

BOOK REVIEWS

First Founders: American Puritans and Puritanism in an Atlantic World. Francis J. Bremer. Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2012. 291 pages. \$27.95 (hardcover).

Francis Bremer's *First Founders* serves as a trenchant reminder of the religious and political diversity of New England Puritans. Bremer traces the lives of many prominent Puritans in early Massachusetts. In its totality, his collection of biographical sketches offers students and the public a themed portrait of Puritanism that confronts and complicates themes in Massachusetts historiography. Bremer's book is not intended for scholars of early America, but is a comprehensive study of Puritanism in seventeenth-century Massachusetts. New England Puritans were settlers, merchants, tradesmen, politicians, and clerics who espoused different opinions about the organization of government and religion in early Massachusetts. Although Puritans remained united in their fervency of faith, they were not guided by a rigid religious hierarchy. Instead, they embraced the autonomy of congregationalism. Congregations were small communities centered on the Puritan meetinghouse and closely governed by full church members and their elected clerics. Bremer argues that this autonomy fostered ideological differences between Puritans and allowed a wide range of religious ideas to circulate throughout Massachusetts. As a result, Puritans never could achieve uniformity and were besieged by religious controversies. Indeed, only the Puritans' search for and preservation of the godly life united them.

Relations among Puritan leaders represented larger religious conflicts in Massachusetts society. Bremer uses differences between contemporaries such as John Winthrop and Thomas Dudley to reveal unique disparities among New England Puritans. While Winthrop, the most affluent Puritan in seventeenth-century Massachusetts, tolerated slight differences in religious thought, Dudley was a strict Puritan who cherished orthodoxy. Both Winthrop and Dudley served as governor of Massachusetts and implemented laws that reflected their religious differences. Dudley proved a driving force



behind the trial and subsequent excommunication of Roger Williams, a man who Winthrop held in high esteem. Bremer argues that Winthrop would have preferred to allow Williams to practice his faith with restraint. Winthrop later informed Williams of Dudley's intention to banish him to England, which allowed Williams to flee from Massachusetts. Bremer's analysis of the relationship between Winthrop and Dudley reveals the range of thought that existed in Puritan New England and exemplifies Puritans' constant struggle to define and enact a stable religious orthodoxy.

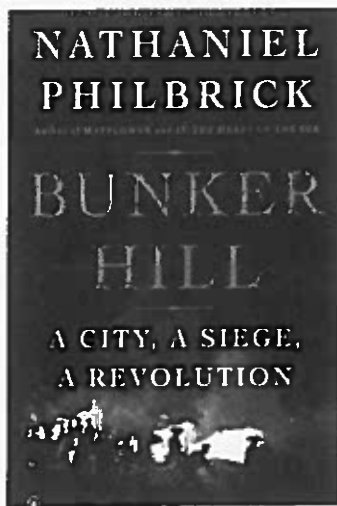
Bremer confronts a more recent development in early New England scholarship: Puritan involvement in an Atlantic World. New England Puritans remained linked to their English counterparts through the exchange of goods, ideas, and people. Many prominent New England Puritans such as John Davenport and Hugh Peter held influential religious posts in Europe. Others, including merchants Robert Keayne and Stephen Winthrop, participated in the extensive trans-Atlantic trade between Europe, the Caribbean, and New England. Bremer argues that Massachusetts' Puritans were more than religious zealots who inhabited the shores of Massachusetts Bay; intellectually and economically savvy, they contributed to the larger religious and political conversation in Europe. English Puritans vying for political control during the English Civil War admired their New England brethren and sought guidance from them in constructing a godly Puritan society. As a result, many New England Puritans were leaders in Parliament's New Model Army and the Commonwealth Protectorate. John Winthrop's son, Stephen, along with other Puritans migrated back to England to participate in Oliver Cromwell's Biblical Commonwealth. Stephen Winthrop, in particular, became an avid participant in the English Protectorate. Guided by principles he learned while in Massachusetts, Winthrop served as a representative in the Second Protectorate Parliament. England's brief struggle for a Puritan godly kingdom caused an exchange between the inhabitants of the Old and New World.

