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Emil Kubek's "Others"[1]

Class, Nation, and Race in Carpatho-Rusyn American Literature

Резуме

«Інчы» Еміля Кубека: клаяса, нарід і раса в карпато-русиньскій літературі в Америці

В сесій статі проведено аналізу того, як карпато-русиньскій америцкій писятель Еміль Кубек представлят в своій прозі і поезиі понятя «свій» і «інчый». Як грекокатолицкій священник, Кубек часто выберат героів, што находят ся на ранті соспільства – бідных, пониженых, гнобленых – дозвалят му тото асоциювати американьскых Карпато-Русинів з ріжныма соспільныма групами. Одкликуючы ся до товдышніх клясовых, народовых і расовык катеґорий, Кубек нераз барже як з білыма Американами ідентыфікує Русинів з Америкы з інчыма «народами помедже» (Італиянці) або расами (Африканьскы Американе). Коли адже естетыка Кубека заохочала його чытатели до культывуваня етыкы выражаючой спілчутя і солідарніст з інчым, слідуючы поколіня Русинів Карпатскых в Америці заняхали тот імперативів і в більшости асимілювали ся з білом американьском культуром.

Ключовы слова: студия над дияспором, люде помедже, міґрацийна література, студия над робітничом клясом

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Abstract
„Inni" Emila Kubeka: klasa, naród i rasa w karpacko-rusińskiej literaturze amerykańskiej
W niniejszym artykule przeprowadzono analizę sposobu przedstawiania terminów „swój" i „inny" w prozie i poezji karpacko-rusińskiego pisarza, Emila Kubeka. Jako ksiądz katolicki obrządku bizantyńskiego Kubek często wybiera bohaterów znajdujących się na marginesie społeczeństwa – ubogich, poniżanych, uciśnionych, co pozwala mu kojarzyć Amerykanów narodowości karpacko-rusińskiej z różnorodnymi grupami społecznymi. Czerpiąc z ówczesnych kategorii klasowych, narodowych i rasowych, Kubek niekiedy częściej niż z białymi Amerykanami identyfikuje Amerykanów karpacko-rusińskiego pochodzenia z innymi „ludami pomiędzy" (Włosi) lub rasami (Afroamerykanie). Podczas gdy estetyka Kubeka zachęcała jego czytelników do kultywowania etyki wyrażającej współczucie i solidarność z innymi, kolejne pokolenia Amerykanów karpacko-rusińskiego pochodzenia porzuciły ten imperatyw i w dużej mierze zasymilowały się z białą kulturą amerykańską.

Słowa kluczowe: badania diaspory, społeczności pomiędzy, literatura migracyjna, badania klasy robotniczej

Keywords: diaspora studies, inbetween peoples, migrant literature, working-class studies

I. Inbetween Peoples

When Slavs from the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires began to arrive in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many settled in Pennsylvania's Coal Region, where job opportunities for unskilled laborers in the anthracite mines were plentiful, and these small cities and towns became the home to some of the largest and most diverse Carpatho-Rusyn communities in the United States (Magocsi 2005a, 15). The local reactions to these Slavic migrants, however, were primarily negative and tended to emphasize the foreignness of the newcomers. While John Higham suggests that "the American mind contained, apparently, no distinctive 'Slavic' stereotype," he mentions that the Slavic coal miners of Pennsylvania were viewed as "uncivilized, unruly, and dangerous" (Higham 1978, 88-89). The national guardsman Stewart Culin was struck by the "mosque-like spire" on the Mahanoy City and Shenandoah churches of "the so-called Huns," a common slur for

immigrants from the Hungarian Kingdom, here referring to Carpatho-Rusyns (Culin 1903, 24, 34). The economist Frank Julian Warne bemoaned this "Slav invasion" of the Coal Region, which, in his view, provoked a "great conflict of races" (Warne 1904, 7-8). The Reverend Peter Roberts, a Protestant minister in Mahanoy City, was taken back whenever "the savage brute" was "aroused in the breast of the Sclav [*sic*]," for it led to violent brawls that often ended "in bloodshed and death" (Roberts 1904, 52). The fact that Roberts refers to these outsiders as "Sclavs" – the Latin term used to describe the barbarian hordes whose attacks led to the fall of the Roman Empire – shows that locals' interactions with these newcomers was perceived as a clash of civilizations (Prokopios 2014, 408). Even the economist Emily Greene Balch, who was sympathetic to the plight of these immigrants, commented that the Slavic miner of the Coal Region "was still un-American in his ways" (Balch 1910, 298).

These remarks indicate that the Carpatho-Rusyn communities of Pennsylvania's Coal Region were made up of what James R. Barrett and David R. Roediger have called "inbetween peoples," a hybrid category, inflected by ethnicity, race, and class, that refers to the Central, Eastern, and Southern Europeans who immigrated to America between the 1880s and 1920s. Not neatly fitting into standard ideas of how white Americans look and act, these new immigrants, in the view of native-born Americans, were somehow "*above* African and Asian Americans," but "*below* white people" in the racial hierarchy of the time (Barrett, Roediger 1997, 4). In his study of the Slovak and Carpatho-Rusyn immigrant press, Robert M. Zecker has argued that Slavic immigrants not only had to "*physically* but also in *behavior*" find a way to pass "as self-respecting white persons" (Zecker 2013, 4). While second- and third--generation immigrants largely succeeded in "working towards whiteness" – a process set into motion, David R. Roediger has argued, by acquiring cultural and economic capital, such as going to university or moving to the suburbs – first-generation Carpatho-Rusyn Americans were forced to confront the fact that they had more in common with other new arrivals than they did with their new neighbors (Roediger 2005).

One of the most prominent individuals who responded to the precarious position of Carpatho-Rusyns Americans was the priest and writer Emil Kubek, who arrived in Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania, in 1904 and for the next 40 years represented the diverse, working-class communities of the Machine Age. While Carpatho-Rusyn American literature has generally been known as "a literature of amateurs" with "limited aesthetic value" (Magocsi 1999, 445)

and assumed to have "a strange detachment from the real world of Rusyn--American immigrants" (Rusinko 2009, 275), scholars have recently begun to explore how Kubek was inspired by and creatively responded to his Coal Region communities.[2] In dialogue with the class, national, and racial categories of the time, Kubek in his poetry and prose often deals with the perception that Carpatho-Rusyn Americans were considered to be outsiders in this new land. In doing so, he tends to associate Carpatho-Rusyn Americans with other "in-between peoples" from Southern and Eastern Europe and even races, such as African Americans. But in doing so, Kubek articulates a theory of "one's own" that crosses ethnic and racial categories. Recognizing that Carpatho-Rusyns were viewed as "others," Kubek develops an aesthetic that values difference and encourages his Carpatho-Rusyn and American readers alike to identify with the poor, downtrodden, and oppressed.

