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An Unrehearsed Cue Script Perspective on Love's Labour's Lost

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An Unrehearsed Cue Script Perspective on Love's Labour's Lost

Andy Kirtland

- 1 The cue script is an important tool to understanding the working practices and construction of Shakespeare's plays. It is a way to impart pertinent information to actors while enabling them to perform with little to no rehearsal. When examining *Love's Labour's Lost* through a cue script, as one of Shakespeare's actors would have done, influences and directions for the actor's performance emerge. By looking at excerpts from Berowne's cue script, and some possible effects when applying basic rules for staging a performance without group rehearsals, we see how Shakespeare crafts characters and directs his plays using a number of devices including shifting between verse and prose, cue lines, false cues, capitalization and forms of address.
- 2 Shakespeare's actors and their contemporaries approached plays differently from their modern counterparts as evidenced in the research of Tiffany Stern in her books *Shakespeare in Parts* and *Rehearsals from Shakespeare to Sheridan*.¹ Actors never received the entire text of a play, but rather absorbed their parts through cue scripts containing only the last few words (or last word) of their cues, the lines they were to speak, entrances, exits and other pertinent stage directions that could not be written into the text. These cue scripts, or scrolls, consisted of several pages glued or stitched together, and attached at either end to wooden rods. Stern and her uncle Patrick Tucker put their research into practice with his company The Original Shakespeare Company as recorded in Tucker's account of the experience: *The Secrets of Acting Shakespeare*.² The Unrehearsed Cue Script Technique explored in this paper is a modern approach based upon the work of Stern and Tucker and evolves from personal experience using cue scripts, assembled from the First Folio, in performance, production and teaching with The New England Shakespeare Festival and my theatre company, The Unrehearsed Shakespeare Project.³
- 3 According to Stern's research, actors prepared on their own, learning their parts from cue scripts with possible help from book-keepers or stage managers, and possibly a synopsis of the plot and characters. Full group rehearsals were minimal, and most likely a

complete run-through of the play did not occur before the opening performance. Under these conditions, pertinent information regarding character, context and blocking would need to be given to the actors within the limited confines of their cue scripts. Clues can be found in cue lines and capitalized words. Transitions are marked by variations in the verse and shifts between verse and prose. The evolution of the text in a scroll often mirrors the journey a character takes on the stage, thus providing a map to guide his performance.

- 4 Cue scripts also act as a director by telling the actor how and when he should move. Two basic rules for blocking scenes without rehearsals, expressed in "The Ten Commandments for Staging Unrehearsed Shakespeare" by Demitra Papadinis,⁴ Artistic Director of the New England Shakespeare Festival are: Cross to the person to whom you are speaking, if you do not know to whom you are speaking, cross to the person who gave you your cue; and: Action to the word, taken from Hamlet's famous advice to the players: "Sute the Action to the Word, / the Word to the Action" (*Hamlet*, III.i.9556-7).
- 5 There are subtleties to crossing to the person to whom you are speaking. An actor *knows* to whom he is speaking when he explicitly names a character or describes them in a way that makes their identity obvious: using titles such as "Lady" when there is only one female on stage, or "my King." If ambiguity exists as to whom the actor is speaking, he should address and cross to his cue-giver – at least initially. Opportunities may exist to change the focus of the speech. Because the actor is often ignorant of whom he is speaking and crossing to, this device can be deliberately employed by the playwright to trick him into false assumptions for comedic or dramatic purposes, as we will shall see.
- 6 The playwright uses personal pronouns to direct the actor as to *how* he should cross. The familiar pronouns "thee," "thou," or "thine" direct a cross toward someone and an invasion of personal space. They can also move conversations from the public to private sphere. "You" and "your" are more formal and they direct a stage cross that leaves space between the characters. They can even direct a cross away. Demonstrative pronouns work the same way: "this" and "these" describe closeness, even touching, while "that" and "those" demand distance. These two rules keep the stage picture constantly moving, and by motivating blocking they prevent a play from becoming a group recitation of 'park and bark' Shakespeare.
- 7 Let us begin our cue script perspective by examining Berowne's first few cue lines, without his text, for what they reveal about context and character. Cue lines are more than just prompts for speech. While not belonging to the character, they provide the actor with important information. The length of cue lines in a professional actor's scroll is a matter of debate, but here we will use three word cues.

