



STRIVING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN DRAMA *RAINBOW'S END* (2005) BY JANE HARRISON

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Abstract

This thesis is the analysis of a play which written by Jane Harrison entitled *Rainbow's End* (2005). It explores the issue of striving for human rights by making use of the given opportunities and resisting oppression. It is reflected by the characters in the play. It is also intended to find out the contribution of fictional devices such as character, plot (conflicts), and setting in revealing the issue of striving for human rights. This analysis is related to the concept of agency in postcolonial theory by Ashcroft et al. that is supported by the text-based and context-based interpretation. The result of this analysis shows about striving for human rights that is experienced by characters by making use of the given opportunities and resisting oppression.

Key words: striving, human rights, opportunities, resisting, agency

A. INTRODUCTION

A play entitled *Rainbow's End* (2005) written by Jane Harrison reflects the issue about striving for human rights. In this analysis, striving for human rights refers to characters making use of the given opportunities and resisting oppression. It is represented by the characters. The characters are treated as unequal to white people. They face many injustices to support a fairly balanced life. The characters realize that they are being mistreated. As a result of having agency, they strive to demand their rights as human beings. Their struggle resulted in them taking great efforts to gain their human rights. Their actions to gain their human rights are making use of given opportunities and resisting oppression.

In term of making use of the given opportunities, the characters make use of education. The characters also find better occupation. In term of resisting oppression, the characters vocalize their voices.

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B. RESEARCH METHOD

The analysis of play *Rainbow's End* (2005) by Jane Harrison is going through text and context based interpretation. It is analyzed by using fictional devices such as characters, plot (conflicts), and setting. Characters and plot are used to reveal the act of striving for their rights by analyzing the characters' action and emotion toward the conflicts. Then, the setting deals with the circumstances and atmosphere. It gives contribution in the process of analyzing by giving help in revealing the meaning.

This analysis is dealing with the concept of agency in postcolonial theory by Ashcroft et al. Agency is crucial in post-colonial theory because it refers to the ability of post-colonial subjects to initiate actions related to resisting imperial power. This refers to agency as a willpower produced by the agent to exert their power or ability to achieve what they desire.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Making use of the given opportunities

Making use of the given opportunities is one of the actions in which the characters strive for human rights. The characters make use of the given opportunities can be seen from what the characters do due to restrictions on the ownership of human rights. Human rights are limited by those in power over the characters, such as the right to have equal education and decent jobs. In relation to this limitation, the characters take advantage of the given opportunities to fight for their human rights. Her way in making use of the given opportunities is done by participating in education. It can be seen from the quotation below:

DOLLY: [shyly] Is it good selling encyclopedias?

ERROL: Sure. I'm out and about—free. I meet all sorts of people. What about you? What will you do when you leave school?

DOLLY: Pick. ERROL: Pick?

DOLLY: You know, fruit... Or the Blue Moon. Errol is puzzled. The cannery. [Beat]. Maybe the hospital. But really, I... it's silly. But I'd kind of like to be a nurse.

ERROL: That's not silly... Nurse Dolly.

DOLLY: But Mum reckons I'm good with figures—you know, algebra. Of course you know. But what could I do with that?

ERROL: Why, lots— (act.1; sc.3; p.21)

The quotation above shows that the character is making use of the given opportunity that comes to her. The character is asked about what she wants to do after graduating. She answers she wants to work as a nurse in the hospital. The character's certainty of what she wants is interpreted that she has the desire and capability to achieve her goal. This shows that the character makes use of the given opportunity by participating in education. The character's certainty is supported by her capability on a subject relating to her dream job. While, she is also good at another subject, algebra, where not many people can manage it well.

Thus, her participation in her education indicates that the character makes use of the given opportunities.

The character's way to success on achieving her dream job is a result of her making use of the given opportunities. She bought encyclopedias, a sign for academic world, to broaden her knowledge to support her education. It can be seen from the quotation below:

(As the lights come up, Gladys is going around the humpy emptying the mouse traps of dead mice and setting new traps, while Dolly does her homework. A song is heard on the radiogram: 'I'll Be Home' by Pat Boone.)

GLADYS: First hint of cold weather and they're in, like a flash. (Dolly sings a line from the song.) I made payment today. (Dolly glances up and sees another volume of the encyclopedia is on the bookcase.)

