POSSESSIVE SENTENCES IN EARLY LATIN: DATIVE *VS.* GENITIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to evaluate a functional differentiation between two kinds of possessive sentenc: mihi est x *and* Marci est x *(where* mihi *and* Marci *stand for any nominal/pronominal constituent). First, I give a general framework of these two constructions and a basic description of shared/not shared features, according to semantic, syntactic and pragmatic parameters (namely: a semantic analysis of the relationship most typically expressed, the [+/-human] character of the entities involved, relevant tendencies in word order, definiteness of the constituents, their topical and/or rhematic status). As the role of these constructions has to be analysed within the whole frame of predications of possession in Latin, the dynamics occurring between these two constructions and other possessive sentence-types (such as* habeo x, meus est x, Marci domus est x*) are also evaluated. Reference is briefly made to notions developed in typological studies, in order to characterize the dative and the genitive constructions as kinds of «have-» and «belong-constructions». I successively try to sketch a contrastive analysis carried on within texts and I focus on some atypical uses of the two constructions. I mainly rely on archaic authors, but examples from every stage of Latin are also used, as the point of my conclusions should not be strictly limited to archaic Latin alone. I finally advance the hypothesis that pragmatic as well as semantic restrictions operate on the genitive type, so that we can draw two different, functional profiles for each of these two constructions. The general profile of the dative construction appears as quite loose and «polyfunctional»: i.e. a basic possessive sentence built on a presentative-existential structure that can answer to more than one single kind of requirement and that, sometimes, can also be triggered by only one constraint at the time, which can be either:* a) *a syntactic/pragmatic constraint; or:* b*) a semantic constraint. The genitive construction, quite differently, depends on a rather rigid co-occurrence of a cluster of semantic, syntactic and pragmatic constraints (*).*

1. *Mihi est x* and *Marci est x*. A general framework

1.1 Scholarly attention has been periodically devoted to the comparison of the possessive sentence-types *mihi est x* and *Marci est x* (where *mihi* and *Marci* stand for any nominal/pronominal constituent). Heterogeneous kinds of analysis have put emphasis, alternatively, on the different semantic contents expressed by each construction according to the case-form employed; on the different syntactic functions involved; or on informational/pragmatic factors. See, for example, works like Watkins 1967; Bolkestein 1983; and Bortolussi 1998, who drew attention to syntactic factors again. As I will try to show, if we look at the actual situation of the two constructions *in vivo*, they indeed show a different status that involves many functional factors; so that syntax alone, or semantics alone, tells only part of the story.

In order to pin down a functional differentiation between these two kinds of possessive sentences, I will first try to picture a general framework and I will successively try to sketch a contrastive analysis. While I mainly rely on passages from archaic authors, examples from every period will be used too as the validity of my conclusions should not be limited to archaic Latin alone.

1.2 The following passages offer two examples of the dative construction (1) and the genitive construction (2):

(1) Plaut., *Curc.* 43: *ei ancillula est*
     'He has a wench'

(2) Plaut., *Amph.* 480, 483: *hodie illa pariet filios geminos duos […]. Eorum Amphitruonis alter est, alter Iouis*
     'Today she will give birth to two twins […]. Of them, one is Amphitruo's, the other is Jove's'

At first sight, the formal distinction between these two constructions involves primarily the different coding of the possessor (henceforward: possessor = PSR): dative *vs.* genitive case. From the historical point of view, we have to acknowledge that while the dative construction displays signs of obsolescence by the classical period, the genitive construction occurs robustly in every stage of Latin and its final decline is simply concomitant with the loss of the case-system and with the development of morpho-syntactic structures based on prepositions in Romance.

In fact, a fundamental factor that has to be considered in order to accomplish a consistent analysis of these two constructions is the increasingly leading role acquired by the verb *habeo* as the major means to express a basic predication of possession. In spite of what is generally held by the *communis opinio* (and, especially, by handbooks' and grammars' hasty statements) ([1]), *habeo* is employed extensively as the major device for predicative possession already in archaic Latin; in Plautus, for example, or in Terence and in Cato, where the ratio between the occurrences of the dative construction and the occurrences of the sentence-type *habeo x* (i.e. *habeo* plus an object, i.e. a possessum [henceforward: possessum = PSM], therefore leaving aside instances of different syntactic structures, e.g. *habeo* + object + a passive perfect participle) shows a numerical predominance for *habeo* ([2]). If we restrict ourselves only to the two «simple» syntactic types exemplified in (3):

(3) *habeo* + object vs. *mihi est* + subject

([1]) Classical Latin as it emerges from grammars represents of course a very complex topic, which involves levels of standardization of the language as well as levels of generalization adopted in ancient and in modern grammatical treatises, which shall not be dealt with here. Cfr., however, AMBROSINI 2001: 102 who, touching the subject of grammatical standard Latin, speaks of it as a «costrutto di grammatici».

([2]) All data concerning *mihi est x* and *habeo x* constructions presented here are from BALDI-NUTI (forthcoming), which is devoted to an exhaustive analysis of possessive structures in Latin.

the ratio between *habeo* + object and *mihi est* + subject is, roughly, 2 to 1 in Plautus and Terence, and more than 20 to 1 in Cato's *de agri cultura*. The results of the numerical assessment I have made are shown in (4):

(4) Numerical scrutiny of the occurrences of possessive constructions

	Marci est x	*meus est x*	*mihi est x*	*habeo x*
Plaut.	30	62	390	619
Ter.	8	16	72	164
Cato, *Agr.*	3	ø	3	68
Caes., *B. Gall.* 11		ø	11	149
Cic., *Ep.*	11	1	8	68
Ver. *Aen.*1	2	1	1	2
Liv. 1-3	5	1	4	29
Tac. *Agr.*	ø	ø	3	7
Petr.	8	2	3	140
P.A.	5	ø	4	51

I shall leave a precise interpretation of these data to further studies on possession in Latin. However, according not only to numerical predominace, but also to the exhaustive analysis of all passages, it is quite clear that *habeo* has taken up much of the wide semantic constellation typical of a possessive verb (cfr. a verb like *avere* in Italian or *to have* in English) already in archaic Latin, where *habeo* expresses not only what we can call prototypical possession, but also many different kinds of relations (3). This trend simply strenghtens through time, as data from Caesar's *de Bello Gallico* and Cicero's

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(3) A precise definition of prototypical possession is of course problematic. Reference can be made to the definitions given in SEILER 1983: 11, TAYLOR 1989: 202-203, HEINE 1997: 39. I suggest here a «working» definition according to which, within the domain of predicative constructions (which present a rather different configuration from attributive possessive constructions) a prototypical relation of possession is an established relation (as in SEILER 1983) between a nominal A (that we call PSR) which is [+hum], [+def], [+given] and [+topic] and a nominal B (that we call PSM) which is [-relational], [-hum], [+concrete], [-topic] and, more typical-

epistolze (a random sample of sixty letters) plainly show. Needless to say, in later authors, e.g. Petronius, the percentage of the *mihi est* construction is dramatically decreased.

