Article

Dispossessed exposures. Housing and regimes of the visible

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Abstract
Literatures and organising show us how, in contemporary racial financial capitalism, housing is formed through dispossessive histories and geographies. Here, we query how these enter into play in the visual regimes through which housing is seen and experienced. For if the visual realm is as much a construct as any other housing matter, finding a grammar to tap into its workings might become handy when its violent outcomes come to the fore. What is reproduced in the visual regimes of housing? What is offered and taken anyway? What might never be seen, and by whom? The article offers a tentative analytical approach to questioning what we call dispossessed exposures: the (en)visioning of homely futures that are deprived, already in the social construct of seeing with the house, the possibility of radical care for and of habitation. These ideas are unpacked through reflection on two films: Ladj Ly's Les Misérables and Fanny Liatard and Jérémy Trouihl's Gagarine. We offer these reasonings as a contribution to ongoing conversations in the renewed field of housing justice scholarship.

Keywords
Dispossession, exposure, habitation, home, housing justice, visuality

An apartment is quiet as paper
Blank, without any décor,
And inside the radiator
Liquid babbles and pours.
The possessions are all in order,

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The telephone's stiff as a toad,
Our well-worn belongings
Are begging to be thrown.
There is nowhere else to run,
The damn walls are unfaithfully thin,
But I have to play like a clown
Idiotic tunes on a comb.
[…]
(Osip Mandelstam, Untitled. From New Poems of 1930–1934)

Although it is central in the thinking and making of actual houses—through planning, design and lived experience—the question of visuality is largely absent from geographical debates on housing and its struggles. If attention is paid to the epistemic value of real estate images under contemporary capitalism (think, for instance, of the critique of real estate advertisements), as well as analyses of the power of images in homelessness poverty politics (Goldfischer, 2018; Lancione, 2014; Rivera et al., 2022), *the visual*, as that relational space constructed through sight, is often just taken-for-granted. It seems to be clear what one means—visually—when one speaks of housing injustice. And it is perhaps unnecessary to speculate too much around the ways in which housing intervenes into the construction of meaning and politics through the visual realm, because those seem secondary concerns vis-á-vis the pressing needs of housing action. We think we know what we see, or in the familiar Foucauldian problematic, think we see what we know. That we see all of the knowledge that is important to know, or conversely, with equivalent distortion, know that what we see is not all that there is, prompting deep excavations behind things. In all of this, *visuality*, as that social construct through which things, words and concepts are aligned in arbitrary ways through sight (Hall, 1997), remains an ill-discussed operation of power in housing scholarship and action.

The problem is not just of visuality. It has to do with the expression of those societal, economic, cultural and spatial processes that converge onto the thing of the house. This is a convergence that continuously (re)makes both its presence and its role in defining habitation. That a comprehensive knowledge of these processes is unattainable at any given time does not mean that the question of how such unattainability is mediated by human ways of constructing knowledge through sense is an irrelevant one. In other words, the epistemology of the housing question bears significance on the definition of the political horizon of that same question (Madden and Marcuse, 2016). How do we know what we know of the geography of housing? Especially as the operations of the house seem so obvious.

Take the house you see on the other side of the road. Its walls and its infrastructure of provisions. Its cement blocks, architectural features, engineered calculations. Take in its caresses, the bags with groceries, runaways and hidings; its being a nodal point in networks where resources are rendered marketable after their ecological extraction. Take the geography of that housing—the writing or constitution of its world—with its mirrors made of sand; its crackers and pillows, its modes of reproduction, metabolic functions and gendered distribution of emotional and material labour. Take such geography not as the expression of an intricate ongoing assemblage, but as the *ongoing itself*, as a constant permutation, with the maintenance, repair and shifts needed to keep it going. Consider the geography of that housing as the tumultuous (re)surfacing of arborescent networks, not lingering just right below the surface of its "damn walls", but running horizontally throughout such surfaces.

The house is the immanent instantiation of all of these networks, but also, and at the same time, the device, which, by design, exposes only a fraction of those networks. After all,

our respective cultures have largely asked us to treat the house as a "shelter from the storm"—a place of respite and stability in the midst of conditions difficult to read and control. We are to treat it as a locus of stability, or more importantly as materializing the capacity to exert some kind of effective authority over at least a circumscribed space of our daily operations. So, in this respect the house cannot "give everything away"—it is both designed and authorized not to reveal the full extent of its operating procedures.

Yet, at the same time, in its resonance with the volatilities of exterior events and sites, it must also become "the storm" itself, in a play of both dissimulation and accommodation, as it "storms" its way onto the scene. For the inhabitants of the house cannot simply settle in to fixed arrangements and practices, no matter how these might abound. They must also proliferate points of exposure to all of those matters that the house might otherwise deflect, in a universe more complex and expansive than anything on the "outside." This is because the house does not have the luxury of an expansive spatializing of its external articulations; they must be represented in a condensed form, which overdetermines or overcodes what each word, gesture, or behavior might mean. In its tumultuous geography, the thing of the house is as truthful as much as an exposed image can be, and therefore also "unfaithfully thin," because there is always and at any time much more going on than what one 'sees'.

As we will discuss in a moment, some have looked at the ways in which the thing of the house plays, mediates and affects definitions and understanding of 'housing' and its geographies of lived experience. Yet, such a speculative terrain of thinking has often been lost in favor of other kinds of structural analysis, which have to do *with* the thing of the house (think, here, of its financialisation) but rarely are centered *from* the house itself. We argue that thinking from the house, in trying to understand *how its material and affective presence engenders the relations it is made part of*, could bear significance for other experiential and structural analyses concerned with the (un)just geographies of housing in contemporary racial capitalism. Visuality is just one of the possible prisms through which thinking from the house might be activated, which we choose here for its relevance. It is indeed at the relational level of the 'visual' where the 'house' is made to perform—by governments and markets—in order to generate a specific, often biopolitical, promise of habitation for the many.

