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Quenti Lambardillion

Paul Nolan Hyde

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Quenti Lambardillion

Abstract

Reviews the history of Tolkien language studies in *The Tolkien Journal* and *Mythlore*.

Quenti Lambardillion

A Column on Middle-earth Linguistics by Paul Nolan Hyde

The Face of Janus:

A Recounting From the Middle of it All

As everyone knows, this issue of *Mythlore* is the whole number 64, the second number of the 17th volume. In January we will celebrate the beginning of the 22nd year since *Mythlore* first appeared in January of 1969. The oddity, and one which hardly anyone realizes, is that Paul Nolan Hyde's writings and/or name have been printed in fully one half of all of the issues to date, beginning with *Mythlore* 32, in the summer of 1982 to this present issue. There are several frightening thoughts associated with this fact, not the least of which have been the letters and articles themselves.

First of all is the passing of more than eight years as the Philology/Linguistics Editor of *Mythlore*. I first became aware of the Society almost at its inception. From 1967 until 1969, I attended Brigham Young University pursuing an undergraduate degree in Spanish and English Literature, hoping someday to instill the wonderment of words into the hearts and minds of teenagers (a task worthy of Don Quixote). My deep interest and feeling for J.R.R. Tolkien's creations were in their infant state and although there were many who had associated themselves with the Mythopoeic Society and suggested that I do the same, I was hesitant, mainly because I felt that I had nothing really to offer except enthusiasm and delight for Middle-earth, an ebullience that I believed everyone who had read *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* shared.

My love for Tolkien and his works continued as I began my teaching career for the Church Educational System as a teacher of the Old and New Testaments to students at Bountiful High School north of Salt Lake City, Utah. Because of the nature of J.R.R. Tolkien's philosophy of good and evil which appear in his books, I often found myself appealing to his writings in my classes in order to help my students grasp the principles which seemed so difficult for them in the Scriptures. *The Hobbit* and the *Lord of the Rings* were enjoying enormous popularity in those days and my students seemed to appreciate the connection that could be made between the teachings of Christ or of Moses with those of moral characters in Middle-earth. Of course, I never taught Tolkien's works as allegories: I had been taught in my English classes to always read the Preface to a book before reading the main text in order to know where the author was coming from. Tolkien's counsel in his Preface was not lost on me.

From 1969 until 1972, I labored on a Masters Degree at BYU in English Language and Linguistics. Why the shift

in majors and the emphasis on linguistics is tale much to long to tell and undoubtedly far more boring than what I am already presenting, but suffice it to say that my desire was to do research on J.R.R. Tolkien and the only way to do so without enmeshing myself in the wasteland of contemporary fiction was to focus on the linguistics aspect of what Tolkien was about. At that time, less than a score of Doctoral Dissertations had been written on Tolkien, and while he still held great popularity among the students, the graduate dons scoffed at the idea of his being more than a "second rate British author". My Masters Chairman, however, was quite sympathetic to my case and allowed my Old and Middle English studies to justify my Thesis as a simple descriptive analysis of the invented languages which had appeared in the *Lord of the Rings*. I left Brigham Young University with Master's parchment in the summer of 1972.

In the meantime, I had been asked to transfer to Orange County, California, to teach at Cypress College. My proximity to the Society mailbox was metaphorically serpentine; had it been a snake it would have bitten me. Still I remained aloof, not because of any fastidiousness on my part, but because I felt that I had nothing really substantial to offer those of the Society who had any interest in Tolkien's Linguistics. After all, I had done nothing more than to describe what I thought was going on in the texts. For the next four years I attended to my doctoral program at the University of Southern California. My chairman, a professor of Old Church Slavic, was not only sympathetic about my work on Tolkien, he was enthusiastic and encouraged me to continue my studies with a re-doubled effort. He, an ardent admirer of J.R.R. Tolkien, knew from his own academic perspective that what was going on linguistically in Middle-earth was far more profound than most, if not all others with whom I had come in contact, had suspected. I thus forged ahead with a renewed sense of purpose.

