

**Manacles of Madness: Haywood's *The Distress'd Orphan;*
*or Love in a Madhouse***

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Eliza Haywood (1693?-1756) produced many popular, romantic fictions in the 1720s and 30s. These works often involve a strong-willed heroine who navigates battlefields of courtship, economics, and love. The novella *The Distress'd Orphan; or Love in a Madhouse* (1995) relates the fictional tale of Annilia, a young woman who was orphaned as a child and inherited a large estate from her merchant father. Her uncle and guardian, Giraldo, aims to control her fortune by having Annilia marry his son, Horatio. However, Annilia meets Colonel Marathon at a dance and they fall in love with each other. Giraldo forbids the match, but Annilia ignores her guardian's wishes and engages in a secret correspondence with Marathon. Giraldo discovers this transgression and becomes enraged; Annilia tells him that she plans to move out of his home and secure her own lodgings. Giraldo, angered by Annilia's independent behaviour, lies to the household and declares that Annilia is insane. He imprisons her in a private madhouse and assumes control of her economic assets. Marathon finds the madhouse, enters it as a supposed patient under the alias 'Lovemore' and rescues Annilia. They marry, and Marathon, as Annilia's husband, gains Annilia's fortune. Although the plot sounds fantastical, in eighteenth-century Britain the criteria of madness were numerous and wide-ranging, and it was not implausible to orchestrate the committal of a sane person. As Foucault has argued, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, madness was dealt with by an increasingly vigorous physical confinement and the madhouse emerged as a means of social control (1973, p.11). The novella accurately portrays historical social attitudes toward those deemed insane; Haywood illustrates the particular abuse and powerlessness young women faced in regard to their fortunes, marriage, and legal control of their persons. This

paper will examine relationships between madness, confinement, and the female body in eighteenth-century culture, and Haywood's presentation of these issues in her text.

In eighteenth-century England, the private madhouses (distinct from the public houses, such as Bethlem) operated as a trade; patients were referred to as 'customers'. The private madhouse system was often abused, and it was possible for unscrupulous individuals to arrange to have a relative or friend committed. For example, people were confined so that relatives could access fortunes, or to allow husbands to dispose of their wives so that they could live with mistresses. Allan Ingram notes that 'the house built for fools and the mad is always capable of expansion simply by a shift in definition of what is sane' (1991, p.101). The definition of insanity was loose at best: almost any social transgression could be construed as madness. Annilia's uncle, in an effort to control Annilia's choice of suitor, and hence her fortune, manipulates the strong-willed Annilia by staging scenes so that she publicly appears as mad.

Symptoms that were considered to denote madness included 'aberrations' in one's speech, deviations from proper social etiquette, inappropriate dress, and general appearance, and immorality. People who spoke too loudly, too often, or too little were suspect. Women were particularly scrutinized in terms of speech; if a woman spoke unnecessarily, or incessantly, she was transgressing social etiquette for appropriate female behaviour. Moral problems, such as the expression of passion or sexual desire – which Annilia exhibits when she first meets Marathon (Haywood, 1995, p. 10) – were also potential symptoms of madness: 'women were clearly expected to behave with a certain degree of modesty and moderation and those who contravened such behavioural norms were often reported as deranged' (Scull and Andrews, 2003, p.70). It was also the norm for ladies to maintain a constant affection and attitude toward their family and friends, and any 'emotional disturbances that seemed excessive, disproportionate,

and unjustified by reasonable cause' (Scull and Andrews, 2003, p.69) or that resulted in a change of affections for their relations were potential symptoms of madness. In addition, 'failure to observe the social etiquette and common decencies of appearance, personal hygiene, and dress suggested a loss of rational control' (Scull and Andrews, 2003, p.69). The behavioural norm was a detailed, prescribed set of behaviours: anyone stepping outside of this range risked being labeled a mad person.

