

Dissipation Of Ethics And Obligeant In Journalism: A Study Of Edward Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang* And *Hayduke Lives!*

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Abstract:

Edward Abbey is a twentieth-century American novelist, essayist, critic, and environmentalist. His writings reflect uncompromising environmental philosophies that create awareness among people about environmental issues such as deforestation, laying roads into natural places, and mining. The present study concentrates on Abbey's two novels *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!*. These novels explicate how the environment is getting degraded to lead sophisticated lives by human beings. In these novels, Abbey portrays of the tendency of humans to exploit nature to lead a comfortable life. He attempts to instil the importance of preventing environmental degradation through the common characters in the both novels like Hayduke, Dr. Sarvice, Smith, and Abzug. They meet one another on a river trip and form a group called The Monkey Wrench Gang and they engage in the activities of protecting nature by making economic losses to the firms which engage in destructing nature. The present article differs from existing research and it primarily focuses on how media fail to abide by the ethics of journalism and how they deviate from exercising their sole responsibility in reporting news. It is so obvious that the Media are doing favour to certain entities since the maximum amount of dividend of the Media is held by other firms. Journalists are enforced not only to reach out to the people with news that makes them aware of impending risks in the future like pandemics, environmental issues, climate change, and social problems (communal and religious issues) but also to cover the news that carries commercial values in the sight of capturing the market. In this regard, Media personnel fail to practice their ethics by taking a stand of favouring somebody by ignoring the truth. It is vividly accounted in *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!* Due to the failure to exercise the ethics of media, an important issue (environmental degradation) that should have been addressed louder to the world was ignored completely by paying attention to the news that carries commercial values.

Key Words: Dissipation of ethics, Responsibility of media and journalism, consequence of not abiding by ethics, and Essence of Media.

Introduction:

Edward Abbey is a twentieth-century environmental activist and his advocacy of environmental issues through his writing is immense. He was born on 29, January 1927 in Pennsylvania. His parents were not able to reside in a fixed place during the years of the great depression (1929-1939) as they were poor, they kept moving from place to place. He has written eight novels and seven volumes of collected essays. Abbey had grown up in a confronting atmosphere that was on the one hand, his mother abides by norms of government; on the other hand, his father would resist much and obey little – anti-capitalistic, anti-religion, anti-prevailing opinion, anti-booze, anti-war and anti-anyone who did not agree with him. Hence, most of Abbey's writings were influenced by his parents like the civil and uncivil. Even though his family encountered fatal poverty during his childhood, he had a fabulous childhood of wandering free and playing with his four siblings (a sister and three brothers) in the nearby woods. Abbey worked as a forest ranger and fire lookouts in the national parks during his summer holidays, where he spent time for reading, writing, and sleeping with young women. He strongly supported zero population growth but he married five women and begot five children; slept with countless women. Abbey's first two novels did not bring the exposure that he intended to bring him but it was done by *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*. It made him to be showered with critical praise in 1968. Its ultimate success earned him teaching positions. He worked in the University of Utah at first and he was placed permanently at the University of Arizona. For some years Abbey with his friend made some economic losses to firms that were a threat to nature like industrial sabotages, burning billboards, hurling away the survey stakes, and damaging the engines of bulldozers and earth movers. Abbey died on 14th March 1989 on account of internal bleeding caused by too much drinking. His body was buried at a secret spot in Arizona wilderness against the law since it was federal property. Edward Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!* deal with various affairs like environmental catastrophes and the destruction of materialistic life. This article primarily deals with the importance of journalists to follow ethics and morality in reporting news.

Objective of the Study:

This study traces the imminence of media and journalism and its dissipation of ethics in Edward Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!* This research article focuses on the following objectives:

- To explore how important role is being played by media and journalism in inculcating people.
- To highlight the gradual dilution in exercising ethics of journalism by media personnel.

- To find the causes for the dissipation of obligeants in journalism and media.
- To investigate how media ignores the exploitation of nature with substantiation from Edward Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!*
- To understand that the practice of taking a stand leads to the loss of trust on the media.

