



Eastern Resonances in Early Modern England. Introduction

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Claire Gallien and Ladan Niayesh

Resonance is music's hidden architecture.
Maximianno Cobra, conductor and musicologist
(private conversation, August 2017)

As with many experiences in life, the full meaning of a research project often unravels in time and through protracted ripple effects. When thinking of putting together this volume, our aim was to problematise Britain's receptions of its multiple Asian Easts from the Renaissance to the Romantic period, not along rigidly adversarial or simplistically subordinative lines, but by exploring patterns that could accommodate multi-directional, indirect, or redirected modes of exchange. In other words, our project was to unpack politics and modes of reappropriation that reached beyond a merely polar understanding of cultural encounter, or a regional ordering of a bordered world (Sakai 2009; Solomon 2016).

The notion of "resonance" gradually imposed itself on us as a way of replacing both the binaries of structuralism and the Foucauldian subordination of knowledge to power by a more phenomenological approach to

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experience, making room for what Veit Erlmann, summing up Stephen Greenblatt's use of the notion in "Resonance and Wonder," calls the "productive intimacy" brought about by cultural practice and circulation (Erlmann 2015, p. 176; Greenblatt 1990, pp. 216–246).

The general definition of "Resonance" provided by the *OED* is the "reinforcement or prolongation of sound by reflection or by the synchronous vibration of a surrounding space or a neighbouring object." Resonance is therefore different from the echo, which also prolongs a sound, but does so on a descending scale, gradually fading away. Resonance on the contrary acts as an amplifier of sound, bouncing off on an enclosed, hard surface and producing new vibrations, and is as such associated with an eruption of force and new energy. Resonance also offers a refreshing alternative to the ocular paradigm of reflection, which suggests a disjunction of subject and object, be it through a gaze, a mirror, or a veil. Honouring "the claim of the ear" rather than "the primacy of the eye" (Dimock 1997), resonance entails the collapse of the boundary between perceiver and perceived, as in the example of the practice in jazz or pop music of "corner loading" detailed by Peter Doyle. This happens when a musician recording in studio faces a plastered or wood-panelled corner:

A feedback loop is set up: the musician makes sounds, the sounds resonate off the walls, the musician hears that resonance, as well as the sounds coming directly from the instrument, and accordingly adjusts and intensifies his own manipulation of the sound-making apparatus, be it voice or instrument. [...] He plays the room. (Doyle 2005, p. 77)

In this scheme of things, Doyle continues, "room architecture itself is enlisted so as to become a temporary aspect of the self," (Doyle 2005, p. 78) as the distance between self and surroundings is replaced by an osmosis and a synergy between what is self and what is other.

Using soundscape, and more particularly resonance, as a model therefore allows for displacing the focus to environments, rather than just defining acting subjects and acted-upon objects in them.¹ In doing so, our project turned to the rich musical lexicon recurrently used by critics in recent years to address circulations in the field of cultural geography.

¹Emily Thompson defines the soundscape as "simultaneously a physical environment and a way of perceiving that environment" (Sterne 2012, p. 117).



Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's definition of territory through the notion of "ritournelle" or refrain has been inspirational in this respect. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, the two authors adapted the motif from a purely musical sense to a philosophical concept related to time and territory. Their chapter "Of the Refrain" reshapes our understanding of physical space classically defined through three linear dimensions, with objects having relative positions in it, determined by coordinates. For Deleuze and Guattari the practice of space—be it through birds' songs in the example taken by them or through human equivalents—transforms it into "milieus" which are not preconditioned to accommodate specific objects or events, but are in a perpetual state of coding and transcoding:

...one milieu serves as the basis for another, or conversely is established atop another milieu, dissipates in it, or is constituted in it. The notion of the milieu is not unitary: not only does the living thing continually pass from one milieu to another, but the milieus pass into one another, they are essentially communicating. (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, p. 313)

Deleuze and Guattari's theorisation complements earlier work by Deleuze, in particular in *Difference and Repetition*, in which he invited a move from the negative determination of difference—what is "not-this"—to a positive approach. For him repetition is that which differs in itself, that which returns but is never the same: "[d]ifference inhabits repetition," he asserts (Deleuze 1994, 76). While acknowledging repetition, his approach to difference is thus resolutely non-essentialist.

