



The Chaucer Newsletter

A Publication of the New Chaucer Society

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Travel Subventions For New Chaucerians

At the Canterbury Congress, Trustees of the Society decided that interest income accumulating from the NCS Endowment should begin to be made available to encourage and assist new Chaucerians to attend biennial congresses. Anyone who has been or will have been awarded a Ph.D. between August 1989 and August 1991 and who is interested in obtaining such a subvention in order to attend the 1992 Seattle Congress should send to the NCS Director by 1 August 1991 a brief (1-2 page) letter of request that also describes how his or her dissertation/thesis centrally focuses on Chaucer. In addition, the applicant's dissertation director should write a supporting letter to the NCS Director confirming that the dissertation is completed. Subventions (in the form of reimbursements) are meant to cover some or all travel, lodging, and registration expenses associated with the Seattle Congress; the size of subventions will depend on the number of applicants and the amount of interest income available, but every eligible applicant will receive some funding.

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1992 NCS Congress Call For Papers

The Program Committee for the Eighth International Congress, to be held at the University of Washington (1-5 August 1992), announces the following topics for sessions. Special themes for this meeting are the state of Chaucer criticism and the contributions of other disciplines to the study of Chaucer. Papers or proposals should be sent directly to the organizer of each session. There are several new formats for sessions, which are described below.

The session organizers must receive all papers or proposals by 1 June 1991. They will select papers and participants by mid-August 1991, and the names of participants and the titles of their presentations will be announced in the Fall 1991 *Newsletter*.

Members may apply to more than one kind of session, but may actually participate in only one. The constitution of the NCS mandates that participants (except for invited speakers from other fields) be members with their dues paid up.

The Committee hopes that the new formats, which contain more places than before and allow for different kinds of participation, will encourage submissions from throughout the membership, especially from recent Ph.D.'s or graduate students and others who have not previously taken part in NCS congresses. We therefore ask members to share this announcement with graduate students, younger colleagues, and

others who may not now be members of the NCS. (Students may join the Society for two years at the student rate of \$15 per year. They should write to the New Chaucer Society for application forms. New Ph.D.'s should see "Travel Subventions" on page 1, column 1).

Organizers have provided a brief explanation of what they have in mind (often edited here to save space), though these are not meant to be limiting and sessions may change in response to submissions.

Because there are many changes from previous congresses, please read the descriptions of each kind of session carefully.

I. CONCURRENT PAPER SESSIONS

In response to numerous suggestions from members, the Committee has tried to make these sessions more focused and open to discussion. Therefore, each session will contain 3 papers and no respondents. Each paper will be strictly limited to 15 minutes to allow for 1/2 hour of general discussion. Organizers are encouraged to be interventionist at every stage. Full drafts of papers are expected by the end of February 1992 and will be circulated to other speakers. Two sessions are open to papers on any subject.

1. The *Legend of Good Women* in Our Time.

Papers that explore current critical positions toward the work (synthesizing or challenging them) as well as those that point in new

directions or offer original readings. What has been resolved? What crucial problems or enigmas remain? What does the *Legend* mean in our time? Mary Shaner, English, U of Massachusetts-Boston, Boston, MA 02125-3393.

2. Exegetical Approaches to Chaucer--An Assessment.

What contributions has exegetical criticism made to our understanding and appreciation of Chaucer's poetry during the past 40 years? Does it have a future? Non-partisan proposals are encouraged. Siegfried Wenzel, 337 Dickinson Ave., Swarthmore, PA 19081.

3. Chaucer and Medieval Subjectivity: Language, Determination, and Resistance.

The idea of the "subject" shaped through language by social formations (such as gender, unconscious desire, ideology, or power) offers a ground where historical and theoretical approaches intersect. Papers are invited that apply theoretical approaches to subjectivity and that locate them in 14th-century society or address the problems of doing so. Daniel Rubey, Humanities Librarian, Lehman College Library, Bedford Park Blvd., W., Bronx, NY 10468.

4. Chaucer and Rhetoric.

What did Chaucer know about rhetoric and what do we think he knew? Papers are solicited that reexamine the views of Manly and Murphy and suggest new approaches to the question. T. P. Dolan, English, University College, Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland.