Scope of the Study:

Discipline, generosity, kindness, loyalty, and sincerity are common and expected qualities in every aspect of humans' life. The dark and gloom would engulf the life of a person sans these qualities. In this regard, ethics is also needed to be followed in every single profession such as medicine, law, engineering, teaching, and all. But the professional ethics are getting diluted gradually across the world in all professions. This research paper is limited to identifying the functions of journalism and media through Edward Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!*. It explores how media and journalists encounter dissipation of ethics on various grounds. Journalism and media play an immense role in inculcating people with day-to-day information to assist them in making the right decision. On account of ever-growing competition, journalists are after content that carries commercial values rather than their commitment to following ethics. It gradually leads to the loss of trust in media and journalism. This research ideas and information are substantiated by Edward Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!*

Review of Literature:

Soumya Datta (1993), in her article entitled *Social Responsibility of Media and Indian Democracy*, states that Mass media holds an influence on human life in various forms at present. It showers with information across the world. The media has a powerful presence in a democratic country like India but they have been criticized recently for having disregarded their obligation to social responsibility. She adds that the vicious practice of business in the field of media turned out to be a danger to the democracy of the country.

Jingan Cui, Yonghong Sun, and Huaiping Zhu (2008), in their writing namely *The Impact of Media on the Control of Infectious Disease* assert that medias are playing such an important role in alerting people in an emergency situation like a pandemic. With the assistance of media coverage, people could easily be intimidated of the situation to follow precautionary methods. So, mass media enable people to reach out to them with necessary information regarding contact transmission. It is a befitting example of the argument that media influences people.

Dale Jacquette (2016), in his work called *Journalistic Ethics: Moral Responsibility in the Media* explains that journalists hold exceptional moral rights and responsibilities. Journalism fulfils its responsibility by taking true information to the people's interest. People are paying for what they get. For instance, when they pay for a subscription it includes news also. So, it should be value for value.

The present research article completely deviates from all other existing research on Media and journalism since it explores the dissipation of ethics in journalism as well as looks for the causes of its occurrence.

Findings and Discussion:

A thingamabob that is unable to be seen does not imply that it does not exist. There are a lot of things that can never be seen but can be sensed such as love, friendship, pain, and anger. They are otherwise known as the form of abstract. In the row; ethics, honesty, genuineness, and others are also being given due importance. Whatever the activity or work carried out by human beings, ethicality would surely be expected or must be there. It applies to every single profession; be it medicine, teaching, or law but journalism bears an extra attention since it reaches everyone with information that matters to them. Because, the action of taking information to others is considered to be the greatest of all deeds. One of the great Tamil classic poets Thiruvalluvar emphasises the importance of acquiring information in his remarkable work called *Thirukkural* which dates back between 300 BCE to the 5th century CE.

"Wealth of wealth is wealth acquired by ear attend;

Wealth mid all wealth supremely excellent." (Kural 411, trans. of G.U.Pope)

Wherein he expresses that the wealth which is gained through ears is the wealth of wealth, which is the greatest of all wealth. So, information plays such an eminent role in society since it is the source of knowledge which is more powerful than the destructive nuclear weapon. The information is made available to people in various forms like printed forms such as books, magazines, and newspapers; audio form via radio; and visual form through television and mobile phones.

Media, abiding by the ethics of journalism, makes an indispensable contribution to reach people with information. It investigates and navigates through cases and keeps people posted with the knowledge that they need to make the right decision. Despite a democratic country being administered by three major pillars called the executive, legislative, and judiciary; people (the common citizens) possess the utmost power as they have the right to elect the person who governs them. In the process of electing a leader, there is a lot to be contemplated. However, a layman/woman may not find a platform to explore and collect all the information that they need to arrive at a conclusion. In such a state or situation, journalism enables people with the information that they need; not only regarding politics but also of all the sectors like economy, social justice, and environmental issues. Journalism registers its impeccable and irreplaceable contribution by furnishing even with macro details to assist people. It also serves as a voice of the voiceless for their enhancement and it

stands by justice to streamline the society by being with truth. This is the reason why journalism is popularly being asserted or addressed as a fourth pillar of democracy.

