

Exploitation Of Humour In Kayode Ariyo's "The Misplaced Trust" And "A Bright New Day"

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Abstract

The effect of humour in literature has of recent times attained a cynosure, carving out such a decent class for comedy. The knowledge of this nascent trend of development has not eluded budding creative writers who seem to be slugging it out with tragedy in literary works. Ariyo 's meticulous and intelligent exploitation of this element has not left him out of the league of those who have used it to the latter. Abinitio, a general overview of humour: surrounding concepts and theories, drawing from available literatures, is given. Thereafter, the paper attempts to x-ray closely, how the concept of humour has been exploited in drama, specifically basing it on Ariyo's duo. It then goes on to analyze the effects of the model humour in Ariyo's ' The Misplaced Trust' and 'A Bright New Day'; after which a conclusion is drawn on the concept of humour exploitation in the works. The paper further reveals how humour relieves tension, induces laughter and rest of mind which bring out the emotional, psychological and clinical state of people's mind.

Introduction

Concept and Theories of Humour

Humour as an element of literature has a wide range of perception world over. Literatures of the world have diverse ways of seeing humour. It runs through every social context. Without doubt, humour and laughter add up to the things that make one human. The attempt of trying to find out what is humour and why it is a central component of our social lives has given rise to a birthing of various views about the concept. All humour is agreeably and fundamentally a communicative activity. At its most basic level, humour is an intentional or unintentional message interpreted as funny. The 7th Edition of the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current

39 English attests to the blunt fact that humour "is the quality in something that makes it
40 funny or amusing."

41 The renowned French poet, Rabelais (2004), opines that «le rire est le proper
42 de rhomme» (laughter is a human feature). Braude, (1996:94) asserts that: "to be able
43 to see humour in a situation is to add a dimension to experience; to be able to laugh is
44 to find a way of moving away from pain." It is on this premise that humour can also
45 be seen as that quality of action, speech or writing, which excites amusement, wit and
46 laughter. Humour is the comic quality - fun, joy, pleasure, entertainment and what is
47 amusing and cheerful - in a person, an experience or idea that makes one laugh. The
48 ability to laugh for oneself and for the world is a tool to survive and to make life more
49 tolerable. Humour in literature is divided into a couple of categories: first, the
50 individual level - while individuals use humour (motivationally/psychologically), and
51 second, the societal level - the function humour has within a social setting or a society
52 (Owen Lynch, 2002). There is this submission that the place humour takes in
53 literature can be compared with the place of crisis in the society. This goes to say that
54 humour, like crisis, has the tendency of discovering the long lasting disorders that
55 people would feel uncomfortable in facing.

56 Within the individual category of humour research, there are three major
57 humour theories: superiority theory, relief theory and incongruity theory (Owen
58 Lynch, 2002, quoting Berger, 1993, Berlyne, 1972, Chapman and Foot, 1976). The
59 first category of humour has the most of what there is humour literature. This is
60 hinged on the fact that it focuses on individual motivations for the creation and
61 interpretation of humour. The second category of humour research is the one common
62 in a social setting. This kind of humour focuses on the functions and impact of
63 humour in a social setting. It has a dualistic nature. Whatever it creates, it has to
64 simultaneously create the opposite. This is what has given it a paradox of humour as
65 posited by Owen (ibid).

66 Furthermore, medical science has also proved that laughter is a critical
67 component of life. It boosts the endorphin level in our brains, thereby boosting
68 morale. Laughter makes us feel better physically and mentally. That is the reason why
69 humour in children's literature has value at various levels. Humour can bring children
70 and children's literature together, and children's literature can bring humour to
71 children.

72 The most important value of humour is that children can learn through humour
73 when reading books. Humour can bring joy and fun, also a love for reading is
74 induced. When a child enjoys a book, he will read it. It is on this premise that Huck
75 (1993: 580), asserts that: "humorous books need no justification other than that they
76 provide pure enjoyment.' Humour therefore, heals. When children's lives are serious
77 and dark, humour can be an easy of escaping serious reality and thereby liberating
78 one. Humour brings distance from pain. Laughter can relieve tension, stress and
79 aggression. Gordon, (1996) further concurs to this when he submits that humour
80 brings emotional warmth and understanding. Humour allows the individual to cope
81 with human frailties of self and others. Humour gives comfort.