5. Literary References to Chaucer to 1700.

How later writers from Lydgate to Dryden have read and transformed Chaucer's work. Proposals should concentrate on one example (others may be given in handouts) and reach general,

theoretical conclusions. The examination of problems regarding intertextuality, anxiety of influence, canonicity, and genre transformation will be welcome. Piero Boitani, Via Venanzio Fortunato 12, 00136 Rome, Italy.

6. Chaucer, Italian Humanism, and the English Audience.

Where are we now in thinking about this question? What did Chaucer carry away from Italy and what did he alter (and why)? How can we define Chaucer's "internationalism"? Who was his audience (and how do we know)? Each paper should be on Chaucer and one of the Italians (Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio). James Dean, English, U of Delaware, Newark, DE 19716.

7. Chaucer and French Court Culture.

Appropriate points of contact might include, but are not restricted to, such figures as Machaut, Froissart, Christine de Pisan, and Deschamps, and such issues as concepts of authorial identity and artistic social status, patronage and audience, the interplay of clerical, courtly, and chivalric values, and the relationship between literature and other arts. Monica McAlpine, English, U of Massachusetts-Boston, Boston, MA 02125-3393.

8. Chaucer and Motherhood.

Mothers, motherhood, and the maternal in Chaucer considered from a variety of perspectives. Possible topics: Chaucerian women who are actual or figurative mothers and/or the absence thereof; mothering as a practice or maternity as an ideal; the representation of motherhood in Chaucer and in other medieval sources. Work by social, religious, and art historians as well as literary scholars will be welcome. Elaine Hansen, English, Haverford College, Haverford, PA 19041.

9. Literary Style, Political Form, and Social Justice.

Particular attention might be paid to the linkage between literary style, aesthetic response, and political positioning. Can Chaucer's celebrated stylistic and generic heterogeneity (evident in *Troilus* as well as in the *Tales*) be construed as a celebration of, an argument for, or containment of, social heterogeneity? Are there counterparts to Chaucer's writing in fourteenth-century political forms? How do Chaucer's ethical and political imperatives measure up to a Langlandian concern with justice? David Wallace, English, U of Texas, Austin, TX 78712-1164.

10. Piety and Devotional Practice in the Age of Chaucer.

Including such topics as the uses of relics and votive images, cult observations of saints, penances and pilgrimages, sermons, religious observance and festival. Provocative interdisciplinary papers especially encouraged. Gail M. Gibson, Dept. of English, Davidson College, Davidson, NC 28036.

11. Chaucer and the Living Language.

Explorations of Chaucer's poetic use of common speech and the diction of popular artistry. Carl Lindahl, English, U of Houston, Houston, TX 77204-3012.

12. Manuscript Evidence for Chaucer's Early Readers.

Manuscript evidence for the production, ownership, and readership of Chaucer's works in the period 1400-1550. Linne R. Mooney, English, U of Maine, Orono, ME 04469-0122.

13. Private Life in Chaucer.

Tensions concerning private versus public life, *privetee*, secrecy, and spatial settings. Papers that draw on historical or other interdisciplinary sources and methods especially welcome. Thomas

Goodman, English, U of Miami, Coral Gables, FL 33124.

14. Papers on any subject.

Robert W. Hanning, English, Columbia U, New York, NY 10027.

15. Papers on any subject.

Carolyn Dinshaw, English, U of California, Berkeley, CA 94720.

II. CONCURRENT COLLOQUIA

Because of the strong demand from the membership for different kinds of sessions, more discussion, and wider participation, each afternoon of the 1992 Congress will consist of a 2-hour colloquium. The colloquia are designed to allow more members to take part in the program and to appeal to those who have been reluctant to present formal papers, though they will be most successful if there is a mix of ages, points of view, and degrees of prominence.

Participants in all colloquium sessions will be listed in the program as speakers along with the titles of their submissions. They may also request a formal letter from the NCS inviting them to speak at the Congress. There will be 3 kinds of colloquia:

Colloquium A: Practicum.

