



Research article

Dismantling France's Manhood in the Prose Works of Holinshed and Sidney

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Abstract

The socio-political dimension of the word 'manhood' is undoubtedly an indication of the superiority and advancement of the English over the rest of the neighboring countries, in particular France. These prose works define what nationalism is. Furthermore, it was also an indication that reflects the pride and supremacy of England and its citizens. This research aims to explore how the Elizabethans, through these two works, dealt with France and how manhood is deployed in their perspective, and how it is relevant to several epithets such as valor and courage. This study conducted a content analysis with the help of the excerpts from the two literary texts. The study concluded that in both literary works, the authors had shown religious and political bigotry and showed the influence of the Elizabethans. It depicted that Elizabethans were superior in having manhood as compared to the Frenchmen.

Keywords: Elizabethans, Holinshed Chronicles, Sidney, France, the French, manhood.



Gender Equality, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

1. Introduction

Codification of words, ideas, and things is related to digging into their history. It is neither the Académie Française nor Oxford dons who could fix their meaning. It has been a common practice of people through the ages to construe and allude to the heavy illustration through figurative language to visualize the traits or gender of humans. They usually use flowery language and exaggerate. For instances, in the Dictionnaire de la Langue Française that was published in 1876, it was written that 'on ne sait de quel genre il est, s'il est mâle ou femelle, se dit d'un homme très-caché, dont on ne connaît pas les sentiments' (Littré, 1878). It reads in English as "we do not know what gender he is, whether he is male or female, is said of a very hidden man, whose feelings we do not know." Thus, it shows that it is a historical assumption that the gender of a human cannot be construed through bodily appearance or physical traits. However, these are the traits of valor

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and courage that define gender in medieval societies. Concerning the nuanced approach of using the word 'gender' to define sexual characteristics, Williams (1983, 285) quoted Gladstone's remarks of 1878 in which he asserted that 'Athene has nothing of sex except the gender, nothing of the woman except the form' (Williams, 1983, p. 285). Both are illustrations of the unusual or different approaches to attributing gender to a human in early history (Scott, 2007). Moreover, Karras (2003) has described that in the medieval era of Europe, which he observed as a world dominated by men, and every human who did not demonstrate the defined manly attributes, either man or woman, was associated with the feminine characteristics or more notoriously he or she was not a man.

Different societies derived different expectations of men and women. It can be inferred that it is the social construction of gender that implies. In early English society, an ideal character of a man was depicted by societal practices of France, where effeminacy was a more prominent feature in the form of a trait. During that era, France was reckoned as a civilized and polite nation in the European region that had an impact on English society in terms of politeness and softness in conversation, as ideal traits of the gentleman (Cohen, 2002). Provencher and Eilderts (2007) have reported the observation of Lavissee, whom himself asserted that in French society, men used to demonstrate bravery as masculinity while females used to earn power through exhibiting divine powers and male support.

Holinshed's Chronicles is one of the interesting literary works of Raphael Holinshed in which he employed historical sources to depict the characteristic. In this literary piece, Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester (2 Henry VI), and Lady Macbeth (Macbeth) were the main characters focusing on the role of Queen and Mother (Fisher, 2018). This research aims to figure out the way English authors depict France by referring to 'manhood' in the above-stated historical pieces of literature. It mainly emphasizes evaluating the concept of manhood. This research will explore several epithets of manhood, i.e., valor and courage. The evolution of the complex concept of manhood will be traced back from older times to the date.

2. Literature Review

When historians focus on masculinity, they primarily look into the patriarchal patterns that unveil the dimensions of oppression towards women and individual and structural dimensions of the dominance of males (Roper & Tosh, 2021). Given tracing back the history of masculinity, one will come to know that this area of study is modern. However, there are several intricacies at the time of integrating them with other subfields of gender studies. Therefore, in the words of Beasley (2009) has viewed that studying gender has become the 'odd man out.' Beasley (2009) has explored the modernist approach of the thinkers of the 1980s and 1990s, namely Raewyn Connell, Harry Brod, John Stoltenberg, Jeff Hearn, and Bob Pease. According to Michael Schwalbe's (2015) theory of 'manhood acts and inclusive masculinity theory by Eric Anderson (2009), the literature is preoccupied with the ideation of hegemonic masculinity that is characterized by societies. Also, there is an element of hybrid masculinity that mainly focuses on incorporating some ideal attributes that are progressive. It results in shaping new hierarchies in society based on masculinity (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014).