The article poses a speculative problem: what can be gained, in terms of a critical thinking of habitation regimes, in addressing 'housing' from the angle of visuality? The house in itself might not see us, and might not see the geographies of habitation it comes to play in. However, that same thing, the house, does bear great significance on what we humans do see, and therefore constructs understanding about housing and its geographies of lived experience. It is clear that every kind of exposure—the act of rendering something visual—is always a partial affair, a negotiation between technical regimes and light. Yet, such a negotiation is not just a prescript, a technicality, but a spatio-temporal construct, a mediation. If we consider that the house never just sees or is seen, but engenders the way we see and deal with it through its materiality and affective charge, then it follows that such engendering can only be a construct as well. Meaning, the engendering emerges from the expositions housing allows through its constant surfacing, its becoming apparent in the midst of multiplicities of matters and troubles. Literatures and organising show us how, in contemporary racial financial capitalism, housing struggles are formed through dispossessive histories and geographies. Here, we query how these enter into play in the visual engendering just described. For if the visual realm is as much a construct as any other housing matter, finding a grammar to tap into its workings might become handy when its violent outcomes come to the fore. What is reproduced in the visual regimes of housing? What is offered and taken anyway? What might never be seen, and by whom?

In asking these questions, we offer a lateral move from the canon of housing and urban scholarship, following the artist and curator Olivier Marboeuf in his invitation to read and feel the world "via the fluid parts of the map [...] rather than interpreting [it] from the solid perspective – the continents and frontiers" (Marboeuf, 2020). When it comes to our concerns, this means to displace the centrality of housing as the unit—of analysis, of policy, of policing, of belonging—and to forefront the fluidity of its multiple geographies via, one unexplored register, the visual. Our contribution is to signal how regimes of the visible, largely underexplored in the housing justice scholarship, do matter for those inhabiting dispossession and those struggling against it. For if things cannot ever be entirely visible, the loaded ways in which housing comes into play in the visual realm do affect the ways in which housing is not only seen in the present, but also envisioned in its promise of future habitation. Here we offer a tentative analytic to question these *dispossessed exposures*: the (en)visioning of homely futures that are deprived, already in the social construct of seeing with the house what is seen and by whom, the possibility of radical care for and of habitation.

We begin with some preliminary problems pertaining to the epistemologies of housing, as well as to visibility and its regimes. We move then to a reading of the thing of the house beyond aesthetics, advancing a methodological proposition around *dispossessed exposure*s. These ideas are unpacked through a reflection on two films, Ladj Ly's *Les Misérables* and Fanny Liatard and Jérémy Trouihl's *Gagarine*. The coda will signal the possible contributions this line of reasoning bears for housing justice scholarship.

Housing as operation

Traditionally, housing scholarship has primarily been interested in the problem of delivery and 'policy'. In recent years this has changed, with more and more scholars looking into a variegated set of issues, from critical readings of its political economy, including its financialised aspects, to renewed interest on housing struggle and related social organising. Under the umbrella of 'radical housing scholarship', and 'housing justice scholarship', a new form of doing 'housing studies' has gradually emerged. In problematising a reading of housing as an issue to be fixed or as a solution to a dwelling problem, scholars are concerned with three intersecting questions.

The first has to do with the wider foundational problem of housing regimes not only as the prime 'fixer' of capitalist flows, but crucially also of longstanding forms of racial and gendered dispossession, and how those are fundamentally accelerated by contemporary financial capitalism (McElroy, 2020; Rolnik, 2019; Roy, 2017). Secondly, renewed attention has been posed on notions of 'home' (Lancione, 2023) and on experiential narratives of homing (Nassar et al., 2023), including when homing is uprooted in eviction (Baker, 2021; Brickell et al., 2017; Cacciotti, 2024). These notions and narrative are read processually and genealogically connected to historic processes of coloniality (Handel and Kotef, 2023; Nethercote, 2022; Rusenko, 2020), state violence (Brickell, 2020), planning and regeneration processes (Fawaz, 2017; Ferreri, 2020; Wang, 2020; Watt, 2021), extended forms of urbanisation (Bathla, 2022; Castriota, 2024), sex work (Morpurgo 2024) and racialising processes (Quizar, 2022; Rodriguez 2021). In these readings, housing is taken as a starting point to question wider forms of injustice, in a move that recalls what radical housing justice activists have practiced already for decades. Thirdly, a certain kind of methodology for housing justice research has emerged, one advocating the need to focus *study* as part of *acting*, and to do so by staying with (a problem and a place) rather than simply deliberating about it. This is a crucial aspect of a certain kind of committed—or emplaced, to use

Ananya Roy's term—kind of housing justice scholarship: one that works with the communities and the struggles it is concerned with, not to replicate an activist posture but to serve a commonly defined purpose (Roy et al., 2020).

Our concern in reapproaching the visual-epistemological question of housing aims to contribute to these latest trends. This is all the more important if one considers a quest for housing justice as bearing meaning for habitational justice at large—one encompassing the 'house' as conventionally 'seen'. At this juncture, it is important to refocus what housing can do for habitation, and what indeed is already doing. Understanding its financialised economics, working for new epistemologies on homing and evictions, as well as questioning the doings—and advancing new ones—of housing justice scholarship are all fundamental contributions. But further and more elusive intersections can be explored.

Scholarship is moving in this sense, albeit largely outside of the conventional remit of 'housing' and 'urban' fields. Works questioning housing via the foundational point of what it means to care and for whom, in inhabiting the extended grounds of the household, is an example of such work (Thompson, 2022). The contribution here lies in the capacity of these relational and intersectional approaches to expand the conceptual and political terrain of 'the concern for housing' through, for instance, a critique of racialised community policing (Dozier, 2019) or a critique of the "shadows of social life" and the spectrality of very real urban and habitational racial violence (Best and Ramírez, 2021). Another salient example is the quest to understand how the "coming home" of people confronted with Oil Palm plantations in West Papua (Indonesia) is bounded to the "silence and screams" of the "mono-time of homogeneous growth on the polytemporal rhythms of the forest" (Chao, 2023). But also, it entails the question of how language—how things are named and identified—comes into play in defining the contours of what counts as housing and for whom, as shown by the community-based work of the After Echo Park Lake Research Collective in LA (2022).

Looking at what kind of subjecthoods are (re)produced by the financialised abstraction of the household is also another example of these kind of works, as evident in the research on the Spanish context of Melissa García-Lamarca, where housing is not mobilised simply as the locus of the financial, but as the hinge through which mortgaged lives are reworked throughout (2022). In another vein, the work of tracing how non-human ecologies are flattening the most fundamental borderscape of housing (the creation of the human/nature divide, Kaika, 2004) comes to bear interesting reflections of what it means to be 'alive' in the city, where, for instance, flows of human-life and mosquito-life are interwoven and manage the everyday of reproductive life within and beyond the household (Acevedo-Guerrero, 2022), or particles of dust emerging from the production of the estate engender the reproduction of dispossessed subjects and urban landscapes (Noterman, 2023). The affective and material grounds produced by housing offer other interesting viewpoints. For instance, expressions of housing, such as those generated by density investigated by Chen and McFarlane (2023) in Hong Kong, are a means to query the materiality of overcrowded dwellings not just as an experiential condition, or a challenge to be solved, but as producers of far more extensive and troublesome geographies of livelihood.