Bodily symptoms were also used to determine madness: cool hands, racing pulse, sweats, irregular gait, and inappropriate facial expressions were all possible signs. Irregular urine or stools were also potential symptoms. Dr. John Monro, a physician who worked in the public madhouse of Bethlem, also ran a private practice and referred some of these patients to private madhouses. He kept a casebook (1766 [2003]) of his private cases. Monro frequently noted these patients' corporeal symptoms as being related to their madness. For example, Monro describes the case of Mrs. Duncan:

Mrs. Duncan [...] was pretty quiet when I first visited her, but at times wander'd very much in her discourse, calling me her Saviour, & repeating, I know my redeemer liveth & her hands and arms were remarkably cool, rather cold: they were very much the same the next time I saw her, tho' she was herself in a most violent agitation, & as they told me had had 2 or 3 convulsion fits; she was at times very furious, talking incessantly without consistence & coherence her pulse likewise much agitated; but at the same time she took both her nourishment & her medicines, & was not insensible of her stools. (2003, p.C-35)

Mrs. Duncan's symptoms could be indicative of a physical, rather than mental illness, but she was placed in the care of Monro, and treated as though the root of her illness was a mental disability.

Monro's casebook illustrates the wide range of behaviours and symptoms that were social and medical indicators of madness. In addition to patients who exhibited corporeal symptoms, some cases dealt with complications that arose from social situations, some similar to themes that

Haywood uses in her text, such as courtship or domestic strife. For example, Monro relates the case of Miss Gilchrist:

Miss Gilchrist at a hatter's in Cross lane near the Monument. Had bewilder'd herself very much about a gentleman who had made his addresses to her, & was thought by her friends & herself to be an improper match, which had hurried her extremely, she gave a very good acct of herself but was a little hurried, & fancied herself dying. (2003, p.C-100)

One of Monro's most compelling cases mirrors Annilia's fictional plight; although he does not comment or make direct note of domestic strife, or economical issues, it is not implausible that such issues may have been involved with the case. He describes:

Mrs. Mackenzie. I was directed by the court of king's bench to visit this Lady in conjunction with Dr. Battie & Report my opinion of her to the court. Dr. B.s acct. of Her was as follows. That about 7 years ago he was sent for to visit a lady in Poland street, who was at the time he saw her very mad, that he order'd wt he thought Proper, & saw her no more 'till last January when upon being call'd in again he found her very mad, he then advised her husband to confine her; but not chusing to take her into his own house, he recommended Mr. Mackenzie to Duffield; he went there & made an agreement with Dr. D. but never Sent his wife there, nor was Dr. B. call'd in afterwards 'till April last, when he again found her very mad, with a particular look in her eyes which express'd distemper in a very strong manner to him; he advis'd Mr. Mckenzie again to confine her; but having reason to imagine she had contracted some acquaintance who might create difficulties, he advised him not to send her to any private Madhouse but to keep her in his own house & sent him a nurse accordingly: & he paid her another visit himself, & when Mr. Mackenzie complain'd that she made too much noise for him to bear her in the house, he advis'd sending her to a private lodging, & recommended one Day, who had just taken a house at Paddington for that purpose. Mrs. M.---- was carried thither & confined but in 4 or 5 days was set at liberty by one Sherratt accompanied by Justice Miller. Both parties appell'd to the court of King's B. & I was in consequence directed to visit her as above; but was not able to discover from the examination she underwent before us any marks of Lunacy. (2003, pp.C-50-54)

Although Haywood's novella is fictional, as evidenced here the type of situation Haywood relates existed in reality.

Normative social behaviour for women in courtship required they remain modest and feign indifference: Haywood's Annilia transgresses this norm when she receives and responds to Marathon's letters. Young women were encouraged to find a suitable husband, but 'despite a general eagerness on the part of women to be married, custom demanded that they maintain an attitude of indifference or even of aversion' (Brophy, 1991, p.107). Conduct manuals of the time expressly stated that not only should women never solicit a man's affection, they should also not reveal that they are interested in a man's attentions:

They ought not to shew at first [...] Rigour; for that rather chases away than gains a Lover. Nor ought they to yield their Hearts as soon as they are solicited; for that is rather the Effect of a foolish Pity, than of the Merit of their Suitors; and he will not be apt to esteem that much, which costs him so little, and is aquired with so much ease.

It is thus that these [...] Fair-ones captivate Hearts by a noble Pride: For in despising Love at the first, they at last triumph with the greater Power. ([Anon.], 1740, p.iii)

Women were expected to conceal their amorous interests in order to secure a man's esteem and affections. Haywood's heroine ignores these rules of social etiquette, and strays into socially problematic behaviour by engaging in secret correspondence with Marathon.

