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## Soul-Making



*A Garden of Contemplation  
Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden, Vancouver, B.C.*

*Photo by Joanne Schultz Hall*

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# Narrative Imagination In Evoking A Language Of Mind<sup>1</sup>

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## Preface

*The psychologists do not know everything. Poets have other insights into man.*

Gaston Bachelard

As a poet, I hold a belief in the significance and import of words. It is important to comprehend the etymological roots and branches of the words we use in the creation of meaning and human understanding. How the accepted meaning of certain words in the theory and practice of therapy changed over time is important. If we are to have knowledge of the original connotation of the words we use in the theory and practice of therapy, we must situate words such as *psychology*, *psychopathology*, *psychotherapist*, and the word *therapy* itself—within an historical context. To do so, becomes illuminating, especially when one realizes how far away from their original meaning the above-mentioned words have come to be understood.

My intention within this paper is to offer reflections upon the ideas and thinking of persons whose theoretical writing has been inspirational to me. As such, this paper wishes to celebrate the work of James Hillman (1975, 1989, 1992), Harlene Anderson and Harry Goolishian (1988), Stephen Tyler (1986), and Deleuze and the late Felix Guattari (1983).

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This paper represents a small contribution to what Hillman (1975) describes as a movement towards re-visioning psychology, a project that includes returning the idea of psyche, or mind, to pathology. As Hillman writes, "Out of psychopathos-logos came the meaning of suffering of the soul, or the soul's suffering of meaning" (1975, p. 71). In my own work, I have discovered that Anderson's and

## Revising psychology includes returning the idea of psyche, or mind, to pathology.

Goolishian's idea of *therapeutic conversation* has been liberating as a means of facilitating dialogue with others intent upon understanding the suffering of their lives. Anderson's and Goolishian's reflections upon Maturana's ideas on language, in the creation and construction of meaning, have also been liberating.

Stephen Tyler (1986), a post-modern anthropologist, has given much thought and consideration to the way in which ethnographic texts may become collaborative creations arising from the search for meaning and understanding between the ethnographer and the informants. Through such a collaboration, *local knowledge* becomes ascendant and privileged. Meaning is evoked, not prescribed or represented. This paper finds affinity between these ideas and how they might inform and influence developments within theory in therapy.

Deleuze's and Guattari's writing and thinking illustrates the post-modern challenge to accepted notions within the med-

ical domain, particularly as these notions and concepts apply to the increasing reification of persons created by psychiatric practices within the medical model. Deleuze and Guattari point out that many artists and writers, for example, have literally or figuratively acted upon their desires, and have had journeys through madness have been break-throughs, not break-downs.

Finally, this paper acknowledges the thinking, writing, and practice associated with the work of Michael White and David Epston (1990). For myself, their achievement in gathering ideas from philosophy, literary criticism and theory, anthropology and sociology, and other domains, has been inspirational in returning the idea of the narrative imagination to therapeutic practice and theory.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Gail Marie Boivin and Stephen Patrick Madigan for reading and listening to ideas presented herein. I also wish to acknowledge my parents, Ronald and Noreen, for teaching me to question and create.

## I. Musings on "Wrong Pathologizing" and a Psychology of Fragments.

*Every philosophy also conceals a philosophy; every opinion is also a hideout, every word also a mask.*

Nietzsche

*Tis all in pieces, all cohaerence gone.*

John Donne

Out of curiosity, I recently examined the Penguin *Dictionary of Psychology* (Reber, 1985) to read how psychology

was defined. Psychology simply cannot be defined: indeed, it cannot, even be easily characterized. Even if one were to do so today; tomorrow would render the effort inadequate. Psychology is what scientists and philosophers of various persuasions have created to try to fulfill the need to understand the minds and behaviors of various organisms from the most primitive to the most complex. Hence, it really is not a thing at all, it is about a thing, or about many things (p. 593). To punctuate this post-modern definition of psychology, it is noteworthy that this dictionary runs to 848 pages! Indeed, psychology is about many things!