In the past, most of the people were illiterate; contrary to the past, at the present maximum number of people are literate but also are busy with their day-to-day routine; in these periods media's contributions are immeasurable since they have been loyal to people by making them aware of their affairs. In this twenty-first century, people's assiduity is taken as an advantage by the government, politicians, and entrepreneurs to execute their evil brainchild sans the knowledge of the people and it is also being upheld by Media and journalists. There are a lot of evil practices, for instance, like natural exploitation, corruption, bribe, and encroaching public properties are being exercised across the globe. It is an ethical responsibility of the media to endorse it to the world rather most of the media are working in favour of the entities that actively engage in such destructive activities since they hold a considerable amount of dividends. In particular, media highly focuses on content that holds high commercial value instead of commitments.

Journalism has some ethics and responsibilities to perform in the social context. The moral responsibility of journalism is to gather essential facts and events from various parts of the world and report them precisely on time to assist people who will get benefit out of it. And also, people pay for the information that they get in multiple ways. If a man subscribes to a television network operator, for instance, it includes the news channels also; people pay and get the newspapers and magazines. One way or another people also pay for the information that they get accessed to. Hence, it is the sole responsibility of journalists to reach out to them with valuable information. By performing so, like intimating people with necessary information journalists can bring an optimistic change in society. Journalism is to flay people in prior about emergencies for being conscious of impending problems such as natural disasters and environmental catastrophes. Contrary to that, unnecessary and irresponsible news may cause chaos and make people lethargic sans knowing the awaiting risk. However, the ethics and moral responsibilities of journalism get diluted as media focuses much on the news which carries commercial value rather than social value because of holding a maximum percentage of dividends in mass media by miscreants. It has been vividly recorded in Edward Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!*

The Monkey Wrench Gang is one of the finest works of Edward Abbey, wherein he delineates the importance of preserving nature and the means of accomplishing it. In this novel, a major character named George Washington Hayduke with his comrades forms a group called The Monkey Wrench Gang to make financial losses to the entities that destroy the environment by engaging in disastrous activities like mining. *Hayduke Lives!* is the last work of Abbey as well as a protraction of *The Monkey Wrench Gang* in which Hayduke attempts to re-organize the gang to execute a destructive project of ruining a giant-like machine called GOLIATH. Since the Monkey Wrench Gang's primary notion is to protect the environment by making economic loss to the companies that exploit natural resources, Hayduke would continue his destructive deeds as he did in *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and attempt to demolish the massive dragline excavator with the assistance of his gang. To preserve the nature and environment, on the one hand, Hayduke with his gang would make financial losses to the companies that ransack the natural resources; on the other hand, a faction called Earth First! under the spearhead of Erika would stage protests passively aiming the attention of people to save the earth. But both attempts would be ignored or neglected by the media even when they had been invited. Rather, the media portrays the activities of The Monkey Wrench Gang as terrorism instead of making people aware of what the Monkey Wrench Gang is all about.

The Monkey Wrench Gang consists of four members. They are George Washington Hayduke (former army man), A. K. Sarvis, M.D. (doctor), Bonnie Abzug (Sarvis' assistant), and Seldom Seen Smith (boatman). They discussed, during their river trip, the impending risk for the environment as well as to human beings by the perennial exploitation of natural resources via mining just for electricity and about the laying out of roads into the natural places. So, the gang determines at last to shoo away the firms that carry out such destructive activities in order to preserve nature by inflicting economic losses on them. For the noble cause of protecting nature, the Monkey Wrench Gang engaged in the activities of doing away with machines like Bulldozers used by the firms. It culminated in a derailing train which carried coal. The gang was labelled as extremists and was searched by rescue team. But no journalist or media came forward to divulge the noble cause of their deed to the world. If it had done so, the evil notion of the entities that deplete the natural resources would have been exposed.