Bremer also explores the role of women within early Massachusetts. The Puritan government accused Anne Hutchinson and Mary Dyer of heresy and punished them, but Bremer argues that they proved exceptions among Puritan women. The majority of Puritan women were deeply spiritual housewives who held significant influence within their congregations. Puritan women assumed responsibility for their children's religious and educational rearing. Bremer presents Anne Bradstreet as a prime example for a Puritan woman concerned with her children's development. Despite her own spiritual wanderings, Bradstreet instilled a firm Puritan ethic within her offspring. Although Bremer's description of Puritan female life is brief,

he renders Puritan women as more sophisticated and sexual creatures than the public would suppose. Bremer emphasized Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *Good Wives* when discussing Puritan sexuality. Puritan women were not the prudish figures so often conjured in popular lore. Instead, women were expected to routinely engage their husbands sexually. Bremer argues that Puritans viewed sex as an essential component to the married life. Procreation was not the only consequence of Puritan sexuality; rather, Puritans regarded sexual relations to form a spiritual bond that strengthened ties of matrimony.

Francis Bremer's *First Founders* is a valuable survey that could be used for an undergraduate survey course or for readers searching for a brief overview of early New England. Overall, Bremer has produced a praiseworthy synthesis of existing scholarship. Many studies of early New England fill the shelves of American libraries; this work will assist newcomers to the field in navigating this vast historiography.

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Bunker Hill: A City, A Siege, A Revolution. Nathaniel Philbrick. New York: Viking, 2013. 398 + xvii pages. \$32.95 (hardcover).

The very name Bunker Hill is deeply embedded in American folklore, and most people probably feel that they know as much about it as they need to, so it requires courage for even a well-known historian to tackle this subject. In what is assuredly his most ambitious effort to date, Nathaniel Philbrick rises to this challenge with a fresh, comprehensive and readable summary.

This book falls clearly within the category of popular history, in that it is presented as a continuous narrative, emphasizes personalities, relies largely on secondary sources, and avoids academic jargon and constructs. It is, however, a fine example of the genre: fluid, balanced, and solidly documented. Philbrick has made full and judicious use of recent scholarship, including Samuel Forman's biography of Joseph Warren, which was being prepared at the same time.

As the subtitle indicates, Philbrick covers much more than the actual battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775. In fact, the battle and the fortifying that preceded it comprise only about 15 percent of the book. Philbrick traces Massachusetts autonomy as a persistent theme from the earliest settlement through the successive crises that preceded actual warfare, and concludes with the British evacuation of Boston on March 17, 1776. He feels that by then most American leaders were ready for independence, even though they might still profess formal loyalty to a king who held no sympathy for them. This is a perpetually arguable point, and the debate will continue beyond this book.

Philbrick delights in bringing out obscure but illuminating details, such as the impact the rivalry between Boston and Nantucket had on the famous "Tea Party." As a Nantucket resident, he is attuned to this historical relationship. The reader will come away with a close acquaintance with the contours of Boston, both physical and social. Accompanied by informative maps (inexplicably lacking in too many other histories), Philbrick depicts Boston in this period as essentially one of the harbor islands—a configuration now entirely unrecognizable. It is somewhat surprising that the term "drumlin," a unifying descriptor of many of the hills that figure in this narrative, was not employed.

Philbrick treats Dr. Joseph Warren as the central person in this account, though he does not overlook his flaws or diminish the contribution of many others. (Sam Adams, for example, is credited as a Svengali-like figure in the revolutionary movement.) Warren was an immensely talented and passionate man, who at Bunker Hill seemed almost to display a death wish. Philbrick cannot avoid speculating on how history might have been different if Warren had not been killed in the battle (although if the physician's propensity to mix into the thick of things had continued, it is hard to see how he could have survived the eight-year war). He quotes a Tory who opined that if Warren had lived, Washington would have been "an obscurity." Philbrick stops short of endorsing this provocative sentiment, but one senses that he is leaning in that direction.