In addition to concealing their emotions in regards to their suitors, women were also expected to give their parents and guardians unquestioning love and obedience, and to follow their advice on the matters of marriage and courtship. The economic and legal power a husband possessed over a wife 'made the prospect of entering such a state of bondage, and for life, daunting' (Brophy, 1991, p.94). Young women were expressly instructed to follow the advice of family and friends in choosing a husband. In John Essex's 1722 ladies' conduct manual, he writes:

Marriage is an Affair of that Consequence in Life, that it is great Imprudence in a young Lady to venture on it, without good Consideration; great Ingratitude to do it, without Advice of Parents, Friends, &c. (p.95)

Women were supposed not to have the experience, foresight, and social knowledge necessary to choose their own match. Essex again stresses the importance of consulting parents or guardians in arranging a successful marriage:

You are to be intreated, I say, to consult your Parents or Guardians, and be inform'd from them, that in so nice a Conjunction, in order to have a happy Marriage, Man and Wife should have but one and the same Interest; and to make up this, there must be a suitable Agreement and Harmony in Age, Humour, Education and Religion; nay, even in Families and Fortunes; and when all these concur, we may expect an equal Satisfaction, as a natural result of an equal Match. (1722, p.97)

Based on Essex's conduct advice, Annilia's uncle Giraldo does Annilia a good service in arranging her engagement to Horatio: the pair is well-matched in terms of families, educations, religions, and age. Although Horatio does not have a large fortune like Annilia, Giraldo follows the majority of prescribed social customs in persuading Annilia to agree to the match. In contrast, Annilia transgresses several codes of conduct and deviates from normative behaviour when she engages in courtship with Marathon. Marathon is much older than Annilia, and they are not matched in terms of family, religion, or fortune. Although Giraldo's actions are in reality oppressive and manipulative, his advice follows the rules of proper social conduct. Annilia's disobedience of Giraldo, and her active participation in courtship with Marathon are socially transgressive actions; her behaviour falls outside the prescribed norm, and meets several criteria of madness.

As a woman, Annilia exists in a highly restrictive social and physical world. Annilia's existence as female disables her in her society; she is not allowed to exist as an autonomous being. She is expected to adhere to specific social behaviours and to obey her guardian; when she rebels, she is

confined because of her transgressions. Rosemarie Garland Thompson explains that '[b]oth the female and the disabled body are cast as deviant and inferior; both are excluded from full participation in public as well as economic life; both are defined in opposition to a norm that is assumed to possess natural physical superiority' (1996, p.19).

The female body is subject to a strict set of social rules. Because of Annilia's young age (she is fourteen) and gender, she cannot access her fortune without a male guardian, and she does not possess the legal power to escape from the madhouse and regain her fortune without Marathon's help. Annilia occupies the 'other' positions of 'female,' and 'deviant' necessary to uphold the dominant binaries of 'male' and 'normal'. Thompson further explains:

[W]ithout the monstrous body to demarcate the borders of the generic, without the female body to distinguish the shape of the male, and without the pathological to give form to the normal, the taxonomies of bodily value that underlie political, social, and economic arrangements would collapse. (1996, p.34)

Giraldo uses Annilia's deviance to reinforce the social dichotomies of sane/insane, male/female, normal/strange. He falsely constructs her rebellion and independent thought into 'madness' so that he can regain authority over her person. Annilia's body is a tool of economic transfer; her subjected state (forced marriage to Horatio, or staged madness) makes Giraldo's acquisition of her fortune possible. Power structures are upheld and inscribed through the demarcated, 'pathological' body.

Although *The Distress'd Orphan* offers little physical description of the characters, Haywood notes Annilia's corporeal reactions to passion and anger: these reactions can be interpreted in different ways. Annilia exhibits the symptoms of passion and/or hysteria: she blushes, trembles, and grows excited whether she receives a letter from Marathon, or argues with Giraldo (Haywood, 1995, p.15, 37). When Annilia first meets Marathon, she 'fe[els] Agitations such as she never before had been acquainted with' (1995, p.10).