Accordingly, although the contributions in this volume all address interactions involving early modern England and different parts of Asia, we have chosen to primarily entitle our project "Eastern" rather than "Asian" resonances. Our "East" is neither an Orientalist, essentialist fiction, nor a single, geographically bounded entity, but primarily a matter of practised spaces and connected milieus. Following the current "global turn" in research across disciplines (Berg 2013), our interest is in the accumulation of meanings that people, objects, and cultural phenomena acquire in their journeys across seas and lands. As with Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello's example of a seventeenth-century ivory knife from the Victoria and Albert Museum collections, combining a blade made in Sheffield and a handle carved in Goa (Gerritsen and Riello 2016, p. 17), what is of interest to us is to investigate how the narratives of people, objects, and cultural phenomena acquire and shift their



meanings through circulations and interconnections. In this endeavour, resonance becomes for us not just an underlying metaphor but a method of investigation.

There are grounds for such an approach within the philosophical and aetiological thinking of the early modern period itself. Mapping the works of such key figures of the Scientific Revolution and of the Enlightenment as René Descartes and Denis Diderot, Veit Erlmann invites us to reconsider that period as “a moment in Western cultural history when reason and resonance developed in contiguity” as they faced “strikingly similar problems concerning the foundations of subjectivity, truth, and sensation” (Erlmann 2010, pp. 11–12). Erlmann underlines in particular the frequent play on the two meanings of the French verb “entendre”—hearing and understanding—in Descartes’ writings (Erlmann 2010, p. 31) and the latter’s reflections on the formation of the foetus and the sympathetic resonance of the unborn child’s body parts with the mother’s heart.² Erlmann also quotes the sensualist philosopher Diderot’s image of the human harpsichord—“un clavecin organisé,” as he calls it in an *Entretien* with D’Alembert (Diderot 1951, p. 880)—apprehending the world and constructing its own rational self through haphazard combinations of fragmented sensations:

But vibrating strings have yet another property – to make other strings quiver. And thus the first idea recalls a second, and these a third, then all three a fourth, and so it goes, without our being able to set a limit to the ideas that are aroused and linked in a philosopher who meditates or who listens to himself in silence and darkness.³

A similar approach to the human mind as “endued with a natural disposition to resonance and sympathy” (Jones 1792, p. 57) is represented in our volume in the contribution made by Michael J. Franklin on the work of one of the defining figures of Orientalism, William Jones. Taking as its chamber of resonance the treatise “On the Musical Modes of the

²See in particular the development in *Compendium musicae* (1618), in Descartes (1985, pp. 7–14).

³Mais les cordes vibrantes ont encore une autre propriété, c’est d’en faire frémir d’autres et c’est ainsi qu’une première idée en rappelle une seconde, ces deux-là une troisième, toutes les trois une quatrième, et ainsi de suite, sans qu’on puisse fixer la limite des idées réveillées, enchaînées, du philosophe qui médite ou qui s’écoute dans le silence et l’obscurité (Diderot 1951, p. 879; translated in Erlmann 2010, p. 9).



Hindus” (1792), Franklin analyses the contributions of the matter of India to the making of Jones’s proto-Romantic emotionalist theory of the arts and also looks at the ways it is inflected by his earlier tyrannicidal “Ode in Imitation of Callistratus” (1782), urging the “triple Harmony” of the mixed republic and the call for manhood suffrage. Though not directly taking root in a reflection on eastern musical traditions, the other contributions in this volume follow the same method in using eastern resonances as ways of bringing about reconfigurations of thoughts, identities, and objects in the West. They are presented here in a manner that distinguishes between three types of resonances—symbolic, discursive, and material. Within each section, the chapters broadly follow a chronological order, but with internal resonances between them, according to our main method of investigation.