## Many journeys through madness have been break-throughs not breakdowns.

Thinking about this definition, I was reminded of a question Bateson asked in his text, *Mind And Nature: A Necessary Unity* (1979). "What pattern connects the crab to the lobster, and the orchid to the primrose, and all four of them to me? And me to you? And all the six of us to the amoeba in one direction and to the backward-schizophrenic in another?" (p.8). I was also reminded of one of James Joyce's characters who announces, "I'm thousands. I'm an *in-divide-u-all*."

Bateson's question speaks to the connectedness and inter-connectedness associated with what he referred to as an *ecology of mind* (1972). Joyce's line speaks to the multiplicity of voices contained within us, to our fragmented experience, and our experience of this *experience*. As human creatures, we take bits and pieces of "lived experience" and construct relevance and meaning through a narrative context. This context is woven through language, through words. Heraclitus wrote, "It is not I who speak, it is the Logos." A post-modern therapy can facilitate the re-storying of a person's existence by returning to an understanding of what the words *therapy* and *psychology* originally intended. For James Hillman (1975), "Psychology ideally means giving

soul to language and finding language for soul" (p.216). "Psyche" pertains to mind, or, to soul, while "logos" pertains to word. Hillman, in seeking the Greek etymological significance of the word "psychology," provides us with yet another lens with which to view the work we undertake when we engage in therapy. And what of the word "therapy?" Hillman is, again, instructive. *Therapeia*, in Greek means to "carry, support, hold"; "the therapist is one who carries and takes care as does a servant... He (sic) is also one to lean upon, hold on to, and be supported by, ..." (1989, p.73). Hillman develops this definition further, pointing out that

the concept of therapist as someone who "treats" the soul is absent. "Let us recall here that psychotherapy in accordance with the root meaning of the words *psyche*

and *therapy* means to serve soul, not to treat it" (1975, p.74), emphasis in original). Thus, it is that for Hillman, "The psychotherapist is literally *the attendant of the soul*" (1989, p.73).

How did therapy shift in direction from *an attending to the soul*, and assisting, in *co-authoring a language*, to become a clinical construct the aim of which was the categorization of persons according to a diagnostic code?

Hillman suggests that for some time now, "psychology has been under the hegemony of medical and religious analogies and ...psychology has been unable to approach what are essentially psychological phenomena from a perspective of its own" (1975, p.57). Hillman proposes that we view the medical and religious analogies as "perspectives": "Our aim is to see them, and see through them; as perspectives, while

maintaining another view that differs from theirs and is psychological" (1975, p.57). As an illustration of these analogies, the following example of how persons under the influence of "depression" have been "treated" may be productive. Hillman argues:

*Because Christ resurrects, moments of despair, darkening, and desertion cannot be valid in themselves. Our one model insists on light at the end of the tunnel; one program that moves from Thursday evening to Sunday and the rising of a wholly new day better by far than before. Not only will therapy more or less consciously imitate this program ... but the individual's consciousness is already allegorized by the Christian myth so he (sic) knows what depression is and experiences it according to form ... (1975, p.98).*

On the subject of the religious analogy and psychology, Hillman concludes, "The counterpart of every crucifixion fantasy is a resurrection fantasy" (ibid). He argues that this has been picked up, over time, by the medical community.

"Depression is still the Great Enemy. More personal energy is expended in manic defenses against, diversions from, and denials of it than goes into the other supposed psychopathological threats to society..." (ibid)

For Hillman, a truly "psychological" view of depression would involve a quite

## The concept of therapist as someone who "treats" the soul is absent.

different undertaking and understanding: "... through depression we enter depths and in depths find soul. Depression is essential to that tragic sense of life. It moistens the dry soul, and dries the wet. It brings refuse, limitation, focus, gravity, weight, and humble powerlessness. It reminds of death. *The true revolution begins in the individual who can be true to his or her depression*" (ibid, emphasis

in original). This passage, and this psychological viewpoint, may serve to remind of those thought provoking, and awe-inspiring, artists and writers who have entered depths in order to find a language for soul. Gilles Deleuze and the late Felix Guattari (1983) described this process as an achievement of *break-through* and not one of *breakdown*. Deleuze and Guattari mention writers such as: Thomas Hardy, D.H. Lawrence, Malcolm Lowry, Henry Miller, Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, as persons who were not afraid "to scramble the codes" and "to cause flows to circulate" (p.132), as they articulated in language the multiplicity of voices and desires within their minds. As in Rimbaud's revolutionary poetry and prose, these writers

Russian Revolution we don't know how it started going bad" (1983, p.55).