Young men and women in the flower of their youth, like Hayduke there, or Bonnie, bleeding to death without a wound. Acute leukemia is on the rise. Lung cancer. I think the evil is in the food, in the noise, in the crowding, in the stress, in the water, in the air. I've seen too much of it, Seldom. And it's going to get a lot worse if we let them carry out their plans. That's why. (MWG180)

Hayduke continued to engage in the action of preserving nature by inflicting financial losses on the mining firms in *Hayduke Lives!* also. He attempted to prevent the giant-like machine, the dragline, from reaching the destination because the dragline was usually used for mining. Mining causes multiple hazards to the environment and it disturbs the eco-system as well. The dragline was four hundred and ten feet long; as long as three folds longer than that of Wright Brothers' first flight. It was thirteen and half thousand tons in weight; as heavy as completely filled one hundred and fifty railroad coal hoppers. It was sixty-seven feet in height and it was capable enough to cross two hundred and ninety thousand square foot distances in a single step. In such a massive gigantic way the dragline was.

Welcome aboard “GOLIATH.”. . . the world’s largest dragline! The 4250-W Walking Dragline, a twenty-seven-million-pound giant that walks to work, is the biggest mobile land machine on earth! . . . The 420-W's record size and design enable it to uncover vast areas of coal, uranium, potash, molybdenum, or other minerals that before now could not have been economically mined. . . . walking dragline “GOLIATH” is the latest example of how Bucyrus-Erie keeps pace with our world’s most urgent requirements. (HL 64)

Since the dragline was massive in size, it was not able to fit itself into the existing path. So, two Mitsubishi bulldozers from BLM used to raze the land and remove the vegetation on their way to free the dragline from any hindrance while moving.

The two Mitsubishi bulldozers from BLM reached the head of Lost Eden Canyon, the bulldozers were operated by a man with a beard who was around thirty years old and by a pink-cheeked teenage girl, where they found the way was blocked by an enraged mob. They were chanting slogans, dancing, waving placards, and hoisting placards. All in the rebel mob were wearing a white colour T-shirt that proclaimed Earth First. The operators stopped their bulldozers and gazed at the mob. In the middle of the crowd, there was a tall young woman named Erika who spearheaded the protest. Every single protester in the group was without arms since they wanted it to be a passive resistance or peaceful demonstration. There were around thirty members in the mob and half of them were women. They all were chanting slogans together at the operator.

No Compromise In Defense of Mother Earth!

We Stand For What We Stand On!

American Wilderness: Love It or Leave It Alone!

GOLIATH Go Home!

Syn-Fuels Is Sinful! Sunshine Is Good!

See One Grand Canyon You’ve Seen Them All!

BLM Means Bad Luck, Mother!

CAUTION: Land Rapers At Work!

Save Our Canyons: SOC It To The BLM!

Nuke Pukes Eat Carnotite!

Radiation Is Good For Who?

Down With Empire, Up With Spring! (HL 81)

Since the demonstration is all about the environmental issue as well as to create awareness among people about the impending risk in the future if the exploitation continues, it was of the utmost importance and responsibility of the media to take the news to the large volume of people but they did not. The placard, flag, and T-shirt worn by the rebels made the place sense as a festival was taking place. But no media had turned around in the place to cover their demands. In particular, Medias had been invited by the demonstrators but they failed to turn out because the media thought that the protest was no longer containing the commercial value. *They’d covered an Earth First! demo only the month before, in the same region and for the same hopeless cause – why repeat themselves? Time to move on.* (HL 81)

There should have been another more important event to be captured or reported if this earth-first rally was ignored. But all the Media in Utah-Arizona engaged to reverberate, non-significant thing compared to Earth's first rally, the twentieth-anniversary celebration of the Four Corners boundary monument. It is one of the popular sites in Canyon Country where the borders of four states (Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico) meet. Since all the Media were engaged to report the non-significant event, a significant deed that should have been taken to the knowledge of the world had been turned down. On being reported by the media, the rally might have gotten the attention of the world and support from across the globe. As per the ethicality of Media, it should actively engage in bringing an optimistic development in the society but in this context, Abbey vividly explicated that Media in the late twentieth century intended to focus on the events that earned them more fortune rather than credibility.

Media, especially journalism, serves as a voice to the voiceless people. Since there were no media and journalists to support the Earth First demonstrators, the two bulldozers' operators had taken it as an advantage and tried to disperse them by threatening them. The operators moved their iron beast back and forth and raised the blades up and lowered them to intimidate the demonstrators thinking that they would disperse like ants by their move but they did not do as they expected. So, the operators turned off the engines and were waiting for assistance from a BLM police-trained ranger to clear the way to proceed further. They were waiting for quite a long time but they saw no ranger, survey crew, and deputy sheriff team. They could see only clouds of smoke and dust due to the advancement of the GOLIATH ten miles behind.

