

Introduction

Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) is essentially recognized as an author of marine story in the contemporary period. His original name is Jozef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski. His parents were Polish. His parents were accused of plotting against the Russians and exiled to the far northern province of Vologda. At the age of sixteen, he left Poland for France to fulfill his old ambition to voyage. Conrad spent four unsettled years, traveling by ship mainly to and from the West Indies. Conrad encountered the acquisition of gun-running, gambling debts on the loan amount. Destiny saved him from death when he was supposed to commit suicide by shooting in the chest, but the bullet missed his heart. In 1894 Conrad entered the British Merchant Navy stayed for sixteen years as a Chief Mariner. He voyaged Singapura, Australian side, the Belgian Congo, Bombay, and the East Indies, enriched his stories. ¹In 1890 he was assigned to serve his position as “captain” of a “Congo River steamer,” though he lost six months of his carrier in Africa being disillusioned by sickness. This incident inspired him to pen his masterpiece, *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Unwillingly he resigned merchant service, settled in England, and finished his first novel, *Almayer's Folly*, already initiated at sea (Conrad 11-12).

During adolescence, Conrad was reluctant to cope with the strict disciplines of educational institution nor he paid attention to his home tutor. He put efforts into the romantic views on life. Ultimately, the infuriated Josef convinced his paternal uncle to permit him joining the French merchant navy. For him, the four years were adventurous, but not contending. Conrad voyaged to the West Indies and Venezuela, squandered a small fortune, lost in love, got involved in a gun-running venture for the Carlists, and attempted suicide in 1878. In the same year, French immigration authorities prevented him from continuing as a sailor on merchant marine vessels. This final chapter appears to have been a lucky one since Conrad started to navigate the upcoming sixteen years on British ships as a British subject in 1887. His transformation from a French sailor to an English one made him master the language finally write his novels and novelette. *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, *Nostromo*, *The Secret Agent*, and *Victory* have been well known, almost since their publication, highly ranked with the poetic novels ever written in English. The voyages seem to have had a sublime impact on his life and art. Some critics investigate that Conrad came to Congo on 12th June 1890. It is noteworthy that he shared his very own

1 King Afonso I (from 1506 to 1540) and Shamba Bolgongongo (from 1600 to 1620) ruled The Kongo.

experience in the Congo when writing *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad xlvii).

Discovering Marlow's Character

A tale fixated in a particular teller broadening to the brink of life is prone to ask for someone exceeding a hero. Conrad has sketched the portrayal of an interpreter otherwise who introduces the “hero” in a situation of the word which is to examine, or recoup him, unlike the traditional novelist who may prefer serving it himself. For instance, in Lord Jim's chapter IV, when Jim postures in the “Court of Inquiry” which speaks for the ethics that has voiced him to the billet of integrity, his agony has met the response of others eyes. Thus, Marlow has come into the tale. Throughout the novel, it is unresolved when the image of “Marlow” came into Conrad's mind.¹ Conrad's portrayal of the character of Marlow was first noticed in *Youth* (1898) and *Heart of Darkness* (1899) while preceding the accomplishment of *Lord Jim* (Zebal xv). After making these three tales (1898-1900) Marlow's absence has been seen for twelve years. Later some radical change in Conrad's narratives again takes Marlow as a narrator of Conrad's *Chance* (Zabel 1958).

The Story as an Allegory

Heart of Darkness is a novelette deals with the appearance and actions of the Racist. C. P Sarvan has critiqued that in the novelette Africa is an epitome for the very aspect of an “accursed inheritance.”² The allegorical narratives catastrophe with the sober realization of the darkness of the human mind. It may evidence difficulties for few to abide by the apologue. When Conrad was casting about for an external parallel, for a physical setting, he chose Africa.

For the Romans, the Brits were barbarous. When the Europeans entered Africa, for them, the Africans seem uncivilized. The primitive barbarity sneaks in the center of Europe. If the Thames is to visit its original source, the Congo, it will experience the horrible pleas, suggestive echoes. The commands of the Roman upon the Britain, and the Europeans upon natives, it was because they perceived they obtained a much higher civilization than the peoples they were pampering and conquering. The contempt was not on account of the race itself, and Conrad opines that Europe's claim of enlightenment and superiority needs earnest reexamination. The reference in *Heart of Darkness* is not limited to a continent (Africa), it is colonialism. The vital point is whether “barbarism” is trivially an incident or not

1 curious and skeptic.