Haywood describes the ‘passion [she] had so lately entertained’ for him as producing ‘strange an Alteration’ (1995, p.10) in Annilia’s mood and manner. Annilia displays similar passionate symptoms when she receives Marathon’s letter later that same evening. She ‘trembled at the encroaching passion of her own Soul’ (1995, p.15); when Horatio and Giraldo return to find her ‘in this condition [...] all the Tokens of a violent Disorder being on her’ (1995, p.15), they mistake her passion for illness, and escort her home. When Giraldo locks Annilia in her room, the narrator comments that with ‘so just a Provocation, Passion must arrive at the greatest pitch’ (1995, p.37). Annilia’s corporeal responses to love and anger are interchangeable.

Seventeenth and eighteenth-century medicine equated desire or passion with hysteria: the physical symptoms for both states were similar, and both states were undesirable in women. In Joseph Townsend’s health guide, he writes that hysteria is caused by ‘violent excitement in the brain [...] by the passions of joy, grief, anger, surprise’ (1795, p.36) and that ‘the persons most liable to this disease are females, from the time of puberty to the age of thirty-five, unmarried women, and young widows’ (1795, p.35). William Nisbet notes in his guide that hysteric patients are ‘easily affected [...] by the flow of the menses [...] [and] passions of mind’ (1793, p.75). Physician William Harvey argued that hysteria is caused by unsatisfied female desire:

[i]n young women when their uterus grows hot, their menses flow, and their bosoms swell – in a word, when they become marriageable; symptoms -- hysteria, furor uterinus, &c [...]. In like manner [as animals] women occasionally become insane through ungratified desire [...] How dreadful then, are the mental aberrations, the delirium, the melancholy, the paroxysms of frenzy [...] brought on by unhealthy menstrual discharges, or from over-abstinence from sexual intercourse when the passions are strong! (Harvey, 1651, quoted in Bocchicchio, 2000, pp.131-132)

Harvey equates female sexual desire with hysteria. The symptoms of passion and hysteria are dangerous, because they are identical, and hence,

ambiguous; the female body becomes socially dislocated and therefore uncontrollable. The body is simultaneously in one state, while it mimics another. As Judith Butler explains, ‘women are such good mimics [...] they are not simply reabsorbed into this function [...] *they remain elsewhere*’ (1994, p.160). From an observer’s point of view, the source of these corporeal symptoms is unknowable. Harvey’s insistence that women marry is an attempt to confine and temper women’s ‘uncontrollable’ behaviours within marriage, an institution that in the eighteenth century worked to regulate women’s economic, social, and legal subjugation. Because the direct cause of the symptoms of passion or hysteria are unlocatable, they are also unpredictable, and as such, a threat to social and economic order. Just like the passionate, desiring woman was channeled into the controlling institution of marriage, the hysterical woman was confined in the institution of the madhouse.

Taking into account the criteria for insanity and hysteria, Annilia, though sane, clearly displays several socially recognizable symptoms of madness. When Giraldo informs Annilia that Marathon is not an appropriate suitor, and that she should not enter into a correspondence with him, Annilia does not obey his advice; instead, she deviates from proper social conduct and tells him:

I am now past my Childhood, and People must imagine that I am either very deficient in Understanding, or you in the Care of improving it, when they shall be told I am incapable of judging what Answer is fit for me to give to any Letter which is sent to me (Haywood, 1995, p.21).

Annilia not only defies her guardian, but she dares to suggest that she possesses good judgment and the right to assert her will. Annilia further transgresses social etiquette when she attempts to move out of Giraldo’s house and sends her maid to secure new lodgings. In an effort to control Annilia’s burgeoning independence, Giraldo intercepts her maid and ‘had a sudden thought come into his head which seem’d to him to be a lucky one, and which he resolved to put into immediate Execution: Alas, said he, to the

Maid, do you not know your Mistress is Mad?’ (1995, p.34). Giraldo constructs Annilia’s madness as a means to control her; however, he easily cites several instances where Annilia displays potential symptoms of mental illness. Giraldo reminds the maid that ‘a few days ago [Annilia was] seiz’d with a most violent Frenzy’ (1995, p.34) (which occurred when Giraldo confiscated Marathon’s letter). Annilia’s maid is immediately swayed by the suggestion her mistress may be mad. She comments that Annilia ‘is in a strange Humour now’ and pleads to Giraldo to ‘give me my Discharge, for I shall be afraid of coming near her’ (1995, p.35).

