

Poverty and Its Aesthetic Construction in Hansel and Gretel and the Tom Thumb

Kontruksi Kemiskinan di dalam Dongeng Hansel And Gretel dan The Tom Thumb

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ABSTRAK (CAMBRIA 10)

Abstrak

Kemiskinan dan estetika sebagai dua konsep kontras disatukan sastra dalam artikel ini melalui pembahasan konstruksi kemiskinan sebagai strategi estetis dalam dua dongeng; Hansel and Gretel dan Tom Thumb. Konsep kemiskinan sebagai 'kekurangan' disajikan sebagai strategi untuk mendapatkan perhatian pembaca, konsensus nilai, moral, dan ideologi dalam narasi dua dongeng dipetakan dalam artikel ini untuk mengungkapkan konsekuensi narasi pada lingkungan sosial. Melalui teori representasi Stuart Hall, konstruksi pengetahuan tentang kemiskinan dilacak dalam teks menggunakan pendekatan konstruksionis. Kami memilih model diskursif dalam analisis diskursif Foucauldian untuk menghubungkan data intrinsik novel dengan konteks sosial sehingga silsilah rezim kebenaran terlacak. Hasil analisis ini menunjukkan upaya oligarki melanggengkan avant garde; sebagai penguasa yang tepat atas orang miskin. Diksi yang dipilih dalam teks-teks mengarah pada kesimpulan bahwa kemiskinan identik dengan kejahatan: kondisi alam melegitimasi kekerasan oleh mereka yang miskin. Kedua dongeng tersebut menjadi alat untuk menyebarkan ideologi borjuis melalui naturalisasi narasi.

Abstract

Poverty and aesthetics are two contrast concepts which are united by literature in this article through a discussion of poverty construction as an aesthetics strategy in two fairytales i.e. Hansel and Gretel and Tom Thumb. The poverty concept whose meaning is 'shortfall' which is presented as a strategy to gain readers' attention, consensus of certain values, morals, and ideologies in the narration of the two fairytales is mapped in this article to reveal the consequences of a narration in a social milieu. Through Stuart Hall's representation theory, the knowledge construction of the poverty is traced in the text using a constructionist approach. A discursive model in Foucauldian discursive analysis is chosen to link the intrinsic data of the novel with the social context so that the genealogy of the regime of truth could be traced. The result of this analysis shows the oligarchic efforts perpetuate the avant garde; as the right ruler over the poor. The chosen diction in the texts leads to the conclusion that poverty is identical with crime: the nature condition legitimates violence done by the poor. The two fairytales become devices for fostering bourgeois ideology through a naturalization of their narration.

1. INTRODUCTION

Hansel and Gretel and The Tom Thumb are the two literary works published by Brother's Grimm in 1812. The two stories have the same plot that is poverty. Hansel and Gretel presents a poor family that couldnot even feed the children, so the parent deserted them in a wood. Meanwhile, The Tom Thumb tells about a kid with his little body since he was born. To survive in the forest, his father had to sell the little child to a stranger in order to fulfill the economic need in his family. Then, Thomas Thumb also did what his father did. He became a tricky person in helping his family to get what he wants.

Analysis of the two fairy tales has been done by people since long time ago. It is a proof that the tales are popular. People also tried to reinterpret and reproduce the works in many versions. Walter, (1991) shows that many versions of Hansel and Gretel are still relevant even for postmodern kids in knowing many kinds of truths served in many version of stories that are reproduced all the time around. The different settings of the versions which use forest as a place of the uncertainty where magic and reality collide are similar to what postmodern kids face in their age of the uncertain world. TV cables that they enjoy at home actually take them away from their parents and leave them with choices in the jungle zones of cyber world.

Furthermore, magical formula of fairy tales is also taken as a public pedagogy in constructing western technoculture. Kitalong, (2000) explained that the ads company also use the reinterpretation of Hansel and Gretel fairy tales' model in advertisements of AT&T by the . The triumph of the kids over the witch who aimed to eat them and safely back home to their father is reproduced by the ads using smart technology. The technology replaces personal resources to gain victory that neglects its function of the previous version in encouraging and giving hope to relieve their oppression done by the overlords.