.....living in Philosophie.
away from these.
to the rest.
should not know.
god-like recompence.
to vaine delight.
grow the weeding.
How follows that?
In reason nothing.
of the Spring.
home Berowne: adieu.
thee from shame.

.....Foure dayes ago.
that did I.
shall possibly devise.
was quite forgot.
on mere necessitie.
for my Minstrelsie.

I.i.32-183

- 8 “Living in Philosophie,” “away from these,” and “to the rest” depict a philosophic lifestyle away from something, either to some kind of rest or to the rest of something else. Together with “should not know,” “god-like recompence,” and “to vaine delights” these cues describe the play and give clues to Berowne’s character. The Berowne-actor may very well feel “god-like” when looking at his verbose and thick scroll, and his early cues give permission to perform in this manner. The next several cues seem to offer little, but “thee from shame” is suggestive. Whose shame? Is it Berowne’s since he answers the cue, or does he defend someone else? Whatever the actor’s choice in private study, he must prepare to be challenged in public performance.
- 9 After each of these cues, Berowne speaks. In Shakespeare, language is an extremely strong indication of character, and the evolution of language can indicate evolution of character. The text for these cues consist of 108 lines (only six of which are prose), nine speeches ending in rhyming couplets, one speech ending with an *abab* rhyme scheme and only 17 lines of verse fitting into no rhyming pattern. He finishes three couplets started by other characters, expressing close connections between Berowne and the character(s) with whom he rhymes. Rhyming can be a character’s conscious choice to be funny, clever, witty, sarcastic, and so on. By choosing to rhyme, Berowne expresses control over his speech and therefore self-control and confidence.
- 10 The punctuation in this section also tells the actor that his character is in control of his thoughts. Berowne has only one mid-line stop, a question mark. There are 13 colons, all of which appear at the end of a line. No thought is stopped with a period before the end of a verse line. Using punctuation in this manner, Shakespeare is telling the actor that the character is clear in his thoughts. There is no wavering, no searching for what is to come next. The speaker is confident about what he is saying.
- 11 The playwright also marks significant ideas or important character traits with capitalization.
- 12 Aside from the beginnings of verse lines, proper names or titles, Berowne’s first 108 lines contain the following capitalized words: Ladies, Court, Mistresse(s), Booke(s), Sunne, Godfather(s), Starre, Spring, Summer, Birds, Rose, Snow, Angell, Embassie, Maide, Article, Lawes and Knight. Some of these capitalized words tell the actor how to frame an argument:

At Christmas I no more desire a Rose,
 Then wish a Snow in Mayes new fangled shows:
 But like of each thing that in season growes.
 I.i.110-112

Shakespeare also uses them to draw attention to subtext or double, even triple, entendres. “Mistresse(s)” has connotations of both female masters and lovers. “Court” can be the place of royal governance, a legal court or the act of seduction. A “Knight” is a devoted follower, but of what: the “Lawes” and “Articles,” the “Mistresse(s),” or both?

While these words are taken out of *context*, this was the *only* text given to the actor. Clues and cues must be taken from anywhere the playwright may have left them.

- 13 In only three of the speeches in this section does Berowne *know* to whom he is speaking, and therefore to whom he should cross on stage.

.....living in Philosophie.

I can but say their protestation over,
So much, deare Liege, I have already sworne,
That is, to live and study heere three yeeres.

I.i.32-35

.....away from these.

Let me say no my Liedge, and if you please,
I onely swore to study with your grace,
And stay heere in your Court for three yeeres space.

I.i.49-52

.....shall possibly devise.

This Article my Liedge your selfe must breake,
For well you know here comes in Embassie
The French Kings daughter, with your selfe to speake:

I.i.137-141

In each instance Berowne addresses the King and therefore crosses to the King. The assumption can be made that the King gives these cues, since he is being answered, but this may not be the case.