In order to find a functional differentiation between the genitive and the dative sentence-types, one relevant point to be considered is that, compared with other possessive constructions, the occurrence of the *Marci est x* type is considerably lower. According to my personal survey, I found only 30 occurrences of the genitive type in Plautus and 8 in Terence. It is true that in later authors the genitive type displays a higher ratio when compared with the dative type, but this happens simply because the occurrence of *mihi est x* has considerably decreased and, as I remarked, the role of the basic possessive construction is played mostly by *habeo x*. Thus, in most authors, the genitive construction displays a low percentage when compared to the occurrence of *mihi est x* + *habeo x* considered altogether. This is, apparently, the reason why Cabrillana 2003: 86, based exclusively on Livy, presents a higher ratio for the genitive construction (200 occurrences vs. 185 of the dative construction): simply because in the linguistic stage reflected in the books of Livy, *mihi est x* is already in decline. While the analysis and the data in Cabrillana 2003 are consistent with most aspects of the matter, any evaluation of the dative construction should not fail to take also the role played by the *habeo x* construction into account.

1.3 A description covering all aspects of possessive sentences like *mihi est x* and *habeo x* can not be given here. For our current purpose, the relevant data to bear in mind are as follows. Both sentence-types are instances of the so-called «*have*-construction», a notion developed in typological studies that simply points to the basic possessive predicative structure in any given language, which is therefore

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ly, [-def] and [-given]. As far as attributive possession is concerned, however, things are different and, for example, a feature like [-relational] displays of course a different relevance (so that the prototypical PSM tends to be [+relational]).

characterized by the prototypical features of predicative possession: i.e. a [+hum], [+def], [+given] and [+topic] PSR; and a [-relational], [-hum], [+concrete], [-topic] and, more typically, [-def] and [-given] PSM. While these two Latin «*have*-constructions» show a different orientation with respect to all these features, which appears most clearly from a diachronic vantage point, the analysis of such a phenomenon does not concern us here. As far as the dative construction is concerned, the relevant features are, then, the almost invariable [+hum] character of the PSR and his [+topic] and [+given] status. The characterization of the PSM is not as strict and it occurs as [+hum] as well as [-hum], and [+concrete] as well as [-concrete]. While its [-topic] and [-given] status is rather firm, the PSM can be either [+def] as well as [-def], although a certain predominace of the latter is indisputable ([4]). Another fundamental factor is, again, one of the typical features of predicative possession: *mihi est x* sentences usually refer to established relations ([5]); so that a [-relational] PSM like a body-part or an ascendent kin occurs only in atypical, marked contexts (i. e. interrogative sentences, hypothetical sentences, etc.):

(5) Plaut., *Most.* 86: *atque in meo corde, si est quod mihi cor*
      'and in my heart, if I have some heart […]'

(6) Plaut., *Stich.* 260: *nullan tibi linguast?*
      'Have you got no tongue?'

(7) Plaut., *Amph.* 484: *uerum minori puero maior est pater*
      'Indeed, the smaller son has the greater father'

This said, *mihi est x* shares with many other possessive sentence-types in other languages the feature that has been defined as «zero-intension», which, according to Lehmann 1998: 6, character-

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([4]) Again, for a more detailed treatment of this subject, cfr. BALDI-NUTI (forthcoming).

([5]) Cfr. SEILER 1983: 80.

([6]) Cfr. LEHMANN 1998: 6, who highlights that «the relationship between the possessor and the possessum prototypically has zero intension»; or, in other words, «the possessive relation itself is basically empty». Possession is not simply characterized by polysemy: the semantic opacity is an intrinsic property of this domain.

izes the whole domain of possession (^{6}). That is to say, no specific semantic feature nor property can cover the whole semantic range displayed by this construction, so that *mihi est x* can also express inherent relations (e.g. 8) as well as the loosest relation in semantic terms (e.g. 9) and occurrences where the dative construction refers to a mental or existential property «possessed» by the PSR, like (9), are in fact numerous:

(8) Plaut., *Most.* 217: *dum nunc haec aetatula tibist*
      'As long as you have this young age'

(9) Cic. *Fam.* 1, 9, 22: *quocumque tempore mihi potestas praesentis tui fuerit*
      'At whatever time I will have the power of your presence'

The occurrence of inherent relations represents, however, a numerical minority; and especially in archaic authors a certain core of instances of prototypical possession (i.e. with a [+hum] PSR and a [-hum], [-concrete] etc. PSM) is robustly attested:

(10) Plaut., *Asin.* 364: *ni hodie Argyrippo argenti essent uiginti minae*
      'If Argyrippus does not have twenty minas of silver today'

(11) Ter., *Hec.* 811-812: *cognosse anulum illum Myrrhinam / gnatae suae fuisse*
      'Myrrina knows that her daughter had that ring'

A passage like (12) clearly shows that the difference with the relationship of physical possession is essentially a matter of context:

(12) Plaut., *Amph.* 406: *non mi est lanterna in manu?*
      'Don't I have a lamp in my hand?'