Giraldo is able to frame Annilia’s passion and displays of independence as symptoms of madness mainly because she is female. Marathon displays similar, if not more extreme, passionate behaviour, yet his sanity is not publicly questioned. Marathon’s masculine constitution is hardy enough to withstand his passion for ‘the Divine Empress of my Soul, the most transporting Annilia’ (1995, p.30); Annilia’s delicate feminine constitution is supposed to be unable to withstand such passion. Giraldo cements the social perception of Annilia as mad when he arranges for her transport to the private madhouse. She is accosted in the middle of the night by ‘ill-look’d Fellows in her chamber’ (1995, p.40) who ‘made her, with all the hast she could, throw on a loose Night-Gown, which she had no sooner done, than like a Lamb among a Herd of Wolves, she was seiz’d by these inhuman Ruffians’ (1995, p.40). Annilia is rudely woken, and ‘rather dragg’d than carried’ (1995, p.40) out of her house; she is in dishabille, and appears ungroomed and ill dressed. Her removal from the home confirms Giraldo’s assertions of her madness.

When Annilia arrives at the madhouse, Haywood pauses the narrative to create a detailed description of the institution. The image Haywood presents works to expose the ‘corruptions of social institutions and the abuse of patriarchal authority’ (Nestor, 1995, p.viii). Haywood focuses on both the inmates and the keepers:

The rattling of Chains, the Shrieks of those severely treated by their barbarous Keepers, mingled with Curses, Oaths, and the most blasphemous Imprecations, did from one quarter of the House shock her tormented Ears; while from another, Howlings like that of Dogs, Shoutings, Roarings, Prayers, Preaching, Curses, Singing, Crying, promiscuously join'd to make a Chaos of the most horrible Confusion: but the Violence of this Uproar continued not long, it being only occasion'd by the first Entrance of the Keepers into the Cells of those Wretches who were really Lunatick, and had, for the Addition of their Anguish, so much Remains of Sense, as to know what they were to suffer at the Approach of these inhuman creatures [...] they [the keepers] saluted them with Stripes in a manner so cruel as if they delighted in inflicting Pain, excusing themselves in this Barbarity, by saying that there was a necessity to keep them in awe. (1995, p.42)

Haywood describes the frightening sounds the inmates make, but stresses that the keepers' behaviour is much more disturbing to Annilia than that of the supposed 'Lunatics.' In this passage, Haywood again describes the madhouse staff as 'inhuman' (she described the men who removed Annilia from Giraldo's with the same term). Haywood's text, like Mary Wollstonecraft's later work, *Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798 [1975]), inverts the social perception that the inmates of the madhouse are dangerous, inhuman creatures, and instead creates a dialogue around the machinations of the institution, and the keepers' dehumanizing treatment of people who are entrusted to their care.

Haywood's description grows into a narrative aside that makes an express social commentary:

What is there to be feared from those helpless objects of compassion [the inmates], who being Hand-cuffed, and the Fetters on their Legs fast bolted into the Floor, can stir no farther than the length of their Chain! Yet with Barbarity, these pitiless Monsters exert the Power they have over them, that whoever is witness of it, would imagine they were rather placed there for the Punishment of some Capital Crime, for which Law has provided no sufficient Torture, than for the Cure of a Disease, by their nearest and dearest Relations. (1995, p.43)

Haywood again refers to the treatment of the inmates as 'Barbarity' and labels the keepers 'pitiless Monsters'. The keepers, who hold immediate

power over the inmates, and who are enforcers of the larger social hierarchy, are not lauded for securing the irrational, dangerous mad people in the institution; instead, Haywood comments that the cruel confinement they enforce would be suitable as punishment for ‘some Capital Crime.’ Haywood does perhaps essentialize the inmates by referring to them as ‘helpless objects,’ but she also calls attention to their status as human. She refers to the inmates’ families and friends, and the life they led before they were confined. Further, Haywood suggests that it is possible for the environment of the madhouse to cause madness in an otherwise sane person. Annilia notes that her surroundings ‘struck so great a Dread into her, that nothing is more strange, than that she did not die with the Fright, or fall indeed into that Disorder of which she was accus’d’ (1995, p.41). Haywood exposes the private madhouse as a dumping ground for people who do not comply with social norms, and also as an institution that not only refuses proper care to those with sincere mental health issues, but as a place that actually causes and perpetuates mental illness.