Like Foucault (1980), Hillman critiques those who seek to exercise power over and against others, based on privileged, expert knowledge. "By carelessly turning over our symptoms to professional therapists, we have reinforced the grip of professionalism upon psychopathology" (1975, p.75). Hillman appears to be suggesting that we, the consumers of therapy, have had a hand in allowing this situation to occur, and to proliferate. Yet, this situation does not have to be accepted.

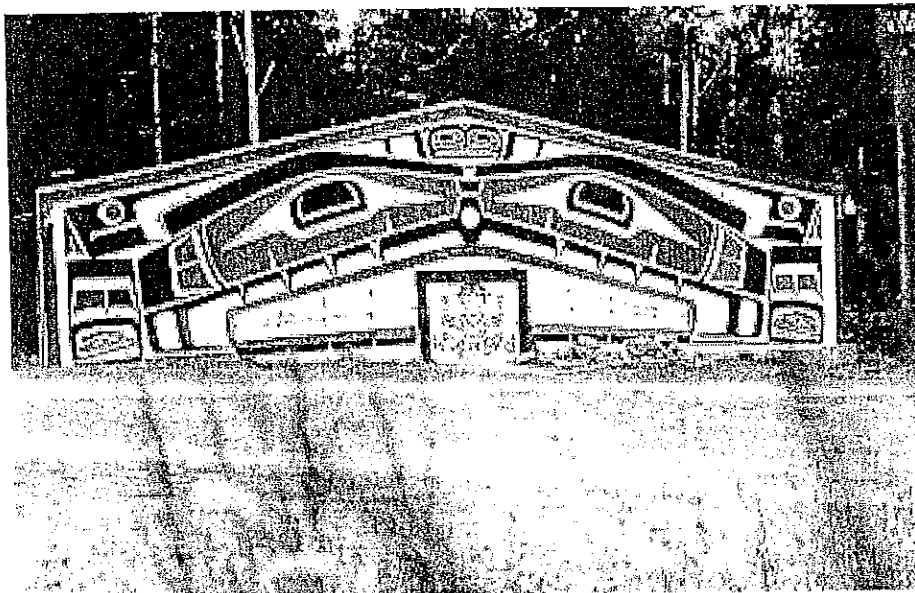
One of the problems associated with a professionalism of this type is that persons often *become* their diagnoses. Hillman describes this process as being

professional naming" reified persons into the "thing" named. More recently, Bill O'Hanlon (1992) has suggested that therapists may give their clients problems. One of the ways in which this may occur is through utilizing the lens of the DSM III technology. Karl Tomm (1990) has been concerned about the influence of the DSM, its inadvertent pathologizing, and also suggests we question assumptions contained within that text. In terms of the "effects" such a labelling technology has upon persons, the post-modern anthropologist, Stephen Tyler (1986, p.139) has gone as far as to call the DSM, "that terrorist bludgeon of the psychiatrist."

If we accept that the therapist is one who serves *mind* then what is required in the engagement between therapist and client is a therapeutic conversation in which the therapist assists the client in finding a language with which to express mind. There is no "treatment" in this engagement: there is only one human being attending with another human being. *Treatment*, then, becomes the fantasy, often detrimental and subjugating, of the clinical, medical model.

*Hillman asks: How can we take back therapy from the killing asymmetry of professionalism and the political abuses of wrong pathologizing, from a system which must find illness in order to promote health and which, in order to increase the range of its helping, is obliged to extend the area of sickness. Ever deeper pockets of pathology to be analyzed, over earlier traumata: primal, prenatal, into my astral body; ever more people into the ritual: the family, the office force, community mental health, analysis for everyone (1975, p.77).*

Being in therapy need not be an endless endeavour. Unlike versions of the medical model, or certain ideas regarding the phenomenon surrounding the recovery movement, a *reflexive, cybernetic therapy of literary merit* (White and Epston, 1990) assists in the process of giving voice to the voices within all of us. Such a therapy leads to the recollection of what Foucault called, "subjugated knowledges" and hitherto, "disqualified knowledges" within the person's experience (Foucault, 1980, p.82). Such a process may be guided by the kinds of questions asked in therapy. Karl Tomm might ask, "Do you ever wonder if continuing thera-



Long House of the Siskutl.