II. Kubek's Poor

As Carpatho-Rusyns began to arrive in the Coal Region, local newspapers responded with copy fit for the tabloids. An analysis of the Mount Carmel *Daily News* from the 1880s to 1910s shows that the words most frequently used to describe "Slavs" were "strike," "shot," "killed," "murder," and, above all, "foreign" (Frey 2015a). The headlines were not much better. One Slav in Mount Carmel reportedly "slept with a corpse" (*Slept with a Corpse* 1898, 1). Others in Pottsville "drowned like rats in a trap" (*Drowned like Rats in a Trap* 1898, 1). Another in Hazleton was "a human fiend" (*A Human Fiend* 1903, 1). One

[2] For years, scholars tended to focus on Kubek's novel *Marko Šoltys* (1922-1923) and its portrayal of Carpathian Rus'. Mykola Mushynka admits that "Kubek's activity in the interwar period (the 20s and 30s) has yet to be studied" (Мушинка 1980, 213). Valerii Padyak includes Kubek in his transnational history of Carpatho-Rusyn literature but primarily as the "author of the first novel" (Падяк 2010, 126). František Dancák was the first to write Kubek's biography, though he largely focused on the period before his emigration. While he argues that Kubek's work features "realistic stories from life in the homeland and from immigrants to America" (Dancák 2006, 6), he admits that "in Kubek's life and work there is a lot that still needs to be studied" (Dancák 2004, 19). Recently, Nick Kupensky (the author of this article) has argued that Kubek is "someone who made significant contributions to the Carpatho-Rusyn literary canon and is a unique example of an American writer who represented the hopes and dreams of Slavic miners during the first half of the 20th century" (Kupensky 2016, 20). Kupensky's *Emil Kubek Project*, an initiative in the digital and public humanities, positions Kubek's life and work within his Coal Region communities (Kupensky 2015).

in Lancaster was "murdered as he slept" (*Murdered as He Slept* 1906, 2). An "entombed miner" Slav in Pittsburgh was a "raving maniac" (*Entombed Miner* 1907, 4). A woman Slav in Passaic "may lose her mind" (*May Lose Her Mind* 1908, 2). A Slav in Harrisburg was "disemboweled with a knife" (*Disemboweled with a Knife* 1909, 2). And Northumberland was forced to contend with "a tricky Slav" (*A Tricky Slav* 1910, 1). The newspaper also chronicled even the smallest confrontations between Slavs and their neighbors with dramatic copy. Two were killed in Wilkes-Barre by "drunken Huns and Slavs" (*The Coal Region News* 1894, 1). Shamokin witnessed "a fracas between a party of Russian Poles and Slavs" that resulted in three men being arrested ([*Judge Metzgar*...] 1896, 3). In Whiting, Indiana, three men turned up dead when a "race war" erupted between a Slavic saloon keeper and his customers (*Three Killed* 1896, 4). Connellsville saw a "terrific race riot between Slavs and Polish miners and coke workers" (*Killed in Race Riot* 1902, 3).

While these stories may have had some degree of truth, their frequency and florid discourse suggests that they were overblown to play on the American public's distrust of these new arrivals. Indeed, sensationalist stories about recent Slavic migrants proved to be a subgenre of yellow journalism, one that was recognized as such at the time. The Reverend Peter Roberts called attention to the deleterious effects of local gossip columns in his *Anthracite Coal Communities* (1904), where he suggests that between one third and one half of the content of local papers are dedicated to gossip columns indulging in "sensationalism," "pleasing phantasy," and "the wildest rhapsody." In fixating on these stories, he argues, newspapers "pander to the deprived sensuous taste of the masses" wanting to satisfy their "morbid delight in reading repulsive scenes in life's tragedy" and "seeing nasty and miserable pictures taken from miry depths" (Roberts 1904, 192-193). Instead, Roberts argued that Americans should recognize the sacrifices of the immigrant miners and hoped that someday they would be memorialized in art. "The soldier on the battlefield [...] has wrought deeds which have been immortalized in song and poetry: but miners have exhibited equal bravery," he writes in *Anthracite Coal Industry* (1901): "They acted from motives of pure humanity, and most of their deeds are buried with their bones" (Roberts 1901, 152-153).

When Emil Kubek arrived in Mahanoy City in 1904, he was acutely aware of the precarious economic and social position of the Carpatho-Rusyn miners who lived and worked in the Coal Region. Kubek moved into the parish house of St. Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church in Mahanoy City's West End,

where the residents were primarily immigrants from Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe who worshipped in Catholic churches and worked as miners or wage laborers. Mahanoy City's East End was largely inhabited by middle--class, native-born Americans of white Anglo-Saxon heritage who attended Protestant churches (Frey 2015b). Acutely aware that his Carpatho-Rusyn community and their neighbors lived in the "wrong" side of town, Kubek – as if answering Roberts' call – began to draw attention to the struggles of the less fortunate in his prose and poetry, an ethic that he subsequently developed and refined for the rest of his life.[3] What this means is that Kubek tends to select protagonists who are down on their luck, on the margins of society, weak in body or spirit, economically exploited, or politically oppressed: workers and peasants, immigrants, and ethnic or racial minorities, in a word, "others." In one sense, we can view his tendency to amplify the voices of the downtrodden as part of his calling as a priest, perhaps a literary orientation inspired by the Beatitudes when Christ reveals that "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 3:5). At the same time, many of his subjects find themselves in adverse circumstances as the result of the economic, social, and political conditions they confront as workers or immigrants in the new world, which is a testament to Kubek's attentiveness to the precarious position of Carpatho-Rusyns in the Coal Region.

