

JOHN OF GAUNT'S INTERVENTION IN SPAIN:
POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS FOR
CHAUCER'S LIFE AND POETRY¹

There are many Spanish references in *The Canterbury Tales* about historical events, geographical places and quotations from Spanish authorities.² Spanish marks can be found not only through explicit allusions but in the implicit contents of the text, as I will show further on in *The House of Fame*, in *The Canterbury Tales*, and in *The Book of the Duchess*. Nevertheless, the importance of the relationship between Chaucer and Spain has traditionally been overlooked by readers and scholars.

The publication of a short article, "Chaucer en Espagne? (1366)" by Suzanne Honoré-Duvergé (1955: 9-13) revealing that Chaucer visited Spain with a safe-conduct granted by the king of Navarre, shed a light on the obscurity of the period from October 1366 to June 1367. But this discovery "has led to speculation about his knowledge of Spanish literature"³. An interesting question arises from Benson's (1991: 795) statement: if Chaucer had a strong influence from France and Italy, why could not he have any Spanish influence, considering his stay in Spain?

¹ I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude to Professor Martin M. Crow for his advice and great interest in this article and his encouragement to continue researching on Chaucer and Spain.

² Readers can find more information in: LEON SENDRA, Antonio & SERRANO REYES, Jesús, "Spanish References in *The Canterbury Tales*," *SELIM* 2 (1992): 106-141.

³ BENSON, Larry D., ed. "Explanatory Notes", *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edition, (Oxford, 1991), p. 795. All Chaucer quotations will be from this edition. About the Spanish Literary influence on Chaucer's work see Jesús L. Serrano Reyes, *Didacticismo y Moralismo en Geoffrey Chaucer y Don Juan Manuel: Un Estudio Comparativo Textual*, Córdoba: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Córdoba, 1996.

It is necessary to know as much as possible about Chaucer's relationship with Spain in order to determine the real historical background to show the minimum conditions for a literary influence.

I propose to clarify some important historical events about the English intervention in Spain (XIV century), focusing on those in which Chaucer may have been involved, and giving a connection between Chaucer's texts and the historical context. The possibility of Chaucer's stay in Montserrat (Barcelona) in 1366 and my argument showing that Philippa Chaucer may have died in Spain (1386-87) may be important enough to bring the reader to a new reading of Chaucer's texts. I will contribute new historical information by means of Pero Lopez de Ayala's *Chronicles*,¹ avoiding the excessive repetition of the historical background,² and, in any case, considering the old researches from a new point of view. I will try to demonstrate how Chaucer may have been involved in the events and how he reflected not only the events but his attitude through his poetry.

I start from 1366 following a historical linear period. What did Chaucer visit Spain for? As Baugh (1968: 69) says "We may never know the precise nature of his mission". The only real document is the one mentioned above which has been included by Martin M. Crow and Clair Olson (1966: 64) in *Chaucer Life-Records*, and we cannot deduce any clear reason for his journey.

Several possible explanations have been suggested for Chaucer's journey. Following Baugh (1968: 56), Suzanne Honoré-Duvergé believes "that Chaucer may have joined the forces of Trastámara and taken part in the military campaign". There is a mistake in this opinion and as Crow and Olson (1966: 65) state:

¹ All Ayala quotations are from MARTIN, J. L., ed., *Pero López de Ayala. Crónicas*. Barcelona: Planeta, 1991.

² For general historical background see RUSSELL, P.E. *The English Intervention in Spain and Portugal in the Time of Edward III and Richard II*, (Oxford, 1955); ARMITAGE-SMITH, S., *John of Gaunt: King of Castile and Leon; Duke of Aquitaine and Lancaster; Earl of Derby, Lincoln, and Leicester; Seneschal of England*. 1904; rpt. London: Constable & Co., 1964; GOODMAN, A., *John of Gaunt: the Exercise of Princely Power in Fourteenth-Century Europe*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.

The sympathy of the English court seems at the time to have been with the cause of Don Pedro.

Another possibility was offered by Crow and Olson supposing that Chaucer was a simple pilgrim to the shrine of St. James. Baugh (1968: 56) refuses both possibilities and about the second one he thinks that:

Travelling with three companions (not separately identified), with servants, horses, and an amount of luggage that seemed important enough to be included in the permission, suggest a more official mission. In view of the war, clearly have chosen to go by way of Navarre when English pilgrims to Compostella habitually went to Coruña in Galicia by sea. The purpose of Chaucer's mission is not easy to define, and perhaps will never be known with certainty.

This argument is not consistent enough to reject Crow and Olson's opinion: pilgrims went to Galicia through the "French way"¹ and many pilgrims arrived at Galicia from England by ships, most of the times, in those which went full of pilgrims to import wine and went back to England in ships to export wool.²

This is my hypothesis: Chaucer went to Spain to persuade English knights to abandon Henry of Trastamara because the English military forces would fight on the side of king Peter. Baugh suggests the same idea but with no document to support it, and casting doubt on this possibility.

I will give some information about the political situation which surrounded the English intervention to provide the necessary insight to understand my hypothesis. I will expound my hypothesis focusing the interest on Sir Hugh Calveley, the most important English knight in the "Gran Company", during the closest period of time to the date of Chaucer's safe-conduct.

The Castilian king Peter was an ally of England under the mutual treaty of 22 June 1362, which was ratified by Edward III (February 1, 1363) and by king

¹ See VAZQUEZ DE PARGA, LACARRA, J. M. & URÍA, *Peregrinaciones a Santiago*, (Madrid, 1948).

² See TATE, Brian, *El Camino de Santiago*, (Barcelona, 1987) and the interesting book by Wendy R. Childs, *Anglo-Castilian trade in the later Middle Ages*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978.

Peter (September 28, 1364). This political and military alliance forbade English knights the participation in the forces on the side of Trastamara.

The Companies invaded Castile and Calveley's most important steps might be significant to support my hypothesis:

- a) December, 1365. du Guesclin and most his forces reached Barcelona shortly after December 25. Calveley was already there.¹
- b) February, 1366. it was the middle of February before all were in Saragossa, including Pedro IV.
- c) March, 1366. Early in March Calveley opened the attack by turning north and following the course of the Ebro, passed through the southern tip of Navarre, and reached Alfaro in Castilian territory. When the town refused to surrender he pushed on to Calahorra.
- d) March, 1366. By March 16 Trastamara was declared king. On March 26 he was officially crowned at a monastery on the outskirts of Burgos.