Before I could complete my work at USC, I was again asked to transfer my assignment by my employer, this time to Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. There I found not only an extraordinarily gifted Old and Middle English scholar in Shaun F.D. Hughes, but an exuberant Tolkienophile as well. I also was able to surround myself with a Doctoral Committee, the members of which not only knew and appreciated J.R.R. Tolkien, but who had actually published academic articles on him using their own real names as the authors. There was no embarrassment associated with appreciating the "second rate British author", in fact it was to the contrary. I spent the next six years establishing residency, working out the

details of my program, and producing the 1200 page monstrosity which by weight alone quantified my right to the three little letters which follow the names of the brain-dead. In the late spring of 1982, I numbly crossed the dais and received my hood from President Arthur Hansen, almost his last official act as the President of the University (the following year he became the Chancellor of Texas A&M).

During my academic career at Purdue, Shaun Hughes had mentioned the Mythopoeic Society on several occasions, suggesting that they might prove to be a valuable resource. I had long stood in awe of his unfailing ability to provide me with new books to read and other bibliographic material. I now know that he was taking advantage of Joe Christopher's "Inklings Bibliography", a resource that I have long since recognized as a valuable tool. Towards the end of my Piling Up of Dissertation, Shaun drew my attention to a call for letters in *Mythlore* 31, asking for readers' comments on how *The Silmarillion*, *Unfinished Tales*, and the *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* had affected and changed their previous view of Tolkien. He suggested that a letter from me my not only be acceptable but also desirable. I wrote my letter which appeared with the comments of numerous others in *Mythlore* 32. I also requested back issues of *Mythlore*.

While all of this academic folderol was proceeding, I became aware of the commentaries and texts that had been published in various forms on the languages of Middle-earth. Predominant among them was Jim Allen's little book, *An Introduction to Elvish*, a prodigious work for its time and one of the few works that have attempted such a wide range of linguistic topics in a single volume. Another source of inspiration was the *Parma Eldalamberon*, originally the Journal of the Mythopoeic Linguistic Fellowship of the Mythopoeic Society. The distinct difference between these two early labors had to do with focus. Allen and his associates (many of whom were part of the MLF) were attempting to effectively define what Tolkien had achieved, while contributors to *Parma* felt free to not only analyze, but to speculate and sub-create themselves. Recent issues of *Parma* have continued that same flavor to the present day under the guidance of its Editor, Christopher Gilson.

As I began to peruse my nearly acquired past issues of *Mythlore*, I noted a decided absence of linguistically oriented material, which came as a great disappointment to me. I had determined in my Doctoral work that one of the major influences on Tolkien's development of Middle-earth had been his overall conception of the languages, particularly those of the Elves. Somewhere in my reading, I do not now remember exactly where, one of Tolkien's critics suggested that what Tolkien was writing was not so much fantasy as it was science fiction, the science being linguistics. While some may quibble about the aptness of the suggestion, it still remains that the linguistic aspects of the *Lord of the Rings* and other volumes are not to be trifled with. Tolkien was deadly serious about them. I sent

another letter to Glen GoogKnight suggesting that maybe something could be done to include linguistics in future issues in *Mythlore*, and that maybe I might be of some service to the Society.

Glen promptly responded to me and asked if I might be interested in producing a regular feature for *Mythlore* and also function as one of his Editors responsible for linguistic material. I was more than flattered and felt such a warmth from the Founder of the Society that I had no hesitancy accepting his offer; the first appearance of *Quenti Lambardillion* was in *Mythlore* 33. For the first three issues (#33-35) I was given the title of "Linguistics Editor", an honorific with which at the time I felt somewhat comfortable, after all I did have some background in the denoted field. In the Spring of 1983, Glen wrote to me and asked if I would prefer the title of "Philology Editor". I immediately went to my dictionary in order to see what the new job would entail. The primary meaning in American English had to do with Historical Linguistics, a discipline with which I had some acquaintance. The second meaning, although archaic, embraced in its scope literary study or classical scholarship. Although I thought that I could get away with the title in the United States, I thought that the English might think me a little pretentious, and told Glen so in a return letter. Apparently Glen thought more of me than I did of myself and I have been the Philology Editor ever since.

Having arrived at this personal numerical milestone, I thought that it might be incumbent upon me to review all of the past issues of *Mythlore* and the *Tolkien Journal*, and describe, albeit briefly, the kinds of linguistic studies that have been done since their beginnings, together with a few editorial asides along the way.