One of Philbrick's strengths is his ability to draw perceptive and balanced personality sketches of the main characters, including some who have often been reviled, such as British General Thomas Gage. He offers a challenging depiction of George Washington, emphasizing how he was shaped by his early military experiences. It is difficult to understand the visceral loathing the Virginian felt for the New England militiamen on first encounter, failing to grasp the potential that was perceived by officers with greater experience. He was itching to drive the British out of Boston in a climactic battle, a risk

that only cooler heads and a succession of circumstances deterred. Somewhat contrary to the prevailing myth, Philbrick concludes that "Boston's fate, it turned out, depended on whether Washington could be saved from himself."

It is clear that the decision to fortify Breed's Hill instead of the more defensible Bunker Hill was a grave error, but the blame for it remains unclear. Philbrick implies that William Prescott was responsible, but the question is likely to remain unresolved. Similarly, we cannot be sure who, if anyone, said "Don't fire 'til you see the whites of their eyes," but even if no one actually said it, someone should have because of the defenders' shortage of ammunition.

In a brief but moving epilogue, Philbrick ties together the various strands of his narrative in the person of John Quincy Adams, who had heard the firing at Bunker Hill as a boy but refused to attend the dedication of the monument in 1843. Adams, whose injured finger had been treated by Dr. Warren, in this scenario meditates on the unfinished business of the Revolution, and perhaps also on the lost greatness of Joseph Warren. Nathaniel Philbrick, who has emerged as a leading popular historian of New England, has demonstrated in *Bunker Hill* that events that have been mythologized for centuries can still make compelling reading.

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So Ends This Day: The Portuguese in American Whaling 1765–1927. Donald Warrin. North Dartmouth, MA: University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, 2010. 416 pages. \$31.00 (paperback).

This exhaustively researched and detailed book is a most welcome addition to the history of the Portuguese in America and their role in the whaling industry. The prominent place of the Portuguese in whaling has been grossly underestimated and under reported. Warrin rectifies these glaring omissions. To properly understand why this book is so important, it is necessary to set the context of whaling in the American economy, a task which Warrin accomplishes admirably. At its height, in value of output, whaling was the 5th biggest industry in the US, and the 3rd biggest in Massachusetts. New Bedford, the heart of the whaling industry in the middle of the 19th century, was reputedly the richest city in the country. At the same time, the Portuguese comprised as much as 25 percent of the crews, and owned many of the supporting businesses in the ports. Over time and slowly, the Portuguese from the Cape Verde Islands and the Azores rose through the

ranks of crew members, becoming boatsteerers (harpooners), mates, and eventually captains and owners.

Warrin notes that whaling was one of the few industries that offered nearly equal opportunity to both whites and immigrants of color. Although prejudice existed, it was possible for a Portuguese whaler to advance, if he were talented enough, and lucky enough to survive the brutal conditions on board a wooden ship in some of the roughest climatic conditions at sea. In fact, by the end of the whaling period, Portuguese crewmen predominated, and nearly half of the officers were Portuguese. By 1900, it was exceptionally difficult to recruit crewmen, and because the Portuguese were the most experienced men by far, their expertise became crucial for the continuance of the industry through the 1920's.

In addition to expertly describing the origins, growth, and decline of the whaling industry in America, Warrin deftly integrates the Portuguese into the American whaling narrative, showing how and why the Portuguese became so deeply involved.

The narrative follows paths similar to those of so many other immigrant groups. The Portuguese signed on to whalers to escape the famines, conscription, poverty, and dearth of opportunity at home. Whaling promised high pay and adventure, and perhaps eventual settlement in America. But because they were unable to speak the language, uneducated, and practiced a different religion (Roman Catholicism) than American sailors, Portuguese whalers were plagued by discrimination. Warrin compares their status to indentured servitude in that they were obligated to spend three to five years at sea and would be arrested and brought back if they tried to desert.

Although the Portuguese were a small but integral part of the whaling fleet in its early years, and a few were able to improve their status on board a whaler, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that they truly prospered. Warrin attributes this, in part, to the concentration of the Portuguese in a few key whaling ports: New Bedford, San Francisco, and Hawaii. Many of the more successful Portuguese were better educated and spoke English (they were now frequently second- and third-generation Americans). Thus, even though the industry declined in size and importance in the late 1800s, the Portuguese were ever more in demand and more likely to command a whaler.



