

CHARACTER CONSTRUCTION IN BYZANTIUM

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DEPICTION OF WOMEN IN MANUEL PHILES' DEVOTIONAL EPIGRAMS **Marina Bazzani, Oxford**

Philes, one of the most prolific poets who ever lived in Byzantium, dedicated most of his verses to powerful figures: emperors, members of the imperial family, and high government officials. The scrutiny of Philes' relationship with his patrons is very telling of the way in which the poet presented himself and related to his addressees: the recipients of his verses were usually powerful men in respect to whom the poet found himself in a subordinate position and in a state of need. This paper shifts the focus to the most evident case in which this usual scenario radically changes: devotional epigrams commissioned by wealthy noble women to accompany the gift of icons and other religious objects, and epitaphs composed at the request of his patrons to lament the death of their spouses. These devotional epigrams are extraordinary sources for the study of aspects of women's agency and social persona: the offering of sacred objects became a tool through which these women could not only express their piety and devo-

tion, but, and most importantly, convey their social standing and traits of their personality. This paper explores how Philes is no longer the central character of his verses, but rather adopts his patronesses' point of view in these poems: it is argued that, by acquiring a female stance, the poet is able to voice female wishes, fears, and deepest concerns. Thanks to a close analysis of these poems that shows how the poet constructs and presents his female characters, this paper uncovers the crucial features that make the female voice unique and distinguished from their male counterparts.

PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN NIKETAS EUGENIANOS' DROSILLA & CHARIKLES: CHARACTERIZATION THROUGH NATURE, LITERARY EXEMPLA AND MIRRORING **Alejandro Laguna López, Málaga**

Niketas Eugenianos' *Drosilla & Charikles* is one of the four Komnenian novels produced in twelfth-century Constantinople. In this erotic fictional narrative, and following the traditional

novelistic plot, the two lovers get separated once and again by Fate before finally managing to reunite. The female protagonist, Drosilla, is pursued by a series of suitors which explicitly compare her to nature and to diverse characters from the mythological and literary tradition. Drosilla has little to no agency, no say over her destiny. Nonetheless, she is aware of the literary tradition to which her story is ascribed and of the expectations put on her. Just as male characters compare her to other women, she also defines herself in relation to them. Existing scholarship has already identified the literary models used by Eugenianos for the composition of this novel, and recent ecocritical studies have tackled some aspects of female characterization in medieval Greek novels, but Drosilla & Charikles has so far received only partial attention in this regard.

In this paper I will explore Drosilla as a character. To do so, I will first analyse the patterns underlying the hypotexts and natural elements used by male characters for her portrayal, which might prove fruitful for further understanding of how femininity is perceived in this period. To compliment this, I will then research how Drosilla presents herself and how she interacts with the other female characters in the novel and especially with Kalligone, the female lover in the subplot. By doing this I attempt to prove that the female characters in Niketas Eugenianos' novel stand in contrast to each other. This paper will therefore provide insight into the portrayal of women in this medieval Greek novel, and especially into how Drosilla's story mirrors that of Kalligone, in whose experiences she can see her own reflection.

CHARACTER CONSTRUCTION THROUGH FOCALIZATION IN ROMANOS THE MELODIST'S KONTAKION ON THE ANNUNCIATION Osman Yüksel Özdemir, Vienna

This paper aims to focus on the narratological concept of focalization as a governing principle of characterization in late antique liturgical poetry. For this purpose, I will present the kontakion on the Annunciation by Romanos the Melodist (circa 485–560 CE) as a case study. In his retelling of the Annunciation, Romanos presents Mary's inner monologues and her subsequent debate with Gabriel upon receiving the news of the Incarnation and her virgin-birth. As these imagined speeches provide a voice to the biblical characters, they have been amply discussed by the scholarship in exploring gendered characterization. With due acknowledgement that imagined speeches are mere representations of gendered voices at the hands of male authors, interpretations have varied from erotical insinuations between Mary and Gabriel to an outspoken and even argumentative characterization of Mary.