Moreover, there is no literary evidence to relate masculinity with the violence factor to portray the hegemonic depiction of masculinity. According to the manifesto of the mass shooter, Elizabeth Hughes, Christopher Vito, and Amanda Admire have presented their argument while referring to the fact that hegemonic masculine characteristics are defined through a strong physical embodiment and manly prowess. However, they offered an alternative depiction of masculinity while expressing manhood. While alluding to modern French society, Arthur Vuattoux has demonstrated abundant examples that still young men in France show hegemonic masculinity, but the adoption of such gender attributes is associated with their affiliations with the lower class because, in the struggling class, violence is the most prevalent factor (Gottzen, 2018). In other words, Kristi Allain and Barbara Marshall characterized it as marginalized masculinity. Additionally, they asserted that hegemonic masculinity involves giving importance to physical activity, and sports, and celebrating physical competence. Gottzen (2018), while taking a closer look into the published literature in the journals like NORMA and Men and Masculinities in the period 2008-2012, figured out that almost half of the published articles adopted an epistemological approach to explore the study of masculinity and were built on the modernistic framework. However, the rest of the papers adopted a post-modernist approach. Consequently, there is no harm in deriving the conclusion that the modernistic approach is not universally applied as they are parallel to the modernistic approach.

Referring to the books published in 1987, masculinity was an emerging field, and this field was interchangeably known as men's studies. For instance, Hearn (1987) and Connell (1987) published their books, the gender of Oppression and Gender and Power. However, in the post-modern era, rare are examples of specifying gender with masculinity. In the post-modern era, the scholars of humanities propounded the feminist approaches and did a critical evaluation of the ideation of masculinities. Mostly, women scholars contributed to publishing a volume in Men in Feminism that influenced the theorists to review the theory of masculinity with the humanistic approach. They argued that the scholars had not addressed the right questions in this field. There are intricacies and false contextualization in this area of interest.

The study of the genesis of English nationalism is not aptly covered and traced back by the study of church and legal systems. The rise of English nationalism is often associated with geopolitical entities and realities where a monarch or a ruler could exercise his manly rigor and courage to safeguard his territories and maintain social order. In a primitive state, to be a man as a mere qualification of being a ruler was not prevalent. Rather the ability to control and maintain the social order and fight against rebellions, characterizing manhood, were deemed as manhood which was the most important factor considered in a monarch or a ruler. This eminence of safeguarding the territories and borders and maintaining the statehood of a territory originated the concepts of nationalism and manhood in the 18th century. According to Anderson (2006), the fall of the two cultural systems i.e., dynastic realm and religious community gave birth to nationalism which was defined as inherently sovereign and limited to respect the boundaries of other nations beyond the territories. Subsequently, the rise of nationalism was strengthened by language and print which laid the basis of national consciousness. In this way, nations had a variety of challenges, the matters of their origins, their national languages, ethnicity, gender, national and religious rivals, and socio-economic mobility in particular in Britain (Anderson, 2006; Carey-Webb, 2014). Other than its traditional view, English nationalism has been drawn out of different