These accounts are very different. Yet, it is their perspective that we find intriguing: it is about questioning the extent of the geographies of housing by seeing the house not, or not only, as the end point or the container of a number of relations, but as the analytical starting point to question how, through extended spatialities and temporalities worked out by the house, wider questions of habitability come to the fore. The conceptual grammars at play in this emergent housing and urban justice scholarship are nuanced, elusive and unconventional. Their speculative work plays through a variety of registers—of radical care, shadows,

ghosts, silences and screams, semantics, financialised embodiments, biological spillovers, mosquitoes, dust and the smell of density. All question, from the grounds of housing, prevailing modes of urban habitability. Building on all of the above, we are concerned with the expansiveness of housing as a material, epistemic and political matter of our time. How to think of the house both as a recipient of processes—a right, a struggle, a fixer, an asset—and as a process in itself? What kind of intersections can come to the fore, by looking at habitation from housing?

Beginning this speculative query from the matter of the visual allows for a number of intriguing questions. How are regimes of visibility—and related questions of what is visible to whom under which circumstances—constructed not simply for or around, but *from* the house? Can a house see? What lies not behind, but throughout, the surfacing of household material arrangements and processes, if one considers these as surfaces building-up things beyond their apparent self? How are these "built up things" engendered by the visual regimes of the thing of the house? In this sense, can the workings of exposure, in dispossessive regimes of habitability, allow us to think through the power-geometries structuring that "place we call home" (Massey, 1994)? Where the matter of home is not just as actant or mediator, but a thing, a flesh, a lively geography of the housing political?

In taking up the problem of exposure and visibility, we are reapproaching the thing of the house as a matter of exposed, underexposed and invisible strata where (in)human relationships come to be defined as collective subjects, or arrangements, within the rule-book of contemporary capitalism and its needs. Weinstein and Colebrook have specified that such a perspective requires not just the attention to non-human capacities, but to consider threatening problems as "disruptions of an actualized field" (2017: xxi). For us asking the question of the regimes of visibility of the thing of the 'house' works in the same vein: it is a tentative move through the stiff recursive idea of treating housing as a receptacle of analysis, or the passage point of structures and processes (Guattari, 2013).

Seeing is being seen

We understand regimes of visibility as fields of contention. Following Brighenti, one can say that such regimes have to do with what affects visibility, whether it is a matter of cultural, social or technical arrangements (Brighenti, 2015). Crucially for us, such 'arrangements' pertain both to things and beings, and have to do with the specific process of exposure through which images become visible and can be seen. In photography, exposure is the amount of light reaching the frame of the photographic film, or the electronic sensor. Similarly, one can say that exposure pertains to the animal eye as well—by coding light through the lens (cornea), the iris, all the way to brain through the optic nerve. If in the digital camera the sensor splits light in a number of Bayer patterns in order to reproduce pixelated colours, the photoreceptors cells in our human's retinas provide for a similar passage point for, and reassembling of, information.

Closing and opening the eye, as well as playing with time, aperture and ISO sensitivity, allow some degree of control on how these infrastructures of perception are exposed to light and capture the information brought with it. Yet, exposure can also be understood more generally as "the fact of being affected by something because of being in a particular situation or place" (Cambridge Online Dictionary). Such a definition does not detract anything from the mechanics just described. But it allows for decentring the conscious perception of the final image (the final product to which 'vision' is often implicitly reduced to), to focus instead on the affect of being in visual interaction—i.e., the performance of becoming part of a regime of visibility, of the coming into vision.

It is clear that an enquiry around the regime of the visible of housing must not reduce the latter as a mere mediator of human vision. We therefore ask: can one say that the house sees because it engenders regimes of the visual? A positive answer would require for the house to possess what we might call an 'affective vision', because it is capable, by design, to effect power on the visual field it is part of. If the house gives rise to a particular way of seeing, then what processes of exposure and filtration does it mobilize and connect with in order to establish a "regime?" In such a reading "seeing" transcends anthropomorphic experience, yet bears an effect upon it.

A vitalist reading of experience helps to unpack this point further. Following Stengers, experience here is not read "in terms of knowledge, consciousness or perception, but [...] in terms of creative self-determination with respect to something else" (2008: 103). According to her, such self-determination has nothing to do with will or consciousness, but it has to do with what Whitehead terms 'occasions', or single entities of becoming, which can turn into event if they are part of an organised whole (a society, a body). Experience, and therefore seeing, is the name we give to a moment of such collective formation: it is the creative determination of a field of action. In our case, the regime of the visible of housing—where parties, which include humans as well as brick and mortars, *affect* the "creative self-determination" experientially called *seeing* (Anderson, 2023). Like the old spiritual, "I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I *see*." The song points to the creation of an event, an act of exposure to a particular coming together of a world, and an alignment of self to world that creates the possibility of seeing, where seeing is more than simply a matter of ocular mechanics.

Crucial to such line of argument is to define the capacity of the house to "see"—as in being part of a visual field of action—in a non-ocularcentric way. One way to approach this is to get closer to Paolo Virilio's machine blindness; what Luciana Parisi has expanded upon in terms of negative opticality pertaining to artificial computation and machine learning. According to Parisi, the machine sees without light, through a "programmed perception that is no longer based on observation and reflection of the object observed" but through the "feedback function of algorithms" that "incorporates the world in terms of input data through which the world is predicted and acted upon in anticipation of its happenings" (Parisi, 2021: 1281). Though Parisi does not frame such negative vision in the following way, her line of argument suggests that the programmed perception of the machine can be understood as a generative bouncing-back of what the machine is asked to see (through its input data, mediated by its computational capacity, it sees more of what it is asked to see). This line of enquiry opens up the possibility of imagining a form of (en)visioning that still requires the formation of an experience—Stenger's self-determination with respect to something else—but breaks clear with the viewing, conscious, subject and its "metaphysics of representation" (Parisi, 2021: 1281). This is a process that has little in common with the *exposure* to light, but more to do with its *subtraction*, yet nonetheless becomes a form of representational practice:

> [i]f the gaze and its mediatic extensions remain a tool for unveiling the other to impart, extend, consolidate the self-determination of the transcendental eye/I, negative optics instead stays with the unsubstantial, unformed, unvalued dimensions of matter, a practice of subtracting light from the surface of the image in which the self-determining gaze continues to mirror himself. (Parisi, 2021: 1282)

The speculative exercise here is not to draw a parallel between the computer and the house, even though, with the increased automation of homely functions under the

(whitening and classist) diagram of smartness, such a parallel could indeed be possible. The question is neither about knowing if the house sees, nor to attempt at seeing like a house. But it is to query how the assemblage of the house constructs regimes of visibility that in relation to our own "enlightened visibility" render some things visible, while occluding others. Does housing bear an affective capacity to enter into the field of the action of seeing, a capacity to probe *from its own matter* affective visions with their relative if only partially intelligible imaginaries? In so far as our enlightened visibility plays a role in the structuring of visuality, such a role is co-defined with the material and affective charge of the thing of the house. For it is not just that we see an imaginary and a materiality of the household mediated by matter (Appadurai, 2015), but it is that *the entire relational field of (en)visioning the household, and its promise of habitation, is not just our own.*

When we look at the house right in front of us, it is not just an encounter with light coming through our cornea into our respective optic nerves, then flipped into our occipital lobes and cognitively connected to our respective systems of representation. At a more fundamental level, in looking at the house we are engaging in a field of vision where we are looked back at and, crucially, where the house shows us only what it constitutively is designed to show us. It also shows us whatever the alignment of things extended in the process of seeing allows us to "see". For we may assume that in order for the design and materiality of the house to organize a field of vision that it must incorporate, affiliate and condense a wide range of events, actors, and processes. But in doing so, it puts them together in such a way as to implicitly foreground particular relations of "production" and to keep others in the background. In order words, this is a production of visuality that is founded upon the subtraction of what is not and might not get exposed. For the relations coming together to play in a regime of the visible are seldom smooth or uncontested; they embody so many intricate stories of blood, sweat and tears, so many other possibilities that could have taken place, that now in some respects become faceless. Hence, the working of an inherent form of *dispossessed exposure* in how the thing of the house makes itself visible in the seeing.

In respect to our human enlightened viewpoint, the thing of the house partakes in seeing because it intervenes in the possibility of our (en)visioning of the homely, and its relative elongations. What is revealed and what is obscured in this interplay go beyond and stay close to the cultural representations of the 'household' driving our cognitive maps, in the sense that the latter are both independent from and structured around the capacity of the house to see us and the world back. Here the point is not of a vision that produces forms of intelligible meaning—in a process similar to computer vision technologies to acquire, process or produce visual representations. Rather, it is a vision that affects the production of regimes of visibility and imaginaries, as it renders, discloses, unfolds, occludes, reveals, displays or withdraws, on the basis of the dispossessive ecological, technical, cultural and economical freight of the regimes it inhabits.

Our argument is that such an emergent, vitalist regime of visibility constructs the geography of housing in an interplay of unconscious exposures, which, however, tend to be based on and therefore replicate the dispossessive ground they come from. Where things are seen and by whom provide for a functional form of 'a' (homely) fold, where habitation might take place for some but not for others. This is not the only thing that takes place in defining such a fold—indeed, it is one of the complementary things going along with, and being structured around the various political and ecological economies of the matter of housing. Yet, such co-constitutive envisioning is there and it pertains to a politics of how meaning is made and traded. It is about how things are rendered intelligible and for whom.

The superficial work of exposure

In being designed as a foreclosure of the world out there, or at least a filter or defining mediation, the house ends up constituting that world too. As Escobar would have it, we design the house, and the house design us back (2018). Not only in the usual sense of making-us-feel in a particular way, but in the experiential sense outlined above: of allowing for forms of (en)visioning to emerge from the regime of visibility that the house affects. Its way of seeing is about the process through which the house projects its own affective vision, and how humans negotiate with that, largely in unconscious and selective ways. In focusing on the affective capacity of seeing and of being seen of the thing of the house, we are interested in the "co-performance of meaning" (Lompe and Wicher, 2020) activated in such a process. For, we believe, ultimately, such a meaning-negotiation and meaning-production enable acceptable definitions of 'habitability' and the relative anthropocentric, patriarchal, heteronormative, racialized and classist affective and political economy of 'home' (Lancione, 2023).

A point of departure consists in displacing overarching aesthetic concerns that seem to be part of the problem of (en)visioning a different kind of home. In a sense, our interest here is different from a reading of the house as an aesthetic object, and to related regimes of housing justice as "political" à-la Rancière. We are not necessarily saying that such a reading might not be possible, but simply that our interest lies in the surfacing of the object(s) of the house as a thing producing things, as a relation extending a whole set of relational geographies—not just as an object of something else. Politically, in terms of housing and habitation justice, the crucial difference lies in focusing on the struggle for particular distributions of what is perceived as sensible (the Rancièrian argument), to the attempt at exploring how the house relationally computes the envisioning of habitable presents and futures on the basis of a genealogy of instructions inscribed in it. In this context, "politics", and the "housing political", are *not* defined exclusively in a Rancièrian way around the problem of "what can be seen and what can be said about it" or around the question of "who has the ability to see and the talent to speak" (Rancière, 2004; Tolia-Kelly, 2019: 129). If these matter, we want to expand by arguing that in vitalist regimes of visibility, where no overarching understanding on what must be seen and by whom is ever really possible, and where the lingering struggles of assembling seeing unfold in the foreground, what counts as "just" is worked out also in unconscious and unannounced ways.

Side-lining aesthetics does not mean to walk away from what seems visible in housing, but it invites for a different way of staying closer to what comes to the fore as visible. Notions of surface(s) and surfacing can be helpful in this sense. Speaking of the surface of the house implies both a form of superficiality and an expectation that something must be going on beneath, and therefore that something must be disclosed in the third dimension. But what if, as Fred Moten has put it, "to speak of the depth of surface is not automatically to speak of a third dimension?" (Moten, 2021). What if, enquiring into the regime of visibility of housing one does not need to excavate, but instead one needs to travel horizontally, and to trace connections throughout the extended surfacing of housing, without ever leaving it? For, without doing so would incur the risk of leaving the only possible ground of shared action where the affective vision of the thing of the house might be rendered relationally intelligible.