1.4 To hold a general view on the genitive construction, we have to acknowledge that, from the functional point of view, the *Marci est x* type partly overlaps with another construction, which differentiates for the presence of a possessive pronoun instead of the constituent in the genitive: i.e. a sentence-type such as *meus est x*. Examples in (13) and (14):

(13) Plaut., *Men.* 903-904: *Quem ego hominem, si quidem uiuo, uita euoluam sua. / Sed ego stultus sum, qui illius esse dico quae meast*
'That man, if I stay alive, I'll deprive of his life. But I am so stupid, as I am saying that is «his» which is now in my power'

(14) Cic., *Fam.* 14, 3, 1: *culpa mea propria est*
'The blame is entirely mine'

This construction is often more frequently attested than the genitive type, especially in dialogues (see its higher score in Plautus and Terence; cfr. 4), where it mainly occurs in the first and second person (mostly singular). In this respect, the division of labour is rather clear, as the *Marci est x* type mainly involves third person PSRs.

Several occurrences of the *Marci est x* type present a genitive constituent which is [-hum] and, generally speaking, these instances have nothing to do with possession. Rather, they simply occur in more or less idiomatic expressions such as the one in (15):

(15) Ter., *Haut.* 387: *et uos esse istius modi et nos non esse haud mirabilest*
'And it is no wonder that you are of that nature [of being chaste] and we are not'

Sometimes, this construction clearly expresses a part-whole or partitive or material relation, like in (16) or (17):

(16) Plaut., *Mil.* 1016: *cedo signum, si harunc Baccharum es*
'Give me the password, if you belong to the Bacchic rites'

(17) *P.A.* 6, 1: *uia enim illic penitus non est, sed totum heremi sunt arenosae*
'In fact there is barely a road there, but is entirely a desert of sand'

Percentages between the occurrences of a [+hum] PSR vs. [-hum] PSR of course are varied. In Plautus a [+hum] PSR has 16 attestations out of 30. In Terence the ratio is 5 out of 8. Broadly speaking, a [+hum] PSR is just as common as a [-hum]. When the constituent in the genitive is [+hum], however, the construction generally expresses a kinship relation or a relation of prototypical pos-

session, specifically ownership. See exaamples from (18) to (21):

(18) Ter., *Ad.* 617, 625: *Sostrata credit mihi me psaltriam hanc emisse / […] nunc quid faciam? Dicam fratris esse hanc?*
'Sostrata believes that I have bought the female lute player for myself […] Now, what shall I do? Shall I reveal that this one [Bacchis] belongs to [my] brother?'

(19) Cato, *Agr.* 146, 2: *Ne quid eorum de fundo deportato: si quid deportauerit, domini esto*
'None of those [tools] shall [the contractor] remove from the estate: if he does remove something, it shall [automatically] belong to the landowner'

(20) Caes., *B. Gall.* 5, 34, 1: *Nam duces eorum tota acie pronuntiari iusserunt, ne quis ab loco discederet: illorum esse praedam atque illis reseruari quaecumque Romani reliquissent*
'For their leaders ordered the command to be given along the whole of the battle line that no one should leave from his place: that the booty was theirs and whatever the Romans had abandoned would be reserved for them'

(21) Petr., *Sat.* 53, 2: *in praedio Cumano, quod est Trimalchionis*
'On the estate at Cumae, that is the one belonging to Trimalchio'

As far as the *meus est x* type is concerned, a [+hum] PSR is the norm. This implies that idiomatic expressions do not play a substantial role in this construction, which usually expresses ownership like *Marci est x*.

1.5 Thus, we can preliminarily set a functional opposition between *mihi est x* and *Marci est x* in the following terms: in the dative construction the wide semantic range covered is matched by an almost invariably strict semantic profile of the PSR, which is almost always [+hum]. In short, this construction expresses the broad domain of the so-called *sphère personnelle* ([7]). In the genitive construction a [+hum] PSR is not as common, but this looser characterization of the genitive constituent is matched by a narrower set of relations that co-occur with the [+hum] PSR, which more fre-

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([7]) As developed in BALLY 1926.

quently are instances of kinship and ownership.

Apparently, according to the data, the genitive construction does not reflect the rather opaque semantic profile expressed by the genitive case within the domain of possessive noun phrase (⁸). In fact, a genitive Noun Phrase does not necessarily cover only inherent relations and a phrase like *Marci caput* is just as typical (and as common) as *Marci domus*. Most typically, the *Marci est x* type points to an inherent relation, i.e. a relation given by nature (cfr. [15]), or, more generically, a relation such as the entity coded as the PSR (not necessarily [+hum]) represents an intrinsic attribute or feature of the PSM. As far as [+hum] PSRs are concerned, the genitive construction designates a relation between a PSR and a property or a characteristic that, although not intrinsic by nature, is intrinsically related to the PSR by cultural convention. Indeed, the occurrences characterised by a «[+hum] PSR & [-hum] PSM profile» generally express a relation which is strongly involved with prototypical possession and whose semantic features are mainly culture-related, namely ownership (see again [18]-[21]), a notion that was highly developed within the Roman culture. Ownership implies a relation of established possession between, most typically, a [+hum] PSR and a [-relational], [-hum], [+concrete] PSM. The set of prototypical PSA related to ownership is indeed the same as the one found in *mihi est x* constructions when they express prototypical possession: *argentum*, a *thesaurus*, slaves. But what is peculiar to ownership is that it does not necessarily involve any physical contact, nor any degree

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(⁸) The relationship between the *Marci est x* type and the genitive NP *Marci x* can not be examined here, as it involves very general and complex issues. With respect to this, however, reference can be made to what has been previously written by Kuryłowicz 1975 [1969] (especially pp. 70-71: «Die Behauptung, dass der Typus *domus patris* sekundär im Verhältnis zu *domus est patris* sei, wäre ebenso falsch wie die Behauptung, dass der Typus *die Rose ist rot* dem Typus *die rote Rose* zugrunde liegt. Richtig könnte dies lediglich vom diachronischen Gesichtspunkt aus sein, weil der Genitiv häufig vom Ablativ (woher?) abstammt. Vgl. frz. *anneau d'argent* aus vulgärlat. *anulus de argento* < *anulus est de argento* oder *anulus factus est de argento*. Bekanntlich setz auch der baltoslav. Genitiv der *o*-Stämme den alten Ablativ, als Antwort auf die Frage *woher*, fort.»).

of control, disposal or use by the PSR. In fact, ownership holds even if the PSR is far from the PSM, or if he has no control on it, and even if he is deprived of it. Even the parameter of temporality seems irrelevant: although ownership usually covers a long span of time, this is not a necessary feature, as the relationship is established according to parameters that are rather juridical and/or cultural and a relation of ownership obtains as such even if it is short-lived. So to speak, ownership is intrinsically a relationship *in absentia*, which connects a PSR and a PSM on a plane that is eminently cultural and which links these two entities in such an intimate and exclusive way that the PSR represents one of the intrinsic and defining features of the PSM. In general terms, there is only one single PSR that bears the status of owner of a given PSM. Therefore, although on the referential level ownership refers to an established relation of prototypical possession, it displays some typical features of an inherent relation, and it could be then defined as a (possessive) relation that is «conventionally described as inherent».