PROFILING THROUGH COMPARATIVE LITERARY ANALYSIS: WRITING-PERSONAS OF KALILAWA-DIMNAH/STEPHANITES KAI ICHNELATES COPYISTS AND TRANSLATORS Lilli Hölzlhammer, Uppsala

When comparing manuscript versions of a text, copyists are treated like ancient, somewhat unreliable printers whose “mistakes” need to be “fixed”. Similarly, translators are synonymous with traitors who fail to truthfully convey a text. In both cases, what clashes with the desired outcome of an exact reproduction is the copyist’s/ translator’s writer-persona. Not to be confused with the historical human being, the writer-persona is the sum of influences and decisions that have been made by the historical individuum during the writing process. Choice of words, editing steps, rewriting, rephrasing, and errors make up the profile of the person creating a new version of a pre-existing text. Differences between versions reveal not only their preferences, education, and interests but also show their working attitude and personality traits. Through this, we establish the profiles of those who present the texts we now consider sources. While these profiles might not reflect the historical individuum, they nevertheless show how they intentionally and unintentionally presented themselves through their writings. With this paper I aim to demonstrate the possibilities and limits of such profiling work by looking at two closely related texts, a 13th century copy of the Arabic *Kalila wa-Dimnah* and its 11th century Greek translation *Stephanites kai Ichnelates* by Symeon Seth. The comparison of their differences will help to characterize the educated and careful manner of the nameless Arab copyist and their concern for female matters and roles in society as well as their religious deliberations. For the Greek, critical thinking in the shape of religious doubts, harsh political criticism and even biographical remarks are

inserted and complemented by an equally uncompromising translation style. Placing these two texts side by side does not only demonstrate how copyists and translators are scribes in their own right, but also offers us a glimpse of the writing-personas producing these texts.

THE VOICE IN BYZANTINE GRAMMATICAL AND RHETORICAL THOUGHT

Baukje van den Berg, Vienna

This paper will explore reflections on the notion of “voice” in Byzantine grammatical and rhetorical scholarship. It asks how Byzantine scholars define the voice, how they envisage its relation to performance, and how, in their view, it is inscribed in the text. In their commentaries on authoritative works such as Dionysius Thrax’s *Art of Grammar* and Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, Byzantine scholars explain that excellent delivery involves imitating the diverse voices of different characters: women and old people, for instance, should sound differently from men. At the same time, they criticize audiences for being carried away by the theatricality of performance: the ideal listener should recognize the skill of the author underlying these successfully represented voices. Voice is thus not a function of oral delivery only, but is inscribed in the text at the moment of composition.

In explaining and expanding on ancient ideas, Byzantine grammarians and rhetoricians open interesting perspectives on the relation between author, character, and performer in the composition and delivery of a text, as well

as on the aural aesthetics of their voices. Byzantine scholars interpret the views of ancient authorities in terms relevant to contemporary literary culture. Their discussion of the textual and acoustic qualities of the voice therefore sheds light on some of the principles governing the production and consumption of literature in their time. This means that a close analysis of their reflections can be expected to advance our understanding of the construction and representation of characters in different kinds of Byzantine literature.

MALALAS ON INDIVIDUALITY

Christophe Erismann, Vienna

In his *Chronography*, a history of the world since its creation, the sixth-century historian John Malalas offers more than a hundred descriptions of historical or literary figures: Homeric heroes, apostles and some emperors. This paper will attempt to reconstruct the conception of individuality developed by Malalas, not explicitly (as he does not theorise the problem), but as implicit in his practice of briefly characterising given individuals. What properties are used to describe an individual? Are they solely physical in nature? Are they ordered or arranged according to a certain priority? I will then propose the hypothesis that the conception of individuality tacitly developed by Malalas in his *soma-to-(psycho-)grammata* to use the terminology of H. Hunger, is very close to the explanation of individuality theorised by the third-century Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry, in his

explanation of the constitution of the individual by a bundle of accidental properties. I will then discuss whether the proximity with – or even the adoption of – the Porphyrian model, which emphasises certain types of property, does confirm the interpretation of J. N. Ljubarskij, who stresses that the human being was considered by Malalas, in contrast to the ancient historians, much more dependent on divine authority, devoid of influence on the course of events.