Among his earliest works is the poem *Lullaby to a Miner's Child* (*Nad kolŷskoiu ditynŷ mainera*, 1908), which was written in Mahanoy City but appeared in Rusyn in his "People's Subcarpathian Almanac for the 1908 Leap Year" (*Narodnŷi Podkarpatskii Kalendar' na 1908 vysokonosnii hod*, 1908) published in

[3] Since Kubek wrote exclusively in Rusyn, his primary audience was other first-generation Carpatho-Rusyn Americans, though his work was known among Carpatho-Rusyns in the homeland and locally in the Coal Region. Kubek tended to publish his work in the newspaper "The American Rusyn Messenger" ("Amerykanskii russkii viestnik"), the almanac "Greek Catholic Union Calendar" ("Kalendar Sojedinenija Greko-Kaftoličeskich Russkich Bratstv"), and the youth almanac "The Falcon" ("Sokol"), the major periodicals of the fraternal organization the Greek Catholic Union that was founded by the Mahanoy City businessman John Zhynchak Smith. He occasionally published in secular periodicals – including the newspaper "The Day" ("Den'"), the religious journal "The Educator" ("Uchitel'"), and the literary journal "The Leader" ("Vozhd'") – and Ukrainian newspapers, such as "Liberty" ("Svoboda"). While publishing in newspapers gave Kubek access to a large audience – "The American Rusyn Messenger" at its height had a circulation of nearly 120,000 (Magocsi 2005a, 4; 2005b, 47) – their ephemeral nature interfered with his ability to reach subsequent generations of readers. At the same time, even during his lifetime, he was celebrated by first- and second-generation Carpatho-Rusyn Americans as the most accomplished and beloved writer in the diaspora.

Uzhhorod. The poem implicitly polemicizes with the sensationalized image of the immigrant miner by shedding light on the struggles borne by working-class families. Written in the form of a lullaby sung by a young mother to her child, the poem begins in the voice of the mother who tries to put her baby to sleep:

Ой спи, солодкое дитя!…
Земля подъ намы рвется…
Слышишь-ли ужасный шумъ земли?…
Отецъ твой, въ темной глубинѣ;
Земля трясется, и успаваетъ тя,
Ой спи же ты, солодкое дитя!
Подъ землею робитъ отецъ твой,
Изъ подъ земли приноситъ хлѣбъ домой;
Въ глубинѣ земли тяжко робитъ,
Пока дитя его, тутъ спокойно спитъ! (Кубек 1908, 81)

Oh sleep, my sweet child!…
Underneath the ground bursts…
Do you hear the terrible noise of the earth?…
Your father is working in the mines oh so deep;
When the earth shakes, that's him who rocks you to sleep,
Oh sleep, my sweet child!
That noise, it's your dad,
From under the earth he's bringing home bread;
Deep in the mines he works as hard as he can,
While peacefully dreams his young little man! (Kubek 2015c)

The conceit of the poem allows Kubek to quietly resignify the mining industry: not only a place of dirt and drunkenness, the mines are the homes to hard-working men striving to provide for their families who exist in a perpetual state of worry for their safety. Indeed, the mother manages to the put the child to bed with an expression of faith:

Солотко спи,
Дитя мое, якъ въ раѣ!
Спи, съ тобою Божая помочь!
Спи серденько мое, добрую ночь! (Кубек 1908, 83)

Sweetly sleep,
Like in heaven, my child!
God will make things all right!
Sleep my dear baby, good night! (Kubek 2015c)

At this moment, the poem takes an unexpected turn when news arrives that the father has been killed in a mining accident:

Ахъ, страхъ, …земля загремитъ,
Рахотомъ страшнымъ пламень возгоритъ;
Земля затряслась, свалилисъ скалы,
Погребли всѣхъ… всѣхъ… всѣ тамъ пропали…,
Всѣ тамъ погибли! …лемъ мы остали
Около насъ дымъ, плачъ, темная ночь…
Подъ скалами мужъ твой, просилъ о помочь. (Кубек 1908, 83)

Oh what a terror!
The mine suddenly shook,
A flame blazed in a terrible shock,
In a deafening blast, the walls then collapsed,
And they all were buried in piles of rocks.
Everyone died!… Only we survived
Amongst the smoke and the cries and the strife…
We found your husband just barely alive.
With sadness he quietly asked for his wife. (Kubek 2015c)

With his dying breath, the father whispers a message for his son:

Солодко спи,
Дитя мое, якъ въ раѣ!
Спи, съ тобой Божая помочь,
Спи, сиротонько моя, добрую ночь! (Кубек 1908, 84)

Sweetly sleep,
Like in heaven, my child!
God will make things all right!
Sleep my dear orphan, good night! (Kubek 2015c)

What makes Kubek's representation of this mining family unique is his compassion and pathos. At the same time, while Kubek's poem was written with a Carpatho-Rusyn audience in mind, that the miner's family is not explicitly marked as Carpatho-Rusyn shows Kubek's early interest in lending his voice to those who suffer, regardless of their ethnicity, an ethic that has made his poem iconic in the Coal Region today.[4]

As *Lullaby to a Miner's Child* indicates, Kubek's first foray into *belles-lettres* focuses on eliciting empathy towards the other, a concern which would come to predominate in the years to come. Indeed, Kubek uses a similar conceit (a widowed mother's lullaby) and structure (an embedded narrative that cuts to the scene of the father's death) in his poem *A Hero's Family* (*Semja heroja*, 1922), a lyrical poem about a soldier killed in a foreign war that was published simultaneously in Rusyn and English in a translation by his daughter Elizabeth Petrik and set to music by his son-in-law Nicholas E. Petrik. Here, a mother sings to her young child on a warm May evening:

Haju, haju,
Vojin otec tvoj v *čužom* kraju! (Kubek 1922c, 5)

Lullaby, lullaby,
Your dad, captain's ‘neath a foreign sky. (Kubek 1922c, 2)

The poem then shifts to the battlefield:

Hornist trubit, tambor v buben bjet,
Ulicej vojsko v pochod idet. (Kubek 1922c, 5)

The trumpet blares, the drummers calling,
Through the streets the soldiers are marching. (Kubek 1922c, 2-3)

The mother continues and explains that the self-sacrificial father is fighting for his country and his family:

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[4] Nick Kupensky's 2015 translation of Kubek's poem *Lullaby to a Miner's Child* (Kubek 2015c) appeared in NPR's podcast *Grapple* about Pennsylvania's deindustrialized communities and was featured by a local law firm Michael J. O'Connor & Associates that represented injured workers (Starobin 2016).