Moreover, Knoepfmacher (2005) noted that children's desertion from home experience will leave them into a trauma of abandonment however Hansel and Gretel fairy tale shows the contradiction. The kids fought to back home and still treated their father respectfully although he contributed on their desertion to the jungle before. The kids tend to be worshipping him. The event when Gretel brought him jewels from the witch's house shows the devotion of the daughter.

Bal (2009) uses Tom Thumb as a model of analysis in recognizing layer of distinction of text-story-fabula. Then, Smuts (2009) also mentioned Tom Thumb to strengthen his argument about story identity and story type. Both of the later researchers focus on the narratology of the fairy tale meanwhile this study means to show how Tom Thumb and also Hansel and Gretel in a representation theory by Stuart Hall reveal its position in the society as a narration dealing with poverty.

As references of the use of Hall's Representation theory, three theses were chosen. The first thesis uses foucauldian discursive method in finding The Representation of Victorian Child Labor in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem: The Cry of the Children (Irawan, 2016). The thesis becomes the model in using discursive model as offered by Hall in his theory. Next, The representation of woman stereotyping in Brothers Grimms fairy tale: "Cinderella", "Snowdrop", and "Rapunzel" (Mutammimah, 2018) also uses the method used by Irawan above. Other than using a discursive model, her work also leads to the analysis of fairy tales which has been done by Noviani Ivanda in The representation of Beauty in three fairy tales Snow White, Cinderella, and Rapunzel presented in Enchanted (Noviani, 2018). Different from the two previous theses, Noviani uses semiotics model in breaking down the

fairytales and therefore it could become a consideration in choosing discursive or semiotics model in analysing the two fairy tales.

2. Method

This research is a qualitative one because the data of this research are in the form of dialogue, narrative description, utterances from the fairy tales. There are two kinds of data in this research; they are primary and secondary data. The primary data are poverty discourses in the fairy tales and the secondary data are taken from books, journals that explains about Europe social condition in early 19th century.

Doing a close reading upon the text to collect the data that construct poverty discourse in the fairy tales is inevitably a first step in a literary research. Then, the data that contain poverty discourse in the fairy tales are classified into three based on the poverty concept i.e.; the lack of food, financial problem and child malnutrition. Discursively, the intrinsic data of the novel are linked to the social context as the secondary data to reveal the genealogy of the regime of truth. When the regime of truth is traced, the operational of power in the construction is also revealed that inscribes the critical position of the author. The way the story are narrated and the knowledge construction in the fairy tales are the aesthetic strategies that will also be the concerns in this study.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

There are three respects that construct poverty discourse in the fairy tales. first, poverty is presented due to the lack of food. Second, poverty is caused by the financial problem. The last one is child malnutrition. These three things will construct poverty knowledge in the fairy tales.

Stuart Hall in his theory of representation stated that representation is production of meaning through language. In other words, representation is an essential part of process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of culture. It does involve the use of language of sign and images which stand for or represent things (Hall, 2003, p. 15). Language is one of the media through which thoughts, ideas, and feeling are represented in a culture (Hall, 2003, p. 1). This quotation explains that some people who have different culture, they have different concept to deliver the material word to other people. Therefore, one should afford to translate the concept that exists in one's mind to understand the meaning into language.

Stuart Hall also classifies the theory of representation as account to be used into three approaches. They are reflective approach, intentional approach, and constructionist approach. In this research, the constructionist approach which uses the representational system, concept and signs to be represented through language is employed.

Hansel and Gretel is a German fairytale which is published by Brother's Grimms (Jacob Ludwig Carl Grimm and Wilhelm Carl Grimm). They are called as the cultural researchers or German academics because they have published some folktales during the nineteenth century. Some of their famous folktales are The Frog Prince, The Goose-Girl and Hansel and Gretel. Speaking about Hansel and Gretel as the study of this research, the story was created in 1812 when the industrial revolution took place. Brother's Grimms as the collector of children literature created some folktales in the society at the time. They wrote and collected several folktales through farmers or people around them. Moreover, starting to write the first

collection of their literary work, they make a story entitled *The Tales of Children and the Home* as the famous folktale in their writing.