DOLLY: Up to K. I'll be nineteen by the time we're up to Z. (Dolly goes over and gets down the latest volume and pours over it.)

GLADYS: You do think they're wonderful, though? You're expending your possibilities'?

DOLLY: Of course, Mum. Every day I learn something new about the big, wide world. That see-through section with the body—the muscles, and the bones, and the veins—that's my favourite. I love reading about the gizzards.

GLADYS: My... gizzards. That makes it all worthwhile. (act.1; sc. 9; p.40-41)

The quotation above shows that Gladys makes an effort to provide Dolly with better educational necessities. She makes use of given opportunities for Dolly to expand her possibilities in life. She wants Dolly to experience the possibilities that she never had. Dolly is also excited to take on new opportunities. Her love of reading about gizzards and things relating to the human body shows how passionate she is about becoming a nurse.

The character always supports her daughter to have good education, then achieving her dream job as a nurse. This is how she makes use of the given opportunity that come to them. It can be seen from the quotation below:

DOLLY: [whispering] You should be up there making the speech, Mum.

NAN DEAR: Gawd no, that's men's business.

DOLLY: Not always, Nan. What's women's business, anyway?

NAN DEAR: Family business, that's what.

DOLLY: [whispering] Keeping the secrets, you mean. [To GLADYS] I'm sorry, Mum, about the bank interview.

GLADYS: [whispering] Well, why didn't you tell me about the nursing? My girl, a nurse! On a scholarship and all!

DOLLY: There was nothing in writing. I couldn't.

GLADYS: Keeping secrets from your own mother! Fancy—you going all the way to Melbourne. You sure that's what you want? DOLLY: I'm sure, Mum. And with Nan's help with Regina... (act.2; sc.7; p. 72-73)

The quotation above shows how Dolly makes use of the given opportunity by getting her scholarship in nursing. Her success is regarding her agency as she exerts her willpower to achieve her desire. Related to the definition of agency by Tully (2003), indigenous people struggle for and of freedom. This statement lines up with how Dolly makes use of the given opportunities. She is trying her best to achieve her desirable job because she wants to get her freedom. She doesn't want to live like her family as they have been oppressed by imperial power. With her moving away from her hometown, she most likely will have the opportunity to be in an inclusive society.

Relating to what Dolly said about her bank interview, it is one of the characters' way to make use of given opportunities. The human rights that they try to strive is a decent occupation. The proof is from the quotation below:

DOLLY: Mum, there's a summer job going at Trevaks that I could try for. They teach you the cash register. And I could maybe get offcuts for you to sew, Nan! I know I could do it.

GLADYS: Of course you could!

NAN DEAR: You'll be at the Blue Moon. With us. As usual.

GLADYS: [hopefully] But it sounds like a good job... a good opportunity... (DOLLY leaves the room. As soon as she's out of sight, NAN hisses at GLADYS.)

NAN DEAR: They're never going to give her that job.

GLADYS: She's good with figures.

NAN DEAR: A girl from The Flats? I don't even see the town Aboriginals working in stores.

GLADYS: Why should her address stop her in life? (act.1; sc.4; p.23)

The quotation above shows that Dolly is making use of given opportunities to work at a bank. It's known that Aboriginals are restricted to work aside from being a pick. It is said as NAN said "They're never going to give her that job."; "A girl from The Flats? I don't even see the town Aboriginals working in stores." It can be meant that Aboriginals are being excluded from society. Their human rights are being limited simply because their skin-color. But they did not give up on trying to get their right even though they are excluded from society. They use their education and knowledge for finding a better occupation. They use the job vacancy as their way of making use of given opportunities to strive for their human rights, getting a decent occupation with their background knowledge and education.

The quotation below is another proof of taking opportunity by the characters. They take opportunity by asking other how to write and read. The quotation is:

(ERROL hurries up the track and is relieved to see GLADYS— in a similar scene to the first time he saw her, chopping wood— but this time outside the new Rumbalara housing. ERROL approaches her very tentatively.)