Peter, The Cruel, had fled from Seville to Galicia and finally to Bayonne asking for the Black Prince's help. The Anglo-Castilian treaty had already been invoked² when king Peter sent his adviser Martín López de Córdoba to England in November, 1365.³ Baugh (1968: 66) includes in his article how Edward III sent a letter to Calveley and other English knights on December 6, 1365, addressed to:

Noz cheres & folialx, Johan de Chandos, Visconte de Seint Salveur,
Hughe de Calverle, Nichol de Dagworth, & Willliam de Elmham,
Chivalers.⁴

¹ All these quotations on Calveley's steps are from Baugh (1968: 55-69).

² See GARBATY, T. J., "Chaucer in Spain, 1366: Soldier of Fortune or Agent of the Crown?", *MLN* 5, (1967): 81-87. I am most grateful to Professor Garbáty for his valuable advice concerning this article.

³ See RADES Y ANDRADA, F., *Crónicas de las tres órdenes y cavallerías de Santiago, Calatraua y Alcántara. (Toledo, 1572)*, fol. 29v.

⁴ Baugh includes part of the letter and give the following reference in the note 21: "The letter is printed in *Foedera* (Record ed.), III, ii, p. 779".

It is clear, as Baugh (1968: 69) states, that the letter “had failed to reach them in time.” Edward III may have tried other ways to convince “them”. I do not agree with Baugh’s (1968: 69) final statement “Whether he ever caught up with them is doubtful.” Was Chaucer successful in his mission? Ayala (J. L. Martín ed. 1991: 341) answers the question:

... Mosen Hugo de Caureley, que era un caballero inglés con quatrocientos de caballo de su compañía, que tenía consigo de Inglaterra, partió del rey don Enrique, e fuese para Navarra, por quanto su señor el Príncipe de Gales venía de la otra parte, e non podía ser contra el. E el rey don Enrique, como quier que sopo que el dicho mosén Hugo partía del, e le pudiera facer algund enojo, non lo quiso facer, teniendo que el dicho caballero facía su debdo en se ir a servir a su señor el príncipe, que era fijo de su señor el rey de Inglaterra.¹

Ayala shows the arguments which convinced not only Sir Hugh Calveley but Henry of Trastamara himself because they were the arguments signed in the Anglo-Castilian treaty of 1362. Chaucer’s success is beyond all doubt. But Ayala’s *Chronicles* (J. L. Martín ed. 1991: 344) reaffirm this success even more, because Calveley not only abandoned Henry of Trastamara, he took part in the battle of Najera against him:

De la parte del rey don Pedro fue ordenada la batalla en esta guisa. Todos vinieron a pie, e en la avanguardia venía el duque de Alencastre, hermano del príncipe, que decían don Juan, e mosén Juan Chandós, que era condestable de Guiana por el príncipe, e mosén Raúl Camois, e mosén Hugo de Caureley, e Mosén Oliver, señor de Clison, e otros muchos caballeros e escuderos de Inglaterra e de Bretaña.²

¹ “The knight Hugh Calveley, who was an English knight with four hundred cavalymen in his company, who came from England, abandoned king Henry, and went to Navarre because his lord, the prince of Wales came from the other side and he could not fight against him. And when king Henry knew that this Hugh had left him, and he might get angry, he did not, considering that the knight did his duty in going to serve his lord the prince, who was the son of the king of England.”

² “On the side of king Peter, the battle was planned as it follows: everyone was on foot, and the Duke of Lancaster, who was called John, the prince’s brother, was in the vanguard with the knight John Chandos, who was the military chief of Guiana,

And some days after the victory of Najera:

Otrosí el príncipe de Gales envió luego al rey de Aragón por mensajero a mosén Hugo de Caureley, un caballero de Inglaterra a tratar con él sus amistades.¹

So, after the battle Sir Hugh Calveley is at the Black Prince's service as a reliable person. William McColly (1988: 84) contributes information confirming that Calveley abandoned Henry of Trastamara in spite of his links to him and his ally Peter IV of Aragon:

To reward Calveley for his role in the defeat of Pedro the Cruel in 1366, Henry of Trastamara gave Calveley the county of Carrion and the title of Count of Carrion. After Najera (1367), and one more on the Castilian throne, Pedro confirmed the grant. Calveley was such an important figure at the Aragonese court that he married an Aragonese princess, the Doña Constanza.

This fundamental role to keep a latent alliance between the English and the Aragonese court was not only supported on Calveley's marriage but in the Aragonese king's interest. In 1366, as Suárez Fernández (1970: 444) says, Peter IV was very attentive with the English leaders:

Las tropas inglesas y francesas indistintamente, comenzaron a pasar por Cataluña en enero de 1366. Pedro IV hizo objeto de especiales atenciones a los capitanes británicos para conservar un puente tendido hacia la amistad inglesa.²

Chaucer's success may have been rewarded as it is clearly reflected in a document where he is considered "dilectus valectus noster", and Tout (1929: 384) shows that:

and Raul Camois, and Sir Hugh Calveley, and Oliver, lord of Clison, and other many knights and squires from England and Brittany."

¹ J. L. Martin ed. (1991: 360): "And afterwards the prince of Wales sent Sir Hugh Calveley, a knight from England, as a messenger to the king of Aragon to treat his leagues with him."

² The English and French forces started passing through Catalonia in January, 1366. Peter IV paid special attentions to the British captains to keep an open way to the English friendship.

In 1367, and probably earlier, he was yeoman or “valectus” of the king’s chamber, and afterwards had the higher rank of the squire of the chamber. It was, however, usual to employ chamber officers on delicate missions at home and abroad.