Hansel and Gretel is one of the folktales from their collection that they created at the time. In the beginning of this story, Hansel and Gretel tells about a poor woodcutter with his wife and his two children. The boy is named as Hansel and a younger sister is named as Gretel. They lived in poverty condition because their father, a poor woodcutter, only had a little food he did not feed their children anymore. In addition, the great dearth falling on the land made them difficult to obtain food. The land in the village could not produce enough food for them; the parents discuss each other in order to overcome the great problem in the family. At last, it was decided that Hansel and Gretel, as the main characters in the short story, who became victims. It was the result of their stepmother's bad treatment. She was going to leave her stepchildren in the forest. In the same situation, the father is just forced to do it.

The issue of this story shows that there is poverty presented in the family. Poverty here becomes the anxiety for lower people because there are two great catastrophes struck on the land. They just have a little food to survive and the agricultural land which cannot produce enough food for them. By looking at the great disaster above, parents who cannot feed and protect their children have to leave them in the forest in order to save their life.

Poverty is caused by the nature

Poverty that is portrayed in this story shows that there is lacking of food in their family. The shortage food as a problem in the story is caused by the great dearth in the village. It means that the occurrence of the poverty was not caused by laziness of the poor to work. However, there is a large dearth on the land. Hence, a poor woodcutter with his family suffers the starvation during the great dearth because the supply of food is not enough and a little to survive.

To complete their life, the lower class people usually have to depend on the nature to get a food but the nature depicted in the story ravages. (Mitchell, 2008:3) said that that an Agricultural depression in the 1870s was caused by a series of bad harvest, which coincided with the rapid settlement of prairie in Canada and the United States. It means that the existence of agricultural depression causes the lower class people do not produce food and suffer starvation during the great dearth. Therefore, the working class people have to do anything to survive in their life. For example, they have to abandon their children to stabilize their need and share a little food to the children to save their life. Regarding to the problem of this story, the scarcity of food here is caused by the damaged nature in the village. Consequently, the lack of food might cause a possibility of unstable family. In this case, the poverty might s possibly causes parents to commit crime to their children. The explanation above can be seen through the quotation below.

Hard by a great forest dwelt a poor wood-cutter with his wife and his two children. The boy was called Hansel and the girl Gretel. He had little to bite and to break, and once when great dearth fell on the land, he could no longer procure even daily bread. Now when he thought over this by night in his bed, and tossed about in his anxiety, he groaned and said to his wife: 'What is to become of us? How are we to feed our poor children, when we no longer have anything even for ourselves? I'll tell you what, husband, answered the woman.

'early morning tomorrow morning we will take the children out into the forest to where it is the thickest; where we will light a fire for them, and give each of them

one more piece of bread, and then we will go to our work and leave them alone (Grimm, 2001, p. 99).

This quotation shows that poverty encourages them to sacrifice the children. The great dearth causes this family cannot procure food on the land. The damaged of the nature cannot provide enough food for the people. The word “procure” means the lower class people have to depend on the nature to get a food. However, the nature depicted on the land is broken. Therefore, the parents have to leave their children in the forest in order to stabilize their needs in the family.

The depiction of ‘dearth’ or great famine in the text recalls the memory of great famine that has happened in Europe around the beginning of the 14th century. The population has increased while the resource for food is insufficient since the climate change that happens through all Europe (Malthus et al., 2018). The climate change followed by bad harvest was the cause of the great famine. The weather is cooler and wetter so that the land is difficult to be cultivated.

It began in 1315 and lasted until 1317. The people of Europe did not really have a steady food supply until about 1322. During this time millions of people died from starvation. Many people died from diseases that their bodies could not fight off because they were weak resulted by malnutrition. Life during the middle ages was harsh and people often had to deal with food shortages because famine in 1351 was wide-spread and extreme. It can be concluded that the great famine is a problem which is not only confronted by the lower class but also other classes for the spread of diseases caused by the cooler and wetter summer and autumn storm. Inevitably the starvation became a catastrophe at the time (Nelson Lynn Harry, n.d.)

Massive death also happened after the famine wave in Europe in the middle of 14th century known as ‘black death’. Many children also were left orphans when their parents died with no one to take care of them. In addition, many people became beggars and thieves (Godfrey, Diane, Danna Lagerquist, n.d.). Furthermore, European faced social problems deals with the population. Crime has increased after all that was triggered by poverty. Wilson John (1958, p. 80) claims that the Victorian Era thus had a very considerable problems to face. Beside the development of the civilization with the technological equipment such as train and steam ship to support the society’s daily activities, the rapid changes also lead to the increase of poverty.

