



RESEARCH PAPER

Analyzing Representation of Gender in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*

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ABSTRACT

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The paper aims at the analysis of gender representation in Mohsin Hamid's novel *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, converging literary and linguistic perspective about gender. The study is the stylistic analysis of the novel, taking into account the category of adjectives at lexical level as suggested by Leech and Short (2007). The study of adjectives is supplemented with the notion of gender performativity by Butler (2006). The analysis of adjectives and their correlation with Butler's performativity delineates, differentiates and elaborates men and women to be sexually distinct as well as socially discrete genders entrenched in the cultural context of Asia. Men and women perform their specific gender roles through repetitive social acts, not by choice but as endorsed upon them by their being a part of a collective thought ruling over the individuals. Thus, the research presents this performative aspect of gender through lexical choices of adjectives opted by the author forming a helpful study for the researchers seeking to approach gender issues in literary texts via linguistic clues and evidences.

Introduction

The debate about patriarchy, gender discrimination and oppression is spread far and wide, historically as well as geographically. The biological and social construction of gender identities and their rendering through discursive practices is a much loved choice for inquiry for the social scientists and literary and linguistic researchers. Feminist literary theory is a diverse array of ideas on women oppression and its representation in literary texts. Such a profound existence of gender specific discourses have enabled myriads of inquiries in this domain with a claim that these writings have played a significant role in breaking stereotypes about gender and educating the recipients of these texts towards gender esteem and equal rights.

In fiction, representation of women by male and female writers has always innately presented the specific cultural demands from a female and a male in order to fit successfully into the social fabric where they are born and destined to live. The researcher deliberately mentions female prior to a male, of course breaking the normal discursive pattern, since it is a female who is often suppressed under the pressure of prescribed performative acts as compared to her male counterpart. The world of *Joseph Andrews* by Henry Fielding adores Fanny as a lovable character as she retains all the qualities, shy and submissive as she is. Elizabeth Bennett of Jane Austen is admired by the readers but her mother always has a special liking for the beauty of Jane Bennett and the cleverness of Lydia Bennett. Maggie Tulliver of George Eliot has to face criticism from her society because she did not act in accordance with the traditional tent around her. And there are many comparative instances of this kind in modern literature as well.

Hamid's peculiar stylistic feature is the choice of very specific lexical items for the representation of men and women as sexually distinct and performing socially discrete gender roles. Adjectives used for the genders from the perspective of the narrator and that of characters minister to the readers and critics to form an idea of how specific gender roles are knitted in the very fabric of rising Asia.

Overview of *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*

This novel is the tale of an anonymous protagonist who is born in a rural setting in an unnamed country of rising Asia and then, with his migration to the city with his family, he steps into the economic struggle through his job as a CD seller and ends as a great businessman. His personal and business affairs are shown simultaneously in the novel. His relation with his mother, his sister, his beloved and his wife helps in understanding gender relations in the context of Eastern world. He dies like all, but his life is a wonderful tale of struggle which is the lot of so many if they want to become filthy rich in rising Asia.

Literature Review

The origin of Stylistics is attributed to two distinct and inter-related areas: linguistics and literary criticism. Stylistics can stand for both linguistic and literary criticism, which depends upon how one perceives and employs it (Short, 1997). Stylistics serves as the area where linguistics and critical exegesis overlap. Hence, Literary Stylistics is a podium where linguistic and literary interpretations may simultaneously be generated out of a text. Widdowson (1975) while considering Stylistics as a linking bridge between Literature and Linguistics studies literary discourse from a linguistic perspective. Widdowson (1975:4) has shown this relationship in the following figure:

