Chapter 13

"Vorstellen" As

"Vorstellen" As: To Put Forward, To Introduce, To Imagine

Kimberley Farris-Manning is a trained musician and sculptor, who completed her degree in Music Composition at the University of Victoria (BMus 18). Over the past few years she has enjoyed designing, installing, and performing various multimedia works. She is interested in how relationships between objects are manifested through material changes over time. More specifically, she is interested in the process of inscription: that is, how objects hold and convey experience and time. She makes art as a form of inquiry: to pose or construct a space in which to contemplate the fragility and contradictory nature of equilibrium.

The venture seems clear to me. One exposes oneself to the light of the public. As a person. Although I'm of the opinion one must not appear and act in public selfconsciously. Yet I know that in every action that takes place a person is expressed by his action and his speech. Speech is also a form of action. That is one form of venture. The other is we start something. We weave our strand into a network of relations. What comes of it we never know. We all need to be able to say: Lord forgive them, for they know not what they do. That is true of all action. Simply and concretely true, because one cannot know. That's what is meant by a venture. I'd say this venture is only possible when there is a trust in mankind. A trust which is hard to formulate. But one which is fundamental. A trust in what is human in all people. Otherwise such a venture is impossible. (Arendt 1964, 58:10)

The general feeling of alienation from humanist values brought on by the rise in xenophobia and nationalism around the world today calls for an

immediate response: can this phenomenological response be adequately made through art? If so, is it appropriate? Philosopher R.G. Collingwood said, "So long as the past and the present are outside one another, knowledge of the past is not of much use in the present. But suppose the past lives on in the present; suppose, though encapsulated in it, and at first sight hidden beneath the present's contradictory and more prominent features, it is still alive and active" (quoted in MacMillan 2009, 44); even in uncertainty can be found a certain truth. Within this whole gamut of experiences across time and space, how can one create art that is relevant to the understanding and perspectives of the present day? In the absence of certainty, should one (or, more specifically, the artist) take action in response to historical and ongoing socio-political events? Is it enough to have a strong moral compass and assumed good intent, or can action in the context of such freedom be irresponsible? How much must one already know, and how much can be learned? To what extent can one's own philosophy and methodology be trusted, when the context for the reception of artwork and the ability of people in society to think and have a sense of morality are so vast?

These were questions I confronted when composing a piece for violin and electronics during the University of Victoria's international and interdisciplinary summer field school: *Narratives of Memory, Migration and Xenophobia in the European Union and Canada*.¹ The experiential learning offered by this program allowed me to explore intersections of art and politics in the composition of my piece *Engrenages*. If art is a means of engaging with ideas, then one can identify and position oneself in the world through engaging with artworks, thereby interacting with tangible sensory inputs. This connection with material allows for relationships to be made with concrete historical events and ongoing social-political realities. In visiting the sites of traumatic memory and collecting field recordings throughout our travels, I did not struggle to find impactful or important material; I struggled to find the means through which to synthesize these experiences into the

¹ From July 16 to August 26, 2017, an international group of graduate students from various disciplines visited sites of traumatic memory in Hungary, Germany, France, and Canada. Participants engaged with artistic material at the sites, and participated in discussions with each other to form balanced and diverse impressions of each unique experience. Individuals responded with written reports and compositions throughout our travels and then presented their findings at a symposium the SALT New Music Festival in Victoria at the end of August. The piece I wrote for solo violin and electronics aims to reflect how artistic narratives of the past may inform the present context of migration, xenophobia, and truth in relation to the sites of traumatic experience visited during this field school.

appropriate form of art. In this chapter, I discuss the steps I took in collecting material (citations and field recordings), creating synthesis (form), and developing structure (Appendix A) in the composition, in conjunction with discussion of philosophical questions that I encountered in the course.

Professor Moussa Magassa explained that all conscious humans have a "response-ability" when it comes to dealing with current or past traumas. The (in)tangibility of art allows it to address ideas that cross boundaries including time, place, and their accompanying accepted social thoughts. Art is made from a human perspective; it is a series of choices and examples made, usually in an effort to engage human interaction with the world. In this way, an artistic venture can be a sociopolitical venture, given the appropriate space, trust, and human agency.