HUMAN NETWORKS AND HISTORIOGRAPHY: CONSTRUCTING THE CHARACTER OF "FRIEND" AND "FELLOW SCHOLAR" IN THE PROEMS OF BYZANTINE HISTORIOGRAPHY

Eirene-Sophia Kiapidou, Patras

Proems of all kinds constitute a special communication situation between the author and the reader. The reader is offered an advance commentary on a text not yet read, while the author, in a way, reveals himself/herself to the audience of his/her time in the finishing process of text publishing. In the context of my recent research on the proems of Byzantine historiography, I argue that Byzantine authors deliberately recycle older narrative models and ideas in order to state their own purpose in writing, to explain the reasons that led them to write the focal work, and to outline the principles they followed in doing so. They thus provide us with valuable first hand testimonies on the praxis and theory of writing history in Byzantium; in other words, on how Byzantine history writers

composed their works and what they considered as the ideal text.

The present workshop has motivated me to examine a different aspect of these proems: their evidence on the authors' friendships and personal connections with certain (named or unnamed) people, who are declared to have played a decisive role as far as the authors' engagement with historiography is concerned. In my presentation I will discuss a wide range of proems of Byzantine historiography from the 4th to the 15th century with the aim of exploring the construction of the characters of "friend" and "fellow scholar" as well as to understand the various ways these frequently appearing characters are connected with the composition of the following texts.

PRINCESS IN DISTRESS: ANONYMOUS FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE BYZANTINE SIEGE OF IKONION (1146)

Roman Shliakthin, Bucharest

The Byzantine siege of Ikonion (1146) was an important event in the early years of Manuel I Komnenos (r. 1143–1180). The information about this event comes from the narratives of John Kinnamos and Niketas Choniates. These narratives are very different. One of those differences is the presence of two anonymous female Seljuk characters, a wife of the sultan of Ikonion Mas'ud I (r. 1118–1156) and the sultan's daughter. During the siege, Byzantine warriors robbed the Seljuk graves outside the city walls. Kinnamos states that Manuel Komnenos in person

stopped plundering and wrote a letter to the sultans' wife. The anonymous wife (who probably was of Eastern Slavic princely origin) wanted to thank Manuel for his actions by sending a flock of sheep. In the narrative of Niketas Choniates, the main actor is the daughter of sultan Mas'ut who addressed plundering Byzantine warriors from the height of Ikonian walls and in a proper speech asked them not to disturb the Muslim tombs out of the walled perimeter. The aim of the paper is to investigate the functions of anonymous Seljuk female characters in two Byzantine narratives. For Kinnamos, the anonymous wife of the sultan is another object of imperial magnanimity who tries to answer Manuel's letter in kind. For Choniates, the situation is different. The ability of the barbaric princess and the wife of runaway Komnenian prince to address Byzantine army from the walls demonstrates the reverse of the gendered roles in *Historia* and hints at the future failure of Byzantine-Seljuk relations, culminating with the gendered description of the battle at Myriokephalon (1176).

„SHE... BLAMED NATURE MOST OF ALL“: ANNA KOMNENE AS A CHARACTER OF NIKETAS CHONIATES

Artemy Streletsky, American University of Central Asia

It is rarely pointed out that Anna Komnene, the leading Byzantine historian of her age, was also a character in the work of Niketas Choniates, another renowned Byzantine historian and a continuator of Anna. In his narrative, Niketas presents Anna as a controversial and

unhappy personality who failed to gain the throne and had to spend the rest of her life in a monastery because of the restrictions of her „nature“. This paper aims to investigate the construction of Anna's character in the work of Niketas through a systematic study of his concept of „nature“. Last not least an attempt will be made to put Niketas' work in the wider context of the Byzantine understanding of gender.

THE VOICE OF A 'REAL WOMAN': EULOGIA'S CORRESPONDENCE RECONSIDERED

Renate Burri, University Fribourg (CH)

The manuscript San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Real Biblioteca, Φ. III. 11 (Andrés 230) preserves, among other texts, the correspondence between Irene Choumnaina Palaiologina and an anonymous spiritual father who has been identified by Juan Sergio Nadal Cañellas with Gregory Akindynos. Although this identification is not approved by every scholar, the eight letters by Irene (who at that time must already have lived in the monastery of Philanthropos Soter in Constantinople under the name Eulogia) are an immediate testimony of the voice of a Byzantine, Constantinopolitan 'real woman'. Being the daughter of the noble and rich statesman Nikephoros Choumnos, she was married at a very young age to John Palaiologos, the son of emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos.

