MEDIUMS IN LITERARY SETTINGS: THE LEVERAGE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE MODERN NOVEL

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ABSTRACT. Literary theorists have always been in search of new ways of expression and new experiments, so much so with reference to the modern novel like, for instance James Joyce's *Ulysses*, *Dubliners*, or *Portrait of the Artist*. Generally, modern writers made use of theoretical notes or *marginal*ia in order to approve or disapprove of certain terms and ideologies, and to set forth their distinct aesthetic philosophy well into the 20th century. The fact that modern writers such as Joyce were in a constant process of changing perspectives and denouncing Realism's infatuation with objectivity can be traced back to their common habit of leaving behind works unfinished just to have a glance into the newly launched technologies on the market, and to put to the test the functionality of subjectivism through the stimuli mediated by scientific discoveries such as waves communication, atonality or techniques similar to the stored-program architecture. The question remains for us, and for the modern writers as well, how far will the employment of these mediums push the writer's inner experience into drawing back from society to create styles which allow for one way or both ways communication. In Joyce's case, we feel, there is a constant peril of misusing concepts like "experience" and "technics" when we analyze his novels, which is why this study debates on the nature of Joyce's epistemology at the very impact with urban technology, concluding that this approach to technology leaves Joyce's work unfinished and open to ongoing interpretations.

KEY WORDS: modernism, technology, Joyce, style, epistemology

Introduction

On the 6th of December, 1933, the Hon. John M. Woolsey of the United States District Court (Southern District of New York) moved to lift the ban imposed on James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and thus for the first time in American history gave way to "free letters" coming from an international author in the era of Modernism. Now, this judge's decision and the necessity thereof might seem strange to us today, however it came after many years of trials and attempts to introduce the American public to the so-called literary products deemed "subject to seizure, forfeiture and confiscation and destruction" (Joyce, 1990: ix). Undoubtedly, Joyce was already known to American literary theorists, and perhaps to some adventurous readers back in the 1930', since his book was released in Paris in 1922. But that did not make its reception in the United States less scandalous, being instantly tabulated in the "early obscene"

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genre. And understandably so, since in 1934, that is, one year after judge Woolsey lifted the ban, Random House in New York published *Ulysses* with a major and a minor in terms of aiding the reader understand Joyce's style. The major would be a special letter sent by James Joyce himself in 1932 and embedded in this first American edition, right after the statements of attorney Morris L. Ernst, and judge Woolsey, the three letters functioning quite well as an introduction to the book. It is worth noticing here that Joyce himself complained to Mr. Cerf, the publisher that until then he was unable to find a publishing house to accept his writings for publication in a volume, including his *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*. The minor, on the other hand, came years afterwards, when in 1961 the book was reset for an unabridged text which does not, however, include chapter titles, thus leaving the reader with important handicaps as to the time, the correspondent episodes between Joyce's *Ulysses* and Homer's Greek legend of Odysseus, and the need to dissociate between the real life of the city and the internal experience of its characters, or whatever they make of their time in the city. The present paper is an attempt to understand Joyce's travel through the city that shapes his epistemic values, however not at the expense of his own style/technics of rendering this experience.

Joyce from Experience to *Tekhné*

For Joyce's readers it is no secret that the author had quite de few phobias made public through his novels, letters, and other writings. In addition to Joyce's outspoken fears like cynophobia or astraphobia (see a thorough presentation in Richard Ellmann, 1982: 514), through his character Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses* he is said to have been afraid of water in general, as he rarely used to bathe—see Buck Mulligan's remark to Haines in chapter Telemachus (James Joyce, 1990: 15). This, in turn, completes his personality by building a trademark along his anxiety circle. Which anxiety, we are told, is to vanish only after Stephen takes a pint of spirits (Joyce, 1990: 18), probably an allusion to Joyce's drinking habits in which he lured from his adolescence. Due to the fact that this remark is made in the first chapter of *Ulysses*, we do not actually see Stephen drunk in Telemachus: since the time span in this chapter goes from 8.00-8.45 AM, the moment is postponed for a later, more proper hour. But if it wasn't for Joyce's serial publication of *Ulysses* in "The Little Review", where he stood by a version of the novel containing chapter titles, we would not be able to trace these character trademarks in the first and subsequent American editions, since there is nothing in the opening of the novel to suggests that Dedalus resembles Homer's Telemachus in any way.