GLADYS: *Why are you here, Errol?*

ERROL: *I'm sorry to bother you. It's about the—*

GLADYS & ERROL: [simultaneously] *Encyclopedia.*

GLADYS: *We... I... won't be needing them any more. All the shillings go into the meter box now.*

ERROL: *Isn't there any way...?*

GLADYS: *No.*

ERROL: *Oh... Thing is, the contract. You signed it.*

GLADYS: *Yes.*

ERROL: *So you need to cancel it. You're not meant to be able to. But there are circumstances...*

GLADYS: *I have 'circumstances' all right.*

ERROL: *But it has to be done in writing.*

GLADYS: *Well, I can't, can I? [Beat.] I can't.*

ERROL: *You mean, you can't write?*

GLADYS: *You're slow on the uptake, lad.*

ERROL: *I've never met anyone—*

GLADYS: *—that can't read and write?*

ERROL: *Yes.*

GLADYS: *Now you have. Could I ask you a favour, Errol? I can't ask my mother—she works day and night. And Dolly's offered, but—*

ERROL: *The favour?*

GLADYS: *Could you teach me, Errol? See, we had a school and good teachers at Cumbergunja at one time, that's why Mum has such beautiful handwriting, but then the mission managers were terrible and it was all downhill, and I got sent off to work for a family. A family of six and a big house to look after—who had time for learning? Then I married Len and we were picking and along came the children, and then the war, and we were all so busy knitting for the war effort and I thought I'd get around to learning from someone but they were all... so busy.*

ERROL: *I had no idea... that any of that went on...*

GLADYS: *Then my darn pride got in the way—*

ERROL: *It'd be an honour, Mrs Banks.*

GLADYS: *It would...? Thank you. (act.2;sc.4;p.62-65)*

The quotation above shows that the character's circumstances cause her to make use of given opportunities. In the dialogue above, it can be seen that Gladys asks Errol to teach her how to read and write. Her inability to read and write is the result of her rights being abused. Gladys's request can be seen as showing her agency. Agency is a way to exert willpower. In this sense, the character has the willpower to not give up on improving herself. Her circumstances aren't discouraging her to make the imperial power look down on her. This is why she makes use of given opportunities. It is to make her and her people's voices be heard. She wants to make changes that will benefit her people and herself.

In sum, making use of the given opportunity is a way characters in the drama *Rainbow's End* (2005) strive for their human rights. The setting, plot and characters support the revealing striving for human rights. The concept of agency also helps to expose the issue of striving for human rights. One of the ways of making use of given opportunities is by participating in their education. Their participation is not only by attending school, but it is also by buying encyclopedias to broaden their knowledge. The help other to read and write also play the role of making use of given opportunities. At last, all their actions are the contribution to striving for their human rights.

2. Resisting the oppression

Resisting oppression is another way for the characters in *Rainbow's End* to strive for their human rights. Their human rights are not fulfilled because of unfairness in their social life. The characters do not receive the privilege of the right, which is to voice their opinions because they are not considered important and also a minority. The resistance in this analysis carried out by the characters, setting, and plot.

The quotation below shows that the character resists the oppressors by vocalizing their ideas and confronting them:

RADIO ANNOUNCER: [voice over] *We resume our live broadcast of the Rodney Shire Council meeting...*

COUNCILLOR 1: [voice-over]...*on Crown Land. We bulldozed the shanties but they're creeping back. This housing problem is not going away. The lack of sanitation poses a serious risk to the good of our town—*

COUNCILLOR 2: [voice-over] *Why can't an ablutions block be built out there?*

GLADYS: *Excuse me...*

COUNCILLOR 1: [voice-over] *The night cart, for one, can't get access for part of the year due to the flooding—*