Diťa! Otec tvoj pojichal v boj,
Za otciznu, za nas, synu moj.
V ruki so sbleju, jak heroj,
Pered sotneju, sam otec tvoj. (Kubek 1922c, 5)

Sweet love! Your dad into war has gone
For our country, my child, for our home.
With sword in his company,
Your dad rides, to bloody dance ready. (Kubek 1922c, 4)

We then learn that "there he fell" ("tam upal"), shot dead as he led his company, and now "rests in a foreign country" ("v čužej zemľi lezit"). The poem ends with the "mother widow" ("vdova mati") continuing to sing her lullaby to "the hero's orphan full with grief" ("heroja siroťi v žaľu"). Thus, Kubek's representation of the war glorifies the bravery, patriotism, and valor of the fallen soldier, but in doing so, he also does not ignore the sorrow and suffering of the hero's family. Again, there are no indications that the family is Carpatho-Rusyn, a sign that Kubek's compassion crosses national lines.

This sensibility is present is Kubek's other major work on the horrors of war, his ode *Last Year's Night* (*Noč staraho hoda*, 1917) in the genre of an epic New Year's greeting (*novoročnyj pozdrav*) that was published in the Greek Catholic Union's "American Rusyn Almanac for 1917" (*Amerykanskii russkii miasatsoslov na hod 1917*) edited by Michael J. Hanchin. The poem comprehensively surveys the agony of the peoples of the world; however, Kubek does not laud the heroes of the battlefield. Instead, he lends his powerful voice to the less fortunate and brings those in need into his poetic universe. The most moving section of the poem is his catalogue of laments, all written in the first-person by men and women, young and old, rich and poor: those who lost their spouses, children, parents, or beloved, those who lost their health or work, a crippled parent whose injury leaves their children starving, a father who lost his mind, a blind man, an imprisoned man wrongfully convicted of a crime, a woman whose reputation is ruined by rumors, a starving family who lost their farm in a storm, a merchant who lost his fortune when it sunk on a ship, a man whose family was murdered by robbers, a woman whose husband was eaten by wolves, a family who lost their crop in a flood, a family starving during a drought, a family who died from the plague, a family who died in an earthquake, a city that was destroyed by

the eruption of a volcano, a city that was destroyed by a tidal wave, an oppressed people not allowed to speak their native language or practice their religion, and a nation whose best and brightest were killed in a civil war (Kubek 1917, 34-36). What this long list of sorrows reveals is the wide reach of Kubek's empathy as a writer, for not only does he collect the sufferings that could afflict Carpatho-Rusyn subjects – death, drought, ethnic persecution, religious persecution, starvation – but he puts them alongside historical tragedies as well, such as, perhaps, the destruction of Pompeii, the Lisbon earthquake, or the American or Russian Civil War. The poem concludes with a brief prayer that illuminates the link between the *rus'ka vira* and Kubek's model of compassion:

> Miloserdnyj Bože
> Pomož v sej novyj hod,
> Vozdvihni tvoj narod! (Kubek 1917, 36)

> Merciful God
> Help us in this new year,
> Raise up your people! (Kubek 2015b)

Kubek's ability to inhabit the voices of the sorrowful is also on display in his poem *The Good Dad* (*Dobryj tato*, 1922), which is written from the point of view of a child with an absent father, this time an unemployed drunk who never seems to be at home. The title, already stylized in the voice of the child, suggests that the poem might be a tribute of sorts to an admirable father, and the first two lines indicate that the child looks up to his father and believes him to be, at heart, a good person:

> Ńít takoho tata,
> Jakoho my mame (Kubek 1922a, 5)

> There's no type of dad
> Like the one that we have (Kubek 2015a)

We quickly discover, though, this father is far from perfect: he sleeps all day, spends the afternoons at the bar, and drinks through the family's meager savings all night. The child senses that his father might not be altogether bad,

for it seems that he wakes up late because he is unemployed and drinks to cope with the shame of being out of work:

Pri barí, vsehda
Najdut patriot,
Kotryj, jak naš tato,
Chodit za robotu:
S nim vraz zalivajut,
Až do pozdnoj noči,
Žal' svoj i klopotu. (Kubek 1922a, 5-6)

In the bar he always
Finds a fellow countryman
Who like our dad
Is looking for work:
They drink with him
Until the middle of the night
And pour out their sorrows and worries. (Kubek 2015a)

While František Dancák has read Kubek's poem as a critique of a moral failure plaguing Carpatho-Rusyn immigrant communities (Dancák 2006, 6-8), what he does not notice is that the child intuitively understands the plight of the father even while he registers his imperfections. In other words, Kubek's poem diagnoses the social and political foundations of alcoholism: the economic precarity of America's working class and the psychological toll that persistent unemployment takes on blue-collar families (Kubek 2015a).

Kubek elsewhere expresses solidarity with the impoverished in his poem *A Mother's Love* (*Materinskaja l'ubov*, 1923), an adaptation of a folktale about the miraculous resurrection of a mother to ease the suffering of her poor son. First published in Rusyn in the daily newspaper "The Day" ("Den'"), *A Mother's Love* describes how three sons return home to attend their mother's funeral, and as each of them approach the coffin, they plead for their mother to come back to life. Their reasons for doing so, however, widely differ. The first son has a beautiful wife and children and wants his mother to witness their happiness. The second son has both great material wealth and prestige and wants her to share in his riches and glory. But what ultimately persuades the mother to come back from the dead is the trials and tribulations of her youngest son,

who arrives "looking poorly" ("bidno vyhl'adajet") and, with "tears in his eyes" ("slezy s' očej l'utsja"), cries out on her grave:

> Oj, matuško moja,
> Jakij ja nesčastnyj, hor'ka moja dol'a;
> Ja malyj, slabeňkij, robiti ne možu,
> L'ubov na tom svit'i nihde ne nacho*žu*,
> Holod, cholod mučit… sirota bidna ja,
> Oj, vstaň, bo zahinu, vstaň matuško moja! (Kubek 1923, 3)
>
> Oh, mother of mine,
> I'm so sad, my fate is so bitter,
> I'm small, weak, and cannot work,
> I can't find love anywhere in this world,
> Hunger and cold torment me, I'm a poor orphan,
> Oh, stand up, because I will die, stand up my mother!