From the introductory page of *Ulysses* we are acquainted with Stephen, Joyce's alter-ego, as the "fearful Jesuit" in Mulligan's words, the two living in

the same tower apparently with no other purpose than having mild debates as how to "Hellenize" Dublin. There is also a personal story in Joyce's life where he as a young man lived in a similar tower for a few months, after his mother's departure and away from a drunken father, however always surrounded by other controversial circles of youngsters. Since the tower itself looked "down on the water and on the mailboat clearing the harbor mouth of Kingstown" (Joyce, 1990: 5), i.e. Thalatta, in Mulligan's words, or the sea, it is understandable, apart from his few enemies there, why in the closing page of this first chapter Dedalus would hand over the key to his room never to return to the tower again.

On the other hand, recent critics of Joyce's writings are trying to make a point on many pages, noticing that Joyce's problem with *tekhné* in his great novels like *Ulysses*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, or *Dubliners* is twofold. He is first and foremost using his style to confuse his readers about certain physical locations which every connoisseur of Dublin would immediately spot with as little effort from the author as possible. Joyce's manifest spatial intention to make his novel a living book of Dublin in his time is indeed confusing, since his imaginary walk through the city resembles driving his readers on no-entry streets, a process which is not only irrational, but also counter-productive for sightseeing (Valérie Bénéjam, John Bishop, 2011: 11-12). However, there are other readers of Joyce who warn us that, if in the *Portrait* the complexity of Joyce's style stems from the character's battle with entering adulthood (hence the book's "general scheme of gradually growing up"), the intricate episodes in *Ulysses* follow a similar pattern, with yet an important difference. Here, "growing"/ "increasing" the complexity stems from the external requirements of the reader, intended to take a difficult journey from the very beginning up to the end:

> In the reference to the wanderer who longed for Ithaca there may be an implication that Joyce wanted his readers to apprehend their own experience of his novel as a kind of Odyssey—that after struggling through the increasing difficulties of his method… they should feel, on coming to the comparative simplicity and calm of "Eumaeus" that they had at last reached shore (Charles Peake, 1977: 165).

This is not to say, however, that Joyce does not follow a linear road map of Dublin starting from his home in Eccles Street no. 7, passing St. George's Church in Hardwick Place, the Belvedere College (Joyce's former Catholic and somehow elitist alma mater in Denmark Street), Parnell's Statue (iconic for Joyce's sense of patriotism and reverence gathered in the historical figure of a conational), the Rotunda Maternity Hospital in Parnell Square, the famous Gresham Hotel and the General Post Office both on Connell Street, etc. down to O'Connell Bridge. This is Leopold's, Joyce's other character first half of his trip through the North side of the city, and it also describes half of

his one-day adventure in the novel. The second half of the trip, on the other way, takes him to Southern Dublin.

This second trip becomes fairly proportionate after crossing the Liffey River, and revolves around the old House of the Irish Parliament—in Joyce's days the Bank of Ireland visited by Stephen Dedalus in the novel—the traditional Protestant Trinity College, also known as the University of Dublin; Sweny's in Lincoln Place, "where chemists rarely move", because Dublin rarely knows any change, down the gorgeous park St. Stephen's Green. The excursion itself is roughly 4 miles long; nevertheless, we are right to guess that for Joyce that would have been a shorter trip than his daily mileage (for a reconstruction of Joyce's daily stroll habits, see http://www.dochara.-com/tour/itineraries/joyce-tour). At this specific point in our study we shall not make other important allusions as to the type of *tekhné* Joyce uses through Dedalus, which is ontologically different from the *tekhné* in Bloom's case, except for what his ethnicity involves.