What we try to construct through the memory of famine and poverty that has happened in Europe is the episteme of shortfall. The fragments of events faced by the European relate to the famine, death, and poverty that frequently happen construct a knowledge of suffering of shortfall that legitimize the abandonment of the weak; abandonment of children by the productive adults (parents).

Hansel and Gretel were published in 1812, long after the tragedy of great famine and Black Death. However the story had lived in the society as a folktale before Brother Grimms create it as their new version. Therefore, the memory of the famine and all its suffering lingers in the recorded story.

3.1 Poverty is caused by financial problem.

A poor woodcutter as the lower class people which is depicted in the story experienced a difficulty in getting a better life. This condition occurs when the working class people are not capable to fulfill their economic need. The depiction of this problem happens because the lower class people have the difficulty in looking for a food in daily life. In this case, there is a financial problem that could not be overcome in the story. Mitchell, (2009, p. 3) said that England's economic and industrial dominance lasted until almost the end of the nineteenth century and had a dramatic impact on daily life. It means that the existence of the financial problem becomes the misery condition to the lower class people. The crisis of food and the financial problem took place everywhere during the Victorian era. In the following quotation it can be seen that the lower class confronts some struggles to get the good.

Not long afterwards, there was once more great dearth throughout the land, and the children heard their mother saying at night to their father: 'Everything is eaten again, we have one half loaf left, and that is the end. The children must go, we will take them farther into the wood, so that they will not find their way out again; there is no other means of saving ourselves!' The man's heart was heavy, and he thought: 'It would better for you to share the last mouthful with your children.' The woman, however, would listen to nothing that he had to say, but scolded and reproached him. He who says A must say B, likewise, and as he had yielded the first time, he had to do so a second time also. (Grimm, 2001, p. 101)

The lack of food is a serious problem in the family life as the mother said. She intended to send the children into the wood and hopes that they will never come back to get their limited food again. The mother's idea was seen as a solution against the poverty by the father so he agreed to do so. Children are not more than pets or stuffs for them that can be deserted when they do not need them anymore.

According to Heywood (2009, pp. 18–19) in nineteenth to twentieth century child labor was a serious phenomenon in United Kingdom, United States and some countries in Europe because of the rapid changing of technology that lead to Industrial Revolution. Germany that started its first step to the industrial revolution in 1784 took England as the model ("Industrial History of European Countries," n.d.) Sequence after the famine, Black Death, political fights among the Holy Roman Emperors and the Princes sacrificed the people on the land. German immigration had increased in numbers that migrate to America since 1770s to 1830s tenfold and continued until 1854 ("Immigration; A New Surge of Growth," n.d.) The migration happened because of their own land failed to promise them prosperity. Social economics and political atmospheres were not on their side but the upper class. All the events traces were recorded in Hansel and Gretel's parents who left their children in the forest as a choice to survive.

Moreover, the following quotation depicts child labor in Hansel and Gretel;

Then they began to run, rushed into the parlour, and threw themselves round their father's neck. The man had not known one happy hour since he had left the children in the forest; the woman, however, was dead. Gretel emptied her pinafore until pearls and precious stones ran about the room, and Hansel threw one handful after another out of his pocket to add to them. Then all anxiety was at an end, and they lived together in perfect happiness (Grimm, 2001, pp. 105).

The abandoned kids come back home and bring the parent pearl and precious stones that lead them all to joy. The poor family reaches their happiness by the children's precious materials. The luxurious material used to be associated as the upper class belonging because of its price which is unaffordable by the lower class. Furthermore the happiness price of the lower class is in the upper class' hands. What the children bring home for their parents is a key to pass 'all the anxiety' and gain 'perfect happiness' that is materialism. Furthermore, the text naturalizes the bourgeoisie's ideology with leading such plot. In other words, Hansel and Gretel is an extension of bourgeoisie's construction upon the avant garde of their appropriateness as leaders of classes. At the end of the story, Hansel and Gretel represents child labor done by the two kids characters. They took home materials to provide the family needs that must be highlighted as a distinction from 'child work' since the kids go through hazardous situation and oppression to do so. The wood in Grimms' spatial construction is identical to developing cities in industrial revolution era. the shortcoming of modernism is presented in the poverty of the kids family that committed crimes in the name of poor and hunger by sending the kids to the wood. Being poor and hungry are gates to be criminal become a knowledge constructed through the beginning until the end of the narration. The knowledge of the poverty and crime is reproduced in the Tom Thumb by the same authors as the following discussion.