Warrin devotes most of the book to whaling, but does not neglect some of the tangential, but equally important pieces of the Portuguese experience. First, one fact that emerges from the book, but is not articulated, is that the first Portuguese sailors to immigrate to America almost always married into “Yankee” families. This was necessary because Portuguese women did not join the men when the whalers landed in the islands to pick up crewmen. This was because many of the enlistees were very young (often between the ages of 12 and 16) and because there was no role for women on board a whaler. The result was that these crewmen, upon reaching America, experienced integration into American life that was atypical of other first-generation immigrant groups.

Second, Warrin makes it clear that in those places where the Portuguese predominated they often became important members of the community, owning businesses that supported the whaling industry and its workers. In some cases they were among the wealthiest members of their communities.

The downside of whaling is not neglected. Warrin discusses the methods used to obtain crew members when recruits were scarce. Trickery, false promises, prostitutes, and alcohol were common ways to lure an unsuspecting man on board. When necessary, force was used, and men were “Shanghaied.” There were huge risks associated with whaling, both for the owners and the crew. But while a successful voyage could make the owner and captain rich, crew members worked on the “lay” system, whereby they received a share of the profits, if there were any, out of which many expenses were deducted. A low level crewman might end up with a pittance, even on a good voyage. On a bad voyage, everyone lost. The dangers and misery of shipboard life and the sea itself are well described. Ship captains were often cruel, punishments were extreme, and mutiny, or the threat of it, was not a rare occurrence. Desertion, especially among the “green” recruits, was frequent, and many of the Portuguese deserted when they arrived back home in the Azores or Cape Verde.

Whalers were involved in the Atlantic slave trade up until the 1860s, and Portuguese owners and ship captains were a part of it. In the Pacific, the Portuguese took advantage of a practice termed “blackbirding.” According to Warrin, tens of thousands of South Sea islanders, predominantly young men, were either tricked or forced into slavery and sent to such places as Australia or Peru. This decimation of the male population allowed many whalers, including Portuguese, to settle in their place.

Warrin does an excellent job of using firsthand accounts, including ships logs, journals, and letters) of Portuguese whalers, to vividly depict their life at sea. Sometimes the level of detail overwhelms the narrative, as for example when he discusses litanies of captains and mates, sometimes only briefly, and seemingly

only for the purpose of including every Portuguese account his research uncovered. The book would have been well served by closer editing, including reducing the number of examples and eliminating the typos and poor transitions among paragraphs. Many excellent photos are interspersed throughout the monograph, usually accompanied by precise identification of the boats, places, and people depicted. There are several maps, which are very helpful, but which could have been larger and more sharply defined.

Although the whaling era in America ended in the 1920s, its legacy lives on in the settlement patterns of the Portuguese that still hold today. These patterns led to the massive immigration of Portuguese to those same areas that followed. But, as Warrin points out, its fundamental importance was to offer an opportunity to an immigrant group to “partake of the American experience, first on board ship and later, if they so desired, on land.” And they certainly did “so desire.”

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***New Bedford's Civil War.* Earl F. Mulderink III. New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2012. 306 pages. \$55.00 (hardcover).**

New Bedford, Massachusetts was considered to be the “richest city in America” in the decades before the Civil War by contemporary observers, as well as one of the most socially progressive. Merchants rich from the oil of the sperm whale walked the same streets as scores of freed slaves from the American South in what was surely one of the most diverse cities in America. Racial attitudes among residents of the town, though hardly ideal, were leaps and bounds beyond much of the rest of the country, and competition for economic opportunity was relatively just. However, the events of the Civil War would create significant repercussions for the city, and postbellum New Bedford would struggle to recapture the economic bounty that had graced the city in the years before the war ripped the country apart.

Earl F. Mulderink, III has written an ambitious volume that carefully

utilizes an impressive array of primary and secondary source material, backed by a wealth of quantitative data that renders the work a true social history. Mulderink's work is ambitious, as he seeks to analyze the economic, social, and political consequences that the Civil War held for New Bedford. His work is primarily focused on the repercussions that the war held for the social fabric of the city itself, and as such, those seeking an in-depth military history should look elsewhere. Mulderink does incorporate the history of the conflict indirectly throughout his work, namely through examination of recruitment efforts of white and black troops within the city, but his interest in the war is chiefly focused on the experiences of the city's African-American soldiers.