concepts, inseparable from gender, and monarchical power (Morrow, 2010). For instance, in *Edward II*, Christopher Marlowe, a complex relationship of gender and power dynamics was revealed; however, it did not pay heed to another aspect of a foreigner's arrival to England and his expedited efforts to gain power with a clear demonstration of intertwining nationalistic roots, class, and political effects. In this play, it was portrayed how due to the involvement and attachment of a French man to the king's court, damaged the king's reputation and caused worries among the power circles owing to the relationship between Edward II and Gaveston. It was more than an issue of the same-sex relationship as it transformed into a serious matter of transposition of power between men of two different nations and ranks as Marlow had described the entire play with the nationalistic sentiments with the superiority of England over France or English over French. The information derived by Marlow in *Edward II* is from Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England*. Holinshed described the execution of the king in a victimized manner in a presumption of xenophobic beliefs of English rather than describing him as a "failed sovereign." These xenophobic beliefs were already prevalent in English society as traveling outside the borders of England was not considered a matter of pride and endangered anxiety among them. Warneke (1995) explored that stranger inside and outside England possessed a deep realization of vulnerability due to the prevalence of xenophobic beliefs. While English people did not feel secure leaving England for fear of any cultural assimilation into the English culture. These xenophobic patterns were also observed and documented by Ascham (1968) who expressed his concerns to travel to Italy by vilifying Italians as "condemners of marriage" as well as defamed as "secret countenances." Besides, in this English society, manhood was marked by adult maturity on account of marriage and possessing status held within the house. Also, it was characterized by his assumption of social roles in society with the traits such as self-mastery and internal discipline. The sexual abilities of men were given importance in the concept of manhood; however, it was conditioned with exercising strict self-discipline and control. The absence of such traits was warned as a cause of effeminizing the character of men in the following words (Shakespeare, 2019):

Thy beauty has made me effeminate

And in my temper softened valour's steel

There were varying trends of masculinity. For instance, beards were reckoned as the markers of manhood in the first half of the seventeenth century despite inviting criticism from the moralists of the era. After the era of 1660, the popularity of beards was replaced by fashionable silhouettes depicting the status and wealth of men that were also used for political purposes. Gradually, the inability of conceiving a male child became a matter of concern which allied to the concept of manhood by blaming men for infertility. Such men were considered unfit for assuming any political or public office and rule the country (Reinke-Williams, 2014). The advent of the nineteenth century marked the era of the realization of differences among males and females in a scientific community. However, the myths of hegemonic masculinity remain prevalent in society, and despite exercising and enforcing liberal and secular orders in numerous parts of the world women were never considered fully and ideally capable to rule a nation (Connell, 1987). In this instance, the realization among women for equality did not lessen which made power struggles more intense amid xenophobic beliefs (Herrup, 2006). Due to a strong belief in men's emotional

quotient and self-control, a narrative grew stronger that only men could better control the territory and English culture and preserve them in their pristine forms from foreign invasion and assimilation. Consequently, it strengthened the nationalistic sentiments and association of nationalism with masculinity which can also be found in the literary texts.

3. Analyzing English superiority of manhood over France through the text of Holinshed Chronicles

Holinshed Chronicles is a famous literary piece from 1577 that is interchangeably known as 'The Chronicles.' This work depicts England, Ireland, and Scotland and comprises their historical accounts of the mid-16th century. This work serves as a principle literary effort for the writers of the age of the Renaissance, such as Daniel, Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare. A famous British bookseller and printer, Reynier or Reginald Wolfe, determined to compile a comprehensive account of the description and mapping of the world. Following his demise, Raphael Holinshed, who was his assistant Reynier, completed this project and recruited writers, and made it limited to the British Isles. It was first published in 1577, and after he died in 1580, Abraham Fleming expanded this work. This work comprises 3.5 million words, edited by dozen authors from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, i.e., Protestant, Catholic, English, or Scottish. Therefore, there are many places where personal biases are flagrant, which diminishes objectivity. In the words of Dr. Paulina Kewes, a member of the faculty of English language and literature at Oxford University, The Chronicles shows delineate the character of a king:

Conventions of history writing in Shakespeare's time not only permitted but positively dictated that chroniclers invent speeches for major historical figures. Thus in the Chronicles, we find Henry V's rousing oration to his troops before the battle of Agincourt [in France]. . . which Shakespeare adapted in his Henry V. (British Library 1577).