The first part dedicated to symbolic resonances reflects on questions of models, circulations, and correspondences between England and its multiple Easts. Supriya Chauduri opens this section with an essay on the Bolognese traveller Ludovico de Varthema’s *Itinerario* (1510) as a work placed at the junction between geographical knowledge, autobiographical account, and translation and print circuits. She locates Varthema as part of the larger community of *passeurs culturels* and trickster-travellers famously studied by Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Natalie Zemon Davis (Subrahmanyam 2011; Davis 2008), and interprets his account in the light of the larger history of travel writing. The chapter unpacks various strategies of *bricolage* used by Varthema to define his persona and his mode of writing. It also investigates the resonances of his work in various European linguistic and cultural spaces, in languages such as Latin, German, Dutch, French, and Castilian, and in many forms including engravings. Finding repercussions and disseminations in English travel compendiums (Richard Eden, Richard Willes, Samuel Purchas), the Varthema type even becomes a century later an ancestor to Thomas Coryate, “traveller for the English wits” (Coryate 1616), who recycles the model of the *Itinerario* for his own self-staging. Considering the ensemble formed around Varthema, Chauduri signposts the stages through which the early modern traveller became a historically resonant figure for his contemporaries and for later generations and asks about the stakes of his resonance for us today at the occasion of a recent exhibition devoted to Varthema in Delhi.

In the following contribution, Matthew Dimmock discusses another complex set of shape-shifting associations in English and other cultural



frames, this time involving the figure of the legendary Queen of Sheba. Early modern English geographers and playwrights placed the figure of Sheba, which looms large in all three monotheistic traditions, in increasingly eastern and Islamic locales, but they also frequently turned her into a symbol of the church submitting to Henry VIII and a useful model for the celebration of female monarchy for Elizabeth I. In the latter case, Dimmock argues that the model is in fact an ambivalent one, with some texts positioning Elizabeth as Sheba, while others feminise the monarchs who send emissaries to her as Shebas, allowing Elizabeth to take the symbolic position of Solomon. The chapter also reflects on the ways in which this “eastern” figure of Sheba resonates in the context of Anglo-Islamic contacts resulting from the Anglo-Spanish conflict and the new alliances contracted by England in the 1580s. As Dimmock’s analysis of the letters exchanged between Elizabeth I and the Ottoman Sultan Murad III demonstrates, the identifications created deep resonances in England but also at the Ottoman Court. Dimmock’s chapter thus complements Helen Hackett’s landmark *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen* (Hackett 1995) by arguing that alongside the list of icons already identified by Hackett, such as Cynthia and Gloriana, we need to include the Queen of Sheba in order to account for the new positions that England and its queen meant to play on the international scene. For Dimmock, the absence of Sheba from Hackett’s list is indicative of a gap to be filled in terms of critical engagement with a late sixteenth-century English culture that was deliberately looking to North Africa and the Ottoman Empire and therefore had to shape an image of its queen in a way that could resonate with these new strategic partners.

The first part closes with Michael Franklin’s reflections on William Jones’s fascination with—and enquiries into—Indian music and music theory. Drawing on a number of lesser studied works by the prolific orientalist, Franklin retraces for us the resonances of classical and Indian music theories in Jones’s political and literary writings. In Britain, Jones’s classically composed “Ode in Imitation of Callistratus” had urged the power of rhythm and harmony at the service of a political ideal of universal suffrage, while in Bengal Jonesian Orientalism extolled Emperor Akbar’s peaceful path of *Sulh-i-Kulh* as a model of governance that both preserved and harmonised Vedantic and Sufi culture, art, philosophy, and religion. Jones’s syncretic endeavours culminate in the hymns he composed after Indian models—“A Hymn to Náráyena” and “A Hymn to Sereswaty”—foregrounding in them the virtues of comparative research,



cultural pluralism, and religious syncretism. And yet, Franklin warns us in conclusion about the limits of the romantic orientalist ideal that was formed in the early stages of the British colonisation of India, when in practice administrators such as Jones, who served as a judge at the Supreme Court of Calcutta, also compiled and translated the codes that would help them govern Hindus and Muslims as separated subjects, while firmly believing in the “unexampled felicity of our nation” in the process (Jones 1792, p. 62).

Gathering its case studies from a period running over three centuries and bringing together the figures of a trickster-traveller, a mythical queen, and an orientalist as varieties of transcoding *passseurs culturels*, this opening section in our volume offers options for thinking about the East not just as an object to be looked at, inspected, and fantasised about, but rather as an agent of resonance throughout the early modern and Enlightenment periods, never a would-be “original” brought in submission to English shores, but always avowedly reterritorialised and dialogised.