After the early death of her husband, she became a nun in the above-mentioned monastery and later on actively supported

anti-palamists. The correspondence has been dated to the years 1332–1338. In this paper, I will present what we can learn from a close reading of Irene's letters, referring particularly to the author's 'factual' background (e.g. her descent, education etc.) and character (how does she express herself, what emotions are expressed in her letters, what does she reveal about herself?). In a second step, I will analyse the interaction between Irene as a noble Constantinopolitan woman with a certain level of education, and her spiritual father, a maybe slightly younger, well-educated monk with anti-palamite tendencies, in order to better understand what role gender and class played in this relationship. The outcome of these examinations may contribute to a clearer understanding of character construction of historical or fictional (female) characters in Byzantine texts.

ROLE-PLAYING THE HERETIC: CHARACTERIZATION THROUGH SPEECH IN ANTI-ICONOCLASTIC HAGIOGRAPHY

Lev Lukhovitskiy, Moscow

Portraying a villain is always a challenge for a hagiographer who has to oscillate between the polemical urge to dehumanize the human adversary of a saint and the requirement for psychological verisimilitude. Making the antagonist evil incarnate is good for the needs of theological polemics but impedes self-identification of the reader with the hero and eventually contradicts the professed goal of hagiography

— to encourage emulation of the saint. However, there is a caveat in making the adversary too close to the prototype, too: if he or she is allowed to speak his or her own language, the villain's voice can eventually outweigh that of the protagonist and even to sow the seeds of doubt about the 'right' doctrine.

Most writers who praised the iconophile saints preferred to sacrifice authenticity for the sake of theological polemics. The iconoclast persecutors are denied the right to use their real — in essence, icon-friendly — vocabulary and are forced to speak a completely made-up language. Yet, a small group of hagiographers took a different approach: they used speech characterization to make the iconoclasts complex human beings with their own — albeit wrong — worldview. Interestingly, this device used not only such writers as Sabas the Monk and the anonymous hagiographer of Michael the Synkellos, whose literary activity falls in the immediate aftermath of the iconoclastic controversy, but also the writers of the Early Palaeologan period, Ioannes Staurakios and the anonymous biographer of Theodosia of Constantinople. The paper will argue that the few extant traces of the authentic iconoclast language are fruits of literary imagination rather than of a conscious attempt to preserve the historical truth.

**NARRATOLOGICAL STUDY OF
DIALOGUE IN THE LATE BYZANTINE
ROMANCE: ANOTHER STEP TOWARDS
UNDERSTANDING CHARACTER?**

Zuzana Dzurillová, Prague

In Byzantine Greek and other pre-modern literature, the male characters commonly appear patriarchal, hegemonic, and ambitious. In contrast, the female characters typically embody humility, honesty, and devotion to (primarily male) authorities. Both are entities with human exteriority and internal mental states. An omniscient heterodiegetic narrator introduces them by means of proper names, definite descriptions, personal pronouns and appearance descriptions. Actions, deeds, and verbal expression (although principally determined by the author/narrator) also define characters. In my contribution, I aim to explore characters, predominantly protagonists, in the corpus of late Byzantine romances (the late 13th – mid. 15th centuries) through a three-step analysis of their voices as represented in dialogic parts of the narratives. First, I detect various linguistic features that constitute dialogue structure, including dialogue length and turn length, to show how the protagonists' interaction resembles/varies in the narratives under investigation. Second, I examine the words and verbal expressions in terms of semantics and stylistics to identify the overall tone of the protagonists' utterances to each other. Third, I reflect on the narrative functionality of dialogue regarding the narratives' macro-structure. Besides enriching the study of Byzantine literature, the exploration of dialogue as a prominent space for a character's self-expression can advance the narrative theory on speech representation in pre-modern literature and – not least – contribute to the discussion on the primary social patterns in Byzantine society as far as the opposition of male vs female is concerned.

MAN-FORMING': REPRESENTING THE FEMALE, PT. 1

Andrew Walker White, Fairfax

As we examine, critically, the presentation and representation of the female in Byzantine literature—a literature largely produced by and for men—the question arises: if it's the men who are creating female characters, and men who are performing these female characters in their *theatra* for other men, how is this form of Byzantine 'drag' performance constructed?