The question then becomes: how does one create an artistic response that confronts these socio-political issues through time, one that acts as a stimulus for further rumination? When dealing with thought, memory, and politics it is important to allow for diverse individual experiences, for it is when actions are no longer questioned or challenged that the power of the collective becomes dangerous. An artist should not use politics as a tool, or allow art to become a form of ideology. Art can *stem* from politics but art still has to be art, foremost.

Due in part to the role of history and education in the sites visited during this field school,² I chose to create the structure of *Engrenages* in a way that is similar to the architecture of a museum: where the building (or structure) itself provides information with regard to the interactions between materials and space. Much as the building of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) leads in an upward spiral to a tower of hope, I wanted the very framework of the composition to focus on the potential for — and power of — resistance. The spirals of love and fear in *Engrenages* (see Appendix B) are both permanent potential realities within human existence. The possibility for hate is omnipresent; one cannot deny its existence, but one *can act against its force*. It is our responsibility as morally decent and conscious humans to resist the pull of collective hate and to invert the spiral of fear. The quest for a truthful history and a healthy future must begin with the

² See Appendix 1 at the end of the book for more details about the the sites visited during the University of Victoria's graduate summer field school, *Narratives of Memory, Migration, and Xenophobia in the European Union and Canada*.

acknowledgement and pursuit of the many narratives that exist within our memories.

The idea of the "people" — as a community of fate — not only implies a communal consciousness, including a communal consciousness of the past; it implies a conscious communal consciousness, and perhaps even more strongly a conscious communal subconscious. And it could — and should — understand itself in a new light, reflecting our history, as something in the manner of a critical, as it were 'sharp-eared' communal consciousness. (Lachenmann 2011, 242)

Art is accumulative; therefore, in responding to historical sites, an artist must also respond to the art that has informed, justified, and resulted from these historical memories.

But it is not enough to remember, or to simply respond; to create contemporary art, one must bring the past into the present and keep memory active. Neither can exist truthfully when divorced from the other; in order to tell a comprehensive narrative or to offer a complete reflection, therefore, one must address the complete narrative. This history is not dead; the narratives are ongoing and very much alive. There were points of convergence between the past and the present visible to me even within the timeframe of this program: the nationalist billboard campaign in Hungary,3 the resurgence of white supremacists in Charlottesville,4 and the fear of and hatred toward migrants (visible in the case of Cedric Herrou in France⁵). Lachenmann describes the "possibility for art to affect people or society [...], to remind them [...] of their destiny as beings capable of spirit, so that from there they can reflect upon themselves and their reality. That means: the artist has nothing to say; [his] task is to create. And the creation will say more than its creator suspects" (Lachenmann 2011, 242). (But if an artist has

³ MWBP, "Billboard Wars Against Rational Thinking," Meanwhile in Budapest, posted July 2017, https://meanwhileinbudapest.com/2017/07/01/billboard-wars-against-rational-thinking/.

⁴ See Astor, Caron, and Victor, "A Guide to the Charlottesville Aftermath," *The New York Times*, posted Aug. 13, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/13/us/charlottesville-virginia-overview.html.

⁵ For more information see "Cedric Herrou Convicted of Helping Refugees Over Border," *Al Jazeera*, posted Aug. 8, 2017, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/08/cedric-herrou-convicted-helping-refugees-border-170808082804597.html.

a poor moral compass, is it still their task to create?) This idea that art is not absolute goes all the way back to Plato's thinking that

the art object ... manifests what cannot be understood in terms of its knowable conditions, because an account of the materials of which it is made or of its status as object in the world does not constitute it as art. Art shows what cannot be said. Philosophy cannot positively represent the absolute because 'conscious' thinking operates from the position where the 'absolute identity' of the subjective and objective has always already been lost in the emergence of consciousness. (Bowie 2016)

An artifact is often assumed to be a physical object created by humans; however it can also be referred to in the scientific sense of the term, whereby it is "something observed in a scientific investigation or experiment that is not naturally present but occurs as a result of the preparative or investigative procedure" (Oxford Dictionaries 2017). There are six main 'historical artifacts' (source material) in *Engrenages*, taken from sound recordings made over the course of the field school. I gathered these artifacts as a form of documentation throughout our travels and worked them into the composition once we returned to Canada. Present in both the violin and the electronics sections of the piece, these examples are enumerated below and exhibited in Appendix C. Throughout the remainder of the chapter, I refer to them by their numbers, as seen below, for the sake of ease and clarity. Please refer to the Appendix for their full textual content.