82 Humour also helps children laugh at the world and at themselves. It shows the
83 ups and downs of life. They can realize they are not alone in their feelings. Jokes and
84 humour, in general, play an important role in knowing who we are and how we think
85 of ourselves and as a result, how we interact with others. Owen (2002) opines that 'A
86 sense of humour has been an essential part of humankind and society throughout the
87 ages. humour cannot be bracketed or seen as a unitary expression or function.'

88
89 In the same vein, Chapman and Foot (1976) have maintained that humour
90 theory literature is not able to provide a general theory. Yet, existing theories are still
91 invaluable for framing our understanding of humour used in and within societal and
92 personal dialogue. As earlier said, a tripartite classification explains the reason why
93 people use humour. However, it can be argued that this 'wide use" has the tendency to
94 be the "misuse" that forsakes the complexity provided by the theories without
95 weighing their collective benefits for the interpretation of individual motivations in
96 humour. In this guise, Feinberg (1978) and Morreall (1983), attempt to debunk these
97 theories entirely and their perspectives on humour motivations instead. Another
98 probable misuse includes unnecessarily expanding these theories.

99 Humour could manifest in Satire and Irony. Satire as a work of art, that is
100 meant to ridicule a society or to correct the ills of a society depends a lot on humour.
101 Irony represents the opposite of the actual or real experience. Humour is relevant and
102 appropriate in irony since irony often employs humour in the presentation of real life
103 experience.

104 On these premises, we will boldly posit that the place of humour in individual
105 and societal life cannot be too stressed. It remains an inseparable part of human life,

106 and will always rear its head in the activities of humanity; normally prompted by one
107 kind of amusing motivation or the other. The prototype of this is what we shall
108 succinctly examine in the works of Ariyo, in which he brings to bear, instances of
109 individual and societal humour.

110 Existing studies have shown that humour is relevant in teaching. Akinkurolere
111 (2013) investigates the perceptions of students on the use of humour in the teaching of
112 English as a Second Language (L2) in Nigeria. She concludes that has pedagogical
113 implications for teaching, as such, humour has educational advantages.

114 Humour serves as a tonic to heal one from the psychological hardships of
115 daily existence by giving relief to certain unpleasant experiences that had exerted
116 undue influences on one's life. Another important fact is that humour through satire
117 has made a lot of social impact in the society by correcting societal ills. For example,
118 social ills of people, and more importantly, political office holders in Nigeria are
119 satirized in the media through Panorama, PhotoSpeak and Cartoon. Thereby, such
120 negative behaviours are being discouraged and heavily criticized.

121 In the work of Reyes et al (2012), humor recognition towards irony detection
122 was brought to fore. They were able to emphasise humour as a tool of communication
123 in social media. Today, if one goes on Facebook, Twitter and so on, various examples
124 of writing, graphic and pictorial that are rich in meaning as a result of the use of
125 humour abound. The playwright, Kayode Ariyo, hails from Ilogbo-Ekiti where he
126 attended St. John's Anglican Primary School 1972-1979 and Ilogbo High School,
127 1979-1984. He later attended Ondo State University(now Ekiti State University) Ado
128 Ekiti 1985-1989. He also attended Adekunle Ajasin University for his MA and PhD
129 programme in English.

130 He served in the Registry Department of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo as an
131 Administrative Officer before he was appointed as a Lecturer in the Department of
132 Languages where he is currently the Head of Department. Among others, he teaches
133 Literature in English, Literary Appreciation and Public Speaking.

134 He has written, directed and produced many plays. He has published several
135 poems, novels, academic papers. Some of his plays include: *The Misplaced Trust*
136 (1999), *A Big Trouble* (2002), *The Filthy Rags* (2002), *A Bright New Day*(2005) and
137 *Prosework: The Only Child* (2003).