- 14 This scene contains ample opportunities for the actor and his scene partners to suit actions to words: “inherit paine,” “To seeke the light of truth,” “please the eye,” “Small have continuall plodders,” “greene geesse are a breeding,” “cause to sing,” “clymbe ore the house to unlock the gate” and “loosing her tongue.” The Berowne-actor is unaware of other directions found in other cue scripts, and must be constantly engaged and listening for them.
- 15 The cue script alerts the actor to a transition occurring sometime around his cue line “Dukes owne person” (I.i.189) by turning from full lines of rhyming verse to short lines of prose.

.....Dukes owne person.

This fellow, What would'st?

.....flesh and blood.

This is he.

.....the magnificent Armado.

How low soever the matter, I hope in God for
high words.

.....grant us patience.

To heare, or forbear hearing.

.....to forbear both.

Well sir, be it as the stile shall give us cause to
clime in the merrinesse.

.....with the manner.

In what manner?

.....in some forme.

For the following sir.

.....Letter with attention?

As we would heare an Oracle.

.....Adriana de Armado.
 This is not so well as I looked for, but the best
 that ever I heard.
so strongly sworne.
 Ile lay my head to any good mans hat,
 These oathes and lawes will prove an idle scorne.
 Sirra, come on.
sit downe sorrow.
 EXIT
 I.i.189-305

However, it leaves him ignorant of the reason for this change. From the unknown event until his first exit, Berowne has nine speeches, eight of which are in prose and are only one sentence long; his only three verse lines are monosyllabic but for three words. His forms of address are also ambiguous, except for his last line, "Sirra," addressed to someone of lower class or rank, or to someone he treats as such.

- 16 From the full text we know Berowne's speech is affected by the entrance of Constable Dull and the clown, Costard. One exchange between Berowne and Costard illustrates a possible cause for this change in Berowne:

CLOWNE. The matter is to me sir, as concerning Jaquenetta. | The manner of
 it is, I was taken with the manner.
 BEROWNE. In what manner?
 CLOWNE. In manner and forme following sire, all those three. | I was seene
 with her in the Mannor house, sitting with | her upon the Forme, and taken
 following her into the | Parke: which put together, is in manner and forme |
 following. Now sir for the manner; It is the manner | of a man to speake to a
 woman, for the forme in some forme.
 BEROWNE. For the following sir.
 I.i.208-218

- 17 Depending on the length of cues given to professional actors (one to three words), Costard gives Berowne several false cues to speak. A false cue occurs when an actor hears his cue to speak, but the cue he hears does not end the preceding speech. If only one word cues are given, then Berowne's cue "manner" is spoken twice; his next, "forme," is given *five* times. Because these are the last words in his speeches, the Costard-actor knows that he is giving false cues and will continue speaking, but the Berowne-actor will not know he receives false cues until the performance. The result for the audience is that Berowne tries to hurry Costard's explanation along, but the clown rides over his interruptions. No longer the center of attention, Berowne's own speech becomes terse, short and clipped.
- 18 When Berowne returns in the second act, he has not recovered the exuberance with which he began the play. The playwright deliberately keeps the actor and the character off-balance. To illustrate how Shakespeare can intentionally mislead his actors for dramatic purposes we will examine the full text of his first interaction with Rosaline.

NAVARRÉ. Madam, I will, if sodainly I may.
 PRINCESSE. You will the sooner that I were away,
 For you'll prove perjurd if you make me stay.
 BEROWNE. Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?
 ROSALINE. Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?
 BEROWNE. I know you did.
 II.i.113-118

Berowne crosses to and addresses the actor who cues him with “make me stay.” His question “Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?” is assumed (by many who have read the play) to be the moment he (re)connects with Rosaline, with whom he shortly falls in love. However, by following the rules mentioned earlier, Berowne addresses the *Princess*. The Princess cannot speak to this intrusion, not being cued, but upon hearing her cue Rosaline crosses to Berowne and repeats the question that then starts the rest of their exchange.