Moved by his plight, the "coffin opened" ("hrob sja otverzajet)" and the "mother stood up" ("matuška vstavajet"). Once again, Kubek's moral is clear: it is not the content or the powerful who are deserving of attention but, instead, the poor, weak, and grieving.

III. Kubek's Downtrodden

While Kubek's typical "other" is an individual who has experienced some sort of loss or misfortune, he also registers the struggles of particular ethnicities and races in the new world. This tendency is most clearly on display in his short story *An Easter Gift* (*Paschal'nyj dar*, 1921), which was first published in English in the Mahanoy City "Record American" (1921) before it appeared in Rusyn in his collected works *People's Tales and Verses* (1922).[5] The publication

[5] There are a number of differences between the 1921 English text and the 1922 Rusyn text, both of which I will cite here. While we do not know why the two texts differ, it is entirely possible that the 1922 Rusyn text predates the translation by Reverend Louis Sanjek, a Slovak Lutheran priest of Croatian origins who was a close friend of Kubek. If this was the case, then perhaps Sanjek had read the story in early 1921 and encouraged Kubek to publish it in the local newspaper during Lent. Sanjek may have suggested – or unilaterally made – revisions to tailor the story to an American audience. Some of these revisions are stylistic in nature or elaborate upon aspects

history of story is telling, for it indicates that Kubek aspired to reach not only a Carpatho-Rusyn audience but also an American one. This is further supported by the fact that its narrator opens in a mode that parodies the tropes of the Coal Region gossip column: nativist suspicion of immigrants, sensationalized rhetoric, and stories that emphasize the criminal or deviant.

The story begins with discourse that foreignizes the immigrant neighborhoods typically inhabited by "inbetween peoples":

> Have you ever seen "a yard of the nations?" Many of them are to be found on the outskirts of large American cities on a thoroughfare which is neither street nor avenue but an alley. (Kubek 1921a, 1)

> Internacional'nyj yard, jakich množestvo v predmísťach amerikanskich horodov, ležit v street'i… ale, hde tam, to ani ne street, ani ne avenue, no second alley. (Kubek 1922b, 114)

Clearly drawing upon recognizable geographies of Mahanoy City, Kubek creates an immigrant neighborhood on the geographic periphery of American urban life and is formed around the back, not the front, of city blocks.[6] Here, the neighborhood sits between a lumber yard and the railway – which is so loud that "the earth trembles under their heavy loads and the inhabitants of the yard of nations are in danger of losing their hearing" – and below the loading planks that block out the sun:

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of Carpatho-Rusyn life. Others concern details in the American scenes, such as replacing the Slovaks in the poor "yard of the nations" with Romanians or replacing an African American family with an Italian one (see below). If Sanjek is responsible for suggesting or making these changes, perhaps it was because he did not want his Slovak Lutheran parishioners to take offense that Kubek associated the Slovaks with other "inbetween peoples" and was worried about how Kubek's American audience would respond to the African American characters. These are, of course, speculative comments, and there may be many other explanations for the differences in the two texts.

[6] The "yard of the nations" is inspired by the tightly packed row houses around the Mahanoy City Lumber & Supply Company, which was located between the back alley of West Railroad Street and the storefronts of West Centre Street, Mahanoy City's main thoroughfare. In 1910, the 400 block of West Centre Street housed 105 individuals, 90 of whom were Central or Eastern European. On the 400 block of West Railroad Street, every one of the 90 residents was Carpatho-Rusyn, Jewish, Lithuanian, Polish, Slovak, or Ukrainian (Schuylkill County Census Records 1910). Residents of Mahanoy City also remember there being an African American family who lived in the neighborhood, though I have not been able to verify this in census data.

You don't find much light between the houses in the yard for the sunshine cannot break through. (Kubek 1921a, 1)

A to každu poljodinu, deň a noč? Ot dyma, porocha ani solnce ne može porozzeratisja porjadočno, po meždu "housami". (Kubek 1922b, 115)

Kubek's narrator also foreignizes the different peoples who inhabit the "yard of the nations":

It needs but a glimpse to tell what class of people are living there. [...] One family is Polish, one Lithuanian, another Greek, one Serbian, another Slovak, one Niger [*sic*], and two are Italian families. (Kubek 1921a, 1)

Samy žitelí s cíloj Europy pozberalisja: jeden poľak, jeden litvin, jeden grek, jeden serb, jeden rumun, jeden niger, i dva taliany. (Kubek 1922b, 116)

Thus, this neighborhood is made up of the very populations that Barrett and Roediger defined as "inbetween peoples": Eastern Europeans (Poles, Romanians, Serbians, Slovaks, Lithuanians), Southern Europeans (Italians, Greeks), and even an African American family. And the most peripheral character in this peripheral neighborhood is Fedor Bistrica, a Lemko immigrant from the Carpathians:

Fedor Bistrica was the only one who did not mix himself in the quarrels of the international yard. He did not have any right to the privilege, for Fedor had neither wife nor children, neither did he pay full rent. He was the inveterate enemy of all the women and all of the children. Not for the world would he talk to a woman. (Kubek 1921a, 1)

Lem naš Fedor Bistrica, ne míšalsja do nijakich sprav svojeho internacionaľnoho yarda. K tomu ani pravo ne mal. Ne lem pro to, že ani ženu, ani ďíti ne imíl, ani cilyj rent ne platil, ale osobenno pro to že on zavzjatym nepriatelem byl vsích ženszin, a ne meňšim vrahom i ďítej. Za svít ne byl pozdravkal jednoj ženščiňí; a obozvatisja? Ta choť by jemu, k cílomu svítu, jesče i tot yard darovali! Ňít. (Kubek 1922b, 117)

At this moment, Kubek's American readers might expect the narrator to elaborate the sinister reasons why Fedor so hates women and children;

however, while the narrator's initial description of Fedor is focalized through the discourse of other residents of his alley or the native-born Americans from the rich side of town, his tone then changes and becomes compassionate when revealing Fedor's backstory:

> Ah but I see that I am getting myself into trouble. If I already started to tell the beginning, then I have to tell the end. I went on blabbing about the second yard, like it or not, and blurted out Fedor's name, so now it's my duty to explain the reason for his hatred of women and children. (Kubek 1921a, 1)

> Až teper' uže vižu, že i ja zal'íz do trobl'u (trouble-klopota). Jesli ja uže vyskazal 'Az', to i 'Buki' mušu vypovísti. Rozbalakalsja ja o 'second-yard'í', choč-nechoč, vytarakal až i Fedorove imja, to teper' uže i dolžnost' moja, i pričinu jeho hňíva oprotiv ženscin i ďítej, iztolkovati. (Kubek 1922b, 117)

This temporal and tonal shift reveals a core component of Kubek's ethic towards the other, even a social outcast who, we are told, hates families: before you can come to a conclusion about an outsider, you first have to consider the circumstances that shaped their character. It is at this point when we learn how Fedor came to America from "that little village in the Carpathians where he was born" ("jeho maloje rodnoje selo, pod Karpatami").