Such staying close to the surface of housing must not translate into an ethnographic fetish, nor the endless description of assemblage. To be relevant for the exploration of the regimes of visibility of housing, and of the dispossessed envisioning they reproduce, the practice of *surfacing* must intersect with the notion of *exposure* presented earlier. To explore

the functioning of exposure—what is made visible to whom under what circumstances—it is necessary to practice surfacing. In exposure, processes are computed in two concomitant ways: (a) they are concretised spatially, in the sense of their landing an assemblage of material experience (on the brain, on the film, on the sensor), (b) while being worked out temporally. This is what pertains to all forms of seeing. The camera, the eye, the algorithm, have to expose information—light, the absence of light, data—for a certain time in order to obtain a certain result. Such is "*the exposure time that allows or edits seeing*" (Virilio, 1994: 61) (emphasis in the original). In being confronted with the house, time is crucial in the field of action going on between what we see and how we are seen. What temporalities does a surface visibilise, and which does not? And then, what kind of extended materialities—political economies, affections, cultures—do surfaces emergent from the thing of the house bring to the fore, and which ones do not?

For exposure is about impressing. But impressing is not just about showing: rather, its substance has to do with a process of carving out and eluding. Even if what is not rendered is unexposed, what is not rendered is still held in a formal external relationship to exposure. Such a process entails both occlusion and inclusion, in the sense narrated by Da Silva in relation to the expulsion of the economic character of enslaved labour in narrations of enslavement through materialist and ethical registers (Da Silva, 2014). Histories are rendered visible in their invisibilization—namely, in the selective expulsion operated at the heart of their appropriation. To follow Da Silva, a "violent analytical gesture" consistently "reproduce(s) the occlusion (the closing to consideration at the level of the concept) of the colonial (juridic, economic, symbolic) architectures for the expropriation of the productive capacity (the productive potential) of occupied lands and enslaved bodies." (2014: 3). We take this not just as an illustration of one of the occluding operations of regimes of the visible pertaining to housing. Rather, in speaking of *dispossessed exposures* we consider it a foundational gesture, given such regimes are currently founded throughout racialised histories and processes of ongoing extraction grounded in racial proprietorship (Byrd et al., 2018).

An exemplification of such a reading can be found in the novels of Toni Morrison. There, the house is not only a material designation, not only a life's container, material affordance or burden. But it is a vast surface of complicated connections and abruptions. These range from the house being the only thing that individuals have that might be theirs, but in a nexus of property relations that constantly foretell its prospective *loss*. It is the plane of ghosts and spirits, of intermixtures of bitterness and joy that cannot be parsed out, an infrastructure of constant rehearsals for holding on, recreating the bare threads that exist across multiple homelands and expulsions. It is a tornado of mixed-up memories and emotions all attempting to crowd each other out or maximize their exposure to possible futures that come to be liferafts of salvation. Interiors are turned inside out in order to defer any curiosity about what might lie within, as exterior walls are folded inwards to upend commitments to particular arrangements of kin and enemy. Opening out and folding in are constantly modulated because Black life is unable to sit still even if it wanted to, and as such exposing must be carefully thought out, prayed and fought over every step of the way—because it is part and parcel of the dispossessive habitation it seeks to escape, of the beyond it only partially can see.

So, what does the house expose in dispossession, in its occlusions, and by design? What is gained in surfacing a wall? Multiple ecologies of life are extended throughout its thresholds. Circulations of energies run through it. Their elongations render global geopolitical ecologies and economies of extraction and value-creation possible, reveal the lingering ghosts of past inhabitants and workers perished in construction, as well as the layers of dust and

microbes and spirits. What surfaces through walls connected one to another are marketed as *housing*? There are the financialised regimes of proprietorship and derivative value-creation. Unspoken affections, including forms of control, domestic violence, division of labours arenot just contained by, but run through the surfacing of housing and its multiple operations. It is not that one is not aware of the tail end of some of these things. We do face decay; broken infrastructures reveal themselves; an interest rate moves from fix to variable. The house is replete with the affection of dark places or moving shades; the signs of patriarchal 'love'. It is about asking how housing exposes these things at different tempos and modalities, always by occluding the visioning of their, and other, arborescent elongations, but while maintaining a fundamental relations to those in order for such exposing to work. What emerges from this regime of power is a contemporary manageable form of habitation, constitutively linked up with the obscuring and the reduction of possible regimes of alternative (en)visioning.

If the question is an epistemological one—how dwellers come to know housing—the answer also revolves around how regimes of the visible are negotiated from the house itself. In such a regime of visuality, humans and non-humans are not only seen, but do take co-part in the chorale of seeing. As much as one sees only what one is given to see, what is given still provides possibilities for further concealment and work. This is where thinking through visuality might allow for another standpoint to articulate how the housing justice question is worked out in practice. It is as if in the play of seeing the house, in order to make sense of it and of its capacity to foster habitation, dwellers have to constantly rub against its surface—to get down and dirty with it, to constantly put a fix on something that slips and slides from one's apprehension, one's grasp. It is not that the inhabitant 'knows' what they 'see', but rather that *their seeing emerges from the experience of creating a collective visibility from the thing of the house*.

Urban dwellers at the tail end of dispossession engage in a constant work of reworking what can be seen, how it is seen, and how meanings of habitation (and uninhabitability) are constructed, negotiated, and contested. These are stories that must be told according to their colonial past and present, their dispossessive racial grounds, as well as by paying attention to current neoliberal forms of local governance and financialised predatory projects. But there are also everyday spaces where all of the above must be dealt with, facing the violence of the dispossessed present, but also proposing an embodied sense of direction, for such a dealing. Visuality is another register to explore how the 'inhabiting' of unjust housing comes to the fore, how it is performed by engaging the extended geographies of housing, an engagement which alters the composition of their visibility. Such a work of surfacing matters in the ongoing workings of how geographies of housing get exposed, and by whom. We now turn to two recent films of estates in the Parisian banlieue that we use to further illustrate these processes—Ladj Ly's *Les Misérables* and Fanny Liatard and Jérémy Trouihl's *Gagarine*.