The African-American experience in New Bedford is one of Mulderink's main areas of focus, and he ably backs his argument that while the city offered something of a haven to free blacks, economic opportunities for African-Americans were hardly ideal, especially given competition with immigrants. However, Mulderink notes that New Bedford did have a larger percentage of black artisans than any other northern city, so chances for gainful, skilled employment did indeed exist for African-Americans. Furthermore, he vividly describes the abolitionist fervor that gripped much of Massachusetts in the decades leading up to the war, with free blacks in New Bedford playing a key role. African-Americans in the antebellum years were respected members of the larger population of the city who simultaneously built their own independent community comprised of powerful social ties.

Once the war began and African-Americans were finally permitted to enlist in 1863, free black men of New Bedford proudly enlisted by the dozen in racially segregated units, including the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts regiment. Undoubtedly the most famous regiment of African-American troops from the war, especially after its immortalization by Hollywood in 1989's *Glory*, the unit would cover itself in glory during its years of service. Its best-known enlisted man was New Bedford's own Sergeant William H. Carney, who despite grievous wounds at Fort Wagner in 1863, never allowed the American flag that he was carrying to touch the ground. For his valor, Carney was awarded the Medal of Honor, but his post-war role would be indicative of the nation's problems with the racial legacy of the war.

Mulderink utilizes the work of David Blight to build the framework for his analysis of New Bedford's post-war racial politics. Blight contends that white veterans from both sides managed to agree on a reconciliationist memory of the war that focused on their mutual heroism, rather than acknowledging the true emancipationist memory of the conflict, which had the additional side effect of marginalizing black veterans. In the aftermath of the war, New Bedford's black and white veterans formed separate, segregated Grand Army of the Republic

(GAR) posts. The post composed of black veterans was significantly smaller than its white counterpart, but Mulderink contends that it still commanded respect from white veterans while also providing a vital source of aid to the families of dead and disabled African-American veterans of the war. However, Sergeant Carney was welcomed into the white GAR post as its only black member, and was offered much-needed financial assistance, with little apparent resistance from any veterans, white or black. This surely created a number of social tensions and challenges that Mulderink unfortunately does not analyze to any significant depth.

Carney's postwar economic difficulties are emblematic of the challenges faced by African-American veterans across the country and in New Bedford, while New Bedford as a whole also struggled to recapture its antebellum economic momentum. Veterans returning home found a New Bedford teeming with white immigrants who had begun trickling into the city in the decades before the war, and now offered considerable competition for lower-paying jobs. Additionally, the whale oil industry was virtually obsolete by that point, and New Bedford's whaling fleet was significantly downsized, necessitating a new economic path.

The city hoped to repurpose itself as a textiles hub, aided by a new fresh water system that could supply the massive amounts of water needed by the mills. Mulderink contends that this rapid transformation and the seamless introduction of the water system represents progressive New England municipal government at its best, as an institution in tune with the wants and needs of its citizens that could take impactful action to further the best interests of the city.

Mulderink analyzes this role of the municipal government throughout his work, and largely argues that it effectively managed the city's needs during an extremely trying time. The city's leaders were under immense pressure to care for the families of soldiers who had gone off to fight, and were largely successful in doing so. His argument is convincing when he contends that both these humanitarian endeavors and the concerted effort to economically reconfigure the city represent the potential efficacy of a city government in tune with its population.

Overall, Mulderink's work represents an outstanding analysis of the numerous ways that the Civil War affected a prosperous New England city. He effectively describes both the ante- and postbellum environments of New Bedford, making it clear to the reader how the war affected the city over the length of the conflict. This is most obvious both in the discussion of race relations and in the economic repurposing of the city as the whaling industry entered its death throes. He effectively utilizes a number of statistics and tables to support his arguments, primarily to convey data indicating larger

patterns over time regarding incomes, population movements, and other social history information. However, this wealth of quantitative data may render the book somewhat inaccessible to the casual reader. Mulderink's book is a thoroughly researched work that skillfully outlines the challenges and changes that a progressive, wealthy New England city encountered during the most tumultuous period in the nation's history.