What we learn in the flashback is that Fedor was not always isolated: when he was younger, he was "jolly," "happy," "always singing in the fields," "the first" at dances, "a good son," beloved by the "parish priest," and defended the younger girls in the village from bullies. One of them, Martusja Mitrim, was especially "beautiful and charming," and the two quickly fell in love. And the narrator's melodramatic descriptions of Fedor's love and care for Martusja strongly contrast with the outsider's perception of Fedor in the story's opening:

> They journeyed to school together and when the brooks were high with the spring rains Fedor would always carry his companion over the water. In the winter, when snows were deep, it was Fedor who broke the path, and it was he who always found the early spring flowers. In summer time both drove the herds to pasture and if a sudden storm came up, it was Fedor's coat that protected the girl from the raindrops. Did other boys attempt to tease Martusja, it was Fedor who came forward as her protector and, on one occasion, when a boy pushed Martusja in the brook,

it was Fedor who held her tormentor's head under water until he cried for mercy even though the other boy was three years older than Fedor. (Kubek 1921a, 1)

Jesli by my vse choťíli doskonalo opisati, jak oni oboje, ďíti sosídny, za mala kvaski mísili pri potočku; jak on ju ostorožno provadil do školy; a v zimí pretoptoval jej doroju sňíhom; v jari že na rukach perenošal čerez mlaki; jak chodili razom na pole s jahňatkami, pozdňíjše že so statkami? Ho, ho, ho! Ta my by do konca ne dobilisja. Ta ci raz zahornul ju, do svojej huni, protiv zimnoho došďa? On merz, že jemu až zuby cvenkali, lem bodaj Marthusja, ne prostudilasja. A, lem by byl paľcom dotknul sja jej, daktoryj svavoľnyj chlopčisko! To jesče, to! Raz mlinarskij Jurko, drylil Marthusju do mlaki, že cílkom sbolotilasja, až plakala; jak Fedor skočil do neho, choť pravi Jurko dva roki staršij byl, a trisnul s nim do toj samoj mlaki, a začal koľínkovati na nem! (Kubek 1922b, 119–120)

In short, Fedor does not possess the types of psychopathic tendencies attributed by the popular press to the Coal Region's Slavs. In fact, he is a model young man: he thinks about others before himself, defends the weak, protects the innocent, and uses his creativity to bring joy to his beloved, for he even "learned the art of imitating birds" and "warbled bird songs" to express his love to Martusja in a language only known to them. But while Fedor and Martusja seemed destined for each other, Fedor was conscripted into the Hussars, which took him away from the Carpathians for extended periods of time.

While the young couple continued to remain faithful to each other, Fedor's troubles began when another villager Jurko received a large inheritance from his recently deceased parents and began to court Martusja during Fedor's absence. He approaches Martusja's mother and argues that his newfound material wealth will guarantee his future wife a life of leisure and luxury:

Look at my fields, my mill. My wife would not need to go to the fields to work. She should not be required even to prepare a meal as such work would be done by my servants. (Kubek 1921b, 1)

Osmoťte tu moje pole, okolo mlina! V jednom falaťí, jak u dajakoho orečnoho pana! A moja žena ne musit choditi na pole hrabati, kopati. A doma, što za robota? Lehne, kolo schoče; stane, jak jej sja ľubit. Isči ani k pecu nemusit itti opekatisja. Na to u mene služnica i sluha. (Kubek 1922b, 125)

Meanwhile, Kubek's narrator adds that "Martusja's mother could not take her eyes from the gold laying on the table. Its glitter seemed to fascinate her and steal her heart" ("Mitrova Ul'a lem s holovu kivala, a s hrožej lesťasčich na stol'í, ne mohla oči spustiti. Ot alčnosti, až jej hor'ko stalo v hortani"). Jurko even "slipped several of the golden ducats" ("sunul paru tal'ary") into her hands and gave her "money and fine linens" ("darunki jej daval i jeden krušok polotna") as often as he could (Kubek 1922b, 127). Despite her most ardent protests, Martusja was forced to marry Jurko, who reneged on his promises, forced her into servitude, and cast his mother-in-law out of the house.

In one sense, Jurko and Martusja's mother are standard character types with literary genealogies based in the Biblical and folkloric traditions. Jurko is deceitful, manipulative, opportunistic, wealthy by chance, not through his own talents or initiative; Martusja's mother is easily seduced by riches and willing to sell her daughter for the promise of luxury. Yet, the fact that Kubek's villains have traits that, at the time, were viewed as stereotypically American reveals how he creates a complex series of narrative frames that compel his native-born readers in Mahanoy City to reassess their own values and, to some extent, identify with the downtrodden Carpatho-Rusyn character. In the end, it was Jurko's *envy* of Fedor and *pride* in his unearned wealth and Martusja's mother's *lust* for money and *greed* for a life of leisure that brought tragedy upon Fedor and Martusja. Upon returning from the army and learning the news, Fedor left for America, heartbroken and resigned to a fate of sorrow. Soon after, a drunk Jurko was killed in a mill accident, a distraught Martusja died from a broken heart, and even Martusja's mother wracked with guilt was found lifeless and frozen on her daughter's grave.