Regimes of power, regimes of the visible

Ly's film is set in Les Bosquets estate of Montfermei, where Ly grew up. It is mostly centered on the sensibilities and practices of three cops in the Street Crimes Unit, whose job is to circulate by car through the district, making their presence felt in largely hit and run interdictions of both normal and nefarious activities, rendering even the most innocent manifestations of child's play or simply waiting for a bus indicative of potentially criminal behavior. For one of the three cops, Stéphane, this is his first day on the job, and new to Paris, basically plays things by the book, while at the other extreme, is a brutish sort, Chris,

who talks nonstop and disparagingly about every resident and is only ever momentarily reined in by the assuredness of the third, Gwada, a black cop, whose mother lives in the estate. Chris likes to pull up to young girls at bus stops and smell their fingers for weed in an act of sexual intimidation. And when the girls try to film it, he grabs the phone and throws it to the ground. Here, the key thing is that you can get away with almost anything as long as it is not recorded.

This raises the question of what is available to be recorded. Clearly, the police see the estate as a "broken record", simply repeating the purported incapacities of its residents to inhabit the affordances provided. Yet the film often assumes a point of view from "nowhere" that amplifies the synchronicities of domestic situations taking place in individual units as if some tacit form of behavioral coordination is taking place across the estate that exceeds the assessments of individual functionalities which otherwise constitute a disciplinary project. The designers and managers of the estate may have envisioned how the households in residence and the possible relations among them were composed, and who would inevitably rub each other the wrong way. But the structuring of uniform spaces and the presumptions of its homogenizing force instead operated as a constant process of scratching, picking at, and rubbing the ways households represented themselves, effacing and erasing the pretence of stable boundaries.

While residents might try to mitigate the degree to which their intimacies and anxieties were exposed to each other, and where housing apparatuses might have imagined that the generic character of the estate would expose residents to the diligence and self-management needed to be fully incorporated as productive citizens, the buildings also exposed residents to the possibilities of dissimulation. Here, the particularities of household backgrounds and situations, instead of being flattened, actually had room to operate, to operate against the material and social constraints. As such, the generic appearance enabled things to leave their mark. What troubles the police is that the supposedly transparent compartmentalization of units did not do its "job." It did not make things "visible", not to them. Instead of providing legibility to who is "normal" or not, the profusion of everyday enactments of ordinariness—families in the kitchens, in front of televisions—was often able to absorb a fluidity of interchanges and complementarity among neighbors, which in turn produced a generative turbulence. Saying it otherwise: it is the following of the surfaces which enables inhabitants to conceal and make apparent, and actually materially and visually rework what is made visible to whom under which circumstances on the basis of the violated ground they have been givenas their habitat.

Instead of simply affirming the resilience of residents in face of the volatile conditions occasioned by this form of residency or the deployment of volatility as an omnipresent condition that consumes the energies of residents, there is a collectively self-produced turbulence. This turbulence is very much about practices of over- and under-exposing the material and affective qualities of place. It unsettles the mutating terms of French internal colonialism, constantly relinking social and economic relations across territories, constantly recalibrating the calculus of explosive and implosive trajectories of influence, affect, and politics. The surfacing of these elongations, and staying with their presence, is key in this form of reworking the house horizontally, through its extended formations. Through those, a co-constituted *experience* of what can be exposed and how comes to the fore from the house and its households.

What seems to be an almost carceral form of socialization—which undoubtedly these estates are—also exudes a proximity of distances, as most of these household units are situated "somewhere else", whether it is a colonial memory, diasporic economy, or simply an incessant exchange of phone calls "overseas." Experiencing this is a matter of what

one could call *overseeing*, an act that is managerial—that tacit synchronization cited earlier. But it is also a seeing that is over in both the sense of a coming to an end of the building's disciplinary project but also a way in which residents seem to always be looking beyond the immediacy of any situation. The way they are already gone, as if the generic household unit registers its multiple exposures to systematic wounding and, at the same time, the playfulness and exuberance of being surrounded by the thousands of stories residents implicitly create together.

The film does depict all of the toing and froing of everyday life, the kids tobogganing on a concrete embankment, the interweaving of speculation and necessity in the local market, the sly, respectful and weary efforts of the real local authorities who try to find common ground among antagonists, and the constant repurposing of what is available for other uses. One gets the sense that things could get out of hand at any time, yet, for the most part they don't, revealing a tacit resourcefulness on the part of a deeply fractured and multiple collective. Clearly, the cops need Les Bosquets more than it needs them. The cops suspect that things are not what they seem to be, that vast conspiracies and subterfuges are built into the very fabric of residence, but where there is little evidence of this occluded matter. Of course, there are fights, acts of violence, screaming matches and indifference—all to be expected from anyone living in such close proximity to each other. But the police are seldom able to detect the operations they are most afraid of, and by the film's end they are literally stumbling their way in the non-computed—and, from their sight, uncomputable—dark.

Perhaps this is why they get frantic when an event occurs that could fundamentally disrupt this dependency. Buzz, a somewhat nerdy looking teenager, likes to assemble and deploy drones from the rooftop of his building, mostly to spy on girls his own age across the complex. One day, the drone accidentally captures a scene where the cops are pursuing a youth, Issa, who is wanted for questioning in a theft. Issa is unintentionally killed in this pursuit by a flashbang when the cops are confronted by an angry group of kids. Despite whatever ameliorative steps at restoring a moral balance to the situation are taken by Stéphane and Gwada, upon learning that the situation has been filmed by the drone, Chris is obsessed with recovering the memory card and obliterating the evidence. This leads to a final violent conflagration within the stairwells of the estate, an event which within minutes would seem to wipe out all of the hard work residents exert to both maintain an infuriated resistance to marginalization and the pragmatic pursuit of everyday deals and small resolutions necessary to give some space of maneuver to everyone. Here, the estate becomes apocalypse. But in part this is because the police are determined to get at some kind of secret they imagine situated "deep inside" the buildings. But that secret is only a further exposition of the violent habitability they occasion.