- 19 If the actors cross to the person to whom they are speaking, the audience experiences Berowne mistaking the identity of one woman, only to discover the lady he thinks he is talking to is there unnoticed by him (a mistake he will repeat in Act v, disguised as a Russian). The playwright marks this entire exchange all sides with the formal pronoun “you.” This is an open conversation, not private or intimate in any way. Everyone on stage and in the audience witnesses this mistake. Is this a momentous revelation that Berowne may be the kind of man who forgets the women he has danced with? Hardly, and it does not change any major themes of the play. It immediately illustrates Berowne’s immaturity and Rosaline’s straightforwardness.
- 20 In this moment, the actor is unaware that he is talking to the wrong woman. He is put in the same embarrassing situation as his character. This happens often for an actor when approaching a play from the perspective of a cue script. The playwright creates moments in such a way that his performers do not have to worry about pretense. His characters and actors make their discoveries at the same time. It is possible that the original actor was made aware with whom Berowne had danced. However, given the mechanics of cue scripts, the playwright probably crafted this *faux pas*. By having Berowne talk to the wrong woman the first time he speaks to a woman, Shakespeare reinforces the character’s lack of ability to fruitfully communicate with the opposite sex as is illustrated in the rest of the exchange:

.....ask the question?
 You must not be so quicke.
with such questions.
 Your wit's too hot, it speeds too fast, 'twill tire.
in the mire.
 What time a day?
fooles should aske.
 Now faire befall your maske.
face it covers.
 And send you many lovers.
you be none.
 Nay then will I be gone.
 from long living.
 I cannot stay thanks-giving.
 II.i.119-127

These seven lines, six of which are short verse lines, contain only five polysyllabic words. He finishes four couplets, but lacks confidence, energy and eloquence. This becomes a theme for Berowne: when talking to women, his rhymes are forced or internal. His struggle to speak to women is his struggle to have relationships with them.

- 21 After this first exchange with Rosaline, Berowne is no longer himself. His following 64 lines of text contain two entrances, an exit, at least two shifts into prose and 13 short

lines of verse. He only rhymes one couplet and shares none. He loses his self-control as he loses control of his verse. The cue script offers a reason for the variance of the character.

.....print: gardon, remuneration.
 O, and I forsooth in love,
 I that have beene loves whip?
 III.i.164-166

This is the first time Berowne mentions being in love, and his cue for these lines is: "remuneration," i.e. payment. The actor knows that he speaks of his love for Rosaline because he has given Costard a letter to deliver to her. However, his description of Rosaline is not flattering, and he ends with a couplet announcing, "Some men must love my Lady, and some Jone" (III.i.197); Jone being a "designation of a peasant girl."⁵ He must pay for being in love, for breaking his bachelor vows "to love the worst of all" (187).

- 22 As another surprise for the actor, "remuneration" is again a false cue given by Costard. Love is an obstacle to Berowne's self-image, and the playwright gives the actor an obstacle to overcome in his confession.
- 23 Berowne's metamorphosis from happy bachelor to a slave of love is fully manifest in his next entrance when he delivers his longest block of prose:

.....to our recreation.
 ENTER BEROWNE WITH A PAPER IN HIS HAND, ALONE
 The King he is hunting the Deare, I am coursing my selfe. They have pitcht a Toyle, I am toying in a pytch, pitch that defiles; defile, a foule word: Well, set thee downe sorrow; for so they say the foole said, and so say I, and I the foole: Well proved wit. By the Lord this Love is as mad as Ajax, it kills sheepe, it kills mee, I a sheepe: Well proved againe a my side. I will not love; if I do hang me: yfaith I will not. O but her eye: by this light, but for her eye, I would not love her; yes, for her two eyes. Well, I doe nothing in the world but lye, and lye in my throate. By heaven I doe love, and it hath taught mee to Rime, and to be mallicholie: and here is part of my Rime, and heere my mallicholie. Well, she hath one a'my Sonnets already, the Clowne bore it, the Foole sent it, and the Lady hath it: sweet Clowne, sweeter Foole, sweetest Lady. By the world, I would not care a pin, if the other three were in. Here comes one with a paper, God give him grace to grone.
 IV.iii.351-371

The capital words here sum up his situation neatly: "Deare," "Toyle," "Love," "Rime," "Sonnets," "Clowne," "Foole," and "Lady." A stage direction tells us that Berowne enters "with a paper in his hand" (the only prop mentioned in Berowne's stage directions) and he is "alone." By setting these pieces of information in a stage direction the playwright imparts them with a particular significance. The paper will be of importance in this scene. This is the first time the playwright wants the actor to *know* he is *solus*, and he is directing the actor to prepare this speech as such.