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***No Closure: Catholic Practice and Boston's Parish Shutdowns.* John C. Seitz. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011. 248 pages + notes. \$42.00 (hardcover).**

John C. Seitz has written a thoughtful study of Roman Catholic attitudes and practices as demonstrated in the recent crisis of Boston parish consolidations and church closings. A theologian at Fordham University, Seitz offers an illuminating account of those people in the Archdiocese of Boston who chose to resist the hierarchy's systematic closing of many parish communities early in the twenty-first century. He focuses on only a minority of Catholics and a few of the shuttered parish communities, particularly one in Boston and one in the suburbs, but he explores larger concerns through his extensive fieldwork and intense interaction with the "resisters". Although Seitz makes use of historical studies of Catholic Boston, this book is clearly a descriptive work based on his study of contemporary Boston Catholic culture. He acknowledges his debt to members of Harvard's Ethnography of Religion Workshop and frequently cites anthropological studies. Seitz also elucidates the dilemmas he encountered in being both an academic pursuing a systematic study and (in the pursuit of his work) being personally involved in the actions he describes.

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston in 2004 commenced a process to close down or "suppress" nearly one hundred parishes out of a total of 357 then extant. Coming so soon after the eruption of the spectacularly tragic revelations of clerical abuse within the archdiocese and the nation in 2002, there was little likelihood that the news of parish closings would be conflict-free. Most Catholics in the region either stopped attending or donating, or else accepted the closures and moved on to new parish communities. Seitz found himself attracted to a study of those who neither opted to leave the Catholic church nor accept the dictate to affiliate with another parish. He began his fieldwork in the second half of 2004 and truly immersed himself in the efforts made by Catholics, especially



in the parishes of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in East Boston and St. Albert the Great in East Weymouth, to stop the closures.

Seitz observed the resisters in action as they occupied church buildings and maintained vigils to enforce their vision. The people he met were attached to these parish communities and church buildings and refused to move on or allow either physical or emotional closure. While he emphasizes that the study is not comprehensive nor about a majority of Roman Catholics, Seitz argues successfully that it is crucial to understand what these occupiers were about. His concerns are theological as he tries to answer questions about a moment in Boston

Catholic history. His concern is twofold: he wants to find out why some people resisted the closures and what the resistance tells us about modern Catholicism (pp. 15–16).

The book commences naturally enough with a consideration of the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s and a discussion of changing meanings of church for Catholics in the last half-century and more. Seitz writes, "If the Council offered continuity amid change as a description of its accomplishment, others faced it as an ongoing puzzle to be solved. This book explores the ways that this broad dilemma has been felt among a relatively small group of Boston lay Catholics..." (p. 31). Structured with themes of sacrifice and sacred presence in mind, Seitz's book explores contested notions of sacrifice and sacred place, the role of the laity, the nature of church authority, and the nature of Catholic practice and history.

The reader who seeks a narrative account of the process of church closings in Boston will not find it presented here, within these pages that illuminate Boston Catholic history. Seitz has unearthed many nuggets of information about the two parishes that he has selected for his focus but also presents information about other parishes and connects his stories to Boston's ethnic and racial history. He demonstrates well that religious history needs to be seen in light of social and urban history and, perhaps more significantly, argues the need to take religious history seriously in writing social history.

Particularly effective in this vein is Seitz's treatment of Italians in East Boston and the North End who were affected by the parish closures as well as by the toll of highway construction and urban redevelopment on selected areas of Boston. "Boston's divided history meant that the question of ethnic difference remained close to the surface. For Italian-Americans in the North End, and in East Boston

as well, it was impossible to ignore the prevalence of Irish-American leaders in Boston's ecclesial and civic life" (p. 105).

An intriguing aspect of the story is the struggle over the ownership of church buildings as well as the fate of sold-off buildings and the disposition of the funds from these sales. Seitz sensitively handles many of the questions raised by actions of church leaders yet stakes out no position of his own on these or other issues, such as who was right about church closings or how the closings should have been handled. This is not a book that throws fuel on the fire of conflict, but one which describes the light and shadows cast by the fire. There is no doubt that this has been a destructive period in Boston Catholic history. This book and future studies may cast more light than heat.

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