1.6 Another factor clearly differentiates the *Marci est x* type from the *mihi est x* type: in the former the pragmatic profile of the constituents is «simpler», in the sense that they show a minimum variation in terms of definiteness and topicality. Although nothing, in principle, seems to exclude a [-def] PSR, in my corpus of occurrences it is always [+def] or, in some cases, [non-specific], as in (22):

(22) Plaut., *Bacch*. 630a: *mortuo' pluri' pretist quam ego sum*
   'A dead man is of more value that I am [alive]'

If we consider only the occurrences that are not idiomatic expressions (like *pluris preti esse*), where non-specific PSRs occur, then the PSR is invariably [+def]. Thuso, although no specific data seem to speak against the possibility of a [-def] PSR in the *Marci est x* type, this is not much more than a mere theoretical possibility; a possibility that has to be considered as very atypical and that should not be overrated (cfr. Bolkestein 1983: 57). The same holds

for the PSM, which is always [+def].

The pragmatic-informational status of the constituents represents an even stricter set: the PSR is always the informational core of the predication and is never the topic; the PSM is always the topic and, as such, it can often be omitted. In fact, in Plautus this happens in ten occurrences out of 30. See for ex.:

(23) Plaut., *Tri.* 533-534, 536-537: *Neque umquam quisquamst quoius ille ager fuit / quin pessume ei res uorterit […] Em nunc hic quoius est / ut ad incitas redactust*
'And there is never no one, whose that field was, who had no problems […] Here is now that one, whose it [the field] is, who is in such a state'

As can be seen in most of the examples, especially in instances with [+hum] PSR, the PSM of *Marci est x* sentences is generally an entity that has been previously mentioned within the discourse. Consider also that the subject, when mentioned, is often a deictic, definite pronoun (I found three cases in Plautus, two in Terence). The omission of the subject, on the contrary, seldom occurs with *mihi est x* sentences.

1.7 A brief analysis of word-order brings other factors to light. First, the linear structure of the genitive construction cannot be «modulated», as it does not allow insertion of other constituents, like a locative specification, which is common in occurrences of *mihi est x*. In other words, we do not have examples of ****Marci est x in z*** (see, on the other hand, many examples like *mihi domi est x / mihi in manu est x*, which are frequent especially in the archaic comedy and constitute only a small sample of this type of sentence). Secondly, in the *Marci est x* type the frequence of the *genitive*-first sequence tends to be higher than that of others. The following data is from my search of the entire corpus of Plautus' comedies: setting aside occurrences of constructions where the constituents referring to PSR or PSM are in a relative form (and therefore implying a specific set of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic constraints that idiosyncratically characterize the structure of the sentence), in Plau-

tus I found 19 occurrences of the *Marci est x* type. Among these, in the 10 occurrences featuring omission of the subject we invariably have a word sequence such as *genitive + esse*. And if we leave aside occurrences of idiomatic expressions and we consider only examples where the genitive constituent refers to a human being (and the relation is, basically, ownership or kinship), 7 cases out of 9 show a *genitive*-first structure. This tendency is considerably strengthened in the *meus est x* constructions, where the majority of occurrences is clearly oriented to place the constituent referring to the PSR in initial position. Again, if we narrow our scope to the cases where the construction *meus est x* expresses purely ownership, the percentage of a *genitive*-first sequence is higher: apart from 8 cases of relative sentences, the remaining 54 occurrences display omission of the subject (= PSM) 30 times and, invariably, the sequence *meus est, tuus est* etc. Among the 24 sentences with subject expressed, 9 present the possessive pronoun in absolute first position. Thus, even in this construction, the majority of occurrences (30+9 = 39/54) show the PSR in initial position. In cases where the construction expresses pure ownership, the percentage of a *genitive*-first sequence is even higher: 27/36 cases ([9]). Although exceptions to this orientation are certainly possible (as is natural in the actual realizations of a schematic, syntactic pattern), this tendency is numerically predominant and must be considered the typical profile of the *meus est x / Marci est x* constructions. With respect to this, see Bortolussi 1998: 72, whose data appear to be even more straightforward: «Dans la prédication d'appartenence, le NP génitif précède la copule dans une proportion de 4 pour 1».

Thus, while a tendency to place the constituent referring to the PSR at the beginning is recognizable even in the *mihi est x* type, in the *meus est x / Marci est x* constructions this tendency is stronger and, I believe, it must be connected with the almost invariably rhematic character of the PSR, which represents the informational core of the predication. Indeed, several occurrences of *Marci est x* and,

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([9]) Cfr. BALDI-NUTI (forthcoming).

especially, *meus est x* sentences clearly express a contrastive focus on the constituent in the genitive and on the possessive pronoun. See again passages like (13-14), or the following (24) ([10]):

(24) Plaut., *Epid.* 587: *Tua istaec culpast, non mea*
      'It's your fault, not mine'

In these examples, the contrastive focus on the PSR is perfectly consistent with the initial position of the genitive constituent or the possessive pronoun. Therefore, *Marci est x* and *meus est x* are sentences whose syntactic structure highlights the rhematic (and, sometimes, even contrastive) focus of the constituent referring to the PSR. The pragmatic stress finds its opposite pole in the highly topical character of the subject that often, as I remarked, is simply omitted.