The second part, which is more directly concerned with textual resonances and questions of receptions, transformations and translations, opens with Jane Grogan’s chapter devoted to textual reception as resonance, theorised as a far more dynamic and dialogic model than direct intertextuality. Grogan’s enquiry centres on a densely annotated copy of the first 1552 edition of the English translation of Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* now held at the Huntington Library. She considers the multiple temporalities at stake in the reception of this volume, as they can be retrieved from its annotations in one or several Tudor hands and the use late eighteenth-century possessors made of it while editing a variorum edition of Shakespeare’s works and trying to prove that the Bard’s classical knowledge had come to him through translated works such as this one rather than originals in Latin and Greek. In the course of her study of the annotations, Grogan also underlines how much the early modern image of Persia in England owed to ancient accounts of the Achaemenids, to the point of obstructing at times data about the country under contemporary Safavid rule, while the appealing figure of Cyrus the Great gets mobilised and reterritorialised in a cultural and political imaginary specific to Tudor England’s preoccupations. Calling for an accretionary approach to the reception of this volume and its contents, Grogan traces a vibrant tradition of scholarly and pedagogic commentary around it over a period of two and a half centuries. Multiple and



unpredictable, the resonances of the matter of the East in and around this copy pertain to an often neglected “sociology of texts” advocated by D. F. McKenzie (1986) and taken up by Grogan in her refreshing approach to reception studies.

Louisiane Ferlier and Claire Gallien’s contribution pursues the exploration on the wayward trajectories of the enterprises of textual transmission and reception, tightening the scope this time on a period of thirty years covered by four very different translations of a same twelfth-century Arabic philosophical tale, Ibn Tufayl’s *Hayy Ibn Yaqdhan*. The translations/adaptations were made by George Keith, George Ashwell, George Conyers and Simon Ockley, respectively in 1674, 1686, 1690, and 1708. These in turn inspired two adventure novels—Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and John Kirkby’s *Life and Surprising Adventures of Don Juliani de Trezz* (1722)—offering variations on the figure of the isolated man on a utopian island, while in 1721 Cotton Mather defended the concept of natural theology with a reference to the same tale in his *Christian Philosopher*. Returning to the four translations and to their paratextual apparatuses, Ferlier and Gallien examine the question of textual resonances across and between languages, from Arabic to Latin and then English, and contexts, as well as the translators’ negotiations with the original text, paying particular attention to the ways in which they manipulated the Eastern philosophical tale to support their personal endeavours and respond to each other. Here, *Hayy Ibn Yaqdhan* is treated at once as a unique editorial phenomenon and as a case study for the ways in which Eastern texts reverberated in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England against the backdrops of theological controversies and a fashion for the Oriental tale best exemplified by Antoine Galland’s translation of *One Thousand and One Nights* (1704–1717). Ferlier and Gallien point out that the authors were less interested in providing accurate versions in English of the *Hayy* narrative than in creating new resonances, by bending the tale to their own theological and literary purposes. In scrutinising the contexts of the four versions, Ferlier and Gallien underscore how a shift from a religious to a romantic use of the oriental tale occurred between these translations, echoing the larger transition in Arabic learning at the time from theological to literary concerns.

In the final chapter of this section, Laurence Williams tackles the complex discursive reverberations in English of the fall of the Ming dynasty at the hands of the Manchu “Tartar” Qings in 1644, as



transmitted to the West through the historical account of the Jesuit missionary Martino Martini, *De Bello Tartarico Historia* (1654), translated into English by John Crook. Approaching resonance primarily as a disruptive process of vibration and destabilisation within a preexisting movement, Williams considers the many ripple effects contributed by the new stereotypes of the would-be Tartars' warlike nomadism forced into an existing body of Chinese stereotypes of effeminate and indolent civilization. Those ripple effects are followed by him into a vast literary body including heroic plays celebrating the Tartars' reinvigorating masculinity, Miltonian metaphors demonising the wandering threat, picaresque novels dealing with Tartary as a place of both geographical and rhetorical extremity, refracted in narrative digressions and nonsense speech. The process culminates with the vogue of *Chinoiserie* satires where, Williams argues, the "Tartar trope" appears as a rich reservoir for transgressive grotesque and cultural hybridity, lurking on the borders of the British dilettantes' enthusiasm with China. This satirical dimension in turn spills over the whole growing appetite of the age for *Chinoiserie*, ironically making the Tartars stand out as imaginative invaders and reappropriators of British upper-class homes and gardens. A final section in this chapter helpfully contrasts seventeenth- and eighteenth-century resonant treatments of the tropes of Tartary and China with those of the Victorian age, in which the territorial domination exemplified by such episodes as the onset of the Great Game in Central Asia (1839) and the first Opium War (1839–1842) went hand in hand with an imaginative curbing of the Tartar and Chinese materials in literary works.