- 1 Sound recording of rain falling on candles left near the memorial plaques at Ravensbrück Memorial Site.
- 2 Quotation from an interview with the President Alain Chouraqui of the Memorial Site of Les Milles Camp.
- 3 Slogans from the Hungarian billboard campaign, read by Hungarian students in the course, recorded at the Memorial Site of Les Milles Camp and in Winnipeg.
- 4 Article One from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as spoken by Ralph Ehlers in the performance of "30 Articles" by Zaid Jabri at Ravensbrück Memorial Site.

- 5 Quotation recorded at a later date, spoken by professor Dániel Péter Biró in a discussion at the Memorial Site of Les Milles Camp.
- 6 Quotation from an interview with the Head of Educational Services, Matthias Heyl, at the Ravensbrück Memorial Site.

One can analyze the surrealistic and fabricated nature of an "artifact" in detail; however, what is perhaps of greater interest at this time is *how* an artist can venture thought into the world: what kind of process must they undertake? The above material alone is not a piece of art: these artifacts are powerful; they carry meaning; they evoke thoughts and feeling. What they lack, however, is form. In my compositional venture at this point, I had the medium but not the means.

- What role can artists play in responding to a particular space and time?
- How can an artist's work address the personal and the political, while finding a balance between the concrete and the abstract?
- How can an artist create a piece politically, without making political art?
- At what point does political art become propaganda?
- How do we get closest to the truth, when the truth is not specified or absolute?
- *In musical terms, what tools or barriers do composers face in searching for these truths?*

I will begin by saying that, although all of these questions address one another, they do remain in essence unanswerable. They are unanswerable because of the very nature of art: because even art that is critically created does not lead to a specific *point*. Returning to the opening statement from Arendt, it becomes clear how pertinent it is that the breadth of an artwork be measured not simply by the final product; in fact, this final product should act perhaps more as a reflection (or artifact) of the process through which it came to be.

The physical and time-based artifact is challenged by the very fact that art responds to the "artificial": that it creates a surreal or artificial world (art-world) to reflect reality. An artist may fear writing things down due to a concern for falsifying or misinterpreting information; conversely, one should regard the *avoidance* of writing with fear, for this denotes an inability to develop and change over time. It is impossible to change what never was; therefore it is possible that the role of the artist is simply to dare to create — even in a space filled with abstract and fluid "unknowns." Arendt explains part of her own experience with this in an interview, stating: "Writing is an integral part of the process of understanding ... because certain things have been established. If I had a really good memory and I was able to retain all my thoughts, I doubt I'd have written anything at all" (Arendt 1964, 58:10). What is pertinent here is the idea that understanding and knowing are two separate things: writing — be it music or text — establishes perception where memory cannot. (Can understanding exist outside of memory? Can you understand what isn't known?)

An artwork engages the interpreter in discussion with the themes of the text or piece, regardless of whether or not they experienced the subject matter firsthand. In this way, art becomes a "force that pushes us together as a people in the more irrational sense, at times in a form of intoxication; as a force that art should not simply invoke, however, but rather, as an object of reflection, break or load with new meaning, 'suspend' and hence 'sublate'" (Lachenmann 2011, 244-45). A mathematician can find a solution to a certain problem, but the beauty of math lies in the *process*, not in the *product*. In many ways, art is like math: each provides material, form, and concepts for others to interpret in a multiplicity of ways, resulting in innumerable solutions and processes. When an artist "weaves their strand into a network of relations" (Arendt 1964, 58:10), what comes of it is not concrete, because it differs for everyone who interacts with that work; but what does come of it is understanding and awareness of the thought process and the dialogue between material and immaterial, body and mind, time and space, personal and political.

When encountering memory, it is easy to remain only in the past. The action of memorialization seems backward thinking: like a freezing of action, moving forward. Memorialization is different from remembering, however, and it is because of memorialization's innate reference to action that it is appropriate when educating today's world regarding the relevance of past atrocities. Chouraqui, President of the Memorial Site of Les Milles Camp, stated that "there should not appear to be an opposition between these two terms (memorialization versus action), for memory can pull towards the past, but memory can also be a motor to the present and the future with the clarity provided from historical lessons, as we are trying to do at Camp des Milles" (Chouraqui 2017).