The rhematic status of the initial constituent in the *Marci est x* type can be seen in a broader perspective and, somehow, it could be related to more general features of the Latin language: specifically, the relationship between the initial position in the sentence and the rhematic focus ([11]). Indeed, an inversion of the sequence «rhematic focus – topic» seems to be reflected in the comparison between the Latin structure *Marci* (rhematic focus) *est x* (topic) *vs.* the (some how corresponding) italian sentence *x* (topic) *è di Marco* (rhematic focus). This phenomenon, however, relates to general and typological changes that characterize the shift from Latin to Romance, a subject which of course is beyond the scope of this paper.

1.8 As already convincingly argued in Bolkestein 1983: 60, 78, in the genitive type the verb *sum* is purely «supportive»; that is, the verb has a merely predicative function: it fully expresses the function of a copula, whose predicate is the constituent in the genitive.

([10]) Cfr. other examples as Plaut., *Mil.* 1218-1219; *Pers.* 472; *Poen.* 391.

([11]) Reference can be made to many works devoted to the relationships between pragmatic strategies and syntactic structures in Latin, e.g. PANHUIS 1982. See, however, early studies like RICHTER 1903, as well as recent contributions, like NOCENTINI 2001; NOCENTINI 2003: 114-115; NOCENTINI (2005: 411-418).

The copular character of *Marci est x* is also confirmed by the absence of additional locative phrases (like ***Marci / meus est x domi / in manu*) that would imply a situative reading of *esse*, a reading that would be incompatible with the copular function and which is rather common in the *mihi est x type* (see ex. 12; cfr. also Bortolussi 1998: 72). In short, the genitive construction, as well as the *meus est x* type, displays the configuration of a copular sentence, which can be schematised in (25):

(25) *Marci est x = y est x*; *meus est x = y est x*   (where *x* = subject, *y* = predicate)

As we have seen, both the genitive construction as well as the *meus est x* type share the same characteristic: the informational core of the sentence is firmly bound to the constituent referring to the PSR. In functional terms, therefore, both constructions can be regarded as identifying predications, whose goal is to provide information on the identity of the PSR. In typological terms, these constructions can be seen as instances of the well-known sentence-type called «*belong*-construction» which, in the literature on predicative possession, seems to have been granted a place of its own beside the standard, somehow more basic «*have*-constructions» such as *mihi est x* and *habeo x* ([12]).

From the functional point of view, the status of identification predicate perfectly matches the semantic orientation displayed by the genitive construction, most specifically by the occurrences with a [+hum] PSR. In general terms, any kind of possessive sentence, being a predication, is not typically characterised by the expression of an inherent relation, as this refers to a relationship that is given by nature on the referential plan and it is therefore too much obvious to be the topic of an unmarked statement (that is to say: sentences like *I have a hand* are highly unusual). But a «*belong-*

([12]) For a detailed discussion on «*have-*» and «*belong*-constructions» (a sentence-type classification frequently employed in typological studies; e.g. BICKERTON 1981) see HEINE 1997: 29-33.

construction» most effectively fulfills its identificatory function if it refers to a relation that in some way excludes the involvement of other PRSs ([13]). Given the presence of such an exclusive, possessive relation like ownership within the Roman culture, the expressions of such a relation (i.e. ownership as a semantic category) naturally coincides with the occurrence of a predication of identification, whose goal is to assert the pertinence of a certain PSM to one specific PSR and to no other. In other words, the overlap between a specific semantic content, such as ownership, and the informational profile of the genitive construction is not a necessity, but a strong probability in pragmatic terms, which justifies the semantic orientation displayed by this construction.

2. *Marci/meus est x* vs. *mihi est x*: a contrastive analysis

2.1 The expression of ownership is not exclusive to *Marci est x* constructions, as it can be indicated also by a *mihi est x* sentence (i.e. *mihi est domus* can, in the appropriate context, stand for 'I own a house'). See exx. like:

(26)   Plaut., *Truc.* 177: *si quidem habes fundum atque aedis*
            'If you really have land and a house'

(27 = 10) Plaut., *Asin.* 364: *ni hodie Argyrippo argenti essent uiginti minae*
            'If Argurippus does not have twenty minas of silver today'

As far as this specific relation is concerned, however, the differentiating feature between the two constructions is that in a *mihi est x* sentence the reference to ownership is simply a contextual

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([13]) Exclusive kinship relations, as between father/mother and sons/daughters, are also obvious candidates to occur. Intrinsic properties, however, are also one of the most effective ways of identification of an entity on the cognitive plane. That is why a genitive construction often expresses, also, a material relation; but we are almost beyond what we refer to as the domain of possession *stricto sensu*, for which cfr. Lehmann 1998: 12 ff.

meaning. Cfr. the following:

(28) Plaut., *Amph.* 381: Mercurius: *Quis tibi erust?* Sosia: *Quem tu uoles*
　　 'M.: Which master do you have? S.: Whichever one you want'

(29) Plaut., *Cas.* 531-533: *Hoc erat ecastor, quod me uir tanto opere orabat meus /
　　 ut properarem arcessere hanc ad me uicinam meam / liberae aedes ut sibi essent
　　 Casinam quo deducerent*
　　 'That's the reason, by Jove, why my man insisted so much that I invite my
　　 lady-neighbor here directly, so that he would have the house all for himself
　　 where they could bring the Casina'

The relation expressed in (28) is not, of course, prototypical possession, since a slave cannot possess his master; consequently, neither can he hold ownership over him. But even in a passage like (29), which presents entities involving prototypical possession (a human being as PSR and a house as PSM), the *mihi est* sentence does not express ownership at all, as the house does not belong to the husband of Cleustrata, the woman who is speaking, but to their neighbours (¹⁴).