Kubek's narrator brings his readers back into the present, having humanized poor Fedor Bistrica and reframed his isolation not as a sign of deviance but one of sorrow:

> Fedor Bistrica came to our town and rented rooms in a Second Alley basement. He was a quiet man who seldom spoke and mingled but little with the neighbors. (Kubek 1921c, 1)

> Fedor Bistrica, takim sposobom dostalsja do našeho second-alley yardu. A začím, v místočku, nikoho ne našol iz svojeho sela, stajemno zahnízdilsja do celeru (pivnicy) v kotorom my jeho našli. (Kubek 1922b, 135)

In Kubek's Rusyn text, Fedor's immediate neighbors – an African-American family – are also outsiders, and Kubek represents how they too were subject to prejudice. Indeed, if Fedor was viewed with suspicion for being too introverted, the African-American family encountered backlash for being too extroverted, so much so the neighbors managed to force them out of the yard for doing nothing more than singing and dancing:

> If the Negroes spent a few days together, the father would take up his banjo and play for hours, and his small children together with their mother would sing along and dance so much so that the unit below them would shake. This upset Fedor, but he never said anything, would take his hat and go to the hills, or walk the streets in the winter. But the Negro family annoyed the neighbors so much that they finally demanded that they be evicted. The Negroes were forced to move out. Peace returned to the yard. Only the kids kept on fighting with each other, and the train whistle kept on blowing.[7]

> Jesli nigry, v laskí proživali paru dni, tohda otec vzjalsja do muzyki, a na svojem banjo, císly hodiny vyhraval, a jeho maly nigerčata, s mamoju razom, vyspísovali, tancovali, čto až koliba cíla chvjalasja pod nimi. To Fedora merzílo, no ne hovoril nič, vzjal kapel'uch i išol do brosča, a v zimí na místo poprechoditisja. No susídam na stol'ko dopilasja sija nigerska familija, čto na posl'ídok trebovali jej otdalenije. Nigry musili "vymufovatisja." V yard'í nastal pokoj. Lem d'ítiska sbytki robili, a tren dubonil. (Kubek 1922b, 121)

Kubek's representation of the African-American family is significant for several reasons. Firstly, while the ostensible reason for the family's eviction is that they make too much noise, Kubek's narrator subtly registers that this may be a cover for the racial animus of the other neighbors: the narrator with palpable irony states that the yard is no less noisy without the black family, for the neighborhood kids continue to fight and deafening trains pass multiple times a day. Secondly, Fedor, who is sensitive to being an outsider, reacts negatively to the family not because of their race but because it is painful for him to encounter happy families. Finally, the new family that moves into the African Americans' old apartment are Carpatho-Rusyns, which suggests an

[7] All excerpts from translations of Kubek's works into English, if not referenced, are by N. Kupensky, who made them for use in this text.

affinity between the two groups. In the end, Fedor befriends the neighbor's three-year-old daughter, Helen, whose parents strongly discourage her from interacting with this strange, reclusive man. However, after Helen falls ill, Fedor helps nurse her back to health and discovers that Helen's mother Martha is his niece! And that this moment of recognition occurs on Easter not only brings Fedor a type of familial love that he thought he would never experience but restores his faith in the goodness in the world.[8]

In short, Kubek's "Easter Gift" reveals how Kubek both represented his Carpatho-Rusyn characters as outsiders within their American communities and associated them with other groups (Eastern Europeans, Southern Europeans, African Americans) who historically were subject to prejudice by native-born Americans. Kubek's ethical imperative remains constant – express compassion towards the other – but here it is inflected by his parody of the Coal Region gossip column, realistic portrayal of the diversity of the "yard of the nations," and explicit inclusion of racial prejudice.

IV. Kubek's Oppressed

While the comparison between Carpatho-Rusyns and other races is a passing one in "An Easter Gift," Kubek returned to this topic in his travelogue *My Journey to Florida* (*Moia podorozh' do Florydŷ*, 1926), a detailed sketch of life on America's East Coast published serially in "The American Rusyn Messenger". The text itself is the result of a trip he took in 1925 with his daughter Maria and her husband, the Austrian baron Frank C. Von Hausen, as they traveled from Christmas Cove, Maine, to Palm Beach, Florida.[9] The nearly 2,000-kilometer journey, often on treacherous, poorly maintained, or non-existent roads, was not an easy one, but their slow pace afforded Kubek the

[8] In Kubek's English text, the family that annoys him is not identified as an African-American one. Additionally, the family that moves out is Italian-American and does so on their own initiative: "When the people who resided on the upper floors were not fighting among themselves they were playing various musical instruments. When Fedor tired of the noise he made for the hills if it were summertime or took long walks on unfrequented streets when the weather got cold. One day Fedor noticed unusual activity about the home of his neighbors, the Italians, and he learned that they were moving" (Kubek 1921c, 1).

[9] Von Hausen would go on to establish himself as a famous artist known for his portraits of America's rich and powerful, such as President Franklin Delano Roosevelt or Albert Einstein (Pollack 2016, 69-70).

ability to carefully observe the living conditions in America's diverse northern cities and the countryside of the Jim Crow South.

Kubek first comments on the plight of African Americans in the north after a positive encounter with a black mechanic who fixed their car:

> Въ Милборнъ-ѣ еденъ нигеръ шиковно и туньо порыхтовалъ нам авто. (Кубек 1926b, 3)

> In Millbourne, one Negro expertly and affordably fixed our car.

This episode causes him to reflect on the difficulties of other black communities:

> Нигровъ уже отъ Ридингъ-а встрѣчали мы; въ Балтиморѣ уже ихъ много, а тутъ во Вирджиніи? Жительства половина изъ чорныхъ состоитъ. – Бѣлыми сненавиженный бѣдный народъ! Размыслялъ: якъ сей утиснутий, горный народъ, въ силѣ переможетъ бѣлыхъ, ибо опасно множится. Не возбудится въ немъ местъ противъ бѣлыхъ? (Кубек 1926b, 3)

> South of Reading we met a lot of Negroes; in Baltimore there are a lot, and here in Virginia half of the population is black. "These poor people hated by whites!" I thought. "Will this oppressed proud people have the strength to overcome the whites because they are alarmingly multiplying, will vengeance against whites be aroused in them?"

Most tellingly, as Kubek sympathizes with African Americans, he wonders if they will ever avenge their discrimination and does so without identifying as white.