3.2 Poverty in the Tom Thumb

In the story of Tom Thumb, there was a family who came from lower class people. They lived in the cottage without children. One day, they wanted to have a child. After they wished to have a child, a miracle happened to them. They were granted a little boy who is called Thomas Thumb. His body is as small as a thumb. They gave him a lot of food in order to make him grown well. However, his body is still in the same size. To survive in the forest, his father had to sell the little child to strangers in order to fulfill the family needs. Through the narration above, there is poverty emerged in the story. The depiction of poverty in the story is represented through the existence of a child who has a small body and the parents who intended to sell him to a stranger to survive. The size of the child is depicted as following.

'how happy should I be if I had but one child! If it were ever so small—nay, if it were no bigger than my thumb—I should be very happy, and love it dearly.' Now—odd as you may think it—it came to pass that this good woman's wish was fulfilled, just in the very way she had wished it; for, not long afterwards, she had a little boy, who was quite healthy and strong, but was not much bigger than my thumb (Grimm, 2001, p. 121).

The size of Tom Thumb indicates malnutrition because of poverty. Lacking of adequate nutrition of a pregnant mother and early infant grow can cause stunting on the child she bears (Mzumara, B., Bwembya, P., Halwiindi, 2018). It is not only about the amount of food intake by a child in his/her early childhood but also the quality of the nutritional diet. Poverty is one of the factors that make nutritional diet fails because of lack of knowledge and quantity on the good food.

Children Malnutrition is the impact of the presence of poverty during their life. Even though they give him plenty of food, the child's body was still small. It

means that children malnutrition as taken place in the story because of the parent's incapability to provide financial need to the children. Therefore, the child suffers a disease such as child malnutrition. The evidence of child malnutrition can be seen through the quotation below.

They gave him plenty of food, yet for all they could do he never grew bigger, but kept just the same size as he had been when he was born. Still, his eyes were sharp and sparkling and he soon showed himself to be a clever little fellow, who always knew well what he was about.

So the woodman at last said he would sell Tom to the strangers for a large piece of gold, and they paid the price. 'Where would you like to sit?' said one of them. 'Oh, put me on the rim of your hat; that will be a nice gallery for me; I can walk about there and see the country as we go along.' So they did as he wished; and when Tom had taken leave of his father they took him away with them. (Grimm, 2001, pp. 121–122)

The food supply which is presented in the story is enough to eat. Tom Thumb as the main character suffered child malnutrition. It happened because the parents are not capable to fulfill their need. Additionally, Tom Thumb as a clever character could deceive the strangers in order to gain a piece of gold. Once again, Tom Thumb fairy tale by Grimms presents child abuse and crime by the poor. The logic that is constructed is similar to what Hansel and Gretel does. Poverty legitimizes crime and all of shortcoming of values and norms in the society to be with the poor.

The aesthetical strategies of the poverty representation in the fairytales

The second question of this research is to know the aesthetical strategies of poverty representation in the fairytales. To find out the aesthetical strategies of poverty representation in the fairytales, the first thing to know is how the narration emerges the aesthetical strategies through the literary work. This strategy related to the framework of representation theory. In broad sense, aesthetic is a branch of philosophy that studies about beauty. Literary work is considered as the beauty through the plot and the chosen diction mapped in the stories (Rader, 1962). Any perspective in viewing a work of art is a way to evaluate aesthetic strategies in the work. For example, a realism work that has its aesthetical strategies in presenting the closeness to the reality. The strategies of one realistic work with the other have different ways. Another example is a postmodernist fiction using strategies of genre of fantasy to explore 'ontological dominant' by presenting fragments of fairy tales in the narration to present the plural worlds or heterocosm (Pujiati, 2019). In short, aesthetics strategies that are meant in this study are efforts of works of art in dealing with beauty.