It is noteworthy, moreover, that the semantic content expressed by *mihi est*, even within the limited boundaries of prototypical possession, is highly context-related. Consider a passage like:

(30) Ter., *Ph.* 35-38: *Amicus summus meus et popularis Geta / heri ad me uenit. Erat ei de ratiuncula / iampridem apud me relicuom pauxillulum / nummorum*
　　 'My great friend and countryman Geta came to me yesterday. Because of an

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(¹⁴) The same, of course, holds for *habeo x,* which, even when it expresses prototypical possession, does not necessarily imply ownership. Cf. Ter., *Hec.* 845-846: Pamphilus: *sic te dixe opinor, inuenisse Myrrhinam / Bacchidem anulum suom habere.* Parmeno: *factum.* Pamph*.: eum quem olim ei dedi* 'Pam.: So, I think, Myrrina told you that she found out that / Bacchis has a ring of her own. Par.: Indeed. Pam.: The one I once gave to her'. Myrrina has discovered that a ring she once gave to her daughter (and which the daughter's husband, Pamphilus, has given to Bacchis) is now in the possession of the prostitute. While *habeo* expresses the simple possession of the ring by Bacchis, who has it but does not own it, the possessive adjective *suus* clearly expresses a different kind of possessive relationship, i.e. ownership, and points to the fact that the ring actually belongs to Myrrina.

old story, I still had a little bit of money that belonged to him'

(vs. ****Erat eius de ratiuncula iampridem apud me relicuom pauxillulum nummorum*)

Here the context presents a very specific and idiosyncratic situation where there are two PSRs, the owner and the actual possessor of a sum of money that was borrowed from the owner. The slave Davus is a very atypical PSR: one who has the money at his disposal (physically and effectively) but who does not own it. Such a (temporary?) possession has of course a relevance more in juridical and effectual terms than in purely temporal terms, and it has to be marked specifically. Such marking is accomplished by the means of the locative expression *apud*, which is sporadically used in archaic Latin to express a possession that is merely physical ([15]). The incidental and temporary character of physical possession is thus opposed to the regular, possessive construction, *mihi est*, which, in this particular case, expresses only ownership. *Apud* (and physical possession) represent, thus, the minor degree of a possessive relation in terms of intimacy and cultural connections between PSR and PSM, the parameters which are relevant when, as in this case, a matter of ownership is in question. Consequently, this particular context determines a sort of scalarity between the two expressions *apud me est x* and *mihi est x*, where the former points to the loosest relation in juridical terms and the stronger relation in terms of effective control, while the

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([15]) Cfr. for ex. Plaut. *Au.* 83: *nam hic apud nos nihil est aliud quaesti furibus.*

([16]) This «procedure» has a striking parallel in modern Irish, a normal «*be*-language» (ISAČENKO 1974) that shows locative-possessive constructions, where the standard possessive sentence employs the preposition *ag* ('at'), while the predication of ownership uses the preposition *le* ('with'). Despite such a clear division of labor, in a sentence like *tá airgead agat orm* (lit.: 'There is – money – at [*ag*] – you – on [*ar*] – me = 'I owe you money'), *ag*, quite atypically, expresses ownership, while another locative preposition, *ar* ('on'), that normally has nothing to do with possession, is the one contextually licensed to expresses momentary possession. Apparently, there are recurring, interlinguistic patterns at work when possession clashes contextually with the expression of a specific category like ownership.

latter expresses the opposite pole and exceptionally denotes what is usually only a contextual meaning, i.e. ownership ([16]). Apparently, in this passage ownership is not expressed by the construction that more regularly designates it (i.e. the genitive type), because the need for a presentative-existential sentence (required by textual constraints such as the [+new] and [-def] character of the PSM) automatically selects a dative construction, in spite of its semantic content; and a sentence like ***Erat eius de ratiuncula iampridem apud me relicuom pauxillulum nummorum* is then ruled out. We can therefore advance the hypothesis that the expression of a semantic category such as ownership is not a sufficient feature to trigger a genitive construction, and that pragmatic restrictions operate on the genitive type.

2.2 Although the regular profile for the *mihi est x* type is that of an existential sentence, where the rhematic constituent is, generally, the [-def] PSM, counter-examples to such a prototypical instance do occur. Consider passages like:

(31) Plaut., *Am.* 143-145: *ego has habebo usque in petaso pinnulas / tum meo patri autem torulus inerit aureus / sub petaso; id signum Amphitruoni non erit*
'I will have these fins up on my hat, while my father will have a golden ribbon under his hat; this sign, Amphitruo won't have'

(32) Plaut., *Am.* 402: Mercurius: *Hic homo sanus non est.* Sosia: *Quod mihi praedicas uitium, id tibi est*
'*M*.: This man is not sane. *S*.: The fault you are attributing to me, it is yours'

(vs. ***id signum Amphitruonis non erit*; ***quod uitium, id tuum est*)

In the first example, neither the PSM nor the PSR represents the predicative nucleus and the rhematic focus is concentrated on the verbal constituent and the negative particle. This is because the core

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([17]) Of course, the predication in (31) makes sense because the presuppositional state-of-affairs that constitutes the informational background is the presence

of the information is expressly the absence of the *signum* on the person of Amphitruo (17). In the second passage, it is the *tibi* that clearly bears the informational core of the sentence. Thus, the [+def] feature of the PSM in both cases, as well as the contrastive focus on the PSR in the second passage, might apparently justify the use of a genitive construction, which normally meets these pragmatic profiles. But two hypothetical *Marci/meus est x* constructions (like ***id signum Amphitruonis non erit; **quod uitium, id tuum est*) would imply a copular interpretation of the verbal form, which would place the sentence outside the scope of the predication. In the first passage, a genitive PSR would require what is the default, prototypical reading of the genitive construction: that is, an intrinsic, inherent relation between Amphitruo and his *signum,* so that such a sentence would mean 'that sign won't belong to Amphitruo', while the actual meaning clearly refers to physical and momentary possession. In the second passage, Sosia, with his harsh answer to Mercurius, is not making a statement such as 'insanity is your proper and permanent condition', but is simply pointing out the fact, which rests completely on the *hic et nunc* circumstances, that Mercurius is the one afflicted by foolishness as long as he (Mercurius) is claiming to be himself (Sosia). In both cases we are facing what can be defined as two «stage-level» predicates (18), that is, predicates denoting two instances of an established, accidental and momentary relation between PSR and PSM, that could not be expressed by a genitive construction, which would call for a «in-

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of that *signum* under Jove's hat. Note, at any rate, that a hypothetical rhematic character for *id signum* seems absolutely excluded, by both its obvious topical status and by the fact that no other *signum* appears in the discourse ground. Thus, an interpretation such as '*this sign* won't be at Amphitruo (but that other one will)' is untenable. Cfr. BORTOLUSSI 1998: 71-72, according to whom the predication in Plaut. *Ampr*. 145, once turned («adapté») into a positive statement **Id signum Amphitruoni est*, would respond to a test-question *Quid signum Amphituoni est?* that, therefore, seems to imply a different interpretation, in which the comment would be the PSM. While this interpretation appears consistent within a contrastive analysis such as the one performed by Bortolussi, a hypothetical rhematic PSM *signum* seems to me rather incompatible with the actual passage of Plaut. *Amph*. 145.