2 Due to continual violence, aggravated murder on a large scale “Africa” is mentioned as “Accursed inheritance” where so called civilized people give their full spirit to exploit them.

where the substantial divergence of “savage” African and “civilized” European reveals through appearance rather than reality (Conrad 80).

Marlow starts his tale, narrating how lighting transforms the gloomy picture of darkness among mass (Conrad 46). Darkness is deep in the zone of Thames. The Thames is the principal part of the utmost end of the world (Conrad 47). The river symbolizes what is following in nature, in man, on other side the ocean remains steady. Unusual and exotic events seem to be covered by unenlightened hearts (Conrad 48). The dummy of the hairdresser is flawlessly clothed. It seems fastidious as if a representative of civilization. It is a part of the colonial machinery, which is immense to the suffering. Marlow's extreme concern toward cleanliness is perhaps an irresistible urge, an attempt to keep clean amidst the moral dirt. Even in the case of Kurtz, one must remember that all Europe had “contributed” to his making. The alleged primitiveness of the boiler-man only serves to show the similarity between his appearance and the actions of the “civilized” (Sarvan 6-9).

This study figures out why Conrad depicted the character of Marlow and what lead the imperialists toward insanity. Despite being European, why Conrad objected against Eurocentric activities, the research will shed some light on it.

Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this essay is to locate how imperialism and insanity are closely related to *Heart of Darkness*. At first, we would answer how imperialism functions in this novelette. Stemming from this question, we would describe how “Imperialism” results in “Insanity.”

Imperialism implies a particular period when one country manipulates other. The stronger the country is, the better its manipulation is. The research is based on Thomas Ladenburg's theory of imperialism as he opines that at the beginning of 1870 Western world expedites Africa taken over by England, France, Belgium, and Germany. The imperialistic era has more or less ended by World War II. Although most countries obtained freedom from the shackle of imperialism, it was not an end to imperialized dominion and industrialized power. To some extent, the colonized countries could not get rid of the influence of imperialism, for being imprisoned in the experience. Historically, through western industrialization, imperial movement occurs with the empowerment of leading nations such as Europe, America, and Canada. Under the subjugation of these powerful countries non-white nation, such as some African or Asian parts are imperialized (Ladenburg 23).

The age of industry and chauvinism regulated European society in the nineteenth century. Imperialism has been dramatically dominated regions and

people over other groups of people during the latter half of that century. It is noteworthy that imperialism initiated from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century. The interval period is also known as Old Imperialism. Europeans commenced commerce with the Far East. They explored the emerged world setting up industry in North and South America and Southeast Asia. They established trading posts and seized footholds on the zones of Africa and China. They worked collaboratively with the regional rulers to ascertain the security of European economy debts and interest. Then the Age of New Imperialism has started in the 1870s. European states settled regions in Africa and the East. They modified the former methods of dictatorship the new imperialists administrated the localities to ensure profit showing overpower. European nations followed an aggressive and manipulative policy by economic demands that they continued since the age of industry. Europe went through a “Second Industrial Revolution” between 1870 and 1914 fastened the phase of transformation as scientific invention, technology, and industry, which promoted the economy with the production of steel, revolutionary change in the ship, building, electricity, and transportation (The Age of Imperialism 2007). The strategy was encouraged and developed through the socio-political condition that connected empire-building that led to the supremacy of Western nation over “backward” nation. By impeding military force, influencing economic spheres, and annexing the territories, Europe dominated the African and Asian parts. By 1914, Great Britain seized the lion’s share of colonies. In so doing, they use the phrase, “the sun never sets on the British Empire” to describe the weight of British zones, which were very expensive. With their attempts to achieve a direct pathway to trade in Asiatic continents, Europe instituted colonies in East Indies. They obtained territories through the built channels in Africa and China. Concurrently, the period of mercantilism in Europe established further necessities that keep demanding opulence. Commercialists conserved the colonies as a source to seize wealth. Meanwhile, the leaders, landlords, and missionary carried their self-interests following the imperial ideology in “Glory, God, and Gold” as if glory, god, and gold are the same (The Age of Imperialism, 145-146).