Marathon eventually rescues Annilia from the madhouse, but his grand gestures call attention to the gravity of Annilia’s situation, and to his melodramatic and unrealistic behaviour as a lover. Nestor proposes that through Marathon, or ‘Lovemore’ (the alias Marathon adopts while he infiltrates the madhouse), Haywood ‘illustrates the irrepressible power of love in excess’ (1995, p.viii). However, while Marathon lives up to his name and goes to great lengths to rescue Annilia from the madhouse, his romantic actions border on the ridiculous. Marathon voluntarily imprisons himself in the madhouse, refers to himself as Annilia’s ‘transported slave’ (Haywood, 1995, p.53), and has his love letter delivered to her via an arrow, shot through the bars of her window, which conveniently ‘fell directly at her feet’ (p.54). All of these incidents are highly unlikely, or even blatant reversals of reality. Marathon, who has seen Annilia in person only a few times, would likely not exert the effort to locate her, much less risk feigning madness in

order to be admitted to the same institution. Marathon states he is Annilia's slave, yet if he becomes her husband, she would be subjected to his legal and economic will. The arrow that happens to fall at Annilia's feet could possibly have injured her. Haywood purposely heightens romantic elements to the point of ridiculousness, and she creates extreme, melodramatic events in order to call attention to the falseness of the situation. The figure of Marathon is contrived and fantastical, yet Annilia's situation of being imprisoned in a madhouse for the benefit of unscrupulous relatives, as previously evidenced, is not. If Marathon did not exist, or was not an overzealous and completely committed suitor, Annilia would be oppressed by the desires of Giraldo and Horatio, and/or imprisoned in the madhouse indefinitely.

Haywood further undermines the novella's romantic, happy ending by keeping Annilia in her nightgown throughout her rescue and marriage. Part of the spectacle of her removal from Giraldo's house involved her wearing only a nightgown; Haywood takes the time to mention Annilia's appearance again, and explains 'she had never any other clothes sent her, than those in which she came; therefore in the same loose Dress in Which she was forced thither, did she escape' (1995, p.58). Annilia, because of her dress, appears mad when she escapes with Marathon. Once Annilia and Marathon escape the madhouse, they plan to be married immediately; however, Annilia takes the time to send Osephas, Marathon's servant, 'to some of those with whom she had been most intimate of both Sexes [...] bidding him tell them they should hear a Story full of Wonder' (1995, p.60). Annilia relates her tale to her friends, and 'the Ladies, having observed her habit [...] would have sent for some of theirs' (1995, p.61) so that Annilia could change out of the nightgown she has been wearing since the beginning of her imprisonment in the madhouse. Oddly, Annilia refuses to accept any clothing except 'a Hood and a Scarf from one of them, saying merrily, her Bridegroom would not like her the less hereafter for being ill-dress'd on her

Wedding Day' (1995, p.61). Social etiquette placed much emphasis on dress: conduct writer Madame de Maintenon explains 'to the ladies' that dress 'makes a more lasting Impression on the Mind than you imagine' (1758, p.40). Annilia, a lady of fortune, marries while wearing a disheveled nightgown: her dress portrays an image of a madwoman. After the marriage, Annilia, still wearing the nightgown, confronts Giraldo and informs him that 'the Writings of her Estate [...] are now the Right of [her] Husband' (1995, p.61). Annilia remains disenfranchised; Marathon now has access to her fortune. Just like Annilia's hood and scarf partially cover her nightgown, the happy ending only partially deflects the fact that Annilia is still a slave to her legal male guardian. Annilia's good fortune depends on Marathon's too-good-to-be-true disposition; she holds as little economical and legal power as when she was physically imprisoned in the madhouse.

The Distress'd Orphan is 'an exploration of the effect of uncontrollable passion on human behaviour' (Nestor, 1995, p.36). However, the novella involves much more than a simple romantic tale in which love conquers all obstacles. Haywood's plot highlights the social, economic, and legal power that male guardians and husbands wielded over their female wards, and the highly restrictive social rules to which women had to adhere. Women who strayed outside of normative ideals risked being labeled as dangerous, or mad. This social climate worked to confine and control the female body and mind either through the institution of marriage, or the madhouse.

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