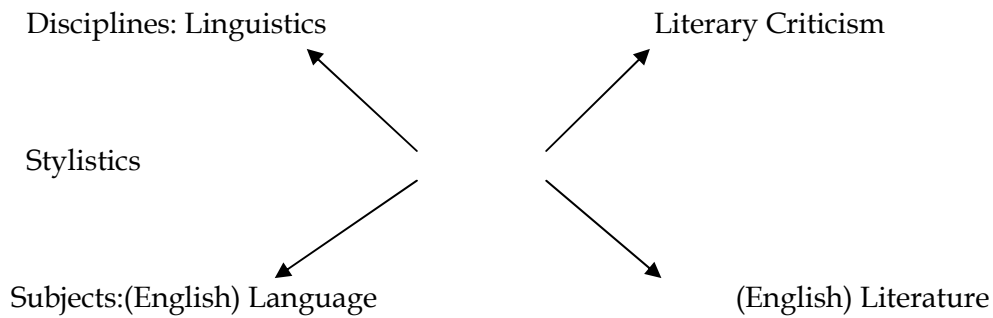


Figure 1.Widdowson's Perspective

According to this relationship established between Linguistics and Literary Criticism through Stylistics, one can easily deduce the pedagogical implications of Stylistics providing grounds for the progression of a pupil from either language or literature towards either Literary Criticism or Linguistics. Style is a lexical and grammatical feature in a text that escorts the analyst to the meaning of the text. Fowler (1986) recognizes style as the standard feature of a language as well as its facet. An equivalent idea is maintained by Toolan (1998) where he interprets stylistics as the study of language in literature.

The use and choice of certain lexical items and their repetition using specific syntactic structures and employing various literary devices are the interest areas of stylistic analyst to probe into the relation between author's choice of language and its function. These choices depend upon some influential factors like age, gender, education, social, cultural, regional background as well as idiosyncratic preferences etc. (Missikova, 2003). Fischer (2010) bases his idea of stylistic interpretation on the fact that meaning as a linguistic phenomenon gets decoded via linguistic analysis.

The study of fiction from gender perspective is not a novel topic. Many researchers have highlighted this issue in their works. Wollstonecraft was objected when she boldly presented her ideas about women degradation and her strong perspective about the equal status and recognition of women along with men (Janes, 2017).Spivak (1988) addresses the theme of the west and the rest as superior and inferior respectively. The same idea is of great significance in studying the dominant position of men in relation to women, which is vehemently presented in literature as well as through actual human actions in the real world. Beauvoir (1989) while evaluating the status of woman compares her with an object of beauty merely to please and entertain the rest. She is of the view that a woman is not born a woman but her society polishes her to assume this gender and her behavior is marked by the standards set by the powerful male strata of her society. Millet (2000) talks about the passive and ignorant view about women in literary writings and, in contrast, the powerful and dominating image of men. Kristeva highlights the importance of language in creating beings who exhibit their cultural norms and identities with the use of spoken and written language (McAfee, 2004)

Following the above idea about gender, the present research sets the stage for the application of Butler's notion of gender performance on the study of stereotypical and deviant roles of men and women as determined by their specific acts in the fictional setting structured by one of the influential Pakistani American writers, Mohsin Hamid.

Material and Methods

The text of the novel is subjected to close reading in order to locate adjectives used with male and female characters are extracted through purposive sampling. Their frequency of occurrence in the text is noted. The performative acts and discourse chunks are isolated and noted in order to discuss the gender specific stance in this paper. The selection of adjectives is based on the model of Leech and Short (2007, p.61).

"A: Lexical categories

ADJECTIVES. Are the adjectives frequent? To what kinds of attributes do adjectives refer? physical? psychological? visual? auditory? color? referential? emotive? Evaluative? etc. Are adjectives restrictive or non-restrictive? Gradable or non-gradable? Attributive or predicative?" (p. 76).

The adjectives in the text are carefully categorized and fit into the blocks suggested above. The adjectives are further divided into categories of representation of stereotypes, social esteem, mutual relation between genders and antagonism. The data is then analysed in the light of gender performance by Butler (2006). She talks about heterosexual matrix which is a scale upon which culture plays its part to differentiate and define men as being different from women. The acts performed by men and women become discrete and naturalized through repetition and become the defining identity of each gender. Thus one is not born or becomes a man or a woman rather the repetitive speech acts and social performances measure masculine or feminine roles of individuals in society. The male and the female characters in the novels are studied in the light of these ideas about gender.

Results and Discussion

Representation of Gender through Adjectives

In Hamid's novel, a peculiar stylistic feature is the choice of specific lexical items for differentiating men and women on the basis of their repetitive acts which rendering them sexually distinct and socially discrete genders in the cultural context of Asia. Adjectives used for the genders from the perspective of the narrator and that of characters minister to the readers and critics to form an idea of how specific gender roles are knitted in the very fabric of rising Asia. Following issues of gender roles are brought to the forefront after sorting out the category of adjectives used for men and women in the text.