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142 **Exploitation of Humour in *The Misplaced Trust***

143 *The Misplaced Trust* is one of Ariyo's comedies. Bola loses confidence in a
144 very close friend, Bidemi. The whole irony of the story is brought to bear when Bola
145 relives her days in the university with Bidemi. Bidemi's marriage hits the rock. Bola
146 feels that accommodating the worthy old friend for just one month in the visitor's
147 room is not too much a sacrifice. Besides, she still vividly remembers Bidemi's
148 assistance to her in their undergraduate days at the university. But if the truth she had
149 known, a friend in need is sometimes a pain in the neck. Bidemi, who all the while
150 pretends to be the only succor the world over, as the marriage of her friend hits the
151 rock, turns out to be a betrayer. Little does Bola know that the friend she so confides
152 in with the secrets of her home is just a wolf in sheep garment. When Bola's marriage
153 finally falls apart, it is with the supposed help of Bidemi that Ade elopes. Bola is to
154 later find love in the arms of Mike having suffered the consequences of misplaced
155 trust.

156 In the dramatic rendition, the playwright wields a strong expertise of
157 sustaining humour throughout the course of his narration. He establishes the first
158 episode in the prologue, where the major characters reveal something that triggers
159 suspenseful images in the mind of the reader:

160 "I'm sorry I... (Stops and looks at the guests.
161 Bola, Ade and Bidemi become transfixed.
162 Bidemi faints. Bola and Ade still stare at each other).
163 -Mike: Man, that's your wife, attend to her."(pg.4)

164

165 It's a humorous display of irony. Little does Mike know that Ade is the
166 supposed husband of his wife, Bola, and that Bidemi is the friend who has betrayed
167 his wife. At this stage, the mind of the reader still wonders: why the fainting? Why the
168 confusion? A lot of questions are triggered with this first episode in the play.

169 The effect of the above excerpt is not just glaring in the imaginary response of
170 the characters. One is brought to seeing a funny proof of the fact that no matter how
171 wise we think we can play a fast one on someone, our evil will surely find us out one
172 day. That exactly is the case with our major characters as the story unfolds.

173 Another instance is revealed in Ade's consistent collision with Alhaji. Alhaji is
174 ready to spend everything as long as it guarantees his marriage to Bidemi. As he

175 cheats on his wife, he realizes that it's not funny that someone cheats on him in the
176 same manner. No wonder, he does not hide his shock as he runs into Ade, who seems
177 to be the rival he has to contend with. He appears to be unsheathing his dagger for war
178 when he asks Bidemi:

179 Alhaji: ... Who's that boy?
180 Bidemi: ... Jealousy! Alhaji, you're jealous.(pg.9)

181
182 This underscores the humorous nature of societal humour. People are often
183 irritated and made angry by that which they would easily do for others. They feel like
184 the whole world gets on their nerves though they are themselves prone to doing that
185 which they may strongly stand against. This is suddenly followed by a very humorous
186 mockery of Alhaji by Ade on page 18:

187 'Bola: Any way, he's Bidemi's boyfriend.
188 Ade: Hey man! You mean that old man is a boy?
189 Isn't he old enough to be my grandfather?
190 He's A sugar daddy, yeah...' (pg.18)

191
192 Ade seems to be wondering what must have come over Alhaji to have taken
193 up the position of a boy friend for Bidemi when he is old enough to rather father her.
194 He is old enough to be Ade's father as well. How men can so condescend to a level
195 that is far below their worth is what the play of humour in this scene captures. The
196 effect of it on us as we read is not just amusing but didactic. Subsequently, when
197 Alhaji comes to present a gift of an Executive Benz to Bidemi, she almost trips him to
198 the ground as she hugs him passionately:

199 'Bidemi: (excited). Alhaji, you are wonderful!
200 (She jumps at him, hugging him but they both crash land.
201 Bidemi gets up and gives Alhaji a hand). I'm sorry, Alhaji.
202 Alhaji: It's all right. I just hope you don't mistakenly kill me
203 one of these days through sheer happiness.'(pg.19)

204
205 It is however rather quite unfortunate for Alhaji who thinks that Bidemi is
206 actually in love with him. She rather loves his money more than his life and person.
207 She often confesses this to her friend. But it seems Alhaji is intentionally blind to
208 what everybody around may see so clearly. He jealously guards the relationship with
209 the money he makes from the innocent blood of his only son. As much as his
210 conscience haunts him, he keeps moving on, seemingly oblivious of what might be
211 happening around him. This perfect exploitation of humour is no longer news in our

212 society. Men seem to stop at nothing whatsoever when it comes to the acquisition of
213 wealth.