All the same, imperialism is the prime concern of the novelette, *Heart Of Darkness*. In between the 1890s, the majority of the continents were recognized as dark continents officially under the control of Byelorussian. European powers were subject to administrate extensive zones. Vandalism, battles, and withdrawing commercial ventures terrorized the white men who were in the remote domains. *Heart of Darkness* evinces that men act according to the situation, especially when they are permitted to run a specific “social system” of currencies. Inescapably, they

overpower other humans. It is a matter of debate to point a person as evil or mad, especially when the person simultaneously becomes a part of an order which is entirely “corrupted” or “corrupting.” Therefore, the novel has been considered as its most “abstract level” to narrate the complexities of the globe beyond the self. Moreover, *Heart of Darkness* is considered one of the first critical literary texts for its pettifogging portrayal of European imperial schemes (Conrad xxv).

On the other hand, the description of “Insanity” has two chief purposes throughout the novel. Primarily it delivers an ironic device to captivate the readers. From the very beginning, Marlow has been considered mad. His madness for the company seems to be a complex factor. In other words, madness manifests priority and needs. In the text, material praxis through arguments depicted the process of manipulation which guarantees unity, neither for the whole community nor for individuals. Insanity, in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), is the impact of exclusive demand. It encourages an individual to be a controller of one’s actions. Insanity is therefore associated with tyranny and misjudgment which we perceive in Kurtz that he does not have to show accountability to any other commander except himself (Conrad xxv).

The concept of civic society makes Joseph Conrad a constitutional author. Karlin Hansson opines that Conrad’s primary novels related to human society, where they encountered diverse occasions as political characters. His civic, spiritual, including ethical perspectives lie fundamentally in Central Europe. Conrad’s ideas, subject matter create a linkage of wisdom and fear. He finds that a community is a villain which compels humans to live systematically by transforming them into wrongdoers. The actions of Kurtz and Marlow evidence “the horror” of life is eternised by falsehood and frequent fakery. Hanson has quoted Thomas Brook’s words that Conrad’s skill of convincing the verity, not through the exhibition. He has shown it via modification of the untrue event that stamps all the efforts to clarify the reality. Conrad willingly withdrew the Congo confounded by the ill-treatment of the locals. His encounters reveal a perpetual impact on his interest. Consequently, he started feeling uncertain about selfhood. *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and Conrad’s Congo ventures certainly seem coequal, making the novel a dissimulated autobiography. The background information crystallizes author’s delay in introducing the text for almost a decennium to leave the African continent. A time span of seven years amid when he voyaged Congo 1889 and penned *Heart of Darkness* 1898 seems complex. The presumption says that Conrad put efforts to efface his resemblance of the Congo experience for those years. Similarly, when Marlow returned to Europe wanted to shrug off Kurtz’s name as if all the things

related to Kurtz became a subject matter of vanishment, giving some instinct of the ultimate ending (245). Conrad has opened up his awful recollections depicting the connection of European superior, incarnated by Kurtz, and the falsehood through the event of “horror” Marlow has experienced. With Conrad inquiring into the background of work is not only impertinent but also deprecatory. It would be contradictory to say that mixing the image of Marlow with Conrad is inappropriate. Conrad has yet asserted that fictive functions similar to historical background, which is close to real-life events. Hansson posits that the novel relates to human history as well. The noticeable difference between novel and history is, the former relies on reality, form, and the structure of the social environment whereas, and the latter is the impression of second-hand materials such as readable print and written pieces (Hansson 4).

Savagery of Imperialism

The savagery of imperialism in *Heart of Darkness* is discerned through white lies and black truth. According to Deyan Gue, driven by an adventurous desire Charlie Marlow, the energetic Brits seafarer, prepares to pursue an agreement with a company origin in Belgium that was running a trade in Africa. He planks a steamer and initiates a voyage throughout the midpoint of the mainland, the Congo. He met an excursion at the outer station by evacuating a caravanette for the leading terminal where he was supposed to renovate a steamship. Through the boat, the Manager has to travel to release a male person named Jim Kurtz at the core terminal. Marlow’s attempt from one station to another finally takes him to his destination. In the text, Marlow’s land place is called the dark heartland, which is compared to Kurtz’s enigmatic purposes and the company’s target to seize ivory (763-764).