(18) For which we can refer to works like KRATZER 1989, KLEIBER 1981, ROUVERET 1998.

dividual-level» (i.e. intrinsic property) interpretation. Therefore, these particular passages suggest that sometimes the choice of a *mihi est x* construction can be motivated e n t i r e l y by semantic factors and that the occurrence of the genitive construction is conditioned by its narrow semantic profile, which is strictly correlated to the «individual-level» interpretation of the predication and is based on the copular reading of the verbal form. Thus, we can infer that not even the specific informational structure [+def] PSR & [+def] PSM is a sufficient condition to trigger a genitive construction, and that also semantic restrictions operate on the genitive type ([19]).

If we refer again to previous works on this topic, Bolkestein 1983: 58 points that «there is no one-to-one correlation between the case form of the possessor and a particular pragmatic function distribution». Although this statement is, *stricto sensu*, correct, it should nonetheless be remembered that occurrences of *mihi est* such as (31-32) are in all respects highly atypical: examples of *mihi est x* showing a rhematic or [-def] PSR (as well as a [+def] or topical PSM) are rare, and instances where the informational core of the predication is a [-def], rhematic PSM are the dominant majority. Rather, a number of heterogeneous factors seem to be at work which not only determine different informational functions for the genitive and the

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([19]) As far as the relatively small subset of occurrences of *mihi est x* displaying either a prototypical possessive meaning and a [+def] PSM (e.g. *Marco est illa domus*) are concerned, it can be noted that in these cases the function of the verbal form, led someway astray from its presentative or situative meaning, tends to overlap with that normally borne by the copula (and therefore, by the verb in *Marci est illa domus*). In fact, historical data about stative verbs in Indo-European languages repeatedly show how different forms (i.e. roots, e.g. *stā-, *es-, *bheu̯g-) constantly flow into different functions (i.e. situative verb, presentative-existential form, stative verb, copula) within a drift-process. In this respect, a language like Old-Irish, where the situative and presentative verb *attá* is in some parts of the paradigm formally differentiated from the copula *is*, is an emblematic example. Such a phenomenon does not occur in Latin, where the verb *sum* holds together many different functions and it can thus display some degree of ambiguity. To examine all implications involved by these dynamics of functional overlap in the verb *sum* would lead outside the scope of this paper. We simply remark that the occurrences of the *mihi est x* type with a [+def] PSM seem to be the *locus* where a semantic differentiation borne only by the case employed (i.e. dative *vs.* genitive) emerges.

dative constructions, but which also bring about a different, syntactic and pragmatic rigidity for each of the two sentence-types.

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 The function of the *mihi est x* construction (as, in general terms, any instance of a «*have*-construction») is to predicate the existence of a relation (prototypically, an established relation) between a PSR and a PSM. This, however, represents only its most typical use, which emerges straightforwardly only in unmarked declarative sentences expressing prototypical possession, and the general profile of this sentence-type is quite loose and «polyfunctional»: it predicates a condition or, more exactly, a state of a certain entity (hence, the presence of a stative verb like *sum*) that is somehow related to another, usually human, participant by a relation that is not necessarily strictly possessive, as it can range among the vast domain of the so-called *sphère personnelle.*

The function of *Marci est x / meus est x* constructions is, rather, quite strict: to assert the involvement of a certain entity (the PSR) with respect to another entity (the PSM) whose relation to the former is already taken for granted, and whose existence is not the informational core of the predication ([20]). In other words, the function of the predication is the identification of the PSR or (if we want to refer to works within the framework of cognitive semantics, such as Langacker 1995), of an entity bearing some Reference Point-status that is semantically specified according to the context. Therefore, we can draw two different, functional profiles.

3.2 The *mihi est x* construction is very common, since it is a basic possessive sentence built on a presentative-existential struc-

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([20]) See, again, KURYŁOWICZ 1975 [1969].

POSSESSIVE SENTENCES IN EARLY LATIN

ture. As such, it displays a complex functional and semantic profile, and it answers to more than a single kind of requirement. Nonetheless, *mihi est x* can be triggered by only one constraint at the time, which can be either:

a) pragmatic = as a presentative-existential sentence, it introduces a new, [-def] noun into the discourse-ground and it predicates a possessive relation between a topical PSR and a rhematic PSM.

b) semantic = as a «stage level predicate», it predicates an established relation.

The majority of occurrences meet both of these requirements and they appear as presentative-existential constructions, introducing a [+new] and [-def] PSM, connected to a [+topic] and a [+def] PSR by an established relation (= both *a, b*). However, as we have seen (cfr. exx. from 5 to 9), the dative construction in some cases can also express a relation that is not at all established (body-parts, kinship, mental and existential properties). Indeed, the semantic content does not appear as the only relevant feature in this construction. Given the very broad semantic profile of possession, this is not surprising and, as I have repeatedly observed, the semantic interpretation of the predication rests heavily on the context. In these cases, the construction instantiates only the pragmatic profile of an existential sentence (= only *a*, as in 30). As a confirmation that profiles *a* and *b* do not necessarily occur together, there are cases displaying only the second function: i.e. those few occurrences with a [+def] PSM and an atypically rhematic PSR which appear to be motivated only on semantic constraints, as they lack both a presentative-existential character and a rhematic PSM (only *b*; as in 31 and 32).

3.3 The *Marci est x* construction, quite differently, depends on the co-occurrence of a cluster of semantic, syntactic and pragmatic constraints: the almost invariably [+def] and [+given] PSR and PSM and, correspondingly, a copular status of the verb *sum*; a rhematic focus on the PSR; and a relation where the PSR is an intrinsic attribute of the PSM. These requirements fulfill, respectively, a se-

mantic function and a pragmatic/communicative function, namely:

a) the expression of an inherent (or «conventionally described as inherent», as in the case of ownership) relation;

b) the specification of a [+given] PSR.