An intensive discussion, both practical and theoretical, of a specialized, non-literary field related to Chaucer studies, led by two or three scholars (both Chaucerians and non-Chaucerians, including plenary speakers) who have worked in this field. Up to ten participants will be chosen for each session. There will no formal presentations by either leaders or participants. Before the Congress, the organizers will provide some suggested readings for the participants and, based on the statements in the applications, a preliminary list of topics to be discussed. The general audience will

be able to ask questions in the last 1/2 hour. Members at any stage of their career who wish to learn more about one of these fields are asked to send a 1-page application (with title) to the organizer explaining their interest in the subject and what they wish to learn and discuss.

1. Paleography and Chaucer.

Ralph Hanna III, English, U of California, Riverside, CA 92521.

2. Literature and History and Chaucer.

Peter Brown, Master, Darwin College, U of Kent, Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NY, England.

3. Art and Chaucer.

Kathleen Scott, 340 Walbridge Dr., East Lansing, MI 48823.

4. Anthropology, Religion and Chaucer.

Barbara Nolan, English, U of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903.

5. Music and Chaucer.

James I. Wimsatt, English, U of Texas, Austin, TX 78712-1164.

Colloquium B: Discussion session.

An intensive discussion of a particular issue in Chaucer studies. Up to ten participants, representing a variety of views, will be chosen for each session. There will be no formal presentations, but a moderator will keep the discussion focused and bring out differences. In response to submissions, the organizer will circulate a preliminary list of questions to the participants before the Congress. The general audience will be able to join in the discussion during the last 1/2 hour. Members at any stage of their career who wish to discuss one of these issues are asked to send a 1-page application (with title) to the organizer indicating their position on the topic and what specific questions they wish to discuss.

1. The Place of the *Melibee*.

Possible questions: Do the teller and position of the *Melibee* make it central to the *Tales*? What is its relationship to *Thopas*? Does its genre change because of its inclusion in the *Tales*? What does rhetorical theory teach us about it? Does it subvert or complement the vision of the human condition in the *Parson's Tale*? James Rhodes, 25 Braeside Drive, Hamden, CT 06514.

2. Wife of Bath Criticism: Vanguard or Rear Guard?

The false dichotomy of the title urges speakers to take positions on the place of Wife of Bath criticism in wider critical currents. Does the history of mentalities better illuminate this text than the history of clothmakers? In what respects is (or is not) the WBT a productive text for feminist theorists? What does the history of WB criticism reveal about the history of our discipline? What new directions should be taken or old directions re-explored? Susan Crane, English, Rutgers U, New Brunswick, NJ 08903-5054.

3. Chaucer Studies and the NEH.

A discussion of Seminars and Institutes supported by the NEH for high school and college teachers. What are some unique aspects of these experiences? How was your understanding or teaching of Chaucer affected? What can be done to perpetuate and improve such programs? Feel free to raise other issues. Lillian M. Bisson, Arts & Sciences, Marymount U, Arlington, VA 22207.

4. Chaucer and the Texts in This Class.

The texts--both primary (including translations) and secondary--we use at various educational levels. All views will be considered, but a focus on the interaction of theory and practice is encouraged: what are or should be

the consequences for pedagogy of our current theoretical, historical, and editorial approaches to Chaucer's text and to questions of the nature and status of texts? Glending Olson, English, Cleveland State U, Cleveland, OH 44115.

5. Chaucer and Recent Technology.

The ways that Chaucer studies can best be advanced by modern technology, especially computing. Both those with past experience and those with ideas for future projects are encouraged. Possible topics: electronic texts; data bases; electronic journals; software for metrical, linguistic, or manuscript analysis; hypermedia; applications for teaching. An inclusive session for the general Chaucerian as well as for the technically literate. Thomas H. Bestul, English, U of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68588 (e-mail: tbestul@unlvax1 or tbestul@crcvms.unl.edu).

Colloquium C: Ten-minute papers.

A series of brief, specific papers employing a wide variety of perspectives, methods, disciplines, and ideologies to address a particular topic. Each session will have 6 ten-minute papers followed by a general discussion among the speakers and the audience.

1. Chaucerian Source/Influence/Intertext.

The session will reconsider the whole question of Chaucerian sources and analogues and ask whether the traditional concepts of source and influence are still useful or should be replaced by the idea of intertextuality. Papers on questions of method and terminology as well as on particular issues are invited. Dieter Mehl, Uckerather Strasse 74, 5330 Königswinter 21, Germany.