When Marlow traverses from external terminal to the core one, amid the river and inside station, he witnesses to manipulation. At the very end, the consequential scenario of the text reveals a barbarous portrayal of “colonial enterprise.” He initiated his journey supporting the imperialistic company as an expert in the domain of ivory trade. Albeit Marlow swiftly cognizes the destructive impediments of “imperialism,” he becomes incapable to fit in “European society” by being approached with the lies regarding civilization and outer appearance of existing things. His unspoken inner soliloquy shows his heartfelt torment with these words “Soul! If anybody had ever struggled with a soul, I am the man” (Conrad 98). Recurrently Marlow’s verdict on “Imperialism” is shrunk evidencing the stretches Imperialist would follow to ensure benefit (Conrad xlvi).

Conrad’s portrayal of dark heart is masked under the white skin in the

novelette. According to Conrad's ironic portrayal of white European as "civilized" and the black people of Africa as "savage" gives an acute meaning. His attempt to design the way imperialists were exploiting and keeping the domains under colonization, how they authorized during the British colonial period in the Dark Continent of Africa, and how the so-called illumination turned into barbarism is prominent in the novelette. The bitter truth in the text grounds that people who pretend as civilized are exceedingly brutal when it comes to practice. *Heart of Darkness* signs the inner intentions of the exploiters poured with ignorance and veiled in the layer of "white skin." Hanker-after power, envy, and lust for ivory promoted them to be brutal beings. The twofold image of culture and barbarism seems to be a cannon for Conrad to serve as a fundamental critique. Conrad indeed makes efforts to delve into the paradoxical portrayal of barbarian and cultured. To unveil the inner ignorance of the European colonizers who cherished their camouflaged "white skin" who pretend to be mild first but turn out with barbarity (2-4).

Exploring Insanity

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* pictures human psychology. According to Marina A. Kinney, this novelette ruminates on human being's aptitude to penetrate insanity as it is with Conrad's capability to escape from it and victory over the "dark," engrossing whims that menaced by his inner views. This conflict between consciousness and insanity manifested in both figures, namely, Marlow and Kurtz. The central character and raconteur, Marlow, takes the readers' attention to Kurtz's predicament primarily. He defined Kurtz as a "poor chap" who lied at the "farthest point of navigation" (5). While this maritime innuendo is adopted in a "literal sense" Marlow is narrating the incident of his excursion in Congo. It wraps up Kurtz's psychological stage. In addition, the narrative is immediate to settle that Kurtz has entirely dived into the "farthest" state of insanity, but the reason seems unclear. It is simple to release his mental state as it is a consequence of greediness and egotism. His power of convening a huge number of "ivory" has made him a supreme creature in the brits and local folks' eyes within the Congo. It is certainly more to Kurtz's absurdity than money-making tendency. In considering his past situation, we can notice the degree of extending his insanity. *Heart of Darkness* is narrated according to Marlow's viewpoint. Therefore, readers have limitations to the ideas described in the text. They do not know what Marlow has not accumulated. Similarly, very little information has been provided about Kurtz's background before he journeyed into the Congo. The readers only characterize Kurtz observing how others define