Is there any connection between Chaucer’s texts and these historical events? Where and how are they reflected? I will show two texts: the two stanzas in *The Monk’s Tale* about “Petro, glorie of Spayne”, which will be commented further on, and the two explicit Spanish references in *The House of Fame*.¹

Whan I was fro thys egle goon,
I gan beholde upon this place.
And certein, or I ferther pace,
I wol yow al the shap devyse
Of hous and site, and al the wyse
How I gan to thys place aproche
That stood upon so hygh a roche,
Hier stant ther non in Spayne. (1110-1117)

In “The Explanatory Notes” of *The Riverside Chaucer* (p. 986, n. 1116-17) we can read that “Baugh (45) suggests the Rock of Gibraltar, but there is no indication Chaucer went that far south.” This is, certainly, a high rock, but there is no evidence of the important variety of elements (“castel, tour, py-nacles, ymageries, tabernacles, pilers, ...”) included in “The Hous of Fame for to descryve-” (1105) by Chaucer. I believe the “hygh roche” is Montserrat, a high mountain, 35 kilometres from Barcelona. The following quotation from an encyclopaedia shows a general parallelism with the description of the “hygh roche”, (Montserrat):

... las aguas tanto pluviales como procedentes de la fusión de las nieves, ejercen en dichas grietas su acción química y mecánica, a la vez erosiva y desnudadora, asurcándoles y ensanchándoles de continuo, y dando a las rocas esas formas caprichosas y

¹ On this matter may be of interest the reading of two papers presented in SELIM conferences: the first, Antonio León Sendra & Jesús L. Serrano Reyes, “Chaucer and Montserrat” in Castellón, 1995; the second, Jesús L. Serrano Reyes, “‘Els Castells Humans’: An Architectural Element in the *House of Fame*” in Vitoria-Gasteiz, 1996. Both papers will be published in the forthcoming proceedings.

fantásticas de columnas y fortalezas, de monstruos y gigantes, de aves y de fieras, etc. Tales filigranas de escultura, que tanto sorprenden y admirán a viajeros y turistas son el resultado combinado de las energías internas y de los agentes destructores atmosféricos.

Aparte de esta rara y admirable fisonomía externa, presenta en su interior una estructura caótica y cavernosa semejante a los antros del Averno.¹

There are many rocks in Montserrat which are called, depending on their shapes, "Bewitched Giant", "Dead Head" "Flutes", etc., and caves of saltpe-tre like the "Virgin Room", which show the original morphology of the mountain. Apart from these natural shapes, there are many carvings in some places of the mountain, for instance, the sculptures on the rocks forming "Los Misterios"² and the "Via Crucis". All of them constitute part of the devotion place whose heart is the famous Monastery of Montserrat. It was a Benedictine monastery in the X century. Baugh (1968: 63) informs that Sir Hugh Calveley was in Barcelona by November 4, 1365, and "on January 1, 1366 Pedro IV feasted all the leaders of the Companies"³ in Barcelona. Chaucer starts his "Story" in the "Book I" of *The House of Fame* with this verse: "Of December the tenth day" (111). It may have been a real date of 1365 according with the historical data. Edward III sent a letter to the English leaders on 6 December, 1365. The tenth of December may have been the date of Chaucer's departure. The poet says at the end of "Book I":

Myn eyen to the hevene I caste.
Thoo was I war, lo, at the laste,
That faste be the sonne, as hye

¹ *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo Americana*. Vol. XXVI. Barcelona: Espasa y Calpe, 1973, p. 780. "Rain waters and the water from melting snow, exert their chemical and mechanical actions on the mentioned fissures, erosive and bare, furrowing and expanding them continually, making the rocks those odd and fantastic shapes of columns and fortresses, of monsters and giants, of birds and wild animals, etc. Such carving watermarks, which make an intensive impression and admiration to travellers and tourists, are the result of the internal powers and the destructive atmospheric agents. Apart from this odd and admirable external face, it has a chaotic and cavernous structure like the caverns of the Hell."

² "The Misteries".

³ Ayala confirms it. See J. L. Martín ed. (1991: 310-311).

As henne myghte I with myn yë,
Me thoughte I saugh an egle sore,
But that hit semed moche more
Then I had any egle seyn. (495-501)

There is a parallelism between this eagle and the one included in a *Viro-
lay*, an unsigned literary work widespread in the XIV century, which begins
“Ayglā capdalt volant pus altament”.¹ It was dedicated to the Virgin of
Montserrat and appears in every anthology and history of Montserrat. It may
have been a poem to sing. The eagle carries Chaucer to Montserrat, that is,

... to a place
Which that hight The Hous of Fame,
To do the som disport and game,
In som recompensacion
Of labour and devocion. (662-667)

Montserrat is well known as a place of devotion. The pilgrimage dates
from the XII century. People went there to pray to the Virgin of the monastery
 (“pel”):

Ther mette I cryinge many oon,
“A larges, larges, hold up wel!
God save the lady of thys pel,” (1308-1310)

When the eagle saw “the Hous of Fame” cried out: “Seynt Julyan, loo,
bon hostel!” (1022),² wishing Chaucer a good lodging. Hospitality was a
characteristic of Montserrat where there were enough rooms to lodge the pil-
grims.

The altitude of the “hygh roche” is emphasised from the beginning: “Be-
twixen hevne and erthe and see,” (715). People can see from the top of
Montserrat (Saint Jerome’s viewpoint) not only Barcelona and the sea but
Valencia, Aragon, the French Pyrenees and the Balearic Islands:

¹ “Eagle of high head that flies very high.”

² “Seynt Julyan” is the patron saint of hospitality.

And y doun gan loken thoo,
And beheld felde and playnes,
And now hilles, and now mountaynes,
Now valeys, now forestes,
And now unnethes grete bestes,
Now ryveres, now citees,
Now tounes, and now grete trees,
Now shippes seylynge in the see. (896-903)

Chaucer himself says how difficult was to climb the mountain: "to clymbe it greved me" (1119).¹

What did the "Companies" go to Barcelona for? Peter IV used to go to Montserrat to pray to the Virgin before a campaign. He went in 1343 before attacking Majorca:

Subió a Montserrat el rey don Pedro IV el Ceremonioso para encomendar a la Virgen, por medio de los monjes y ermitaños, la empresa de Mallorca.²

It was winter (from November to February) when they were there. Chaucer reflects it:

But of what congeled matere/ hyt was ... (1126-27),

They were almost ofthowed so
That of the lettres oon or two
Was molte away of every name, (1143-45)

I have cited above "la fusión de las nieves"³ describing Montserrat.

Calveley and his companions were feasted in Barcelona by Peter IV. They prepared the attack against Castile. When the Spanish kings visited their cities, in the Middle Ages, some ceremonial activities, as Nieto Soria (1993:

¹ Montserrat is a mountain with these measurements: 10 kilometres long, 5 kilometres wide, 26 kilometres perimeter and 1236 metres high.