The duality of these terms was visible in each of the three main memorial sites/museums that we visited throughout the summer course, as well as at Keleti Railway Station in Budapest, Hungary, which has a contemporary and ongoing narrative. (See Appendix 1 at the back of the book for the course description and the full description of sites visited.) In a way, Keleti Railway Station shows the intersection of memory and action most vividly, even though this site is not highly "memorialized" as of yet. Perhaps, in this case, there is a different kind of memory in play — one that is still actively being formed in this place and for these people, but that reeks of so many other terribly memorable times.

In my experience, Ravensbrück Memorial Site had the strongest potential for "active memory." As well as the artifacts and statements found in the on-site museum, the physical space is maintained in such a way as not to be a reflection of the past but rather an echo or shadow of what happened there. The forensic memory⁶ approach taken by the memorial site ensures that the narratives and testimonies of survivors are recounted *in* or *on* a physical space that is pertinent to each story. The success of this site as a place for both memorialization and education lies in the simultaneous presentation of *fact* and *concrete historical narrative* (in the museum), as well as the crucial *relation to the world* maintained by the very human and physical interaction with the stories, people, and lives that previously occupied the space. The human and abstract connection achieved by this "forensic" approach to memory is surreal, and in this sense could be considered art in and of itself.

The CMHR is an "idea museum": a museum that interacts with the visitors and educates them through the stimulation of thought and exposure to ideas, while leaving room for personal responses to the topics and material. With the architecture of the building as its guide, the museum presents a broad and thorough narrative of human rights violations, as well as progress, within Canada and around the world. Facts, narratives, and case studies guide a visitor through a platform of critical thinking toward the final point and height of the museum, the "Tower of Hope": the idea being that once someone has learned and acknowledged these past human wrongs, there is hope for action, and for progress moving forward.

This is where I found the museum to fall short.

⁶ Forensic memory is the scientific investigation and approach to documenting and establishing memory.

We spoke with one of the staff at CMHR about the difficulties of incorporating contemporary issues into the fabric of a museum before they can be fact-checked or properly curated. I understand the values, fears, and complications inherent to this quandary, but firmly believe that in a world of live issues — of atrocities that resonate too closely with past events — it is not enough to engage with these events from the distance of pure education. What the CMHR already does very well is to find points of convergence between historical traumatic events, as evident in the exhibit presenting genocides around the world. I look forward to seeing how the museum continues to grow, hopefully increasing the number of temporary exhibitions, art installations, and other creative ways of fostering thought and discussion around current events.

This may be where art can offer a sideways entry point: an avenue into the exploration of issues that lack the distance and perspective necessary to curate an informed and accurate museum exhibit, for example. The final section of the museum at Camp des Milles has a graphic that charts the four stages of genocide: this is a concrete and active tool that visitors can use to relate the past to current-day or ongoing situations, and to draw parallels between what has happened, what could happen, and what needs to be done. I look forward to seeing how the CMHR grows to incorporate more varied contemporary tools into their already impressive dialogue.

Art has the capacity to elicit a response in the absence of certainty. Where truth and ability to act seem elusive, art can highlight its own artifice as a means through which to find not just one truth, but all truths. The synthesis of multiple narratives, perspectives, and dimensions enables art to "act on the conscious via the senses" (Lachemann 2011, 243). It is "precisely here [that] the contribution from our perspective as artists is crucial — an imaginatively and intellectually electrifying awareness of what makes the concept of art so indispensable for all of us" (Lachemann 2011, 245-46). The danger in this assumed power of art and of statement in the absence of knowing is the inherent power of the artist (or of art) to constrain or dictate thought.

The approach taken in the compositional venture is therefore of the utmost importance. In the absence of certainty, when "what comes of it we never know" (Arendt 1964, 58:10), the artistic *process* becomes foremost in establishing the integrity of a piece. The "venture" lies largely in its form, as well as the synthesis material.

Composed in five movements, each movement of *Engrenages* can be mapped onto a part of the graphic described in Appendix A, as illustrated below. A preliminary score can be found in Appendix C.