The other film, *Gagarine*, takes place in the renowned Cité Gargarine in Ivry-sur-Seine, built by the Communist Party in 1961, named after the Russian cosmonaut, and then demolished in 2019. The trajectory of the estate basically mirrored the fortunes of the party, which in the end proved unable to sustain the estate and its model of socialist progress. In the film, a black youth, Yuri, lives alone, his mother and younger brother having decamped into a new domestic situation where he was not welcome. Yuri, his long-time friend, Houssam, and Diana, a Romani with whom he would eventually fall in love, canvass nearby warehouses for disused equipment that could be retrofitted into the dilapidating spaces of the estate in order to ward off the prospective demolition. But despite their skilled efforts, they are not enough to prevent unforeseen accidents from emerging during official inspections. The complex is sealed, residents, who long have taken good care of each other, move away, and only Yuri and a hapless low-level drug dealer Dali, both with nowhere else

to go, are left to forage their way through the interior obstacle courses to maintain some foothold within their apartments.

All during the inspection procedures, residents attempted to do something, whether it was introducing new lighting or rewiring the elevators. Yuri and his friends rummaged through a vast warehouse of "refuse", which turns out to be what they call a graveyard of other social housing projects—all of the metal, lights, motors and so forth still in excellent shape, implying that there is more value to all of the various parts of such housing than the house itself. Despite the efforts at repair, the wear and tear, abetted by years of underfinancing, was read as the increasing dysfunctionality of the household. After all, Yuri appears to have been abandoned by his family, and both public and domestic spaces are ridden with different forms of trafficking—from drugs to pernicious rumors and claims, as well as a racialized politics of who is eligible for better housing. Some residents are lured into the inevitability of things being over, as others try to get "over" on the different administrative agencies that seem to suddenly rediscover that they have a role in the viability of the buildings.

There are only a few, then, that seem to have a vision on the larger urban conditions that are salient—the churning turnovers of use in other spaces surrounding Gagarine, which are now available to "illegitimate" settlements and uses and are objects of speculation at different scales. There are moments when the film seems to amplify the sense that there is nothing wrong with Gagarine in its own terms; from the surface, things seem structurally sound, or at least recuperable with some serious retrofitting. At the same time, the film seems to suggest that the building sees its demise coming—as it "invites" its residents to rediscover a sense of conviviality that might see them through new circumstances. But in the end, according to "Report 1641D", the fatal structural problems remain invisible to even the heightened acuity of residents. Issues of subsidence, dust levels over 25 parts per thousand, asbestos contamination and persistent failures of the evacuation system result in the expert's recommendations that the buildings be demolished.

Yuri is an autodidact who seems to know everything about astral matters, electricity, plumbing, and computing. He puts this knowledge to work as the demolition crews proceed to ready the estate for its eventual collapse, turning it into a kind of "outer space", even more unfit for inhabitation than before. Watching old videos of space capsules occupied by astronauts, Yuri realizes that endurance in these conditions means breaking up the integrity of the domestic unit. Smashing through walls and moving laterally across the complex, he mobilizes his skills to turn previously unrelated rooms into some kind of elongated self-sufficient space. Using the model of the International Space Station as his guide, he elicits previously undetected affordances from a building that is being walled up and decommissioned, constructing a complete environmental support system—but before constructing, crucially envisioning it from the place of the house, from its geographies of matters and affects, exposing the impossible possibilities contained in them.

This serves as a platform for the unfolding love story with Diana, a relationship expressed through the wondrous sensualities opened up by the making of a new habitable world in the immanent ruins of once was, and with a sense of expansiveness offered by the liminality of a building emptied of residents but yet holding all of their collective dreams and memories. Mounting a giant crane, whose functions are ambiguous here—is it a tool of construction or destruction—Yuri hesitates, afraid of the heights being scaled. But Diana blindfolds him so that he neither looks up nor down, and upon reaching the small driver's cabin at the top removes the folds revealing to both, for the first time, a "total image" of the *Gagarine* complex in the nocturnal quiet.

Unlike Ly's film which pointed to all of the practices of "real management" effected on a day-to-day level in face of residents' rage, economic precarity, plural compositions, and

excessive policing, *Gagarine* re-envisions the estate as a potential utopia. Like all utopias, an inordinate sacrifice is demanded, and Yuri nearly perishes as the former residents assemble one last time to witness the demolition. Yuri has somehow managed to completely rewire the charges intended for demolition into a vast morse coder signalling one last time the aspirations once embodied by the estate as a platform for a new life. It is not simply that all of the residents are gathered one last time to *see* the definitive end of their former homes, but rather that the building is "gathered" to see them, to acknowledge the significance of their collective lives now largely absent to each other. Just how it has managed to see is not clear, for the proceeding minutes of the film render Yuri, the consummate technician, more as a phantasmagorical creature—someone possessed by the building itself for this final, consummate performance. The seeing, here as in *Les Misérables*, is a collective experience—a "creative self-determination in respect of something else"—of what has been occluded in showing demolition: a project of habitation invisibilised, yet kept present by those who have surfaced through it.

   Finally, the films themselves are housing surfacings rendered intelligible (and unintelligible) through a collective process of 'seeing'. Exposure works here across elongated time and space, given the power of the film to store a representation of a visual regime. Critique in relation to the stigmatizing power of image, when it comes to popular neighbourhoods, is abundant and clear. But bringing back that critique into the conversation of how regimes of visuality affect the *imagination* around housing futures and concerning—in the contexts above, how and for whom housing can be made visible and when is rarer. This is especially the case for Geography and Urban Studies, loaded with material preoccupations and structures, but less attentive to the workings of the imaginary. The *pellicula* does not simply represent stigmatised houses and their demolished promise of habitation. It exposes those promises in their occlusion, retaining a connection with the materiality of their surfacing precisely by making it impossible to show it in full. These films, to say it otherwise, do not resolve the image of place, they do not show its fix, they are not a plan, but stay with its multiple open trouble, which is also of hope and project. By staying closer to the surfacing of the lives they expose, they go right back into the meaning, knowledge, and therefore the politics of (un)knowing place.

Coda

At the encounter between our ways of seeing and what the house makes visible, occluding everything else, a fold of habitation emerges. By fold, we specifically conjoin site, modality, potentiality and time. In such a fold, there is little perception of intricate dispossessed temporalities and spatialities. Homely surfaces of concrete won't reveal political ecologies of sand; they won't reveal the racial financial logics backing the mortgages rendering proprietorship possible; they are laid out in such a way to reinforce division of gendered labours, and don't show how much state agencies are made homely in our homes. The thing of the house is more than an aesthetic operational and material image, culturally constructed and circulated, intersecting with class aspirations, ideas of modernity, and coloniality. Beyond all of that, its surfaces render a deeper story of containment and opportunity, marking the exposed end of ecological processes, cultural constructions, and belongings. Across those surfaces, the house comes to see and to be seen exuding its own affective charge, detached from human rationality. The house surfacing engenders seeing in unintelligible ways, which assembles human (en)visioning to produce the *house-habitable* as the many see and come to know it. Our habitability comes out of a fold of negotiations, of which the visual social field is one of the unexplored registers.