- 24 "I would not care a pin, if the other three were in" (IV.iii.369-370), he declares at the end of his speech, and true to these words, upon discovering Navarre, Dumaine and Longaville are also enamored with their own ladies, Berowne recovers his control from the beginning of the play.

Now step I forth to whip hypocrisie.
 Ah good my Liedge, I pray thee pardon me.

Good heart, What grace hast thou thus to reprove
 These wormes for loving, that art most in love? [...]
 Where lies thy griefe? O tell me good Dumaine;
 And gentle Longavill, where lies thy paine?
 And where my Liedges? all about the brest:
 A Candle hoal
 IV.iii.503-526

He chastises his friends with 23 full lines of regular pentameter, all rhyming couplets except the last line and a half. He is clearly talking to (at least) the King, Dumaine and Longaville, crossing to them as he does so. There are many cues to action in these lines: "teares," "Minstrels," "asham'd," "foll'ry," "sighes," "grones," "transformed to a Gnat," "whipping a Gigge," "lies thy griefe," "lies thy paine." He relishes that he has company as a lovesick fool in this joyous, physical speech.

- 25 In Act V, the men disguise themselves as Russians to woo their ladies. This scheme fails when the ladies, forewarned of this Russian ruse, disguise themselves and dupe the men into confessing their feelings to the wrong women (Berowne's second *faux pas*). After having their masked advances repulsed, the men return as themselves only to be confronted with their failure, and Berowne's cue script directs another conversion.

..... comming from Muscovie.
 Thus poure the stars down plagues for perjury.
 Can any face of brasse hold longer out?
 Heere stand I, Ladie dart thy skill at me,
 Bruise me with scorne, confound me with a flout.
 Thrust thy sharpe wit quite through my ignorance.
 Cut me to peeces with thy keene conceit:
 And I will wish thee never more to dance,
 Nor never more in Russian habit waite. [...]
 And to begin Wench, so God helpe me law,
 My love to thee is sound, sans cracke or flaw.
 V.ii.576-598

He finally rhymes to a woman ("Heere stand I, Ladie") in a mature, easily fluid fashion that until now eluded his conversations with the fairer sex. The confidence and maturity of Berowne's language marks his confidence and maturity. There is neither the flowery pomposity of his earlier tirades to his mates, nor the wild hyperboles of his tormented passion. The playwright even employs the pronouns "thee" and "thy" to create a private, intimate moment away from the others on stage. Berowne invades the personal space of the woman to whom he speaks, and even touches "this white glove."

- 26 The Berowne-actor knows he is speaking to a woman, and he knows he is speaking about his love for her, but it is unclear to *which* woman he is speaking. It is clear that earlier Berowne wrote a letter to Rosaline, and he has professed and defended his love for Rosaline, but there is never evidence in his cue script that he ever speaks to Rosaline. He never says "you, Rosaline." The actor can assume that this is the case, and he will discover if he is correct, but he already has been wrong twice.

.....griefes are double.
 Honest plain words, best pierce the ears of griefe
 And by these badges understand the King,
 For your faire sakes have we neglected time,
 Plaid foule play with our oaths: your beautie Ladies
 Hath much deformed us, fashioning our humors

Even to the opposed end of our intents. [...]
 And even that falshood in it selfe a sinne,
 Thus purifies it selfe, and turnes to grace.
in thy brest.
 And what to me my Love? and what to me?
are so yong.
 Studies my Ladie? Mistresse, looke on me,
 Behold the window of my heart, mine eie:
 What humble suite attends thy answer there,
 Impose some service on me for my love.
impotent to smile.
 To move wilde laughter in the throate of death?
 It cannot be, it is impossible.
 Mirth cannot move a soule in agonie.
of your reformation.
 A twelvemonth? Well: befall what will befall,
 Ile jest a twelvemonth in an Hospitall.
on your way.
 Our woing doth not end like an old Play:
 Jack hath not Gil: these Ladies courtesies
 Might wel have made our sport a Comedie.
 then 'twil end.
 That's too long for a play.
 V.ii.952-1082

In Berowne's final cue lines the playwright directs an unsuspected modulation in tone and circumstance: "greefes are double," "in thy brest," "are so yong," "impotent to smile," "of your reformation," "on your way" and "then 'twil end." A role that began with a verbal bang fizzles out at its conclusion with none of Berowne's recently recovered energy and eloquence.