In a spate of time, demonstrators approached the operators with beer and apples. Erika asked the male operator named Orval Jensen why he thought to dig the Grand Canyon to make nuclear bombshells when others love it. He replied to her that it was no longer the Grand Canyon. But Erika was not ready to accept any sort of convincing answer from him. She added that Lost Eden Canyon was a part of the Grand Canyon and the mining process would pollute the land and destroy the turtle-like living species and beauties of nature as well. For which Jensen asked back whether turtle was important or people but Erika replied right away that both were important. Two of the demonstrators with a person

named Pete approached the female operator and they initiated conversation but she was not ready to carry the conversational ball.

Instantly, all the demonstrators got back to their position locking their elbows with one another like chains across the marked way when they saw the arrival of a BLM patrol vehicle. At last, the most awaiting assistance to the operators reached the spot. A rangerette named Virginia H. Dick alighted from the vehicle. She was in uniform with a badge and held handcuffs in one hand. Breaching of ethicality in journalism would also lead personnel in another discipline to the state of being lethargic from performing their sole responsibility. There must be an intimidation to every professional to do their duty with utmost honest. Otherwise, the journalist has to tend them to do but on account of the absence of media, the rangerette attempted to disperse them by threatening. The duty of a ranger was not only to maintain law and order but also to provide a peaceful atmosphere to the people. A peaceful atmosphere can never be imagined without a healthy environment. So, she should be against to such activities of harming nature but she was not. In these situations, journalism must stand by the mob but they stood expecting commercial values. At the outset the rangerette warned the mob to let the bulldozers mind their business of razing the ground; by besieging them they (the mob) committed a huge mistake.

Virginia H. Dick (rangerette) shouted at the mob though she was a bashful rangerette. She called the leader of the group to conversate with them to put an end to the chaos at the Lost Eden Canyon. But no one responded to her initially. Later, Erika said that there was no particular leader, rather all were leaders. But she came forward as a spokesperson to find a way to stop the exploitation of nature by conversating with Dick since she loved America and Canyon country.

"I speak," Said Erka, "because I luff America and because I luff your beautiful free speak and your beautiful canyon land." . . . I speak because my heart cannot be silent. . . . I speak because I cannot sit aside, like bush, like stone, like a stupid chump, when zee big machine comes every day closer to ziss place vee luff like home. (HL 86)

Erika said to the rangerette that they had been there to stop GOLIATH from advancing. After having heard it the mob roared out of cheers. Dick waited for the noise to wane off, after that she intimidated them to get rid of the way because they were preventing the operators from doing the work assigned to them by the federal government. She added that they, however, did not have a proper permission to demonstrate. Dick gave the demonstrators two minutes to leave the spot otherwise she warned them of calling the county sheriff and public safety department and S.W.A.T team. And also, she warned them of six months imprisonment on various charges as well as fines would be levied around five thousand dollars from each. But the demonstrators stood still, they did not budge even.

The rangeratte tried by multiple means to fly them away but the earth first demonstrators stood firm. The bulldozer operators ignited their iron beasts and moved them in an intimidating way at the demonstrators but there was no fearful reaction from the mob. Even when Dick said that they were all arrested, she found them not moving. They were too strong in their decision. Dick found a man on a horse watching them from the distance, and another horse was tethered to a tree when she looked around the place to make sure that how the demonstrators assembled there either by truck or bus. Then she realized that they come there walking around forty km from the river.

Dick was baffling sans knowing what to do; thereafter she saw roostertail of dust approaching toward them. It was Bishop Love in Ford Bronco. He alighted from the vehicle and smiled at Dick as well as at Jensen sincerely but his smile faded away when he saw the woman operator because he did not like to hire women for construction work. Since it was a government job, certain principles should surely be followed. At last, Love looked at the protesters.