In other words, the *Marci est x* construction is typically employed when the need to identify the specific and exclusive PSR of a [+given] PSM co-occurs with the expression of an inherent relation. The overlap of these two factors is by no means accidental, and is due to pragmatic and referential phenomena. Basic predications of possession (i.e. «*have*-constructions») typically involve [+def] and [+given] [+hum] PSRs and their informational function focus on the PSM or, especially in the minority cases with [+def] PSM, on the relation itself. In «*belong*-constructions», like *Marci/meus est x*, the informational function is the identity of the PSR that, given its cognitive salience, is the entity whose individuation is more likely to be debated. Although in principle a predication specifying the identity of the PSR can involve any possessive relation (indeed, we have a few examples: see again 32), this informational requirement actually occurs more often with inherent relations, because established relations usually display a series of features on the referential plane (such as physical contact, disposal or employment *in acto*, control) which make the identity of the PSR more evident. The specification of the identity of a PSR is most likely to occur when the inherent relation between PSR and PSM is not overtly evident and is not characterized on the referential plane by physical contact, manifest control or any other immediately perceivable interaction between the two entities involved. This is naturally the case with abstract (inherent) relations that do not involve either a strictly physical character, or inalienable and relational entities (e.g. body-part relations, that, indeed, do not occur in *Marci est x / meus est x* sentences) and that are simply *in absentia* (so that, for ex., doubts can be cast on the identity of the PSR). A typical case is kinship. For the reasons given in § 1.5, (legal) ownership is just as typical as well.

3.4 Finally, and additional note can be made. Given the afore-

mentioned phenomena, namely the informational need to focus on the PSR's identity, it appears that a predication of ownership like *Marci est x,* (and, perhaps, more generally similar kinds of «*belong*-constructions») inherently displays a pragmatically marked function, at least in its prototypical instantiation. Pragmatic markedness also accounts for the relatively rare occurrence of *Marci est x* in comparison with other possessive constructions (*mihi est x*, *habeo x*).

Is is noteworthy, then, that another rather common device to predicate the fact that a [+given] PSM belongs to a specific PSR is, indeed, an identificatory, «possessive» copular sentence. In such a sentence the predicative core is not given by a constituent in the genitive case alone (or, alternatively, by a possessive pronoun), but by a twofold NP explicitly marking both PSR and PSM, such as *Marci liber*. The relatively rare occurrence of the possessive type *meus/Marci* (pred.) *est* (cop.) *x* (subj.) is thus balanced by the high occurrence of an identificatory, copular construction like *meus liber / Marci liber* (pred.) *est* (cop.) *x* (subj.), that is schematized in (33):

(33) *meus liber / Marci liber* (pred.) *est* (cop.) *ille = x* (subj.)

(vs. *meus /Marci* [pred.] *est* [cop.] *ille liber = x* [subj.])

Apparently, such a twofold sentence structure for *belong*-constructions is not very different from the one we see in English: compare *This book is John's / mine* vs. *this is John's book / my book.*

Instances of this *meus liber / Marci liber est x* construction occur in every period of the language and they are numerous in almost every text:

(34) Ter., *Eun.* 962: *dico edico uobis nostrum esse illum erilem filium*
'I tell you, I swear to you that he is our master's son'

(35) Caes., *B. Gall.* 6, 32, 3-4: *Tum copiis in tres partes distributis inpedimenta omnium legionum Atuatucam contulit. Id castelli nomen est*
'Then, with his forces divided into threee parts, he sent the belongings of all the legions to Aduatuca. That is the name of the fort'

(36) Cic., *Fam.* 5, 2, *9: ut senati consulto meus inimicus, quia tuus frater erat, subleuaretur*
'So that by a decree of the senate my enemy, because he was your brother, was relieved'

(37) Petr., *Sat.* 9, 9: *nocturne percussor […] cuius eadem ratione in uiridario frater fui*
'You predatory prizefighter, whose brother I was in the same manner in the garden'

The function of this copular sentence is, thus, that of a possessive predication which is semantically related to the expression of ownership. Compared to the genitive construction, this kind of copular-possessive sentence is, presumably, less marked pragmatically, as the rhematic part of the sentence is not confined to the genitive constituent alone but it involves the whole genitive/possessive adjective NP which presents both PSR and PSM in the same syntactic and informational unit. Seemingly, a more detailed and exhaustive evaluation of the role played by the genitive construction within Latin would also require a deeper analysis of the dynamics between the genitive construction itself and this other kind of copular «*belong*-construction».

Given that in Latin the same verbal form *sum* can express either the function of copula and of a presentative-existential verb, we can finally remark that in many cases the interpretation of this copular «*belong*-construction» can be ambiguous:

(38) Caes., *B. Gall.* 6, 17, 1: *Deum maxime Mercurium colunt. Huius sunt plurima simulacra*
'Of the gods they worship Mercury the most. Of him there are numerous image / His are most of the images'

(39) Petr., *Sat.* 55, 4: *Ab hoc epigrammate coepit poetarum esse mentio*
'From this epigram there began a discussion of the poets / From this epigram the discussion began to be of the poets'

The syntatic interpretation of (38), for example, presents two options: *sunt* (=presentative-existential verb) – *plurima simulacra*

huius (subject, [-def]). Or, alternatively: *huius* (predicate of a genitive construction, with pragmatic focus) – *sunt* (copular verb) – *plurima simulacra* (subject, [+def]). Of course, the polyfunctional status of *sum* interacts with another feature of Latin: the lack of definite markers and, also, of markers of topic/comment status. In fact, it is noteworthy that, in principle, the possibility of ambiguity holds even if a presentative-existential value of *sum* is excluded: in a clearly copular sentence like *nostrum esse illum erilem filium* the predicate of the copula can be either *nostrum* (the subject being *illum erilem filium*) or, as it seems more consistent in the specific context of (34): *nostrum erilem filium* (the subject being *illum*). The obvious conclusion is that, apparently, no effective consequence takes place at the communicative level, as the rhematic status of the parts of the sentence is generally granted by contextual factors and by mutually-shared knowledge among speakers.

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ABBREVIATIONS

PSR = possessor
PSM, PSA =possessum, possessa
[+/-hum] = human/non human
[+/-def] = definite/indefinite

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