The influence of *Chinoiserie* in English gardening and architecture hinges Williams's contribution to the next one, by Vanessa Alayrac-Fielding who opens the third and final section in our volume, bringing into play the connection between material culture and artistic sensibilities. Here, Alayrac-Fielding analyses the contribution of Chinese models to a new conception of landscape gardening in the post-Glorious Revolution context. She argues that it was in response to a garden image of continental despotism represented by French gardens' symmetry and central designs that England developed its own landscape gardening, using Chinese motives and praising the supposedly far-eastern ideal of "sharawadgi" to value irregular beauty and disorder. Thus the matter of China was made to resonate with an English construction of national identity and sensibility against continental models. Alayrac-Fielding traces those far-eastern resonances into several works, including William



Temple's "Upon the Garden of Epicurus" (1685) and a 1712 essay by Joseph Addison in the *Spectator*, before considering the degree of manipulation and accommodation involved in the process through the case study of the illustrations from Matteo Ripa's *Thirty-Six Views of Jehol* (1711–1713), adapted into English as *The Emperor of China's Palace at Peking* (1753). Ultimately, she concludes that China does not merely contribute exotic ornamentation to English gardens, but rather engages in a full transnational and transhistorical conversation, a process overall studied by Srinivas Aravamudan as a marker of Enlightenment orientalism (Aravamudan 2011), as opposed to its nineteenth-century imperialistic counterpart famously denounced in the Saidian paradigm.

With Diego Saglia's contribution, we return once more to India, focusing this time on British fictional and non-fictional responses in the long eighteenth century to the aesthetic and ideological challenge of India as an overwhelming profusion of signs and objects. Revisiting Nigel Leask's interpretative model of the Romantics' East as inflected by a shift from mercantilism to colonialism (Leask 1992), Saglia argues that the romantic moment itself resonates within a larger temporal frame. Accordingly, in this chapter he follows the reverberations and modifications of what he calls "the aesthetics of the bazaar" over the course of two centuries, starting with the classical image of India as a *cornucopia* as it can be gathered from seventeenth-century accounts, such as the letters of Sir Thomas Roe (1615) at the dawn of English diplomatic and commercial relations with India. Yet, as the British empire expanded, Saglia notes how the ideological consensus about it receded, paving the way for critiques of commercial and colonial expansionism in a context of enlightened and revolutionary movements, calling into question the topos of India as a repository for endless wealth and bringing in dystopian images of potential economic exhaustion and decay, as in Thomas Beddoes's *Alexander's Expedition* (1792). Next replacing the topos of the bazaar within the rising literary trend of the prose sketch at the turn of the nineteenth century, Saglia underlines how this trend records a failure to totalise and control the excess of India and to dominate it through a textual process of accumulation and multiplication. For Saglia, the textually fragmentary and incomplete depictions of India relay its untamable superabundance and thereby its resistance to assimilation and digestion by the empire. For him, post-romantic India marks its departure from that of the Romantics by still demanding to be represented while resisting an exhaustive figuration.



The closing chapter of our volume doubly places itself at the edge of the British empire in India, chronologically and spatially. Here, Anne-Julie Etter turns to the antiquarian activities of the East India Company employees in the post-Hastings period and focuses on the process of constitution of private and public collections of Indian statues. Etter's study blends personal biography and material culture for a multilayered approach to meaning. Her work engages with Richard Davis's concept of the "lives of Indian images" and how objects are given renewed significances while being successively appropriated by diverse communities (Davis 1997), as well as with Maya Jasanoff's concept of "self-fashioning" in colonial contexts and through collecting activities (Jasanoff 2005). She details the different modalities through which British collectors acquired statues, from thefts and spoliations to gifts as the Raj was getting put in place, and how these various modalities may in turn have affected the ways in which the objects resonated for their collectors. By taking into account both individual and collective resonances of objects, Etter weaves affective memory with knowledge acquisition and imperial fashioning, as statues were transferred from the houses of homebound collectors to East India Company offices, libraries, and museums.