If Bloom walked the city to and fro, his way of knowing a place is through walking great distances. Moreover, he is the wandering Jew of the novel, as Marilyn Reizbaum simply notices in *James Joyce's Judaic Other*. In other words, although it has been said that there is almost no research into this character's Jewishness, we do not necessarily have to benefit from the said research in order to be able to acknowledge the gap between the "Hellenistic" type, the young Dedalus, and the old, more intricate and complex Bloom, with his Jewish-like blueprint over Dublin: "… it is as though readers of *Ulysses* have believed… the notion that Jews were never persecuted in Ireland because they were never let in, and that therefore Bloom's Jewishness is a mythical, essentially irrelevant aspect of his character… Joyce was making conscious what was unconscious in his immediate culture" (Marilyn Reizbaum, 1999: 10). So far in Joyce's story, the type of character determines the kind of travel, which is always accompanied by old and new narratives such as the events surrounding Dublin's educational institutions or the descent into Hades portrayed by the funeral of Paddy Dignam.

Resuming our path to Joyce's spatial *tekhné* in *Ulysses*, the confusion for the reader is not caused by the map itself, but is highly related to the degree in which the common traveler through Dublin is able to use Joyce's *episteme* as an orientational skill. The story itself is a web of intricate and intimate passages of feelings and experiences which, as Bénéjam shows, are not

> represented "in terms of ends and means"… ; technical objects are granted being, if not human being, and even the potential for speech… The novel locates the imagined urban community of Dublin in the simultaneous connection of the city's inhabitants through infrastructure, and it threads that connection through the deep temporality of the city's nomos, Dubh Linn (Bénéjam, 2011: 21-22).

Secondly, or at least so he implies, the author attempts to give us a recognizable map of the city so that in the event of its destruction we could still remember the places as they once were. But if in the first instance we faced a problem with Joyce's travelling style, as he drove us through the city on no-entry streets so to say, in this second instance we are driven by a visually impaired guide, since Joyce had almost lost his vision by the time his novels were being published. And if nowadays this visual difficulty is not a secret anymore, we still let ourselves guided by Joyce most of the times at our own expense. This is now our experience, no Joyce's, and it should be an eye-opener: Joyce does not pay attention to what meets the eye, like we do when we try to decipher what he imagined for us (and isn't it ironic how we rarely perceive the very danger in this game!); the more Joyce imagines Dublin by his own map, the less we acknowledge that this is not a real map. It is rather a hyperbolic image of his city as seen by a man with an optical challenge. For instance, Joyce does not act in his novel like a tourist would, because the amount of time and storytelling about the city, apart from being told in the past tense, are given tens of pages of hard content. As Charles Peake notices,

> The formal parallelism of the techniques of the "Telemachia" and the "Nostos" is the most emphatic indication of Joyce's intention to lead the reader into and out of the complexities of the novel. In the *Portrait* Joyce has already introduced narratives expressive of different ages: one could label… the technique of the first chapter of the novel "narrative boyish", and the technique of the fourth "narrative adolescent" (Charles Peake, 1977: 166).

Consequently, the hero's *episteme* of the city is not a recounting of the things seen, but more appropriately a remembrance (evocation in its twofold meanings, both "recreation" though imagination, and "summoning" of the spirit of the city) of things past, which cannot be accounted for after only one day-trip through Dublin.

Because Joyce knows the city in his own way and time, he does not just pass through points of interest such as Belvedere College or Trinity College, to give just two fashionable examples of Dublin's cultural attractions. Even though the latter is a 16th century old academic institution with a prestigious history, Joyce is determined to share with us a personal comment in disregard of this university's achievements. Joyce almost takes an oath not to ever enter this building, because, as a former Belvedere graduate himself, his principles would prevent him from attending as a visitor, even if his bishop granted him a permission letter. A Catholic by name, Joyce translates his optical difficulty for his character Leopold Bloom, a Jew by birth from an Eastern country, who later on converted to Catholicism when he asked Molly's hand in marriage. The rivalry in time between these two educational places of Ireland is well known, and it might have amounted to cultural and political

conflicts between Irish Protestants and Catholics as early as the opening of the Catholic University of Ireland in Dublin in 1854, later known as University College Dublin, and here's how Peake elaborates on this again:

> The adoption of a different technique of presentation for every chapter in *Ulysses* is, essentially, a development of the stylistic variation in *Dubliner*s and the *Portrait*, where the style of each story or episode is controlled by two interacting factors— its place in the book as a whole, and the nature of the incident, situation, character and mood to be represented. In the short stories, for instance, the first-person narrative of "Araby" is determined by its place among the stories of childhood and the Romantic rhythms and images reflect the boy's emotional condition, while, in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room" the detached, dramatic manner reflects the shift to "public life" as well as suggesting the superficiality of Dublin politics (Charles Peake, 1977: 164).