Photo by Joanne Schultz Hall

entered their own depths, faced death, and were therefore capable of living life. According to Deleuze and Guattari, "Psychoanalysis ought to be a song of life, or else be worth nothing at all. It ought, *practically*, to teach us to sing life. And, to see how the most defeated, sad song of death emanates from it: *eiapopeia*" (p.331).

Hillman has suggested that, in these days of late capitalism, therapy serves the purposes of the state by helping the individual adjust to the status quo. Therapy becomes an "adjustment" that is *done* to someone. Therapy is not an open exploration through language, it is a closed, prescriptive, enterprise. As Deleuze and Guattari write: "Psychoanalysis is like the

the ultimate outcome of the therapy game.

*By giving pathologizing a clinical name, the professional therapist makes the first move in this therapy game ... as soon as the move is made of professional naming, a distinct entity is created, with literal reality. On the one hand, I am protected from this thing by separation from it; it now has a name. But on the other hand, I now have something, or even am something: an alcoholic, an obsessive neurotic, a depressive (1975, p.75).*

Hillman, writing almost twenty years ago, was one of the psychotherapists to begin to question how this act of "profes-

py might actually interfere with your ability to learn how to find solutions on your own?" (Tomm 1987, p.182). If there is any point at all to "being in therapy," this being in therapy must involve a path toward self-healing and self-liberation.

## II. Multiplicity, Plurality, and Egalitarian Contexts of Change

*I have not read a work of literature for years. My head is full of pebbles and rubbish and broken matches and bits of glass picked up most everywhere. The task I set myself technically in writing a book from eighteen different points of view and in as many styles...*

*James Joyce, in a letter, June 24, 1921.*

*On the other hand, he often agreed with Vico that "Imagination is nothing but the working over of what is remembered," and said to Frank Budgen, "Imagination is memory."*

*In Ellman, James Joyce, 1982, p.512.*

Anderson's and Goolishian's (1988) paper, *Human Systems as Linguistic Systems* was liberating. My reading of their paper proclaimed that the art of therapy involved maintaining an open space, a flowing conversation in which persons engaged in dialogue evolving towards *problem dissolution*; and where the dignity and integrity of each person within the therapeutic context was paramount.

For myself, their speculations upon the primacy of *language* within the therapeutic context suggested that, because human dilemmas are defined within language, these same dilemmas can be dissolved through language. This served to remind me of Laing's text, *Knots*, in which he suggests "knots" were linguistic traps, words tricked us into. As such, though language, these knots could become undone. Thus, knots were human dilemmas, logical outcomes of taking words to their extreme logic.

Korzybinski's statement, often quoted by Bateson, also came to mind: "The map is not the territory, and the word is not the thing named."

The notion of a therapeutic conversation was particularly intriguing to me. As in a painting or construction by Picasso or Braque, or as in a composition by Strauss, the therapeutic conversation offers multiple descriptions of, a *problem*

## Psychoanalysis ought, practically, to teach us to sing life.

or a *complaint*; problems and complaints being, merely, *language constructions*. Within the open field of this formulation — therapeutic conversation — there was no correct point of view, no right perspective, no wrong perspective. The dualism of right/wrong that often contributed toward self-blame or blaming others did not have a place within this formulation. Rather, there existed a proliferation of several voices, each with its unique contribution aimed at problem dis-solution arising in polyphony. This language exchange resulted in an engendering of curiosity and interest amongst the participants, not apathy and disinterest: "I didn't know that." "I didn't realize you thought

## The dignity of each person within the therapeutic context was paramount.

that way." What you said is surprising." "I never heard that story before." Such comments became familiar refrains in the therapy. For Anderson and Goolishian, therapy brings forth the *unsaid*, and the *not-yet-said*. In this collaboration process, what emerges, what is evoked — adds new meanings, new understandings, and new narratives.