One effective means of determining the Byzantine male concept of the performing female, of 'man-forming,' is through the grammatical scholia. Pre-pubescent males were expected to master the performance of a variety of female roles drawn from Homer, Euripides and beyond, memorizing and performing texts which often included extended speeches in the female voice.

The pre-pubescent vocal range, moreover, matched that of these female characters; and in the highly competitive atmosphere of a typical grammar school, the need to master the feminine voice prior to puberty, prior to the development of a lower vocal register, was paramount. The scholia offer crucial evidence for how both the mind and the voice of the female was constructed, from childhood onward, in the male imagination.

The mastery of the feminine in grammar school, moreover, was essential to the student's progress in rhetoric school, where they spent considerable time creating speeches focused on the feminine—our extant progymnasmata, on the subject of *ethopoieia*, almost always

feature speeches of classical female personae in moments of extreme grief and torment as examples.

This presentation will draw from select scholia focused on female speeches, and point towards key features of the performance dynamics of the male-filtered female presence in Byzantine poetry and literature.

CHARACTER CONSTRUCTION WITHIN THE CONSTRAINTS OF SCRIPTURE: MAGDALEN AND THEOTOKOS IN THE CHRISTOSPASCHON

Margaret Mullet, Edinburgh

Although the Theotokos dominates all three plays of the Christos Paschon trilogy and the chorus throughout is made up of women of Galilee the third play is the one where female roles are explored more fully; at the same time the Theotokos shares the limelight with other women, notably Mary Magdalen. I should like to explore two issues in this paper. One is more familiar to Romanos scholars: how to develop a character known from a very few biblical verses and engage the reader/congregation in sympathy, empathy or admiration. The other is the question of the character construction of what are not totally fictive people: the entities in this story world are envisaged as moving across and responding to multiple texts—in gospel narratives, apocryphal gospels, hymns, homilies and Lives and in real life as well. In the Resurrection play, the gospel roles given to Mary Magdalen and the nameless

myrrhophores are expanded and redistributed to the Virgin (who is the protagonist of the whole trilogy), the Magdalen, and the chorus, with brief references to Mary the mother of Mark and two other Maries. This female world of courage, hope and celebration with its characters played by three actors is contrasted with the male world of the comic sub-plot in which the guard, the priests and the governor, also played by three actors, conspire in a cover-up. While they try out their story on a sceptical Pilate, the Magdalen is bringing the good news of the Resurrection to the male disciples, several times castigated for their inadequacy by the Theotokos. The only other male character, apart from supernatural apparitions, is a single messenger who is cut down to size by the Theotokos. The paper will look at gospel harmony, ethopoia, performance issues (briefly) and the process of characterization.

BIBLICAL AND EARLY CHRISTIAN CHARACTERS IN PSELLOS' FUNERAL ORATION FOR THE PATRIARCH KEROULLARIOS: POLITICAL ROLE OF CHARACTER CONSTRUCTION IN ELEVENTH-CENTURY BYZANTIUM
Aleksandar Andjelović, Vienna

One of the masterpieces of Byzantine funeral oratory is a lengthy funeral oration that Psellos composed around 1060 for then-deceased patriarch Michael Keroullarios. Despite its informative and intriguing character, this funeral oration has been only edited and translated, but it has not received much scholarly attention.

In it, as expected, Psellos presents Keroullarios as the champion of virtue with a godlike soul and philosophical mind and outlines Keroullarios' childhood, education, parents, and brother, relationship to the emperors and empresses, his Christian humility and mercy, his service as the patriarch, and his 'angelic' nature. Apart from these conventional topoi of funeral oratory, however, the narrative of this funeral oration is interwoven with several main motifs that are telling for the immediate social and political context: Keroullarios' 'martyrdom' is constructed through the figure of Job, his honesty and outspokenness (*parrhesia*) on all occasions is described as similar to those of the early Christian martyrs, his anointment as performed by Samuel, his patriarchate compared to Athanasius of Alexandria, Chrysostom, and Gregory of Nazianzos, and the oration is to a large extent modelled on Gregory's funeral oration for Basil of Caesarea. In addition, this funeral oration informs us about the setting of its performance and its elite Constantinopolitan audience, thus allowing us not only to situate such a public speech in its immediate context but also to speculate about the role of character-construction in a public speech in eleventh-century Constantinople. Instead of reading funeral oratory simply as literature or as rhetorical exercise, I approach it as a part of a ceremonial and memorial ritual with immediate political implications. This paper will thus discuss what can be gleaned from textual analysis of this funeral oration in general and of the character building Psellos employs in his portrayal of the deceased patriarch in particular, thus aiming at demonstrating that