That is why the no-entry sign is, again, not problematic for Joyce, especially in part two of the novel, which corresponds in Hellenistic terms to Ulysses' one time stop on the "pleasure" island, and it expands his visual field to a new level. Even the religious terminology in *Ulysses* is linked to Joyce's experience both with the city and its "trenches" and with the Catholic school he attended in his youth. His *tekhné* at this point involves terms like "cardinal", "church", "pope", and "exorcism" for depravation mediums such as the brothel in part two of the novel, but this lexicon is also specific to the practice of the Catholic priests known for their exorcist curricula, see, for instance the Irish priest Malachi Martin, himself a fellow of both Dublin's Jesuit Belvedere College and Trinity College, for whom the practice of exorcism works both ways, as inner cleansing from demons and as casting them out (see Joseph P. Laycock, 2015: 227-229).

The purge of old sins in Leopold Bloom's one-day life can be considered as a metaphor for his modernist technicality, while the road trip stands for its vivid epistemology, precisely because it is a remembrance of a lifetime in a daytime. When in 1911 Joyce tried to have his *Dubliners* published in Ireland as a novel addressing current and pressing issued related to the "liberation" of his country "under the British rule", i.e. an exorcism by any means "legal, social, ceremonious" (see http://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/an-irishman-s-diary-1.466859), his attempt was a prequel of the author's strive with his own/national past, and it also was a novel of evocation. His imaginary space is not a whim, as it so often happens in literature and art in general. Joyce has to see this way or not see at all, and this is a self-imposed exercise which allows him to make a living in the real world.

This experience, then, stems from his *tekhné* and his imaginary cartography, a mania competently explained by Bénéjam. Joyce's style proves hectic in *Ulysses* because while trying to write a map of Dublin for his readers in

order to integrate them into the narrative process of his wok, he nevertheless expands the narrated time (*kairos*) at the expense of the time travelled or quantity time (*kronos*), and because of this there is no way Bloom's trip through Dublin as presented in the novel could ever be completed in one straight day. The narrated time is the felt time, or better known as quality time, the personal action in the novel which comes timely, and it is up to the narrator how much or intense he feels, or for how long.

The difference between *kairos* and *kronos* in the modern novel beginning with Joyce and Proust is significant because *kairos* expands time according to the intensity and duration of a second/minute/hour in the mind/conscience and soul of the character. *Kairos*, thus, takes the felt content of *kronos* (*chronos*) always with the help of something the author experienced/saw/sensed in his distant/recent past (hence its technicality), in order to "evoke" that sensation left unexplained in the past. *Kronos* as chronological time is what happened in the meantime and it functions as an exploratory journey. (For a comparative study of these two concepts in the modern novel, and for kairos as the "fleeting"/liberating moment opposing destiny in both theology and politics, see Hugh Rayment-Pickard, 2007; Vítor Wethelle, 2012; also for *kairos* as a certain short time in the divine history (*chronos*) with close implications on human history, see Jerry Vardaman, and Edwin M. Yamauchi, 1989: 5-13). The accent on *tekhné* in Joyce's novels involves even details related to the way Homer's work might be approached in a Modernist manner, hence:

> Eumaeus is the 16th chapter of *Ulysses* and the opening episode of the third and final division of the book, Nostos or Homecoming... According to the schema of Joyce loaned to Valery Larbaud, the scene of the Eumaeus episode is the cabman's shelter reputedly run by James Fitzharris, the former Invincible... The time at which the action begins is after midnight. The organs of the episode are the nerves. The art of the episode is navigation. The episode's symbol is the sailors. And its technics is narrative (old) (Nicholas Fargnoli, 1996: 67).