As the therapist, the "master" conver-

sationalist, continues asserting the primacy of language, dilemmas dis-solve. In Bateson's words, *news of difference* becomes recognized; relevance becomes contextualized between the participants who find themselves co-evolving new meaning and new understanding within the open field of the therapeutic conversation. Anthropologist Stephen Tyler (1986), has written of "the poet as *therapon attendant of the Muse*" (p.134), and, in the therapeutic moment, this role seems quite apt. Poet as therapist, therapist as poet, attending to the soul of others; listening for the words that

deconstruct old stories, attendant to the new possibilities — *news of difference*. I appreciate that Anderson and Goolishian would have us focus closely upon language; how language assists in the problem definition; and, how language assists in deconstructing problems. Together they wrote, "We live with each other, we think with each other, we work with each other, and we love with each other. All this occurs in language ..." (p. 377). They also brought attention to the thinking of Maturana and Varela, to the effect that, " ...every human action takes place in language, and also that every act in language brings forth a world created **with others**" (p.377-378, emphasis in original). The poet, John Donne, suggested this long ago when he wrote his famous line, "No man is an island." Today, we would say, "No one is an island." Another poet, a man who loved philosophy, Charles Olson, considered that we inhabit a human universe, and that language is the instrument by which we explore and come to create meaning of that universe. Language is about communication, celebration, the expression of sadness, of joy, the awe of living and the terror associated with intimations of death. Whatever language is *about*, it exists as a medium between persons; it exists for some one. As George Steiner has written, "There is language, there is *art*, because there is *the other*" (1989, p.137). The *other* makes us think, ponder, ruminate; the other involves us, as we involve the other. Yet, in these therapeu-

tic conversations, "the other" is not to blame. No one is to blame. Brad Keeney (1983) writes, "Cybernetic epistemology involves moving away from blaming identified patients or their families for their problems. It sees symptoms as metaphors for a whole ecology, leading one to a state of awareness Bateson depicts as 'humility and loneliness.' This 'loneliness of liberation' as (Allan) Watts ... calls it, arises when there is no longer any gene chemical, individual group, or culture to blame and be angry with" (p.125).

Following Bateson, Watts, Deleuze and Guattari, and others, I encourage the consideration that, it is through language, through our engagement with *the other*, that this loneliness of liberation may become realized and transcended. It is further suggested, following Hillman, that only a "talk therapy" may achieve such an exploration and rediscovery. Hillman writes: "all modern therapies which claim that action is more curative than words ... and which seek techniques other than talk (rather than in addition to it) are repressing the most human of all our faculties—the telling of the tales of our souls" (1975, p.217).

By playing with the meanings and significance offered and evoked by words, a passage into and out of mind may be achieved or realized. As persons talk, they often surprise themselves with new insights and ideas. But talk alone does not necessitate change; talk must be coupled with action.

### III. Musings Upon Evocation, Reverie and Therapy

*It just is, that's all.*

Van Morrison

I find an affinity between the therapeutic practice expounded by Anderson and Goolishian, and Stephen Tyler's description of the post-modern ethnographic text. For Tyler (1986), a post-modern ethnography privileges discourse: discourse, for Tyler is, "the other as us" (p.128). As such, discourse wishes to avoid representation. The form the ethno-

graphic text takes results from the collaboration between "others" (i.e., between ethnographer and the native colleagues).

For Tyler, the *meaning* of the post-modern ethnographic narrative does not abound within the narrative as such, but rather exists as an understanding of the mutually evolved, fragmentary, experiences evoked.

*Therapies which claim action is more curative than words ... are repressing — the telling of the tales of our souls.*

✓ The project of a post-modern therapy consists, as I see it and think about it, in an acceptance of the fragmentary pieces of experience that are our lived experience, and the lived experience of those presenting in therapy. Deleuze and Guattari state, "We live today in, the age of partial objects, bricks that have been shattered to bits, and leftovers. We no longer believe in the myth of the existence of fragments that, like pieces of an antique statue, are merely waiting for the last one to be turned up, so that they may all be glued back together to create a unity that is precisely the same as the original *unity*. We no longer believe in a primordial totality that once existed, or in a final totality that awaits us at some