2. Interpretive Cruxes.

Papers that illustrate how different approaches can illuminate particular passages in Chaucer. Emphasis not on analysis and defense of the critical approach

itself, but on the application of it to a single passage from Chaucer. Titles should reveal both the approach and the passage. Complete papers preferred (rough drafts acceptable). Short papers welcome, for they may allow time for more than six papers in the session. Emerson Brown, English, Vanderbilt U, Nashville TN 37235.

3. Spiritual Community and Social Pathology: Polemical Views of the Prioress' Tale.

Recent work in psychoanalytic and narrative theory, in feminist studies and women's history, on the formation of late-medieval communities, on the varieties of medieval anti-semitism, and on the cult of the Eucharist all bear on the already polemical history of the Prioress and her tale. Papers sought that define a position through the careful and explicit use of historical materials and theoretical frameworks. Thomas Hahn, English, U of Rochester, Rochester, NY 14627.

4. Chaucer, Piers and Religion.

Tightly focused, comparative papers on the religious discourses of Chaucer and Langland: e.g. responses to clerical and ecclesiastical practice; uses of hagiography; representations of female figures in religious contexts; confession and penitence; patience and poverty; and styles or functions of religious language (prayer, sermon, exegesis, etc.). Detailed treatments of specific passages encouraged. M. Teresa Tavormina, English, Michigan State U, East Lansing, MI 48824.

5. Readings of a Passage: *Merchant's Tale* 1944-81.

Papers from as many different critical positions as possible (from metrics to Marxism and from feminism to philology) to discuss a single Chaucerian passage: *Merchant's Tale* 1944-81. Papers

preferably should concentrate on either 1944-54 or 1955-81. Not a discussion of the tale as a whole, but a careful critical study of the passage itself, which may be informed by a more general understanding. Elizabeth Robertson, English, U of Colorado, Boulder CO 80309.

C. David Benson
Co-Chair 1992 Program Committee
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Storrs, CT 06268

REMINDERS

Please return the ballots for four new Trustees for the 1992-96 term by 1 April.

Please fill in the information requested on the 1991 Dues Notice and return it as quickly as possible so that we may update our membership records, prepare the new directory, and guarantee future mailings, including this year's edition of *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*.



The Merchant's Damyan and Chaucer's Kent

Readers already persuaded that Chaucer is a learned, subtle, and careful poet may cheerfully agree that the name Damyan in the *Merchant's Tale* alludes to St. Damian. Nonetheless, the objection that Damian is too obscure a saint to have meant anything to Chaucer raises legitimate methodological concerns. One may question interpretations that seem to require of Chaucer not only excellent Latin and painstaking attention to detail but also access to a modern research library. "Some critics," one wise former colleague of mine used to grumble, "assume that Chaucer had at hand the whole *Patrologia Latina*, including the indexes."

In seeking traditions behind Chaucer's allusions we often do turn first to the *PL*, not because Chaucer kept the Latin Fathers at his *beddes heed*, but simply because their works are well preserved, well edited, and well indexed. Traditions found in Latin works can often be found in popular vernacular literature and in art as well. For example, two lines of a Middle English poem, "On the Feast of Corpus Christi," provide Damian's connection with healing and support the pun on "lechour" at E2257: "Cosma and Damianus, þei weore leches, I-writen is þus." But to find Damian close at hand, Chaucer had to know of only one of two Kentish churches dedicated to the brothers St. Cosmos and St. Damian.

One of these churches sits about a half-mile east of the village of Blean, two-and-a-half miles to the north-northwest of Canterbury cathedral, and, hence, less than two miles from the route of Chaucer's pilgrims. In 1375, the year Chaucer was granted custody of two Kentish heirs, Archbishop Simon Sudbury endowed its parsonage as a "perpetual vicarage." The other church, in Challock, lies about ten

miles to the southeast of Canterbury, in a corner of Eastwell Park, south of Challock Lees. This church is about a mile to the north of the ancient route from Winchester to Canterbury known, at least from the 18th century on, as the "Pilgrims' Way."