² *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europea Americana*, 786. "King Peter IV, the Ceremonious, went up to Montserrat to entrust the campaign of Majorca to the Virgin by means of the monks and the hermits".

³ "the melting snows".

129-120) shows, were organized, such as “danzas de espadas”¹, and these activities had “una innegable dimensión propagandística”². Chaucer describes the stage:

Ther saugh I famous, olde and yonge,
Pipers of the Duche tonge,
To lerne love-dances, sprynges,
Reyes, and these straunge thynges.
Tho saugh I in an other place
Stonden in a large space,
Of hem that maken bloody soun
In trumpe, beme, and claryoun;
For in fight and blod-shedyng
Ys used gladly clarionyng.
Ther herde I trumpen Messenus,
Of whom that speketh Virgilius.
There herde I trumpe Joab also,
Theodomas, and other mo;
And alle that used clarion
In Cataloigne and Aragon,
That in her tyme famous were
To lerne, saugh I trumpe there. (1233-1250)

There are many elements in the text which reflects the historical situation: Peter IV, Henry of Trastamara and Calveley with other free lances were in a public festivity before attacking Castile. It is well known that the Companies included Dutch. Chaucer mentions them: “Pipers of the Duche tonge”. The stage shows another site for the forces “Stonden in a large space” which implies the great number of men ready for the war. All musical instruments are for war: “For in fight and blod-shedyng”; and, among the famous “Theodomas, Messenus” and “Joab”, the trumpets from “Cataloigne and Aragon” are mentioned as “in her time famous”.

Chaucer may have been impressed by that pompous and public festivity as it is reflected in the description of *The House of Fame*. He, a good observer, described that show, having his ears and eyes as the best instruments

¹ “Sword dance”.

² “An undeniable propaganda dimension”.

to perceive it, and the narrator confirms it repeating persistently the verbs “saugh” and “herde”.

There is an interesting word to research: “Reyes”. The *Riverside Chaucer*¹ gives this explanation: “*Reyes* (translating a Dutch word) are ring dances”. I do not know which Dutch word is, but it is a Spanish word meaning “kings”. It may have been a Spanish dance like the “sardana”, the typical Catalan dance, where men and women dancing make a wheel. There is a very important and significant festivity in Spain called “Reyes”, which is celebrated on 6 January. Many churches included the performance “*Officium Stellae*” in the night offices, in “Reyes”, in the Middle Ages.

And Chaucer continues describing the feast with “jugelours, magiciens, tragetours, Phitonesess, charmeresess, wicches, sorceresses, exorsisacions, fumygacions ...” (1259-1264). It is well known that Peter IV, the host, was called “*El Ceremonioso*”² and that he loved not only Literature but Alchemy and Astrology.

This is just a bit example of the many parallelisms to support this hypothesis but there is a short space in this article to expound the whole comparative analysis.³

Chaucer may have taken Edward III’s letter to Calveley or not. His safe-conduct from 22 February to 24 May, by Charles II of Navarre, implies just the failure of the English king’s letter to make Calveley and other English knights abandon Henry of Trastamara. Goodman (1992: 46) narrates how:

In January 1367 Carlos allied with Enrique of Trastamara and closed the Pyrenean passes to the Black Prince. At the end of January the latter sent Gaunt to meet Carlos at St Jean Pied de Port and to scort him to a conference with the prince and Pedro at Peyrehorade. There the king one more changed sides and the terms for an alliance were reaffirmed. Setting out in mid-February, the army struggled through snow-covered passes till they reached the shelter of Roncesvalles.

¹ “Explanatory Notes”, 986.

² “The Ceremonious”. It is very significant according with the description of the ceremony.

³ I will expound this hypothesis in forthcoming articles.

Chaucer was not of the party. He was probably trying to follow Calveley and his English companions. Ayala (J. L. Martín ed. 1991: 341) shows how while Henry of Trastámara was in Haro, “ordenando sus gentes para la batalla”¹, Sir Hugh Calveley abandoned him.

This conflict was the origin of John of Gaunt’s claim to the throne of Castile. It is necessary or at least highly desirable to give a short explanation. The Duke of Lancaster, who had fought at Najera (1367), would marry Constance of Castile, Peter’s daughter. This policy of marriage was suggested by Sir Guichard D’Angle as Braddy (1935: 77) points out:

Moreover, he was instructed with and succeeded in the negotiations for the marriage alliance. Afterwards, he was present when the nuptials of the Duke and Constance were solemnized at Rochefort.

Shortly after this marriage, the Duke of Lancaster claimed the crown of Castile and Leon. The process of this claim lasted sixteen years. The history of this period of time is included in Ayala’s *Chronicles*.

I think that from the beginning the idea of no success was quite clear for the Duke of Lancaster. He tried to get as much as possible from this conflict. There were two important interests: The Duchess Constance wanted to avenge the murder of her father, and the Duke of Lancaster wanted to recover what his father-in-law did not pay. But the intensity of the claim increased depending on the real possibility of a victory. So there were no important acts until 1386 when Portugal gave the Duke of Lancaster the opportunity of fighting together against Castile. In 1373, as Ayala (J. L. Martín ed. 1991: 466) shows, the Duke of Lancaster was claiming not the crown but the price of it:

el rey don Carlos de Navarra vino al rey don Enrique a Madrid, e fabló con él, que el rey de Inglaterra e el príncipe de Gales serían sus amigos, e que se tirase de la liga del rey de Francia, e que el rey de Inglaterra e el príncipe dexarían la guerra que avían con él, e non ayudaría a las fijas del rey don Pedro que estaban en Inglaterra; e para esto el rey don Enrique diese al príncipe de Gales alguna suma de dineros por la debda que le debía el rey don Pedro de los gajes que ovieron de aver él e los otros señores e gentes de armas, los

¹ “Preparing his forces for the battle.”

quales él pagara por venir con el rey don Pedro a Castilla. E que haciendo el rey don Enrique esto, el príncipe dexaría todas las otras demandas del regno de Castilla, e así lo faría el duque de Alencastre, que era casado con doña Constanza, fija del rey don Pedro.¹

Henry of Trastamara did not pay any attention to this blackmail.