214 Funnily again, men seem to forget too soon, the promises they make before
215 they possibly become rich. Alhaji makes his wealth with great peril in alliance with
216 his wife. While he secretly cheats on her, he knows that he can never marry Bidemi
217 except he gets Alhaja's consent. Yet, he would have none of it. He remains adamant as
218 he keeps aglow the flame of his love affair with Bidemi. He gets to the extent of
219 thinking that he can just bring her to Alhaja and Alhaja will cheaply succumb. His
220 encouragement being that he and Alhaja need a son. But they cannot just have it. In
221 Act two scene six, he presents Bidemi to Alhaja and he regrets his action as Alhaja
222 will have none of it. True to the claims of Alhaja, it is Alhaji's money Bidemi wants to
223 marry and not Alhaji himself.

224 "I know nothing about your philosophy, for all
225 I care! Look, young lady, you want to marry Alhaji
226 Who's old enough to be your father because of his money?"(pg. 32)
227

228 The above quotation is Alhaja's response when Alhaji talks about getting
229 married to Bidemi. At the peak of Sola's marital challenges, she calls the problem of
230 her marriage to settle the problem-of her marriage. She is so ignorant of the fact that
231 her best friend has had secret affairs with her husband to the point of completely
232 taking him over from her. As much as she tries to understand where she must have
233 gone wrong, the worse the whole situation becomes. She does her best possible but
234 the love and happiness she once shared with her husband has simply attracted the
235 trashcan of history.

236 Ironically, the friend she helps in affliction turns out to be the pain in the neck.
237 Bidemi herself has not had it going well all the while as she wriggles out of Alhaji's
238 life narrowly escaping death. Her dream of blissful marital life with Alhaji is a simple
239 building of a castle in the air. In Act three scene five, Ade gets irritated by just
240 anything Bola says or does. Her tea has even become bitter. How humorously sour
241 love becomes when the flaming sword of infidelity melts the strong chord that ties a
242 couple! That exactly is the situation in the case of Ade and Bola. Things fall apart and
243 Ade is not ready to mend the broken fences. The rest of the play is interplay of one
244 kind of subtle humour or the other. To a large extent, the funny evils that men do live
245 after they are gone. The humour exploited throughout the text evokes the suspense
246 created at the beginning and which is sustained as the story continues to unfold.

247 Without the humour created, the reader will not remain continuously expectant of the
248 next scene. The humorous nature with which each scene begins and ends rings a note
249 in the mind of the reader.

250 **It is** so simple, yet so pregnant with a lot for us to learn. People who are prone
251 to cheating others do not wish to be paid back in the same coin. They are so
252 suspicious of the moves of others because they don't like being treated the way they
253 treat others. It is this that has prompted our playwright to script a play around the
254 daily happenings of our being as a society. The playwright has actually displayed an
255 expertise in this very short dramatic piece. He has justified his genius in the chosen
256 genre. With this pace, we hope to hear more of Ariyo as far as humour is concerned in
257 literature. He is a budding master of the genre.

258

259 **Exploitation of Humour in *A Bright New Day***

260 A Bright New Day is a comedy knitted around the life of a university don, Dr.
261 Olaipo of New Era University. He is a despicable and disgustingly randy lecturer who
262 sexually harasses the female students in his department, leaving scores of victims in
263 the wake of this exploits. In like manner, Dr. Olaipo extorts money from his students
264 with reckless abandon. His exam scores are awarded arbitrarily on the power of the
265 naira and sexual satisfaction. His very faithful agent is Tunde, a very notorious cultist.

266 Commenting on the literary piece, Adewumi, (2005) observes that the drama
267 piece is so unique that it will evoke the sympathy of the readers in view of the ugly
268 situations most females undergraduates face in our universities. The choice of diction
269 brings to bear, images of the moral decadence in our society and the hydra-headed
270 godfatherism in our tertiary institutions as it propagates the war against extortion as
271 well as cultism and other vices pervading the corridors of our institutions of learning.

272 The astounding confidence of Dr. Olaipo leads him to the door steps of Lola, a
273 female student, and one poor Fala, a male student. These form a very thick skin but he
274 is bent on penetrating at whatever cost. The two students yet remain uncompromising.
275 Firmly captured in the web of failure in his 4-unit course, the duo run for help from
276 pillar to post, all to no avail. No one seems capable of stopping the enigmatic lecturer
277 in his promiscuous expeditions as he is highly connected to the powers that be.