This study uses Hall's theory of representation with Foucauldian discursive model. Therefore the knowledge construction was traced in the narrations. Poverty construction in the fairy tales is played through the chosen diction and the plot that explores the sufferings of the poor. This strategy eventually emerges a knowledge about how poverty knowledge is constructed in the fairy tales. The knowledge constructs a truth about how poverty takes place in the contextual background. The nature's condition presents as one cause to be blamed and that becomes the reason for the poor in committing crimes in the society. Value and norm violations negotiate alternative of grand narration but at the end of the stories, they confirm the dominant ideology; bourgeoisie as the right ruler.

The knowledge about the meaning of poverty constructed in the fairy tales states that poverty through the occurrence of food scarcity, a great dearth that causes the lower class people cannot fulfill their needs and child malnutrition. Through the chosen diction and the plot in the story lead to a legitimation of lacking of food and dearth in abandoning Hansel and Gretel or selling Tom Thumb as a choice to survive for the parents. It shows that the problem of food, a great dearth and child malnutrition are poverty knowledge constructed in the fairy tales.

3.3 The Critical Position of the author

The critical position of the author can be uncovered through the discourse of poverty that is analyzed in the stories and relate it to the biography of the author. By relating to the two points above, the critical position of the author can be known whether he criticizes toward the whole characters who represent the poverty or agrees toward the whole characters which represent the poverty in the fairy tales. In other words we scrutinize the positioning of the author through the discourse constructed in the works.

Jacob Ludwig Carl Grimm and Wilhelm Carl Grimm were famous collectors of German fairytales in the nineteenth century. Their fame was known by the people around the world after they gradually created and published the first collection of fairytales entitled *Children and Household tale* in 1812. Their works are assumed as 'so German' since the two brothers dedicate their life to the German folklore and oral tradition.

They had conducted researches in gathering the stories along their life and revised the stories into their version in their age. Grimms worked to cultivate the fatherland of Germany in making their works. Moreover, Grimms as the collector of fairy tales created famous stories during their life. Some of them were Cinderella, The Frog Prince, The Goose-Girl, Hansel and Gretel, Rapunzel, The Tom Thumb, Sleeping Beauty, Snow white.

The Grimms Brothers' life had changed drastically after their father's death that brought social hardships to the family. Phillip Grimm contracted pneumonia and died suddenly in 1796 at the age of 44, and his death was traumatic for the entire family (Zipes, 2002). Their mother took her six children out of the big house into a small one. They lived with financial support from the grandfather and also an aunt of Grimms. The rich relatives that support the brothers life is a salvation of their poor life after the death of the father.

The poverty they dealt with after the death of the father is the root of bourgeoisie's ideology they produced in Hansel and Gretel and also in the Tom Thumb. How the rich relatives and friends support the Grimms life hegemonize them of the greatness of bourgeoisie. They are the subject of bourgeoisie's ideology and they articulate it in their works. The shortcomings of being poor were reproduced through the narrations so that Grimms existence are also accepted by the dominant class to maintain the position. Through the fairy tales analyzed in this study, the critical points that stir up the dominant class cannot be found but materialistic as salvation of the difficult life. Finally the two fairytales confirm that bourgeoisie's values are truth.

4. CONCLUSION

Great famine and black death are two phenomena that linger in the memory of European. The phenomena are also recorded in the two fairy tales analyzed in this

study: Hansel and Gretel and Tom Thumb. Even the phenomena are five centuries away from the writing process of the fairy tales, the knowledge construction of the poverty rooted in the folktales has spread to the whole centuries. Discourse of sufferings caused by poverty is preserved in the Grimms works. They are articulated with the current phenomena when the writers live. Furthermore, Hansel and Gretel and Tom Thumb are recollection of the European on the natural and social catastrophe from 14th to 19th century. The devotion of the children to the parents in the stories is linear to the child laboring in the age of industrial revolution as the age of the fairy tales' production. The articulation of the poverty become the artistic strategies of the tales to embody the dominant ideology as the right ruler, as the salvation of the poor, and also as source of moral and value in the society. As Grimms come from upper class, the tales are constructed in the perspective of the dominant class to do interpellation of new subjects of the ideology. Fairy tales are smart choice to 'interpellate' new subjects of certain ideologies. Therefore, adults needs to be critical in choosing stories for the kids and it is the adult's job to grow critical thinking of the children since children are our next generation to lead the world.

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