As Parisi and da Silva remind us, reflecting on the possibility of techniques as tools of resistance, "enlarging access to tools and retooling algorithms for new ends (beyond the logistical order of capital reproduction) requires a radical abolishment of the architecture that sustains the Promethean teleology of instrumentality in the first place" (2021: 4). Translated into the concerns of this article, if to think and to know housing justice one has to struggle against the axioms of financial racial capitalism, it is undoubted that some are better explored than others. The visual "architectures" sustaining, but also allowing for a prosaic reworking, of those same axioms are not accounted for, not enough. Largely, this is a problem of the epistemological language at our disposal, hence the need for retooling. To this end, we have centered the notion of 'exposure' not to invoke that we can see more, or more profoundly and better, but to advance an analytic inviting a focus on *how* seeing takes place from the house, in a co-constitution with the regimes of the visible the house affects. In this analytic, occlusions which are also inclusions become apparent, in a process of bordering that constantly reworks the threshold of the homely and the unhomely, of the habitable and the uninhabitable (Lancione, 2023; Mezzadra and Neilsen, 2013; Simone, 2022).

Returning to the dialectical relationships between ways of seeing and the tensioned constitution of regimes of visibility, such an analytical use of exposure invites housing justice scholars to a work for a broader (en)vision of the geographies of housing and homing. For it is important to deconstruct what it is seen about housing, and how the horizon of the housing political is visualised, to stay closer to the arborescent surfacing of the multiple processes, materialities and affections that come together in the thing of the house. Once again, it is not absolute vision one seeks, but attention to the constructions of conflicting regimes of the visible and their appropriation, for multiple political ends, as illustrated in *Les Misérables* and *Gagarine*. What is *just*, in how things are seen and worked out in the everyday surfacing of housing? What kind of political horizon for just housing emerges by engaging in this way with the power of visuality? Granted: this is just a cognate manoeuvre, which must work together with available structural and experiential grammars. Yet, the project of unpacking *envisioning of housing justice* must be a strictly situated one. It replaces grand narratives of salvation, 'housing as a fix', with "an ethological ethics, an ethics of immanent modes of being, an ethics attuned to becoming – with all its dangers and all its hope" (Braun, 2004, 272). The immanence of the regimes of visuality is key, as shown in the two films evoked above.

Communities made expendable via housing rub-against the workings of exposures on a daily basis. For if particular forms of material decay are rendered visible to capital, a realignment of how the house sees (and therefore is seen) constantly takes place, redrawing the relational map constituting cascading forms of occlusions but also, unavoidably, overtures. The play here is not epistemological but very material. This is because it has to do with histories of racialised containment, which have always lingered throughout the surfacing of the household, and are then revealed in their operationalised displacement by exposing, and operationalising, the material decay of the thing of the house, or the crime stat, or the untenability of public housing regimes. (Think of the case of the colonial household, beautifully discussed by Chao in a recent *Antipode* feature on "Plantation", 2024.)

However, as the two films we have taken as illustrations show, it is not just that what has been made visible from the outside is made available to 'a' specific end. But it is that recompositing—re-exposing—takes place from within, from those closer to the surfaces of the thing of the house, those who have inhabited by rubbing against the walls, the cracks, the nonworking pipes, the inefficient electric wiring, the mould and the broken windows. Constantly operating against those surfaces have made dwellers attuned not to

what lies behind the surface, but to its spatio-temporal uneven elongations and its affordances for alternate (en)visions of habitation.

Staying closer to the surface, to follow Taussig, is then 'just' a trick: "something that highlights nature's mysteries as well as those inherent to social institutions and personal relationships" (2016: 481). The trick as technology is to instantiate a necessary way of seeing the house and of being seen by the house. Necessary because it must be done in order to render what is made dispossessed and uninhabitable somewhat liveable. Such a technique, to avoid the entrapments of what Parisi and da Silva call the "Promethean teleology of instrumentality" (2021), requires an "inordinate empathy with reality" (Taussig, 2016: 481) so as to capture the multiple arborescent propositions currently tapped at the house's surfacing. This is an empathy that accepts that one has to work through and with surfaces, in dealing with the house, but by keeping alert to what Moten calls the 'pan dimensionality' of surfacing, the constant relationship "between all and nothing" (2021).

For if the regimes of visibility of the house occlude, and can be used as overtures for a number of operations, the question we posed in this article is what to do with the constant lingering not only of the actual image, but of the visual cacophony of the occluded one? How to account for the immanent, yet dispossessed envisioning of habitation in thinking of housing and homing? Can we think of a house forefronting its ecological complexity or, to say it better, exposing the time of its ecological travel, decadence and project, and can we then find a way of staying with its trouble and its promise (Haraway, 2016), of rubbing against it? Can the thing of the house not only be designed sustainably, but allowed to see us so that the bare notion that things need to be sustained and trained as resilient might become an impossibility, and a differential articulation of seeing from 'homing' might come through?

Going beyond (the current fold of) habitation requires an alternate disposition towards the "rich interaction between all and nothing" (Moten, 2021), which concerns also how one trains themselves to see, bearing in mind that seeing is not just what one does, but what one engages with *from* the seeing of *any* other. In searching for a grammar to foster efforts to (re)think and (re)do housing justice and its theory, we need to follow Katherine McKittrick's invitation to be driven by wonder. Fighting the violence of normative exposure means working toward "a method that demands openness and is unsatisfied with questions that result in descriptive-data induced answers" (2021: 5). Such a speculative move offers promise to reapproach the question of what is unjust habitation. The question does not ask where people sleep in order to identify an issue. But, it traces in the thing of the house the financialised, heteronormative, racialised, and legal histories that give rise to what we have called *dispossessed exposures*: (en)visioning of homely futures that are deprived, by design, of the possibility of radical care for and of habitation. We hope this article provides for some further reflections to refuse the "idiotic tunes" vilifying the temporal and spatial intensity and the elongations of the thing of the house, to continue renewing the study of housing beyond the entrapment of policy and efficacy.

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