278 As the story unfolds, a bright new day dawns with the appointment of a new
279 head of department who assumes his position with the zeal of sanitizing the

280 Department having heard of the kind of rot that pervades the department. Dr. Adejare,
281 the new head of department succeeds in his attempt and the rot in the like of Dr.
282 Olaipo loses their firm grip of misdemeanor.

283 The whole exploration of humour begins in the characterization of Dr. Olaipo:

284 *"(Lizzy, a female student, enters. Dr. Olaipo watches*
285 *the beautiful girl, with keen admiration. Her hair is let loose while her make-*
286 *up of many colours is glistening.*
287 *Her spaghetti blouse and mini-skirt expose body rather dangerously. She*
288 *walks majestically in her own world as*
289 *her dark goggles shine. Everywhere is quiet except for the*
290 *sound of the soles of her shoes. She eventually finds a*
291 *place to stand. He clears his throat). As I was saying,*
292 *you can browse a *bakassi on the internet. "(pg.8)*
293

294 The whole digression to Lizzy, one of his victims, changes the course of
295 events in the lecture. The students responded hilariously to the new trend taken by
296 their very randy lecture. The personality of the lecturer in question is thus revealed to
297 the reader. It becomes glaring that in Dr. Olaipo will be a sex maniac. That indeed is
298 him as we later learn how any beautiful thing in skirt sets his sexual desire in motion.
299 He takes the day and does things just as he pleases. He harasses his female students
300 sexually. Tunde extols his sexual prowess which seems to make him feel very
301 powerful and invincible:

302 "Tunde: Oga, you deserve the Guinness Book of records'
303 award for being the best youth fucker of the year!
304 *(They laugh)*
305 I'm proud of you, Sir.
306 Dr. Olaipo: These girls are mostly like chickens.
307 When you want to catch them, they run away.
308 All you need do is procure enough grains which you generously throw to
309 them.
310 They walk themselves straight into your basket eating and then you close the
311 lid." *(They laugh)* (pg.22)
312

313 He never sees the possibility of being caught in the act of being disciplined by
314 anybody. Tunde remains the errand boy who as well follows the footsteps of his grand
315 master with harassment of female students and threats to those who may want to
316 prove stubborn for one reason or the other:

317 "Tunde: Anyway, because of you guys, I'll consider a ransom." (pg.33)

318 The above quotation on page 33 is after a brush Lola had with Tunde. Lola
319 insists on keeping her integrity as usual. She refuses to condescend to the level of a
320 whore as Tunde wants with her. As a result, he has to be compensated with money

321 before he forgives her for treating him like "rags". He wields so much on campus
322 since the powers that be seem to be on his side. At the end of Act Four Scene Two, Dr
323 Olaipo's overture to Lola is sternly rejected. She resists him with the whole of her
324 strength. She holds her head high in spite of the impending consequence of not
325 playing the game according to his rules.

326 Unfortunately for Dr. Olaipo's victims, the arbiter of their case seems to be at the beck
327 and call of their assailant. Dr Dara, the Head of Department concludes that the
328 reporters of the evil of Dr. Olaipo are just being blasphemous.

329 Dr. Dara: You heard me well. Well... He's the alpha and omega of his course.
330 His word is final. You recalcitrant students! (Pauses).

331 If you go and see him and mend fences, there is something one can still do.
332 But if you allow this period of grace to pass you by, then you have yourselves
333 to blame." (pg.41)

334
335 For Dr. Dara, Dr. Olaipo is an upright and erudite scholar who should not be
336 taught the etiquette of a civilized being. How funny, that the very culprit of the ills
337 and rot in the education of the university is the one who goes cot free. The
338 appointment of Dr. Adejare in Act Five begins the new trend of things where the
339 perpetrators of evil are not allowed to go Scot free. He ensures that everyone receives
340 the reward of their deeds whether good or bad. It is with this new wave of leadership
341 that the likes of Dr. Olaipo and his cohorts will regret their action.