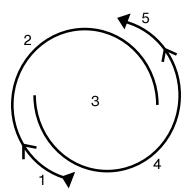


FIGURE 13.1. Graphic for "Engrenages: Inverting the Spiral of Fear for solo violin and electronics." (Kim Farris-Manning, 2017.)

The piece begins and ends with *artifact #1*, framed by the acknowledgement of ongoing memory. In *movement one*, sound artist Jordie Shier manipulated the recording of the rain to sound like fire, while the violin plays pitches taken from the recording in fragments, as shadows. The violinist moves between tasto, ½ col legno, flautando, and ponticello, exploring the combination of noise and sound, clarity and confusion, at each point. Distorted and searching, the violin seems to be slowly engulfed by its surroundings.

Movement two begins with a rolling ostinato in the electronics, providing motion as the violin plays a sort of rhythmic and pitch translation of artifact #2. When the violin starts trilling at the top of page 3, snippets of text from artifact #3 begin in a spatial 4-channel form. The fragments are meant to convey that this text is everywhere; the Hungarian students who read and recorded the text did not have to look up the billboards to remember what they said — this is a part of their world, and it is inescapable. In order to subvert or invert the original meaning of this text without denying its intention, this fragmented section is chaotic, loud, and an overload of information. The messages are there but they do not make sense, and the rest of the piece tries to shed light on this.

Hannah Arendt mused about what changed and what stayed the same over the course of Hitler's reign: "What has remained? The language" (964, 37:15). She further explains, "The German language

didn't go crazy;"(, 38:30) the people using it — the syntax of the German language — is what became insane. Proved in reverse, this means that given the appropriate techniques, insanity can be challenged: its power can be harnessed and used in inverting its message. In presenting the text of the Hungarian billboards, I am not propagating their message: I am introducing material that needs to be confronted, parsed, and debunked. There is power in these words, and it needs to be deconstructed before it can be reconciled.

Movement three marks the arrival at the centre of crisis: devoid of reason, logic, purpose, and consistency, I struggled to find a way to render this negative space. If Lachenmann is right in saying that "art [as a force] should not simply invoke, however, but rather, as an object of reflection, break or load with new meaning, 'suspend' and hence 'sublate'" (2011, 244-45), then perhaps a way to do this is to create a new perspective by construing the lens; by combining contradictory statements, thus creating a new complexity of meaning.

Shier and I developed a system of "perception distortion" through electronic convolution: taking the impulse response from the "fire" version of artifact #1 and the original recording of artifact #5, Shier convolved and processed this with a recording of the violin playing a transcription of artifact #4. I chose to use Article One of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights here as a poignant reminder that law depends on our regard for memory (fire, artifact #1) and morals (artifact #5) in order to rule human behaviour. The violin is very sparse and noise-based in movement three, depicting the illogical and irrational human condition in this context.

Movement four begins with an embellished version of the quote from Matthias Heyl, artifact #6, on the violin. This shows how difficult an undertaking the spiral out — resistance — is, requiring the support of both the individual and the (balanced) collective. At system 3 of the score, the violin circles around the pitches B, C, and D, and recalls bow positions from earlier in the piece. This act of searching and of effort is accompanied by another piece of convolution in the electronics. In this case, the impulse response is taken from a violin realization of artifact #5 (an internalization of the need to 'repair') and the consonants from the fragments of artifact #3 (a reminder of what it is that needs repairing). These are convolved through violin interpretations of the Hungarian billboards, signifying ownership of the language and a simultaneous subversion of its meaning.

Movement five is the only time a field recording is played with no electronic manipulation except for added reverb: this is a return to artifact #1 in its original state. The live violin plays alongside the recorded material, using a series of five intervals taken from the same source material, and a rotating a series of bow placements. The simple yet constant changes of interactions between bow technique and recorded source material creates space for listeners to hear and respond to the material presented, on their own. The piece ends with the first interval of the series played col legno tratto, implying a cyclical and continuous form. The formal lack of closure does not mark an end to anything, either artistically or in society, showing a connection between the past and the present in the time-span of this piece and beyond. This composition represents a necessary venture into current and past artistic, socio-political, and human thought. It is a personal response to what I experienced and witnessed at the sites visited during the field school. It is a collection of dialogues held with the people and places that we encountered during our travel. It is a venture into the unknown, simply and concretely because I do not know the answers, and I seek better questions. It is an act, and an evidence, of trust.