Eek Plato seith, whoso kan hym rede, the wordes moote be cosyng to the dede. (A 741-742)

In 1374, Ayala (J. L. Martín ed. 1991: 475) informs that Henry of Trastamara had news about the Duke of Lancaster's preparations to invade Castile from Aquitanie:

e llamábase el dicho duque de Alencastre rey de Castilla e de León, e traía armas de castillos e de leones.²

“this kyng” (1314) as he was called at the end of *The Book of the Duchess* is an interesting example of propaganda at that age. This time, as in 1381 when the Duke of Cambridge (“mosén Aymón”),³ tried it once again, the results were the same: the loss of many men obliged them to retreat before fighting.

In 1385, following Ayala's *Chronicles* (J. L. Martín ed. 1991: 607), the king of Portugal gave the Duke of Lancaster the last chance of getting what he wanted long ago:

el maestro Davis, que se llamaba rey de Portugal, avía enviado mensajeros a Inglaterra, especialmente al duque de Alencastre, ...

¹ “King Charles of Navarre met king Henry in Madrid, and he talked with him that the king of England and the prince of Wales would be his allies and he should leave the agreement with the king of France and then the king of England and the prince would leave the war against him, and they would not help the daughters of king Peter, who were in England, in exchange for some amount of money for the prince of Wales because of the debt which king Peter had contracted with him and other knights who were paid to come with king Peter of Castile. And if king Henry did so, the prince would give up to the other claims of the kingdom of Castile, and the Duke of Lancaster, who was married to Constance, king Peter's daughter, would do the same.”

² “ and this Duke of Lancaster was called king of Castile and Leon, and he brought coats of arms of castles and lions.”

³ He had married to Elizabeth, Constance's little sister.

por los cuales le hacía saber cómo el rey de Castilla fuera desbaratado, e avía perdido muchas gentes suyas de las mejores que en el regno de Castilla avía, e que agora tenía tiempo de se venir el dicho duque para Castilla.¹

On the other hand, the results of the Parliament of 1385 in England may have helped Gaunt to decide as is reflected in Palmer's (1971: 480) article:

There is something equally curious about the fact that no grant was made to John of Gaunt. He was the only one of the king's uncles who did not benefit from his nephew's liberality at this time."

Ayala (J. L. Martín ed. 1991: 614) narrates how the Duke arrived at Galicia on July 25, 1386, with his family:

Dende a pocos días llegáronle nuevas al maestre Davis cómo el duque de Alencastre era aportado con pieza de navíos e de gentes en la villa de la Coruña, que es en Galicia, día de Santiago, e cómo tomara y algunas galeas que falló del rey de Castilla, e que la gente que el dicho duque traía eran mil e quinientas lanzas, e otros tantos archeros, e todo de muy buena gente. E traía consigo su mujer doña Constanza, que era fija del rey don Pedro, e una fija que avía della, que decían doña Catalina. E traía otras dos fijas que el duque oviera primero de otra mujer con quien fuera casado antes, fija de otro duque de Alencastre e conde de Dervi que fuera antes que dél, e a la mayor decían doña Phelipa, la cual casó entonce con el maestre Davis que se llamaba rey de Portugal, segund adelante diremos, e a la otra decían doña Isabel, la cual casó entonce con un caballero que venía con el duque, que decían mosén Juan de Holanda, que fuera hijo de la princesa e de mosén Thomas de Holanda, e era entonce mosén Juan de Holanda en esa cabalgada, e el duque de Alencastre fizole su condestable.²

¹ "... the grand master Davis, who was called king of Portugal, had sent messengers to England, especially to the Duke of Lancaster, to communicate how the king of Castile had been defeated and had lost many soldiers, the best ones in the kingdom of Castile, and how this Duke would have the chance to come to Castile."

² "The grand master Davis had news few days ago of how the Duke of Lancaster had arrived with ships and military men at the town of La Coruña, which is in Galice, the day of St. James, and how he took some ships of the king of Castile, and the militarymen were 1500 lances and a like number of archers and all of them were

Ayala gives important information: John of Gaunt's wife and his daughters went with him. One was Catherine, Constance's daughter, and the others were Blanche's daughters.

As is well known, the Duke of Lancaster granted a pension of ten pounds a year to Chaucer's wife Philippa, for her services to his wife Constance in August 1372. It was when they were just married. If Philippa was in Constance's service, she ought to be in her service in Galicia in 1386. Constance's husband's daughters were to marry important men and her own daughter Catherine would marry Henry III of Castile. Constance's need of household chores might be important enough to get rid of Philippa, who was very well paid and highly esteemed.¹

The Duke of Lancaster and the king of Portugal, as Ayala (J. L. Martín ed. 1991: 616) shows:

acordaron que pasado el invierno deste año, luego al comienzo del verano siguiente entrasen en Castilla con todo su poder. E de allí adelante cada uno comenzó a reparar sus gentes, e se apercivía para aquel tiempo. Pero en este medio ovo en Galicia mortandad grande en los ingleses, en tal guisa, que los mas e las mejores capitanes que el dicho duque de Alencastre avía traído consigo murieron allí, e otros muchos de los archeros e gentes de armas.²

good. And he brought with him his wife Constance, who was the daughter of king Peter and a daughter who had been born of her, who was called Catherine, and he brought other two daughters who the Duke had of another woman he married before, who was daughter of another Duke of Lancaster and Earl of Derby, the elder was called Philippa, who married the grand master of Davis, who was called king of Portugal, as further on we tell, and the other daughter was called Elisabeth, who married then a knight who come with the Duke, who was called John of Holland, who was son of the princess and Thomas of Holland, because the Duke of Lancaster made him his military chief."

¹ On March 19 1386 she was admitted to the fraternity of Lincoln Cathedral, a custom for the royal family.

² "They decided that after the winter of that year at the beginning of the next year they would enter Castile with all their power. From that moment they began to prepare their troops for that time. But in those days a high number of victims happened among the English, so that the greatest and best captains who were brought by the Duke Lancaster, died there, and many other archers and military men."

They would be in Galicia from July 25 1386 until the next summer. But instead of increasing their power making preparations for the attack they were defeated, before fighting, by the worst enemy: “pestilence”. So they did not wait until the summer, and in March 1387 they invaded Castile. Ayala (J. L. Martín ed. 1991: 627) narrates the situation:

Después que entró en Castilla, siempre ovo grand mortandad en sus compañías, en guisa que perdió muchas gentes de las suyas; e segund se sopo por cierto, morieron trescientos caballeros e escuderos, e uchos archeros e otras gentes.¹

Philippa Chaucer might be among ‘otras gentes’ checking this event with Martin Crow and Virginia Leland’s (1991: xix) information:

Philippa Chaucer, to whom he had been married for at least twenty-one years, disappeared from the records after 18 June 1387 and is presumed to have died.