the usage of biblical or, for that matter, any ancient characters in Byzantium was not only a literary trope but also an integral part and political tool in maintaining the tradition within the Church. This paper will thus “supply insights into the Byzantine society and culture,” which is one of the underlying questions this conference is addressing.

MALE VOICES ON FEMALE CHARACTER - FUNERAL ORATIONS ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF EMPRESS HELENA DRAGAŠ PALAIOLOGINA
Maja Nikolić, Belgrade

Five funeral orations composed on the occasion of the death of Empress Helena Dragaš Palaiologina have been preserved up to present day. George Scholarios, John Argyropoulos and George Gemistos Plethon composed one each and addressed them to the Empress’s son, Emperor Constantine XI Dragaš. The other two, on the other hand, were composed by John Eugenikos and they were addressed to the Empress’s other son, Despot Demetrios, and to his wife, basillisa Theodora. All of these five orations, however, tell very little about Helena Dragaš Palaiologina herself and are completely different in terms of the motive for their composition as well as the message that each one of them wanted to express. While all the mentioned texts contain an affirmative characterization of the late Empress, constructing, in accordance with the requirements of the genre, the image of an ideal woman as a good wife,

mother and nun, some of them actually express open criticisms thus stressing her political role and disapproving her political choices and decisions. Namely, while John Argyropoulos’s paramythetikos presented a political call to Emperor Constantine XI to turn to the West and embrace the Church Union, John Eugenikos’s paramythetikoi invite despot Demetrios, as one of the leaders of the anti-Union party, to abolish the Union and thus oppose the official pro-union politics of the Empire. According to Eugenikos’s claims, it was Empress Helena Dragaš who supported the Union of the Churches. It is the aim of this paper to show how the authors of these texts used the character of the late Empress to express their personal political stands.

THE CONSTRUCTION AND PERFORMANCE OF THE PATRONESS'S GRIEF IN IOANNES CHORTASMENOS'S THRENOS EPITAPHIOS FOR ANDREAS AND MANUEL ASAN
Callum Hendleman, Edinburgh

The late Byzantine period witnessed a significant uptick in the production of funerary orations financed through aristocratic patronage. Attested in numerous rhetorical genres, such as Monody, Epitaphios Logos and Threnos, the function of these texts as pieces of oral performance for the contemporaries of the deceased and patron provided ample opportunity for the projection of a public-facing identity, carefully constructed to portray both deceased and patron in a manner which was both laudable and legitimising. A further innovation,

originating in the Komnenian period but used extensively by late Byzantine writers, was the fusion of *ethopoia* with verse compositions, typically epigrams, but also the *epitaphioi* of authors such as Nikephoros Gregoras and Manuel Philes, composed “as if in the person of” their patron. Given that women and their voices are underrepresented in the Byzantine textual record, the significance of these texts lies in the fact that they offer a sizeable corpus of constructed female voices, oftentimes of an aristocratic patroness. The largest of these, Ioannes Chortasmenos’s *Threnos Epitaphios* for Andreas and Manuel Asan, “spoken by the most noble Asanina”, will be the focus of this paper. Firstly, through a reappraisal of the text’s punctuation attested in Chortasmenos’s autograph manuscript (ONB.Suppl.Gr.075), I shall demonstrate that the text was geared toward an oral performance in the presence of Asanina’s contemporaries. I will then turn to the text itself, highlighting several aspects which not only point toward Asanina being its patroness, but also demonstrate that she had a hand in shaping the constructed character therein. By setting the text against its performative context and wider Byzantine attitudes toward grief and emotionality, I shall demonstrate that Asanina, through Chortasmenos, constructed an identity which emphasised her maternal relationships over her marital one, whilst also grieving in a manner seen as laudable in the late Byzantine thought-world.



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