Social Position and Esteem of Men and Women

A chain of Asian authors, especially Indian and Pakistani fiction writers in English, hold a special interest for the issue of gender and social esteem linked with men and women in their society. A general stance in Asian society is that the position of women is to undertake responsibility to protect and preserve what is called the home- an inner hub of the national culture and spiritual essence. Concomitantly, men are considered responsible to learn superior tactics of systematizing material life and rising socially for the protection of the same inner hub. Taking this primary notion in view, Hamid's choice of adjectives to differentiate men and women on the basis of social position and esteem in Asian context appears very apt and relevant. These choices perform the function of differentiating men and women in the very context of the fictional world crafted by the narrator. As an illustration of this differentiation in the social roles of genders, following extract can serve as evidence:

"She [mother] squats as your father is likely squatting, *handle-less* broom in her hand instead of a sickle, her *sweep-sweep* waddle approximating his own movements. Squatting is *energy efficient, better* for the back and hence *ergonomic*, and it is not *painful*. But done for hours and days and weeks and years its *mild* discomfort echoes in the mind like the *muffled* screams from a *subterranean torture chamber*". (pp. 8-9)

Here, it can be observed that gender identity is marked and determined by sustained social performances (Butler, 1990). The males and the females are judged on the basis of the efficiently performed roles which are naturalized and have got knitted in the cultural fabric of a society.

Adjectives form an endearingly fine picture of the domestic duties of a woman and what feelings emerge out of delivering such responsibilities. In order to understand this point, a look at the table no. 1 deems significant where adjectives showing this difference have been foregrounded.

Table 1
Adjectives representing Men and Women

Sr. No.	Men	Women
1.	Tall	Younger
2.	Good	Older
3.	Young	Jaunty (Strut)
4.	Strong	Fragile (Vulnerability)
5.	Lucky	Suppressed (tears)
6.	Surviving	Smug
7.	Important	Muffled
8.	Most loyal	Unmitigated (agony)
9.	Adorable	Baffled
10.	Voracious	Wondrous

Through this tabular presentation of adjectives used with men and women in the novel, it becomes apparent that whereas men are presented with positive physical and mental traits, women are represented mostly on the basis of their emotional state of being. The character of the sister of protagonist is an instance to illustrate this point of view:

'Lately she alternates with alarming frequency between suppressed but globular tears and calm airs of smug superiority'. (p.24)

The adjectives representing women are emotive and psychological in nature more than physical ones. The reason is that woman as the softer sex is considered as the seat of emotions but, interestingly, it is shown that such emotions are adding strength to female characters rather than reducing them to weaker entities as compared with the male characters. Thus, we can also observe deviation from the stereotypical notions about gender.

'She [sister] does something you associate with women of girth and substance, not with slender slips of girls like your sister. She sings in a quiet and powerful voice'. (p.26)

Contextually, she is weak and miserable but adjective choices show that amidst hardships and shattered hopes and aspirations, the sister of protagonist still shines with the power of endurance and patience in odd circumstances. Same can be inferred from the representation of the characters of mother who fights courageously with cancer, wife of protagonist who remains successful as a well educated and self sufficient woman even after divorce and pretty girl who keeps whirling in the ocean of struggle to become famous till death puts an end to her life-long toil.

'She [mother] is perplexed by her wounded status, like a soldier who has been shot but as such sees no blood'. (p.66)

It can further be deduced from the study of the physical portrayal of women in the novel that Hamid deviates from the traditional norm of associating extraordinary beauty and exaggerating physical charms of women in his novel. Since the focal point of author in the novel is the position of individuals in a developing world of Asia so he deals most of his characters in the light of their goals, aspirations and actions rather than their physical charms and exotic appearances.