If Chaucer married Philippa in 1366, (the same year he was in Spain), he became a widower when Philippa Chaucer died in Spain in 1386-1387. So, she probably died in Spain of “pestilence”. It may have had very negative repercussions for Chaucer.

The Duke of Lancaster and the king of Portugal could not stand more than two months in Castile from March 1387, as Ayala (J. L. Martín ed. 1991: 628) narrates:

E el tiempo que andovieron por Castilla estas compañías pudo ser fasta dos meses poco más o menos.²

They knew that two thousand French soldiers were near them and they went back to Portugal. They stayed there until, at least, the end of 1387. The king of Castile, John I, sent ambassadors to Troncoso, a village in Portugal, where John of Gaunt was, and he accepted the king of Castile’s proposals:

¹ “After entering Castile, there was great mortality in his company, so that he lost many of his people, and as it was well known, three hundred knights and squires and many archers and other people.”

² “And they stayed over Castile about two months.”

his daughter Catherine would married the king's heir, Henry, and he and his forces would leave Portugal and would go to Bayonne.

May Chaucer have been in Spain again? (1386-1388). It may not be a mere coincidence that, after twelve years, he left the customs and the free rent house in Algate. It is true that his patron had less power being in Spain, but it is not less true that Chaucer might be necessary. Negotiations between the Duke of Lancaster and the king of Portugal had just started on arriving at Galicia. Moreover, before invading Castile in March 1387 Ayala (J. L. Martín 1991: 625) informs that

el duque envió un caballero que decían mosén Tomás de Persy¹ al rey de Castilla, e allí se trató el casamiento del infante don Enrique, fijo del rey don Juan, con doña Catalina, fija del duque de Alencastre e de doña Constanza, su mujer.²

John of Gaunt, as I have already mentioned, had in mind the idea of a negotiation to get money. So, diplomacy was more effective and fruitful than war. In this case diplomatic servants were more essential even than soldiers. War was useful to press, it was just a token on the chessboard. Ayala (J.L. Martín ed. 1991: 615) shows how before Thomas Percy was sent to the king of Castile, this king had sent his ambassador, secretly, to the Duke of Lancaster:

le dixo el dicho prior al duque de Alencastre secretamente³, que la razón porque él más viniera a él era que el rey don Juan de Castilla le enviaba decir que el duque non avía más de una fija de su mujer doña Constanza, fija del rey don Pedro, que llamaban doña Catalina, a que el rey don Juan avía un fijo, e que se ficiese casamiento dellos e serían herederos de los regnos de Castilla e de

¹ This was one of Chaucer's friends who took part in the English intervention in Spain. He was fighting in Galicia in 1385, probably preparing the Duke of Lancaster's arrival on July 25, 1386 (St. James' day): "fue en 1385 tomada por los ingleses bajo el mando de Sir Thomas Percy, la villa de Rivadavia". Amador de los Ríos, *Historia Social, Política y Religiosa de los Judios de España y Portugal*, II (Madrid, 1984), 330, n. 3. ("Rivadavia village was taken by the English troops in 1385 under the command of Sir Thomas Percy")

² "The Duke sent a knight, who was called Thomas Percy, to the king of Castile, and there they treated the marriage of the infant Henry, the son of king John, with Catherine, daughter of the Duke of Lancaster and Constance, his wife."

³ "secretamente" shows John of Gaunt's diplomatic strategy.

León, e cesaría esta quiston e guerra. E el duque lo oyó de buen talante e plógole¹ dello.²

Two key dates can help to support the suspicion of Chaucer's stay in Spain (1366-1387?): In May of 1387, as Robinson (1957: 1026) refers, his royal annuity was transferred to another person.

The transfer was made at Chaucer's request, so that is possible that he sold it for a sum of ready cash - a rather more drastic way of raising money than borrowing on one's life insurance, but not entirely dissimilar.

About May of 1387 the king of Portugal and the Duke of Lancaster left Castile because of "pestilence". Perhaps Chaucer needed money to make a doctor rich as he wrote in the *General Prologue*: "He kepte that he wan in pestilence" (I- 442). We know, through Suárez Fernández (1970: 469) that between March and May:

Una parte de las fuerzas, mandadas por sir John Holland, regresó a Gascuña con sorprendente salvoconducto de Juan I para atravesar Castilla.³

The second key date is 5 July 1387 when he was given a safe-conduct to accompany his friend William Beauchamp to Calais. He may have gone to meet his patron who travelled from the port of Lisbon to Bayonne. If the records about his wife had disappeared after 18 June 1387 and she was dead, was this travel concerned it?

In any case, if Chaucer did not help his patron from the Spanish ground, he did from his poetry. There are two books where we can find Chaucer's attitude in defence of his patron's claim: *The Canterbury Tales* and *The Book*

¹ "plógole" reaffirms what I have said in the preceding note.

² "this prior said to the Duke of Lancaster secretly that the reason for which he had come to him was that king John of Castile had sent him to say that the Duke had only one daughter of his wife Constance, the daughter of king Peter, who was called Catherine and that king John had a son and if they married they would be heirs of the kingdoms of Castile and Leon, and this affair and this war would be stopped. The Duke listened in a good mood and was pleased with this."

³ "Part of the forces, under the command of Sir John Holland, went back to Gascony with a surprising safe-conduct of John I to pass through Castile."

of the Duchess. Both Chaucer's works show how the author upholds the Duke of Lancaster's interests. There are two parts in each one which can be considered as speculations because of the vagueness and the many possible interpretations. These are the cases of *The Tale of Melibee* and a part about hunting in *The Book of the Duchess*. The explicit references defending his patron's claim are represented by the stanzas about King Peter, in *The Monk's Tale* and the last part of *The Book of the Duchess* (1311-1323).

I am going to start commenting *The Tale of Melibee* and its possible historical connections to the Duke of Lancaster's intervention in Spain with Manly and Edith Ricket's (1940: 371-72) words:

Undoubtedly the work was popular, not merely because of its proverbs but also because the situation discussed was a not uncommon experience in the Middle Ages.