GLADYS: [voice-over] *If I could say something...*

COUNCILLOR 2: [voice-over] *Then build it at Daish's Paddock.*

COUNCILLOR 1: [voice-over] That's out of the question.
GLADYS: [voice-over] Why so?
COUNCILLOR 1: [voice-over] Daish's is our town tip site, that serves the whole of our community, not just an itinerant minority, as the councillor for the West Ward well knows... (There's a roar from outraged councillors.)
GLADYS: [voice-over] Oi! Re the so-called 'housing problem', it is a housing problem because us Aboriginals—
GLADYS: [voice-over] —us Aboriginals are not welcome in the townships—
CHAIRMAN: [voice-over] Madam! (GLADYS needs to fight to be heard over the roars of the councillors.)
GLADYS: [voice-over] And apart from those concrete humpies that you built—call them houses?
CHAIRMAN: [voice-over] Order! I must insist—
GLADYS: [voice-over] And what about the other families? If you won't let us build our own houses on higher ground—
CHAIRMAN: [voice-over] The Chair does not recognise this—
GLADYS: [voice-over] —as if we choose to live on a floodplain—not realising that we need water too—to cook and to clean—
CHAIRMAN: [voice-over] There are protocols! If you read the rules—
GLADYS: [voice-over] Maybe you don't think we do wash—
CHAIRMAN: [voice-over] Eject this interloper—
GLADYS: [voice-over] I'm not an interloper—I belong here—this is my land!
CHAIRMAN: [voice-over] Madam, read the rules! Eject her!
CROWD: [voice-over] Hear! Hear!
GLADYS: [voice-over] I haven't finished. In fact I'm just starting re 'the housing problem'... (Her voice fades out as she is being led away.) (act.2; sc.3; p. 60-62)

The quotation above is a situation where the character is invited to discuss the relocation of the aboriginals' housing. Yet, the dialogue above shows that the imperial power is more dominant than the aboriginals. It signifies that Aboriginals have little to say in their own lives. The Chairman's reaction to Gladys's showing her resistance denotes that they never expect Aboriginals to have the courage to resist the imperial power. Despite the colonization and war being gone, the discrimination and racism towards Aboriginal are still alive. They are being revoked of their lands and their rights. The imperial power think that they have the right to exercise their power over the colonized (Said, 2003; Vichiensing, 2017). It can be seen that the imperial power has the mindset that they are the one who hold the higher power. It is ingrained in them that nothing is better and more powerful than them when it comes to others' lives. With Gladys's courage, she proves that Aboriginal has the power to silence the imperial power and can resist their oppression by vocalizing their thought and confronting them. Gladys's

attitude is justifiable because it is her reaction after being neglected and silenced the whole time. She uses this opportunity to express her dejection. She intends to get the imperial power to see the perspectives of the Aboriginals. Instead of understanding her concerns and ideas, the imperial power silenced her. She proposes to have Aboriginals posse a good life where they can live among themselves and not be victimized by the imperial power.

The irony of this conversation is that the imperial power claims they try to make a better environment for the Aboriginal people. Yet, when the Aboriginal people give their opinion about what was best for them, the imperial power act defensively and silenced them. Therefore, the only way for Aboriginal to be heard is to resist and vocalize their ideas.

Another proof that the character has the ability to resist the oppressor by voicing their ideas and not let the oppressor interfere their family business. It canbe seen from quotation below:

(The RENT COLLECTOR is standing there.)

NAN DEAR: Mr Coody.

RENT COLLECTOR: Mrs Dear.

DOLLY: [offstage] Gawd, Nan, it's only just past seven and already it's stinking hot. Tonight I'll have to sleep on the roof like the others. Imagine me clambering up there— (She walks in, heavily pregnant, and stops dead when she sees the RENT COLLECTOR who looks with disdain at her body.)

RENT COLLECTOR: Your arrangements will need to be re-evaluated, with the impending new arrival. I'm not sure that the house is suitable for an extended family—

NAN DEAR: That's not of your concern. (She gets the eggs out of the basket.)

RENT COLLECTOR: It is very much of my concern. Everything to do with the habitation of this establishment is my concern.

NAN DEAR: This is Aboriginal Housing... [under her breath] not your own private kingdom. (DOLLY makes a sharp moan.) Go in, Doll. (NAN passes over the rent book and the payment.)

Here's the rent. Please leave.

RENT COLLECTOR: And the person I saw just leaving? NAN

DEAR: The midwife.

RENT COLLECTOR: I should think the hospital is a more suitable place—

NAN DEAR: [to herself] And hospitals is where they take our babies away.