While this returns us to the enormous and age-old question of "what is art," the power (or potential power) of art to dictate or constrain thought should not be overlooked — for "herein lies, not least of all, the danger that the horror might recur, that people refuse to let it draw near and indeed even rebuke anyone who merely speaks of it, as though the speaker, if he does not temper things, were the guilty one, and not the perpetrators" (Adorno 1998, 4). It is not the role of the artist to temper things, especially thought. As Arendt warned: "one must not appear and act in public self-consciously" (1964, 58:10). In order to allow others to respond as individuals, art must draw near the contentious: confront, reject, and recall differing ideas without directing and imposing one possible response.

The pressure exerted by the prevailing universal upon everything particular, upon the individual people and the individual institutions, has a tendency to destroy the particular and the individual together with their power of resistance. With the loss of their identity and power of resistance, people also forfeit those qualities by virtue of which they are able to pit themselves against what at some

moment might lure them again to commit atrocity. (Adorno 1998, 2-3)

In order to maintain this simultaneous closeness and distance, the role of the artist may be to "bring closer what is too distant, thereby enlarging details, and [to] remove to some distance what is too close, thereby gaining perspective. Art and criticism both involve the active manipulation of perspective and detail, of wide-angle and close-up. Criticism, as well as art, brings reality into focus and also distorts it" (Schiller 2003, 94). Perhaps the question I was confronted with in approaching the composition of this piece, then, was how to find balance between distance and focus, perspective and opinion, memory and action, idea and truth, understanding and knowing.

- How does one create an artistic response and space that confronts these socio-political issues through time, while allowing freedom for others to respond in their own way?

There is a multiplicity of outcomes, *Engrenages* being an example. The problem is that with art as with politics, there is no universal method or way to venture forth other than to act and to trust.

Engrenages: Inverting the Spiral of Fear

for solo violin and electronics

Engrenage n.

1) (technique)

Mécanisme à roues dentées transmettant un mouvement de rotation.

2) (figuré)

Enchaînement de faits auxquels on ne peut échapper.

1) (technical): gears

Mechanism of toothed wheels that transmit a rotational movement.

2) (figurative): chain, spiral

A sequence of facts/realities that cannot be escaped.

("Engrenage." Dictionnaire français.

https://www.linternaute.fr/dictionnaire/fr/definition/engre nage/)

The graphic in Fig. 13.1 depicts two simultaneous spirals leading in and out of a vortex, which is fed by the inward-moving spiral. In this case, the **inward spiral**, "fear," represents xenophobia, hate, and control. The **outward spiral**, "love," depicts the community and strength of xenophilia. The **centre of crisis** is a point of stasis removed from regular time: it is bereft of morals, and of basic human rights. It is devoid of normality, regularity, human dignity, and equality; and this alter-reality is nearly impossible to escape.

This piece analyzes the dualities, contradictions, and points of convergence between different sites and instances of traumatic memory. The listener is invited to travel with the violinist through simultaneous spirals, to feel the pull of the individual against the collective, the body

against the mind, motion versus stillness, memorialization versus action, and love versus fear.

Using field recordings from the travels to European sites of traumatic memory as acoustic and electronic material, the interactions between violin and electronics in the composition examine the pull of the dualities mentioned above: striving to take the outward spiral, invert the *engrenages*, and move instead toward a *centre of peace*.

Appendix B

Source Material in Engrenages

- 1 (recording)
- 2 «Il ne faut jamais regarder les sociétés et les situations de façons stables, mais il faut les regarder comme des processus.»
- 3 "We must never regard societies as stable; rather, we must regard them as processes."
- 4 Billboard slogans:
 - "Hungary is a strong and proud European country."
 - "If you come to Hungary, don't take the Hungarian jobs."
 - "If you come to Hungary, you must respect our culture!"
 - "If you come to Hungary, respect our laws!"
- 5 "Article One of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."
- 6 (translation from Hebrew) "Repair, repair," repair."
- 7 "That they [the students] were raising questions together, that they were able to stand alone if they needed, that they were asked whether they need support."

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