- 27 There is also a change in punctuation from Berowne's first appearance on stage. In this section there are three colons occurring mid-line, denoting a shift in the character's thought without ending it. The character is unsure of what he will say next. Three question marks also appear mid-line, each ending a thought. Since they come in the middle of a line, that line is completed by a new thought following quickly on the last. The build-up in momentum here is in the shifts made by the character. This is a significant departure from Berowne's first 108 lines of text where the momentum is derived from driving to the end of a well thought-out idea. Now Berowne is off his guard.
- 28 The audience and readers know that the death of the Princess' father has just been announced. This is the first real peril to enter the world of Navarre. The princess and her train must abandon their suitors and return home, leaving instructions for the men on how they can truly prove their love. The Berowne-actor is ignorant of this, again discovering this in tandem with his character.
- 29 Often clues to a character's end appear throughout his cue script, and in the Berowne-actor's scroll there is no indication of a wedding. Revisiting Berowne's cues from Act I, scene I, it is interesting to note that his cues begin with "living in Philosophy" and end with "sit downe sorrow." As earlier stated, the Berowne-actor never *knows* whether or not he ever speaks to Rosaline, so there is no expectation in his text that the two will end up together. While unforeseen, Berowne's deflated conclusion is in many ways seeded throughout his cue script by the playwright.

30 This small tool, the cue script, holds a vast store of shorthand information for actors and can enable troupes of performers to produce entire plays with little to no group preparation. By eliminating information that is not directly pertinent to an actor's independent study of a role, Shakespeare made it possible to produce complex, subtle and entertaining characters while constructing surprising, dramatic situations that both performers and audience discover in the moment of creation. By looking at these texts from the point of view of an actor and his scroll, we can see Shakespeare as a master craftsman, a playwright who forged entire productions from his pen.

NOTES

1. See Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts*, Oxford, OUP, 2000 and Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, Oxford, OUP, 2007.
 2. See Patrick Tucker, *The Secrets of Acting Shakespeare: The Original Approach*, New York, Routledge, 2002.
 3. All quotations, lineation and attributions from the works of William Shakespeare in this paper are taken from *The Applause First Folio of Shakespeare in Modern Type*, prepared and annotated by Neil Freeman, New York and London, Applause Books, 2001. From research done by Tucker, Stern, Papadinis, Freeman and others, and my own practical experience performing, teaching and producing, I believe that the First Folio of 1623 is the closest manuscript that we have to what Shakespeare's actors would have used in performance. Later editions have been edited for a reading audience, and in doing so, clues such as capitalization, lineation and punctuation have been altered in ways that obscure the directions that were meant for actors who used the text for performances.
 4. For a closer look into how Ms. Papadinis approaches the First Folio scripts for performance, see her introductions and annotations to her Frankly Annotated First Folio editions of *Romeo and Juliet*, *As You Like It* and *Macbeth*, available from MacFarland publishing.
 5. Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary, Vol 1.*, New York, Dover, 1971, p. 604.
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ABSTRACTS

Based on how Shakespeare's actors would approach the text, through cue scripts, the Unrehearsed Cue Script Technique is a key to unlock the playwright's directions written into the text. By looking at some excerpts from Berowne's cue script we will see how Shakespeare was able to craft plays in such a way that his actors would be able to perform them with little to no group rehearsal.

Fondée sur la façon dont les acteurs de la troupe de Shakespeare abordaient le texte, à travers la seule connaissance de leur propre rôle, la technique du *Unrehearsed Cue Script* est une approche qui permet de révéler les indications scéniques introduites par le dramaturge dans le texte même. A partir d'extraits du rôle de Berowne, nous allons voir comment Shakespeare réussit à écrire des pièces que ses acteurs pouvaient jouer quasiment sans répétition avec la troupe au complet.

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Mots-clés: script, représentation, répétition, acteur

Keywords: cue script, rehearsal, Love's Labour's Lost, actor

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