I reject, as Lawrence (1940) does, Hotson's (1967) interpretation considering the tale as a political tract to dissuade John of Gaunt from invading Castile in 1386. The Black Death and the two thousand French soldiers were, as I have mentioned above, enough to convince him. Nevertheless, Stiwell's (1944: 434) opinion about the "vagueness of the Melibeus as an allegorical figure" can be changed into a certainty when some historical events and circumstances are supported by Chaucer's text. So, some of these connections can lead us to think that *The Tale of Melibee* was written as a consequence of the war against France and Spain at that age. Chaucer's text was not created to teach or to advise John of Gaunt, Chaucer's patron and his actions may have been Chaucer's source of inspiration. The Hundred Years' War was long enough to apply any interpretation from *The Tale of Melibee*, as Stiwell (1944: 436) shows:

English foreign policy in the 1380's and '90's resolved itself into disagreement between aggressionists and non-aggressionists.

It might be more probable that Chaucer reflected in his poetry those events closer to him. Hence his patron's intention and actions were connected to Spain from the battle of Najera in 1367, and his claim of Castile from 1372 to 1388, it is not a wild deduction that a tale such as this one can be interpreted through the point of view of the Duke of Lancaster's intervention

in Spain. John of Gaunt learnt by experience the difficult theme of peace versus war. After the truce of 1375 in France, everybody held him responsible for the disaster because England lost many territories.

The Duke of Lancaster's trajectory in the intervention is a succession of failed attempts; he gets money and his daughter's marriage.

When he arrived at Galicia on August 25 1386 "He haskeþ wel that wisely kan abyde " (VII, 1054). So he decided to play the role of Melibee and followed "Prudence": The king of Portugal and he would wait until the next March, 1387 to begin the attack. But why did not he invade Spain before? Because, perhaps, someone advised him:

For al be it so that ye be myghty and riche, certes ye ne been but
allone, / for certes ye ne han no child but a doghter, / ne ye ne han
bretheren, ne cosyns germayn ne noon other neigh kynrede / ...
But thyne enemys been there, and they han manie children,
betheren, cosyns and oother my kynrede. (VII, 1365-1372)

As "it is a woodnesse a man to stryve with a strenge¹ or a moore myghty man than he is hymself" (VII, 1481). The Duke of Lancaster gave up the crown of Castile. And his counsellors may have advised him: "if thou hast myght to doon a thyng of which thou most repente, it is bettre 'nay' than 'ye'" (VII, 1218). And "The dissensioun bigynneth by another man, and the reconsilyng bygynneth by thysel" (VII, 1691). This can show easily how he made negotiations secretly with the king of Castile before invading Castile through Benavente and how quickly they went back to Portugal. So, the Duke of Lancaster was a good Melibeus and his "wounded doghter" (his inheritance and heir or his wisdom for military conflicts) would recover from her wounds.

The Book of the Duchess shows another text where Chaucer upholds his patron's claim. Considering the possible date of composition in 1374 can help to understand the meaning of Chaucer's work. But there are not any documents to demonstrate the real date. Although some scholars, among them Condren (1971 & 1975), propose 1376 date for the composition, there some significant events which can lead us to think of 1374 as a proper date.

¹ "Pestilence": two thousand French soldiers and the Castilian forces were a "peril".

Condren sees the eight-years sickness (30-43) as a period of grief after Blanche's death, but this period of time could be considered as a bad period for his own marriage (1366). Then we have 1374 as the date for composition. Besides, as I have already mentioned, there are some other important events which are not speculations. On 13 June 1374 John of Gaunt granted Chaucer with ten pounds "in consideration of the services rendered by Chaucer to the grantor." The same year, as Crow and Leland (1991: xv) show:

King Edward granted the poet a gallon pitcher of wine daily for life. The wine, it is suggested, may have been the reward for a poem presented to the king during the festivities.

On 10 May 1374 Chaucer obtained a free house rent in Algate. On 18 June 1374 the Duke of Lancaster ordered an alabaster tomb for Blanche. It was a great year for remembering Blanche. In 1373 we have seen how the king of Castile received menaces from the Duke of Lancaster. And it is in 1374 when he considered that "talking is not the same as actually doing", and "e llamábase el dicho duque de Alencastre rey de Castilla e de León, e traía armas de castillos y de leones", as Ayala (J. L. Martín ed. 1991: 475) narrates. It is clear that John of Gaunt was called "king of Castile" by his partisans as Ayala shows. But what is more interesting and important is that Chaucer calls him "This Kyng" (1314) at the end of *The Book of the Duchess*. It is at the end of the book where there more biographical elements of John of Gaunt.¹ Chaucer is clearly defending his patron's interests. Following this important mention, a necessary question appears: If Chaucer calls him "a man in blak" during the poem and he calls him "kyng" only once at the end, is there any latent background in the book which led Chaucer to conclude that "a man in blak" was a "kyng"? Certainly, I think that this content exists. I consider the hunting as an allegory of John's of Gaunt's attempt to invade Spain at that time (1374).

The hunting starts being Chaucer at home (England) after describing war scenes of Troya and the *Le Roman de la Rose*. Then he went out (out of England, Aquitanie). The dogs (soldiers) and the hunters (knights) got ready. The "hert" (the crown of Castile) escaped and the hunting is stopped

¹ "long castel" (1318) means "Lancaster"; "Seynt Johan" (1319) means "St. John's day"; "ryche hil" (1319) means "Earl of Richmond".

because of the “defaute” of a dog (John of Gaunt lost many soldiers in Aquitanie). Ayala (J. L. Martín ed. 1991: 476) supports this interpretation:

Pero luego sopo que el duque de Alencastre non venía a Castilla,
antes por el grand trabajo que pasaron en Francia él e sus gentes,
llegados a Burdeos, donde se iban para Inglaterra.¹

“With that me thoughte that this kyng / Gan homwarde for to
ryde.” (VII, 1314-1315).

And finally, there is another text in which Chaucer defends his patron’s interest explicitly. Chaucer wrote two stanzas in *The Monk’s Tale* about “Petro, glorie of Spayne”. I am not going to pay attention to the possible sources of Chaucer’s story. It may have been Sir Guichard D’Angle as it is suggested by Braddy (1935), the Duchess Constance² or one of her attendants. What I consider really interesting is the content and Chaucer’s attitude and intention on writing the two stanzas:

O noble, o worthy Petro, glorie of Spayne,
Whom fortune heeld so heighe in magestee,
Wel oghten men thy pitious deeth complayne!
Out of thy land thy brother made thee flee;
And after, at a sege, by subtiltee,
Thow were bitraysed and lad unto his tente,
Where as he with his owene hand slow thee,
Succedyng in thy regne and in thy rente.