The portrayal of major woman character in the novel, pretty girl shows gender perspective:

'Her looks would not traditionally have been considered beautiful. No milky complexion, raven tresses, bountiful bosom, or soft, moon-like face for her. Her skin is darker than average, her hair and eyes lighter, making all three features a strikingly similar shade of brown'. (p.38)

'I know. You [pretty girl] wanted to leave the neighbourhood and now you've done it. You're famous.' (p.87)

This female character is neither an archetypal nurturer nor a damsel in distress rather, she is a crusader and an independent woman who knows how to chalk out her own destiny, though how lucrative or filthy it may be. She can be contrasted with the mother and sister of the protagonist who are presented in somewhat traditional light. When she is exposed to the world of men she has 'jaunty' strut (p. 38) that gives a hint of the pleasure that she takes in vanity but when a man gawks at the sister of pretty girl, one can observe her 'altered' gaze (p. 28) exhibiting the shyness of a simple rural girl for whom this masculine stare is a matter of embarrassment and disrespect.

The adjective choices show that the central motif is neither beauty nor emotions but the labor to perk up from scratch to a sound social standing in rising Asia. Most of the characters deviate from the traditional gender polarization that defines categories of human beings into males and females while also devising their social roles, esteem and nature of socialization. Such polarization creates a barrier to attain an esteemed position in the socio-economic hub. But characters in this novel are unique in this regard because irrespective of their genders, they are all striving for a rise in their social and economic stipulation which is shown as a dream of most of the youngsters in a developing country like Pakistan.

Relationships within and across Genders

The study of adjectives shows that their function is multi dimensional when it comes to defining gender roles. Not only do they differentiate genders biologically and socially, but also the relationship within the same gender and across them is construed on the basis of adjectives. It means that study of adjectives may be very fascinating and exciting to wade through the nature of human relationships and social contacts. In this regard, the first evidence is the nature of relationship between two women, protagonist's mother and his paternal grandmother.

Your mother and grandmother play a waiting game. The older woman waits for the younger woman to age, the younger woman waits for the older woman to die. p. 9

In an all-female society your mother would likely rise to be queen, a bloody staff in her hand and crushed skulls beneath her feet. p.9, 10

The author's pick of adjectives for the portrayal of the identity constructions of a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law seems very relevant which can be illustrated with the help of the following table.

Table 2
Adjectives showing the perspective of Mother-in-Law

Sr. No.	Adjectives
1.	Vain

2.	Arrogant
3.	Headstrong
4.	Unquenchable (disapproval)

The adjectives mentioned in the table show a traditional association of negative attributes to a daughter-in-law by her mother-in-law. This implies that how adjectives create a pen picture of human relations.

The relation between brother and sister is also constructed through specific lexical choices by the narrator which adds realism and honesty of portraying characters enwrapped in social and traditional cloaks.

*'[...] your faces small ovals of the familiar in an otherwise unrecognizable world'.
p.15*

'[...] that she seeks you out not to comfort you, but rather for the comfort that you, her only recently recovered little brother, have in this moment of fragile vulnerability the capacity to offer her'. (p.15)

When gender identity and relationship is linked with the question of dominance and power, one can argue that it is the common sense of any community which gives a naturalized notion of gender roles in society converging at the point where no force or effort is needed to question that traditional role. That is why, despite being elder, the sister of the protagonist depends upon him for emotional support and strength in an unrecognizable world. Her character also reveals a desire of relatedness and belonging in a social world that is ghastly replacing genuine human relations with artificiality and materialism.

The traditional viewpoint can be applied on other relationships presented in the novel. The mother and father of the protagonist typically represent the common perception of parents towards male and female children.

He says to your mother, "He's a strong child. This one" She says, "He's very strong". (p.11)

She demonstrated more enthusiasm for education in her few months in a classroom than your brother did in his several years... but your sister will not be sent there in his stead. (p.28)

The preference of strength and education given to a male child is very appropriately projected. The notion of a very young lady and her early marriage is embedded in the base of the cultural belt of countries like Pakistan and India in Asia. But we cannot call Hamid's choice of adjectives and projection of such a scenario as almost rigid and harsh. Since the setting of the novel is rising Asia, hence, it remains an honest endeavor on the part of the author to capture the realistic image of norms, values and manners of the habitat of Asia.