With this in mind, the writer could pass through a certain building in less than one minute, but his felt time might as well be allocated sixty pages in the novel, a very statutory disproportion in modern and postmodern literature, although a very necessary consequence of the experience which models the author's *tekhné*. In this context, one of the few episodes in *Ulysses* whose time span actually makes sense as *kronos* (and as comprehensive *kairos*, even if his myriad of personal details and flashes seize our attention questioning this sense of reality) is the funeral of Patrick "Paddy" Dignam from the chapter "Hades". The episode recounts the very story of Elpenor and the character dies in the same way, thus raising awareness of the situation of drunkards in Dublin just as it once did in Odysseus' time. The remarkable style with which Bloom remembers his old friend and the possibility of attempted suicide by

being drunk, thus the trip to Hades of, first the dead man and then, his mourners, seasons the narrative with picks from Graeco-Roman myths and last rites. But this that is not all to it.

The burial scene in *Ulysses* is anticipated by Bloom's own burial in water at the public baths, while the image of the decomposing body is anticipated by Bloom's own scent after using the soap bought from the chemist, which happens one chapter prior. His fear of worms, grave holes, and darkness is but a conclusion of his immersion in water from the chapter "Lotus Eaters", and there is no way the writer can hide his fear, since he defined and expressed it so clearly. Interestingly enough, Bloom attempts to wash away his old sins and his city's dirt (see the chapter "Dirty Dubliners") with new products like expensive scented soap, but this remains an intention nonetheless, since from buying up to using the cleansing object, Bloom has to visit "The Mother Church". The first impression of "the Church" is later spoiled in "the haunts of sin", as Bloom's dialogue with Mrs. Breen unfolds: "(Bloom): Not so loud my name. Whatever do you think of me? Don't give me away. Walls have ears. How do you do? It's ages since I. You're looking splendid. Absolutely it. Seasonable weather we are having this time of year. Black refracts heat. Interesting quarter. Rescue of fallen women Magdalen asylum. I am the secretary… " (Joyce, 1990: 443 ff.). The only purpose of using the synecdoche here and elsewhere in the book, we gather (such as Mother, Black, Brother, Miriam/s, etc., and even Bloom), is to function as a grand metaphor for Joyce's plan revealed in Bloom and Stephen's final dialogue.

As the story goes, Stephen, the boyish man whom Joyce introduced from the very first pages as being aquaphobic, meets Bloom, the "waterlover, drawer of water, watercarrier" (Joyce, 1990: 671), and a father-figure for the fainting Dedalus arises. The contrast between Stephen/the future/the artist/the writer/the reader/water hater (but otherwise expected to be clean), and Bloom/the past/the scientist/the sailor/the traveler on and between waters, can be followed in time, since up to their last encounter they supposedly met when Stephen was 5, then 10, and then 10 years afterwards. However, the emphasis here is not on Stephen and Bloom, as it once was in the *Odyssey* on Telemachus and Ulysses. Things are clear on this, since perhaps the only character on which Joyce really focuses is Molly/Penelope, to whom he bestows an entire monologue chapter at the end of his novel. Joyce's technical apparatus is not about his characters. It is mostly about soothing his readers after their difficult travel inside his novel and according to his experiences, so much so that in the end, here and in *Dubliners* or the *Portrait*, "what Joyce had done… was to try to capture the impalpable essence of experience, temperament or mood through style" (Charles Peake, 1977: 166).

Any debate on the concepts of *tekhné* and *episteme* in Joyce's *Ulysses* involves this kind of approach, namely a distinct sense of variation between Stephen's

way and Bloom's way, and it is unequivocally related to the shape Joyce's technique takes in the proximity of each of these characters. Following Stiegler's interpretation of *tekhné* in Joyce's novel, a path that combines "humanity, technics, and language" as they must have originally formed a bonding, Bénéjam, like Stiegler hardly sense this sort of ambivalence in Joyce's rendition of *tekhné*. In Stephen's case, as a "fearful Jesuit", his outspoken phobias become the objects he encounters on his way to "growing up" and they proportionately objectify his fears of water, thunderstorms, etc.