THE TOLKIEN JOURNAL

In the first issue of the *Tolkien Journal*, a one page prospectus by the New York Tolkien Society, Dick Plotz hoped that future issues would include, among other things, "articles, scholarly or light,... on the languages of Sindarin, Quenya, and the Westron." The second issue, a three page affair, included a rather intriguing analysis of the Ring Inscription by Mark Mandel. Although the details may prove to be overly speculative, the techniques used to analyze the inscription are quite laudable. Issue 1 of Volume 2 contained several tidbits including how to pronounce "Meriadoc" (accent in the third syllable), a complaint that the Ring Inscription had been printed by Ballantine upside down, a word-for-word translation of "A Elbereth Gilthoniel" given by Tolkien himself, and Cory Seidman's "A Uniform System of Tengwar for English" (a controversial issue which continued in III:1, p. 16). In addition there is a fascinating letter from John Plotz who, after making reference to Mark Mandel and Robert Foster's "Guide to Middle-earth" says:

Surely this is missing the point. How far away is this dull scholarship and silly adoration (one a par, I think, with the comic book specialists) from the beauty of Lothlorien or the grim spector of the Dark Tower. It was all right for

Mr. Tolkien to be concerned with details: it was up to him to produce a tightly-plotted novel in a carefully-wrought world; but for us to go through the strange passages of Middle-earth with gun and camera (Look! There's an orc with an unanalyzed name!) is both unnecessary and harmful. (p. 6)

In the following issue (II:2), the fat was in the fire with several letters siding with John Plotz, and Dick Plotz valiantly attempting to stem the tide. Interestingly enough, in that same issue were some of the silliest and preposterous fabrications trying to pass themselves off as "sub-creations", an extraordinary irony in retrospect. Bob Foster responded in a sober and forthright manner. "I am in favor of detailed study and interpretation of LotR, but only which such work does not violate the principle of internal integrity". In Issue 3 of the same volume, Mrs. Laird H. Barber contributes another insight:

Indexes and inquiries into names may not interest everyone, but they are helpful aids if one is working with *The Lord of the Rings*...It is a difficult work to study critically, simply because it is so large and so concisely written. Indexes and other such aids are, of course, secondary to the major critical questions *The Lord of the Rings* evolves. Nevertheless, these factual inquiries should be done and made public" (p. 13)

Thus were born, at a very early time, the traditional divisions in Tolkien studies which persists even until this day. I have to say, that being a purveyor of "indexes and other such aids", I warmed up to Mrs. Barber instantly.

In addition to these early philosophical and somewhat existential quibbles, the *Tolkien Journal* addressed few of what would be considered serious linguistic elements. Included, however, were short articles on Tolkien's sources: Cory Seidman Panshin, "Old Irish Influences upon the Languages & Literature of the *Lord of the Rings* (III:4, p.7-8); Patrick J. Callahan, "Tolkien's Dwarves & the *Eddas*" (Whole Issue 15, p. 20) in which Callahan lamented the lack of scholarship on Tolkien's use of Anglo-Saxon and the Finnish *Eddas*; and finally a brief set to between Dick Plotz and Karen Rockow about Tolkien's use of Anglo-Saxon word for "prince" in *Beowulf* (Plotz II:1, p. 2; Rockow III:3, p. 15) which justified Callahan's lament. The real lesson in all of this has to do with the dangers of putting anything in print that may come back to haunt you. I am surrounded by ghosts myself and can sympathize with Dick's collection of specters.

As I gleaned what I could from these long past publications, I noted an initial keen interest in the invented languages of Middle-earth, particularly the calligraphy, and then a subsequent waning into other concerns, including quite a bit of personal sub-creation using Tolkien's world as a base. It was almost as if the languages had been the igniting spark for many Tolkien enthusiasts, but once their minds, both academic and creative, were set afire with Tolkien's vast mythology, the spark did not seem necessary. This pattern is apparent in the journal *Mythlore* as well.