The text shows that one of the characteristics of a king was his oratory skills when he addressed his army before the battle of Agincourt started. Further, Shakespeare got inspiration from The Chronicles and accounted for it in his work to figure out the personality of Henry V. Another example from the Holinshed has been given below in which the manhood of Henry V has been expressed:

If we should fight in trust of the multitude of men, and so get the victorie (our minds being prone to pride) we should thereupon peradventure ascribe the victorie not so much to the gift of God, as to our owne puissance, and thereby provoke his high indignation and displeasure against vs: and if the enemy get the upper hand, then should our realme and countrie suffer more damage and stand in further danger. But be you of good comfort, and shew your selves valiant, God and our iust quarrell shall defend us, and deliver these our proud adversaries with all the multitude of them which you see (or at the least the most of them) into our hands. (British Library, 1577)

And Shakespeare adopted it as:

This day [October 25, 1415] is call'd the feast of Crispian:

He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,

Will stand a tip-toe when this day is nam'd,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
He that shall live this day, and see old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
And say, 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian:'
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars,
And say, 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'
Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day. Then shall our names,
Familiar in his mouth as household words,
Harry [Henry] the king, Bedford and Exeter,
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,
Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd.
This story shall the good man teach his son;
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remembered;
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile
This day shall gentle his condition:
And gentlemen in England, now a-bed
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

Both texts emphasize the importance of valor, courage, and persistence during the war times. Shakespeare apparently has expressed that only the people who stood up for their country on the day of the Crispian war had manhood, and those who showed cowardice were not able to be called men. These texts manifest that in English literature, gender has been explained through vigor and courage. In *Chronicles*, a reader may find elements of comparison between the Englishmen and the Frenchmen. For instance:

Gouverneur of this siege at first, was Yuan or Owen of Wales, but he was murdered one morning as he sat alone viewing the castell, and combing his head, by one of his owne countriemen, which vnder colour to serue him, was become with him verie familiar. This Owen or Yuan whether ye will (for all is one) was sonne to a noble man of Wales, whom K. Edward had put to death for some offense by him committed, where this Yuan got him into France, being as then verie yoong, and was brought vp in the French court, and prooued an expert man of warre, so that great lamentation was made for his death by the Frenchmen. But the Englishmen, although they misliked the maner of his death, yet they were not greatlie sorrowfull for the chance, sith they were rid thereby of an extreame enimie. (Patterson, 1994).

This text illustrates that the Englishmen had more self-respect; therefore, they did not like the way their governor died. This act refrained them from making any hostility toward the French people. Another text represents the manhood of an English captain during a fight that faced the hostility of Frenchmen:

Whereupon, [immediately] after the coronation, the earles of Cambridge and Buckingham were sent with a power unto Dover, and the earle of Salisburie unto Southampton: but in the meane time, to wit, the one and twentieth [sic] of August, the frenchmen entring [sic] the Ile [sic] of Wight, burnt diverse towned in the same. And though they were repelled from the castell, by the valiant manhood of sir [HUGH LIRRELL] capteine thereof; who laid no small number of them on the ground; (Patterson, 1994).

The writer asserted the wisdom of the English captain and attributed him to a strong character of manhood. Further, it states that:

...yet they constreined the men of the Ile [sic] to give them a thousand marks of silver to save the [RESIONE] of their houses and goods, and so they departed from thence, sailing still along the costs, and where they saw advantage, set on land, burning sundrie towns neere to the shore, as Portesmouth, Darthmouth, and Plimmouth. (Patterson, 1994).

It has been asserted that during an expedition to Southampton, the English captain saved the belongings of their people from the belligerence of the French aggressors. Below is an example where the conduct of the king has been demonstrated that convinced people to show manhood in order to save the city of London from the attacks of rebels:

Here it is to be remembered, that the king, after the citie of London was deliuered from the danger of the rebels (as before ye have heard) in respect of the great manhood, and assured loialtie which had appeared in the maior and other of the aldermen, for some part of the recompense of their faithfull assistance in that dangerous season, made the said maior William Walworth knight,... (Patterson, 1994).