A good example here would be the lively description of the sewage system with its urban functions, or the power station functioning for the city (an idea that Michael Rubenstein, in the chapter "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Urban Planner" from Bénéjam's, 2011: 122, borrows from Berndt Stiegler, 1998: 1). In Bloom's case the only fear is oblivion (symbolized by worms, grave holes and darkness), which is why the entire novel is an act of remembrance. Stephen and Bloom's *episteme* resulting from their encounter with technics is disruptive, once again, since the first is a Catholic, while the second was born Jewish and has a Jewish-like experience with the city of Dublin as with any other city for that matter. Bloom is not afraid of technical obstacles; however, he is fearful his memories might not be well preserved. This fear would be one of the reasons why the reader cannot partake in Bloom's personal travel, while on the other hand he is well accustomed to Stephen's misty ways to maturity, which is always a daily issue. To state that these two characters render a unique *episteme* in this novel would equal to assuming that Joyce himself had a bipolar conscience. It is more appropriate, however, to notice the different measures used by Joyce to make sense of Bloom's status in his work:

> … the thematics of Jewishness gives way to a poetics of Jewishness… The poetics of Jewishness encompasses the language of psychoanalysis; the "minor" language of the colonized subject: *mauscheln* (the hidden language of the Jews); the Jewish joke…, "the language of the outlaw", the very technics of Joyce's work, especially in *Ulysses*. These technics enlist the psychological phenomena of repression and displacement… (Marilyn Reizbaum, 1999: 9).

Stephen's attempt to "Hellenize" the city corresponds to his need to animate the objects or the technical system of his city in order to better understand the urban world and overcome the phobias it unleashes. His vivid sense of things also corresponds to a younger age of human history, i.e. younger than Bloom, hence Stephen's urban image is different from Bloom's wandering self and his sense of displacement. In other words, it is difficult to simply assume that in his *Ulysses*, Joyce "forges another relations to technique", in

Stiegler's words (1998: 1), because this humanity-technics-language relationship (Neil R. Davison, 1998: xii-xiv)[1] is far more complicated and is used to make sense of the past.

Bloom's fears have nothing to do with childhood scary stories; they nevertheless have everything to do with what is going to happen at the end of his travels, since he is not aware yet of the father figure he could be. Through Bloom, Joyce's *Ulysses* stands between the modern and the postmodern era of the novel, since his character makes use of modern technology in order to leave something behind, a heir who fructifies his ancestral experience; nevertheless, he is not the closing voice of the novel, but his wife is, and the last chapter is paramount for the postmodern feminist psychology devoid of punctuation marks, thus written in blank. For this, Bloom's experience in relation to his Jewish ancestral heritage is complete, while his episteme in connection with his urban Irish context is yet to be completed if we are to take into consideration his parental role, and his situation as a modern husband, a circular routing for which his entire map of the city was intended.

Conclusions

For decades now the readers of *Dubliners*, *Ulysses*, *Portrait of the artist*, and other writings produced by Joyce have been wrongly made to believe, in part by attorney Morris L. Ernst's letter occasioned by the success of *Ulysses'* case in the US in 1933, that the publication of such novels would "liberalize the law of (literary) obscenity..., making it impossible (to legally sustain) an attack against any book of artistic integrity, no matter how frank and forthright it may be" (Joyce, 1990: viii). In Joyce's defense, however, his novel(s) is not first and foremost a voice for the freedom of sexual expression no matter what, as many were led to think, a thought that perhaps inspired them to buy the book and read it. Let us remember for a start that this novel is a sample of what European Modernism meant at the turn of the 20th century. It is a book of a search for something apparently inexpressible, which the author sought to express in a way different than the language of the then common people, or the common sense of his contemporaries. Hence, if the book lacks common sense is because the author was not really preoccupied to describe the everyday life of his fellows, as his novel is a personal travel, an individual quest for his own way/experience. Most of all, this novel is highly technical, so that the readers should actually stumble on Joyce's phobias, his intricate

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[1]   Neil R. Davison discusses the technicality of a Jewish portrait in Joyce's work, and notices the stereotype of associating a specific physiognomy to the realistic type of Jew, while the new, modern Jew escapes "categorization" because he is from the gentiles, just like Bloom is an Irish Jew.

experiences with the city and his own definition of marriage, fatherhood, morality, and tradition. If the author proposes from the very first pages of the book that we embark on a voyage throughout the streets of Dublin, this travel is an excuse for him to improve on his style/tecnics by making himself a live experiment. But no Modern experience is ever social; it is as internal as it gets, and if we thought even for a minute that Joyce wanted to share with us something so personal, we might start reading again!

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