GC 117. 39-40. by meanes of which fauour Iohn thought himselfe at that time to be a man of *no small* reputation.

- (5) Some prepositional phrases expressing the ineffectual result :

DA 279. 32-33. without regard therof, we vtterly at this present, and for the time to come, declare them *of no effect*.

TR 246. 10-11. I am sory goodman Hodgekings, that the great priuiledge which our King gaue to this towne, *comes to no greater purpose*[.]

JN 45. 25-26. they gave their daily attendance at the Cardinalls house : but *spent* many dayes *to no purpose*[.]

TR 226. 41-44. whereupon it came to passe, that the Clothiers and diuers others receiuing great summes of money, do take among it much crackt money, it *serued* them *to no vse*, because it would not goe currant[.]

3.12. In elliptic phrase consisting of two nouns with *no*.

The first group expresses the negative condition for the negative result of the second.

2GC 182. 23-24. and now good Mistris I will not : *no penny, no Pater Noster,*
that is flat[.]

NOTES

- 1 My thanks are due to Dr. Dennis Bergmann, who has kindly read my draft and given me valuable suggestions and advice.
- 2 To the note *IH4* II. i. 28 (*hast thou never an eye in thy head?*) (Arden Shak. (1914)) Cowl-Morgan states that it is a "common expression" and quotes N. Breton, *Crossing of Proverbs*, 1616 "Hee that hath his eyes in his head will looke about him,"; and Nashe, *Pierce Penilesse* (Mckerrow, i.208): "never an eye in your head to lead you over the threshold." No example is in Deloney. The following is an analogous example.

JN 12. 46-47. with that shee brought in an old woman with *scant euer a good tooth in her head*[.]

- 3 Examples accompanied by "of them all" are not in the *OED* (never, *adv.* 3. *never a*; 3b. *never a one*). An example of the same collocation *never a one of them all* is in Jespersen, *Modern Eng. Gr.*, II. 10.333: Robinson's translation of More's *Utopia*. *neuer a one of them all* hath ... lesse then XX. myles of grounde.
- 4 Deloney's examples may show that Poutsma's statement that '[t]he omission of the article seems to give an emotional colouring to these utterances' is a half-truth and cannot be borne out. (*Gram. of Late Mod. Eng.*, II, IA, § 68.) Dahl thinks that '[n]o article occurs in sentences containing 'euer' and 'neuer', in 'statements of a general character.' (*Linguistic Studies*, pp. 152-53.) The fifth and the last example in Deloney seems to be an idiom in referring to the truth of utterance. Similar examples are:

Jonson *Poetaster* I. ii. 46. [Tucca]: the tongue of the Oracle neuer twangd truer.

Shakespeare *Troilus* IV. iv. 21. [Pandarus]: There was never a truer rhyme.

Shakespeare *Coriolanus* IV. v. 114-15. [Aufidius]: never man Sigh'd truer breath[.]

An example from current English in *POD*⁵ (word): a truer word was never spoken.

- 5 With this may be compared examples of *no* with nouns denoting scarcity:
JN 22. 22-24. home they came in order as before, and to dinner they went, where was *no want of good cheare, no lacke of melody* :
- 6 The *OED* may well have referred to this usage under 'no', though it refers to the construction *there is no* followed by a gerund (no *a.* 4). With regard to the nouns *remedy* and *shift* the *OED* refers to *there is no remedy* (*remedy sb.* 2b), and to the phrase (*to have*) *no other shift* (*shift sb.* 3b), but not to the construction *there is no (other) shift (but)*.
- 7 Jespersen states that *no* must be considered a tertiary in some combinations. One of the examples he quotes is:

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To the no small delectation of a little crowd. (*Essentials*, 8.74.)

His interpretation seems to be based on the negative focus completely on the adjective *small*. If the *no* is tertiary without any collocational tie with the noun, the negative and the adjective can be isolated from the noun. However, the predicative use of *no small* would be difficult to attest.

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