RENT COLLECTOR: You realise it is outside visiting hours? Given your obvious flouting of the rules, I think—

NAN DEAR: I don't care what you think! You and your visiting hours. Your rules. No sing alongs after dark. Your spying. You, mister, can go to blazes! I'll give you 'one'... (She raises

an egg as he turns.) *Two... Oh hell, three.* (He runs. NAN chucks the eggs, one after the other, at his departing form.) (act.2; sc. 5; p.65-55)

The quotation above shows that the character can defend themselves. It shows that the character has her voices and agency. Nan Dear's act of resistance is the effect of a traumatizing event. The event is the Stolen Generations. According to FOCUS Asia-Pacific (1997) and Marten (2002), Stolen Generations refers to those children of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who were forcibly removed from their families from 1871 to 1969 by the Australian Federal and State government agencies and church missions to eradicate Aboriginal's culture, under acts of their respective parliaments. Nan Dear tries her best to deceive the rent collector into not touching her granddaughter. She tries not to repeat the past by not letting the rent collector have the audacity to interrogate their family. It is proven from Nan Dear's dialogue "And hospitals are where they take our babies away." It is to show how Stolen Generations worked. They take the Aboriginal babies away from their families and separate them to manipulate them into being the imperial power's puppets.

According to Keen (2000), women in traditional Aboriginal culture were respected for their role as life-givers. Consequently, Nan Dear's action of holding off Dolly from the rent collector is justifiable. Aboriginal women who live with violence show resilience and agency their whole life. In their mothering role, they work tirelessly to protect their children which includes lessening the risk from both a violent partner and a violent child welfare system that often seeks to remove their children. The resistance action is the way the characters strive for their rights. It is required of them to resist the imperial power to show that they are capable of living their lives.

Another proof that shows character has the ability to resist the oppressor by vocalizing their desires can be seen from the quotation below:

WOMEN ON MICROPHONE: [voice-over] *Ah... we've just had word. Papa Dear's been caught up at a funeral. If Uncle Wally is here, can he present the petition? Where are you, Uncle?*

GLADYS: *Petition. Uncle Wally... What's he got to do with this?* (She marches up to the podium.) *I will present the petition. [Tremulous] After all, me and my father Papa Dear, we came up with this here petition together... Gawd, I'm nervous — [To an audience member] Oh, hi there, Aunty... (She closes her eyes and without looking at the paper she begins.) As you know, William Cooper tried to present a petition to King George a few years back, but it was refused. Maybe our current monarch will listen to what we have to say. Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of England and her territories. We humbly present this petition to you... [To herself] Why humbly? We've been humble too long.*

Anyway...[She continues confidently.] *We request...* [To herself] *No, we don't, sorry Papa.* [Continuing] *We demand to be heard.*

CROWD: [offstage] *Hear, hear.*

GLADYS: *Your Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Second. We demand suitable housing for the Aboriginal people.* [To herself] *Yes, we got Rumbalara. And I'll be the first to admit, the idea sounded good. But—have you seen it? Concrete. No doors inside—so, we don't need privacy, not like regular folk, is that it? We want decent houses. Mrs Windsor, would you live at Rumbalara? Then why is it good enough for us? Why do we have to prove we can live like white fellas, before we get the same opportunities? And, to boot, we're watched over like a bunch of cheeky kids... We're second class citizens in our own country. No, we're not even citizens. Heavens, and this is the fifties! We demand the right to control our own destiny. Now how exactly did Papa Dear word it...? (She looks at the paper. She's lost her train of thought. She begins to panic. She's up in public, reading. She looks at the piece of paper wildly.)*

VOICE: [offstage] *Do you need your glasses?*

GLADYS: *No.* (There is a sustained moment of tension, then she hesitatingly reads one word, then another, then another.) *'We demand the right to make our own decisions, and not be at the whim of government, at the mercy of Protection Boards, at the vagary of landlords and property owners.'* *'We demand proper schooling.'* [To herself] *And not just for us.* [Continuing] *'The white people too—they need to be educated about us, and our ways.'* (She is reading more fluently now.) *'Opportunities. We want jobs in town for our sons and daughters. We want them to go to universities.'* [To herself] *Yes! Not just high schools but universities! And why not? They say we can't learn, but we can. We can do anything once we set our minds to it, eh? 'We, the undersigned, demand to be the equal of anyone. And we will fight for that right. And keep fighting. Until we are treated right. By our neighbours and employers. By the Shire, by the Crown, by Mr. Menzies.'* [To herself] *And if it's not him, then the next Prime Minister. Or the one after that. Lastly, and this isn't in the petition, but maybe it should be, I don't want my mother to be served last in the butcher's. And I want townsfolk to say, 'Hello, lovely day'. Not cross the road to avoid us like we're lepers.* [To her audience] *We can get along with each other, can't we?* (ERROL and DOLLY look at each other, longingly. NAN, as always, notices this and smiles.) (GLADYS has revved the CROWD into a frenzy, but as she looks at them, she stops abruptly, her natural modesty reasserting itself.) *Goodness, I think I've said more*