In the Holinshed, there is a mention of the extraordinary bravery of an Englishman who had committed suicide. Critically, on the one hand, the writer portrayed the man with extraordinary courage. On the other side, he did not remain rational about the cowardice of this man. If he were really a man of courage, how could he take his own life? This shows that the writer did not make a parallel comparison while defining the manhood of Englishmen. However, it is evident from the text of The Chronicles that the conception of manhood was not limited to man

only. But there were some ideal and defined attributes in the presence of which either man or woman was entitled to have manhood. This text illustrated that women were praised for demonstrating those attributes side by side with the Englishmen:

There were also holden for the more honour of the same marriage, solemne justes (sic) for certeine daies together, in which, as well the Englishmen as the queenes counciemen shewed prooffe of their manhood and valiancie, whereby praise & commendation of knightlie prowesse was atchieved, not without damage of both the parties. (Patterson, 1994).

Presumably, the authors of the Holinshed's Chronicles intended to express the superiority of the English over the French, and the entire text of the Chronicles contended that no one was better than and equivalent to the English, as illustrated below:

we think it a great piece of manhood to stand to our tackling, until the last drop, as men that may spare much because we have much: whereas they having less are afraid to lose that little which they have. (Holinshed & Harrison, 1587).

4. Analyzing English superiority of manhood over France through the text of Philip Sidney

Sir Phillips Sidney, born in 1554, was a passionate politician and a foreign policy expert that had an account of services for Queen Elizabeth I and her court. He was a strong protestant voice. Usually, the Queen advised him to be careful when there was a clash of politics and religion. His clash was flagrant when he tried to use his writing skills to convince the Queen not to marry the Duke of Anjou. Through analyzing the text excerpts from his letter, the elements of prejudice towards Frenchman will be assessed:

"...these, how their hearts will be galled, if not aliened, when they shall see you take a husband, a Frenchman and a Papist, in whom (howsoever fine wits may find farther dealings or painted excuses) the very common people well know this, that he is the son of a Jezebel of our age: that his brother made oblation of his own sister's marriage."

In the abovementioned text, Sidney tried to convince the Queen by alluding that the Duke of Anjou was a French papist or Catholic and cited the example of the Duke's cold-heartedness in obstructing the marriage affairs of his sister. Sometimes, Sidney drew a parallel example to show the compatibility of both in these words:

"That coupled Lewis the Twelfth and Ferdinando of Spain to the conquest of Naples. Of fear, there are innumerable examples: Monsieur's desires, and yours, how they shall meet in public matters, I think no oracle can tell; for as the geometricians say, that parallels because they maintain divers lines, can never join: so truly, two, having, at the beginning, contrary principles, to bring forth one doctrine, must be some miracle."

Sidney stated that the expectations of the Queen and the Duke did not commensurate well, which would trigger uneasiness in the lives of both. He also pointed out the nationalistic bigotry and differences in an abhorrent way:

"He of the Romish religion; and if he is a man, must needs have that manlike property, to desire that all men be of his mind: you the erector and defender of the contrary, and the

only sun that dazzleth their eyes: he French, and desiring to make France great; your Majesty English, and desiring nothing less than that France should not grow great: he, both by his own fancy and his youthful governors, embracing all ambitious hopes; having Alexander's image in his head, but perhaps evil painted;."

He asserted that the Duke wanted hidden nationalistic interests for the rise of France. However, you are the emblem and the guarantor of Britain's glory. These interests were conflicting. While the Duke was going to exploit this relationship for his own interests, and he was likeminded to Alexander. While characterizing manhood, he tried to convince the Queen to analyze that the Duke did not possess the manhood:

"The longer a prince reigneth, it is certainly the more he is esteemed; there is no man ever was weary of well-being. And good increased to good, maketh the same good both greater and stronger: for it useth men to know no other cares, when either men are born in the time, and so never saw other; or have spent much of their flourishing time, and so have no joy to seek other; in evil princes, abuse growing upon abuse, according to the nature of evil, with the increase of time, ruins itself."

At the end of the letter, he once again reiterated that when the Duke comes into power, he will abuse his power and will use his designation to protect all his ill-doings.

"As for this man, as long as he is but Monsieur in might, and a Papist in the profession, he neither can, nor will, greatly shield you; and if he get once to be King, his defence will be like Ajax's shield, which rather weighed them down, than defended those that bare it."