him and how the related persons know him. The viewpoints of Kurtz's fellows provide no instance of lunacy before his life in the Congo. The initial stage of the fictive contains eulogies from these peoples, the majority of which depicts Kurtz as a genius and outstandingly powerful as an individual. Kurtz is known as a "prodigy" (22) and a "genius" (24). Meanwhile, the majority of folks admit his potentiality and majesty within the enterprise. The Accountant whom Marlow connects before starting the journey says, "[Kurtz] will go far, very far" (16). The shared opinion of others represents how Kurtz's positivity, impressionistic activities attract others in the association. Additionally, Marlow himself opines Kurtz's articulateness. This feature of Kurtz's character affirms the certain behavior illustrated by the folks, while it also hints at Kurtz's nature of clarity through which he impresses others. Emphasizing Kurtz's capability to dialogue, Marlow says, "[O]f all his gifts the one that stood out pre-eminently, that carried with it a sense of real presence, was his ability to talk, his words" (43). The noticeable part of this narration is that Marlow is recapping it. He substantiates Kurtz's aptitudes of what he owned until the last moment. It commends a parallel of consciousness that lasts in Kurtz. However, this acquaintance does not thwart him from cultivating a sense of supremacy. It is proved within Marlow's words when he details about Kurtz's pleas such as "You should have heard him say, "My ivory." Oh yes, I heard him. "My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my—" everything belonged to him" (44). For Kurtz, everything and everyone should be under his controlling power. Kenney also relates D.H. Lawrence's character Gerald Crich In *Women in Love*. Notably, Gerald is excessively conscious of his surroundings. Similarly, Kurtz also is no less secure from insanity. Gerald maintains a strong attachment with Gudrun Brangwen, which probes his psychological inclination. Later it brings destruction alike to the experience of Kurtz. In discovering the instincts that subsidize the sense of insanity within the fiction, it becomes apparent that both men's lunacy emerges from the desire of being an idol-like figure. These men culminate an acute sensation of superciliousness, they after a while, become segregated from the living world. Concurrently, their insanity is extended by greed, heading them toward more distance. Kurtz's lust emanates from the atmosphere. It is enrooted through the meeting of the native woman. And Gerald's lust is developed by a carnal relationship with Gudrun. As a consequence of their imbalance longings, the men utterly lose their sanity. Finally, deaths bring catastrophe (1-4).

Discussion

In *Heart of Darkness* Joseph Conrad explores the psychological "heart of

darkness” among human beings. The text looks at the inappropriate Eurocentric social representation of enlightenment. It overshadows the inner concerning the psychosomatic situation where humans are subject to be formed. Conrad puts up the counteraction of black and white to exhibit the flimsy charade of illumination in the context of the imperialistic world. At the very beginning of Marlow’s journey into the African Congo appears that he is the product of the Imperial European society. Marlow cognizes the assertion behind colonialism but is unready for the barbarism and the ferocity of the heart of darkness. It becomes clear when Marlow faces the “grove of death,” where numerous natives are feeble and about to die. Yet, Marlow has confronted the absurd situation despite being unable to deal with it. He meets a young boy with a piece of white European thread around his neck. In this circumstance, white is a sign of prejudice, leaving its general meaning of pureness and uprightness. Several challenging assumptions about the white piece of yarn that is used for sewing. Conrad has used it as an epitome of the dark or evil practices of the colonial imperialist. The white thread constantly reminds an opposition to the black child, Marlow raises some questions based upon the whole situation—“Why? Where did he get it?” (27)—proved that he could not initially recognize the outcome of imperialism. It is furthered when he provides the child a “Swede’s ships biscuit,” it makes him bewildered that he becomes a failure to handle the situation. Marlow then moves toward his naiveté by leaving the spot and continuing on his journey. After that native boy who provides a stark contrast, The Accountant, whom Marlow meets immediately, clothed utterly in neatly pressed “white linen.” This man represents the ideas which Marlow compared with the illumination before he foots in the Congo. Marlow admires the accountant, addressing him as a “miracle” and “superb,” this is because he is not tainted by the darkness—the barbaric and the wild nature of the Congo (BrightKite.com 2012-2019). Furthermore, that man is devoted to his duties Marlow thinks and says “His books were in apple pie order.” Marlow stated that “the man had verily accomplished something” (28).

Albeit the Accountant appears in the novel for a short duration, his importance is prominent like other related figures. He epitomizes the interests and tricks of the Company. In the center of the forest, he spends his time with his “ledger” indicates the Company’s great importance to ensure profit. Furthermore, his flawless white dress symbolizes the Company’s manipulative interest to pretend as ethical in front of the world. Seeing the incident of a dying person in the abode, The Accountant claims, the ill figure’s howls disturb his concentration. Apart from that, it is highly tough to protest against the breakdown in the environment. The Accountant desires to see the native so that he can concentrate on preventing “clerical errors” like the

Company (Conrad 38). Illness and death are unavoidable parts of the business. If anyone goes through it, it can distract the primary purpose of a person. It can tally the profit. Paradoxically, here the profit means how the company is exploiting the natives. Above all, The Accountant also personifies the contempt that the whites cherish for the natives and the agents of the Central station who remain ready to establish their position by fair means or foul (Conrad lvi, lvii). An imperialistic attitude leads them to insanity. Meena Bharadvaja posits Vladimir Ilyich Lenin that imperialism is “the highest stage of capitalism” and “the priority to find new outlet for investment” which is why “lenders secured higher return to their investment in exotic countries of Africa & Asia than at home” as these select regions are in their controlling power (5).