than enough. But please, signour petition. Come up to me afterwards. If you want me to read any part to you... I can. Thank you. (GLADYS ends her speech to tumultuous applause. DOLLY and ERROL again look at each other, very emotionally, clapping hard.) (act.2; sc.7; p.77- 79)

The quotation above represents how unfair the treatment Aboriginals receive throughout their life because of colonization. It immobilizes their movements to have a better life. Gladys' action in voicing her ideas is a way to strive for her rights. Gladys' speech is what has been the dream of Aboriginal people. They want people to see them as equal. They still have to deal with how people see them. They never get treated as other human beings. For Aboriginals, human rights or being treated as equals have never been granted. It is hard for them to even walk around the city because people still see them as threats. They have been trying many times to get noticed by the government. Yet, it seems like their opinions of them never reach them as they should have. Though they have been living alongside non-Aboriginals, the treatment is still worse than ever. Even though war and colonization are gone, discrimination is still the number one problem for Aboriginals.

As Gladys said, they never have the rights in their needs. It is always forced on them whether it is their housing problems or what jobs they can attain. Even though Aboriginals don't have much to say in everything they get, they always try to resist things that don't fit their inclination. They refuse to believe that Aboriginals can do anything without the power of the imperial power. It is such an irony when Gladys said, "We're second-class citizens in our own country. No, we're not even citizens. Heavens and this is the fifties!" The aboriginals have to get permission to get their rights from their colonizer. They have to strive to gain their human rights because they never have been seen as equals to the imperial power.

In sum, resisting the oppressor is one of the ways characters strive for human rights. The settings and characters' dialogue cause conflicts between characters. This refers to revealing the issue of striving for human rights. The concept of agency also helps expose the issue of striving for human rights. The characters' way to resist the oppressor is by voicing their ideas and confronting the imperial power. The settings of the drama set characters to resist their oppressor. They resist the oppressor because they have the agency of themselves. It leads to the characters being independent (they vocalize their voices, determining their own decisions without outside party interference). Their independence is needed to show their ability to equal life. At last, all their actions are the contributions to striving for their human rights.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Rainbow's End (2005) is the novel by Jane Harrison issued about the characters striving for their human rights. The analysis of the drama is analyzed using the concept of agency in postcolonial theory by Ascroft et al. (2000). The characters (as Aboriginal women) face injustices and lack their privileges as human beings. Consequently, they demand the society and higher party to grant them their human rights. Their ways to show their agency to strive for their human rights are by making use of the given opportunities and resisting oppression.

The first action from the characters to strive for their human rights is by making use of the opportunities. Making use of the given opportunities is crucial for the Aboriginals because not a lot of chances they get to get the same opportunities as white people. They have to be smart in order to fulfill their needs. Consequently, taking opportunities is the way to also show their agency. They have the ability to freely decide their role in society. The characters action of taking opportunities are obtain better education to broaden their knowledge and opportunities, finding better occupations, and asking to teach how to write and read.

Another way to strive for human rights is by resisting the oppressor. The characters resist the oppressor because they have the agency of themselves. The characters have been traumatized by the colonizer resulted in them resisting the oppressor. They have to show their resistance in order to denote their insurgency to the oppressor. They resistances are shown from being silence to them vocalize their dislikes of the inequality. They also stand up for themselves. In addition, their actions lead them to determine their decisions without outside party interference.

The issue of striving for human rights happens because the unfair treatment and revoking rights of Aboriginal people. To minimize this issue, the dominant group/imperial power needs to acknowledge the existence of Aboriginal people and to consider them as equal. In addition, as minorities (Aboriginal people) have to fight for their rights as well as speak up for themselves.

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