MYTHLORE

The first numbers of *Mythlore* are replete with linguistically oriented material. Ruth Berman led the way with her interesting little piece on "orcs" ("Here and Orc, There an Ork," I, pp. 8-10; the ubiquitous Karen Rockow and Nan Braude would respond in Issue 2, pp. 50-51). In that same issue, Sandra Ballif began her "A Sindarin-Quenya Dictionary, More or Less, Listing all Elvish Words Found in *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Road Goes Ever On*, by J.R.R. Tolkien (I, pp. 41-44; continued in II and IV). It is noteworthy that the ink was barely dry on the first installment when Alpajpuri in Eugene, Oregon opened fire on Sandra's attempt; everyone now knew that there was a cook in the kitchen and things were warming up. Not that I suspect that anything malignant was going on, but in issue III, Glen GoodKnight published the following notice: "The Elvish Dictionary being serialized in *Mythlore* did not appear in this issue because of so much material to be included. It will continue in the next issue." Any hesitations the Editor may have had about linguistic material appearing in *Mythlore* has long since been repented of.

In *Mythlore* VIII, Paula Marmor demonstrated effectively for the first time how an understanding of the languages can be of great value in getting at the superstructure of the story line ("The Wielders of the Three and Other Trees," pp. 5-8; Margaret Purdy would comment later in *Mythlore* XIII, pp. 29-30). Interestingly enough, that same issue announced the new publications, "*Parma Eldlamberon*" and "*Mithril*," with Paula as Editor of *Parma*. Glen GoodKnight's Editorial reveals the intent of these new publications:

Their appearance will signal a slight editorial policy shift in *Mythlore*. As a general rule (with some infrequent exceptions) all poetry and fiction will appear in *Mythril*, and all linguistic material will appear in *Parma*. Why? One, because that is the purpose of the two new periodicals respectively; two, because we really didn't publish that much poetry, fiction, and linguistic material in *Mythlore* before. This way is neater. *Mythlore* has and will be primarily focused on articles and reviews. (p.9)

Perhaps Glen's real desire at that time was that there be one publication for all of these disciplines, but there were serious financial constraints which seemed to make it more practical to publish the three journals separately. That policy would be followed for the next six years, during which five issues of *Parma* would appear. Between 1977 and 1983, however, *Parma* remained dormant.

Linguistic issues seemed to raise their heads from time to time in *Mythlore*, but generally confined to the Letters section. Alexei Kondratiev gave a particularly insightful observation in *Mythlore* XIII:

As for the linguistic controversies which some Society members (myself included) find so engrossing, I think they relate to an aspect of the Inkling's work that is far from superficial. The bards of "primitive" societies have always been conscious of the "magical" properties of language, of the bright glimpses of the numinous it can

afford to those who study it; see also Lewis's "Virtribian" poem "The Birth of Language" (*Poems*, p. 10). To witness the entrapment of meaning in structures of suggestive sound is a source of unending wonder to some people, who never tire of finding new examples of the process. My own experience of philology has been "joyful" in the most genuine sense. And Tolkien's statement that imaginary languages were a seminal element in his subcreation is, I believe, significant."

Alexei's sentiments are so much like my own, that I feel as if we have been cut from the same bolt of cloth. And there are countless others who, although they may not be as articulate as Alexei, unquestionably felt and feel a passion for words and meaning that almost defies description. Tolkien tried in his little metaphor on taste (see *Letters*, pp.264-5).

In *Mythlore* XVI, Glen GoodKnight writes a short comment on the nature of the Letters column:

I have noticed since the Society began printing letters, they have been interesting and informative. However, over the last year the quantity and literateness of them overall have risen sharply. I am delighted with the variety of topics and opinions expressed." (p. 28)

Among the various commentaries expressed contained many which were linguistically motivated, generally as an observation made on some assert or question raised in *Mythprint* (see Dale W. Simpson, *ibid.*, pp. 31-32; Anders Stenstrom, *ibid.*, p. 34; Margaret R. Purdy, *ibid.*, pp. 37-38; and another letter from Alexei Kondratiev, *ibid.*, p. 38).