Lexical choices also construct the nature of the relationship between husband and wife through the character of the unnamed protagonist and his wife. It may be stated that Hamid has captured the spirit of this relationship by adding a third character and affixing the adjective 'other' to convey the real motif of her existence in the life of the protagonist. In order to form an idea of how two female characters are represented in the context, let us have a look at the following table showing differences of the use of adjectives for the difference of association of the protagonist with wife and pretty girl:

Table 3
Relationship of Protagonist with Wife and Pretty Girl

Sr. No	Wife	Pretty Girl
1.	Unpleased, flickering, fraught (p.130)	Flushed, relaxed glibness (p.110)
2.	Wondrous, indefatigable (p.148)	Archetypal woman (p. 135)
3.	Charitable, religious (p.167)	Other woman (p. 147)

The adjectives differentiating wife and pretty girl in the first row show that the relationship enjoyed by the protagonist and pretty girl is romantically associated with the derivation of physical ecstasy promised in such contact. Whenever they meet, the description of the surroundings also reinforces the physical nature of their association. They used to live in *adjacent* streets and working in the *same* market (p. 41). The choice of the adjectives 'adjacent' and 'same' shows that the function of their use is to measure the probability of a relationship that can be established on common grounds. They had a number of *unspeaking* encounters (p. 53) in *dark* and dimly lit street and over the roof top and it is *starless* sky whenever they happen to see each other. This pattern of the use of adjectives suggests the physical aspect of this romantic contact where the bosom of love remains mainly entrapped into the bodily charms and pleasures. And by the time the protagonist gets married the pretty girl has assumed the status of an *archetypal* woman and a *living* memory in the life of the protagonist and her *languid* voice offers him some *wonderful* moments during which everything around him seems *less substantial*. The adjectives just used show the scale of their use by the narrator. In this instance, it can be observed that the growth of a relationship can be very emphatically presented through the use of adjectives. The pretty girl was an object of physical pleasure in the beginning but as the age and novel proceeds, the romantic version of love is modified into an eternal and immortal vision that remains with a person with or without the presence of the object of love.

The use of 'archetypal' is adopted to show the feelings of a lover towards his beloved. Otherwise, the pretty girl fits only into the mould of the progressive vision of a woman but when one has to define the archetypal social esteem and associations of a woman, the character of the pretty girl hardly glues in that arrangement.

A look at the adjectives used for the wife of the protagonist leads us to a number of other interpretations of their choice. From the above stated discussion on

the nature of relation between the hero and his beloved, one cannot jump to the conclusion that Hamid has associated positive tone with that affair and marriage institution is blotted in his work. Marriage is esteemed to be a very sacred institution in the social world of Asia. It gives completion, security and strength to a pair joined in matrimonial bliss but it is assumed to offer more prerogatives to women than men. Keeping in view this primary notion, let us contrast the characters of the pretty girl and the wife of the protagonist on the basis of the lexical choices used distinctively for both of them as stated in the Table 3. The presence of the pretty girl in the life of the unnamed leading character affects the happiness tagged with married life. Because of her, he feels uninterested towards his own wife and their relationship remains flickering and it is a kind of burden borne by both him and his wife. Despite this, he calls his wife wondrous and she is presented with the positive attributes as shown in the Table 3. The positive adjectives like *indefatigable* [determination], *striking* [maturing beauty], *relative* [prosperity], *influential* [position], *pertinent* [advantage], *evident* [fearlessness], *self-sufficient* [fire], *disarming* [warmth] and *fortunate* are all used to given vivacity to the character of a wife. No adjective overshadows a negative trait embedded in her character. It can be generalized that a wife is held in high respect and esteem and she is considered a sacred being in traditional terms. On the other hand, a woman having an affair outside marital bond is seen with a doubtful eye and she can never enjoy the respect given to a wife in the sacred boundary of home. The pretty girl was called 'slut' by the mother of the hero. Her relationship with him might have been exciting 'breath-halting' feelings in the hero but at the same time he is shown to regret the possibility that could have made his married life successful had he not denied due share of love to his wife:

You shut your eyes, briefly seized by a strange regret, maybe for the delays to this project, or for the state of your marriage, or for becoming so late a father to your son, for being, in all likelihood, destined to overlap too limitedly with the span of his life. (p.156)

Though there is no sense of reproach for having a life-long relation with pretty girl, but a failed marriage is painful even in such a triangle. Such description reveals that though pretty girl enjoys the pleasure of being loved but she is denied the respect with which the society embellishes a wife. So, tradition dominates in the portrayal of human relationships through adjectives.