When they crossed into North Carolina, Kubek was struck by how much uninhabited land there was in the South. He then immediately associates the emptiness of the Carolinas with the abolition of slavery and Great Migration of African Americans who fled racial violence:

> Миллiоны народа бы ту могло выжити. […] Може быти, что передъ освобожденiем нигровъ, помѣщики-государи сихъ сторонъ обширнѣйше господарили, къ тому имѣли достаточну силу работныхъ рукъ, своихъ чорныхъ невольниковъ. Тѣ магнаты, о богатствѣ ихъ исторiя говоритъ, – изчезли. (Кубек 1926c, 2-3)

> Millions of people could live here. […] Maybe before the liberation of the Negroes, the landowners all around were completely in power and had enough of a labor force from their black slaves. But these magnates about whose wealth history writes have disappeared."

Elsewhere, he is moved by the poor living conditions in black rural communities:

> На сколько богаты и красны города, черезъ которы мы прешли, на столько бѣдны ихъ околицы и жителѣ ихъ, по большей части нигры. […] Изъ по между деревь, гевъ-тамъ видно еще, старинны хаты, яки собѣ нигры-невольники, сами мусѣли сбудовати. Маленьки кучи, подобны свинскому хлѣву. Якъ могли въ нихъ люди пребывади?! (Кубек 1926c, 3)

> How wealthy and beautiful are these cities we drove through, how impoverished are their outskirts and residents, who for the most part are Negroes. […] Deep in the forests are barely visible old huts that the Negro slaves were forced to make. Small heaps that looked like a pigsty. How could people live in them?!

And in Henderson, North Carolina, Kubek is struck by the stark differences between how whites and blacks live:

> Стары, спустошенны нигерски хаты, въ большемъ числѣ являются, изъ подъ деревъ. Смутный край. (Кубек 1926c, 3)

> The old, abandoned Negro huts in a great number come into view from beneath the trees. What a sad land.

Kubek and the Van Hausens eventually arrived in Palm Beach, Florida, where for three months he wintered alongside the highest echelons of American society. Kubek, naturally, very much enjoyed this experience and, soon after, began to advocate for a Carpatho-Rusyn American exodus to what he felt was America's paradise:

> Аранжди, грепъ-фрутъ цитромны, бананесъ, пайнъ-еплъ, свѣтъ-потетосъ въ таблахъ больше акровъ, очень красное. […] Если былъ не замарнилъ свои гроши, на изданіе книгъ, то сію фарму былъ конечно купилъ! (Кубек 1926d, 3)

Oranges, grapefruits, bananas, pineapples, sweet potatoes for acres and acres, it was all so beautiful. […] If I didn't waste my money on the publication of books, I could have definitely bought this farm!"

But for all of his ecstatic praise of the Sunshine State, his seventh and final installment of *My Journey to Florida* expresses sadness at the realities of segregation, which, for Kubek, reveals the hypocrisy of the American dream:

Чорны, совсѣм отдѣленны отъ бѣлыхъ. Въ конституціи, полну свободу и права имѣютъ, но лемъ въ конституцій, на паперѣ. Снелваженный сненавиженный народъ. (Кубек 1926е, 2)

Blacks are completely segregated from whites. In the Constitution they have all of the freedoms and rights, but only in the Constitution, on paper. What a disrespected, hated people.

However, he also registers the great artistry, creativity, and success of African Americans in spite of everything:

Свои костелы, свои забавны мѣстца, свои торговли, свои школы имѣютъ. […] Имѣютъ добрѣ зарядженны торговли, кафеярни, театеръ, своихъ лѣкарей, лоеровъ, апатеду. Видѣлъ между ними модерно одѣтыхъ денди кавалѣровъ и женщины въ красныхъ автахъ. (Кубек 1926е, 2)

They have their own churches, their own places for entertainment, their own trades, their own schools. […] They have well-developed trades, lunch counters, theaters, their own doctors, lawyers, pharmacies. I have seen among them modern dressed dandies and cavaliers and women in beautiful cars.

It is difficult to not hear in these lines echoes of Kubek's assessments of his own Carpatho-Rusyn American communities. Earlier in the same text, he writes:

Имѣеме писателей, поетовъ, композиторовъ музыкальныхъ, артистовъ, на якихъ бы и сами образованны народы пышны были. (Кубек 1926а, 3)

We have writers, poets, composers, actors, who the most developed nations would be proud of.

However, the obstacles that prevent Carpatho-Rusyns from achieving success are not discrimination, prejudice, and racism but apathy, ignorance, and laziness:

> Дарем на ихъ праца, не есть для кого писати, компоновати, малевати (рисовати), працовати. (Кубек 1926a, 3)
>
> But their work is in vain – there's nobody to write for, to compose for, to paint for, to work for.

And in recognition that his work has largely been in vain, Kubek announced that *My Journey to Florida* will be his "last appeal to the Rusyns".

V. Afterword

Not only were Kubek's works under-appreciated in his lifetime, but his ethics also failed to meaningfully influence Carpatho-Rusyn American society. His aesthetic that expresses care for the poor, compassion for the downtrodden, and sympathy for the oppressed never led to social forms of meaningful solidarity with other nationalities or races, and even within Kubek's lifetime, Carpatho-Rusyn Americans' status as "inbetween people" proved to be fleeting. In one generation, many of the Coal Region's Slavs managed to escape the nativism and prejudice that their parents confronted and, through the acquisition of cultural and financial capital, perceived themselves – and were perceived – as white Americans.

A few years later, Anne H. Smith – the daughter of Kubek's friend and patron, the Carpatho-Rusyn businessman John Zhynchak Smith – also published a travelogue about her own world tour, which included stops in Cuba, Panama, Hawaii, the Philippines, China, Japan, Thailand (Siam), Indonesia, India, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel (Palestine), Greece, Italy, France, and England. The contrast between the views of first- and second-generation Carpatho-Rusyns Americans could not be more striking. At one moment, she describes being especially impressed with "the beauty and magic charm" of the Panama Canal. "One could not help thinking of the four centuries of wild and bloody romance, mixed with squalor and suffering which made up the history of the Isthmus of Panama until it was taken over by the Americans in the early part

of this century," she writes: "Such names as Columbus, Balboa, Morgan, Goethals and Gorgas passed through one's mind" (Smith 1929, 1, 4). Here, Smith's admiration of the conquistadors reveals the extent to which native-born Carpatho-Rusyn Americans had transformed from "fiends" and "brutes" into fully-fledged unhyphenated Americans. At the same time, it shows that one of the consequences of doing so was that they began to stop identifying with the oppressed and started identifying with the oppressors.

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