342 "You are either here as a purposeful student,
343 aiming at excellence, or you're flushed out of the system.
344 You are free to report to me any case of extortion by
345 any lecturer or sexual harassment..." (pg.42)

346
347 That is about the best of the speech the students have heard in recent times.
348 Dr. Adejare has hit the nail on the head. The glory of the likes of Dr. Olaipo has come
349 to an abrupt final end just in the blink of an eye. It is just like an answered prayer for
350 the students. They are bent on seeing the new change that the new leadership of the
351 department envisages. No wonder, the speech is received with thunderous applause
352 from the excited students.

353 The humour truly begins to unfold as the likes of Lizzy; the most cooperative
354 victim of Dr. Olaipo, no longer holds her head high in pride (pg. 43). Dr Adejare does
355 not have time for the games. The erring students are in for it. Subsequently, the
356 proudly promiscuous Lizzy is caught in an examination malpractice.

357 Lizzy: I...I

358 (Dr. Adejare removes the cap from her head. A piece

359 *of paper falls off from it. The invigilator quickly picks*
360 *it up and gives it to Dr. Adejare who reads through it silently...* "(pg.53)
361
362 She is made to realize that one cannot always get away with evil. One can
363 clearly imagine the satisfaction on the faces of other students as the scene unfolds.
364 **The work** is very humorous and thought provoking. How great are the mighty fallen!
365 The same ordeal comes to Tunde, the fearlessly self avowed cultist.

366 *"Dr. Adejare: Will you get up?*
367 *(As Tunde is getting up, he quickly takes the piece of*
368 *paper on his seat and attempts to swallow it. In the*
369 *struggle that follows, he is soon overpowered by the duo of invigilator and Dr.*
370 *Adejare. The paper is successfully retrieved from him).*
371 *(To Tunde) the lord of the dark world, the secret world terror!*
372 But soon secret things shall be made public for it's bright new day. Both of
373 you, consider yourselves expelled
374 from this university..." (pg.54)

375 The fearless Dr. Adejare is sanitizing the system and the bad eggs in it are
376 being taken away slowly. It is in the hike of the humorous repercussion of the
377 unchecked ills in the department that the 'Almighty' Dr. Olaipo is caught. It is so
378 funny enough that he cannot even smell a rat as he realizes before his own downfall
379 that his boys are in trouble. When Lola comes calling he concludes that he has finally
380 got what he all the while waited for:

381 *"Lola: you'll enjoy me much today that you'll*
382 *never forget me, sir. (He nods). But please, I must*
383 *go to the ladies before the action starts."* (pg.57)
384

385 Little does he know that he is in for it and that his end has finally come. While
386 at the brink of getting sexual satisfaction from Lola at the classic Hotel, the worst
387 embarrassment of his life comes knocking:

388 *"Lola: (Shouts). Yes, action time! (Suddenly, the door flips open. A horde of*
389 *cameramen from different media houses flood the room with different kinds of*
390 *cameras, recording the scene. Print, radio, television reporters follow them.*
391 *Out of the shock, Dr. Olaipo's hands seem to have been magnetized by Lola's*
392 *shoulders. Enter Leye, leading two other detectives who bear guns.*
393 Following them are Dr. Adejare, Mama and Fala). (pg.58)
394

395 He is intercepted by an unexpected visit of a horde of cameramen, policemen,
396 alongside Dr. Adejare, Mama and Fala. Glaringly, he couldn't contend the shock.
397 Ninety-nine days for the thief, one day for the owner, it goes without saying. The
398 disgrace that follows the arrest is a stigma Dr Olaipo will live with for life. He has
399 simply got it wrongly and he is going to pay dearly for it. Not just with his personality

400 but with his pocket. The style of humor as presented by Ariyo in *A Bright New Day*
401 attracts the commendation of all. The intended effect on the victim is fully achieved.
402 He leaves us with so much to think about as he drops his pen. No matter how highly
403 connected you are, you cannot always get away with evil.

404

405 **Conclusion**

406 Throughout the analysis of Kayode Ariyo's duo, our attempt has been to
407 present the manner in which the playwright has exploited humour as a concept in
408 literature to drive home his point. He has established in clear terms, the didacticism
409 embedded in it alongside the fun and amusement it excites in the reader. It is a careful
410 ploy into addressing important matters that bother on our being as human beings and
411 how this can achieve the entertaining objective of literature.

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