It can be inferred from the above-stated text that Sidney's other concern was regarding the Pope, whom he considered him not as a trustworthy but rather as a trouble maker 'the other faction, most rightly, indeed, to be called a faction, is the Papist' (Holinshed & Harrison, 1587). However, the rest of his letter focused on Anjou's negative personal characteristics. He tried to convince the Queen that Anjou could not be 'a man in person'; thus, he deserved disqualification due to his contradictory religious beliefs.

In his closing remarks to the Queen, he outlined the character of the Queen for the state and reinforced her role as a stateswoman, which is also a reflection of manhood:

"Let such particular actions be found out (which be easy as I think to be done) by which you may gratify all the hearts of your people: let those in whom you find trust, and to whom you have committed trust, in your weighty affairs, be held up in the eyes of your subjects: lastly, doing as you do, you shall be, as you be, the example of princes, the ornament of this age, and the most excellent fruit of your progenitors, and the perfect mirror of your posterity."

Given the obstruction of patriarchy, this phenomenon has been criticized over the past decades, but the debate has not ended. However, it helped to realign the conception of manhood that does not comply with the existing idea of dominant masculinity. In the modern era, political masculinity is also subjected to a discussion, namely fratriarchal masculinities, masculinities of peacekeepers, and violent masculinities. These are the addition to manhood. These types of masculinities can be practically observed in the rise of Donald Trump, who got the majority from the angry white people. The popularity of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Vladimir Putin was backed

by the support of people like traditional patriarchy. Unlike the popularization of masculinity at the highest political offices around the world, till 2019, only seventeen countries have women head among 190 countries. Therefore, political masculinity has gained prominence among famous leaders. In other words, the Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, has asserted that for a more egalitarian and equal society, there is a need to end flagrant differences between patriarchy and masculinity. Given observing the emerging trends, the underlying causes were the social transition and political realignment that keep on challenging the existing realities. Therefore, manhood does not necessarily belong to male dominance. However, one solution to strict masculinities is to promote egalitarian manhood and stabilize womanhood (Myrntinen, 2019). A promising benefit of political masculinity includes keeping the status quo intact and initiating retrogressive or progressive policies bringing revolutionary transitions (Starck & Luyt, 2019). Even in the construction industry, the attitudes toward manhood have been changed. The workforce has transformed with inclusivity and less hegemonic patterns (George & Loosemore, 2019). In a broader perspective, among various patterns of manhood, hegemonic masculinity is not constructive and is taught and imposed on the subject. Through creating an environment of mutuality, neutrality, and inclusive empowerment, these hegemonic patterns can be eradicated, and the whole society can move towards a compassionate, healthy, and flexible society for both men and women.

5. Conclusion

This study explores two literary pieces, *The Holinshed Chronicles* and the Letter of Philip Sidney which he wrote to the Queen. The research analyzed abundant examples where bias and religion-political bigotries are obvious in the texts. Based on the analysis of the excerpts from the selected works, it can be inferred that manhood was the subject of criticism, and even the writers of the mid-16th century did not attribute manhood to the physical strength, appearance, and embedment of males only. But the one who possessed the characteristics of valor and courage. In *The Holinshed Chronicles*, the author has expressed several instances where he attributed courage and personality characteristics to the Englishmen. Upon reading such texts, a reader may assume that French people of that time did not possess manly vigor and notable personality traits. Similarly, in the letter of Sidney to the Queen, he exhibited his religious bigotry and anti-Angevin approach, despite his vast knowledge and experience in the court. Therefore, he tried to inculcate that in case of the espousal of the Queen with the Duke, she would not be able to protect the interests of the empire as well as the English Protestantism if the king was a French Catholic. Further, he stated that the Duke had aspirations with Alexander and his expansionist policies, and the people of Britain could not trust a French king to accept and protect their liberties and territorial sovereignty. Consequently, he asserted that the Duke might conspire to topple Elizabeth I in his quest to be great. To sum up, the English authors who compiled the historical accounts of England could not remain above the religio-political prejudice. It resulted in dismantling France and distorted their gender fabric of manhood.

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The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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