Etter's contribution marks a *terminus ad quem* for the investigation on Eastern transfers undertaken in our volume. The method we have followed throughout has been close to Walter Benjamin's conception of translation as "*fortleben*" ("afterlife") in his essay on "The Task of the Translator" ("Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers," 1923). As noted by Caroline Disler, the compound "suggests progress (*Fortschritt*), separation (*Fortgehen*), complementarity, supplementation, futurity, transformation" (Disler 2011, p. 189). She further argues that translating "*fortleben*" as either "afterlife" or "survival" (for which the German equivalents would be "*überleben*" or "*weiterleben*") does not render full justice to the concept:

There has been no death, no damage, no catastrophe to the original. There is no afterlife. There is no survival. Neither is there a simple continuation of the original that was. There is *Fortleben*, metamorphosis, evolution, transformation, renewal, renovation, supplementation. (Disler 2011, p. 193)

The Benjaminian conception of "connection of life" in translation, i.e. transformation and renewal between source texts and translated texts rather than imitation between original and copy, has had a deep impact



on our own perception of Eastern resonances in the early modern and Enlightenment English imaginations. Firstly, the volume has sought to dissociate itself from declinist positions premised on the fallacy of an original losing its supposed authenticity as it moves across various cultural landscapes. Instead, we have investigated Eastern resonances as *fortleben*, i.e. as transformations, renewals, and supplementations of objects, images, and texts coming to Britain from the parts of the globe it orientalist. Secondly, we have tried to operate within a frame that is intra- rather than intercultural, considering that the objects and forms that circulate over the period do not belong to separate cultural blocks which would merely exchange with each other, but are the productions of specific locations moved by affective, political, and economic forces. Finally, the multidirectional approach we have endorsed in studying resonances has been concerned with difference in repetition, with the new inflections given to Eastern texts, objects, and tropes as they were moved and relocated in the West. The musical trope used throughout has been crucial for thinking of the presence of the East in English culture not as fixed copies of an alien original, but as multiple and shape-shifting reformulations. It has enabled us to place the emphasis not on fading traces of objects *as dislocated*, but on their renewed presence and meaning *as reterritorialised*. For us, Eastern resonances have constituted sites where English identities could be defined, confirmed, questioned, split, or reconfigured, but in all cases where their autonomy and homogeneity as ontological subjects were challenged and where polarities were unsettled.

Ultimately, as Nick Nesbitt cogently summarises: “A body can only resonate with another if they have certain characteristics in common” (Nesbitt 2004, p. 70). Accepting the share of the other within the self implies making room for it in our conception of hospitality, along the lines defined by Jacques Derrida in *Writing and Difference*. There, Derrida suggested that hospitality cannot simply mean reaching out to the other but must also imply the clearing of a space within the self to accommodate the dissenting voice of the other, making the self accessible, vulnerable, and open to questions framed in ways that are not familiar (Derrida 1978, p. 131). This is what we have tried to do in this volume by looking into the transformations of Eastern objects inside the spaces cleared for them within early modern English works. We hope the result we have reached is in tune with Juliana De Nooy’s summary of Derrida’s developments on alterity within identity through the metaphor of resonance:



...getting a buzz from the buzzing. Sound produced here by sound waves coming from ... where? This is the otherness without the *presence* of the other, without direct access. The other is not there to behold but leaves traces in the form of echoes. The other sets off reverberations that strike a chord within us as sympathetic vibrations transmitted from one space or body to another. Resonance is produced within sameness as sympathetic vibrations, but reproduces otherness, doubling it. In doing so, it disturbs what seemed like a simple opposition: same/other, known/unknowable, inside/outside, us/them. Suddenly we can see that the other is also within. (De Nooy 1998, p. 9)

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