The oldest extant parts of both churches date from the 13th century. Why these churches were dedicated to Cosmos and Damian and when they were originally founded is unclear, but the popularity of the saints in Kent and the churches as well may go back to Saxon times. A 7th century bishop of Rochester was named Damianus. More intriguing for the *Merchant's Tale* is evidence that from the time of William the Conqueror on through at least the late 18th century an annual fair was held at the parish of Challock on the Day of St. Cosmos and Damian. If that fair referred in any way to the priapic attributes of Cosmos and Damian that were still in evidence in 18th-century Isernia, Pluto would have even bigger reason to refer to Damyan as a "lechour." Chaucer's associations with Kent are, of course, extensive and well documented.

Although some local joke may be lost to us, I do not claim that the presence of these churches ever explained why Chaucer named May's lover Damyan. What has thus far been claimed for the allusion has already been adequately documented by written sources. But these churches do suggest that written sources, even obscure Latin ones, can provide clues to traditions that were part of Chaucer's everyday world. This kind of allusion to local knowledge may seem so obvious to our British colleagues as not to be worth mentioning. Those who too rarely have the opportunity to walk about in Chaucer's world, however, might appreciate having things like Damyan's Kentish churches mentioned in glosses and learned commentary.

It was pleasant to find support for a Chaucerian allusion not in a rare book room but in the sunshine, in Kent, during and after a scholarly conference. One can only imagine what lies ahead in Seattle.

Emerson Brown, Jr.
Vanderbilt University

Sources and Acknowledgements

On priapic and healing St. Damian: Letter from Sir William Hamilton, 1781, in Richard Payne Knight, *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* . . . (orig. pub. 1786, repr. 1974 of 1894 ed.), pp. 5-8, cited in Gordon J. Laing, *Survivals of Roman Religion* (New York, 1931), p. 76, in turn cited by J.S.P. Tatlock, *MP* 33 (1935-36), who might have pressed his point more strongly had he known of the fair at Challock; *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.* (EETS OS 98), p. 194, ll. 551-552; Phillip Griffith, *Explicator* 16 (1957), No. 13; E. Brown, *Chaucer Review* 2 (1968), 273-277 and 4 (1969), 31-38; Norman Eliason, *Names*, 21 (1973), 140; E. Brown, *Names* 31 (1983), 80; R.A. Pratt, ed. *The Tales of Canterbury* (1974), p. xxxi; *Chaucer Name Dictionary*, s.v. Damyan.

On the Bishop of Rochester and the churches and fair in Kent: Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, 4 vols. (1778-99), 2.32, 3.163-67, 563-70; a handy modern guide: John Newman, *North East and East Kent* (Penguin, 1969), pp.141, 250-51.

On Chaucer and Kent: *Chaucer Life-records*, index s.v. *Kent* and summary, pp. 512-513.

For help of various kinds, my thanks to Peter Brown, Ann Oakley, Nancy Bradbury, Betsy Bowden, T.L. Burton, Paul Thomas, and Michelle Matthews.