*In the postmodern fairy tale, Humpty Dumpty lives with the fragments.*

future date" (1983, p.42). In the post-modern fairy tale, Humpty-Dumpty lives with the fragments, because all the kings horses and all the kings men cannot put Humpty-Dumpty back together again. Our prevailing stories, of who we *have been* interweave with other, emergent,

alternate stories of who we *are and can become*. Within the coauthorings involved, in a therapeutic conversation, this will be similar for all involved. Yet, the experiences described or *re-membered* will be in pieces, will be fragmented. Michael White and David Epston (1990) have stressed the role played by imagination in *problem externalization* and have written extensively on the role played by language both in the definition and construction of persons (p.188) within our culture and society. White and Epston have also suggested that openness, curiosity, excitement, and a profound interest in the words being said by those in therapy, create an authentic experience of worthwhileness. The therapist, in their vision, is not objective or neutral; the therapist does not sit back as though merely a reflecting mirror, a representation, of what Stephen Tyler calls a "reality fantasy or fantasy reality."

Recently, in his response to Steve de Shazer (1993), Michael White has written of how his reading of Gaston Bachelard has influenced his own thinking in a particular direction. This new direction, I find intriguing, in offering a further push-to-the-edge of what I would term "the uses of narrative imagination." White writes: "The identification of contradiction with mystery is provocative of imagination, and the use of particular languages of therapy, often picturesque, is evocative of powerful images. At times, in special circumstances, these images

can extend the known limits of culture. Elsewhere ... in following the ideas of Gaston Bachelard, I have speculated that these powerful images 'trigger reverberations' that reach back, in history, to *certain* events or experiences that 'res-

onate' in some way with the image—many experiences of the past, that would not be remembered under ordinary experiences, 'light up' and contribute to alternate story lines" (White, 1993, p.131).

This passage speaks for itself, indicating what I think is a further adventure into the realm of the multiverse offered

by words coupled with the images they may engender. This is fertile territory, territory previously explored by poets, writers and other artists. This is an "imaginal territory," as Hillman might say, available to the domain of therapy.

## Summary

*Nothing is settled; everything can still be altered.*

### Levi-Strauss, *Triste Tropics*

Order, disorder, need not necessarily imply dichotomy. A poet whose words meant much to me, Robert Duncan from San Francisco, wrote a piece entitled, *Fragments of a Disordered Devotion*. Fragments, pieces, instances, moments—

## The experience of "self" and "other" need not be linear and ordered.

that is all we have. In re-collecting those fragments, pieces, instances and moments, we achieve "this drawing together, this reweaving ... what Joyce called *re-embodiment*" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p.43). Within the domain of therapy, I discover an affinity between what Joyce referred to as *re-embodiment*, and what Michael White and David Epston refer to as *unique outcomes* (1990). Unique outcomes may have a temporal location, or, they may occur to the person within the therapeutic conversation itself. As such, these "moments" of re-collection imply instances of illumination, realization, and what Joyce termed "epiphanies." Furthermore, these moments of unique outcome, or of epiphany, provide portals and windows—*openings*—into mind. It is language that allows for these openings into mind to occur; it is language that transports us, and allows for the articulation of meaning to become organized and patterned. I have reflected, within this paper, upon ideas and insights provided by a number of persons whose thinking and practice has been inspirational to me. Together,

the emanations of these ideas and insights have suggested the importance of the narrative imagination in evoking a language of mind.

My reading of certain poets allowed me to comprehend that the experience of self and other need not be linear and ordered. Similarly, my reading of Deleuze and Guattari, Laing, and others, provided me with an understanding of how fractured dimensions of one's experience may become whole and embodied through acceptance and discovery. Bateson, Keeney, Tyler, and others, appeared along the adventure. Anderson's and Goolishian's therapeutic conversation appeared to offer the most liberating, egalitarian, context in which to explore and facilitate the discovery of a new history of self. Homage was paid to the ideas and practice of David Epston and Michael White, and I was further encouraged by White's (1993) recent push into yet another domain, inspired by his reading of Bachelard. Finally, this paper would not have been created in this form if not for the initial impetus provided by the writings of James Hillman. Hillman often mentions this line by John Keats, and Keats shall have the last words! "Call the world if you please, The vale of Soul-Making? Then you will find out the use of the world."

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## Note

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