The Letters column continued to heat up in the next issue with Dale Simpson attenuating a discussion begun in *Mythprint* which then spilled over into *Mythlore* (Issue 17, pp. 16-18). Thomas Santoski (p. 20) and Judy Cole (pp. 19-20) also bring to the fore several etymological issues. These kinds of discussion would proceed in the Letters column for some time (see Benjamin Urrutia, *ML* 19, p. 25; 24, p. 19; Rod Walker *ML* 25, p. 17). But the gemstone of *ML* 17 was Marie Nelson's short article, "Non-Human Speech in the Fantasy of C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Richard Adams". Her observation that humanity and language are interconnected, and that perception governs our evaluation of non-human characters is an insight of great magnitude, especially considering how Tolkien's division of the human soul into the various sentient races is formally done to a large measure by attention to speech patterns in concert with racial outward physical appearance.

In *Mythlore* 23, Jonathan McColl, who was ostensibly jumping to the defense of the British Tolkienophile publications, made an extraordinary comment regarding the importance of detail:

We come out with minutiae for various reasons: it is... interesting to point out totally unconnected consistencies in the Middle-earth stories (thus showing all the more how well Tolkien wrote them), fun to resolve inconsistencies and exciting to find unpublished bits of the Professor's which confirm any guesses at all. Minutiae are not always trivial. Jim Allen and his colleagues in the Linguistic Fellowship deal with minutiae all the time in

discovering Elvish details. Previously unpublished or limited readership items of Tolkien's, Lewis', and Williams' interest people in societies like ours (now I mean both the Tolkien and Mythopoeic) and we do not consider them unimportant. (p.38)

This painful examination of detail horrifies me, but my own studies have shown that what Jonathan says is true. There is an inward satisfaction that comes when the Master is proven right, and the detractors are put to shame. Only detail can really demonstrate the truth of the matter because generally the most egregious of the *faux pas* occur when the scholarship has been unnecessarily shallow. Jonathan's perception that unpublished material sometimes shed light on aspects of Tolkien's overall conception was confirmed in *Mythlore* 24 (Summer 1980) wherein Joe R. Christopher's article, "Three Letters by J.R.R. Tolkien at the University of Texas", demonstrated the value of publishing unpublished letters. Joe's commentary on the second letter in particular excites the desire to read what Tolkien had to say to Terence Tiller about dialect representation in Tiller BBC script. What a delight it was when the *Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* were published in 1981 to find all three letters included in the collection. Joe's enthusiasm probably did not directly effect the Tolkien's Estate to publish J.R.R.T.'s correspondence; that undoubtedly had been in the works for some time. But it is the intense interest in Tolkien's thinking, somewhat preserved in his letters, that makes the hunt for minutiae delightful and enormously rewarding.

In *Mythlore* 28, Marie Nelson reprised with "Bird Language in T.H. White's *The Sword in the Stone*" (pp. 35-37) wherein she demonstrates White's consistency in his language invention and character development of his non-human entities with historical variants of the English language. This kind of a study can be, and has been, applied to Tolkien's use of dialect in the Middle-earth volumes. Not only can one be lucid as to what each dialect suggests about the characters, but a simple analysis can go a long way in clarifying the interrelationships that exist between the major and minor persona in his novel.

INTO THE BREACH

In the winter issue of 1982, on page 42 of *Mythlore* 30, Lee Speth made the following announcement:

The Council of Stewards regrets to announce that *Parma Eldalamberon*, the Mythopoeic Society's Elvish language journal, must be officially discontinued. It has been three years since *Parma* 5 appeared, and a long series of letters and personal approaches to the *Parma* staff has failed to bring another issue demonstrably nearer to publication.... Articles on Mythopoeic languages will be welcomed in *Mythlore*.

The hope was expressed that someday the linguistic aspect of the Society might be revived and that the members would be notified.