CHAUCERNET BEGINS

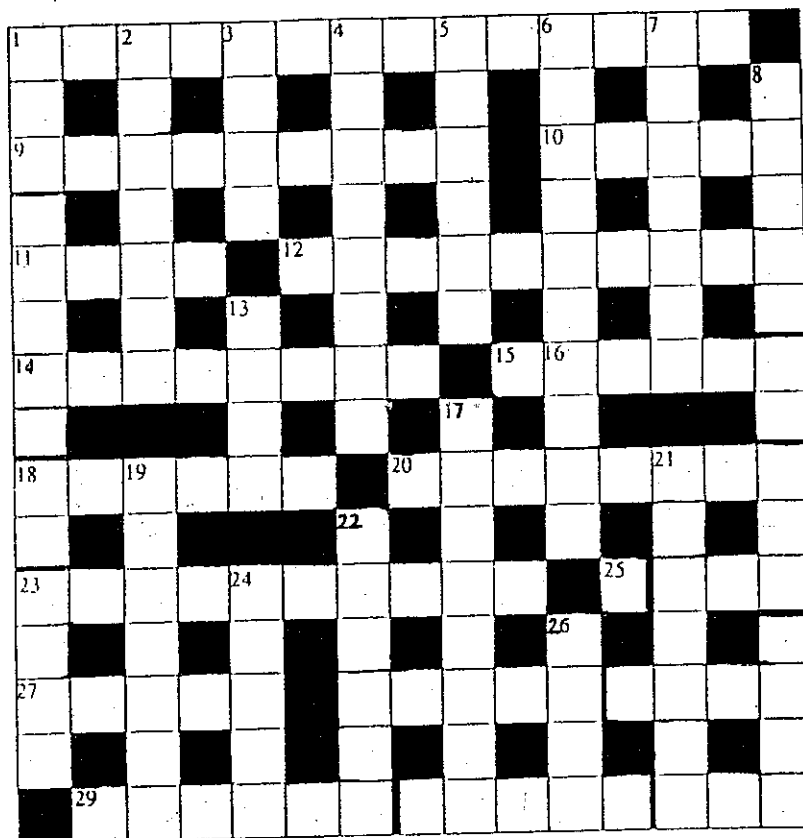
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CHAUCER CROSSWORD

Richard F. Green has devised yet another delightful Chaucer crossword. We will be glad to publish the names of the successful solvers in the *Fall Newsletter*; send a photocopy of your solution to Green by 15 August: Department of English, U of Western Ontario, London, N6A 3K7, CANADA.

The words and phrases which make up the answers are all to be found in John Fisher's *Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer*; those using other editions may find minor variations of spelling (the occasional final *e*, or *i*, for *y*, etc.).



Across

1. A nut rum as tonic? Makes a change! (14)
9. Former spouse at Cambridge wears black--it's understandable (9)
10. Chop up great Kentucky elm (5)
11. Learning by role-playing (4)
12. People are damned rude! Flocks are scattered (6,4)
14. Redeem gold for jem (8)
15. A leman, by Jove! (6)
18. Cheap shellfish? (6)
20. Weird doom lay on a suicidal heroine (8)
23. Ed has trouble with tee and green--requires a lot of help (5,5)
25. The Shrew's tinker or the Reeve's miller (1,3)
27. Spill he lit is not straight (5)
28. Goddess's fish or Alice's beauty spot? (5,4)
29. The Summoner's curse makes a sword-edge most twisted (6,5,3)
3. Take the Roman himself (4)
4. Arranged for Poe to get involved with an undated play by Jarry (8)
5. Stay in childcare establishment (6)
6. Mindy's in the middle (2,3)
7. The patois spoken by Troilus's brother to the Prioress (7)
8. Ask as a boon and yell about Alison's eyebrows (5,2,3,4)
13. Fairy king is handsome (4)
16. Croesus's kingdom in lonely desert (4)
17. One who should be indulgent turns on draper (8)
19. Old English saint few could mistake for Troilus's lover (5,2)
21. Hear the girl has gone astray (7)
22. Twist a sleeve upon a bough (6)
24. In Bec he'd expanded (5)
26. In the West End, or its opposite? (4)

Down

1. Burgundian's order for Argonaut's booty (3,5,2,4)
2. Agree to race cod (7)

Newsletter Submission

The New Chaucer Society is now able to accept both computerized and traditional printed submissions to *The Chaucer Newsletter*. If computerized, the submission must be in ASCII text; it must be stored on diskettes using IBM-compatible or Macintosh-compatible diskette formats; either five and one-quarter inch or three and one-half inch diskettes are accepted. Computerized submissions should be accompanied by a copy of the printed text. Please include with any type of submission your address (and E-mail address, if available), phone number (and fax number, if available).

The Chaucer Newsletter, distributed twice a year to members of the New Chaucer Society, is intended primarily as a vehicle for Society business. Its ephemeral character makes it unsuitable for substantive articles, but we are happy to publish discussions of research-in-progress and other activities of interest to Chaucerians. The deadline for the Fall issue is 1 September; for the Spring issue, 1 January. Send materials to Christian Zacher, Editor, at the address given below. You may reach us at the CMRS office (614-292-7495) or by fax (614-292-7816).

The New Chaucer Society



The New Chaucer Society

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