Another point of discussion emerges from the use of 'other [woman]' for the pretty girl. Though the debate on 'us' and 'them' or 'I' and 'other' is related with the postcolonial study of the developing and the developed nations but the concept can be borrowed for the present function in the context of this novel. 'Us' is a stronger body and occupies a position of dominance whereas 'other' pertains to a weaker entity in a subordinate position who lacks many privileges conferred upon the former one. That is why the weaker position of a woman is represented with lexical choices of 'them, other or subaltern'. But in the present case the distinction of us and other is to be made between two women, and not between men and women. The pretty girl leaves her home in order to get filthy famous in rising Asia but her foot as

it crosses the threshold of her house closes door of any prospect of a promising domestic future and that is what the author shows through choice of adjective 'other' for her. She dominates the life of the anonymous hero but she could not entitle herself to any badge of honour and respect that is given to a wife.

Gender and Antagonistic Adjectives

Another aspect of the function of adjectives representing gender is their use to present antithetical ideas. The reason for the use of these antithetical adjectives is creating a sense of relativity of reality which is never absolute. Additionally, the choice of placing adjectives as opposites add a sense of obscurity resulting in enabling the readers to choose for themselves the possible meaning out of a situation projected in the novel. It may be noted that the author has used the contradictory adjectives while showing gender contact. The vague air of doubt engulfs the members of one gender when they try to establish an untraditional contact with a member of the other gender. In addition to this, the emotional state of a character, whether male or female, is represented via adjectives used in antithetical ways.

Following is a list of adjectives used antithetically while describing characters and their feelings.

Table 4
Antithetical Adjectives

Sr. No.	Antithetical Adjectives	Characters
1.	Horrified, great fascination	Students
2.	Skinny and strong	Protagonist
3.	Familiar and unfamiliar	Pretty girl
4.	Happy and afraid	Protagonist/Pretty Girl
5.	Suppressed and globular tears	Sister
6.	Tearful and affectionate Reunion	Protagonist/Son
7.	Surprised and unsurprised	Protagonist/Pretty girl

The pretty girl seems to the protagonist a woman who is familiar and unfamiliar at the same time, familiar as he enjoys an intimacy with her despite long pauses in between their occasional meetings and unfamiliar because that strange woman loves him but is not inclined to have a life-long matrimonial bond with him. That is why this obscurity of their relationship leaves them in a fix and this leads to meetings ending with state of happiness as well as fear and that of being surprised and unsurprised.

The emotional state of characters is also embedded when the author uses antithetical adjectives. Students watch their teacher in horrified great fascination when he punishes the brightest student. The sister of the protagonist suppresses her tears when her fate is decided by her parents but these tears appear as globules. The hero meets his son after a couple of years and this warm reunion is both tearful and affectionate with a ferocious yet protective hug (p. 222). In this way the use of

antithetical adjectives seems apt and relevant adding variety to the derivation of connotative meaning from the lexical choices at hand.

Thus, Butler's notion is successfully applied and inferred in the above stated discussion.

Conclusion

From the details discussed in the above section, it may be concluded that adjectives play an efficient role in describing the gender identity, differences and the specific roles assigned to each gender and their study can be very fascinating in order to form an idea of the style of an author's way of presenting gender in his work. The answers to the three research questions are sought in this paper. The first question was about the choice of adjectives for men and women characters in the novel. It is shown in the discussion section how a writer attributes gender roles to male and female characters by a distinct choice of adjectives for both. The second question revolved around the stereotypical or divergent gender specific roles of characters in the novel. It may be inferred that Hamid's novel gives a balanced view of performativity as we have observed how he sometimes deviates from the representation of naturalized gender roles of women. The third question addressed Judith Butler's ideas about performative acts of gender. Here it may be concluded that both men and women are determined as two distinct social entities on the basis of their actions creating a heterosexual matrix in which goal, expectation and duties get distributed between the two according to the culturally and socially accepted norms which serve as a scale to gauge gender roles in the society.

The research is significant for the future researchers to study gender roles in the novels, and also for the different dimensions of research in literary stylistics. It is also an effort to blend and converge literary and linguistic perspective for the study of a literary text and the gap between two areas, that is, literature and linguistics for the study of fiction is bridged up and it may continue in the future endeavors that follow.

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