It was at this extraordinary juncture of time and space that yours truly happened upon the scene, fresh from the altar of academia, willingly prepared to pour out my life's

blood (I was a-leaking in any event) to promote Tolkien linguistics. I do not think it prudent at this point to rehearse all that has appeared in *Mythlore* of a linguistic nature since *Mythlore* 33; those who are reading this little history already know more about my views than they ever bargained for. In short, however, I have attempted to spark an interest in linguistics in the minds and hearts of the readership, regardless of their educational background. We have discussed calligraphy, phonetics, morphology, translation, syntax, narrative technique, cartography, historical and descriptive linguistics, language classification, and treated real languages from Welsh to Finnish to Old and Middle English. New material has appeared, as in the case of "Narqelion". Re-newed debates have prospered inside and outside of the pages of *Mythlore*. I cannot say that I have been the instrument of gladness in this particular field of endeavor which has prompted the resurrection of the Mythopoeic Linguistic Fellowship as the Elvish Linguistic Fellowship (ELF) and of the bi-monthly newsletter, *Venyar Tengwar*. I was much to absorbed in what I was doing with *Mythlore* to be anything more than a moral supporter to Jorge Quinonez and Carl Hostetter. I also am not totally convinced that a mere linguistics column in *Mythlore* has brought about Chris Gilson's revival of *Parma Eldlamberon* as a personal oil for me, to keep me honest as it were. Although I had little to do with it, it pleases me immensely that Bill Welden, one of the original Mythopoeic Linguistic Fellowship, serves now on the Council of Stewards. I simply believe that it was just time for the spark to be struck again. I happened to be at the right place at the right time: walking into a magazine filled with old powder, dry as a California hillside in August, with a burning match in my hand. It has been a blast!

What next then? I look forward to the future of Tolkien Linguistics with great hope, knowing that there are many like me who are willing to put time and effort into the pursuit of defining Tolkien's linguistic aesthetic and its subsequent effect on the creation of Middle-earth. We are looking forward to a second edition of *An Introduction to Elvish*, or something of that ilk. We continue to hope for more material from Christopher Tolkien to clarify what we suspect about the diversity and completeness of the Languages of Middle-earth, perhaps even a volume dedicated to the history and development of the languages themselves. Finally it is to be hoped that at some point, a more concerted effort might be made to synthesize the narrative and languages in a fashion to enable us to grasp in a single vision, the entire masterpiece that is Middle-earth

The Linguistic aspect is certainly not all that can be known; there are many windows looking out of The Hill across The Garden and The Water to the Blue and Misty Mountains. We of linguistic and philological bent, however, feel that our opening to the Shire and beyond is "a perfectly round door like a porthole, painted green, with a shiny yellow brass knob in the exact middle".

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MYTHOPOEIC CORE READING LIST

MYTHLORE frequently publishes articles that presuppose the reader is already familiar with the works they discuss. This is natural, given the purpose of this journal. In order to be a general help, the following is what might be considered a core reading list, containing the most well known and frequently discussed works. Due to the many editions printed, only the title and original date of publication are given.

J.R.R. Tolkien

The Hobbit, 1937; "Leaf by Niggle," 1945; "On Fairy-Stories," 1945; *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* 1954; *The Two Towers* 1954; *The Return of the King* 1955; *Smith of Wootton Major* 1967; *The Silmarillion* 1977

C.S. Lewis

Out of the Silent Planet 1938; *Perelandra* 1943; *That Hideous Strength* 1945; *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 1950; *Prince Caspian* 1951; *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* 1952; *The Silver Chair* 1953; *The Horse and His Boy* 1954; *The Magician's Nephew* 1955; *The Last Battle* 1956; *Till We Have Faces* 1956.

Charles Williams

War in Heaven 1930; *Many Dimensions* 1931; *The Place of the Lion* 1931; *The Greater Trumps* 1932; *Shadows of Ecstasy* 1933; *Descent Into Hell* 1937; *All Hallow's Eve* 1945; *Taliessin through Logres* 1938, and *The Region of the Summer Stars* 1944 (the last two printed together in 1954).



Mythopoeic Celtic Stationery by Patrick Wynne

This stationery features four designs, all found in *Mythlore* 35: The Celtic circles portray themes from J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams. Each circle is at the top right of the page and is 3.6" in diameter, with a lined border around the page. the fourth design is of the four corners found on the mailing envelope your *Mythlore* is sent in, but much larger in size. the set includes 4 sheets of each design, making 16 printed sheets, 12 blank sheets, and 16 envelopes. The paper is of neutral but beautifully antique-appearing parchment. Each set makes fine personal stationery for both men and women, and are excellent for that special mythopoeic gift. \$5 per set. Send your order to:

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