Before reaching Africa, Marlow visited the Company’s office in Brussels to assign his treaty. He states that the town reminds him of a “white sepulcher” (13). The point of “a whited sepulcher” seems to be a biblical reference. Under the gospel of Matthew, Christ rationally criticized the scribes and the Pharisees because of their revealed hypocritical behavior. He compared them with “whited sepulchers.” Conrad hypothesizes that something inappropriate and unjust exists in Brussels inside the impressive external view. In tandem with the biblical interpretation, he depicts, like Pharisees, the supporters of imperialists are over conscious. They remain ready to look ethical. Their words sound enlightened, altruistic, and developed. On the other side, their dark deeds unveil amid self-absorbed intentions and grossly unfair treatment toward other nations. The structure of the building reveals concealed ferocity, with the hints of deaths and void signs. Furthermore, there is “grass sprouting between the stones, showing that not only the civilized varnish superimposed on a hidden iniquity but also a suppressed Nature, refusing to be brought under control (Conrad xxviii). That concealed iniquity and repressed attitude lead them, imperialists, toward insanity.

While citing Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* in *An Image of Africa*, Chinua Achebe focuses on how Africa dominated in the palm of European hands who arrived to establish white supremacy as a “civilized” society demarcated from the dark continent of Africa. For Conrad’s way of penetrating Africa and sketching the natives as “niggers” and “common savages,” Achebe gets an opportunity to accuse him “a bloody racist.” Joseph Conrad depicts in the text “A nigger was being beaten nearby” (43). Following Achebe, some other critics also point a cloak of racism and an ungodly novel upon the back of Conrad. In *An Image of Africa*, Achebe states that the Polish British novelist Joseph Conrad radically misrepresents his African characters. Thus, he shows a reinforcement of the sense of African

culture, society as brutal and prehistoric (Achebe 1-3)

Conrad's raised voice toward racism despite belonging to the European region might bluff some critics. Achebe could have better appreciated him noticing the raised voice of a foreign author. In brief, Conrad's skillful portrayal of racism brings out his subjective experience¹ through his novel. Probably he targeted to eliminate racism from all the societies regardless of specific continents because when people become misogynistic, they also are called racists.

Conclusion

Joseph Conrad's style of writing portrays a puzzled picture to the readers to cognize the coherent substance behind his works. His ideas unveil the hidden description of the period he experienced. He ironically comments on imperialists who start manipulating the underdeveloped countries or the countries which have enormous natural resources with their advanced machinery power because "the word ivory rang in the air" (42). So, one thing is certain that having machinery power does not mean having natural resources. We may relook Kurtz's devotion toward "ivory" where he combines every separate individual. He rationalizes things on the perspective of seizing "ivory" only. Both Marlow & Kurtz have paved the role of Eurocentric consumption. They have escaped away from truth "but truth-truth stripped of its cloak of time"(59). On time everything comes out exactly.

The novelette is not about a description of Congo River, but describing method of men's inner thought as we find "We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of Darkness." Furthermore, alienation in *Heart of Darkness* has represented throughout the modernist theme with Conrad's stream of consciousness technique, which is one of the primary themes in modernist literature. Conrad has introduced the character of Marlow with an unnamed narrator who gets a small part in direct speech at the opening few pages. Then in the last passage on board the *Nellei* with Marlow's critical ideas on Imperialism the anonymous narrator echoes. The readers observe destruction with Marlow's words "The horror!" which "seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness" (111). Marlow's fear alerts the future generation to get rid of destruction through imperialism. Moreover, the study finds that with Marlow's character the inner voice of Conrad through his voyage experience. It seems his journey was full of cynicism and his fear of destruction was prominent. Above all the paper has brought out the multilayered meanings of this multifunctional novelette.

1 Deals with past experience, consciousness and conscience.

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