Media should support positive activities and extend its governance in all possible means by taking the news to the knowledge of other people across the world. Due to the absence of journalists and media in the place where the demonstration took place, the ranger who was employed to prevent violence unleashed violent activity against the demonstrators. If the media happened to be there, it could have been prevented. Even though Dick asked Love whether to call for assistance from the county sheriff, he denied saying that it would take at least two hours for them to reach the spot. So, he took charge to clear them off.

Bishop Love indicated the women operator to alight from her seat and she too abided by his words. Love took the seat of the woman operator. He pulled the lever and lifted the blade to dust it off and he moved it forward aiming at the centre of the earth's first mob. Bishop Love moved the bulldozer forward at its maximum speed towards Erika thinking that they would split into many factions. But they did not move even an inch and Erika held the American flag right in front of her as if to ward off evil forces using a crucifix. Peeved at it, he dumped the dune of debris over Erika's feet and sunk her crouch deep in the mud. It was absolutely against democracy and it was, in particular, done by the ranger (law protector). Therefore, the necessity of media and journalism was mandatory to support and to be the voice of the voiceless people. But Erika was with firm courage to withstand anything. Since the mob was with determination, he sought support from Orval but he found that Orval's machine was still as he went away leaving the bulldozer. Love informed the woman operator to take her bulldozer as he had taken Orval's machine. On account of firm determination from the demonstrator, Love targeted the left side of the mob where younger girls were there. They seemed to be a weaker faction also. When Love advanced, he saw them trembling and taking a step backward. Then he raised the dozer blade to make it look massive in size to intimidate them more and the woman operator targeted the right side of the mob.

The faction on the left side scattered like cows and protesters on the right side as well started running away except Erika when Love advanced the machine towards them as he expected. Since she was half buried by the debris, Bishop Love

and the woman operator engaged in the work of shooing the demonstrators away by threatening them. After some long, Bishop Love stopped chasing them but the woman operator continued to do that. Violence had been unleashed on the demonstrators by the law protector. The so-called fourth pillar of democracy, Media and journalists, should have been there to preserve the rights of the common people. But they breached their ethics by making them present in the twentieth-anniversary celebration of the Fourth Corners boundary monument.

The role of Journalism in maintaining peace and keeping the law and order in control by taking whatever the incident which disturbs the peace in the society to the knowledge of the concerned authority is immense. In the head of Last Eden Canyon, not only demonstrators were shooed away but also a fight broke out between Hayduke and Love. When Love came back towards Erika after having unlinked the demonstrators, he noticed that another giant-like machine approaching him from his right side. It was as big as Orval's bulldozer. At the outset, Love thought that he got support from the government but it was not so. Love's machine was assaulted by the new machine and at last both machines fell into a nearby drop-off. As *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!* are considered to be the picturization of a real-life incident, if the media was at the demonstration spot, the violent activities unleashed against the demonstrators and breach of law and order through the fight between Love and Hayduke would have been prevented.

Being not present in the demonstration spot for the first time could be taken up as a mistake but if it continues, it can be confirmed that media and journalists are controlled by power. Media and journalists had not only boycotted the demonstration of the mob to preserve nature and earth when two bulldozers reached Lost Eden Canyon but also the protest led by the same Earth First! mob at Neck against the arrival of GOLIATH. Because Media and journalists are not free-handed to abide by morality and ethics, they are controlled by the shareholders who are the primary culprits on all possible grounds.

The Earth First! faction staged a protest at Neck where they all were again arrested and manhandled by the law preservers. Though Medias were invited again they failed to appear.

Because the "media," though invited, had once again failed to appear. Why? Such decisions are made discreetly, quietly, by a few important people meeting on the golf course, in the boardroom, at lunch in the Brown Palace in Denver, and at the Biltmore in Phoenix. A few brief phone calls to appropriate TV, radio, and newspaper bureau chiefs settled the matter. Therefore the "media" did not appear. (HL 239)

Conclusion:

The primary responsibility of the Media is to choose and convey the news and the news should be chosen based on the necessity. Edward Abbey has vividly depicted that Media and journalists did not follow ethics concentrating on non-important things and neglecting the protest to protect nature. Hence, it leads to a loss the trust in Media and journalism. The practice of violating certain principles and not following ethics of journalism by media makes people lose their credibility on them.

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