The feeld of snow, with th’egle of blak therinne,
Caught with the lymered coloured as the glede,
He brew this cursednesse and al this synne.
The wikked nest was werkere of this nede;
Noght Charles Olyuer, that took ay hede
Of trouthe and honour, but of Armorike
Genylon-Olyuer, corrupt for meede,

¹“But later on he knew that the Duke of Lancaster did not come to Spain because of the great difficulties that they had in France, they had arrived to Bourdeaux from where they would leave to England.”

² This possibility apart from Skeat is suggested by Henry Savage, “Chaucer and the ‘Pitous Deeth’ of ‘Petro, Glorie of Spayne’”, *Speculum* 24 (1949): 357-375.

Broghte this worthy kyng in swich a brike. (VII, 2375-2398)

Both French traitors, Duguesclin and his nephew Oliver of Mauny were well known at that time because of their tricks. When the king of Navarre, Charles II, The Bad, had made an agreement with Peter, The Cruel, and the Black Prince to let them pass through his territory in 1367 and fight on their side, he deceived them with Oliver of Mauny's help. It is not necessary to support that D'Angle was Chaucer's source, taking into account that his reasons to hate Duguesclin because he and Oliver were quite hated by English.

Chaucer was worried about a possible misattribution: "Noght Charles Olyuer"¹. Why did Chaucer dedicate one of the two stanzas to the two traitors? Because he was interested in showing that his patron's father-in-law was murdered in 1369. It was not fair play. He was "bytrayed". The rights of "thy regne" and "thy rente" had been got by means of treachery and an murder.

Chaucer's first line is very difficult to be shared by historians or even by his contemporaries.² Chaucer used "noble", "worthy" and "glorie" because he may have written the stanzas from 1369 (the king's death) and Catherine's wedding in 1388. During this period Chaucer wrote these stanzas not only in favour of the Duchess Constance's feeling but to defend his patron's claim. If there were two versions of the stanzas, one containing "thy bastard brother made thee flee" and the other without "bastard", I agree with Savage's (1949: 364) opinion that

the bastard version therefore, must have been written at some time earlier than 1386, when there was no need to conciliate the usurping house of Trastamara.

¹ This knight was very famous. He took part in the battle of Najera.

² So much is this the case that even the Black Prince did not have a high regard for Peter, The Cruel, after the battle of Najera, in moments of celebration and victory: "... luego que la batalla fue vencida, aquel día, e dende adelante siempre ovo entre el rey don Pedro e el príncipe poca avenencia." LOPEZ DE AYALA, Pero (J. L. Martín ed. 1991: 365). ("After the battle was won, that day, and in future, there was a little agreement between king Peter and the prince"). The fundamental cause was Peter's cruelty.

But, in my opinion, Chaucer might be aware of the negotiations between John of Gaunt and the king of Castile in 1386. There are two reasons for this suggestion: First, Chaucer's friend Thomas of Percy was sent to reach agreement about the marriage between Catherine and Henry III. On the second place, Chaucer omitted "bastard", but he shows Peter as a victim and his brother as a murderer. "Petro" is only related to receptive clauses ("Thow were bitraysed and lad"), he is not an actor but a beneficiary of two opposite results: "magestee" and "deeth". The actors of these results are "fortune" and "he" (his brother). However, his brother is the actor-subject of the verbs: "made" ("thy broher") and "slow" ("he").¹ These two factors lead to think that the possible date of composition was 1386-1387: from the negotiations to the agreement in 1388. It is very significant that both parts in the negotiations, as Ayala tells in his *Chronicles*, defended the genealogical tree, as rightful and legal to become king of Castile. Within this debate, in 1386, the bishop John of Aquis, following Ayala (J. L. Martín ed. 1991: 623), defended the Duchess Constance's right, among other with these words:

Otrosí dice que el dicho rey don Alfonso casó una su fija
bastarda, que decían doña Beatriz ...²

He tried to demonstrate that Henry of Trastamara was Peter's bastard brother. But after this discussion Thomas of Percy was sent to the king of Castile. Ayala does not tell any more about the results, but in 1387, after the Duke of Lancaster's retreat to Portugal, John I of Castile sent ambassadors to Troncoso (a village in Portugal) and John of Gaunt accepted the conditions: he would leave Portugal and would go to Bayonne where they would reach agreement about the wedding of their heirs and the amount of money that the Duke of Lancaster would receive. It seems that in this interval of time Chaucer may have given up to write "*bastard*", according with his patron's policy.

¹ An interesting analysis for these two stanzas could be made, in more detail, using Halliday's systemic analysis, but it should be too long. Readers interested in this systemic linguistics approach can read the basic book: HALLIDAY, M. A. K., *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. (London, 1985), and an example of this analysis in Jesús L. Serrano Reyes, "Spanish Modesty in the *Canterbury Tales*: Chaucer and Don Juan Manuel", SELIM 5, 29-45.

² The word underlined is mine. ("That king Alphonsus married a bastard daughter who was called Beatrice.")

According with Savage (1949: 623), "Chaucer was sensitive to changing winds at court."

Moreover, there are some details in the text that reveal Chaucer's defence of his patron's interest. Seemingly, John of Gaunt claimed the crown of Castile but what he was conscious of being able to get was money and a little more.

Henry of Trastámara is accused of usurper ("out of the land thy brother made thee flee", 2378), murder ("where as he with his owene hand slow thee", 2381), and thief ("sucedynge in the regne and in thy rente", 2382). It is noticeable that Chaucer wrote "in thy regne" and "in thy rente" and not "in the regne" and "in the rente". The possessive is very eloquent: he was meaning that "regne" and "rente" were Peter's, and that was to say John of Gaunt's. The use of "rente" is a redundancy in those historical circumstances: to have a kingdom implied to have a rent. Chaucer shows his patron's real interest by means of this redundancy.

The long and important English intervention in Spain during the XIV century and one document showing that Chaucer visited Spain in 1366 should lead Chaucerians to research the presence of Spain in both Chaucer's life and work.

Jesús Luis Serrano Reyes

University of Córdoba

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